

## NIKOLA TESLA: VISION, CREATIVITY AND SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS

Jürg von Ins

*Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Berne (Switzerland)*

[vonins@inschrift.ch](mailto:vonins@inschrift.ch)

Creativity is a gift (lat. donum, not datum), highlighted in Europe since 1500 A.D., far earlier than in many other cultures. The veneration of creativity fed the myth of the genius as a superhuman mutant in service of progress. In fact creativity enables us to find something new, but this is not necessarily useful.

However, admiration contrasts with knowledge. Creativity is a poorly investigated subject in anthropology as well as in psychology and the sciences of art, music and dance.

Most creative personalities change from being inspired to running idle. Often the creative process starts and ends in depressive states. Only a few Europeans seem to have experienced creativity as a permanent state over a long period of time, among them certainly Michelangelo, Mozart, Picasso and Tesla. Tesla's descriptions of creative processes in the first part of his autobiography give important insights into the phenomenon.

As Tesla and others experienced, permanent creativity is not always easy to handle. It may bring forth psychopathic symptoms. Those who experience such a phenomenon usually develop means to control the never ending influx of inspirations. Tesla was quite successful in doing so. But such taming strategies have significant effects on creativity. It's intensity lowers and it 'specializes' more and more on fields and topics of social interest. The focus of the creative personality shifts gradually from the process to be controlled to the invention/creation to be produced. More and more the (former) creative personality produces what society waits for, though on the level of ideas nothing new. At this point scientific and technical progress profit best on short terms.