

PART THREE

FORMS AND DOMAINS OF CREATIVITY

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CREATIVITY: HOW DOES IT WORK?

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I *Introduction*

Creativity is the ability to come up with ideas that are new, surprising, and valuable.¹ I am using ‘idea’ as shorthand, catchall term here. It can be a concept, a poetic image, a scientific theory, or even a particular form of taxation, all of which are commonly called ideas. But it can also mean a style of painting or dancing, a way of building a bridge or skinning a cat, a millinery design, a cooking recipe, a recipe for home-made bombs—or even a plan for delivering them to maximum effect.

As that long list suggests, we find creativity in every area of life: not just art, science, or business. Moreover, it is an aspect of normal adult human intelligence. So every one of us has it, although some of us display it more often, and more convincingly, than others do. By ‘more convincingly,’ I mean that some people repeatedly produce ideas highly regarded as valuable—and which, so far as is known, no one else has ever had before. (They are ‘historically’ creative, or H-creative.) Most people, by contrast, produce only moderately interesting ideas, many of which are already known by other people, even if new for the individual concerned. (They are ‘psychologically,’ or ‘personally,’ creative: P-creative, for short.)

What different people regard as interesting varies, so new ideas can be valuable in many different ways. Encyclopedia writers, gallery curators, chemists, sculptors, property developers, entrepreneurs, and advertising executives focus on different sorts of creative idea, different sorts of value. But for all these groups, they are most interested in H-creativity. However, if an idea is H-creative it must necessarily be P-creative too.

¹ Margaret Boden, *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms* (London, Routledge, 2004).