



IS ART DETERMINABLE?

A Study of How the Innate Human Psyche Controls Potential Creative Output



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A Proposition

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Foreword

To question whether art is determinable requires an element of clarity to be afforded to the reader, so forgive me for opening with an introduction to an introduction. I base my argument on establishing that human creativity emanates from a collective, structured and innate resource evidenced by storytelling. It will be established that humans are, to some degree, pre-programmed and this leads to humanity being considered to be predictable and hence determinable. I will apply this idea to art through the study of creativity. I am structuring this essay following approaches to Comparative Mythology (comparison of myths from different cultures, identifying shared themes), namely: linguistic, structural, psychological and phylogenetic. Followed by the application of this to the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy. Finally, I cover how this is shown in an art context and the consequences of this proposition.

Introduction

In literary criticism there is an understanding that, “fiction contains a limited number of basic plots” (Book Review, 2005). This seems to be because individuals have commonality in experience and thus strive for, and value, similar ideals. This has been established throughout time and across nations. “Story telling has a shape... traced back... to the very beginnings of the recorded world” (Yorke, 2015, pXI).

Building upon a formalist understanding of fiction, I will discuss how creativity is constrained through cultural and human contexts (for instance, societal limitations and genetics). By considering the zeitgeist of the times I hope to identify how the art of past eras has been constricted, and employ this to theorise how the art of the future could be determined. I will use this to realise whether freedom of choice is lessened due to the constriction of thought. This line of thinking has been exhibited in the novel *1984* by George Orwell in his use of the language ‘Newspeak’. Newspeak is a language of restricted grammar and vocabulary which serves to limit the autonomy of thought. “How could you have a slogan like ‘Freedom is Slavery’ when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact, there will be no thought, as we understand it now.” (Orwell, 1949, p157).

Formalised narrative (rigorous adherence to recognized forms) was highlighted by literary critic Vladimir Propp who, “identified 31 ‘narratemes’ (narrative units) that comprised the structure of many... stories” in Russian folklore (Changingminds.org, n.d.). Writer, James Boswell states: “How small a quantity of real fiction there is in the world; and that the same images, with... little variation, have served all the authors who have ever written,” (Boswell quoted in Booker, 2004, p8). Authors aspire to be original, but as psychologist Carl Jung says, perhaps we are all psychologically constructed the same essential way, and so we tell the same stories (Booker, 2004, p11). This could be due to an evolutionary trait, ancestral memory or, as Jung would say, ‘collective unconscious’ (Fritscher, 2019).

“Stories present us with an ideal picture of human nature” (Booker, 2004, p268). As we seem programmed to live out a particular narrative, we therefore represent and reinforce this narrative within

our lives subconsciously. This commonality in thought appears to be “beyond the storyteller’s conscious control” (Booker, 2004, p6). If all literature has the same base concepts, and this is because of humans maintaining the same fundamental base, then this can apply to art as well. “Adolf Bastian put forward the theory that the human mind seems to be so constituted that it naturally works in certain forms” (Booker, 2004, p11).

Throughout this essay I will study the constraints of the human condition and how this pertains to our notion of creativity, and any claim for the originality of ideas. I will question what it would mean for the future of art and society if all art could be predicted, and how this proposition has affected humanity for centuries. If this predictability and rhythmic nature ceased to exist, or never existed, where would humans be? Without art perhaps humans would have never left their caves and ventured into the unknown.

Chapter One - Linguistic and Structural Monomyth

The term 'monomyth' has been used as a term for a mythological archetype that re-occurs throughout the world's cultures. I will be looking at this idea in this chapter through similarity in language origin and structure of stories/myths. More specifically, I will draw upon the work of three theorists: Joseph Campbell (Professor of Literature), Christopher Booker (journalist) and John Yorke (television producer).

“Throughout the inhabited world, in all times and under every circumstance, the myths of man have flourished” (Campbell, 1968, p3). Where did stories come from, and why did we start telling them? A commonly accepted idea is that though the development of fire, humans achieved social stratification which lead to an increase in ‘daytime’ allowing more social time to occur. This community interaction is speculated to be important in the advancement of language and so creativity.

Most myths, stories and legends start with the creation story and the story of fire such as the Myth of Prometheus. In fact, Prometheus is used to denote creativity by some: “Prometheus’s gift of fire has given... the world and mankind the power to smelt, forge, fabricate and make, but an internal fire too: thanks to Prometheus we are now endowed with the divine spark, the creative fire, the consciousness that once belonged only to the gods.” (Fry, 2018, p1). This continued use of the creation story shows that humans strive to find our origin point. We want to know where we came from. Perhaps this inclusion of fire as the origin of the creative spark shown in the Prometheus myth and others gives some truth to the idea that stories originated around the fire.

Many scholars in the 19th century believed all myths showed signs of having evolved from poetic descriptions of the sun’s behaviour. According to this theory, these descriptions had become distorted into stories about gods and heroes. This tracking of the sun likely would have been used to predict crop cycles and yearly events as well as to teach. “Art, literature, myth... philosophy and ascetic disciplines are instruments to help the individual pass his limiting horizons into spheres of ever-expanding realization” (Campbell, 1968, p190); or perhaps as T. S. Eliot thought, “humankind cannot bear very

much reality... unless we subject the sprawling chaos of the universe to some kind of clarification it is impossible to stay sane” (Elliot quoted in Yorke, 2015, p212). We tell stories to distract from or attempt to explain life.

Academics have studied stories identifying key plots, character functions and motifs in droves. Propp analyzed fairy-tales for commonality, Campbell followed the heroes’ journey finding that “it will be always the one, shape shifting yet marvelously constant story that we find” (Campbell, 1968, p3), and Booker inspected the “base ideas” (Booker, 2004, p17). Most recently, Yorke said stories share the “same framework” (Yorke, 2015, pX). Why are stories something we are all drawn to tell, and “why do we all continue to draw our stories from the very same well?” (Yorke, 2015, pXI). Yorke also wrote “Stories are about someone wanting something but someone is in the way. ‘Tell me what you want’ said Anton Chekhov, ‘and I will tell you what manner of man you are’” (Yorke, 2015, p9). This mirrors life. Hasidic (Jewish theology) even says, “God created man in order to tell stories” (Booker, 2004, p593), showing that perhaps telling stories *is* our central purpose.

This essay relies on the idea that the narrative seen in literature and its basic plots can be applied to art in the same way. If this notion has persisted since we first gathered around the fire surely it passes onto all other areas of life? Perhaps narrative is the wrong word to use – I am insinuating that humans unconsciously portray the same stories in all forms of art, but is this accurate?

Roland Barthes seemingly agrees, stating that: “Narrative is present in myth, legend, fables... paintings... indeed, narrative starts with the very history of mankind” (Barthes and Dusit, 1975). In *Origins of Creativity*, Wilson says “Archetypes composed of universal stories and images, have been recognised in western culture since Aristotle analysed Sophocles tragic hero in Oedipus Rex,” (Wilson, 2018, p165). This shows that narrative has been thought to possess universal qualities since the beginning of its documentation. However, does this show that humans are programmed to think in a specific way or that the plots in literature are identical to the concepts in art?

In an alternate semantic argument Barolsky says:

Pictorial artists obviously do not narrate stories in the same way that writers do. In a certain sense, they do not narrate at all... Understanding (the art)... requires the beholder to retell the story to himself. This act of recollection is itself a narrative. The figures that refer to this narrative are not a narrative in themselves. (Barolsky, n.d.).

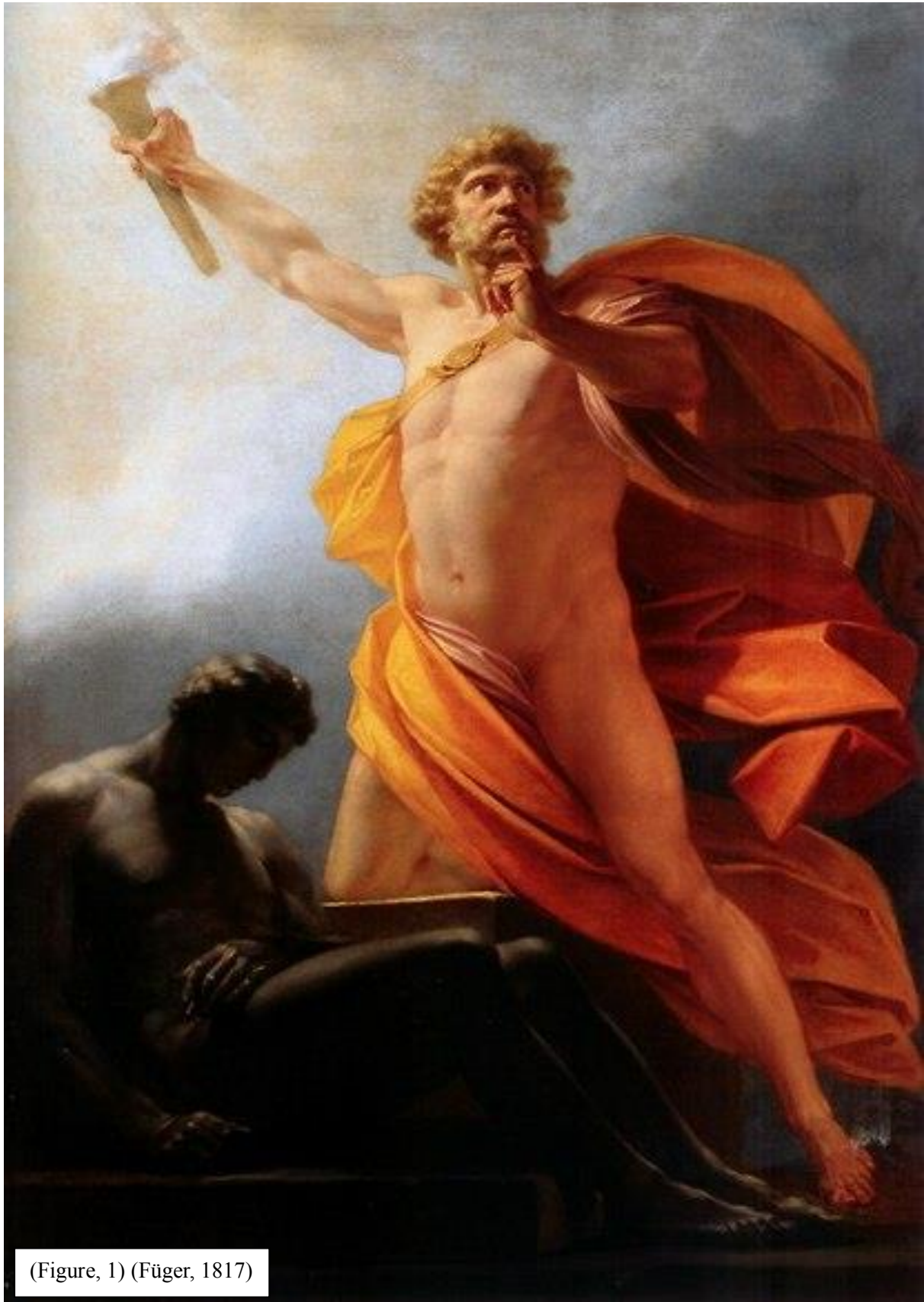
Because we talk of art and stories together it is inevitable for us to identify a narrative in art, although it would be wrong to say that this is the *same* narrative as found in literature. As Michelle Gauguin has pointed out: "if you don't include it, people will find it anyway, because we are pattern-seekers. We find stories and meaning in clouds, in the whorls on tree-trunks, and famously, the palms of hands." (Gauguin, 2014) Even if narrative is not the accurate word for both art and literature together the sentiment is correct.

Narrative art is art that tells a story. Much of Western art until the twentieth century has been narrative, depicting stories from religion, myth and legend...In modern art, formalist ideas have resulted in narrative being frowned upon. However, coded references to political or social issues, or to events in the artist's life are still commonplace. Such works are effectively modern allegories and generally require information from the artist to be fully understood (Tate, 2018).

Causing us to ask, does 'old' art conform to this base plot concept and not modern art? Perhaps contemporary art is widening its bounds, and humans are breaking free from past constraints. Or, as artists strive to be seen as 'original' we have hidden our stories and made them more cryptic. We are a product of our culture and society. Our current generation has developed with the internet age making us closer as a species and the world appear smaller. Although, perhaps though this connection causes us to have a more shared recollection, and then make art that reflects this. Art does not have to contain a full story arc, it just has to invoke a memory in the viewer.

In this chapter I have established that stories have a fixed set of narrative plots and this relates to art through our human ability to assign a narrative to experience. We have also touched on the origin of

stories through the creation of fire and Prometheus (Figure 1). As well as the concept that something inherent to human nature leads us to tell stories and create worlds as shown through stories having a fixed narrative. However, can this innate quality be proven?



(Figure, 1) (Füger, 1817)

Chapter Two - Psychological and Phylogenetic

Phylogenetic and psychological ideas relate to the nature versus nurture discussion. Is the story humanity tells innate or learnt? Phylogenetic origin to stories would mean that they are an innate and natural part of us that we have no control over – potentially relating to lack of free will, while if stories originate instead due to nurture then this is learnt through experience and can be controlled. While both influence us, which dominates?

“All stories are formed from the same template, writers simply don’t have a choice as the structure they use,” (Yorke, 2015, pXVI) But why is this? Maybe humans have a fundamental construct or this is learnt through the stories we tell children and the structuring of the world. The philosopher “[John] Locke proposed, the mind of the individual is at birth a blank slate... and it is experience of the world that fills this slate... all abstract ideas and complex thoughts owe their origins to our basic experience of the world” (Gergen, 1999, p9). In contrast Immanuel Kant argued that “in order to understand the world we must come prepared with certain innate ideas” (Gergen, 1999, p11). Kant believes that some aspect of the human organism comes with preconceived ideals. Indicating that perhaps we are programmed with some fundamental base concepts. While these are all ‘old’ ideas they are still relevant today as they influence current thinking and can be applied to our current understanding.

Plato believed in a similar idea to Kant. Plato argued for dualism. Dualism is the notion that humans have composite natures: the material part is the physical body and the non-material part is the mind/soul. The mind and body are thus linked. Materialism is the alternate view that the mind or soul cannot be separated from the body (Plato, and Jowett, 1996).

Plato maintained that the soul was eternal and not capable of destruction as when something decays it disintegrates. Its constituent parts lose their integrity and the thing ceases to be. The soul is immaterial and does not occupy space. It therefore does not disintegrate and is immortal. While the soul is immortal, the body is mortal. At the end of life, the soul is “set free” from the body. For Plato the goal of the soul is the world of forms, which can only be seen indirectly in the physical world. Forms are the non-

physical essences of all things and exist in the 'real world', all objects and matter in the world we experience (the shadow world) are merely imitations of the forms. Plato argues that real knowledge of the forms comes from the soul. He suggests that when we learn, we are actually recalling the knowledge of the forms that the soul had before it was 'imprisoned' in the body (Plato, and Jowett, 1996). In *Phaedo* Plato puts forward the above arguments. These ideas are akin to the genetic memory concept as described in psychology.

Genetic memory is a memory present at birth that exists in the absence of sensory experience, and is incorporated into the genome over long spans of time, it's part of a theory that we have an ancestral memory coded into our DNA and confirms that we do not start life as a 'blank slate'. Mice were experimented with to see if sensory experiences could be coded into their DNA. It was found that when a male mouse becomes afraid of a specific smell, this fear is transmitted into his sperm, integrating that fear into the DNA of his offspring (Hughes, 2013). Epigenetic studies have shown that changes in an organism's external environment, its life events, and even its choices, can influence the expression of its otherwise inflexible DNA code (Hughes, 2013).

This genetic memory or succession of memory harks back to Darwin's theory of evolution. Through natural selection humankind has changed because of our habitat and situation. "Our bodies are specialised for the ecosystem in which our species evolved. Our minds are accordingly limited." (Wilson, 2018, p69) This means that we are nevertheless restricted by the past conditions of our predecessors as this is coded within ourselves.

Humanity has matured but is still inhibited, we advance as we encounter new situations. "Phobias are almost entirely limited to risks acquired in the wild by our distant ancestors... our species has not yet had time to evolve phobias to knives or guns." (Wilson, 2018, p124) We have always shared certain traits, such as the "common instinct to generate language composed of arbitrary sounds and meanings. Also, there was the shared capacity to practise creative arts." (Wilson, 2018, p58). While this is clearly due to environmental factors, it still seems that this relates to nature as this is a common instinct.

This idea that humanity is ‘coded’ to a degree is widely and commonly thought: “the software of creativity comes pre-installed on the human hard drive” (Eagleman and Brandt, 2018, p184). This view is confirmed in religion and in society. Meaning, creativity surely is invariably within us.

Through the rhythms and unpredictability of our lives, “we relentlessly simulate what ifs” and become “masters at generating alternate realities” (Eagleman and Brandt, 2018, p27). It then appears that “creativity is a biological mandate” (Eagleman and Brandt, 2018, p31), and we have used creativity to hunt and build cultures, to advance civilisations and to tell stories. Hegel (philosopher) said important parts of ourselves could be found throughout history. To take this notion further and think every aspect of ourselves – who we are and who we will be – can be traced in our histories.

Through history we are bound by social and “cultural constraints... we might imagine that creativity has no bounds... (We) are shaped by social context” (Eagleman and Brandt, 2018, p108). This idea is shown by Gergen: “My life experiences are also bonded... it is not only that my words will inevitably carry the traces of nationality, gender, age and sexual preference, but my life experiences are also limiting” (Gergen, 1999, pVII). Campbell echoes this thought:

The individual...is limited as either a male or as female; at any given period of his life he is again limited as child, youth, mature adult, or ancient; furthermore, in his life role he is necessarily specialised as craftsman, tradesman... nun, or harlot; he cannot be all... From his group he has derived his techniques of life, the language in which he thinks, the ideas on which he thrives, through the past of that society descended the genes that built his body. (Campbell, 2004, p383)

Even the quotes I have implemented show humanity to be restricted, as the same ideas seem to be repeated across the ages. We only experience so much in our lives and that controls how we see the world, we are constricted by the environment we developed in – and the world views imposed on us by our community. “A modern European, can read Plato and Aristotle through from end to end, he can even write books expounding their philosophy, and all without understanding a single sentence. Unless

he has enough imagination, and enough power of detachment from the established meanings or thought forms of his own civilisation.” (Barfield. quoted in Read, 1965, p19) Our imaginative potential is narrowed by society and understanding of life similarly restricted. As I grew up in the Christian church I am also constrained by that worldview, and in this essay I will talk about God as I have learnt to perceive the world through the lessons I was taught as a child...

“What are the causes that make communities change from generation to generation...? The changes are irrespective of persons, and independent of individual control. They are due to the environment, to the circumstances, the physical geography, the ancestral conditions...” (James, 1880). I agree with this statement as “it is the peculiarity of living things not merely that they change under the influence of surrounding circumstances, but that any change which takes place in them is not lost but retained, and as it were built into the organism to serve as the foundation for future actions” (James, 1880). We are affected by everything that happens to us and that happened to our ancestors. Because of this, can we make a conscious choice to do anything? Or is every move already encoded into us? “There is no caprice, no spontaneous impulse, in human endeavours. Even tastes and inclinations must themselves be the result of surrounding causes.” (Allen, in James, 1880) This surely cannot be all down to environment, as “the same parents, living in the same environing conditions, may at one birth produce a genius, at the next an idiot or a monster” (James, 1880). Despite the extreme claim, it is one that seems credible.

Perhaps we can assign blame to a ‘Higher Power’. Most, if not all societies, have a version of the creator God, a being that created the world and all living creatures. I am focusing on the Abrahamic God (of Western religion), as while I am studying how humans developed creativity in general, I am looking at this from my own Western point of view, researching predominantly European books, artists and philosophers. My ideas and subsequently this thesis will always be constrained in this way, by my own environmental circumstances.

The Abrahamic God is thought to be omniscient, a term that can be defined in two main ways. The first is that God has unlimited knowledge of everything in all of time, and God is timeless. The second definition is that God has limited knowledge as God cannot know the logically impossible or the future. God’s knowledge is gained through time, and is everlasting. Anselm called God “supremely perceptive”

(Anselm, 2010). In the Christian Bible, God is shown to have an all-knowing nature (following definition 1), and in 'Genesis 3' we learn that God has perfect knowledge of everything; the serpent commenting that "you will be like God knowing good and evil" (Holy Bible, 1986). The belief that God is all knowing raises philosophical problems, the main one being that if God has an awareness of the future acts of humans, it would suggest that subsequent events we believe to be contingent in relation to circumstances and choices are not contingent at all, but necessary. This would conflict with the notion of free will, indicating that we have no responsibility for our actions as God already knows our decisions and they cannot change. Kant said: "Without freedom, there can be no moral choices." (Martin, 2016). However, many Christians refute this idea, arguing that we still have free will. Friedrich Schleiermacher argues God can predict how people will act, but this doesn't make the knowledge causal (Martin, 2016).

The philosopher, Boethius's view was that any negative consequences of Gods omniscience can be avoided because foreknowledge and freewill are compatible. Divine intelligence can see the future in a way that a human cannot reason, because God is eternal and humans are not. "Only that which comprehends the whole plenitude of endless life together, from which no future thing nor any past thing is absent, can justly be called eternal." (Mirus, 2017). According to Boethius, God is a being outside of time whose foreknowledge is not foreknowledge of things future to God, "but knowledge of a never changing present" (Mirus, 2017).

Following this, individuals could have all of their ideas and lives mapped out for them before they're even born. This concept ties in well with genetic coding and pattern recognition and would explain why humans seem to conform to a set number of ideals. If all humans were made by one curator "in the image of God," (Holy Bible, 1986) and from the same template, why wouldn't we all have this base setting coded within us?

Mythology has been interpreted by the modern intellect as a primitive, fumbling effort to explain the world of nature (Frazer); as a production of poetical fantasy from prehistoric time, misunderstood by succeeding ages (Muller); as a repository of allegorical instruction to shape the individual to his group (Durkheim); as a group dream,

symptomatic of archetypal urges within the depths of human psyche (Jung); as the traditional vehicle of man's profoundest metaphysical insights (Coomaraswamg); and as God's revelation to His children (the church). Mythology is all of these... Mythology shows itself to be as amenable as life itself to the obsessions and requirements of the individual, the race, the age." (Campbell, 2004, p382).

If stories encompass everything then is this pointing to them having an innate quality?

Within this discussion I am leading towards nature (phylogenetic). I think we are all coded in some fundamental way, and while nurture clearly influences this, it comes down to an innate quality as even the way we nurture is due to nature in the first place. Depending on your view, this could be due to God or genetics or the 'forms' but there is some kind of pre-knowledge. If we are programmed, and everything we do is determined by this code, then the way we nurture is also somewhat determined by our nature – a very circular argument and one in which the terms themselves can be questioned.

Chapter Three - Apollonian and Dionysian

What drives us to tell stories? Why do stories and art works survive the ages? If we are all programmed to follow one story then wouldn't its expression be consistent in style rather than in periods of Classicism or Romanticism in literature, and Abstract Expressionism or Conceptualism in art?

Yorke says: "Art... encapsulates the continuing battle between order and chaos" and "art owes its continuous evolution to the Apollonian – Dionysian duality" (Yorke, 2018, p77). It would seem that everything owes its advancement to this dichotomy. The Apollonian – Dionysian duality is the notion of order verses chaos (Apollo representing order and Dionysus representing chaos). Camille Paglia argues that humans developed through revolt against chthonic forces of nature turning to the Apollonian trait of ordered creation (Paglia, 2001). This is a battle that has been raging for centuries. Once we achieve a semblance of order (Classicism, for example), humanity gets despondent and revolts (Romanticism). This can be seen in popular culture, including in the film *The Matrix*:

Did you know that the first Matrix was designed to be a perfect human world, where none suffered? Where everyone would be happy? It was a disaster. No one would accept the program... I believe that, as a species, human beings define their reality through misery and suffering. The perfect world was a dream that your primitive cerebrum kept trying to wake up from. Which is why the Matrix was redesigned to this. (*The Matrix*, 1999)

Even when everything can be predicted and goes well, we feel a sense of uncertainty. We need unpredictability to create and thrive, as instability leads us to try to create stability. Uncertainty allows us to invent and evolve as a species.

Incorporating the idea of the linguistic and structural monomyth from earlier in this thesis (Chapter 1), it is clear that many cultures have a creation myth in which a group of younger, more civilized gods conquers or struggles against a group of older gods who represent the forces of chaos (Hesiod and

Lombardo, 1993). For example, in Greek mythology the Olympian gods defeat the Titans, an older and more primitive divine race, and thus establish cosmic order (Squire, 2013). This myth of the gods conquering demons - and order conquering chaos – seems innate and universal.

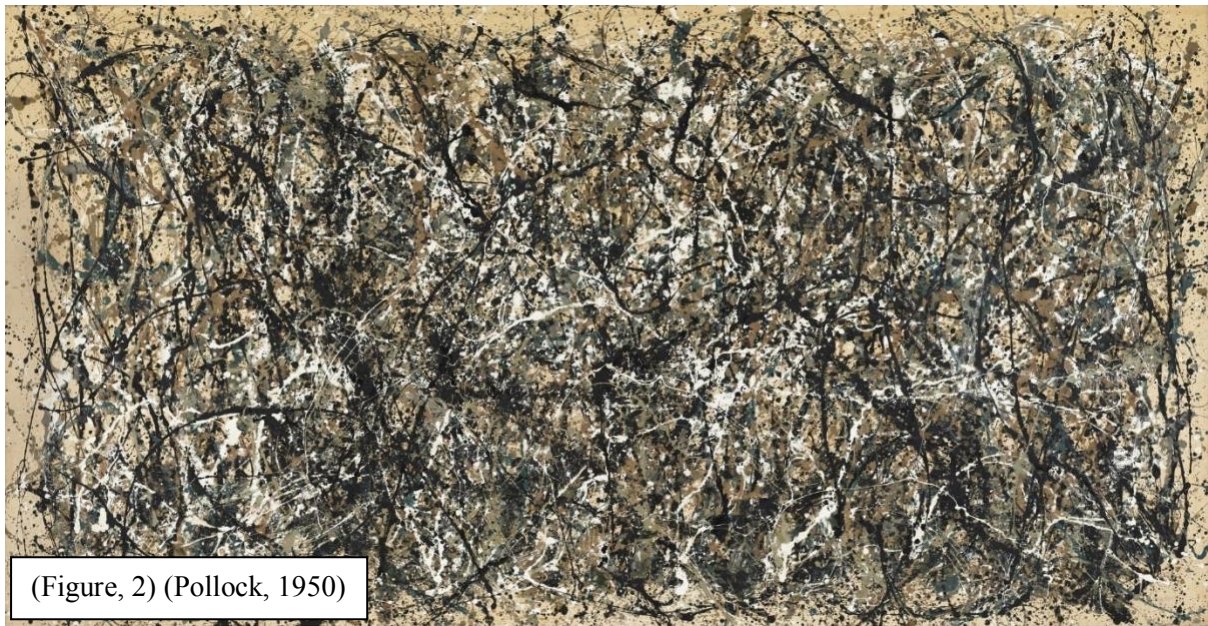
We are driven by this dichotomy. Humanity seems to “oscillate between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life” (Caruth quoted in Saltzman, 2006, p6). The “Greatest question we ask ourselves: What happens when we die?” (‘Beyond Death’, 2016); our narratives encapsulate this. Death informs life, and the fear of life ending both motivates us and holds us back: “(I’m) Afraid of not having done enough... of not living enough. I would say this drives me as much as anything. A fear of not living.” (Clark, 2017) The figure of death appears repeatedly in literature, theatre and every form of art imaginable, it unites every living being in our universe, and it is the only thing we can be sure of. “I’ve come to believe the fear of death drives all men” (Alexander, 2004). Death is then seen as chaos and life is an attempt to impose order: “We cannot accept chaos; we have to order it” (Yorke, 2018).

Uncertainty is a fundamental condition of human life. We try to master it by discovering the regularities in events which enable us to predict and control them... The human mind possesses a marvellous capacity to perceive order and design in the welter of experience. We can abstract from each unique event the qualities which make it recognisable as one of a class of events whose behaviour we can learn to predict, creating a world of assumed stability (Marris, 1996, p1).

We try to predict every eventuality but we can never do this completely accurately so we rely on things that seem to have worked in the past. But how does a specific artistic genre such as Abstract Expressionism fit this concept when it appears to be spontaneous and intuitive?

“Automatic art is seemingly without intention,” but “art making is an intentional activity, even if it incorporates non-deliberate, unconscious, and spontaneous processes” (Livingston, 2005, p209). How can both be true? Focusing on painter Jackson Pollock we see that “at first glance Pollock’s Abstract-expressionism appears to be chaotic but dig deeper and it’s possible to detect an underlying structure

there too. Pollock's paintings are 'fractal', tiny sections of the work mimic the structure of the whole; simple geometric patterns are repeated in different magnifications," (Yorke, 2018, p78). A pattern exists in the chaos and humans can identify this.



"Storytelling, then, is born from our need to order everything outside ourselves... it is only through story that we are able to bring our inner selves into line with the external world. In that process some kind of sense is made, and if we're lucky, some kind of truth discovered." (Yorke, 2018, p231). This idea is mirrored in *The Runaway Species* (by Eagleman and Brandt): "For thousands of years, the arts have given us direct access to our inner lives, offering us glimpses not only of what we think about, but also how we think. No culture in human history has been without its, music, visual arts and storytelling" (Eagleman and Brandt, 2018, p9).

We all tell stories, and this seems to bring some order to the chaos of life, in that we learn through stories. Stories teach is morals and show us how we could live our lives. They allow us a freedom to predict and play by generating abstracts. Creativity fuels humanity, and this dichotomy fuels creativity. "Stories will tend to survive because they tap into our universal desires, feelings and symbols" (Yorke, 2018, p227).

Chapter Four – The Past and the Future

In this chapter I will explore how art making is an innate creative process that incorporates this dynamic notion of chaos versus order, and how artworks are somewhat limited and predictable.

The Creation of Adam (Figure, 3) is a fresco painting by Michelangelo (1512). It illustrates the biblical creation narrative in which God creates mankind. Bramante (an architect) resented Michelangelo so he convinced the Pope to commission him in a medium which he was unfamiliar with (Greatest Artists and Their Paintings, 2002). Michelangelo persuaded Pope Julius to give him a free hand in the painting and proposed a different and more complex scheme of works that varied from the original plan. *The Creation of Adam* is thought to depict the excerpt “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him.” (The Holy Bible, 1986) The inspiration for Michelangelo’s treatment of the subject may come from a medieval hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, which asks the “finger of the paternal right hand” to give the faithful speech. This shows how influenced by society and history humanity has always been.

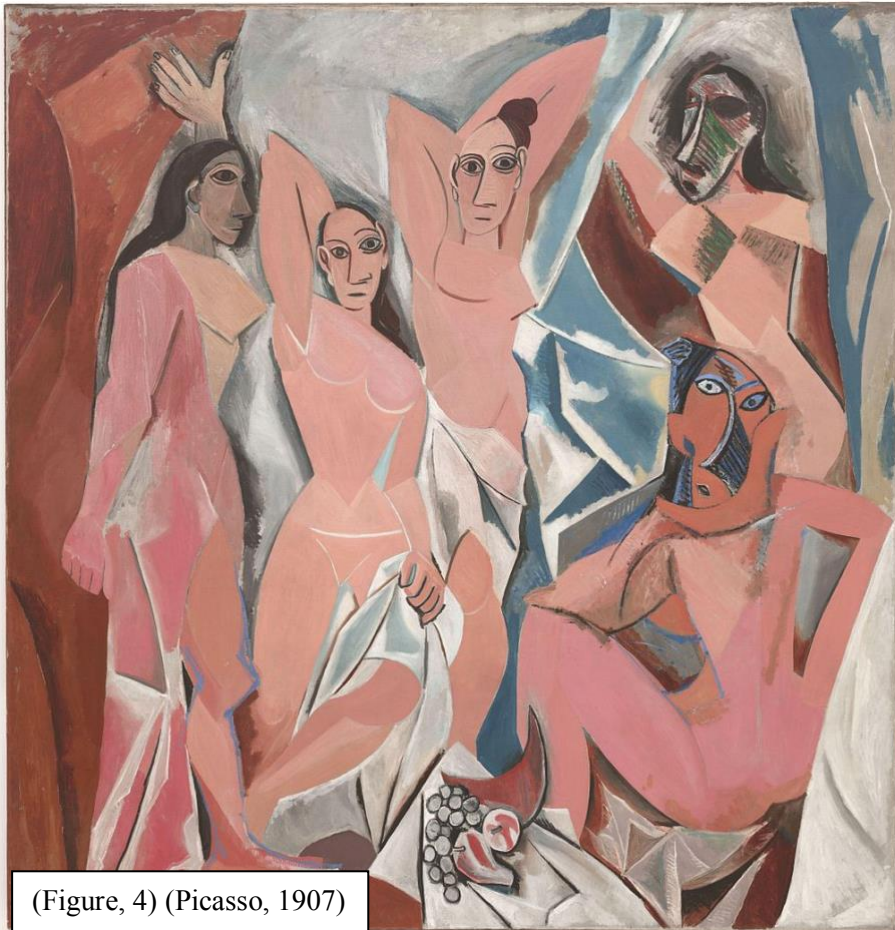


Although, how is this work constrained and predictable? Michelangelo was the son of a sculptor and an apprentice to an artist by the age of fourteen (Greatest Artists and Their Paintings, 2002). As such, he had years to build up his skills. Had his father switched jobs he would have never been bought up learning how to carve stone and building up precision in his art. Michelangelo was also noticed by a

prominent family because of his skill which opened up new avenues to him. However, he was limited by his commissions and the materials he had to use. He had a sculptor's upbringing giving him a precise area of expertise but also narrowing him to that style. The work is to a degree predictable as at the time so many paintings of the same kind were being commissioned. His work was one of many but stands out because he had the skills and representation of an old family. To quote Gergen again: "Traces of his nationality, gender, age and sexual preference" (Gergen, 1999, pVII) will always be prevalent in his work as it is with anything he or we create.

"Human creativity does not emerge from a vacuum. We draw on our experience and the raw materials around us to fashion the world" (Eagleman and Brandt, 2018, p38). The same ideas have influenced many. As "Mark Twain said 'history rhymes'" (Eagleman and Brandt, 2018). There is this idea of the 'isolated artist' that is not true as we are too influenced by the world to ever be isolated from it. Take, for instance, the artist Picasso and scientist Einstein. Both read a paper by Henri Poincare (*Science and Hypothesis*, 1902) and both were inspired by it to expand their works further: Einstein creating the theory of relativity and Picasso attempting to depict multiple dimensions in his work (Miller, 2012). The same concepts influence in different ways. Hundreds of people could read the same paper and not go on to change the world or leave any sort of lasting impression.

Focusing on Picasso's painting *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) (Figure, 4), it becomes clear how work can be reverse-engineered and ideas can be traced. "Paul Cézanne... had broken apart the visual plane into geometric shapes and blotches of colour." (Eagleman and Brandt, 2018, p45). Picasso had called Cézanne his "one and only master." Picasso's work was also influenced by El Greco's *The Opening of The Fifth Seal* (1608–1614) (Figure, 5) and modelled a large part of his own work on this piece. He copied the bunched groups of nudes and even used the same size canvas. While Picasso was painting *Les Femmes d'Alger* "there was an exhibition of African masks at a nearby museum" (Eagleman and Brandt, 2018) and he wrote that this is where he got the idea for the elongated faces in his work. If that exhibition hadn't been on, and he hadn't seen *The Opening of The Fifth Seal*, this work would have never been created.



(Figure, 4) (Picasso, 1907)



(Figure, 5) (Greco, 1608 - 1614)

It is hard to work out how people of the past were constrained in their creativity. Perhaps, Michelangelo was limited by computers not existing while he was alive, and we are constrained because computers are accessible to us now. We can theorise by looking at history. For instance, we know that Michelangelo's father was a stone carver which influenced him, and that he had to work long hours laying on his back using a material he wasn't proficient in. But which aspects of this limited him? It is impossible to say, perhaps working in an unknown material allowed him to experiment more, and maybe being the son of a stone carver added a lot of pressure to go into his father's business. Yet overall I think it depends on the innate qualities of the person to how they will react, which can be tracked and determined with enough data. To track this you would have to follow Boethius's view of God and "see everything as though from a lofty peak." (Duncombe, 2014). There is simply too much contingency in life.

Through this essay I have considered art of the past, biblical art, and contemporary art, and shown how art of the past is created in context, and with various constraints. Now allow me to make a leap of logic – if all art in the past is created under societal ideals of the time this will continue into the future allowing art a degree of predictability. As human creativity seems to be constrained by an innate condition, then art can be seen to be determinable.

Art of the past denotes work of the future *because* we are inspired by art of the past. Also, as humans have a limited capacity for creativity, no ideas are original, but are an amalgamation of inherited ideas. Yes, we advance but we advance in a similar matter to what went before, and we seem doomed to repeat our history and our art. This is the curse of humanity.

This is all speculative. Can art actually be predicted? There is too much to consider for a human to be able to predict art to come. Humans are too unpredictable and are too constrained by the many factors I have presented over the previous chapters to ever have a clear enough view to analyse themselves. We are literally too close to the subjects. However, could we predict this future with computers? And moreover, should we? Psychology lecturer Duncan Moss (Moss, 2018), in an interview, remarked that if computer programmes could predict stories and art, "this would be so sad." He said the world wants

us to create things and that we are in a “dance with the universe.” I think this is a beautiful image and yes it would be sad if everything we ever made could be reduced to an (predictive) algorithm. We need uncertainty in life to find the beauty. An algorithm would limit things like free will and perhaps remove some purpose in life.

Let’s suppose we created an algorithm to predict all art and plugged this into a computer for it to show us the future of art. Would computers have the imagination to create art in the same way as humans? Art requires some human element that a machine just lacks. “Computers can’t understand the meanings of program, work, art and our life” (Reichardt, 1971) despite the many attempts to do just this – from the algorists to contemporary machine learning techniques computers lack an innate quality that humans possesses.

I went to see the exhibition “*Chance and Control: Art in the Age of Computers*” at the V&A (2018), that referred to the 1968 exhibition “*Cybernetic Serendipity*”. I enjoyed seeing how computer programs were being used in art. However, the exhibition fell flat. No works could be said to be completely computer made, and the ones that were ‘mostly’ computer made lacked any kind of human dimension or 'soul'. The artist Hiroshi Kawano had hoped to gain insight into the logic underpinning our creative process through computer art. Kawano, who specialised in aesthetics and the philosophy of science, produced a work in ‘*Chance and Control*’ called *Untitled (Red Tree)* (1971) (Figure, 6), a screen-printed computer-generated image:



(Figure, 6) (Kawano, 1972)

Kawano “believed the artistic process could be taught to a computer and programmed, creating an autonomous machine that could make its own artistic judgements.” (Kawano, 1972) I also believe this to an extent as I think a computer program could be made to emulate human creativity and produce art to come such as an A.I. However, I do not think humans have developed sufficiently sophisticated programs yet, and even if this could be done I think this would ruin a fundamental part of humanity; the uncertainty.

I have adopted a child named "System 360/75" from IBM. Though I am sorry that his eyes are still rather short-sighted because of his young age, I have decided to bring him up to be a painter as his tabula rasa brain with 256 K bytes has fortunately been bestowed with an a priori exact memory. By means of Fortran programs I have given him all my aesthetic knowledge, including a painting algorithm, based on Markov-process model, which can approximately solve the problem of analyzing and synthetizing the images of pictures. Soon he grew up to possess the ability to learn picture-painting by himself under my art-education, and to paint new pictures creatively visualizing a general image from the pictures he saw in his own artistic experience. The picture "Red Tree" is one of the works he produced on September 30, 1971, in just 8 minutes, after learning 7 pictures I showed him. Now I am looking forward to my lovely child's becoming some day a superior painter able to create pictures with human qualities.

Hiroshi Kawano

(Figure, 7) (Breeze, 2016)

The artwork created by Kawano or “System 360/75” could be argued to be a factor of nature, the system is given its ‘genetic makeup’ and works from a source, and its environment effects it. However, this system does not allow for choice. The system is given images to look at then extrapolates the data it has been told to collect. It is not using its own creativity or intuition. But then do we suffer the same problem? If we are programmed – as I have argued in the previous chapters – then are humans different from an advance computer? One that is able to adapt to input and environment? We cannot be said to have original thoughts, and the world feeds us images we then extrapolate from to create things. While this is an old source the idea behind it still rings true.

Therefore, what would the outcome of this coded nature be and how does it affect the world? If this predictability and rhythmic nature ceased to exist, or never existed where would humans be? How important is the art and work of the past regarding the future of humanity?

In actuality it is impossible to say, to quote William James: “The causes which operate in these incommensurable cycles are connected with one another only if we take the whole universe into account... it is for human necessity – to regard them as disconnected and irrelevant to one another.” (James, 1880) There is too much data to corroborate these thoughts or to ever prove these concepts at this moment in time. The entirety of time, history and apparent imagination would have to be taken into account. Life and even the human mind are things we do not understand yet and I doubt we ever will, only the future will tell.

To write this essay, I have spent several months going to seminars, talks, exhibitions, reading numerous books, interviewing and emailing people. The essay draws on this as well as my ‘innate’ knowledge and is constrained in the same ways I am. There can be no conclusion to this thesis just a gathering of knowledge.

Humans appear to have some innate knowledge that makes us human and gives us commonality. This could be the soul or genetics or some other force but nevertheless there is something that connects us

all and this influence in our lives can be demonstrated in our creativity. This, in turn, is evidenced by storytelling. “In the end we are all in a sense experts on stories, because nothing is closer to us than to see the world in the form of stories. Not only are our heads full of stories all the time; we are each of us acting out our own story throughout our lives” (Booker, 2004, p701).

Word Count: 6971

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