The philosophical tradition has long concerned itself with those aspects of our existence that are distinctively human: justice, knowledge, virtue, consciousness, art, politics, and reason. Creativity, while no less a constitutive feature of human life, has largely escaped philosophical analysis. Creativity is undoubtedly important, but it is not clear what sort of philosophical purchase might be gained in an area that has long been understood and experienced as inherently mysterious. Appropriately enough, the work of demystifying creativity was taken up by science, particularly psychology, where it has exploded into a major area of research. Informed by the current scientific understanding of creativity, philosophers are better able to take up the questions relevant to their discipline: What is the value of creativity in a human life? Can creativity be learned? Is it best understood as an activity, or in terms of the products of that activity?

Key words: creativity; philosophy; psychology; theology

1. Introduction

There is little that shapes the human experience as profoundly and extensive as creativity. Creativity drives progress in every human activity, from the arts to the sciences, business and technology [1]. We celebrate and honor people for their creativity, identifying eminent individuals, as well as entire cultures and societies, in terms of their creative achievements. Creativity is the vehicle of self-expression and part of what makes us who we are. While some of the topics explored by earlier thinkers have come to occupy a central place in philosophy today—such as freedom, justice, consciousness, and knowledge—creativity is not among them. The philosophy of creativity is still a neologism. In contrast, psychology has seen a definite surge of interest in creativity. A great deal of issues have arisen in the middle between philosophy and psychology and are handled best with contributions from both. This interdisciplinary approach is embraced by a new school of creativity researchers who are part of much broader trend toward dialogue and collaboration between scientifically-minded philosophers and philosophically-minded scientists.

2. Creativity

Perhaps the most fundamental question for any study of creativity, philosophical or otherwise, is what is creativity? The term “creative” is used to describe three kinds of things: a person, a process or activity, or a product, whether it is an idea in someone’s mind or an observable performance or artefact. There is an emerging consensus that a product must meet two conditions in order to be creative.
It must be new, of course, but since novelty can be worthless, it must also be of value. The value of the creative idea in a product is sometimes not recognized immediately, and it takes years until it is put into service. Creativity begins with a foundation of knowledge, learning a discipline, and mastering a way of thinking. You can learn to be creative by experimenting, exploring, questioning assumptions, using imagination and synthesizing information. Learning to be creative is similar to learning a sport. It requires practice to develop the right muscles, and a supportive environment in which to flourish, but one has to have proper predispositions in terms of a talent, curiosity and motivation. Creativity refers to three kinds of things: a person, a process and a product [2]. However, in order to be classified as creative (regardless which of the three kinds of creativity we are dealing with) it must be new and of value, i.e. be functional or useful. Thus, it becomes obvious that the person may be a creator, i.e. an artist; the process may be creative. All of the contributions deal with this triad. Either alone or, rather, showing how they are interrelated.

3. Imagination

Imagination is frequently associated with creativity – indeed, in one of its uses, ‘imaginative’ is a near-synonym for ‘creative’. In much of western thought, the imagination has an ambiguous status, seemingly poised between spirit and nature, mediating between mind of any body – the mental and the physical – and interceding between one soul and another [3]. For Aristotle, the imagination was a kind of bridge between sensation and thought, supplying the images or ‘phantasms’ without which thought could not occur [4]. Descartes argued that the imagination was not an essential part of the mind, since it dealt with images in the brain whose existence – unlike that of the mind – could be doubted. Kant, on the other hand, held that the imagination was fundamental to the human mind, not only bringing together our sensory and intellectual faculties but also acting in creative ways, a conception that was to blossom in Romanticism and find poetic expression in the works of Coleridge and Wordsworth [5]. More recently, the role of the imagination in empathy has been stressed: the ability to identify with our fellow human beings and with fictional characters being regarded as crucial in accessing other minds, enriching our own experience and developing our moral sense. In fact, in the history of western thought, the imagination has been seen as performing such a wide range of different functions that it is problematic whether it can be understood as a single faculty at all. In imagination we are able to think of what is absent, unreal or even absurd, and so it appears to grant us almost unlimited conceptual powers. Yet it also seems to inform our perception of what is present and real and every day, and so permeates the most basic levels of our daily lives. Imagination serves this cognitive manipulation role. Bach presumably imagined, working from within the constraints that he imposed upon himself, how certain musical combinations and structures would achieve certain goals. He did not, as it were, simply read off or abstract from the relevant music-theoretic information. He had to manipulate, by use of the imagination, that information (and perhaps add to it) in ways unbound to accurately representing it. This oversimplifies Bach’s creative process, but the general point should be clear. There is, for richly creative achievement in the arts and sciences, a cognitive manipulation role, and imagination serves it well [6].

4. Creativity and Philosophy

Philosophers have discussed whether creativity operates in the same manner in all domains, including arts and sciences. Kant conceived of artistic genius as an innate capacity to produce works of “exemplary originality” through the free play of the imagination, a process which does not consist in following rules, can neither be learned nor taught, and is mysterious even to geniuses themselves [7].
Schopenhauer stressed that the greatest artists are distinguished not only by the technical skill they employ in the production of art, but also by the capacity to “lose themselves” in the experience of what is beautiful and sublime. Nietzsche saw the greatest feats of creativity, exemplified in the tragic poetry of ancient Greece, as being born out of a rare cooperation between the “Dionysian” spirit of ecstatic intoxication, which imbues the work with vitality and passion, and the “Apollonian” spirit of sober restraint, which tempers chaos with order and form [8].

Almost everyone else agrees that creativity at the highest level occurs in both domains. Psychologists have generally held that creativity operates in much the same way in both domains and some philosophers have agreed, holding that both artistic and scientific creativity are a matter of problem solving. However, several aestheticians have objected that the artist, unlike the scientist, is not standardly confronted with problems to solve. Creative discovery is possible, but the difference between creation and discovery explains why independent discoveries are possible and indeed common in science, whereas it seems to make no sense to suppose that someone else could have created a particular artistic work.

5. Creativity and Psychology

When a person realizes there is a problem or a task before them that requires creative thinking it triggers the formation of a focused stimulation in the cerebral cortex. Moreover, the hypothalamus causes a noradrenaline rush which makes one feel “creative anxiety” or a sensation that something is missing or lost. The feeling doesn’t give the person rest as anxiety stimulates the thinking process and the search for solution [9].

It is thought that the well-coordinated work of both the right and left cerebral hemispheres of your brain is the physiological basis for the interaction of the two main elements in the creation of something new: imagination and criticism. The right hemisphere is in charge of creative, synthetic thinking and envisions things as a whole (imagination), while the left hemisphere is in charge of logical, casual thinking (criticism). A too dominant left hemisphere causes an “inner critic” to be too strict, which prevents a person from realizing unique ideas. A too dominant right hemisphere leads to unrestrained fantasizing and an inability to differ realizable ideas from the crazy ones. The more coordinated and harmonious the work between hemispheres, the better the understanding of reality and the more ideas a person can create. In addition to that, the activation of one hemisphere slows down the other. That’s why, to achieve the harmonious interaction, alternating between the domination of each hemisphere is suggested when solving a problem. Any person is capable of and ready for creative search and activities. To keep physiological systems functioning well, they need to be used and exercised. In other words, one needs to keep looking for creative solutions.

Creative thinking is triggered by: sleep and rest routine, fresh air, physical activity, sobriety constant change of activities, conditions, and scenery [10].

6. Creativity and Theology

The term creativity, as currently used, has very little grounding in the classical theological heritage. The ancient and medieval authors held that creative power is proper to God alone. Creation had a generally accepted definition: productio rei ex nihilo sui et subjecti (production of something from no preexisting component or material). No creature, even the highest of the angels, could create anything at all. Most theologians have followed St. Thomas in holding that creatures could not even cooperate as instrumental causes in creating [11].
It was commonly taught that each human soul, as an immaterial substance, came into being by a creative act, and hence was immediately produced by God. Creativity, to be sure, is not God’s only property. Creation would be pointless unless God preserved creatures in existence and enabled them to achieve their proper goal. God’s presence and activity, therefore, may be discerned not only by the occurrence of utter novelty but also, at times, by extraordinary durability and fruitfulness.

On the other hand, there is an a priori argument that purports to show that the creative process cannot be teleological. If one takes the means to an end, one has to know the end. But if a process of making something is creative, then one cannot know the end: for if one knows the end, one has already been creative. For instance, a poet creating a poem cannot already know what the poem is. So the creative process does not consist in taking means to ends: it is not teleological [12].

7. Conclusion

Creativity is hard work. One should, therefore, be very skeptical about the romantic idea about the mad artist genius that sits in his or her cold attic flat slurping cheap red wine while pouring out original visions the rest of us can hardly grasp. When discussing its philosophy it requires drawing on the resources not just of the philosophy of art but many other areas of philosophy, including the philosophy of mind, science and epistemology. A lot yet remains to be seen, but one is certain, creativity is an emerging and exciting area of research within philosophy.

REFERENCES