

7 Explicating ‘creativity’

Paisley Livingston

Given the many ways people use the word, it seems unlikely that ‘creativity’ names a single concept shared by all reasonably well-informed parties. An *explication* of ‘creativity’ can, however, identify “a good thing to mean” by this term in the context of systematic enquiry.¹ Contributing to such an explication is the aim of this chapter. My focus is on creative actions and achievements. What makes such things creative, I propose, is originality in the devising of an effective means to some end. This proposal stands in contrast to value-neutral conceptions of creativity, as well as to various honorific conceptions according to which the pursuit or realisation of good goals is necessary to creativity.

My point of departure is the oft-repeated claim that creativity is a species of valuable novelty (e.g. Boden 2010: 1; Csikszentmihalyi 1996: 27). As the sense of this claim depends on how its constituent concepts are disambiguated, in the first section I examine different notions associated with the expressions ‘novelty’, ‘originality’, ‘priority’, ‘unprecedented’, and ‘innovative’. In the second section, I turn to the axiological conditions. I discuss some arguments supporting strong conditions as well as counter-examples that challenge their alleged necessity. I consider a value-neutral idea of creativity and propose an instrumental success condition. In the final section, I examine some claims about relations between novelty and value as constituents of creativity.

I Kinds of novelty

Although it is often stated that novelty is a necessary attribute of all creative items, it is not easy to say just what this entails (Hausman 2009: 5). Is novelty only a subjective projection of someone’s surprise or unfamiliarity, a pseudo-property that may be dispelled by a second look? An alternative to this sort of subjectivism about novelty is to identify it as a real attribute of particular, spatio-temporally located events. Yet, such a notion would appear to be vacuous because *every* particular event or action is novel in that it has never happened before. Perhaps it would be better to say that an event is novel only if it is the first instance of a kind. Second

and subsequent instances of the kind are not novel, at least relative to that kind. There are reasons, however, why this very broad sortal–relative conception of novelty is not an adequate constituent of our explication of 'creativity'. Consider, for example, the (1970) work of fiction by Erich Segal entitled *Love Story*, which may come to mind when one searches for examples of hackneyed but lucrative popular fiction. With regard to any number of kinds one might think of, this work was unquestionably first of the kind. For example, it was the first best-seller romance published by a classics professor at Yale University. Given a broad, kind-relative elucidation of what 'novel' means, this was a novel feature of the work, but it hardly counts for or against its creativity. What needs identifying is the kind or kinds that pick out the sort of novelty that is directly relevant to creativity.

Reference to some uncontroversial examples of creative and uncreative achievements can help us with this problem. Consider first the accomplishments of the Russian high jumper Valeriy Brumel, who used the familiar straddle technique to set the first of his six world records at the high jump in 1961, being the first to clear the bar at 2.23 metres (Matthews 2012: 42–43). This was a skilled and exceptional performance, but was it creative? It seems perfectly obvious that it was not. If you doubt this, try to say which features of his performance were 'creative' or manifested creativity.

Consider now another athlete, Richard Fosbury, who abandoned the straddle technique in the early 1960s and came up with a new way of jumping by turning his back to the bar just before taking off. Using this effective new technique that he had independently devised, Fosbury won an Olympic gold medal and set an Olympic (but not world) record in 1968 (Matthews 2012: 82). Fosbury's achievement is widely acclaimed as creative (e.g. Kaufmann and Runco 2009: 156). What is far less well known is that a Canadian athlete, Debbie Brill, independently developed a similar technique some two years after he had done so (Oliver 2014: 39–40). Brill became the Canadian national high jump champion, but never achieved the fame enjoyed by Fosbury, who was her elder by six years, and who was first to use the back-to-the-bar technique in major international competitions.

In their contributions to the sport, all three jumpers shared the end of maximising the height at which the bar was crossed in keeping with the rules of the event. The key difference between the achievements of Fosbury and Brill, on the one hand, and Brumel's, on the other, is that even though Brumel successfully cleared the bar at unprecedented levels, he did not innovate with regard to technique. In contrast, Fosbury was the first to come up with an unprecedented means to the end of excelling in high-jump competitions: the "Fosbury flop." Brill too was no mere copy-cat: she independently developed her own backward jump ('the Brill bend') well before Fosbury's innovation became famous by virtue of his

televised use of the technique at the 1968 Olympics. These cases suggest that at least one important kind of novelty we are looking for with regard to creativity is novelty in devising a means to some end. Given the goal of their chosen sporting event, Fosbury and Brill were both innovative in precisely this sense, while Brumel was not.

Is this result generalizable to uncontroversial examples of creative achievements in other domains? It is easy to find examples in the arts that fit the pattern. Consider the case of *Un chien andalou*, a short film co-authored by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí in 1929. The filmmakers' most immediate goals in making this film were to shock or *épater* a bourgeois audience and to exemplify surrealist attitudes using the cinematic medium (Admowicz 2010: 9). These were not new goals, but given those ends, the making of this film was both an effective and an innovative achievement. Various cinematic devices are used to baffle and annoy any viewer who expects the film to present some kind of commonsensical or familiar sequence of story events. Most famously, early in the film there is a disturbing montage sequence in which a man appears to slice a woman's eye with a razor. A very remote literary antecedent could perhaps be identified in Shakespeare's line, "Out vile jelly? Where is thy lustre now?" (*The Tragedy of King Lear* 1917: III, vii, 82), but no such surprising and shocking montage had been included in a film before.²

It is possible to identify many other examples of creative achievements involving the devising of new means for the realisation of ends. To mention a few cases that often come up in the literature on creativity, Goodyear found a new means of preparing rubber in the making of tyres; Jenner found a new technique for preventing disease using vaccinations; Galileo found ways to test, refute, and improve on Aristotle's claims about motion; and so on.

Coming up with unprecedented means to some goal looks to be crucial to the novelty of creative achievements. With this in mind, the relevant explication of 'novel' can be stated as follows:

(N1) a particular action, α_1 , performed by A at t_1 using means, M, is novel₁ just in case it is the first instance in which M was used to perform an action of kind α .

Berys Gaut (personal communication) raised the objection that it is also possible to be creative in the generation of ends, in which case the sort of novelty identified above would not be necessary to creativity. For example, someone could independently recognise or make friendship, beauty, freedom, or the good life a final value; that person could even have been the very first human being in all history to have done so. If that is so, the 'just in case' in (N1) is too ambitious and should be replaced by an 'if'.

I wonder, however, whether these sorts of cases should be identified as creative achievements if the relevant agents devised no new means to the realisation of actual instances of the final value in question. Simply valuing x intrinsically, or acquiring the attitude that some x is a final end, is neither necessary nor sufficient to realising a creative achievement, whereas coming up with innovative means to such ends, possibly along with the original discovery or invention of those ends, would be both.

There is at least one other potential problem with (N1): only one of the relevant senses of 'novel' is identified. I have in mind a distinction that Robert K. Merton (1957) couched in terms of 'originality' and 'priority'. Following Merton's stipulation, someone who is the very first to make a discovery or invention has priority, and this is the sense of 'novel' identified by (N1). 'Originality', Merton stipulates, refers to a discovery that is realised independently, but that may or may not have priority. Here is how 'novelty' in the sense of Merton's 'originality' might be elucidated:

(N2) a particular action, α_1 , performed by A at t_1 using means, M , is novel₂ just in case it is the first instance *in which A used M* to perform an action of kind α where A 's intentional use of M to perform α_1 does not depend on any knowledge on the part of A of someone else's prior use of M to perform actions of type α .

Given (N1) and (N2), we can say that Fosbury is credited with priority; Brill manifested originality, but did not have priority; and Brumel had neither—with regard to technique, that is. What if Brill had heard about Fosbury's flop, but then forgot all about it and later rediscovered the 'new' technique? If this rediscovery was causally dependent on Brill's earlier knowledge of Fosbury's action (by virtue, say, of some unconscious psychological process), then this would not be a case of originality.

Does (N1) or (N2) give us the primary or even the only relevant sense in which a creative achievement is novel? In her influential contributions to the literature on creativity, Margaret A. Boden weighs in on the side of originality—or what she calls 'psychological creativity', as opposed to historical creativity (Merton's 'priority'). She claims that the latter allows of no "systematic explanation" (1990: 34). Psychological creativity, she observes (2009: 238), does not entail historical creativity, whereas every case of historical creativity involves some kind of psychological process. "The first step to understanding H-creativity is to understand P-creativity," Boden adds in the same context, going on to say that the study of psychological creativity should be granted methodological priority because it concerns the "core processes" that are involved in creativity. With regard to the psychological springs of originality, Boden consistently refers to changes to what she calls a "conceptual space" or "landscape with a characteristic

structure and potential,” as well as to the “generative principles” and “rules” constitutive of a mental space or domain. She argues that the really striking instances of creativity involve changes in these rules or constraints.

Boden could be right about the relevance of originality to creativity even if (as is argued in Novitz 1999) her claims about the core processes at work in creativity turn out to be mistaken or lacking in explanatory depth. In other words, it would be a mistake to deny the salient, *creative* difference between Brill’s and Brumel’s athletic achievements on the grounds that Brill did not have priority, and one sees no other grounds on which such a denial might be based. The excellent reasons we have for attributing creativity to Fosbury for his invention of the flop carry over without loss to Brill’s independent invention of her bend. The differences between their two achievements *with regard to priority versus originality* have to do with the historical context in which an individual does something and with that person’s knowledge or ignorance of relevant antecedent achievements. Since there is no priority without originality, the live question is whether the novelty component of creativity could be *exclusively* a matter of originality, in the sense of (N2). In the rest of this section I survey and assess considerations relevant to this question.

While it would be most convenient to set priority aside and understand creativity entirely in terms of originality, this overlooks some aspects of the value that people often look for in creative achievements. Priority, and not just originality, remains a kind of novelty or innovation that people are often interested in identifying. With regard to actions and ideas in various pursuits or fields of endeavour, people want to know when and how the first instances took place, and they want to know this in general, and not just relative to a particular person or some restricted domain of activity. Merton and his colleagues investigated the great emphasis placed in scientific institutions on priority of discovery, as evidenced by the many controversies over priority—a well-known example being the bitter dispute between Newton, Leibniz, and their followers over the invention of the calculus. The solution was clearly not a matter of saying that the really important sort of creativity resided in how the advent of these mathematical ideas stood in relation to the individual thinkers’ own prior activities or psychological states. The dispute would not have been settled had it been established that Leibniz had manifested greater personal originality than had Newton, or vice versa, nor would it have helped if it had been discovered that both thinkers had exhibited equal measures of originality. What the parties in the *Prioritätstreit* wanted to know was which thinker came up with the valuable ideas first and why would that sort of achievement be deemed superior to one that manifest only originality. Merton conjectures that the key function of the institutionalised emphasis on priority is to motivate scientists to make and publish new discoveries and thereby

contribute to the independently valued growth of scientific knowledge. In such a context, priority of publication could even trump priority of discovery since it is the former that best serves scientific knowledge as a social institution. Perhaps an analogous argument could be given to explain the emphasis on priority in other domains, but there could be other and more fundamental reasons as well, such as a spontaneous admiration for realising the (increasingly) difficult feat of coming up with something nobody else has managed to do before.

Epistemic problems besetting claims about priority may be taken as grounds for an exclusive focus on originality. In response to this thought, it must be acknowledged that sometimes the "who was first?" question finds no solid answer, so we are left with a choice between agnosticism and risky conjectures when it comes to priority. So why not give up on that notion entirely and focus entirely on originality? One reason why that might not be the best policy is that in some cases the evidence about priority stacks up very well. In the case of Fosbury and Brill, we have their testimony and the public record of their respective athletic performances and training. In interviews, Fosbury acknowledged Brill's independent invention of her bend; Brill did not contest Fosbury's priority (Brill and Lawton 1986).³ There is no good reason to doubt that Fosbury had priority, even if we cannot undertake a perfectly exhaustive and infallible search *proving* that no one else ever tried jumping with his or her back to the bar prior to Fosbury's famous performance. Also, is knowledge of originality, as opposed to priority, any more certain? When we attribute originality to someone, can we be absolutely certain that this person has not knowingly or unwittingly copied someone else's achievement? In some cases, establishing that there was no copying or unconscious influence could be just as difficult as establishing a claim about world-historical priority. So, epistemic worries and desiderata are hardly decisive when it comes to the question of what sorts of novelty are relevant to creativity.

There is also a question about the scope of priority. Is it appropriate or even viable to think in terms of priority relative to all human history as opposed, say, to more limited domains, such as a given socio-cultural sphere or tradition? For example, do not many people discussing the creativity of some item restrict their remarks to Asian or Western spheres, thereby dropping unmanageable questions of absolute historical priority?⁴ One response to this question is that this is a practically useful tactic but not one that reflects a defensible substantive position regarding novelty. It is perhaps telling that if sufficient evidence arises indicating that the boundary between traditions or cultures was in fact crossed, and that an apparent innovation in one tradition was actually borrowed from or influenced by an earlier innovation in a different tradition, assessments of the former innovation are revised accordingly. An example would be art historians'

tracking down Asian and African sources for seemingly innovative features of modernist Western art.

To sum this part up, priority is often valued over originality. A single-minded focus on originality has the shortcoming of overlooking this well-entrenched interest in priority. On the other hand, it would be wrong to deem priority strictly necessary to the kind of novelty required of all creative achievements. Priority is, however, sufficient to it, as is originality. Though there is no priority without originality, there can be originality without priority—as the Brill bend case was taken as establishing. One aspect of Brill’s situation is that it would have been very difficult for her to have known about Fosbury’s prior experimentation with the flop. In this regard, she may be contrasted to someone who manages a feat of originality while remaining irresponsibly ignorant of prior accomplishments. Such a person’s achievement is likely to be deemed less creative than that of someone who was reasonably aware of relevant antecedents and nonetheless manages to devise an effective new technique.

Does novelty in the sense of originality, or (N2) above, suffice to pick out the actions and products to be classified as creative? Not according to the proponents of honorific explications of creativity, who hold that some behaviour or its product is creative only if it satisfies a strong axiological condition, which most often amounts to requiring that anything creative must be good for its own sake, or at least good as a means to some genuinely valuable end. In other words, even if an action or invention is novel in the sense of exhibiting psychological originality, it could still fail to be creative if it does not manifest the right sort of value. Such strong claims about the relations between creativity and value are examined in the next section.

2 Creativity and value

Are robust value conditions on creativity conceptual truths? Do they identify essential features of all genuinely creative actions and their products? Or are they desiderata regarding what merits recognition as instances of *good or exemplary* creativity? I argue for the latter option in this section: it is doubtful that strong normative conditions are met in all of the events or achievements that it is a good idea to classify as creative. As Berys Gaut (forthcoming) puts it, “not all exercises of creativity are valuable, since not all the kinds produced are valuable.” More bluntly, it is not contradictory to speak of ‘bad creativity’. A weaker axiological condition, may, however, be warranted, and below I explore ways in which it might be formulated and defended.

In arguing that there can be bad creativity, I claim neither priority nor originality. In a paper first published in 1954, C. R. Rogers reported on a

similar intuition: "One man may be discovering a way of relieving pain, whereas another is devising a new and more subtle form of torture for political prisoners. Both these actions seem to me creative" (1970: 139). In the same vein, Robert B. McClaren (1993) recognises the existence of harmful creativity, and more recently, David H. Cropley, James C. Kaufman, and Arthur J. Cropley (2008) allow that criminal and terrorist actions, such as the 9/11 attacks, can be 'highly creative'.

To embroider on Rogers' example, imagine an evil but creative torturer who acts on entirely sadistic motives. This vile fiend creates a device that has a new way of inflicting unprecedented amounts of pain on the victims. The invention is creative but evil. If it is objected that the device must have some good uses or valuable side effects, it would be fair to ask why that must be so. How (and when) was it established that if some α is an effective means to some valueless or evil end E, necessarily, α serves as an effective means to some valuable or good end, E'?

Some readers may protest that the torture-device counterexample is a philosophical conceit. For those who prefer actual examples, the annals of crime include many cases of creative wrongdoings incompatible with a strong axiological condition involving the actual promotion of a final good (Cropley and Cropley 2013).⁵ Many of the creative felonies reported by law enforcement agencies were not only immoral, but proved in the long run to be self-defeating for the perpetrators, and so fail even to satisfy weak conditions on prudential value or rationality with a small 'r'.

Advocates of honorific Creativity with a capital 'c' may deny on intuitive grounds that such examples are really creative. Yet, what *arguments* can be given in support of such rulings? There are precious few in the literature. One salient attempt is David Novitz's bold (2003) effort to derive an honorific notion of creativity from conceptual truths. He contends that behaviour that is "destructive" cannot be creative, because creation and destruction are antithetical: "It is a conceptual truth that creative and destructive acts exclude and need to be distinguished from each other in any theory of creativity" (2003: 186). This is not a successful argument, as James Grant (2012) has contended. It may well be conceptually true that one cannot create and destroy something in the same sense at the same time, but it is not contradictory to say that some action or invention could be creative as well as sadistic. Novitz equivocates when he asserts that "acts that are deliberately harmful or malicious are properly thought of as destructive" (2003: 185). In the example as I conceive of it, the sadist creates and uses a novel instrument of torture that can be used to inflict great pain, and there is no good end served by this invention. Yet the victim is not literally destroyed in any "proper" sense, so the example does not fall under Novitz's ban on saying oxymoronically that some act is "creatively destructive." As Matthew Kieran notes in this regard, whether something

is immoral is distinct from whether it is destructive: it is good to destroy some bad things.⁶

In an earlier paper, Novitz proposed an explication of ‘creative’ based on a weaker condition to the effect that creative acts must be “intended to be, and are potentially, of real value to some people” (1999: 77). This clause as well does not look to express a defensible conceptual truth. Just what would count as a telling counterexample to such a condition depends on how the expressions ‘real value’ and ‘potentially’ are understood. If it is allowed that the innovative torture device potentially has real value to the sadistic torturer who plans on using it, then the condition has become extremely weak—too weak to support genuinely honorific intuitions about creativity. If, however, this is not admitted, and the innovative torture device is recognised as creative, we have a counterexample to the honorific conception. A better argument is wanted if it is to be established that Creativity covers all relevant cases.

Another strategy that could be taken up in this regard would be to appeal to an Aristotle-inspired doctrine of the unity of the virtues.⁷ The basic idea is that evil actions cannot be creative any more than novel criminal scheming can be an instance of *phronesis*, practical wisdom, or any other virtue. But in a context where doubt about a strong axiological condition is on the table, this argument for a moral condition on creativity is unacceptably question-begging because it relies upon the contested assumption that creativity is directly dependent on a system of inter-related moral or intellectual virtues. *No virtue, no creativity*, reads the contested premise. Someone who doubts this premise can hold that creativity is not a virtue at all, but a feature of behaviour independent of a holistic system of positive moral personality dispositions or traits. It may be worth recalling that Aristotle, who is an important source for the thesis of the unity of the virtues, explicitly allows in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (2000: 1144a) that both practically wise and villainous people can be clever [*deinos*]. Why can creativity not have the same status as cleverness in Aristotle’s scheme, in which case it too could be manifest in either virtuous or immoral actions? We lack a reason why creative acts cannot be similar to clever ones in this respect and not necessarily be the product of practical wisdom working in harmony with the other virtues.

Another way to argue for an axiological condition on creativity runs as follows. The first premise is that the term ‘creative’ names a property manifested only by purposeful behaviour and its artifacts; on this view, no matter how novel and worthwhile they may be, non-purposeful natural events and objects cannot be creative. Since they belong to the larger category of purposive doings, creative acts and products all have an intentional source relative to which they are valued or prized in at least a subjective sense. So for all agents, *S*, and actions, α , *S*’s doing α cannot be creative unless

S values doing α . It follows validly that all creative actions are valuable at least from the perspective of the agent.

There are, however, plausible objections to this line of thought. Suppose our creative sadist is a wanton individual who does not value his own sadistic inclinations and corresponding actions. Driven by impulses he cannot control, the sadist nonetheless finds clever, novel ways to satisfy his cravings. The result is a series of creative acts that do not satisfy even the weakened axiological condition just mentioned. To deal with such a case, we could revise the condition and change S's necessary attitude from values to wants, desires, or preferences, but then we end up with something too weak to serve as an honorific concept of Creativity, if only because the wants and desires in question could be immoral or self-defeating, even from the perspective of the agent. The crux of the problem is that there is intentional, skillful, innovative behaviour that is not a matter of even trying to do good or valuable things, or even what one deems, all things considered, to be good or valuable things.

Are we warranted to conclude that there is no justifiable axiological condition on creativity? What about instrumental value, understood as the devising of effective means to ends that may themselves actually be good, bad, or indifferent? As was suggested above, many uncontroversial examples of creativity manifest this sort of efficacy or instrumental value, and that includes cases that do not satisfy stronger axiological conditions. An instrumental success condition is entailed by the formulations of (N1) and (N2) above, it being implicit that the innovative means must be employed in the *successful* performance of the action. In the complete absence of a successful performance, an attribution of creativity does not seem justifiable. For the sake of clarity, we can recapitulate the 'minimal creative action condition' as follows:

(MC) a particular action, α_1 , successfully performed by A at t_1 using means, M, is creative just in case it is the first instance *in which A used M* to perform an action of kind α where A's intentional use of M to perform α_1 does not depend on any knowledge on the part of A of someone else's prior use of M to perform actions of type α .⁸

How might one argue in favour of such an explication of creative achievements? Uncontroversial cases of creative exploits fit the pattern. Pick any invention that is generally hailed as creative and ask whether it does not exhibit some measure of success in realising the relevant goals. One might think that a good place to look for counterexamples would be the category of *creative failures*. Think, for example, of some of the inventive but disastrous attempts that were made in the early history of aviation (Hallion 2003, Abzug and Larrabee, 2002). Such failures are only worth

calling ‘creative’ because some part of the inventor’s complex innovative action proved effective. For example, the design for a heavier-than-air flying machine actually generated sufficient lift to get the machine off the ground, which was a significant advance relative to the many previous devices that had failed in this regard. This part was successful, but the lack of an adequate steering mechanism led to a crash. Whence the justification for calling this invention a creative failure. The overall action did not satisfy (MC), but the attempt to generate sufficient lift did. Or imagine that someone is the first to come up with an elaborate but hopeless opening in chess (e.g. some system for advancing the rook and bishop pawns). This innovative set of moves does not serve the object of the game, which is to checkmate the opponent, since anyone who uses it is most likely to lose against any moderately skillful player. If one agrees that it would not be appropriate to call such an ineffective innovation ‘creative’, the salient reason is that it has no instrumental value relative to the inventor’s goal of devising an effective opening in chess. It is not enough that an inventor anticipates or believes that his or her invention is an effective means to a chosen end (even if that end is a very good end, or even a new final value); if it is to be counted as creative, the innovation has to be somewhat effective in contributing to the realisation of the end.

This instrumental value condition is compatible, by the way, with Gaut’s (2009, 2014) instructive emphasis on the link between creativity and skill, as well as with the possibility of an inventor’s inclusion of stochastic elements in the creative process. It is also compatible with the akratic torturer example mentioned above: that horrible device works, even if the ends are pernicious and not recommended by the inventor’s (or anyone else’s) best overall judgement.

Is (MC)—the instrumental condition coupled with the originality condition—too weak to provide a viable explication of creative achievements? Suppose someone settles on a pointless or silly goal—finding a way to lose at chess—a goal, moreover, that it is fairly easy to realise, as long as one’s opponent is trying to win. Suppose as well that this person, who is a novice at chess, unwittingly recapitulates a somewhat effective way of realising this goal (i.e. get your king out early), thereby manifesting some small measure of originality. Do we allow that this is an instance of creativity? Well, why not? Creativity is a matter of degree, and this case can be recognised as fitting on the lower end of the spectrum as a mildly creative feat that not everyone could accomplish.

Consider now the axiological condition on ‘imaginativeness’ or creativity proposed by Grant, which requires (1) that it was plausible for the person to believe that the item had a reasonable chance of contributing significantly to its value, (2) that coming up with this item was not derivative, and (3) that thinking of this item was not obvious (Grant 2012, 281). I

am not sure whether all of these conditions are met by my 'get the king out early' example as described above. The player's minor innovation satisfies the non-imitative condition, or (2), but it may fall short of (3), the non-obviousness requirement. Someone might think, however, that getting the king out early is a pretty obvious way to lose at chess. But we could well imagine a case where it was not really obvious to the novice chess player, who had to think a while and experiment a bit before coming up with it. What is obvious to a highly skilled player is not at all obvious to a beginner. Similar remarks could be made about condition (1). Given the goal of finding a way to lose at chess, the novice's non-derivative innovation may well be plausibly taken, by that person, as having significant value relative to that aim. Someone whose intuitions indicate that this person's chess strategy is not an example of creativity at all would need to appeal to stronger axiological conditions to support such a judgement. Perhaps it might be required that the innovation surpass the average level of instrumental success arrived at by the members of some relevant group. If novices at the game would on average come up with this or some equally effective solution, then such a standard would entail that even if the 'get the king out early' tactic had a kind of originality, it would fall short of being creative by virtue of its instrumental mediocrity. Those who hold that even the average performance tends to manifest creativity might, however, be disinclined to take on board this condition in selecting the explication of 'creativity' to be adopted in their research.

3 Novelty and its values

If creativity is a species of novelty (defined as originality or priority in the devising of means or final ends) having at least some measure of instrumental value, what is the relation between these two conceptual constituents of the explicated notion of creativity? Does a successful achievement have its value partly by virtue of its novelty, or are these strictly independent conditions? Could it be the case that the sort of novelty we have identified always carries intrinsic value of its own, which would entail that the explication of creativity is honorific after all?

That novelty *per se* is not an intrinsically valuable property (and indeed, that it is not an intrinsic property at all) was argued above. Only on a bold and implausible stipulation of 'novel' would it turn out that everything novel is valuable. This is, by the way, not a new point. It was put quite forcefully by Thomas Reid, who commented that "a thing may be new and yet have no agreeable quality in it" (1973 [1774]: 38). Reid adds in the same context that "Novelty is like a cypher in arithmetic which adds value to every significant figure but is of no value in itself." We may wonder what Reid had in mind here if we consider that the basic operations

of arithmetic do not really work the way he suggests. He might have been thinking, not about arithmetic *per se*, but about a numeral scheme where $1 < 10 < 100 < 1000$, etc. More recently, Bruce Vermazen (1991) has argued that the locus of value is not originality as such, but other features of actions or works. Vermazen allows, however, that originality and other valued features could jointly provide the basis on which another sort of value supervenes. Perhaps this was the sort of thing Reid had in mind.

With Reid's and Vermazen's remarks in mind, we ask whether there are cases taking the following form:

(NV) actions α and β are valuable because they both successfully realise a worthwhile end, Ω ; β realises Ω in a non-novel manner; α manifests priority or originality in the way Ω is realised; *therefore* α 's realisation of Ω is more valuable than β 's realisation of Ω .

Some cases *appear* to exemplify (NV), but a closer look suggests that many if not all of them do not really do so. Suppose the action *realising Ω via good old β* is compared to the action, *realising Ω via brand new α* , and the latter is preferred because it has the added value of offering a pleasurable relief from boredom. But then the ends realised by these two actions are not really equivalent: what *brand new α* realised, and *good old β* didn't realise, was an Ω^* that turned out to be more valuable than Ω . One can also generate counterexamples to (NV) if there are cases where what is wanted is only an Ω realised by the traditional means and not some Ω produced by some new-fangled trick.

The case of the Fosbury flop clearly does not match (NV) since the end Fosbury achieved using the flop was a jump higher than those he and his rivals could realise using the straddle or some other technique. It follows that the schema exemplified by Fosbury's creative flop is not (NV) but:

(NV*) β realises Ω in a non-novel manner; α manifests priority or originality of manner and realises a superior end, Ω^* ; *Ω via β is less valuable than Ω^* via α .*

One could add that Fosbury's novel technique was more valuable than the traditional one not only because it allowed him to win the Olympic event, but because he contributed to the larger end of improving athletes' performance in the event (and that is another reason for saying that his Ω^* was quite different from the Ω realised by traditional jumpers). One may grant this point while maintaining that Fosbury would have manifested creativity even if his technique had not proved exemplary for other athletes.

Conclusion

On the account developed above, some α is a creative action or achievement just in case α manifests originality as an effective means to its end, where there is no assumption that this end is intrinsically valuable or good, either in fact or in the judgement of the creative agent. To characterise creativity as novelty in devising effective means is not to deny its importance. In many happy cases, creative actions bring ample cognitive and other rewards. Yet, creative actions and their products can also be maleficent or indifferent, which is what honorific notions of creativity fail to allow. Setting aside the honorific approach may help us detect more ways in which an overemphasis on creativity—in the sense of originality or priority—has negative consequences, such as ill-conceived and pointless innovations that are effective only in wasting time and energy or in making things worse. Although some authors go too far in condemning artistic and other innovations, it is easy to identify cases where novelty of style or manner has been purchased at too high a price. This is hardly an original point—Kant (2001: 197) famously made a similar remark in paragraph 50 of his 3rd Critique—but it is worth repeating.⁹

Notes

- 1 This characterisation of explications is attributed to Allan Ross Anderson (via Nuel Belnap) in Dupla (2015).
- 2 As Alain Virmaux establishes, this was not the very first film of surrealist inspiration, and some have attributed priority to *La coquille et le clergyman* (1928), a short film directed by Germaine Dulac and based upon a script by Antonin Artaud. Virmaux argues that it is far from obvious that the authors of *Un chien andalou* were indebted to the 'chronologically very close' work by Artaud and Dulac (1965: 121). *Un chien andalou* is in any case by far the more striking specimen of surrealist cinema.
- 3 For a relevant interview with Fosbury, see: <http://speedendurance.com/2007/06/15/dick-fosbury-former-olympic-high-jumper/>.
- 4 Thanks to Andrea Sauchelli for raising this question.
- 5 For some popular discussions of creative crimes, see: http://www.oddee.com/item_98270.aspx, and <http://www.businesspundit.com/10-most-imaginative-criminals/>.
- 6 Personal communication.
- 7 Matthew Kieran, talk given at Lingnan University, December 2013; for Kieran's discussion of the psychology of *exemplary* forms of creativity, see his previous work (2014). For critical discussions of these regarding the unity of the virtues, see Wolf (2007) and Sreenivasan (2009).
- 8 Stiffer conditions might be devised by weighing additional constraints on the creative party's knowledge of antecedent achievements, or by raising the standard of instrumental value or 'success'.
- 9 A version of parts of this chapter was presented at the Frontiers of the Philosophy of Literature Conference, Syddansk Universitet, Odense, Denmark in September 2015; I thank Peter Lamarque, Lanier Anderson, Catrin Misselhorn, Dorte Jelstrup, and other participants for helpful queries and comments. Thanks as well go to Andrea Sauchelli and Dorte Jelstrup for their comments on an early draft of this chapter. I am especially grateful to both Matthew Kieran and Berys Gaut for very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

References

- Abzug, M. J., and E. E. Larrabee (2002) *Airplane Stability and Control*, 2nd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Admowicz, E. (2010) *Un Chien Andalou (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, 1929)*, London: I. B. Tauris.
- Aristotle (2000) *Nicomachean Ethics*, R. Crisp (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boden, M. A. (1990) *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms*, London: George Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Boden, M. A. (2009) “Creativity: How Does It Work?”, in M. Krausz, D. Dutton, and K. Bardsley (eds.) *The Idea of Creativity*, Leiden: Brill.
- Boden, M. A. (2010) *Creativity & Art: Three Roads to Surprise*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brill, D. and J. Lawton (1986) *Jump*, Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.
- Cropley, D. H. and A. J. Cropley (2013) *Creativity and Crime*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cropley, D. H., J. C. Kaufman, and A. J. Cropley (2008) “Malevolent Creativity: A Functional Model of Creativity in Terrorism and Crime,” *Creativity Research Journal*, 29:2, 105–115.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996) *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, New York: Harper Perennial.
- DuPTa, A. (2015) “Definition,” in E. N. Zalta (ed.) *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/definitions/>.
- Gaut, B. (2009) “Creativity and Skill,” in M. Krausz, D. Dutton, and K. Bardsley (eds.) *The Idea of Creativity*, Leiden: Brill.
- Gaut, B. (2014) “Mixed Motivations: Creativity as a Virtue,” in A. O’Hear (ed.) *Philosophical Aesthetics and the Sciences of Art: Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, vol. 75, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grant, J. (2012) “The Value of Imaginativeness,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 90:2, 275–289.
- Hallion, R. P. (2003) *Taking Flight: Inventing the Aerial Age, from Antiquity through the First World War*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hausman, C. R. (2009) “Criteria of Creativity,” in M. Krausz, D. Dutton, and K. Bardsley (eds.) *The Idea of Creativity*, Leiden: Brill.
- Kant, I. (2001) *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, P. Guyer (ed.), P. Guyer and E. Matthews (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaufmann, G. and M. A. Runco (2009) “Knowledge management and the management of creativity,” in T. Richards, M. A. Runco, and S. Moger (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Creativity*, London: Routledge.
- Kieran, M. (2014) “Creativity, Virtue and the Challenges from Natural Talent, Ill-Being and Immorality,” in A. O’Hear (ed.) *Philosophical Aesthetics and the Sciences of Art: Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, vol. 75, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Matthews, P. (2012) *Historical Dictionary of Track and Field*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.
- McLaren, R. B. (1993) "The Dark Side of Creativity," *Creativity Research Journal*, 6:1–2, 137–144.
- Merton, R. K. (1957) "Priorities in Scientific Discovery," *American Sociological Review*, 22:6, 635–59.
- Novitz, D. (1999) "Creativity and Constraint," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 77:1, 67–82.
- Novitz, D. (2003) "Explanations of Creativity," in B. Gaut and P. Livingston (eds.) *The Creation of Art: New Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oliver, B. (2014) *The Commonwealth Games: Extraordinary Stories Behind the Medals*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Reid, T. (1973) *Thomas Reid's Lectures on the Fine Arts*, P. Kivy (ed.), The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Rogers, C. R. (1954) "Towards a Theory of Creativity," *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, 11, 249–260, reprinted in P. E. Vernon (ed.) *Creativity: Selected Readings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.
- Segal, E. (1970) *Love Story*, New York: Harper & Row.
- Shakespeare, W. (1917) *The Tragedy of King Lear*, T. Brooke and W. L. Phelps (eds.), New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Sreenivasan, G. (2009) "The Disunity of the Virtues," *Journal of Ethics*, 13:2, 195–212.
- Vermazen, B. (1991) "The Aesthetic Value of Originality," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 16, 266–279.
- Virmaux, A. (1965) "Une promesse mal tenue : le film surréaliste (1924–1932)," *Études cinématographiques*, 38–39, 103–133.
- Wolf, S. (2007) "Moral Psychology and the Unity of the Virtues," *Ratio*, 20:2, 145–167.

Further reading

- Krausz, M., Dutton, D., and K. Bardsley (eds.) (2009) *The Idea of Creativity*, Leiden: Brill.
An excellent array of perspectives on creativity.
- Vernon, P. E. (ed.) (1970) *Creativity: Selected Readings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Another valuable collection of papers on creativity; includes a translation of Henri Poincaré's (1908) 'L'invention mathématique', in his *Science et méthode*, Paris: Flammarion.