

nudged



EXPLORING YOUR
CREATIVE CORE

DERRICK TRIMBLE

An authorised
sample selection

Nudged

Exploring your Creative Core

Derrick Trimble

DEUTERON GROUP

For Mom and Dad,

I hope you are watching

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Introduction

The game show is a cultural phenomenon that has captured the imagination of the masses since the inception of television. Contestants pit their skills against the house in a televised battle of odds-defying drama while sponsors ply their wares to mesmerised audiences during commercial breaks. Returning from the fast-talking sales salvo of the break to the live studio audience, contestants average Jane or Joe must act with lightning-fast decisiveness and accuracy to get a shot at a prize. A mix of chance and skill set the stage for the pleasant host and screened players' flirt with destiny. Meanwhile, an audience of dedicated home viewers keep ratings up to satisfy sponsor saturation measurements. The spectacle of watching somebody like yourself, somebody you may know, or an underdog win big is a powerful attraction.

Tipping Point is a British game show conceived from a popular arcade game. The amusement centre version is a lite form of gambling aimed to snag otherwise disposable loose change. A player will strategically select a slot to insert their coin. A rub for luck, a spin for action and the coin careens from the slot to join a growing mound of coins. A nearby ledge is poised to collect randomly landing coins as amassed sections cascade into a trough for collection. By nature of the game, winnings are small. Invariably, a portion of the winnings is fed back into the process by the player. Winning, in the end, and for this example, is not as crucial as that well-placed coin that nudges the pile forward.

Expectation, anticipation, and finally, satisfaction bring the plunking addiction to a close. Bored of the game, or out of coins, the competition ends. With its termination, the player will return to engage in the meaningful games of chance and skill that mark a life. A metaphor of our existence or a casual distraction? I am constantly aware of connections in daily activities. That is what I do. I draw parallels that have the potential to touch people and evoke meaningful change. We can easily miss the value of those moments of observation, like the tipping point arcade game, if we aren't looking. Too busy or checked out, we may squander rich insights of human nature, the universe in which we live, or the consequences of their interactions. Instead, we can find ourselves in a perpetual

pattern of rinse and repeat. A nudge is an action that can dislodge you from that cycle. You are frequently nudged over the day to think and act to stimuli. Some nudges are uncomfortable. Other nudges are outright revolutionary, demanding a substantial investment of energy, resources, and self. Most nudges we receive are barely noticeable, ignored or put on the back burner for later consideration. We do far better when we don't allow the habit of nudge neglect to gain permanence in our attitude. An overdeveloped habit of ignoring nudges may have consequences. Over a lifetime, negligence of stimulating opportunities may become the basis for regret. A mental condition no person intentionally seeks to develop.

What if you had the tools to manage life's challenges and minimise regret? The rhythmic pitch of marketing legend Ron Popeil surfaces from memory in response to that proposition. "How much would you pay for that tool? Remember it helps manage not some, not bits, but all of life's challenges?" Then comes the increased value. "What would you pay for such a tool? Hundreds, thousands, maybe even millions?" After hawking some added value to the wonder tool, Popeil would introduce the pitch. "For today only you won't pay millions, not thousands, not hundreds. No, not even £39.99." With bated breath, audience excitement heightens. The brain of a bargain junky then floods with adrenaline. "Today, and every day, you can have this tool for FREE! The answer is already inside of you." All that for free? What's the catch? The catch is simple and immortalised by the Pitch King—"You must act now." Stale opportunities may give way to new opportunities, but the one that came wrapped in the moment is lost or won by an action.

Whether we recognise an opportunity when it arrives mostly depends on our ability to appreciate the use-by date of that moment. No matter how a prospect comes wrapped, regardless of its nature or eventual outcome, there is a single common thread that binds that occasion to every other opportunity we face. A prospect for change is the spark that ignites creative engagement. Creativity is then the accomplishment of an idea or the materialisation of something imagined. Deep within the crevices of your brain, imagination forms and morphs using the bits and pieces that you daily feed your mind as building blocks for a creation. At a state of saturation or urgency, your imagination will spill over as an action.

Every new action you take is rooted in your creative core and affected by new and established connections. That core and its processes become the instinctive drive directing every aspect of your decision-making. Your ability to create is intrinsically connected to these features of the human experience. Psychologists,

scientists, and philosophers continue in their debate about the nature of creativity. We are fortunate to live in an era where the accumulated theoretical thought on creativity is met by technological advances to measure those theories. Over the past few decades, we've gained incredible insights into the brain and human behaviour. Those discoveries also challenge the premise of free-will—all but stripping consciousness to a state of organic automation. To some, your actions can be ascribed as nothing less than autonomic chain reactions set-off before your consciousness engages. Considering the complexities of the brain, this debate of choice and its relation to creativity will continue for some time. For those that recognise the value of creativity in their day-to-day living and seek to enhance their abilities, the debate is immaterial.

Even if we are non-unique automatons, as suggested in some circles, you can learn. Like building muscle, you experience life, and your response to those experiences can alter the physical dynamics of your brain. You can train your brain to think and respond differently through engagement and practise. The pathways for this kind of brain training are innumerable. Regardless of your age or any other personal factors, you have applied countless approaches to modifying your behaviours and ultimately the person of you. Reading this book is another pathway of your engaged brain training. With your consumption of the past 1080 words of this introduction, your mind weighed, tested, and analysed what I've written comparing the content to your thoughts. In other words, you've already been nudged. What does it mean to be nudged? At least what does it mean in the context of our applications of creativity?

Think about how you use a nudge in situations where boredom or apathy create a level of mental, if not also emotional, disengagement. A family member fidgeting during a religious service or a dinner might receive a gentle nudge to encourage an appearance of alertness. An audience member that succumbs to a moment of "resting his eyes" gets a nudge before his unconscious rest escalates into an embarrassing nasal growl. Perhaps, a partner receives a polite nudge in the side following an insensitive comment in an awkward social moment. To be nudged is to be metaphorically poked in the side to be made aware of a condition. Unfortunately, that kind of poking doesn't earn the long-term results that we want. An intrusive nudge of this type may instead evoke an emotional escalation. Good intentions may not matter much if the person receiving the nudge is offended. You want a nudge that has a positive and productive long-term impact. You want to create something that lasts.

For that purpose, let's take a wander back a few thousand years. History can give us a perspective that changes in the way humankind responds to challenges

have not differed much over time. Ancient Greece provides plenty of examples for consideration. Foundations of thought in ancient Greece became the DNA of government, science, philosophy, and the arts in Western civilisation. Among the many names associated with influencing Greek thought, the son of a sculptor is perhaps most well-known. Until his death in 399 BCE, the philosopher Socrates sowed seeds of ideas that shaped much of the way the world thinks. Distinctions of thought between Socrates and his contemporary Plato remain the essence of philosophical debate. Of his teacher, Plato referred to Socrates as a ‘gadfly’ of the Athenian state. A gadfly being that annoying, biting, inescapable pest that relentlessly denies the harassed any form of rest. Undoubtedly, it was Socrates’ likening of the state to that of “a great and noble steed” that fuelled his reputation as an irritation of the state. Plato suggested that Socrates saw it as his duty to provoke, or nudge, the State to apply reason to their actions.

Socrates applied a method of eliciting knowledge from his students that I liken to midwifery. He used questions to nudge a response and then build upon that response until a full thought was born. That approach to educating is called maieutic or the Socratic method. Following this methodology, the teacher-coach-trainer-tutor is more of a guide than an expert. Alternatively, education in the form of knowledge transfer is best known as the didactic approach, wherein the student is a passive receptacle. I mean that in a general sense. I appreciate the value of didactic teaching. It is used globally for transferring information. Where a student has limited experience or knowledge, there needs to be a cascading of information through knowledge transfer. Where a student has limited understanding, the didactic approach is the leading method of student education conducted around the world. Scientific theory and how-to instructions provide the bedrock for students to explore possibilities. And that is where the handover to a Socratic method and reason accelerate growth.

Midwifing a thought to fullness infers that conception has occurred. The role of the coach then is to excite that thought to another stage of development. Therein lies the action of being nudged; activating your reason to move an idea along. The Nudge Principle is how we participate in that moment. Going back to the Popeil tool illustration, what tools do you already have that will allow you to move a thought along at will? If you are going to drive a thought, what can you do to shape that thought for a purpose? What will be the outcome of that purpose? And ultimately, what form of action will that thought inspire?

A simple definition of creativity is to use the imagination or original thought to create something. One definition of creativity tags onto that ‘something created’ with qualifiers that the created must also be unique and have a value to

somebody. If confined to the financial definition of value, then we'd have to bow to the axiom that a valued item or action is only as valuable as what somebody is willing to pay. The use of creativity in a business case depends on the exchange of monetary value for the created. We will address creativity as a business case as we progress. I think the definition of required value, or even being unique, is too narrow for our use. To strum the chords of the imagination of a broader audience, we are going to stick with the general definition of creativity that it is the process of creating something.

We are comfortable with the word creator when it comes to defining a person that creates. A creative is any person capable of original thought. You can wear the title creator when there is a creation. What you'll find in the Nudge Principle are nudges of creative movement that harness your imagination, develop original thoughts, and then to create something. While there is a solid argument in the business case scenario for having an end in mind—a something—the creative process can also be undermined by limitations. If a vision of a something is fixed in the mind, then the creative process can become restricted. You may be pre-ordaining an outcome instead of stimulating creative dynamism.

In a manufacturing mentality, you know that you must create a widget for A, so you will tick the boxes of X and Y and thereby create a functional widget. I want to encourage you to avoid falling into this trap of utilitarianism as we explore principles of creativity. Not that there isn't a place for methodology in the creative process—quite the contrary. Creativity is saturated with method. What I hope you gain from creativity comes at an individual level where creativity does something for you as a person. The tools you will use are tools from your toolbox. The utility comes later, once the imagination and original thought have achieved some maturity to stand on their own.

Tools in your imagination toolbox are more principles than tools. What you have at your disposal for crafting your imagination and original thought is priceless. Your Nudge journey will lead through familiar territory. You have functioned with these nudges your whole life. Perhaps unaware of their presence, you engage in each frequently day by day, maybe moment to moment. Creativity is developed and released from your creative core by the nudges of SEE, TELL, FLOW, PLAY, FEEL, BE and DO. Regardless of your view of your creativity, your creative core is continuously working out possibilities and using the resources of your creative core. The process is as old as human history.

One

Your Creative Core

1

The Creative Nomad

In the wake of the 2007 slip of the economy that led to a full-blown recession, I sought to recreate myself. My friend Nate convinced me that I should have a go at screenwriting. An ambitious independent filmmaker, he was also looking for a script to produce. Having not long before suffered the consequence of redundancy, I thought I'd give it a try. Within six months, I'd written four scripts. Awarded the confidence of my friend, I thought it was time to invest.

Together we attended the 2008 Screenwriters Expo in Los Angeles. Before the big event, my hopes of screenwriting glory reached ripeness with my bundle of untested scripts in hand. Although it was a lot of writing for a guy just getting started, it is was laughable achievement compared to that of the competition. Inspired by visions of acceptance awards at the Kodak Theater, we charged onward with abandon through workshops of screenwriting hope. If nothing else, we told ourselves we'd walk away with a better understanding of the industry. Throughout the weekend, I overheard other hungry hopefuls express their disdain for that sterile industrial term. Our nostalgic vision of filmmaking was more romantic than pragmatic. A weekend with industry experts would change all of our minds. Hollywood style film making is business. The infrastructure that makes Hollywood creative magic happen is called the industry.

Our time spent that weekend in Los Angeles was invaluable. Besides the repeated reality check that studios won't even touch an unsolicited script, there were axioms, unwritten rules, and jargon aplenty. (Please see the legal department for an explanation.) Carried along on the information wave with the "Don't copy an original concept" advice, was a writing rule about gaining audience attention within the first five to ten minutes. That is called The Hook. Professional speakers have a similar guide in an unsubstantiated 90-second rule. Regardless of the exact passage of time when a film or speaker begins to lose an audience, there is indeed a point where an audience member will emotionally invest or divest. A person

might wonder how some films make it to the big screen if their filmmakers were following these same hard rules. What is not a surprise is the depth of creativity exercised in every aspect of a film's creation. Nate and I only scratched the surface of an enormous corporate landscape where creativity and business meet.

To ground our journey of creativity, let's explore the subject on the grand scale of the human story. The most excellent drama of history is the passage of humanity from era to era. Creativity is the constant of each forward step. How civilisation arrived at different stages of social development permeates every nuance of our collective story. The modern hunter-gatherer version of Nate and I was that of two people travelling to explore the film making hunting grounds of Los Angeles. In our naivety, we may have convinced ourselves that we were self-actualising from some lofty height of a creative vision. Once we pulled back the veneer of expectation, we found ourselves at the ground level basics of survival. In this arena, could we convert our skills into something that might earn a living or did the overcrowded screenwriting hunting grounds have room for more predators? If the latter were the case, then we would move on as nomads on creative landscape.

First Spark

Kicking against the norm is a natural characteristic of the creative. Doing something different is the creative's playground. Dissent from an established pattern makes way for change. Sometimes change works, other times it doesn't or at least not directly or with immediate results. Change can occur later as seeds for change take root and spread. Following the historical influence of literature, filmmakers use their medium to stimulate thought, make statements, and entertain all at once. Breaking from the formulaic is risky but necessary for creativity. Concerning film, I want to point you to a non-traditional opening sequence of a movie that tested the boundaries of the hook.

For the first ten minutes of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the audience watches a story about space travel begin with semi-vertical ape creatures surviving in an arid wasteland. Not exactly what an audience would expect from a tale advertised as 'an epic drama of adventure and exploration.' Except for some strange rising beehive sound at the arrival of a mysterious black monolith on the scene, the initial ambient soundtrack is comprised of grunting, screeching, and howling primates. Released in 1968, the same year as the Charlton Heston version of *Planet of the Apes*, ape costume design had not progressed much from the Weissmuller days of Tarzan. Yet, something about the Kubrick sequence created

an interest that hooked audiences. Perhaps it was a primal connection of discovery that piqued audience curiosity.

Terrance Malik's 2011 film *The Tree of Life* bested Kubrick's ten-minute evolutionary setting. With his visually stimulating fifteen-minute vision of the origins of life, Malik almost lost me a few times, but I hung on. Curiosity and an appreciation for the excellent editing kept me intrigued. Something about discovery, a unique angle of presentation, and the uncharted realms of imagination aroused my commitment. To Kubrick and author Arthur C. Clarke's credit, they never revealed the meaning of that monolith sequence in the opening scenes of 2001. Shortly after the film's release, Kubrick was interviewed for Playboy magazine and asked about the introduction. In response to the ape-monolith scene, he replied, 'You're free to speculate as you wish about the philosophical and allegorical meaning of the film—and such speculation is one indication that it has succeeded in gripping the audience at a deep level.'

2001 celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2018. Despite a half-century of formal and informal analysis, its widely interpretative meaning holds steadfast. Should Kubrick have explained his visual interpretation, his audience may have felt obligated to apply a specific design and then altogether missed the point. There are layers of meaning in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, but it is in those first ten minutes that the audience forms a connection. An audience member is not required to hold a degree in dramaturgy, be a film analyst, or walk the clouds with the titans of film to appreciate the obviousness of the first ten minutes.

For the ape creatures of the opening sequence, there are moment-to-moment struggles, conflict, vulnerability, barrenness, and limitations to communication. Every strand of existence is held together within a volatile social order. With the break of dawn, the scene is disrupted by change. Awakened, probably from a dream state, a single ape reacts to a strange object that appeared overnight. The questionably safe boundaries of their hollow is invaded by an object of contrast. Let's give our main ape creature the name Archie so that he feels more human to us. Archie's eyes widen as they inspect the unnatural structure. Reacting instinctively, he alerts the other apes who rally in a frenzy. The object is taller than any other stone formation on the landscape. Black, smooth and straight-edged, the monolith is a curious contrast to the surrounding red sandstone. Something is different. Archie explores the monolith with progressive advances.

Satisfied that the structure doesn't pose a threat, he touches the surface. Curiosity neutralises his fear. Other beasts follow Archie's lead with calmed interest. With a climate of safety secured, the entire troop join into the investigation by stroking and tasting the odd addition to the live diorama. The

troop becomes absorbed with new sensations and watch one another in their collective discoveries. Each ape creates an experience with the monolith. To communicate their experience, perhaps they seek to form an utterance to describe what they see and feel. Early communication begins to take shape.

Using the magic of film, we skip the mundane passage of time to the next scene when Archie makes a connection between his experience and the environment. Crouched amidst a pile of sun-bleached bones, the wheels of Archie's curiosity begin to make connections. The cause-and-effect awareness of what-if grabs his attention. Bemused by the interaction of bones as they clink around to his swipes, Archie becomes aware that some bones interact differently when a collision occurs. Fully absorbed in his curiosity, Archie selects a bone to test what happens when one bone collides with other scattered bones. Within moments Archie's enthusiasm increases with force and speed, turning a jawbone into a bone-crushing tool. Archie discovered, by observation, use for something as commonplace to his environment as a sun-bleached bone.

Equipped with the tool, Archie becomes emboldened with confidence. His confidence is put to the test when a rival group challenges Archie's troop at a watering hole. The jawbone proves an effective instrument to deliver a death blow to a competing troop leader. A tool used for foraging, ploughing, or digging can also be use as a weapon. Enlightenment can be a double-edged sword and survival is a powerful creative force. We discovered early in our evolving consciousness, the importance that necessity plays with invention.

Feeding the Nine Billion

Whether or not the first sparks of creativity were born out of a survival instinct or safety mode is anyone's guess. No one took names or conducted surveys. We will never know. In our 2001 reference, Archie held in his hand a tool for creativity or destruction. When our basic human needs are at stake, it is easy to blur the lines between survival, safety, and belonging. Our brain doesn't pause to consider which of these factors has priority. They are a tangled set of motivators that drive our actions. It's easy to look back at the traces of humanity on history and assign labels to epochs based on our contemporary perspective. For Archie and Company, we can appreciate that his progeny evolved from gatherers to hunters. The better they managed their surroundings, the more they were able to turn their creative energies toward collective activities like production — primarily in the domain of agriculture.

With the increase of safety, at least relatively, humanity gathered as communities. Those collectives required crops to maintain their hard-earned

foundation of survival, safety, and a sense of belonging. Opportunities within groups to relax their vigilance against threats allowed for further exploration of creative expression. Art, production, and engineering developed from a position of comfort and security. The collective became a laboratory of social interaction wherein people observed and learned from others within the community.

Belonging is a catalyst for exploring possibilities both on an individual and communal basis. With the expansion of the community, more time can be spent contributing to the greater good. The watch-my-back mode of survival and the desperation for safety could become a secondary concern. A stronger community meant that increased numbers could contribute to the essentials of living and security. From their mutual success came increased cooperation. Prosperity is an outcome of this type of purposeful collaboration. As a result of when increased numbers of people gather under that umbrella of protection, demand for managing the population will also increase. When there is increased collaboration and growth, challenges ensue. The need for innovation becomes inevitable.

Sounds a bit utopian. An agricultural society where members work together to produce food for their community in relative safety and a universal sense of wellbeing is Utopia. In every storyline of society building, first indications of permanence begin with a group claiming territory for commerce, trade, and community. In a metaphoric sense, they are taking root in the land. Inhabitants are declaring as a symbolic overture to any witness that “We are here to stay.” We here for as long as the ground produces, the environment doesn’t become hostile or we are forced from the land.

All that changed in a large-scale capacity with the introduction of industrialisation. As more food was produced, more resources were needed to meet the consuming populations of urban growth. A gradual increase of movement by people to cities created sprawling metropolises across the globe. A gradual decline of the agricultural society fed the rise of the industrial, technical, service, and a plethora of other industries—including criminal and war-making. Instead of planting foodstuffs, we planted ourselves in population centres, we planted in the residential areas outside cities, and we planted in chairs or on the factory floor. We rent or purchase homes and declare, “We are here to stay.” That is, until things look better on the other side of wherever.

Feeding people was humanity’s core issue for millennia. Agriculture and industrialisation were the separating factors of an advanced society. Today that agrarian divide between developing and industrialised countries is narrowed due to the high demand for technology in mass food production. Nevertheless, feeding the population remains a considerable concern rather than a footnote on

an agenda. Blighted by global change, armed conflict, political upheaval, or gross mismanagement of resources, many nations struggle to provide relative safety and wellbeing that appears in abundance elsewhere. Subsequently, this triggers the movement of people. It may start small and feel like a trickle, but in time sizable numbers of people will migrate from one location to another.

Historically, these and a myriad of other conditions, push people from their familiar which leads to a variety of conflicts between the Haves and Have Nots. The battle of will and resources has raged across our story. In the outcome, resources and people are reallocated and dispersed. Trails of our heritage line ancient paths marked by architecture, culture, and an engrained narrative of interaction between peoples. The double helix of our DNA is tagged with the complexity of people across a past that crisscrosses the globe. We are the evolution of the merging of peoples and cultures.

Without adversity, be that at the hand of others or the consequence of nature, we would likely remain sedentary. Adversity forces us to explore. The incentive for exploration is to find, see, or achieve something new. We want something different than what we currently have. Arguably, we look for a blend of the familiar in our seeking. The ordinary offers a sense of safety. If our destination, or the journey there, is alien to our existence, we take others along like us. Movement of people is as old as time. Only when there is an overshadowing perception of limited resources or a threat to safety—security in our current mindset—does one group restrict the integration of others. The migration of people across national borders or from rural to urban has intensified over the past century. We could easily get lost in the conversation at this point while chasing newsworthy rabbits into their burrows. We are aware of the issues. To grasp the enormity of the challenges and to find solutions demands robust creative energy.

Globalisation, politicising, exploitation and armed conflict have replaced the base conditions of safety and wellbeing. Stripped down to the foundation where people live, and apart from being an academic exercise or political debate, people move because they seek a better life. The creative energy it takes to find solutions under a steady pounding of challenges is a regular theme in the narrative of human history. Adapt or die. I don't want to trivialise the challenges one person faces in contrast to another. Ultimately, migration challenges will result in similar outcomes. A single refugee plotting a strategy to cross international borders will apply the same if not a more considerable creative effort than the collective will of people trying to keep him out. The moral question at hand regards the final tally of fatalities before we implement a workable solution.

Our global population rises at a steady pace. By 2042, there will be over nine billion people on the planet. We have evolved from a sparsely populated world of hunter-gatherers to the bustling cityscapes where artificial environments and urbanists apply their creative energy to get ahead. What we do and how we do it is generally a personal prerogative. At the close of a day, we measure our struggle relative to the challenges we face. One person's battle is another's vision of freedom. The insatiability of the human condition urges us to apply creativity to improve our safety and wellbeing—regardless of how that may be defined.

Statistically Misrepresenting the Individual

One of my many quirks is a tendency to throw out an arbitrary percentage to validate a position. The coup d' grace of my argument will conclude with something like, "Given what we know, that is about 99% unlikely to happen." When I am feeling overconfident and want to punctuate my stake in reality, I will add decimal points. So that 99% certainty takes on a new depth of leverage when I nod and say "99.9%." Recognising that there are innumerable variables that can change a condition, I leave that tiny percentage to unknown influencing factors. Somewhere along the line, I picked up this habit of using this percentage additive in my daily conversation. If I had to point the finger at a specific influence for how this crept in, I'd blame the television weather presenter. For decades they have directed our attention to graphics and charts using all sorts of technology. Like eager gamblers, we sit on the edge of our seat waiting for those golden words of speculation that can shift plans to enjoy a full day of sunshine to 80% chance of showers.

Tracking and projecting weather patterns have vastly improved with satellite technology. The ability to pinpoint weather with mystical accuracy on a micro-scale has far-reaching applications. Farming, trade, and leisure are three industries that rely heavily on accurate weather projections. When the weather turns hostile, the impact on financial and insurance sectors scramble to minimise loss. Similarly, the corporate art of speculating on statistical data is fine-tuned with scientific precision. Like a farmer planting a crop based on soil conditions and projected weather patterns, companies depend on quality data for their strategies.

Data also plays a substantive role in the realm of marketing. From data collection and analysis to product development and delivery, buyer trends are sieved through data manipulation to hone finely devised campaigns. That your product preferences are culled from your purchasing and browsing history is only a small segment of the power of marketing. Another facet of marketing, often

hidden from our perception because of marketing effectiveness, is the clustering of audiences into groups. We are carefully categorised into buyer groups to cultivate a sense of belonging according to how we identify with others. A fundamental human need is to feel part of something. Except for bold adventurers that reject the social constructs of belonging in favour of isolation, we all seek to belong. We also like to think that we choose how we will interact with others. We may even enjoy some success in that area on occasion. The influence of other people is a gravitational dynamic pulling us toward some measure of interaction, whether great or small.

That is just a snippet alluding to the big picture of us—the macro version. In philosophical thought, that may also be the essence of a higher consciousness. A oneness of mind that connects all thinking souls across time and space. Do you think your thoughts are your own? Whoa, hold on there cowboy. Too much to suggest this early in our relationship? The concept that we share a universal mind goes way back in philosophical history. The reason I introduce the idea of a universal mind here is to punctuate one extreme of the spectrum of consciousness. Snapped to the other end of the spectrum, the school of thought makes us out to be the product of automated neural responses, neither having nor exercising will. Consciousness in that narrow band of thinking is not even a consideration as we relate it to creativity.

Misrepresentation of the individual is an evident deficiency in the process of ad hoc—and formal—statistical associations of social behaviour. The world-gone-mad approach of categorising people in the cauldron of public discourse first fosters and then spreads a range of fallacies. Fallacies breed stereotypes, biases, prejudices, and ultimately division or worse. Replicating like a resistance mutated virus, the corrupted form of reason infects and transfers from one person to another. With the assistance of the ever-present tools of global communication literally at hand, the infected thinking spreads with pandemic impact.

To avoid drawing the ire of a particular demographic or succumb to the ideology du jour, allow me to illustrate with a fictional scenario. Our sample belongs to a much-maligned categorised group of people. Delta Sigma is an educated, middle-aged, purple-skinned person from Talitounia. Throughout history, people of this description have behaved superiorly and engaged in countless acts of dominance. As a people group, their history demonstrates advances in civilisation and acts of goodwill. However, in the public arena, the latter is perceived as a form of self-serving exploitation. Activist movements perpetuate that any person with those demographics is the root cause for all the world's woes. The fallacy goes something like this:

- Delta is a purple, middle-aged, Talitounian.
- Delta recently made a disparaging comment about the green-skinned race of Manua and has a perceived history of bending the truth.
- Therefore, it is safe to conclude that all purple, middle-aged, Talitounians are racist and liars.

Most of us know at least one purple, middle-aged Talitounian. Rho, the Talitounian that we know isn't anything like the horrible person depicted in the storm of meme-contagious thought infection we see and hear. Apart from some physical characteristics, Rho is respectful, thoughtful, and caring. From this, we know with certainty that not all purple, middle-aged Talitounians—or otherwise—are evil incarnate. Among the catalogue of consequences that comes from faulty thinking regarding people, one outcome that ranks right at the top is the impact defective thoughts have on a sense of belonging. Intuitively, we know that we belong. Somewhere, we belong. Whether we are firmly ensconced in a belonged identity or on a journey to find it, how we identify our self has a direct influence on our creative expression.

Reach out beyond the boundaries of conventional thinking, and you will find that creativity is not confined to a traditional interpretation of the arts. More than art. More than dance. More than music. Creativity is demonstrated by original thought and novelty. Original thought doesn't mean that nobody else has considered that thought. What it does mean is that your thought is unique and authentic of you. Among a broad range of experts and researchers, the definition of creativity adopts specific characteristics of the definition's source. Besides originality and novelty, another associated quality defining creativity is value. What is its worth to you? To others? Where do you place value on the process of creativity and the created?

Creativity doesn't require a canvas for expression. Where creativity resonates in your being is in the frequency of your identity. The creative is the canvas. What you create, regardless of the format, will also attract others to associate you by that expression of your creativity. A creative will influence others in more ways than you can imagine as one person's creativity can have a profound cascading impact on countless people. Measuring the scope of a viral creative action is to map a new strain of the common cold. You can see where it has been, but you can't count every person that it affects. The organic nature of creativity leaves a trace of its existence with those caught by or identify with that creative expression. With the creation nestled in your psyche, it will contribute another facet to who you are.

Smart Cities, Robotics, AI, and Eternity

We have traversed the span of human history within a few short pages. From Archie, our cave-dwelling ancestor who scratched out an existence to stay alive, to seeking a sense of belonging in a globalised world nearing a population of nine billion. Upwards of 68% per cent of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2050. Increased advances in technology attract workers to urban areas for a variety of reasons. Many migrants are drawn by conditions identified in earlier observations of this chapter, such as safety and security. The demand for creative solutions, adaptability and the will to commit are three expectations for our success. We know the answers. To achieve genuine and sustainable success, we must apply our collective creative potential to the problems we face. Creativity must be the primer for change.

The necessity to innovate comes with the concentration of people to an area. Urban infrastructures built on past foundations, as innovative as they were at the time, were not designed for the capacity of people they are experiencing. Alerted by population growth projections, and the need to secure improved positioning for trade in global markets, entire new cities are being created. These new cities are beacons of technological advancement, and models of smart city innovation. Technology can satisfy the foundational needs of its inhabitants and ensure people living in advanced urban areas thrive in relative harmony. At least that is what technology is purposed to achieve. In that kind of environment, citizens can contribute to the underlying goals of society. By doing so, the inhabitants can spend more time and energy devoted to creative thought, innovation, and value creation. As technology shifts the balance of people to the city, technology applied in the agricultural and natural resource sectors stimulate further migration to cities. An increase of city dwellers can also trigger a reduction of employment options. Could it be that innovation is both a problem and the solution?

Advances in robotics and artificial intelligence bring improved efficiency in natural resource management. Where there is genuine collaboration among stakeholders and a will to find holistic solutions to challenges, the outcomes can lead to harmony between technology and people. The vast majority of technology is designed with the intent to improve lives. To keep us from being pulled into a debate regarding conflicts of morality, even if just momentarily, let's adopt a position that the overall intent of technology is to improve lives. In our external world, robotics should produce more efficiently, mitigate safety issues, and serve the masses.

As for our private life, robotics will enhance our leisure experiences, eliminate the mundane chores of daily duties, and perhaps augment our cure for loneliness.

We've been living with robotics as part of society, directly and indirectly, since it was introduced to manufacturing in 1962 with UNIMATE. Regardless of what some people will tell you, you can't stop progress. Along with robotics, in a somewhat symbiotic way, a robot requires a brain. Decision-making processes for the simplest robots equate to binary choices of yes-no or on-off. For manufacturing, this approach to binary decision-making speeds processes and reduces waste. Increased profitability is the result. We are not too far away when robots will have an enlarged presence in our daily life. It will happen. For now, robotic devices mostly operate quietly in the background. They keep us safe and perform countless functions out of sight. Pioneers and innovators of technology want to take that to another level.

Enter artificial intelligence or AI. By introducing artificial intelligence, robotics and the broadest imaginable spectrum of software application move from binary yes-no computations, to new levels of complexity. The concept of AI is the philosophical backbone of the Internet of Things (IoT), where the interconnectivity of technology and humans interact in tandem. Conspiracists, Luddites, techno-timids, and the wary may view the integration of AI as intrusive and a sign of the end of humanity. Technological advances only seem to affirm their predisposition that we are subjects of Big Brother. Again, we are going to take a leap here and assume a posture that AI is designed to improve our life.

Why? Why is all this technology created to enhance our experience? Can't we freeze time and remain in a state of a simple lifestyle akin to rustic communal living? Well, yes, you can. There are communities to join or create, that fit that exact ticket. Thankfully, there always will be—or at least we can hope there will be. Society needs to keep one foot squarely planted in close relation with the Earth. We must cultivate our symbiotic relationship, even if it is by just a relative handful of guardians. Hand in hand with that guardianship comes the responsibility to manage urban populations. For that task, technology is vital.

An objective of technology-assisted improved lives, or at least from a perspective of social engineering, is to facilitate people to develop to their highest potential. Everything from gene splicing to smart refrigerators has the purpose of freeing the resources of your mind. Germinating in that pool of your brain are collective thoughts, ideas, images, and experiences that may lead to alternative solutions for a problem or inspire a new creation. Technology, at its finest, should be in servitude to the user, not the user to the technology.

Meandering on this seemingly non-sign posted path of thought, you may be wondering how I plan to make a connection between technology, belonging, and creativity. I've been nudging you in a direction by building up what may feel like

disconnected topics. Technology is vital in this discussion because technology serves to preserve our existence. Whether that technology directly extends our life by health and medical advancements or as bytes of information lingering in cyberspace, the use of technology establishes a footnote in history that we were here. One way or another, we want to live forever.

Within the context of meaningfulness, your esteem is energised by your experience to leave a mark. Perhaps I am oversimplifying, but it may be best to speak plainly. Your self-worth or esteem is the value that you ascribe to your existence. The resulting demonstrations of creativity are inseparably linked to your self-perception. You create. In one way or another, you do create. I've had conversations with brilliant people that tell me they are not creative. Somewhere in the shades of their experience, they associated creativity within a narrow band of understanding that creativity is something that others do, but not them. Logic, reason, obligation, cultural and traditional boundaries can block an individual from demonstrating creativity in ways that satisfy their person.

Alternatively, another person, that demonstrates brilliance in the form of art may be engaged in a tumultuous battle of the mind. In that struggle, a tug of war of self-perception highs and lows may produce incredible works across multiple platforms of creative expression. History is replete with stories of people that struggle with their esteem but produce legendary work that inspires generations. Icons of art leave traces of their brilliance while their stories may be marked with tragedy. We idolise artistic remnants of genius, while at the same time, diminishing our value of creativity in the day-to-day. Creators viewed from under a cloak of idolisation, take on a mystical nature of divine favour attributed to an elect. Everybody else is just ordinary. Or so that thinking would lead you to believe.

For all its faults and failures, its use and misuse, technology improves lives. Yes, I repeated it. We use technology to make our lives better. That, in turn, makes us or should make us feel good about our self. We see evidence of the creative use of technology from those living in the abysmal conditions of waste shanties to think tank incubators calculating missions to Mars. Whereas people in developed areas may benefit from a glut of readily available and affordable new technologies, people in underdeveloped regions are forced to innovate. If only to satisfy the necessities for survival. The former group must be vigilant regarding a tendency for complacency in their pursuit of the creative. The latter group must innovate to stay alive.

What the Universal Mind Said

If you were to comment on what you consider the top issues facing humanity, what would make the top of your list? Let's set some parameters on your list. Firstly, the problem must have the potential to affect a significant portion of the global population. Looking beyond yourself nullifies the superficiality of what may be a big deal to you, but trivial in the grand scheme of broader challenges. Additionally, the issue must also have some basis in known or existing conditions. You can't include things on your list like concern for a global invasion by a hostile alien race or the Earth's destruction to make room for an intergalactic highway. Except for those two parameters, your list can include any issue facing humanity.

A once-over browse of a newsfeed should give you plenty to consider. You may even use a feed aggregator that delivers to your various devices the latest trends and developments on topics of your interest. Headlines, subject lines, or images pop up on your preferred device or Internet site announcing a 3-second flash of information to capture your attention. Even if not personalised as suggested, you will be inundated with information that is important to somebody. They will have paid for the opportunity to influence you and invade your thoughts. Influence arrives packaged in many guises to alter your thinking.

In the culmination of the final episode of *Blue Planet II*, Sir David Attenborough concluded with some alarming assertions regarding our global stewardship. The appeal to reason relating to the shocking impact of plastics in the ocean affected my thinking regarding my role as a consumer. I am much more aware, and my purchasing practises have changed. I won't say dramatically, because manufacturers make it almost impossible to eliminate the use of disposable plastics. I am, however, more actively engaged in how I spend my money concerning plastic consumption. Using my one-person buying power, I am determined to stop purchasing products packaged in non-recyclable plastic. I might only achieve reduced use. I am committed to recycling nonetheless. Anything recyclable that I use will make it into an appropriate recycling process. Religiously. I am concerned for the planet and the impact our choices have on others in that invisible-until-it-manifests cause-and-effect trail. How deep a commitment I will gain is probably growing in a matter of degrees.

For me to answer the question I posed to you, I'd have to attribute those concerns like plastic to a category I'd consider symptomatic of broader issues. Those challenges are complex and resist being categorised as solutions with a series of binary decisions. That is why my concerns tend to take on philosophical overtones. I can reduce my list of worries to three issues: The status of individuality, the perception of free will, and the external influences imposed on

society to control free thought. You can barely broach the offspring of these subjects without the conversation escalating into a lively socio-political debate. Where it is possible to exchange ideas on these subjects, genuine change can occur. From an outsider listening in on the discussion, there seems to be more rhetoric than collaboration, more talk and less action. The three issues that concern me do so because they comprise the battleground of creative thought. Without applied critical thinking and creativity, legitimate change cannot be sustained.

My paths in the creative process took me across various domains before a chord struck. When that happened, my learning and experiences began to coalesce. Instead of observing life experiences as isolated instances, I started to make associations between those experiences and from them derive a sense of meaning. Creativity is the common thread that continues to weave its way through our experience. If I say to you that we adopt a survivalist mode when things are tough, you'd probably agree. You just get on. Find a solution. Move forward. You applied creativity and arrived at a conclusion. Whether in the high or low points of esteem, creative thought was present at every transition.

When I began to research creativity, it became apparent that creativity is a universal trait of cognisant humanity. I suggest cognisant humanity because there must be a spark of self-awareness for creativity to flourish. My interest in creativity leapt forward during my business administration graduate studies. The influence of creativity in business is the pulse of organisational health. One may argue that their company is not favourable toward creativity or innovation. Truth be told, creativity in business is demonstrated top to bottom, side to side. A better way to view the creative grit of an organisation may be through the internal process that fans the flames of innovation and empowers staff. A volatile business environment demands the ongoing and renewed application of creativity for survival. A stagnant environment demands the same attention.

The personalisation of my creativity research came when I read Dan Pink's book, *A Whole New Mind* (2006). Pink's observations resonated with me and triggered a stream of adaptive thinking. It felt like he was in my head, writing what I was thinking. I wanted, no, needed to act on what percolated inside. Somewhere along the line, my pursuit came to a satisfying intersection where my X qualities (dreamer) met my Y qualities (pragmatist). At that intersection, I discovered an invigorated urgency to be creative. More so, I opened untapped traits of my personality that previously laid unattended, ignored, or neglected. What may have seemed an epiphany was the culmination of a lifetime of insights and observations that reached a point of saturation. Research on brain processes, and

investing in philosophical reflection, churned out a regular feast of logical argument for me to devour. Every direction I explored returned the same conclusion: at the core of humanity is a need to create. Instead of offering up answers to an endless supply of issues and problems, my objective evolved to provoke creatives to think and stimulate their awareness. Shake up existing notions. Introduce enough thought disruption to elevate creativity. Wonder. Explore.

On the journey to this point in life, I contemplated the concept of universal consciousness—or the universal mind. A simplified definition of universal consciousness could be that we don't have original thoughts. The line of thinking might continue that we share the thoughts and consciousness of the past alongside all other sentient beings. We may package our thoughts in different words, phrases, and languages—including languages of creative expression—but there is continuity of thinking among every human being. From my orientation, that proposition will evoke a collision of values. My mission includes advocating individuality, the perception of free will, and resisting those that attempt to control the two. Differences don't necessarily need to divide. They should expose unexplored pathways to new thinking. The efficient working out of disagreements demands a robust and vibrant creative process.

I am unique. You are unique. Sure, we have autonomic responses. Thankfully they keep us alive and safe. We are also conditioned to respond to conditions based on our experience. We create because we engage in that process by choice. Recently I read an article citing a study claiming everything we do is a delayed reaction predetermined by our brain. An action, measured with the latest in neuroscientific technology, can be traced to a specific neural path. Materialist thinkers are content to accept that the origin of a thought is a reaction of the brain to stimuli. My experience affirms for me otherwise. When I am in a state of flow, creativity is a series of choices culled from a singular perspective that I call "me." That journey feels like meandering at times, but I don't mind a touch of the nomadic, especially if it leads me to an oasis of personal evolutionary thought.

This is a sample of the book
Nudged: Exploring Your Creative Core
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