

The Prudential Value of Creativity; a Neglected Question in Neuroethics

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Claim

CLAIM: Creativity's value for people is a neglected topic in neuroethics. It is necessary to understand creativity's relationship to well-being to determine if creativity is a morally considerable concern in ethical decisions.

Methodology

Descriptive and critical literature reviews were performed in the fields of neuroscience, psychology, creativity theory, and philosophy to define and analyze concepts of creativity, divergent thinking (**DT**), accounts of well-being, and value theory frameworks.

Key Concepts

Creativity and Divergent Thinking (DT)

The standard definition of creativity is bipartite; for something to be creative, it must be both *original* and *effective* (1). **DT** is a distinct type of neurocognition involved in fluid intelligence, working memory, originality, fluency, and flexibility (2).

Well-being (WB)

A hybrid, explanatory framework was used to analyze creativity's value. This welfarist position assesses the prudential value of a good for people by focusing on how much well-being it creates, and it indexes to how a particular good will affect the well-being of an individual person in her relevant circumstances. The welfarist WB account is flexible and can respond to worries of the influence of relativism, alienation, and misguided subjective preferences. Aligns with the Four Principles of Bioethics (3).

Disclosures: None

Results

Creativity appears to be an "all-purpose good"(4) with both instrumental and final value as part of human flourishing.

Instrumental prudential value:

The literature provided abundant evidence that engaging in creative activities is linked to significant improvements in health indices (5). It also showed creativity generates robust instrumental value through desirable products, pleasurable experiences, adaptation, and innovation.

Final prudential value:

The overview provided compelling evidence **DT** inheres in creative ideation and creative self-efficacy. Creative ideation appears to enlarge our well-being by increasing the number of interests, preferences, and awareness of choices people can have. Creative originality allows us to access and possess more well-being by generating valuable information about the world and the self that is both conceptually new and useful (6)

Correlations between creativity and ill-being:

There is evidence of shared underlying biological features in creative bases and psychopathologies which may create vulnerabilities in people, however there is lack of empirical proof that creativity is a unidirectional cause of psychopathologies (7). The correlative and/or intermittent presence of a state of ill-being with a state of creativity is too broad and insufficiently evidenced to preclude the final prudential goodness of creativity and **DT**.

Impacting well-being through neuro-interventions that alter creative capacity:

The possibility of enhancing and diminishing creativity through biotechnologies is a current reality.

It is well documented that a wide range of interventions, such as medications to direct transcranial stimulation (**tDCS**), can preserve, impair, or increase creative functioning. As technologies evolve some may argue it is a morally imperative act of procreative beneficence to use selection or even gene editing technologies (8) such as CRISPR Cas9 for/against genetic bases that impact creativity.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The survey results confirmed the claim that creativity's value within the context of well-being is a neglected topic of investigation in neuroethics. Although there is almost no work in the literature of practical ethics on the significance of creativity for well-being, beyond considering the goodness of "aesthetic experience", the review and analysis of the literature in related research on creativity strongly suggests **creativity is a constituent part of well-being**. It follows that the DT necessary for creative originality is a **prudentially good** cognitive capacity for a person to possess. I conclude the research reviewed shows **creative DT and creativity have morally considerable value for well-being, in a final sense and as an all purpose good**.

I recommend philosophers and practitioners in neuroethics study the importance of DT and creative capacity to index and appropriately value creative functioning as part of the well-being of an individual person within her relevant circumstances.

References

[Creativity's Prudential Value Reference Link](#)

