# 8 The value of creativity

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Creativity is almost invariably thought of as a valuable trait. But is that true? Can some instances of creativity be bad: for instance, is not the creativity of a torturer a bad thing? And in so far as creativity has value, what kind of value is it? Is it, for instance, an instrumental or intrinsic value? And if it is valuable, *why* is it valuable? How does its value relate to other capacities we value, such as spontaneity, with which it is sometimes coupled? In this paper I will address these questions, arguing that creativity has both intrinsic and instrumental value, but that it is also only a conditional value, which explains some of the puzzling cases to do with "dark" creativity, such as the torture case. I will conclude by arguing that part of the value of creativity is to be explained by the value of spontaneity.

My method will be to gradually build up a definition of creativity, and examine whether and how each added component, either on its own or in interaction with other components of the definition, conditions whether creativity has value and if so what sort of value it has.

## 1 Disposition or capacity?

Creativity is a type of disposition or trait, rather than a mere capacity. A mere capacity or ability is such that someone may possess it, even though she never exercises it. A person may have the capacity to learn Hungarian, but never learn it. A disposition or trait, in contrast, is such that it must be exercised at least sometimes when suitable opportunities present themselves. A person is not kind if she never acts in a kind fashion when kindness would be appropriate. The conditions under which the disposition is activated (the disposition-relevant conditions) need never obtain, so that the lack of its activation does not count against its possession: for instance, someone may be courageous, but have never done anything courageous, since she was never in a situation where courage was called for. But if she found herself in a dangerous situation and did not act courageously, that would count against her being courageous.

Creativity is, on the criterion just advanced, a disposition rather than a capacity. If someone never did anything creative, despite numerous

opportunities for creativity in his life, whether in his job, leisure time or everyday tasks, then that would show that he is not creative. If creativity were a mere capacity, however, he could still be creative, in the same way that someone's turning down all opportunities to learn Hungarian would not show that he lacked the capacity to learn Hungarian. But since absence of creative activity in situations where creative activity would be appropriate or advantageous counts against someone's being creative, creativity is a disposition.

## 2 Newness and value

What is creativity a disposition to do? A necessary condition is that something new is produced, a condition on which almost everyone writing on the topic agrees. Something can be new by virtue of its being the first time that it has ever occurred in human history; or it can be new by virtue of its being the first time that it has occurred in the life of the person who has produced it. In Margaret Boden's (2004: 2) terms, this is the difference between historical and psychological creativity (H-creativity and P-creativity). A child making his first drawing is doing something new for him, and it may be creative, even though his drawing looks much the same as other drawings produced by children innumerable times before him. Likewise, a mathematician coming up with a proof new to her is creative, even if it turns out that the proof had, unbeknownst to her, already been discovered. The child and the mathematician have been P- but not H-creative. I will mainly focus on P-creativity.

Creativity understood as the disposition to produce P-novel, or even H-novel things, is in itself neither good nor bad. Some new things are good, such as medical cures and significant works of art. But plenty of new things are very bad news indeed. One of the primary causes of the economic collapse in 2008 was the rampant production of new kinds of financial derivatives that allowed far greater leverage than had previously been possible and were so complex that almost no-one understood them, including many of the bankers who sold them.

To exclude bad and worthless things counting as creative, most writers on creativity have required a value condition to obtain in the definition as well. Boden (2004: 1), for instance, holds that creativity is "the ability to come up with ideas or artefacts that are *new, surprising and valuable*." The value condition has been echoed by many writers, including Peter Carruthers (2011: 437–8) and Teresa Amabile (1996: 35), though some have rejected it (see Hills and Bird, this volume). If we hold that creativity is a disposition to produce new and valuable things, then we remove the "bad news" cases of novelty just noted, and that makes creativity straightforwardly valuable. If, necessarily, a disposition produces valuable things, then the disposition is valuable.

## 3 Instrumental and final value

Is the value of the creative disposition instrumental or intrinsic? Since it is a disposition to produce new and valuable things, activating the disposition serves as a means to producing good things, and so it has instrumental value in the same way that activating the disposition to cook has instrumental value in producing cooked food. So, the creative disposition has instrumental value. Human creativity has produced innumerable good things, including great works of art, wonderful technology and extraordinary scientific discoveries.

Does it also have intrinsic value? "Intrinsic value" is used in various ways in philosophy, one of which is to designate the value of ends. For something to be valuable in this way is for it to be valuable as an end, or valuable for its own sake, as opposed to being valuable as a means, or instrumentally. Since "intrinsic value" has varying uses, I will instead refer to the value of something as an end as its "final value." The test for whether something has final value is whether we would properly judge it to have value, even in the absence of its effects.

Does creativity have final value? Here we encounter a difficulty: for if creativity is defined in terms of the production of new and valuable items (which are effects), then we cannot consider the disposition apart from its effects, for these effects are necessarily present, and hence the test for whether the disposition's value is final can get no grip. The difficulty may be pressed by considering the verb "to create," understood in the sense in which to create is to make something creatively (as opposed to the value-neutral sense in which someone may create a disturbance or a mess). "To create" is what Gilbert Ryle (1949: 143) called a "success" or "achievement" verb, as opposed to "task" verbs that do not require success. To create is to succeed with something, or achieve something, rather than merely to try to do something. So one cannot consider the creative disposition independently of its effects, as is required by the final value test.

However, this difficulty can be met. As noted earlier, a disposition is activated only in some circumstances, in what I called the disposition-relevant ones. When we consider the disposition outside of those circumstances, we can judge its value independently of its effects and so the final value test can apply. For instance, someone may have a generous disposition, but have been deprived of all means for exercising generosity. We would consider her generosity valuable even in these circumstances; so generosity has final value (as well as instrumental value). Consider too the disposition to heal or cure people. "To heal" is an achievement verb, as opposed to "to treat," in the medical sense, which is a task verb, and so encounters the same apparent difficulty with the final value test as does the verb "to create." A medical doctor may have the disposition to cure people, but,

if only healthy people surround her, she does not have the opportunity to exercise the disposition. When she is in these circumstances, we can consider her disposition to heal independently of its effects, and it is clear that we would judge that it is valuable even in this context: we would, for instance, continue to admire the doctor for her commitment and skills that constitutes the disposition, even if she could not exercise it.

Does creativity have final value by this test? Consider a painter who becomes blind, or so destitute that he can no longer afford the materials and tools needed for painting. Would this painter's creativity, no longer exercisable due to internal or external circumstances, still count as valuable? Again, the answer seems clear that it would, just as we would judge as valuable the doctor's disposition to heal even when surrounded by only healthy people. We would, for instance, continue to admire the painter for his creative disposition, even in his unsighted or impoverished circumstances, and we would regret that he could no longer exercise it.

## 4 Conditional value

So creativity, it seems, has both instrumental and final value. There is however a significant challenge to this claim. There appear to be cases of "dark" creativity, creativity exercised in the service of the bad, rather than the good. A creative torturer and a creative terrorist, for instance, are forces for the bad, and the world is made worse by their creativity. They are all the more dangerous because they are creative, rather than being unimaginative or derivative in pursuit of their chosen ends. In such cases, creativity seems, far from being valuable, to be very bad. Moreover, these cases threaten the definitional claim that the creative product must be valuable, for there is nothing valuable about the ruination and destruction of lives that the torturer and terrorist bring about.

One response is to deny that immoral people (the torturer) and immoral artefacts (his torture instruments) can be creative. David Novitz, for instance, would describe the torturer and terrorist not as creative but as only "ingeniously destructive" (Novitz 1999: 78) and he argues that destructive things cannot be creative (Novitz 2003). But few people seem to share Novitz's intuitions about such cases, and his argument for the impossibility of immoral creativity fails, for reasons I won't rehearse here.[1]

One could drop the value condition in the proposed definition of creativity, so that novelty sufficed for creativity. But doing so would mean that things that are new in worthless ways would count as creative. Suppose that someone gathers all the green books in her house and spreads them out carefully on the roof. This probably hasn't been done before, but it isn't creative: it's just plain pointless or silly.[2] Moreover, something can be new by virtue of nothing so bad having been done before: the Dundonian

poet William McGonagall is famous for writing published verses of unparalleled awfulness; absent a positive value condition, McGonagall would count as highly creative. So we seem to have a dilemma: *either* reject the value condition and admit worthless novelty as creative, *or* keep the value condition and reject the possibility of immoral creativity. Neither alternative is palatable.

The solution is to distinguish between something's being *good* (or good period, or good simpliciter, as I will also put it) and something's being *good of its kind*. The creative terrorist is a good terrorist, in the sense of being good as a terrorist, because he is good at terrorising. But he isn't good, period. The creative torture device is a good torture device, in the sense that it is good as a torture device, for it is a good thing to use in torturing people. But it isn't good, period. When we judge that a product is creative, we don't require that it is good period, but only that it is good of its kind.[3] This being so, it does not follow that all instances of creativity are valuable, for creative products are only valuable of their kind, and the kind may be a bad one, such as terrorism or torture devices.[4]

It may seem counterintuitive or even paradoxical to claim that there are good terrorists and good torture instruments. But there is nothing odd here. Peter Geach (1956) distinguishes between "attributive" and "predicative" adjectives. Consider the statement that something is a grey ant; one can infer from this that the thing is grey and that it is an ant; so "grey" is a predicative adjective. If either of these inferences fails, the adjective is attributive. From the statement that something is a large ant one can infer that it is an ant, but cannot infer that it is large, since even large ants are small; so "large" is an attributive adjective. Geach claims that "good" is *always* an attributive adjective. I do not share that view, but Geach is certainly right that "good" in some of its uses is attributive: one cannot infer from the fact that someone is a good terrorist that she is good, or from the fact that something is a good torture device that it is good. These inferential failures belong to a larger class of inferential failures characteristic of attributive adjectives. So, far from there being anything counterintuitive or paradoxical about the use of "good" when applied to terrorists and torture devices, this use has the same logical form as do many other attributive adjectives.

Creativity, then, is a disposition to produce things that are new and valuable of their kind, rather than valuable, period. It follows that not all exercises of creativity are valuable, since not all the kinds produced are valuable. However, some produced kinds are valuable, and when this is so, creativity in producing things of those kinds is valuable. Torture devices are not a valuable kind of thing, so being creative in producing them is not valuable. But medical devices are a valuable kind of thing, so creativity exercised in producing them is valuable. Following Kant (1993), we can

call things that are valuable only under some circumstances "conditionally valuable," and those that are valuable under all circumstances "unconditionally valuable." By this test, creativity is a conditional value, since it is valuable only when the kind of item produced is a valuable one: say, a medical device, rather than a torture device. Christine Korsgaard (1996) has argued convincingly that the conditional/unconditional value distinction is not to be conflated with the instrumental/final value distinction, since some conditional values are also final.[5] For example, according to Kant, the happiness of a being is valuable only if and to the extent that she possesses a good will; so happiness is a conditional value. But happiness is not valuable only as a means, since it is also valuable as an end; so happiness is a conditional but final value. Similarly, to take Korsgaard's example, a work of art, say a painting, has value only on condition that it is experienced (or could be experienced): but nevertheless, we value works of art for their own sake, rather than merely instrumentally (that is, merely as means to producing experiences). So paintings have conditional value, but also final value; of course they have instrumental value too, since the experiences they provide may be valuable. Thus, some kinds of values are conditional, final and instrumental. Creativity is one of those kinds of value. (It does not matter whether you find these two examples plausible, but only whether you agree that some values have this structure.)

It follows from the conditionality of creativity's value that we should not celebrate creativity in the unqualified manner in which we frequently do so. Some exercises of creativity are bad, in the sense that they make the world a worse place. In some possible worlds, *all* exercises of creativity would be bad. Imagine a hell-world in which everyone is malevolent, so that increasing their creativity would make them more effectively awful. Parts of the actual world are hellish, and the degree to which this is so is an empirical matter. So it is an empirical matter whether overall increasing creativity will make the world a better place. It is certainly not a necessary truth that it will, since creativity is a conditional value, and only when the conditions of its being valuable are fulfilled is it also a final and instrumental value.

## 5 Creativity as a kind of agency

So far, I have been following the implications for the value of creativity of the newness and value conditions in the definition of creativity. There are further definitional conditions. If all that were required to be creative were a disposition to produce new things that are valuable of their kind, then the oyster that produces a beautiful new pearl, the tree that produces an elegant and distinctive canopy of leaves, and the tectonic movements that produce valuable and unique diamonds would count as creative. But none

of these things is creative. And this is because none of them is an agent. Creativity is something whose exercise we praise, and we do not praise anything other than agents and their products. It is a central tenet of the agency theory of creativity that I defend (Gaut 2010b) that only agents and their products can be creative (contrast Boden, this volume).

If agency is a requirement for creativity, how should we understand the connection? Merely being produced by an agent—being the product of an agent-involving event—cannot suffice. Suppose that Anne suffers a spasm in her arm and this causes her to knock over a pot of paint, which produces a beautiful and new pattern. She has not been creative: it was purely a matter of luck that the pattern turned out this way, and we do not praise people for things produced purely by luck. Anne's spasm was an occurrence in an agent, but it was not an act, since an act is intentional under some description (Anscombe 1963; Davidson 1980: 43–61), and Anne's spasm was not intentional under any description. So does the production of novel and valuable things by acts suffice for creativity? Suppose that Brian acts with the intention of leaving the room and in so doing brushes against the pot of paint; when it crashes to the ground it also produces a beautiful new pattern. Brian has acted, for he behaved with the intention of leaving the room, but he is still not to be credited with creativity. This is because his action was, in respect of the production of the pattern, entirely accidental. So, since the accidental is what is not intended, the content of the intention of the productive act matters to whether its product and agent are creative.

What is this content? Consider Splash, a two-year-old boy. Seated at a table with a piece of paper, a brush and a paint pot, he proceeds enthusiastically to create a complete mess, enjoying the sheer pleasure of splattering the paint around. Some of it gets on the paper, a lot on the table, and not a little on the walls. He pays no special attention to what is on the paper, or indeed any paint pattern that results from his actions, but continues piling on paint everywhere in exuberant enjoyment. Eventually he grows tired and bored, and stops. When his mother pulls up the paper from the table, there is one of those new and beautiful patterns that keep, amazingly, recurring in our examples. Has Splash been creative? He might have been creative in producing a mess, because that was his intention and he was certainly aware of the paint splashing around. But he has not been *artistically* creative, since he never had any awareness of the artistic values instantiated in his painting: their occurrence was a matter of pure luck, the result of the happy chance that his disruptive activities produced something with artistic value.[6]

To be creative, then, an agent's actions have to have some sort of intentional connection with the kind of values for which he is being credited as being creative: his actions have to "hook up" with these values in the right

way. So the condition in the definition of creativity—that the product is valuable of its kind—has to figure in the correct way in the agent's actions.

What is that way? Mere awareness does not suffice, for suppose that Splash becomes aware of the artistic values of his painting, just as he is aware of the traffic noise outside the house, but he ignores the artistic values, just as he ignores the noise. He has still not been artistically creative.

Suppose, in a third scenario, that Splash, now grown older and wiser, starts to pay attention to the artistic values of what he does: he becomes aware, perhaps, of a rather pretty colour combination on his piece of paper, and seeks to add to it, varying its properties, and attends to the result. When he gets something that he likes, he stops of his own accord. We can at last call him artistically creative. What entitles him to the accolade is that he takes the production of certain artistically valuable properties as his aim, and that aim guides his actions. To put the same point differently, Splash's *reason for acting* in the way he did was to produce something artistically valuable. So to be creative in some kind of activity, say an artistic kind, the agent must be guided by the values of that kind of thing, that is, take as her reason for acting the production of values of that kind. She must be guided in her actions by reasons of the relevant kind.[7]

What is required for this guidance? More than awareness of the values is needed, as we saw, since those values might be ignored by the agent. And awareness of those values together with exercising a capacity or ability to produce those values does not suffice, even when the capacity is triggered by the awareness. Suppose that Flash, an adult artist, has in mind a new kind of painting that is both seductively sensuous and vibrantly tense. Despite repeated failed attempts to produce a painting of this kind, he is so enamoured of his vision that he loses concentration and drops his pots of paint on the floor; and they happen to produce a painting of the very kind that he had been trying to produce.[8] Flash has aimed at the production of an artistic value, his action is explained by that aim, and he has exercised the capacity to realise the aim—for he must have the capacity to produce the new kind of painting, since he actually did produce it. But Flash has not been creative. So aiming to produce some values, exercising the capacity to realise them, and the aim triggering the exercise of the capacity do not suffice for being creative. Flash's problem is that he did not *know how* to produce the intended outcome, and it was only luck that secured it for him. Therefore what is also required to be creative is that one exercise *knowledge* of *how* to produce something with the relevant values, that is, one must *understand* how to produce them.[9] Only then can one's actions be guided by the appropriate reasons.[10] Now one important kind of knowledge-how is skills; it is often possible for someone to act for reasons only because she has the skills to guide her actions by the relevant reasons.

So, to be creative, an agent must aim to produce a certain range of values, and must have some understanding of how to do so. She must thus exercise her agency in a way sensitive to the values, so that her reason for acting is to instantiate them, which is possible only because she knows how to instantiate them.

One may object to these examples that they mistakenly assume that chance can play no role in artistic production. But the painter Francis Bacon, for instance, sometimes flung paint by hand at his canvases in the process of painting them, and on at least one occasion completed a painting by throwing paint at it (David Sylvester 1993: 90–4). Chance played a significant role in his artistic process. However, Bacon usually employed the flung paint as a starting point, a source of ideas, and subjected it to further painterly manipulation; on the occasion when he ended with the flung paint, it was because, as he said, "it looked right" (94). So, Bacon employed chance as part of an intentional process that was sensitive to painterly values, including intentionally letting certain areas stand, since they worked artistically. The examples I gave, in contrast, were ones where chance was the *only* factor in the process, or relevant part of the process, and so there was no room for crediting someone with creativity. We don't credit people for things that are *entirely* a matter of luck. The creative process can *use* chance elements, and the creative output may be better because of these elements; but it cannot consist entirely of chance elements.

A second objection concerns the requirement that to be creative one must intend to produce the relevant range of values. Does that not drive us to an unacceptable intentionalism about the interpretation of artworks, indeed an intentionalism against which I have argued elsewhere (Gaut 2010a: ch. 4)? But my claims are about creativity, not about the interpretation of artworks: creativity is only one of the properties that we ascribe to artworks, as well as to many other things and activities. Moreover, it is not part of my case that to be creative an artist must intend to produce *all* of the artistic values that her work exemplifies. That would entail that if an artist were not aware of a particular value of her work, say the intensity of the interaction between two colours in a painting's background, we could not give her creative credit for it. That is too strong a requirement for creativity: could even Shakespeare have been aware of all the subtle values, some depending on complex interpretations, which critics have found in his work? So the requirement should be the more modest one that the creative person intends to produce at least *some* of the values of her work, and we can leave it to critics' understanding to determine what that involves in a particular context.

## 6 The value of creative agency

I earlier argued that creativity is a disposition and have just argued that it is a disposition that only agents, exercising their agency in a relevant

reasons-sensitive way employing appropriate knowledge-how, can be properly said to possess; it follows that creativity is an agential disposition. In one sense of the term "virtue," creativity is therefore a virtue. However, unlike paradigm virtues such as moral ones, it does not require an intrinsic motivation, that is, a motivation to carry out the actualisation of the disposition for its own sake, as the kind person acts for the sake of kindness (Gaut 2014). Not all virtues are unconditional goods: courage is not, for the courage of the terrorist does not make the world a better place. But virtues are typically final goods, which also have instrumental value; we have seen that this is true of creativity.

What does the agential aspect of creativity contribute to its value? Agents act to actualise values by using their knowledge of how to do so. This enables them far more reliably to produce new and valuable items than can non-agential beings. Consider the incessant war between man and microbes: we are under continuous attack by microorganisms, and have developed a range of antibiotic drugs to help combat them. These drugs have been developed using our agential capacities, our ability to aim at worthwhile results and deploy elaborated forms of knowledge to achieve them, and they have been produced in a short span of time. On the other side of the war, microbes have produced through mutations new variants that are valuable to them, some of which are resistant to our antibiotic drugs. But those variants were not produced by the microbes' intentions, for they have none, nor by deploying and elaborating knowledge. Rather, in a population of untold trillions of microbes across a vast number of generations there emerged by chance a few genetic mutations that happened to confer resistance to some of our drugs. We are not guaranteed to win the microbial war, as the emergence of drug-resistant bacteria shows, but the striking fact is that a small number of humans can, within one or a few generations, do what bacteria require a vast number of organisms and generations to do. We accomplish that by exploiting our agential capacities of forming intentions and developing knowledge, to generate and test new and valuable drugs. So creativity, as an agential disposition, has instrumental value in massively increasing the rate and reliability of production of new and valuable things. It also has final value since we admire agents for their agential disposition to produce those things.

## 7 Creativity as a kind of spontaneity

The agential aspect of creativity also enhances the final value of creativity in other respects. I turn now to examine one of these, and show that there is a constitutive connection between creativity and spontaneity. To see this, consider first the relation of creativity to ignorance.

Could, say, a poet know in advance of being creative in composing a poem what precisely the poem that she produces will be like? If she did, then at the point when she composed the poem it would not be new to her, and so she would not have been creative in composing it then. So she cannot know precisely what the poem will be in advance of creating it, and therefore cannot know in advance precisely the end at which she aims.

This relationship between creativity and lack of precise foreknowledge has been noted by several philosophers: for instance, Collingwood sees the artist as engaged in the expression of emotion, which is "a directed process: an effort, that is, directed upon a certain end; but the end is not something foreseen and preconceived …" (1938: 111); he contrasts the artist with the craftsman, who has precise foreknowledge of the result he aims at (1938: 16). Vincent Tomas also argues that "To create is to originate. And it follows from this that prior to creation the creator does not foresee what will result from it." (1958: 4).

Though these formulations have been influential, they are not quite right. Someone could still be creative, while knowing the exact end at which she is aiming, provided that she did not know the exact means to bring about the end. Consider architectural plans: presented with one, a building engineer can know precisely what is aimed at, but still be creative in finding the means to build the structure. So, being creative is inconsistent with the state of precisely knowing both the exact end *and* the means prior to being creative.

There is an a priori principle about creativity, which I call the *Ignorance Principle*:

> (IP) If someone is creative in producing some item, she cannot know in advance of being creative precisely both the end at which she is aiming and the means to achieve it.

IP is a principle governing, amongst other things, actions, since it concerns both means and ends, which actions possess.

IP is an analytic truth. The definition of "creativity" incorporates a newness condition, and this requires that the item produced is new to its creator at the time of her being creative. (This is even true of H-creativity, since being H-creative entails being P-creative.) In creatively producing an item at time $t_1$, the creative person cannot know at some earlier time, $t_0$, the exact nature of the item and how to produce it, for then she would have been creative at $t_0$, rather than $t_1$.[11]

In contrast, consider someone doing something uncreative, which I will call "fabricating." For instance, contemplate a joiner making a chair of a kind he has made very many times before. The joiner *can* know precisely in advance the exact end at which he is aiming (all the features of the chair)

and the exact means to produce it (the steps he will take to make it). So we get the principle:

> If someone is fabricating some item, she *can* know in advance of fabricating it precisely both the end at which she is aiming and the means to achieve it.

It follows from IP that the creative person cannot have an exact plan of what she will do prior to being creative. A plan to do something requires not only the specification of an end but also of a means to bring about the end. If I have only an end in mind, that does not yet constitute a plan, since I may have no clue about how to bring about that end. Merely aiming to buy a Lamborghini does not yet constitute a plan for doing so, since I would also need to know how, for instance, I am to get the money to buy it. Since plans require the specification of both means and ends, precise plans require precise specification of both; so the IP rules out the creative agent's having an exact plan of what she is to do prior to the moment of creation.[12]

Consider next the concept of spontaneity. Things can be said to be spontaneous in several ways: for instance, the self-combustion of certain chemical mixtures is spontaneous, in the sense that their combustion does not require the presence of an external factor. In a second sense, thoughts that come to someone unbidden are said to be spontaneous, in the sense that they occur independently of her will. In a third sense, I do something spontaneously if I do not plan it in advance, but do it on the spur of the moment. It is this third sense that concerns us. In this sense, actions that are not completely planned in advance have an element of spontaneity.

Putting together these points, if an activity is creative, IP applies to it; if IP applies to an activity, the activity cannot be precisely planned in advance; if an activity cannot be precisely planned in advance, it has an element of spontaneity. It follows that creative activity must have an element of spontaneity.

The necessary connection of creativity to spontaneity provides a further element in our account of the value of creativity. For we value spontaneity, and indeed it has the same features of having conditional, instrumental and final value as does creativity.

Spontaneity is not an unconditional value. If Alf angers Bert and Bert spontaneously punches Alf in the face, Bert's spontaneous act is not a valuable one.

Spontaneity has, however, instrumental value. Imagine that we were to completely plan our actions in advance, so they exhibited no spontaneity whatsoever. Then the world would forever be undoing our plans, for unexpected things happen. Spontaneity has instrumental value in empowering

us to navigate around a world where the unexpected is commonplace. Michael Bratman (1987: ch. 3) in his planning theory of intention, notes that we often have to plan in advance because of our limited cognitive resources: if we waited until the moment was upon us to decide what to do we would often not have the time to make a good decision. And for the same reason, we cannot rely on complete planning: for to say that unexpected things happen is to say that our expectations are sometimes confounded, and that is because we do not have the divine-like power of perfect prescience. God could plan exclusively with no element of spontaneity. We cannot.

Spontaneity also has final value. For consider a world that is entirely predictable to our cognitive powers. In such a world there would be no need for spontaneity: planning would suffice. Suppose we lived in such a world and planned exclusively, losing our ability to act spontaneously. Would we have lost something worth having? We could not regret its loss on the instrumental grounds that we thereby did not secure some good effects, for those effects, of acting competently in the world, are still present, but they are now secured by complete planning. Nevertheless, it seems that we would still regret our inability to act spontaneously, so our regret would be grounded on the loss of something that has final value.

That we value spontaneity as an end is also shown by our attitude to improvisation in the arts. The jazz writer, Ted Gioia, argues that improvisation is essential to jazz, and that improvisation is spontaneous (Gioia 1988: 33). As he notes, there is a puzzle as to why we value improvised music, since it seems doomed to be a second-rate, imperfect art, compared to composed music, for improvisations are prone to technical mistakes and aimless passages (68). To elaborate on his point, composition, it seems, must always be at least as good as improvisation in producing a work, since there is always an opportunity to revise the work when one plans it in advance of its performance. A composer may decide not to revise her first thoughts, in which case the work is no worse than if it had been improvised; but if the composer decides to revise her piece, and she knows what she is doing, then the work would be better than its improvised equivalent. Composed works are always at least as good as improvised works, and will frequently be better. So why value improvised music?

The answer is that we value musical works, like other artworks, as achievements, and therefore as valuable given the conditions under which they are produced. If there are two identical sound structures, one composed and the other improvised, then the improvised one is, other things equal, the greater achievement, since it is harder to produce something on the spur of the moment than when one has multiple opportunities in composition to create and revise it. In this example, the effects, considered independently of the generative actions, are the same since the musical

structures are the same. But we value the spontaneous work more highly as the greater achievement, so it follows that we must ascribe final value to spontaneity. Our practices of music making and appreciation therefore show that we value spontaneity as a final value.

Since we value spontaneity, and creativity involves an element of spontaneity, part of the explanation for the final value of creativity lies in its dimension of spontaneity. The value of spontaneity is conditional, instrumental and final, as is the value of creativity. And creativity involves a kind of spontaneity in producing things that are new and valuable of their kind. We previously saw how the newness and value elements contribute to the value of creativity. Adding the agential, and in particular the spontaneous, aspect of creativity contributes a further element in showing how creativity inherits the value of spontaneity.

I am not claiming that all spontaneous acts are creative: Bert's spontaneously punching the annoying Alf was not. Nor am I claiming that creativity has value only in respect of its spontaneous aspect, for one can be creative in planning things and things can be valuable in respect of their planned dimension. What I am claiming is that the necessary spontaneous element in creativity is a source of the value of creativity additional to the disposition to produce new and valuable products.

## 8 Conclusion

I have argued, then, that creativity is an agential disposition involving the exercise of relevant reasons-sensitivity and appropriate knowledge of how to produce things that are new and valuable of their kind. I have also shown that this entails that all creative activities have a spontaneous aspect to them. The value of creativity is a conditional one, that is, whether it is valuable depends on the circumstances; this is because creative products are not valuable simpliciter (valuable period), but only valuable of their kind, so whether creativity has value depends on the value of the kinds of artefacts and activities produced. Creativity also has instrumental value: its exercise is a means to producing valuable things, when the conditions for their being valuable period obtain. Agential production of these good things is vastly more powerful and efficient than the production of novel and valuable entities by non-agential biological evolution. Lastly, creativity has final value, when the conditions of its being valuable obtain, since we value its exercise independently of its effects, and its final value partly depends on the spontaneous dimension of creativity. A significant upshot of the discussion is that because creativity has only conditional value, exercising it may make the world a worse place. So we should indeed celebrate creativity, but not in the unqualified way in which this is so often done.[13]

## Notes

1 See Livingston (this volume) for some reasons to reject Novitz's arguments.
2 The example is from Anscombe (1963: 26), though she uses it to make a point about intelligibility, rather than creativity.
3 I have been influenced here by Grant (2012), though his account differs in some important respects, and does not make the connection to attributive adjectives.
4 It should also be noted that things can fall under more than one kind, so the formulation of something's being "'good of its kind" should be understood as shorthand for "good of its kind or kinds." Things may be creative as falling under one kind, but uncreative as falling under another. For instance, a walk by Richard Long may be uncreative as a walk but creative as an artwork; or, to take Grant's example (2012: 276–7), an uncreative dance may be a creative way to get someone's attention.
5 Korsgaard refers to unconditional as "intrinsic" value, but I will not do so, since "intrinsic value" is frequently used as a synonym for "final value," and Korsgaard's terminology risks losing the very distinction that she is defending.
6 Splash is a human analogue of the chimps discussed in my (2011: 267); Kieran's (2014: 126–8) stroke victim is also a structurally similar case.
7 For present purposes, we can be neutral about the correct theory of the relation of practical reason to value; for a survey of the options see Cullity and Gaut (1997).
8 Flash's case is an example of a deviant causal chain: see Davidson (1980: 79).
9 Katherine Hawley (2003) argues that knowledge involves not only the ability to succeed at something, but also being able to provide some warrant for one's success.
10 It should also be noted that the actions that produce the values cannot consist entirely in following algorithms for the production of those values. Consider someone producing a painting by using a painting-by-numbers kit. Her actions are uncreative, but not merely because she is producing something that is already in existence. For suppose that due to a manufacturing error, the paints were wrongly mixed or the areas labelled with the wrong numbers: she might then produce something that has never been seen before and is beautiful. But she is not creative, since she was merely following an algorithm. Algorithms, being completely precise rules, allow no room for creative choice. Of course, one can be creative in *inventing* or *choosing to follow* a particular algorithm, but one cannot be creative in *following* it.
11 To say that IP is analytic is not to say that it is trivial, since there are informative, because not previously explicitly known, true analyses of concepts. The successful definition of some of these would have significant consequences, as is true of many of the key terms that philosophers seek to define, including "knowledge," "virtue," etc.
12 Cf. Carl Hausman (1975: 10–11) who writes: "The artist begins a creative process without a preconceived plan … If he were to start with such a plan, then creation already would be complete in his mind." The ellipsis in the quotation, however, is "or concept of the exact complex of qualities in the object which he will create," which suggests that he equates having a plan with merely having some end in view. In that case, he is making the same point as Collingwood and Tomas, and does not see the significance of the fact that plans specify means as well as ends.
13 I am grateful to Robert Audi, Matthew Kieran, and audiences at the Universities of Kent at Canterbury, Leeds and Sheffield for their comments on this paper.

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