Conference Entry Form

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Proposal Title *  
Historical Re-Enactment as Creative Activity: the Psychological Perspective

Abstract (500 words). Abstracts will be published on the webpage before the conference. *

The popularity of historical re-enactment in contemporary society raises many questions which could be considered in new ways on the interdisciplinary basis, including psychology. This presentation examines the phenomenon of historical re-enactment as a kind of creative activity. The author uses scientific knowledge of psychology and deductive method to inquire whether historical re-enactment meets the agreed criteria of creative behaviour and to clarify the role of such components as motivation, personality and knowledge in the activities.

According to widely recognized definition given by psychologist Teresa Amabile (1996), creativity is the production of novel (original) and useful (adequate) ideas or other results in any domain. Of course, it is quite subjective to state what is novel, and what is useful, but better ways aren’t found yet. Hereby there are good reasons to say that historical re-enactment brings multifarious creative results to life of an individual as well as of society.

Various categories of the results of creative behaviour can be identified in different areas of human activity (see Almonaitienė, 2013). Creation of “things” (material objects), suitable technologies and their demonstrations, on one hand, and creative social behaviour, on the other, are presumably the main categories of the results of creative behaviour in case of historical re-enactment.

The first category may include reconstruction of food, clothing, weapons, jewellery, ceramics, etc., and technologies used in their production, as well as demonstrative performances illustrating the reconstructed material objects and the technologies.

The second category deals with such non-material creative results as one’s new Self (identity), new community comprising all the necessary structural and dynamical attributes (roles, statuses, stages of formation, etc.), or new alternative to the ordinary lifestyle.

Amabile (1996 and later) as well as many other psychologists stress the different role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in creative activities: the first leads to better results, mainly. The (re)creation of material objects, technologies and their demonstrations are more likely to be due to external motivation – not least because of the fact that the results are easy to use or sell. The above named creative social behaviour often requires much resources (time, commitment, etc.), but its results have no clear applicability and can’t be sold in many cases. It seems that intrinsic motivation is very important here, leading to high level “pure and unapplied” creativity.

The presentation will focus further on the above mentioned premises providing guidance for possible directions of the re-enactment research in psychology.

Selected references:


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