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Deconstructing creativity

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It is also conceivable, at least hypothetically, that human thought (in so far as it is itself praxis and a moment of praxis) is fundamentally the understanding of novelty (as a perpetual re-organisation of the given in accordance with acts explicable by their end).

(Sartre 1976: 61)

In this chapter we will introduce a theorization of creativity which may well feel counter-intuitive to many at first. We contend that traditional discourses and theorizations of creativity have unconsciously limited its very nature to a set of preconceived ideas, thus distancing 'creativity' as a theoretical concept from the *praxis* of creativity. If creativity is a matter of 'going beyond', of exploring that which might be not so obvious and clear-cut and of challenging the taken-for-granted, then this puts the researcher of creativity in something of a bind. In order to be a 'creativity researcher' one needs to align oneself with a set of assumptions, but in order to stay 'creative' (as a moment of *praxis*), one has to continuously challenge these same assumptions. In fact, in order for creativity to remain 'creative' it, by its very nature and definition, needs to go 'beyond creativity'. We will discuss here this ontological problem of creativity, the fact that at the very core of creativity lies an *aporia*,¹ a difference to itself lodged in its very being. We aim to show that a critical and philosophical analysis might be needed to get a grip on this *aporia*. The kind of critical analysis we want to introduce here goes by the name deconstruction.

Deconstructing creativity? What might this mean? Well, we aim to do something to the concept of 'creativity', and that 'something' is to subject it to a process of 'deconstruction' as developed by Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction is a practice rather than a theory, particularly as the latter has one fundamental requirement: that of closure. As such, it sidesteps what Rickards and De Cock (1999: 239) called the ontological paradox in creativity research: 'How might the generative process of creativity be expressed within a model or theory seeking some generalizability if an essential part of the process is its uniqueness from that which existed before?' Deconstruction resists theory precisely because it demonstrates the impossibility of closure. Deconstruction fastens on the symptomatic points, the *aporia* or impasses of meaning, where texts and concepts get into trouble, come unstuck, offer to contradict





themselves (Eagleton 1996). It can be best described as a way of reading or perceiving that destabilizes a hierarchical order by stating what the hierarchy has suppressed. As Derrida (1981: 41) puts it:

In a traditional philosophical opposition we have not a peaceful coexistence of facing terms but a violent hierarchy. One of the terms dominates the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), occupies the commanding position. To deconstruct the opposition is above all, at a particular moment, to reverse the hierarchy.

For Derrida, dominant positions have no foundation in themselves but are sustained by what they differ from. Deconstruction is for Derrida ultimately a political practice, an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought maintains its force.

What deconstruction does is the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within a particular situation, text or concept. Whatever is present is not self-sustaining but lives on what it excludes, and by marking this difference deconstruction makes the excluded bounce back on the excluder (Iser 2006). Deconstruction spotlights what the dominant features have relegated to absence, the articulation of which makes the hierarchy fall apart. The conflicts within a concept like creativity, which the hierarchical order is supposed to pacify, thus come to the fore again.

Whilst there does not exist a commonly accepted definition of creativity, most commentators would agree that creativity involves the ability to come up with something ‘new’, which is of ‘value’ or ‘useful’ (Bills and Genasi 2003; Cox 2005; Ford 1996; Rickards and De Cock 1999).² Furthermore, it is often seen as critical for organizational success (Elsbach and Kramer 2003; de Brabandere 2005; Gogatz and Mondejar 2005; Proctor 2005). In a deconstructive move we want to explore what this focus on ‘the new’, on ‘value’ and ‘organizational success’ actually suppresses. Put somewhat differently, it is important, in order to develop the theoretical basis of creativity, to shake up this ‘hierarchy’ and see where this might take us. Indeed, isn’t it so that in our reliance on creativity theories and models, on ever-more ‘productive’ creativity techniques, we are actually in danger of losing ‘a general alertness which makes us aware, from moment to moment, of how the process of thought is getting caught in fixed sets of categories’ (Bohm 2004: 75)? Doesn’t the obsession with ‘novelty’, with ‘frame-breaking’ and ‘thinking outside the box’ – ‘ideas’ for the sake of ‘ideas’ – suppress that what is actually happening under so much active and activist energy reflects rather conservative norms: ‘compulsory individualism, compulsory “innovation”, compulsory performativity and productiveness, the compulsory valorization of the putatively new’ (Osborne 2003: 507)? Does the recent interest in creativity from policy makers (e.g. the 2005 *Cox Review of Creativity in Business*, commissioned by Gordon Brown, then UK Chancellor of the Exchequer³ and now Prime Minister) not contain a strong ideological dimension: a need to respond to and fit in with the perceived needs of contemporary capitalism in a globalized risk society?

In the remainder of the chapter we want to explore the suppressed dimensions inhering in the notion of ‘the new’ and open up possibilities for creativity beyond the dominant neo-liberal, market-focused ideology of ‘creativity’ as a well-behaved category and phenomenon. In other words, we want to reclaim creativity and take it seriously, without remaining fixed in a strict hierarchy of pre-suppositions and preconceived notions. To put it more succinctly: we want to think creatively about creativity.





First deconstructive move: novelty and progress

The palpable contradiction between the absolute claim for novelty and the inevitable repetition, the eternal return, of the same gesture of innovation over and over again, does not disqualify the characterization but rather lends it a mesmerizing, forever perplexing and fascinating, spell . . .

(Jameson 2002: 125)

Asserting that creativity is about creating novelty may seem little more than a tautology. Yet, whilst it is undoubtedly true that creativity can be about creating the new, one could inquire whether this assertion holds always-already. One could also question whether the underlying assumption of creativity as essentially linked to such beneficial novelty and progress is justified, or whether both these aspects are parts of an ideological construction geared at normalizing and accentuating one set of notions over others. The process of deconstruction aims at this kind of ‘picking apart’, arguing that the creation of unspoken hierarchies and implied necessities are in fact limitations to thought, driven by a particular Western desire to purify and control. In this case the object being purified and controlled is then creativity, the one thing one claims is beyond pure control – an inherent contradiction in thought.

Creativity, as a concept put to the use of contemporary capitalism, emphasizes the value of novelty, and positions this as a primary process in the economy. If we follow the argument developed by Schumpeter in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942), creativity is that which entrepreneurs showcase when they introduce new things into a market, and it is the ‘creative destruction’ they wield that makes them such potent agents of change. Furthermore, it is this process of innovation that enables progress in the world, as witnessed in advanced technologies and economies.⁴ In current versions of this argument (see e.g. Bills and Genasi 2003; Cox 2005; de Brabandere 2005), creativity is presented as existing in juxtaposition with an old world/economy (that which was) and as forming a signaling device for the birth of something better. Put slightly differently, it is often stated that creativity is important because it helps deliver the new into the world. The assumption that the new is clearly superior to what went before has an important corollary: failure to move from one to the other is to be explained by ‘conservatism’, not to mention stupidity or straightforward ignorance (Edgerton 2006). In other words, the concept of creativity serves as a way of creating a binary along the lines of old/bad – new/good. Creativity, seen as a morally upstanding phenomenon, emphasizes novelty and through this positions the new as necessarily better than the old, thus creating one of the hierarchies that deconstruction aims to topple. Where such a statement might be understandable and quite sensible in local cases, we must question whether we are prepared to accept it as a general statement. We must further ask whether it is, in fact, a neutral statement, but will leave this consideration to our third deconstructive movement.

To create a brand new product or start a new company is obviously a creative act. At the same time, virtually all such acts contain at least some traces of old ideas, and this ‘old’ content might in fact be quite substantial. If we look to the world of art, we see that creators such as Marcel Duchamp and Claes Oldenburg used already existing things – the ready-mades – to create high art (cf. Guillet de Monthoux 2004), thus problematizing the notion of novelty.⁵ For them, there was no original, only an endless chain of derivatives. The world of the commodity had become a degraded one, in which things had been drained of their intrinsic value; but precisely because of this, they were now free to be put to all kinds of ingenious, innovatory uses. What someone like Marcel Duchamp produced out of this non-innovation is ultimately one of the most original forms of art of modern times (Eagleton 2005). Žižek (2006) points out how Luther





accomplished the greatest revolution in the history of Christianity, thinking he was merely unearthing the truth obfuscated by centuries of Catholic degeneration. In cultural theory, Walter Benjamin emphasized the notion of ruin and remembrance as central aspects of any creative act (cf. Rehn and Vachhani 2006), and in innovation studies one has long recognized that the most common form of innovation is incremental, i.e. one where the creative component is in fact the smallest part of the final product. All these facts are in themselves not 'new' and indeed some have been discussed at some length in creativity theory. Yet, this discussion has in almost all cases taken the form of emphasizing that it is still the new aspect, however minor this might be, that defines a particular act as creative.

Our first deconstructive move, then, is to claim that creativity need not be about novelty. Even though novelty may be present in creative acts, this can in fact be a fairly minor part thereof. The emphasis on novelty is needed to ideologically position creativity as part of an economic movement and to connect it to the modernist ideology of progress. But why would it be essential for creativity? Creativity can also be a question of returning, going to the roots, getting back to basics. Creativity can be about taking away things, simplifying, creating by ignoring novelties. A neo-liberal ideological understanding may see the new as that which creates value, but a skeptical reading of this would ask whether this not merely involves recasting some old ideological chestnuts and enlisting the concept of creativity to drive these forward. If, for instance, we look at how MIT's John Maeda (2006) champions simplicity and thereby design and innovation principles that have been taken on board by companies such as Philips, we see that he encourages scaling back and reducing, rather than enhancing and adding on. Cook and Brown (1999) discovered that for a group of design teams at Xerox interacting with old artifacts is often a source of insights that are valuable in designing new technologies. The design team have a 'hands on' interaction with those artifacts that afford the recapture of those particular bits of knowledge associated with a particular competency, thus demonstrating the generative power of the practices associated with recapturing old knowledge. Here, creativity is about seeing what is truly valuable and permanent in something, rather than adding the newfangled onto it.

Thus the *praxis* of creativity does not necessarily underwrite the valuing of novelty over the already existing, as it deals mainly in achieving a goal. The reading of this process, however, has opted to promote novelty as the central aspect in order to achieve ideological goals. Our first deconstructive move thus suggests that we cannot allow the concept of creativity to be always-already defined by novelty, nor to fall under the ideological framework of progress and modernism, but instead to allow for a concept of creativity which says that it might at times be better to be old-fashioned. The notion of novelty as defining creativity is in such a reading not only analytically problematic, it is also uncreative as it discounts possibilities.

Second deconstructive move: originality and uniqueness

The staggering popularity of Reality TV programmes which consist simply in someone pottering mindlessly around his kitchen for hours on end suggests one interesting truth: that many of us find the pleasures of the routine and repetitive even more seductive than we do the stimulus of adventure.

(Eagleton 2005: 8)

The painter Paul Cézanne, generally considered as one of the most important innovators in the history of painting⁶ (cf. Berger 2001; Foster *et al.* 2004), demonstrated a very peculiar kind of





‘creativity’, one that eschewed novelty and instead focused on work and repetition. As he put it himself ‘The quest for novelty and originality is an artificial need which can never disguise banality and the absence of artistic temperament’ (quoted in Doran 2001: 17). What to make, for example, of Cézanne’s stubbornness in wanting to paint the same view of Mont Sainte-Victoire over and over again? For Cézanne, the *work* of painting involved repetition, ‘repetition in the name not just of seeking an answer to something but of locating, deepening, embellishing a problem . . .’ (Osborne 2003: 520). Through the Mont Sainte-Victoire landscape – because Cézanne used it over and over again as his raw material – one comes to see what creativity can mean (in his particular context). It is what Paul Ricoeur (1998: 179) referred to as the ‘enigma of creation’:

The modesty or the pride of the artist – in this case, it amounts to the same thing – is probably to know at this very moment how to make the gesture that every person should make. In apprehending the singularity of the question there is the sentiment of an incredible obligation; in the case of Cézanne or Van Gogh we know that it was overwhelming. It is as if the artist experienced the urgency of an unpaid debt with respect to something singular that had to be said in a singular manner.

The explanation of creativity thus has to be sought in the *process* of production itself; the power of the paintings lies in their *painting*. Nothing appeared more sacred to Cézanne than work: ‘My method is to love working’ (Doran 2001: 127). He thus subscribes to the very Marxist notion that reality can best be approached through work, precisely because reality itself is a form of production. Here, we find another ideological problem. Many commentators on creativity insist that the reason that creativity is important is because it generates unique and original things, and that this in turn produces value. But in accepting this we have taken in a theory of value as already unchallenged and objectively true when this theory is in fact a hotbed of dissenting opinions (see e.g. Gibson-Graham 1996). Furthermore, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, historians have become increasingly preoccupied with the phenomenon of repetition; not as Hegel described it by saying that everything in world history happens twice, but rather as Marx expanded this in his 18th *Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* when he corrected what Hegel forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce (Foster *et al.* 2004).

Our second deconstructive move, then, would be to challenge the notion that creativity by necessity must contain original properties. Instead, we suggest that copying, imitation and mimicry, not to mention just hard (re)productive work, can be just as important. For instance, the new realist movement in the pictorial arts (as represented, for example, by the Florence Academy) attempts to achieve almost photo-realism in their art, which positions hard work and reproduction as more critical aspects of creative work than originality. Similarly, one can find cases in architecture where the creator has tried to copy a style almost religiously, maybe adding a small twist, and presenting this as both a creative work and as homage. Another example would be industrial design which tries to mimic natural forms (e.g. the Anglepoise task light) or bands that try to capture the style and image of a bygone era (blues revivals, neo-crooners). In all these examples the hallmark of success in a creative endeavour is that one has succeeded in copying that which one references: ‘It’s just like the old times!’, ‘I can’t believe this is not an Eames!’ Exactness in mimicry can also create exquisite ironic effects, such as when Oscar Wilde created a new form of comedy simply by perfectly duplicating English high society mannerisms in print and on the stage.

Such a deconstructive move would point to the fact that originality lies in the relational dynamics, not in the thing itself, and thus not in creativity itself either. Originality is a process,





not an essential characteristic. We are always constrained by both the matter we are forced to work with and an audience we are trying to communicate with. Edgerton (2006: 84–85), for example, illustrates how car repairers in Ghana develop an intimate knowledge of cars and engines and how to keep them going using local materials, in the process transforming the cars: ‘Replacement gaskets were made from old tyres, fuses were replaced by copper wire, nails were used as lock-pins . . . what might seem like dangerous and costly indifference to the rules set out in maintenance manuals was a remarkable example of extreme technical artifice brought within human understanding.’ Creativity emerges here when one produces something that paradoxically adheres to the rules of the game and at the same time establishes new rules. The compulsion to emphasize uniqueness simply reduces creativity to one of its aspects, in the interest of better fitting it into a preconceived structure. As the modernist notion of progress, which in neo-liberal discourse is ascribed to the workings of the market economy, *ipso facto* necessitates the existence of essential and replenishable originality, it is obvious why this aspect of creativity has been emphasized, even though this points to an ideological positioning rather than an analytical one.

Our second deconstructive turn thus involves a position where creativity might very well be about doing the same thing over and over again, and that things do not necessarily have to be original to be creative – or at least that one should not overemphasize this part of the binary. It might be that it is the very process of working that shows us creativity, rather than it being revealed in the originality of the final product. Therefore we shouldn’t exaggerate the role of originality or uniqueness in the definition of creativity either, as this reduces what creativity can be or mean. This turn, however, should be seen as much more radical than merely a definitional *volte-face*, as it points to how the productive nature of creativity can be (alternatively) understood.

Third deconstructive move: neutrality, or, recasting the ideology of creativity

It is generally accepted that both innovation and entrepreneurship depend upon and utilize the creative impulse. As both have been politically and ideologically cast as necessary for economic growth and development in post-industrial economies, creativity has thus become something of a poster-child for the potential inherent in the market economy (*viz.* the *Cox Review of Creativity in Business*). Such a positioning, however pleasing it might be for creativity researchers, is not uncontroversial. It assumes that creativity is an external, outside thing, which can be harnessed by market agents such as the ‘innovator’ or the ‘entrepreneur’, and thus casts creativity as both neutral and necessarily beneficial. There is scant if any discussion about how this casting of creativity has made it into a moral category, and by extension a political one.

Little attention has been paid to how creativity can be a negative thing, or even an immoral or illicit affair. Similarly, the assumption that creativity is always a joyous thing, the mark of a free society, and the handmaiden of contemporary capitalism has been seldom put into question. This assumption is remarkably strong and affects much of theoretical work on creativity. While it is obvious that creativity can exist in fields such as accounting, crime, torture or paedophilia, such negative aspects are rarely if ever brought up in the discussion thereon, as this would make the concept seem less bright and decidedly positive than in its current dominant representations. Following the same logic, we can ask why it would necessarily be the case that creativity is furthered and utilized best in market economies?





In their study of *blat* networks in the Soviet Union, Rehn and Taalas (2004) argue that contrary to popular assumption the USSR may have been the most entrepreneurial country ever, and by extension, the most creative economy of all. In a system where even the simple act of buying meat was hindered by a Byzantine system of laws, regulations, five-year plans and a stifling bureaucracy, creativity and entrepreneurial action were not simply things a few special individuals engaged in, but became a necessary part of survival. Focusing on a system of favours and gift-exchanges known as *blat*, Rehn and Taalas discuss how the Soviet citizens would set up intricate and often highly creative networks of exchanges and mutual assistance in order to keep the everyday economy running in the undergrowth of the state-run system. For instance, a person with access to medicine could help a friend who in her turn knew a butcher who might need a new coat, which might be had from a person who had earlier got a discounted Aeroflot-ticket from somebody's brother, and so on in a complex and ever-changing network of assistance. This obviously demanded quite a lot of creative finagling, interesting exchanges and out-of-the-box approaches to exchanges. At the same time, such *blat* networks obviously worked against the system and were basically illegal. They might have been beneficial for the people taking part in them, yet siphoned off resources from the greater system and could be understood both as a way to make the economy more efficient and as a system of exploitation. Such a system can of course not be seen as neutral – our view of it is inevitably tied to our views on what constitutes a 'good' society. Creativity, considered from this perspective, is not neutral at all but part of how we ideologically construct the world (cf. Žižek 2006). We can state that *blat* was creative or showed creativity, but whether this statement is seen as meaningful ultimately depends on our view of the world.

Peculiarly enough, this reaction to the oppression of the Soviet bureaucracy can be seen as a fundamentally Marxist move. The hallmark of Marxism is precisely the idea that human beings create both the world and themselves. Bernard Williams (1977: 206) put it thus:

At the very centre of Marxism is an extraordinary emphasis on human creativity and self-creation. Extraordinary because most of the systems with which it contends stress the derivation of most human activity from an external cause: from God, from an abstracted Nature or human nature, from permanent instinctual systems, or from an animal inheritance. The notion of self-creation, extended to civil society and to language by pre-Marxist thinkers, was radically extended by Marxism to the basic work processes and thence to a deeply (creatively) altered physical world and a self-created humanity.

Our third deconstructive move, then, would be to say that creativity is not a neutral thing, nor a self-evidently good thing, but instead necessarily tied to a moral and ideological context. Maybe, instead of 'creativity', we have things like 'neo-liberal creativity', 'late-modernist creativity', 'Marxist creativity' and so on. We might even have something like a neutral concept of creativity, but this would possibly have to accept things such as torture and systematic abuse as part of its expression. In other words, it is not enough to focus on *praxis*, we must also (echoing Sartre) think about the fundamentals of human thought (including the notion of ethics and how we construct the framework of our thinking). What deconstruction can do is to show how we (through the mechanisms of ideological thinking) neutralize and valorize a concept like creativity, and how we need to be aware of the possibilities for imbuing the concept with different values. The deconstructive method, which is mindful of how valorizations are turned into ontological claims, can help us disentangle the sometimes muddled moral discourse of creativity in contemporary society. As to the question of how we then would define creativity, we must turn one last time to Derrida (2001: 188):





The answer must each time be invented, singular, signed, and each time only one time like the gift of a work, a giving of art and life, unique and, right up until the end of the world, played back. Given back. To the impossible, I mean right up to the impossible.

Discussing deconstructed creativity

Why these deconstructive moves? What do we want to show? A critical reader could now challenge us and say we are merely playing a semantic game, and even suggest that we are draining the concept of creativity of meaning by suggesting that any-and-everything can be fitted into it. In one sense this latter accusation might be true. We do want to empty the word of its dogmatic and ideological meanings, as these in fact never can capture the concept of creativity in its entirety, and instead work as a form of straitjacket for enabling only particular types of analyses. We do not want to present a novel definition of creativity, but instead point to the problems with defining that which may lie beyond the graspable.

On one level, deconstruction should be a natural and normal process to all and sundry working in the creativity field, for it is reminiscent of many of the practical methods we use to develop ideas. Rule reversal, lateral thinking and all techniques working with interruptions or discontinuities are connected to the notion of deconstruction, even if the latter works on a more philosophical level. In this sense, deconstructing creativity is just a question of being creative about creativity, testing its borders by way of techniques used and prescribed by the field itself. On this level, deconstruction could even be seen as a sort of necessary ethics for the field of creativity studies; one that would assume that the field would practise what it preaches and not be afraid of 'walking the talk'.

Yet, there is obviously something much more radical at stake here. When one starts to subject the concept of creativity to such deconstructive moves, something happens. The familiar creativity territory becomes alien and strange and we seem to lose our bearings. The taken-for-granted grounding of the concept of creativity starts to look like just so many assumptions, created to fit nicely in with other assumptions. Creativity, from being a sign of humanity's potential, becomes just another word in the arsenal of politicians and CEOs. Rather than the nice, productive concept of good productive cheer we are left with a neo-liberal slogan or perhaps a Marxist rallying-cry.

Our aim is not simply to suggest that creativity is always-already ideologically tainted. It is not more so than any other concept one cares to analyse. Instead, our interest lies in bringing to the fore that which is normally hidden. By valorising novelty over the pre-existing, one turns creativity into part of a modernist narrative of unending progress and the necessity of continuous capitalistic development. By valorising originality, one hides away notions of production and work, not to mention history. By valorising creativity as a neutral concept, one hides away the many assumptions about ethics and the nature of social life that form the possibility of normalizing concepts. We cannot fully escape the framework within which we think, nor the context from where we think, but we must work on our awareness about the foundations of our thinking.

In an age where creativity has been corralled into the service of both big business and the nation state, we must be able to display a degree of intellectual honesty and show that we can subject even the concept of creativity to critique. Deconstruction is a technique for opening up concepts, subjecting them to difficult questions, and escaping the totalizing tendency inherent in all attempts at definition. By applying it to creativity, we have tried to suggest possibilities for





a creativity theory of tomorrow; one that would generate more interesting insights from, and surprising twists to, the old tales.

Notes

- 1 Aporia is a term borrowed from literary theory which indicates the impasse of an undecidable oscillation, as when the chicken depends upon the egg but the egg depends on the chicken (Culler 1997: 100).
- 2 Ford's (1996: 1116) definition is succinct and typical: 'I define creativity as a domain-specific, subjective judgement of the novelty and value of an outcome of a particular action.'
- 3 The report offered the following recommendations (p. 16):
 - A nationwide programme should be introduced and supported to engage SMEs and demonstrate the practical benefits of applying creativity.
 - Steps should be taken to get greater understanding of creativity and innovation into the boardroom by recruiting people with creative experience onto company boards.
 - 'Managing creativity' should be a topic in the Institute of Directors (IoD) Chartered Director syllabus.
 - Broadcasters should take the same approach to encouraging creativity that they have recently shown towards enterprise.
- 4 Schumpeter attributed his insight that capitalism is an evolutionary process to Marx, whose vision already comprehended the raw power of capitalism. For Schumpeter, capitalism is never stationary but driven by a process of innovation, which is itself driven by the pursuit of profit, with profit-hungry entrepreneurs in the driving seat.
- 5 Duchamp's quintessential device in this respect was the readymade (e.g. bicycle wheel 1913; bottle rack 1914; Fountain 1917), an appropriated product positioned as art. This device allowed him to leap past old aesthetic questions of craft, medium and taste to new questions that were potentially ontological ('what is art?'), epistemological ('how do we know it?'), and institutional ('who determines it?'). His famous urinal (or 'Fountain') was the only one out of 2,125 works from 1,235 artists that was rejected for exhibition in April 1917 by the American Society of Independent Artists. As Foster *et al.* (2004: 129) put it: 'Never shown in its initial guise, *Fountain* was suspended in time, its questions deferred to later moments. In this way it became one of the most influential objects in twentieth-century art well after the fact.' Duchamp's main lesson was that no artist determines his work finally. Not only does the viewer have a share, but subsequent artists also interpret a body of work, reposition it retroactively, and so carry it forward as well.
- 6 John Berger (2001: 225–227) paid Cézanne the following homage: 'Everyone is agreed that Cézanne's paintings appear to be different from those of any painter who preceded him; whilst the works of those who came after seem scarcely comparable, for they were produced out of the profound crisis which Cézanne half foresaw and helped to provoke. . . . Cézanne, who consciously strove towards a new synthesis between art and nature, who wanted to renew the European tradition, in fact destroyed forever the foundation of that tradition by insisting, more radically as his work developed, that visibility is as much an extension of ourselves as it is a quality-in-itself of things.'

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