



## Creativity and Corporation

Creativity and how it affects us.

*“Don’t think. Thinking is the enemy of creativity.  
It’s self-conscious, and anything self-conscious is lousy.  
You can’t try to do things. You simply must do things.”*

— Ray Bradbury

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### What is it?

Creative ideas appear nonlinear, divergent, and unreasonable and are often received by others as unwelcome, implausible, and unattractive. It’s important to recognize that the creative end product or result, while it may solve a problem, is not the target of the creative process.

The creative process is something unto itself and, like love or excitement, it does not aim for resolution. At the same time, having a goal is often beneficial for the constraint it provides, and the opportunity it affords to find peace and return to center.

If you’re already doing something that you know how to do and have done before, then

you're either not being creative or being only partially creative. What we often mean when we talk about being creative relates to being partially creative.

Full creativity is doing something you didn't previously know how to do. The more untaught, unpracticed, and unprejudiced we are, the more we rely on our own creativity to move forward.

Accomplishing something we have not done before is creative. It may not look creative when viewed from the outside, but we are being creative in our minds. We are thinking creatively.

I'm being creative here because I'm putting together two fields each of which I know something about and adding them to something I know little about.

The fields I know a bit about are working with people—which is to say collaborating in a professional context—and taking an idea from imagination to realization. What I know little about is conveying creativity to people and managing it in people. In spite of this, the project seems interesting, feasible, and productive. Failing in this task is a possibility, but it is not an end-point.

It's often bad to seek direction on how to handle your inspiration. Doing so almost always kills the inspiration because you stop listening to yourself. Inspiration is a spirit and spirits are busy with important things—more important than most of your affairs—and if you don't give them your full attention they are within their rights to take their efforts elsewhere.

If you are going to seek outside advice, and you want to retain the attention of your muse, then seek that advice from someone else who's inspired and not from a normal person. But since spirits incarnate in people, and it's people that are easiest to find, you need to discern spirit in people. Do this by letting your muse direct you. That is to say, don't use your social skills and don't consult your friends. Keep your ears open, your guard down, your vigilance ready, and your radar tuned.



## Creativity Unincorporated

I found advice in the form of the book *Creativity, Inc.* by Ed Catmull. This is the story of the birth and growth of Pixar, originally a brainchild of Apple Computer and later a subsidiary of Disney. But I could not read the book as I could only get reviews and summaries of it.

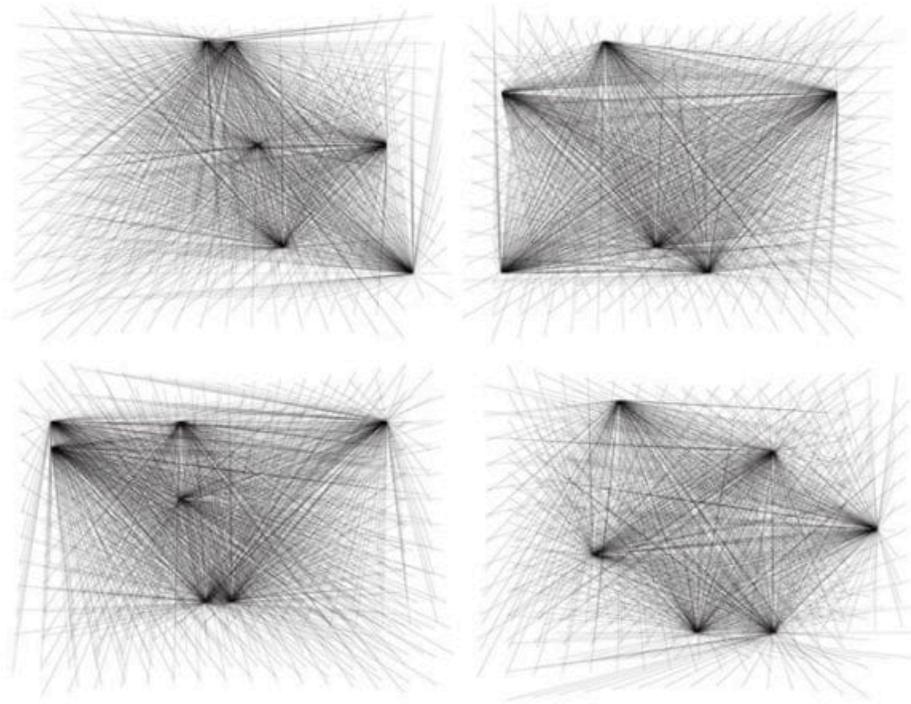
This is a good trick. Most of what a person has to say clouds their original insight. Reviews and summaries identify the main points at the expense of flavor and depth. Reading these summaries was as tasteless as eating freeze-dried steak.

From the remains of Ed Catmull's insights—such as survived the freeze-drying—I realized there were three parts to my project: an individual's creativity, a group's creativity—which is more of a management thing—and the problem of having the two coexist.

Most of Ed's book focused on these last two. I suspect that's because that's where the money is in the business book-writing market. Few bother to teach individual creativity, and most book-buyers are not looking for it.

This is a good insight for me because I focus on the individual, and that's not where most peoples' need lies. The immediate need lies in teaching people in organization how to evolve, which is to say how to incorporate adaptive change. I appreciate this, but

I also think individual creativity is given short shrift. You cannot understand organizational creativity if you don't have some personal creativity.



## All The Practical Stuff

*Creativity, Inc.* focuses on the practical stuff: how to hire, manage, present, and maintain a combination of change, balance, and stability in an organization. These are more problems of engineering than creativity, and I think Ed Catmull is more of an engineer than an artist.

Most of the successful creative people I know are more engineers than artists. That's certainly true of the scientists and partly true of the designers, and those are the people in my background. Those who are more artists than engineers tend to be more creative than practical and are not commercially successful. We applaud some extreme and unstable artists, but many crash and burn. Life is a practical problem.

My strength, if that's what you want to call it, is that I am creative and I manage to conclude my projects. In that, I consider myself an engineer. But where most engineers build nests and live in them, I build nests and move beyond them. Like an artist, I don't settle down.

I try to take the most important insights with me but, as has been said about mathematics, the core of the problem is what's left after you throw all the extraneous stuff away. Just as the Buddhists extoll non-attachment, so do mathematicians and also the best creative people. If you're surrounded by well-ordered stuff, then your mind is well-ordered, too, and this is a burden.

The summaries of Creativity, Inc. that I read cut away the fat and bone, and removed the formatting, explanation, commas, and conjunctions to leave only sparsest sentences and little juice. I read that and threw away all but the last chapter, chapter 11. From chapter 11 I took these four points.

## Chapter 11: The Unmade Future

People often assume that creative people have a sudden insight that guides them to produce new stuff. Catmull disagrees and asserts that creative individuals realize their visions after years of dedicated struggle.



### **The creative process as a marathon ...**

Speed is an illusion that conveys movement but not an arrival. You FEEL creativity as a change, as something new falls into place, but the size and importance of the change often cannot be discerned.

As with your inner ear, a small movement can reorient or disorient you. We are highly sensitive to change and it is often followed by anxiety. For many people, the sensation of change triggers a reflex of discomfort. Many go to great lengths to avoid change of any sort.

The creative process must be episodic. It is not a marathon, though it often emerges out of marathon-like planning, focus, determination, and strategy. Constant change is exhausting and ultimately depleting. You need rest both for recovery and vitality. Creativity flourishes when it is unconstrained, unobserved, and undisciplined. There is a difference between containment and constraintment.

Whereas reason likes to grow slowly, inspiration thrives on urgency. I think sex is one of the quintessentially creative acts, in spite of its leaving us empty-handed. Creation in all forms tends to be climactic. Creativity always involves some mysterious need for urgency that presses against resistance. It is said the most creative people tend to do

things near the last minute and, to the minds of the fastidious, they appear to procrastinate.

On the one hand, creative endeavors require a foundation, and often an extensive foundation. On the other hand, when the fruit is ripe the harvest is often frenetic. Fruit that is not picked when ready will rot on the vine. The marathon runner had better be ready to sprint.



### **If you only focus on failure...**

Any “thing” that you focus on will emerge in greater detail. That’s a given and the core of the Law of Attraction, which is more a consequence of attraction rather than a law of it. It is a reflection of how our minds build our reality from whatever we fixate on.

The question is whether the detail we perceive is real or only something we have imagined. Imagination focuses attention and begins the process of interaction. Imagination is like food but to create a result digestion must follow. The result of digestion is knowledge. You can create the imaginary, but if your imagination does not speak to you it has no life, or no life yet.

Creativity lies here, in the time during which the bread rises. Where the less creative person foresees, fashions, and follows a path to completion, the creative person cogitates, emotes, deviates, or recreates until novelty arrives. One follows the heart, not the mind. Emotion forges a connection with the whole, whereas intellect rides on the function of the parts.

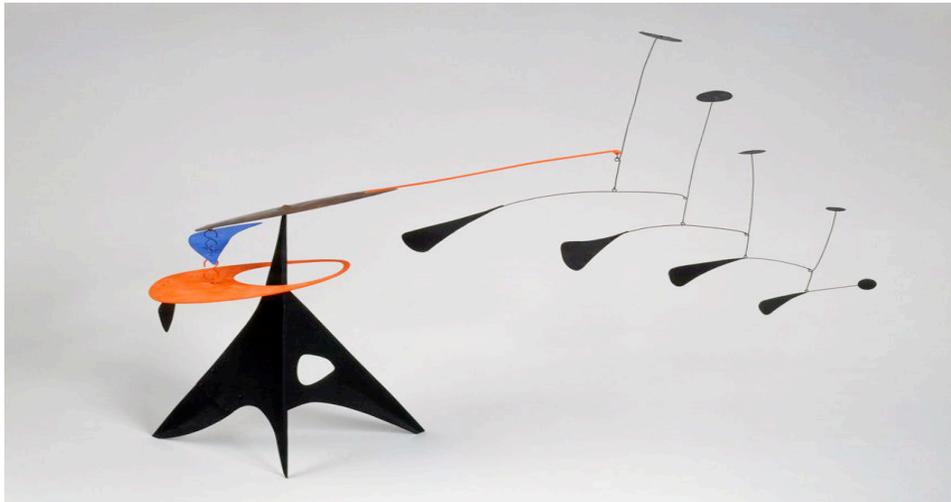
The opposite of failure is not success, it’s process. Failure and success are two nouns that describe outcomes of the old thought form, and you’re looking for a new one. You will miss this new process if you focus only on failure or success. You can’t focus on either outcome because you’re looking for a path or process that has never before led to either as it has never been taken anywhere.

You can create the image of failure or the image of success, but neither one is real until it comes to life. When they come to life they are first sustainable, for some period, and then, ideally, they become self-sustaining. Once they gain a permanence, once that new something has emerged, then you can move toward or away from it. Only then does

your creation have a reality separate from your belief.

There is a wisdom that comes from sensing whether your illusion is gaining life or remaining inert. New ideas are fragile and have a subtle pulse. Having insight into new ideas involves both subjective insight and objective analysis. One needs both, one needs to manage insight and analysis separately. Like inhaling and exhaling, both work toward the same result, but not together.

You will fail if you focus exclusively on failure if that failure is a real possibility. You may succeed if you focus exclusively on success if that success is a real possibility. You will not achieve what you don't focus on, but just focusing on something does not ensure you will achieve it. It must also be a real possibility.



### **Analyze the problem ...**

“Analyze the problem; don't avoid reflection.” This could be a statement that distinguishes humans from other animals. It seems almost incidental but how you approach problems determines everything that follows.

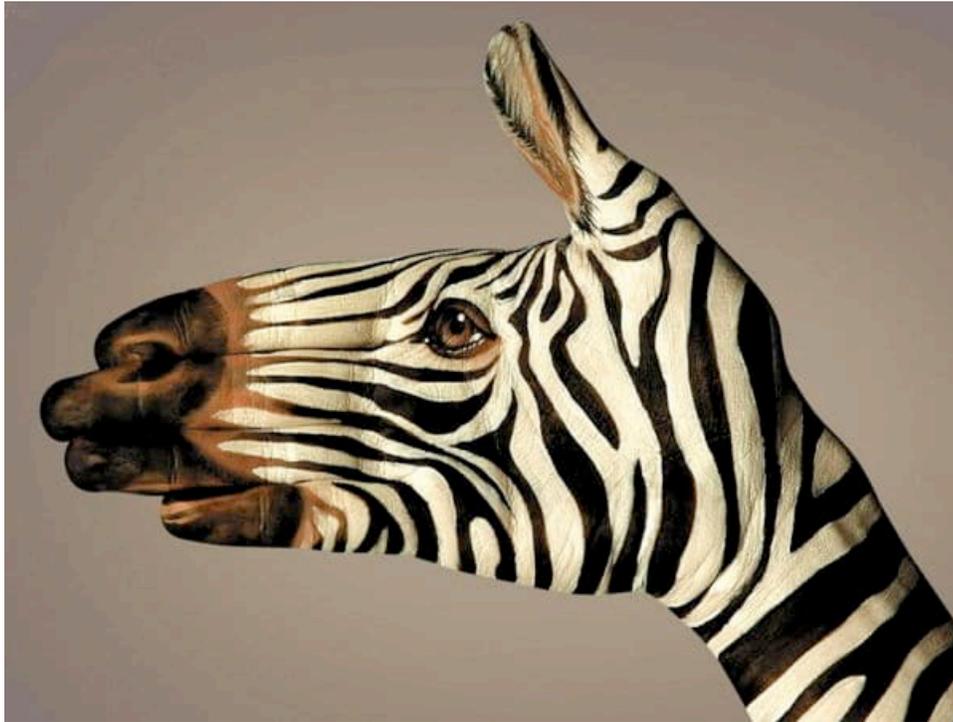
Approaching problems as sources of opportunity rather than sources of frustration is a reflection of your spirit. If you're inclined to see any problem as an opportunity, then you're likely to see every problem as an opportunity. As such, the advice to reframe problems as opportunities is practically useless. It may just as well apply to everything all the time. This cannot be a one-off attitude, it's a reflection of personality.

Many people confuse problem analysis with negative thinking believing that positive thinking entails the rejection of problems. From this perspective, criticism is deprecating or disheartening, and those who do criticize are disabling.

This can be true in some cases. Passive-aggressive people are those who disguise destructive intentions as a righteous suggestions. But objection and criticism are not the same things because criticism rests on analysis, while objections state personal boundaries.

Creative people are self-critical, but the successful ones are not self-destructive. Knowing this difference is crucial to the successful birth of your creations. There is a

world of difference between self-doubt and idea-doubt. Self-doubt is crippling; idea-doubt is challenging. Welcome doubt in your work, but not in yourself. Welcome those who know a problem well enough to criticize your solution, but not those who criticize you unless, of course, you deserve it!



### **Where you see yourself...**

There is a problem: the boundary between self-doubt and idea-doubt is not clear. As the author of our ideas, we bear responsibility for them. On a subtle landscape we take our work personally, like we love our children. Our work does reflect ourselves or else it has no meaning. This is dangerous territory. Many artists' self-esteem has succumbed to the contagion of idea-doubt, and there is something necessary in this. Real creation is, at some level, self-creation and the tragedy of an idea's failure is a personal one.

For most people being creative stays at the office, but for the deeper creatives it comes home. It is for this reason that being deeply creative is mentally destabilizing or, as is often the case, the force moves in the opposite direction: it is the personal need to reform that drives creativity in one's actions.

I don't know where to draw the line between self and object, or if we really have the power to deny our emotional need to judge ourselves on the basis of our work. I see only one secure defense: self-love. To love yourself means you will not value yourself in proportion to the value of the outcome of your efforts. And this should be the case because your self-image is the sum total of your personal value, while the outcome of your efforts is just one point on a near endless stream of explorations of the world. And if you can do this you are safe to pursue any goal, and to see every outcome as either a useful product or another step closer to one.



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