

Introduction

"There is no doubt that creativity is the most important human resource of all. Without creativity there would be no progress and we would forever be repeating the same patterns." ~ Edward de Bono

Indeed, creativity—the ability to imagine new ways of being and to bring them into existence—is essential for the advancement of our societies and for solving humanity's stickiest problems. By seeing the world in unique and novel ways, creative people can reduce suffering, expand consciousness and contribute to human evolution. Moreover, with their deep sensitivity and ability to stir our emotions, creative people can aid us in processing our personal trauma and pain and lift us to the heights of happiness, sending ripples of wellbeing far and wide. The potential positive influence of creativity on our communities is behind Sir Ken Robinson's assertion that in our educational institutions, creativity should be given the same status as literacy; it is an essential skill.

However, creativity is not only a method to achieve altruistic ends. In a global marketplace where new ideas are scarce, creativity is a prized asset. It is a pathway to profit and power and those who wield it well are

celebrated and rewarded royally. Businesses, though, prefer to use the term innovation, a word which sounds less soft. Nevertheless, have no doubt that what they are seeking to foster is the creative spirit, and what they are working to build are creative processes and products, for it is these that will secure their future.

"Innovation is a key factor in any company's ability to succeed in the long run." ~ Elon Musk

But beyond this preoccupation with external rewards, it must be remembered that creativity is innate and inspirational part of who we are. It is in our nature and is a natural human state. We use it daily to solve personal challenges, forge connections, and fulfil our unique purpose. Creativity, then, is not just a tool for economic success but a pathway to personal wellbeing. Living in alignment with our authentic creativity leads to holistic health.

"Art washes from the soul the dust of everyday life." ~ Pablo Picasso

Suppressing or denying our inherent creative nature brings us in conflict with ourselves and all those around us. Finding it and fostering it has the potential to better our lives in profound ways.

Yet, despite the reverence with which creativity is held, it is a concept that largely remains elusive and enigmatic, and for this reason can come with great excitement.

"I've no idea where ideas come from and I hope I never find out; it would spoil the excitement for me..." ~ J.K. Rowling

As we will see throughout these pages, the mystery of creativity comes from the fact that it is partially explained by so many disparate concepts, but not fully captured within one. Creativity encompasses ideas drawn from science, systems theory, socio-cultural constructs, psychology, and spirituality. It has intellectual and rational components as well as existential and even supernatural considerations. Each perspective contributes to our understanding, but not one captures its totality. Creativity, then, is a multifaceted and multidimensional phenomenon, and understanding it completely could be deemed impossible, or at the very least the legacy of a lifetime.

After contemplating creativity's breadth and depth, Plato insisted it was a function of the divine, impossible to be comprehended by mere mortals. Immanuel Kant also described it as a mystery even to the greatest geniuses. In writing this book then, and seeking to

understand creativity for myself, it could be expected that these great thinkers would consider me conceited.

For Plato, creativity was so beyond our mortal imagining that it required messengers, Muses, who could interpret its vast visions into our rudimentary language, provide instructions and inspire people to commit to its purpose and processes. The role of the artists was to heed the call of the Muse and accept its challenges courageously, for this was how you paid proper homage to such an ethereal entity. By answering the call of creativity, the artist achieved ascendancy and a place amongst the immortal.

However, there have been several centuries since these magnificent minds walked this Earth, and we have had much time to contemplate creativity further. We now have machines that show the electrical and chemical functions of our brains, and computers that help us determine the cause and effect of so much we see. In many ways, science has taken the place of spirituality and has become adept at documenting creativity's dance. We have numerous studies investigating and reporting upon creativity's precursors and processes and the neurophysiology behind invention. Academic journals and conferences are dedicated to discussing the concept and bringing creative communities together. A ton of self-help books and courses show people how to get better at creativity and how to nurture it in their

organisations and own homes. While each one of these offerings comes with the best of intentions, the plethora of creativity products means that in many ways, creativity has been subsumed into the materialistic swamp of our modern world. It is no longer a divine legacy but a commercial profit centre, with institutions and individuals using it to earn an income. In previous ages, creativity was associated with awe and magic; in modernity, we have seen it descend into the mundane and collapse into commodification.

Yet, while we can continue to research creativity and develop numerous theories and methods around it, I believe that creativity in its complete form can only be understood by those actively engaging in the process.

“Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes and having fun” ~ Mary Lou Cook

Creativity is not something you grasp by speculation alone or by putting people through a scientific study—it is something you experience by doing. It is not just a logic you can grasp, but a feat you must feel.

While each person's experience of creativity is unique, having a shared language and a common understanding of the key concepts and principles of creativity helps us navigate its mysteries and discuss it with others to gain

deeper insights. Therefore, we begin this journey by defining creativity and establishing a working foundation to guide further discussions.

From this base, we will explore how creativity is not an isolated phenomenon but an embedded entity, visible only through its outcomes in people, processes, and products. We will delve into the systemic nature of creativity, showing how individuals, domains of knowledge, and fields of gatekeepers interact to shape and influence creative work. We will also examine the creative process, revealing its stages and nonlinear, iterative nature—a messy yet magical flow well-known to artists and innovators.

We will also investigate how creativity is deeply connected to human physiology, looking at how our bodies and brains start, sustain, and shape creative pursuits. Emotions are the precursors to all of our actions, and so we will also explore the creators' psychological journey. How do emotions help or hinder the development of unique and valuable ideas? What role do resilience, curiosity, or fear play in the creative process?

Going deeper into the human condition, we will consider creativity as it intersects with intelligence and spirituality. We will see how creativity manifests as a multidimensional, multifaceted, and multidirectional

energy—a phenomenon that integrates all aspects of our existence. Creativity requires the application of many intelligences making it an integrative power. In addition, we will see how creativity fosters transformation and is thus a force that can reshape ourselves and the world in which we live.

However, while creativity has immense benefits, this book also acknowledges its challenges. As the natural laws remind us, every phenomenon has an opposite state; even the sun casts a shadow. Similarly, creativity's strengths can become weaknesses and be manipulated to serve destructive ends. We will examine the moral and ethical dimensions of creativity, exploring how it intersects with questions of right and wrong. We will also see how the call of creativity can be all-consuming, removing the responsibility and interdependence that are integral to authentic art.

In recent years, advancements in artificial intelligence have sparked fears, with some announcing it will be the cause of creativity's downfall. Yet, this book will show that technology has always been both an outcome and a catalyst for creativity. Technology and creativity are phenomenon that are intricately intertwined. On this basis, we will discuss where attention regarding artificial tools is best placed so that artistic integrity and human art can be best maintained.

From technology, we shift to nature, examining creativity through the lens of the natural laws. There are immutable laws that exist in our environments whether we like them or not. We will see what these mean for how we work with creativity and how we can best make a connection with it. Finally, the book concludes with practical guidance for fostering creativity, summarising those factors that help and hinder it's flourishing. This final chapter will be of value for those shaping educational curriculums, workplace environments, health support systems and cultural enrichment programs, outlining the infrastructure that needs to be in place for creativity to prosper.

I hope this book will encourage you to contemplate and examine your views about creativity and come to your own appreciation of how it shows up in your life. And, like all the amazing philosophers before us, I hope that you enjoy the exploration of something that lives beside you every day, while at the same time is both amorphous and all-encompassing.

My greatest wish though, is that you not only think about creativity, but then go further. Test out the theories presented here, practice them, question them. Develop, design, draft, combine, construct, and collaborate. Doing so will give you a deeper understanding of the true nature of creativity. For as Buddha suggests, understanding anything, especially creativity comes

from working with the ideas yourself, and seeing what is true for you.

*“Don’t blindly believe what I say. Don’t believe me because others convince you of my words. Don’t believe anything you see, read, or hear from others, whether of authority, religious teachers or texts.” ~
Buddha*

In this way, this book serves merely as a starting point—a superficial view of creativity's components, a set of ideas that others have espoused, and, more importantly, an invitation for you to continue the exploration.