Paid work is often exploitative, damaging and dangerous. Nevertheless, as well as safety and a decent wage, workers often seek satisfaction and self-realization through their employment. For many people now, creativity is one of the most desirable aspects of a job or career. People can of course be creative in any kind of work but some types of employment are commonly thought to offer greater possibilities for creativity than others. Amongst them are the very jobs that many graduates from communications and media degrees aspire to gain, in the media industries, sometimes the cultural industries, and increasingly, the creative industries.

But what is the nature of this creative work? Does it really offer less alienation and greater autonomy than other kinds of employment? How do creative workers understand the trade-offs between security and autonomy in this kind of labor? This talk examines these issues, drawing upon research carried out in three major creative or cultural industries: television, magazine journalism and music.

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