

## History of Creativity

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## Why Study History?

- Provide context
- Thoughts about creativity in flux
  - Shaped by our concept of self
  - Shaped by our concept of society
- Many conceptualizations of creativity
  - Simultaneous

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## Important Considerations

- Purpose of creativity
- Creative domains
- Degree to which creativity is valued
- Degree to which creator is valued

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### Biblical Contributions to Modern Creativity

- God creates “ex nihilo”
  - Creativity = Divine activity
- Man is made in God’s image
  - Just as God creates, Man should be “fruitful and multiply”
    - Creativity = procreation

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### Biblical Conceptualization

- Divine instruction necessary for human creativity
  - Noah’s ark
  - Ark of the Covenant
- Creativity only valued when used to serve God

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### Biblical prohibitions

- Human creativity should be limited
- Moral prohibitions
  - Second commandment
- Bible argues against curiosity
  - Humans should believe and obey

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### Ancient Greek Conceptualization of Creativity

- Classical/"Mystical" View of Creativity
  - Creativity enabled by the Gods
  - Muses are creative
    - Inspire all artists

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### Ancient Greek Conceptualization of Creativity

- Art is imitation
  - Of eternal ideal (Plato)
    - Must follow eternal unchanging models
  - Should be purposeful and methodical (Aristotle)
    - Greater imitation = greater value
- Art is a skill
  - Taught and improved with practice

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### Greek Valuation of Creativity

- Most important activities not considered "creative"
  - Philosophy, politics, military prowess...
- "Creative" activities viewed as skills
  - No social status
  - Valued
    - Through writing
    - Annual celebrations and competitions
    - Describing as divine
      - Inventors of arts or founders of cities

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### Roman Conceptualization of Creativity

- Adopted Classical view of creativity
  - Changing emphasis
    - Viewed Greek works as artistic creations
- Romans were pragmatic
  - Architecture and engineering valued over sculpture and painting
  - Great achievements = imitating nature most exactly

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### Roman Creative Achievements

- Architecture
- Practical Inventiveness
  - Repeating Ballista
  - “Tortoise” defense strategy
- Organizational Talents

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### Roman Conceptualization of Creativity

- “Creatio”: To make, produce, grow
  - Biological fruitfulness
- “Ars” or “Artis” refers to human making
- “Genius”: Force which allows procreation
- “Creativity”
  - Matter of genius or inspiration
  - Purpose is to further the goals of the state

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**Medieval Conceptualization of Creativity**

- Similar to biblical conceptualization and classical view
  - Arts are imitation of life and nature
- God creates ex nihilo
- Humans work with existing material
- “Creativity” province of God

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**Medieval Conceptualization of Creativity**

- Function enhanced by art and beauty
- Legitimacy of creativity
  - Correspondence with Christian faith
- Purpose of art
  - Imitating and revealing the sacred
- Mastery and inspiration important
  - Novel interpretations to be avoided

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**Recognition of Creators**

- Lack of recognition for creators
  1. Point was to show divine majesty
  2. Works were collaborative
  3. Creators of works were craftspeople
- Art is still considered a skill
  - Imitation important

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### Secular Creativity

- Less likely to be religious
  - Some lurid, bawdy
- Included writing, law, technology

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### Medieval Obstructions to Creativity

- “Creativity” seen as dangerous
  - Strict limits to creativity and curiosity
- Office of Inquisition established
  - Heretics excommunicated and put to death
- Social structure
  - Clearly defined responsibilities and power
- Bubonic Plague
  - Killed 1/3 of population
    - 25 million

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### Renaissance

- Noticeable advances in all human endeavors
  - 1500 seen as turning point in Western History
- “Tipping point” of creativity
  - Seen as something to strive for
  - Creators respected
- Arts and innovation supported

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### Renaissance

- Conscious effort to return to Classical models
- Recognition of past – Appreciation of new
- No distinction between divine and human doing

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### Government Support for Creativity

- Renaissance driven by competition
  - Between city-states
  - Demonstration of power and wealth
- Florence
  - “Hot-bed” of creativity
- Increased value of creators and creations

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### Renaissance: Conceptualization of Art

- Art = imitation of divine idea, BUT
  - Capable of improving and transforming reality
  - Capable of bringing something new into being

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### Renaissance: Technological Creativity

- Innovative individuals recognized and rewarded
- First formal patent law created

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### Renaissance: Michelangelo

- Creations convey ideas about centrality of creative process

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### Renaissance: Leonardo da Vinci

- Art, thought, inventiveness
  - Derived from observation and depiction of nature
- Experience = "Knowing how to see"
  - Step 1: Imitate outward form
  - Step 2: Express "spirit" of subject

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### Split between Art and Technology/ Craft

- Prior to Renaissance
  - Art, technology and craft grouped together
- During Renaissance
  - Art seen as separate from technology and craft
    - Painting, sculpture, poetry
  - Reflects greater value given to “artistic” creations over crafts

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### Romantic View of Creativity

- Artistic creativity analogous to divine creativity
- Artists see “essences” not visible to others
  - Belief in “creative genius”
    - Creative individual different from normal individual
    - Driven by “intense and terrible passion”

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### Romantic View of Creativity

- “Creative genius” includes scientists and inventors
- Impacted conceptualization of creativity
  - Creativity concerned with discovery rather than imitation
- Viewpoint taken by Psychometric Approach to studying creativity

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### Artist-Entrepreneur

- Albrecht Durer (1471 – 1528)
- Survived with little church patronage
- Work produced and marketed to the public
- Ruthless self-promoter
- Believed great wealth belonged to great artists

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### Age of Enlightenment

- Valued
  - The strange
  - The novel
  - The innovator and his/her innovations
- Believed
  - Human reason and action can transform the world
    - Understand the universe
    - Direct their own destiny

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### Age of Enlightenment

- Directing energy and effort
  - Political systems
  - Discovering natural laws
- Creators and discoverers honored
- Standard for patents established in 1710

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### Age of Enlightenment

- Discovery, art, science
  - Considered to be creative endeavors
- Creation is methodical, purposeful, logical
  - Inspiration important for generating idea
  - Structured process important for bringing idea to fruition

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### Backlash to Enlightenment The Romantic View of Creativity

- Enlightenment approach
  - Characterizes modern view of creativity in science and economics
- Romantic view
  - Characterizes modern view of creativity in the arts
  - Sources
    - French revolution, industrialization, mechanization

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### Romantic View of Creativity

- Poetic and artistic creation
  - Outpouring of emotional energy
  - Inspiration found in nature
- Identifying with nature = strong emotions = great art
  - "Creative Genius"
  - Beyond conscious control of creator
  - Goal is creative expression

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## Two Strands of Creative Genius

### **Romantic View**

- Creative individuals different from others
- Focus on inspiration, imagination, self expression
- Arts and literature

### **Enlightenment View**

- Creativity is methodical, persistent search for "truth"
- Focus on ingenuity, invention, problem solving
- Sciences and economics

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