

FOSS and the Creative Process: Knowledge, Technology, Autonomy

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The Creative Process (Knowledge, Technology, Autonomy) involves:

- problem-solving activity that goes beyond the mere communication or transfer of information because it demands the need for knowledge (critical consciousness) in dealing with information (**knowledge**)

(We may also look at FOSS as a creative problem solving process in this respect, because FOSS is a philosophy that requires knowledge, a critical consciousness, in dealing with information).

- a critical and conscious behavior underlying the function of "creating" something instead of "buying" something (**technology**)
(We may also look at FOSS as a critical, conscious, strategic behavior that empowers you to "create" rather than to "buy")

- a production process built around an unconventional understanding of property rights (**autonomy**)
(We may also look at FOSS as a generic production process that counteracts the monopolizing effects of copyrights and patents. The building of software is a shared, distributed creative process, not an industrial good or a commodity).

(In Islam, the concept of intellectual property is not a sui generis Islamic legal concept – IP is a concept developed in the west, from a completely different culture, with the objective of financial gain and profit. There are no verses or hadith that states that knowledge or ideas are protected under Islamic law. What they will surely find in those sources is that all knowledge belongs to God and that knowledge seeking and knowledge sharing is an obligation for all Muslims).

(Indigenous peoples and cultural communities have complex concepts of rights too, which often reflect the complexity of the natural environment).

How Creative Process is destroyed:

- by activating the cultural scene into a market-oriented atmosphere where selling is more important than creating (**aesthetics degenerates into technique**)

- by organizing the cultural environment into a "creative industry" with the rise of the "creative class" as key players (fodders) in the global economy (cannon) (*articulation degenerates into classification; knowledge degenerates into transferable skills/information*)

- by influencing people to define their interests (which creates the illusion of freedom) within the regimes of a global consumerist culture (*culture degenerates into commodity*)

How a submissive national government intends to destroy the Creative Process (as defined by the British Ambassador to the Philippines in his talk at the First Philippine Creative Industry Forum about "The Creative Economy and the Rise of the Creative Class," outlining several factors he deemed necessary for the growth of the creative industry):

- Education: special schools/curricula to develop creative skills (*there is no such thing as "creative skills." Creativity, articulation and understanding are not transferable measurable skills, they are not techniques that can be applied to pre-defined ends. It is an intellectual disaster when schools focus on skills in competencies and deems it unnecessary for students to understand a difficult theory, idea or work of art. Education is about self-knowledge, not simply acquiring a set of skills*).

- Clusters: establishment of geographical centers of creative activity, in the same way that there are financial/commercial centers (*it is an insult to creative people to be organized into financial or commercial centers, especially by a national government that is determined to sell them to the global marketplace*).

- Strong intellectual property rights regime (*with regards to the output of authors, artists and inventors, we don't need an even stronger intellectual property rights regime, we have existing laws – positive law, common law or indigenous traditions - that ensure protection, respect and access for all within the spirit of sharing and communal ownership. The enforcement of stronger intellectual property regimes is only in the selfish interest of large foreign multinational companies, monopolies, and powerful countries – it has no real benefit to our country, certainly no benefit to our economy*)

- Leadership: creatives must be prepared to lead in their sector(s), so training will have to be provided. (*With political thinking conditioned within the corrupted concepts of education, social*

organization and intellectual property rights, we should all be terrified of the kind of training and indoctrination that the creative industry is going to provide. And worse, we will probably have to pay for all that training too).

(In the First Philippine Creative Industry Forum, speakers and presenters from Singapore and Hong Kong were also invited, to share their experiences and success stories in the adoption of the British Creative Industry):

How Singapore intends to become Renaissance City 2.0 (to get rid of its reputation as the "Switzerland of Asia"):

- by building a superb two-tower megaplex for the creative companies, with a huge egg-like auditorium nested in the middle for creative experiments;
- by courting major names in art, architecture, design, etc. to join its art festivals and cultural events

(Basically, this is a marketing approach in promoting Singapore and Singapore is pumping big money into these projects – and the central idea here is that if you build it they will come. The original intention was to get rid of Singapore’s reputation as the “Switzerland of Asia”, that is, a country to do business in but with no soul. For a country with no biodiversity, cultural resource and heritage as rich as the Philippines, Singapore could only rely on its money resource to attract soul from other places with the hope that their local constituents could be infected or inspired. But the Philippines is not Singapore. Besides, we have done this sort of thing before – the entire CCP Complex was built for this very same determination. And did it all work out? Did we become more creative? Does being creative mean getting the Subanon people from Zamboanga to perform the sacred and elaborate ritual dance of the buklog to the CCP for the spectacle of Manila-audiences and foreign guests?)

How Hong Kong followed the Singapore model:

- by mapping the creative industries in the country to determine their contributions to GDP
 - by creating Hong Kong Disneyland
- (Actually, the current Chinese regime is not very excited about the creative industry idea – it makes sense that the American Disneyland is confined to Hong Kong, the former Crown Colony – as a political strategy. In fact, US passport holders already in Hong Kong are refused entry to mainland China, a move that better reveals China’s position).*

How the Philippines formulates a strategy to develop the creative industry and destroy creative process:

- Via a pre-defined concept of development and creativity that begins by a gung ho rally that the Filipino is creative, and that economic activity transforms creative cultural content into cultural products operating under a value chain.

- Via a roadmapping workshop: A workshop intended to set a roadmap in developing a creative-driven economy. The plenary session formulated strategies to reach their ultimate goal: a vision to guide strategies in developing the creative industry, and getting artists to think in terms of the economic value of their art. The participants were divided into 3 areas: 1) Creative Output; 2) Creative Industry Value Chain; 3) Support System for the Creative Industry. Here, the participants were placed in a narrowly pre-defined space, they were not allowed to define that space by themselves in response to their own perspectives, needs and urgencies, in claiming their own rights to articulation, understanding and self-knowledge. This is the form of education that the British ambassador was talking about where people are trained and given skills in order to satisfy a pre-determined task or end.

Art can facilitate the way out of consumerist (dependent and mendicant) thinking:

- insofar as art is a generic process for knowledge that bifurcates to other processes of production such as picture production and picture perception (here, the encounter with art - with the artist's mind - is experienced as an exemplary, explicit, precise expression (and not a mere instrument or tool) where self-knowledge (*knowledge*) underwrites (*technology*) self-government (*autonomy*))

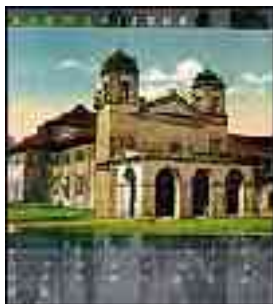


Photo of Church of Caysasay (left) and painting of Church of Caysasay (1904 oil on canvas) by Pedro Salazar

The history of linear perspective goes back to the experience of the ancient Greeks, in particular to a scene painter for Aeschylus demonstrating a realistic depiction of depth through size reduction in the spatial layout of buildings in the fourth century BC. This passed on to the Roman Empire, who employed central vanishing points in the wall paintings of Pompeii. But it was only in the period of the High Renaissance that linear perspective was codified, starting a revolution in spatial apprehension and ways of seeing in Western art. The codification of perspective spurred the development of devices and measuring instruments that extended the scope of optics and served as drawing aids for artists. Because these artists' tools were also exploited in the verification of sight, it long remained unchallenged and unexamined that linear perspective defined no clear conceptual distinctions between ways of seeing and methods of representation; the Western visual tradition and especially the criteria for veritable vision became dominated by this single convention of space representation until the nineteenth century.

By the twentieth-century, because of the predominance of linear perspective in Western painting and the realism of the photographic image, we were conditioned to believe that drawings and paintings were necessarily derived from views. The belief also became reinforced that those pictures providing the most convincing illusion via the geometric certainty of linear perspective were better than those diverting from this ideal. Physical optics, which was first codified into perspective in the Renaissance, and finally "naturalized" in photography, became determinants for the "proper" depiction of objects in space; "natural perspective" became the dominant (Western) cultural canon, and pictorial representation could only be described in terms of possible views. In modern photography and the mechanism of the camera obscura, the image is created by light rays from objects in a scene and their intersections with the picture plane. It is based upon this primary geometry that perspective and the optical arrangement in a camera are said to be the same. So, what else could possibly be more natural than a picture derived from the image painted on the retina itself?

However, the analogy between linear perspective and the mechanism of vision is not this simple. As optics and perspective were concepts interchangeably used over the centuries, the visual ideology derived from the simplification of this relationship could not be easily questioned. And because optical theory cannot account for pictures whose geometries do not correspond to "natural

perspective” or possible views, such pictures have been explained away as curious aberrations as a result of the artist’s lack of skill or of a particular culture, and placed in the category of “naïve” and “folk” painting.

Sometimes, those pictures that could not be explained in terms of the fixed viewpoint and converging lines of linear perspective were described by art historians as “more intuitive systems of representing spatial recession.” The use of diverging orthogonals in Orthodox Christian art, for example, was characterized as being more convincing in practice than in theory. However, it is not only the function of art to present convincing illusions of depth, and the different systems of representation used by artists should not be explained only in these terms.

Church of Caysasay by Pedro Salazar is shown here with superimposed lines to indicate the direction of the main orthogonals, which converge as in linear perspective, but not to a single consistent vanishing point. The orthogonal line of the walled grounds of the church on the left side is drawn upwards to the right, and the orthogonal on the right side is drawn upwards to the left. The church building was drawn using the rule: “Draw the front face parallel to the picture plane so it is represented as a true shape and depict the side faces as oblique lines.” Applying this rule, the portico façade of the church is represented in oblique projection; however, the extended building on the right is represented in almost pure isometric projection. The calesa in the foreground, the huts in the background and the goats in the middle distance all have their own internal projection systems.



Photo of Church of Taal (left) and painting of Church of Taal (undated, oil on canvas) by Pedro Salazar .

The constructional principle used in Church of Taal also by Salazar may be explained in similar terms. The face of the church is represented as a true shape and the sides represented as parallel oblique lines sloping upwards. The roof of the convent building is also depicted as a true shape. The stairs in the foreground, however, is drawn in perspective with the orthogonals converging towards a vanishing point in the picture plane. So it appears that the church building was painted with no reference to views - and logically so, because the church could not have been viewed from such a height. The stairs, however, appear to have been derived from a view-centered description.

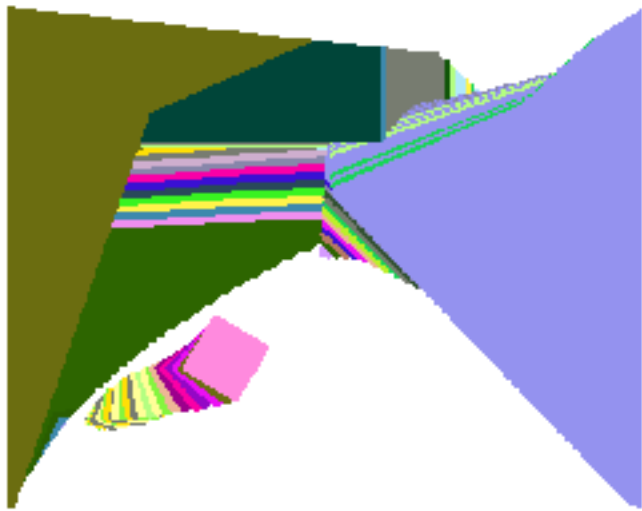
In both paintings by Salazar, because it is unlikely that they were entirely painted directly from a scene viewed at such a height, it is possible that various sections of the church and other surrounding objects were drawn from views and their other parts drawn using rules applied to an object-centered description. To a way of seeing conditioned by the dominance of projection systems found in realistic Western painting, photographs and video images, these paintings are often described as “naïve” or “folk.” But it is also possible that the artists were rejecting the rules of linear perspective or even the limits of the human visual system for aesthetical and technical reasons, as well as for reasons of accuracy which linear perspective also attempts to achieve. In fact, the paintings of Salazar are accurate in terms of their topological properties even if the projective properties are not.

So in the representation of scenery, spatial recession is not always the purpose of the artist nor should it be our sole interpretation. Describing landscape painting in terms of object-centered and view-centered systems and the spontaneous systems that artists conjure in negotiating between object, view and social stimulus enables us to appreciate and understand landscape as rich and dynamic articulations of space. With knowledge of space conjured in a variety of ways not limited to vision or a singular point of view, we may become more empowered in our reception of images.

Pictures that appear to be views of scenes are not necessarily derived from views, and actual scenes are not necessarily expressed in terms of view-centered representation systems such as linear perspective. Perspective is a construction and a myth, an aid to representation that has become both a practical and limiting aid to vision, altering and shaping our view of the world and of ourselves insofar as we have allowed ourselves to believe that it is a persuasive model of how we see and how we come to know. **Art is a visible language whose conventions we can break in order to understand the language itself and acquire the wisdom to discern the numerous illusions of our constructed realities.**

Art can facilitate the way out of consumerist (dependent and mendicant) thinking:

- insofar as the artistic process involves the artist's self-knowledge through dialogue with her medium, this is essentially the process of articulation or language-building that the community of articulators and listeners may learn to recognize as their own right and capacity (here, there is the drive to create, to engage with the process and problem of building, and not simply to produce and consume)



Quad (2004, software written in Java) by Trevor Batten

Some Notes on Quad:

As an exception, this work is not based on the practical implementation of the basic parametrical space system, which (on various levels) is fundamental to the other works (although this principle is still operative on a conceptual level). On one level, the work is based on a visual interpretation/implementation of a voltage controlled oscillator - a fundamental piece of equipment found in the analogue studio at the Institute for Sonology (then in Utrecht),

where the artist studied when a young man.

Basically, a VCO produces a sine-wave -which varies in frequency according to the voltage level fed into it. However, the basic amplitude oscillates (in the theoretical model) between +1 and -1 which allows it to be easily mapped into a dimension of any size (as happens when one draws a circle -where the basic sine/cosine functions are mapped to a specific radius). Any changing variable has a minimum and a maximum value -so one can easily link three oscillators together in a single group -such that each oscillator has its minimum and maximum values determined by the other two. A rectangle can be constructed from any two points -each with an x and a y coordinate -thus a total of 4 parameters is required.

So it requires a bit of 'fiddling" to create a group of oscillators which control the movements of the two points that define a rectangle (this is something that requires further working out within the context of the applet).

However, once this is established (more or less) -one can use the colour value found at the location of the point to control the relevant group of oscillators (if one interprets the colour in terms of red, green, blue components this maps easily to three oscillators -but one could include the transparency -in which case one would have four control parameters available). Once a rectangle has been defined -it can be redefined as a diamond shape -by bisecting the sides and connecting the points..... Or one can interpret the original four parameters (which determine the locations of the corners of the rectangle) in completely different ways -as defining the radius, rotation and central x,y position of a variable square, for example -or even as determining the radius, rotation and location of two connected lines. Later, when sound is added, it will be interesting to see how the oscillator system used for the sound will relate to the one used for the image.

In both works, the oil painting and the software art written in Java, we can see that artists use rules and that articulates, an exemplary expression, something that is certain and precise. The creative process involves knowledge and its articulation and our engagement with products of the creative process requires our claim to knowledge and articulation too. FOSS as a philosophy is about precision, clarity, knowledge and understanding – a process critical to our perception and use of the open nature of source code.

However, one might also ask why would Microsoft, a consumer-motivated monopoly, adopt a similar philosophy? What has changed in the original spirit of the open source movement?

The strategic behavior of Microsoft and consumer-motivated

monopolies to become involved in opensource is predictable, logical and ultimately successful, just as corporate America has become a success, because the time has become ripe for the opensource movement to adapt the very same market-focused models that it originally sought to create alternatives to, just as we are now mapping the indigenous creative process into the straightjacket of global free trade.