

rB Problem of Creativity | Rod Brace

<http://rodbrace.com/article/creativity>

At Walt Disney World in Orlando there is a Lego store that overflows with every possible Lego piece and kit. For the Lego-ly inspired, one can make a replica of just about every form known to man from these pieces. The store is an overwhelming collection of all things Lego. Yet, the WOW of the store is not in the store, but rather just outside the store. It is there that children and adults alike marvel at the massive configurations of these, tiny colored building blocks. There is a sea serpent emerging from the lake extending fifty or so feet in length. There is a seven foot high transformer toy leering down at the gawking passersby crowds. A family of Lego tourists are taking pictures, which inspires real life tourist families to stand beside the life-size Lego mom, dad and kids to get their photo taken. All of these displays are built with tiny, regular sized Lego blocks taking on shapes and magnitudes that we have never seen. The assembly of these primary color miniature bricks is truly unique.

No doubt, thousands of books have been written on creativity. Most of these books are peppered with suggestions on creating an environment in which to be creative. A few have tips on changing your paradigm or looking for the unusual. But, given the continued drive by organizations to stimulate creativity, it appears that there is not a dependable way to create creativity. I've concluded that creativity, in the sense we are searching for it, not only does not exist, but is impossible to conjure up.

The word "create" appears 86 times in the bible and it always refers to an activity performed by God. God is the Creator, therefore He creates. There are no cases in which a human creates in this sense of the word. God doesn't build. God speaks creation into being. God doesn't construct. God proclaims something to be in existence. God's creativity brings something forth from nothing other than His will that it exists. Humans will not be found in the bible, nor in life, creating like God. The first recorded instance in which man was said to be a creator of something was in 1482 as a creator of poetry. Man was later described as creating art, or creating an architectural marvel. As mankind moved into the Renaissance period, man was creating at levels never experienced in history, or at least his results were now seen to be creations. When the twentieth century arrived, man was creating at will in fashions and magnitudes never before seen. Man was now a full fledged creator according to our vocabulary. Man was said to be creative. The debate over man's ability to create went back and forth as the Reformed theologians warned of the inherent pride that looms close when man is deemed to be a creator. Opposing arguments were offered up by the Sacramentalist theologians pointing to the nature of man as "imago deo" or in the image of God. Man in this sense was the little "c" creator who created out of the ability given to them by God.

For me, I find myself drawn to the story of Bezalel as I search for an response to our quest for creativity.

Bezalel is mentioned only a couple of places in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), primarily in Exodus (35:30 and beyond) as a gifted artisan who was to interpret some detailed directions from God regarding the construction of a mobile sanctuary and its contents. We

are told that God gave Bezalel (1) wisdom, the insight or perspective to see the big picture and how everything fit together. Bezalel was given (2) understanding, an intelligence and ability to problem solve. Then (3) God gave Bezalel knowledge, the know-how of a particular talent and finally, Bezalel received (4) craftsmanship from God to be a master of his technique. In the verses that follow, Bezalel and his co-workers made many great things including the Ark of the Covenant, an ornate work of wood and gold. The bible said that Bezalel made all of these things. Bezalel was never described as creating them. Verse after verse we are told that Bezalel made not created. Bezalel took wood, fabric and gold and made stunning items. He constructed and fabricated from the raw materials that God had created. He did not, in the sense of the biblical "create" duplicate God's ability to speak into existence newness. Bezalel did however use his God-given wisdom, understanding, knowledge and craftsmanship to do great things for God.

It is in this story of Bezalel that organizations find what they are looking for. When a leader says she wants her team to be more creative, we must ask what do you want them to create that has not already been created by God? God has given us the building blocks, the Legos if you will, to make great things. He puts within us the ability to think and reason in a way that assembles these blocks into new ideas or new applications. We see new patterns form as we assemble his created pieces. We showcase God's creation by assembling and organizing what He has given us in new and stunning ways. We build on the history of what has been made to see new ways to use what we know.

Semantics plays a big part in the distinction between creating and constructing but the subtle difference moves an organization to place a higher value on a team and their ability to connect the parts that already exist rather than seek a self-serving pattern of conjuring the new as a source of individual fame. Too much time is spent trying to pull something from nothing instead of considering the pre-existing parts and combining them in unique ways.

Creativity in the way we seek it, does not exist. It's pursuit ends in a prideful dead end that is disruptive to organizational goals and progress. Creativity in this way becomes an exercise in pride for the sake of creativity. Rather, we should respond to a need by assembling what God has created for a purpose. We are told that Bezalel was given these attributes by God "for the service of the sanctuary." His work was purposeful, rather than just an exercise in achieving selfish recognition.

By setting aside our ineffective pursuit of organizational creativity, we can see more clearly the desired destination; the outcome. As we employ our God-given wisdom we see the big picture, the association of little parts toward the journey to the end result. We have an understanding that begins to lay open the problem at hand examining each part. The knowledge of how our talent can be applied to that problem begins to solidify our approach and apply our skill and craftsmanship to rearrange the parts in new and meaningful ways. It is this alignment of meaning, followed by a new approach, that organizations desire. Unique assemblage of the raw materials and thoughts created in and for us by God will achieve the desired outcomes.

Chasing after fanciful dreams of creating something genuinely new, leaves organizations paralyzed by desiring what they cannot humanly create. When we back away from the attempt to conjure newness and map a new route to a purposeful goal we do inspired work.

Check the vocabulary of your organization. Are you hopeful creators or wise makers of new solutions? We are created to be makers, not makers of the created.