

Eigen, M. (1982). Creativity, Instincual Fantasy and Ideal Images. *Psychoanal. Rev.*, 69:317-339.



(1982). *Psychoanalytic Review*, 69:317-339

## Creativity, Instincual Fantasy and Ideal Images

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### Introduction

Creative activity is profoundly rooted in a fundamental ambiguity of human experience: the fact that we can experience ourselves as both embodied and disembodied at the same time. The basic tension between two worlds or dimensions of experience has been recognized by psychoanalytic thinkers in such concepts as “body ego” and “observing ego” (Freud, 1923; Greenson, 1967), “somatic ego feeling” and “psychic ego feeling” (Federn, 1952), “body self” and “mind self” (Kohut, 1971), and “body ego” and “transcendental ego” (Elkin, 1972). We move within and between these two poles, now immersed in thought, now in body experience. In extreme states of dissociation the observing function becomes split off from immediate experiencing (Federn, 1952; Arlow, 1966). More generally the flow of interest flexibly shifts in emphasis as cathexes fluctuate in characteristic ways. In optimal instances the ego's double experience of itself reflects a natural division or differentiated unity. At such moments one may take oneself for granted or experience oneself as “whole” in harmonious well being. Creative activity frequently appears to be motivated by the intention to reconcile these two primary poles of human experience. It may be prompted by the wish to reduce the tension between them or represent an expressive overflow of their felt harmony.

Milner (1969, 1973) and Ehrenzweig (1971), in particular, point out various ways the ego symbolizes its shifting states of tension and harmony as it moves through different worlds of experience. The ego, for example, may represent its own self-experience and, more broadly, its sense of psychic creativity by means of androgynous god images (Ehrenzweig, 1971, Parts IV & V). It may, too, express its

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implicit awareness of its dual nature by means of images which portray various degrees of mind-body separation and union. Thus images of facial features superimposed upon a lower body area or vice versa can, we shall see (Milner, 1973: Appendix; below, pp. 17-20) intimate something of the ambiguous interplay between representatives of mental and physical aspects of experience.

The quality of analytic outcome may be related to whether and to what extent a patient can allow symbols of psychic creativity to emerge and, finally, be integrated with body experience. In an earlier paper (Eigen, 1973) I described patients who were able to absorb a healing experience of the ego reflecting itself in a disembodied and isolated way, albeit within the context of the therapy relationship. Some patients find it difficult to go beyond the confines of body imagery and values while others find it more difficult to enter the body and live in it fully. In the present paper a patient, F, who eventually was able to produce symbolic experiences of creativity itself is contrasted with another patient, B, who could not allow himself to transcend body oriented ego experiences. Both patients exhibited severely resistant character disorders and both ostensibly entered treatment because of sexual impotence. In each case impotence was cured. However, the quality of cure in F's case was inestimably better inasmuch as he was able to move far beyond symptom relief.

Although both patients possessed a gift for meaningful, spontaneous imagery, only F systematically produced transference images of creativity as such. What was particularly significant in F's growing capacity to experience symbolic expressions of psychic creativity was his ability to create ideal images which he could attach not only to self and other representations but to an evolving, useable ego-ideal. The mind spontaneously creates ideal images which enter into varied points of tension and harmony with representations of material reality. The ability to sustain the tension between representations of ideal and material realities is an essential condition of creative growth and work. A vital ego-ideal provides an ideal pole of experience which attracts representations of material reality which are relevant for its purposes. Thus the ego-ideal may come to act as a nodal point for the convergence and transformation of symbolic expressions of ideal and material experience. Insofar as the ego-ideal helps to stimulate and support creative activity it often also serves as a symbolic mirror of creativity itself. For example, F's ego-ideal, as will be seen, ultimately

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mirrored and represented his experience of creativity. With the support of the therapeutic relationship the newly restored ego-ideal was able to withstand both cynical attacks and threats of fusion. By so doing it was enabled to undergo the maturation requisite for it to play a significant role in the process of integrating ideal and material dimensions of experience, a never-ending ideal of growth.

Although ideal visions vary in specific content they normally convey some sense of infinite or absolute perfection (Bion, 1970). In order to facilitate discussion a generic term, *ideal imago*, will be coined to represent what is constant in the consciously and unconsciously intended ideal objects of cognition. The developmental course of the *ideal imago*, particularly with reference to the ego-ideal as a symbolic expression of creative experience, is discussed following the case presentations.<sup>1</sup>

### Case of B

B had been married over a year and only on several occasions had he been able to have sexual intercourse, and then with premature ejaculation. He could sustain erection and achieve orgasm during mutual masturbation which was his usual sexual activity. If he placed his penis near his wife's vagina during masturbation he lost his erection almost instantaneously. He had very little sexual activity prior to marriage. B initially said he functioned well enough in other areas of his life.

B's central concern was to preserve his marriage. Before marriage he had been extremely isolated. He had lived alone with his mother. His wife was his first deep contact outside of his family and they fast became inseparable. She accompanied him to sessions and remained in the waiting room. Before sessions I often found them holding one another and after sessions they usually embraced. He could not relinquish this behavior throughout his analysis. They clung to their island of safety with a vengeance, a defiant oneness, at once formless and determined. There was something proud in their dependent isolation, as though they were saying, "What you see is a hard-won creation: Hands off!" Other persons seemed to be enemies.

In much of the early part of his therapy B ventilated long held back fantasies and feelings about his mother. He had lived alone with her from the age of four until age 30, when he married. His father

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left home when B was four and died five years later. He depicted his father as weak and futile, constantly demeaned by mother. In B's view his father's strongest moment was his leaving. He felt his mother turned his father into a vegetable and, in effect, killed him. B, afraid of his mother, became outwardly polite and compliant. In his words, "I learned to play dead in order to avoid my father's fate." At the same time he felt a longing for mother, tinged with protective worry. He frequently was excessively anxious over her well being. His wish to appear good was threatened by "bad thoughts," obsessive intrusions. He periodically broke out with uncontrollable fits or temper tantrums and occasionally smeared himself with feces until age eight. He had erratically soiled throughout childhood. He spent much energy warding off his hate.

Once he began to realize that in analysis he could voice whatever he wished his obsessive stream began to emerge. In many of his fantasies, previously short-circuited, his mother injured herself. When as a child he learned that parts of heaven sometimes fell to earth he feared that a meteor would fall upon his mother in the night. He remembered at one point having been convinced that he saw trees begin to break and fall as she walked under them. He also felt a need to be her protector and accomplished this by touching himself secretly without anyone noticing, thus neutralizing evil forces. In still more frightening fantasies he was responsible for her imagined, almost hallucinated injury. He recalled trying to make her fall down by closing his eyes and tensing his muscles as tightly as possible. He squeezed himself with all of his might wishing she would collapse. His mental efforts were sometimes so intense he was convinced she did fall because of him.

In sessions he developed a magical world based on comic book heroes from his childhood. His mother was Wonder Woman in danger whom he, Superman, would save or vice versa. He also would be Plastic Man and she Plastic Woman. They could stretch their limbs as far as they pleased in order to find and protect each other. At other times they competed with each other in heroic and treacherous ads, alternately saving and endangering one another. In one fantasy series they turned into all-consuming monster blobs who menaced each other but finally recognized each other's true super identity in the nick of time. They could reverse as well as change identities, he the female and she the male.

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He experienced much relief in letting his fantasy life unwind. Keeping it in check had caused great tension. However, he did not view me favorably. He split his love and hate, reserving the former for his wife. He claimed to have an all-loving relationship with her but viewed me as a villain who wished to break up his marriage. Yet he did not seriously consider changing to another analyst. He commented with hostile self-satisfaction, "You're [the mental health field] all alike. You can never let a marriage be because you're all so miserable yourselves." It seemed as though he came to analysis in order to find someone to hate. His anger most often was shown in intellectualized backbiting but at times more direct irritation broke through. He preferred to be icy and aloof and tended to blame me when he felt needy. He was in the transference bind of hating but needing therapy and took to acting as though it were my fault that he needed to be in session. When he was able to express some of his anger a little more directly he admitted, "I would have exploded if I didn't come here. Even if you don't know what to do with me it's a relief to pass part of my nervousness on."

If I tried to explore the way he split his feelings he became more defensive. At the same time his attacks on me tended to loosen his psychic How so that more remembering and imagining could occur. In particular, permission to express his angry feelings seemed to enable him to explore his feminine identity more thoroughly, as though feeling his might allowed him to express some feared wishes.

He recalled a period in his childhood in which he dressed in his mother's clothing. He felt urges to do this again and for a time acted out his wish with his wife's clothes and some women's outfits he bought for himself. He admired himself in the mirror and explored many imaginarily autoerotic possibilities, such as sucking his own nipples, sucking his penis, and having sexual intercourse with himself. He successfully fulfilled his oral fantasies in his dreams. For a brief period he enjoyed the inflated thought that he was an androgynous being capable of fertilizing and giving birth to himself. In one session he went so far as to feel that the world was a giant embryo within him which resembled him.

Such images expressed B's envy of and wish for fusion with the maternal object together with his attempt to feel more powerful than she. They also reflect a basic need for self-building. The apparent defensiveness of his imagined self-containment was partly a way of

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furthering contact with himself. In the safety of a self-created womb one may dare to consider the potential birth and regrowing of oneself in both one's male and female aspects. A regression to a sense of self-creation is sometimes needed in order to generate and maintain a fuller sense of self.

A particularly significant aspect of his self-creation fantasies involved anally generating his legs and penis from his feces. In a vivid set of images his body at birth was only partially formed. His head and upper torso were most prominent. He created his legs and penis last. They emerged as a fecal tail from his anus and gradually became properly differentiated. With the emergence of feet and penis—symbolic carriers, respectively, of self-support and self-assertion—as aspects of his body ego his self-birth fantasies diminished.

The anal drama expanded to include parental figures. He imagined smearing himself with feces using material from his fecal feet and penis. He painfully acknowledged that he had always felt like a “bag of shit.” The fecalization of his body had two aspects: his body was both “made of shit” and covered with it. In being feces he was a part of mother which was just like father. He felt that both he and father were made from mother's feces, “pieces of mother's shit.” Smearing himself with feces was smearing himself with father. The self-demeaning role of his father had been concretized and fixed by a fecal metaphor by means of which B had structured his paternal longing. Smearing himself with feces as a child took on new meaning in light of this. It represented a fight to hold onto father any way he could, even if both of them were reduced to part-objects of mother's body.

He experienced the provocative, spiteful and exhibitionistic spirit of his fecal bravado. In it he asserted that what his mother found useless he found valuable. He and father remained degraded maternal creations but it was a defiant degradation. His awareness of his need to identify with the fecal father in order to have a father at all was sufficient to initiate the pain of real loss. He was able to sustain, at least transiently, a mood of mourning over paternal deficit and failure. A correlate of this movement was that B was able to openly experience positive feeling toward me for a time. The mechanism of splitting diminished long enough for some psychic readjustment to occur before his basic defensiveness reasserted itself.

B could now maintain an erection during sexual intercourse but

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suffered from premature ejaculation. The latter cleared up after work with dreams and fantasies concerned with the relationship between oral and phallic androgeny. In one of the most important of these sequences B's penis was lined with teeth which he deposited in a woman's vagina during intercourse. In this image the vagina dentata derived from him. This was followed by a dream in which a woman's vagina appeared to be toothless and spongy, possibly needy. B thought, “If I enter it, it will suck up my power.” The question that now formed was who would be toothless, he or she. In vigorous protest he imagined his whole body as a giant tooth bursting with teeth. Nevertheless, the opening of his penis seemed to be a hungry mouth, toothless and gummy. The problem became one of owning both might and need without reducing one to the other. In his dialectic with maternal power he had projected both his teeth and wish for merger onto the vagina, a projective need reinforced by his mother's inability or refusal to grant him what was his: only she could be hungry and have teeth. He was testing out the possibility that he had the right to be needy and dangerous too.

His withdrawal of negative projections from the vagina created space for the emergence of a more positive projective-introjective process. The vagina, at least temporarily, could be experienced more in accord with its containing function and as a model symbolic container for psychic contents as well as for penises and babies. By contact with the vagina the penis now could become a vehicle for the transfer of power whereby it assimilates something of the vagina's containing function and resilience. That is, contact with the vagina as a symbolic container, even if in a rudimentary way, permitted a more profound acknowledgement of the male and female aspects of the phallus. B now experienced his penis in both its penetrating and containing aspects. He recalled a time in childhood when he wondered whether men could have babies. He oscillated between anal and phallic birth fantasies. He also thought that the penis was a baby that men were continuously having. For the first time in adult life he became conscious of respecting his scrotum and testicles as containers of the ability to propagate. This led to positive feelings for both the hard-rigid and soft-flexible aspects of his genitals. The soft-hard polarity, expressed above in images of gums, teeth, feces and weaponry, now could be further integrated in genital terms.

One extreme consequence of his assimilating vaginal capacities in

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terms of the phallus was a striking set of fantasies in which he imagined his penis as an androgynous god. Hitherto his mother had claimed most of the god power. His state of mind might be summarized, “I can be god as well as or better than she.” One might be tempted to interpret B's affirmation of the bisexual phallus as a narcissistic attempt at encapsulation, a defiant denial or, certainly, an identification with the maternal aggressor. Nevertheless, what is most central in this movement is the attempt to assimilate and transcend maternal power. It expresses a primitive and tentative consolidation of the wish to be and do, however defensively, and it is this which requires the greater emphasis.

It is worth noting, in passing, that B's gain in ability to have sexual intercourse was accompanied by a shift in time experience. Previously he had felt rushed, often without clearly realizing it. He had to hurry in order to evade impending dangers. He also complained that things went by too quickly. He would try to go faster in order to catch up to the rushing moment only to find himself speeding ahead of himself and events. However, when he would slow down things seemed to move too quickly again. He always felt “behind” or “ahead”

but never just “with”. He once sarcastically said that he “could not come fast enough.” By assimilating aspects of maternal power he was able to make and give himself time. He felt a greater fit between his inner time sense and his sexual rhythms.

When B became reliably potent he terminated analysis. From his point of view treatment was successful. In addition to satisfactory sexual functioning he experienced fewer somatic disturbances, increased confidence and a wider range of daily options. The results were more than he had hoped for. Nevertheless, he regrouped his defenses and consolidated his gains behind splitting and projective identification strategies. He continued to idealize his wife while I remained the wayward and at times malevolent intruder. His sense of mastery was reinforced by a partial fusion with the idealized image he projected onto his wife. At the same time he installed the analyst within his system as a containing focus for bad parts, at best a kind of internalized outhouse. By using the analyst as a permanent psychic draining system B achieved a manic superiority over the bad mother but at the cost of a fuller integration. What goodness he received from the analyst he experienced as his own without gratitude or acknowledgement.

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In addition, no genuinely independent father principle was established. B accomplished his gains by reducing the analyst to a useable element in his matriarchal psychic system. Masculinity was almost entirely defined with reference to the maternal body. His use of images assumed a quasisymbolic function. He did not fully enter the image as a symbolic possibility through which he could be radically transformed. In an important sense his use of his mental processes was well controlled. He participated in his capacity to imagine only enough for the desired, circumscribed gains to occur without opening himself to more risks than were necessary to reach his goal. He was not willing to sustain the more profound disruption necessary for a fuller creative development. He thus appeared to use his psychic processes as things or objects in order to achieve tactical ends rather than as signifiers of a more developed quality of selfhood, an end in itself.

## Case of F

F's presenting complaint also was sexual impotence. He had been in therapy twice before with other workers. His past complaints had been severe anxiety and depression. He was a chronic drug user who impulsively rotated between marijuana, amphetamines, barbituates, heroin, and alcohol. His past therapists attempted to regulate his addictions by prescribing controlled drug regimes. He had received a mixture of supportive and insight therapy and had achieved some semblance of order in his life. He was a professional “rock” musician who worked, dated, and had friends. He adapted to and took for granted a chronic moodiness and background feeling of low grade despair. He showed strong idealistic and cynical attitudes side by side. His idealism seemed to be coupled with a moralistic bitterness pervaded by a sense of having been gypped. He sided with what might be characterized as a “magnanimous pessimism” with a tone of hurt pride and compulsively lacked any inclination to feel good.

In his first sessions he wondered whether his prolonged drug use caused his impotence. He defiantly confessed that if it did he could or would not break his addictions. They were too much a part of him. He stated with some irony, apparently using “therapy language,” that he wanted a “magic cure” which left the life he built up

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for himself intact. He seemed untouched by the cloudy, drift-along, and at times almost slurred quality of his style.

Once F's analysis began he allowed painful obsessive defenses to emerge first. He secretly believed he was being punished for sinful wishes and behavior. He felt he transgressed God's will and was suffering the inevitable consequences. This was one reason he no longer complained about his reduced state and learned to “make do.”

His main crime was that he induced his wife to have sexual intercourse with his best friend. He tortured himself for years with fantasies of his wife having sex with his friends. He enjoyed elaborate masturbatory rituals in which he prolonged the excitement these ideas brought him. Only through such fantasies did he achieve full orgasmic relief which he described as “explosions.” He felt his wife eventually left him because he was basically a monster. He also felt guilty that his wife's or daughter's clothes at times became part of his rituals. He felt such thoughts and actions alienated him from the human community. He dreaded but lived for these degrading, ecstatic moments and spoke of them with a tone of depressive helplessness tinged with gloating.

An early resistance took the form of wanting to argue over the religious basis of his hopelessness. F compulsively tried to convince me that God never could accept him, that he was irredeemable. After a time he mentioned a friend from high school who became a priest, an active homosexual who was intensely interested in Buddhism. I asked what would happen if he spoke with his friend. He felt certain his friend would condemn him. At the same time he was fascinated that someone could be so aberrant yet still be a holy man. F rationalized that priests were allowed to do “funny” things because they were closer to God but ordinary folk like himself were lost.

He began meeting with his friend who was accepting and insightful. He helped F begin to face his punitive picture of God and supported my view that F had God and the Devil mixed up. When in sessions F began to verbalize “God's voice,” mocking laughter could be heard behind its demands and accusations. F's God turned into a devil, either mischievous and impish or rasping and hating. F initially tried to maintain a stance of defensive amusement with his devil-self but broke down in horror. With the disclosure of his partial identification and possibly fusion with the combined god-devil image he found himself unable to clearly distinguish between the divine and demonic

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in his experience of himself and others, something which seemingly had been clear to him before. He was forced to become aware of a deeper psychic reality. Although this placed him in a more acute predicament, he experienced immediate relief from the obsessive sexual fantasies about his wife and daughter which had plagued him for years.

He terrified himself with his new religious perplexity and at one point broke out in fever. The perseverating quality of his predicament began to subside as an underlying fecal self-image became more conscious during his illness. In a transitional image F saw himself as a Jesus made of feces, blessing others with the fecal material which composed his body: "a shit-smearing Jesus," in his words. This image expressed both his covert megalomania and his sense of unworthiness. By being the divine fecal child he felt both spoiled and saved, an experience of power mixed with the thrill of humiliation. Through the fecal blessing he could be identified with mother and her special son, a "lovable little shit." He thus turned his self-hatred into provocative activity in which others received what he became, an essentially boundless revenge ("I can turn anything into shit.").

In another set of fantasies, the fecal Jesus image was replaced by a little girl who urinated fiercely from a standing position.<sup>2</sup> The urine turned into liquid feces which streamed from her body openings. She seemed to F "like a fountain pissing shit from every pore." F experienced the "shit pissing little girl" (his description) as a primitive act of self-assertion, a furious show of might. It was a cathartic letting go. After experiencing the affect carried by this anal-phallic image F was able to maintain an erection during fellatio. In this context fellatio made him feel clean. He pictured his partner as a cat licking his fecal body parts as though they were part of herself. By feeling himself as a cherished part of her he could momentarily feel redeemed.

In other images the cat turned into a lioness. F, though more paranoid, remained passive and covertly identified with her power. In fellatio his passive needs were met directly while dissociated active tendencies were experienced vicariously. At the same time by licking him ("licking shit") the maternal figure was debased. In this drama his active side was devalued while his masochistic aspect was elevated. However, contact with the phallic little girl aroused in him an inkling of his own active potential. In fact he experienced himself in a superior and dominant position at least mentally, since his partner did as he

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wished. In terms of body zones he felt his activity bottled up in his sphincters and more than once used the phrase that "he had his prick up his ass."

When F was successfully able to sustain oral sex he terminated analysis. Termination and return to treatment became a recurrent pattern. The rise in good feeling threatened his chronic depressed and masochistic position. He was used to a lower level of stimulation and the increase in pleasure tended to have a disorganizing effect.

Soon after he returned to analysis he elaborated his first explicit transference fantasies, the threat of which was doubtless a major factor in his having left. F was having difficulty maintaining the integrity of the analyst's face and body. In a vivid quasihallucination he saw the analyst's face turn into buttocks with mouth as anus. At the same time he imagined the analyst's face inscribed on the anal zone, "a face below." A mutual transposability of face and anal region emerged, a facial-anal fusion. F, further, found that he could convert any part of the analyst's body—or the human body in general—into an anal image. For example, he imagined the analyst as an anal breast, a container of fecal food. In a further development the breast had an anal mouth filled with a fecal nipple, simultaneously sucking and sucked on. The analyst was both anal mother and fecal child, at once an elevated and degraded creator and creation. Most importantly, the analyst's face seemed cohesive and radiant or dim and cracked depending on the patient's and sometimes the analyst's mood or momentary psychic position.

The initial feeling F expressed concerning these images was anxiety. He also showed curiosity. The crises F was undergoing centered around his doubts as to whether the cohesive or "good face" could support and give coherence to anal fusion and attacks. Insofar as the "face-ass" identity<sup>3</sup> implied a failure to properly differentiate and coordinate components of the self-image, F experienced his position as precarious and his fantasies as threatening. Contact between face and anus could contaminate and spoil the face.

At the same time imaginary contact between face and anal area can have a positive function insofar as it reflects a growing, reciprocal relationship between mind and body. The face, symbolic of human personality, may act as a reference point by which body areas acquire deeper personal significance. In a similar context **Milner (1973, Appendix, I-III)** suggests that the "face-ass" merger expresses a twin

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movement in which consciousness (represented by the face, particularly the eyes) is at once embodied and suffuses the body. The circular transposition of face to anal area and vice versa expresses the symbolic upward-downward flow of consciousness and energy. In pathology either of these poles may be too much absorbed by or detached from the other. This might result, for example, in either overliteralizing or overspiritualizing the body and in collapsing or making an abstraction of consciousness. In psychic unity the face as human signifier retains its prominence as an organizing principle in the field of meaning but is, nevertheless, one of many experiential foci which flexibly corefer to one another. The therapeutic task is to convert the contaminations feared or courted by the patient into differentiated expressions of a growing mind-body unity. This is most effectively aided by the patient's increasing awareness of affective meaning in the therapy relationship.

The use of imagery is one way to experience the connection between thinking and feeling. Images give rise to both. However, images may also be used to maintain isolation. For example, F tended to experience his rush of imagery with generalized anxiety softened by

curiosity. The full range of thought and feeling they might evoke was avoided at first. They initially took on an appearance similar to screen memories, vivid but still. It was when he was able to connect the rise of images to his feelings in the therapy situation that they came most alive with meaning and affect. Spontaneous imagery for F was both a way of expressing and keeping distance from the importance the analyst was beginning to have for him. He began to admit pain at perceived slights or neglect on the analyst's part. It was when he felt hurt or angry that the analyst's face appeared to be filled with cracks, holes or otherwise damaged or deteriorating. When he experienced a taste of well being the analyst's face appeared brighter and caring. The analyst's face always reconstituted itself and appeared fresh and undamaged once more. For a time this drama repeated itself incessantly. It would seem to F that the damage would never go away or that I would take revenge, possibly withdraw or simply disappear. He might then feel a mixture of triumph and guilt or be convinced that he was lost. His critical learning, won over and over again, was that the restored face persistently surfaced, encompassing his fragility and hostility with a sense of the undamageableness of essential goodness.<sup>4</sup>

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F's use of imagery reflected a sensitivity which had remained relatively uncultivated because it had not been able to find an effective interpersonal form. He had had to dampen his sensitivity rather than continually risk feeling overwhelmed. In the context of the therapy relationship F's feelings for the therapist and his capacity to imagine could stimulate each other and lead to a further unfolding of both. This eventually resulted in a deepening of his relationship to the various phases of his life.

As F's fantasy life evolved he made and sustained the distinction between fecal and urinary images, thus breaking through his pan-anality. A dream summarizes this phase of work. In it a devil offered F heroin with the promise that it would help F. The devil had a fecal smell and fecal material oozed from his body surface. F hesitated. He felt angry and repelled. The devil told F he would die if he refused. This frightened F so that he began to urinate. As his urine gathered force he thought of cleaning the devil with his urinary stream or perhaps wash the devil away entirely.

Upon waking F feared the anal devil would try to hide deep in his bottom. If he tried to drown or flush the devil out it meant irrigating his own insides with his urine. This led F to remark with black humor that his way of helping himself was to "piss up his own ass," a grim metaphor for his self-destructive bind. He associated feelings of congealed hatred with the devil whom he now saw as his bad self. The urinary stream was a display of incipient phallic power which in the dream remained "clean," uncontaminated by the fecal object it opposed. In this context the urinary image was an intrapsychic advance, whatever the remaining mix-up between cleansing and polluting forces.

Following the image of the uncontaminated urinary flow from his own penis, historical associations came more freely. F recalled having been tied to a bed by an older female cousin when he was under five. She teased him in various ways. Afterwards, throughout middle childhood, he felt humiliated by the laughter of little girls and he withdrew in impotent rage. He related a number of incidents in which girls taunted him and he withdrew rather than risk greater defeat. When alone he had rageful fantasies in which he beat the girls. In time his sense of outrage faded. Instead he appeared to erotize his aggressive feelings and found himself excited by the sight and touch of women's clothing, first an older sister's. He developed orgasmic rituals based on a fantasy of being teased.

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In adolescence F acted out homosexual feelings on a number of occasions without basically doubting his essentially heterosexual orientation. He associated images of his father with his homosexual urges. He pictured his father as weak and needy, a man who swept the floor at his mother's command. When F found that his homosexual episodes failed to establish a proper paternal object he abandoned them in despair. It was then he started taking drugs and succumbed to his fecal self-image. Although drug addiction may be an oral disorder it, like many oral problems (Ehrenzweig, 1967; Eigen 1977), frequently is structured in anal terms. In street language, for instance, drugs are referred to as "shit" while abstaining from drugs is known as "staying clean." F described his drug taking as an attempt to create a world of his own by "eating his own shit." In one self-denigrating fantasy F stuffed his feces back into his anus and commented, "Even my ass eats shit." When he explored his attempt to be self-contained it seemed as though he were trying to nourish himself by stuffing his fecal penis into his anal mouth.

F remembered having received enemas in early childhood while his mother ritually held him firmly on her lap, his penis pressed against her clothed belly. Either she or his father administered the enemas. F would feel rageful humiliation and ecstatic pleasure. He felt as if he would die and experienced his bowel movements as orgasmic explosions, an orgy of masochistic satisfaction. The described sequence of "dying" and orgasmic explosion amounted to a perversion of the rebirth experience.

He could recall splitting into two demons in these orgasmic moments. One was his body demon madly exploding. The other was his head demon, an onlooker who grimaced and chuckled, "Heh, heh." In sessions the head demon's laughter turned into images of a woman who wished to incorporate his penis through fellatio. F felt helpless but also fused with her power, secretly controlling. Her oral striving condensed maternal intrusiveness, F's active and passive wishes and his feared punishment. In talking about this image F remembered scenes in which his mother displayed a ruptured navel when he was a small child. It seemed to pop out like an erection, as though the incorporated phallus was showing. It also seemed like an umbilical cord. F felt repulsed and wished to rip it off. It infuriated him that his mother repeatedly rejected her doctor's recommendation to have it removed by an operation. Her masochistic exhibitionism maddeningly stifled him. His strong impulses horrified him because, as he

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expressed it, "Cutting off my mother's belly-cock would be cutting off my own life-line." Maternal castration anxiety (Eigen, 1974) merged with separation anxiety.

After recovering the above memories and elaborating fantasies and feelings associated with them F reported significant changes in his devil images. The body demon became a prankish little boy who harbored erotic-aggressive urges towards mother's body. Maternal longing became a meaningful issue. At the same time the head demon—previously also a castrating woman (above)—turned into a little girl who laughed at F each time he achieved an erection. The derisive girls of childhood had become a symbol of castrating and self-castrating contempt.

After exploring the above thoughts, feelings and memories, F became potent during genital intercourse and left treatment once more. His life had been going relatively well. He was enjoying both his personal relationships and his work. However, within half a year of termination he experienced a suicidal depression which forced him to seek help again. Once in analysis he revealed that he had magically expected potency to solve all of his psychological problems. The discovery that he could be potent and still have disturbances was vastly disillusioning.

He now had several dreams in which he was flying and enjoying the expansive, resistanceless feeling he had hoped sexual intercourse would bring. He confused complete narcissistic fulfillment with sexual gratification. This failure in reality testing pointed to a wish for limitless union with the Great Mother. His collision with reality had been so devastating because an opposite process had been initiated by analysis. The analytic work prior to his termination contributed to a growing decaathesis of the Great Mother image. F felt wounded by the experiential gap and sense of emptiness associated with becoming disengaged from a highly charged identification or merger. He sought to ward off the threat of further individuation by leaving therapy. The narcissistic injury he tried to avoid might be summarized, "After so much, this is all I am?" His collapse forced him to return to therapy and come to terms with the depressive loss and deflation of becoming merely human.

However, the entry into the human world is also vastly liberating. The pain of mourning the loss of an identification or idealized magical power is compensated by the release of energy previously tied to

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the mother-god image. The hidden megalomania implicit in such a fusion is converted into a useable sense of power. The ego is threatened but also exhilarated by the mounting sense of aliveness linked with an increase in personal creativity.

F gave tentative form to his heightened sense of creative potential in an image of a history teacher similar to a teacher he liked in high school. This kindly and encouraging man once had presented an alternative which seemed radically different from F's own degraded father and homosexual acting out. F had thought he would like to become a history teacher also. This was his first memory of an active and appealing ego ideal. He had almost forgotten about it over the years. This man was the only unambivalent figure F had presented. His image for some time symbolized for F the hope of living up to his potential. However, this one source of support had not been enough to sustain him. He found he lacked the inner resources to go to college. By the time he completed high school he was already immersed in a drug culture and soon acquiesced bitterly and finally numbly to his reduced life style. Now and then flickers of what he might have been or once wanted to be crossed his mind but that was rare. The emergence of his old ideal came as a surprise to him but fit his overall increase in self-feeling.

He had never respected himself for being a musician. For him it was "a dirty business," part of the drug world. He would say of himself and his friends, "We're just a bunch of animals." He felt he did not use his mind as a musician as he imagined he might if he were a history teacher. He knew that music could be more stimulating and meaningful but for him it was "just coasting." He now gave himself to his revived interest in history and permitted himself to begin to think and feel everything he could about it. He had dreams in which he appeared as a history teacher or his former history teacher appeared in a positive role. In one dream he read a history book of western civilization as he travelled through Europe. In the dream he was animated and absorbed, more present than he normally was in everyday life.

His ideal image of a history teacher was different in a number of respects both from himself and his high school teacher. The face was brighter and clearer. It evoked a sense of breathing fresh air. F felt "cleaned out" thinking about it. The fantasy figure's eyes were particularly important. In F's words, "They're just nicely there. They don't

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pierce me or try to draw me in. They seem content just seeing and feeling. They're not up to anything funny. You can be OK with them." F's attachment to this image preserved the promise of wholeness. It tended to energize, give direction, prod, and soothe. The ego-ideal functioned as a good mirror for what F felt was best in him but had devalued. He once said of his idealized image of the history teacher, "He's the way I might have turned out if things had been right ... the way I should turn out ... the real me...."

F made abortive attempts to return to school. He took some courses that interested him but did not complete any. He found that becoming a history teacher was a good idea in theory but that it no longer actually appealed to him. He was libidinally more involved with music. He felt disappointed at not finding school more appealing and began to mourn his never to be achieved old ego-ideal. In so doing he discovered that what being a history teacher *meant* to him was more important than actually becoming one. He began to transfer the good feelings he tapped in contacting his neglected ego-ideal to the idea of working more seriously as a musician. This enabled him to admit the

deeper significance music always held for him. He felt he previously disparaged music, for one thing, because it came easily to him. Since he did not have to work hard at it he felt it could not be worth much. Consequently he failed to invest it with the work required for real accomplishment. He really loved playing and had been ashamed to admit it. In a profound sense music had been a Good Mother for him. He often succored and nourished himself by playing. He deprived himself of fuller satisfaction by not cultivating his talent. In thinking what he might yet do as a musician he felt some relief at not having to become something which was foreign to him, such as a schoolteacher.

It gradually began to dawn on F that all of the feelings evoked by his ideal image were his and could be applied to anything he did. He experimented with the ideal feeling he had discovered and at times could "turn himself on" at will by contacting it. When he was able to "tune into it" he felt clearer and brighter. As his ability to tolerate good feelings increased his drug intake spontaneously diminished. He almost entirely stopped heroin and pills. Marijuana and alcohol continued, markedly reduced. He began to face more of his ambivalence about becoming a person. Experiencing himself more meant that he would have to take more responsibility for who he was and who he might become.

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F, almost predictably, again left treatment. He returned after a shorter time than usual and with greater awareness of what he was doing. He could remark, "Maybe next time I'll be able to just talk about leaving without having to do it." He was involved in a serious relationship with a woman whom he also considered leaving. He used the gratification he received from this relationship to attack the analyst and used the more rare air of analysis to attack his partner. Fear of closeness bordering on paranoid oscillated with moments of intimacy. His ability to tolerate more friction in the therapy relationship enabled him to contain disturbances better in daily life.

Oedipal material became more important in the transference. F had dreams in which he compared himself with the analyst. In them the analyst was admired by women for his superior strength, intelligence, and creativity. The women represented the mother and F's own feminine longings. In a further dream he admitted the analyst's superiority of experience but still felt humanly equal with him. He could now say, "I fled therapy so I wouldn't have to face coming to terms with you." This meant coming to terms with the father principle. A flexible shifting back and forth between narcissistic and object transferences was necessary in order for F to build and test his capacity for experiencing many possibilities on the closeness-distance continuum. Insofar as oedipal problems came into focus F could visualize and be energized by the challenge of integrating passive and active aspects of his creative wishes (for related examples of the relationship between psychic androgeny and the oedipal situation see [Eigen, 1974, 1975b, 1977a](#)).

Nevertheless, F was only at the beginning of being able to consolidate the capacity to tolerate feelings of well being and effective power. He was still easily flooded by self-demeaning outbreaks and panicky intimations of underlying deadness. He had made gains which enabled him to experience momentary feelings of wholeness which provided a basis for a gradual shift of his basic ego identification. He could endure attacks on himself and others without having to destroy the feeling life he was beginning to permit himself to build. The range and intensity of feelings available had increased in variety and subtlety. He experienced a sense of renewal. He thus had some framework from which to risk productive leaps into disorganizing areas. This phase of the growth process involved an intricate interplay between a comforting-stimulating relationship to the *ideal imago* and frightening-depressing encounters with flaws in his psychic structure.

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## Discussion

Although both patients accomplished more than they anticipated in therapy, the quality of the outcome in the case of F clearly was superior. B never seemed to decisively rise above an essentially self-contained addiction to maternal part-objects. Even sexual intercourse remained inherently autoerotic in spirit for him. He maintained a clinging relationship with his wife which sealed off the possibility of otherness. No transcorporeal idealizations arose nor was father ever defined truly independently of mother's body. Potential symbols of autonomous selfhood were either lacking or manifested themselves almost entirely within the context of body-ego meanings where they remained embedded.

F, in contrast, was able to create images of the analyst's face and ultimately cathect an ego-ideal which assimilated positive maternal and paternal qualities. For F revived contact with ideal images and, particularly, the ego-ideal, was profoundly healing. In instances of serious personality impoverishment contact with ideal images can genuinely nourish the ego, build supplies, and restore hope, as well as stimulate and support the wish for meaningful work. [Kohut \(1971\)](#) has recently emphasized ways in which ideal images spontaneously arise in narcissistic transferences and ultimately add to the personality's overall well being and ability to function. The therapeutic impasse with B provides an instance in which resistances to an idealizing transference were not surmounted. B's gains largely came through contacting aspects of the grandiose self. F, in contrast, more flexibly moved between self and idealized object cathexis. This greater elasticity enabled him to develop beyond the defense of splitting. With F both sides of dissociated polarities could be gathered into the transference so that the transition from splitting to ambivalence could be made. Without such a development the most far-reaching assimilation of identifications or, in Kohut's phrase, "transmuting internalizations" could not adequately occur.

In F's case the affective coloring and heightening of F's visualization of the analyst's face suggests the highly charged tone with which the infant must view the human face since for the infant the human face or face representation has been found to be a central and organizing focus of perception (Spitz, 1965; [Elkin, 1972](#)). The infant's systematic and coherent gaze and smile in relation to the human face has

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been correlated with the emergence of self and other awareness (Spitz, 1965; **Elkin, 1972**). Thus F's dramatic perceptions of the analyst's face may well establish contact with the foundations of selfhood. F's development appears to confirm this belief. As F evolved the *ideal imago* proceeded to be transferred on to the therapist as a maternal, then paternal ideal and, ultimately, as an ego-ideal which both incorporated and transcended maternal and paternal qualities. The capacity of the human mind to spontaneously create ideal images undergoes development through pre-maternal, maternal, paternal and transpersonal phases. Similar developmental phases with reference to ideal images have been traced by **Pumpian-Mindlin (1969)** and **Blos (1972)**.

Analysts such as **Reich (1973)** and **Chasseguet-Smirgel (1974, 1976)** have pointed out the harmful role a pathological ego-ideal may play. In these instances there is either (1) a short-circuiting of the distance between the ego and its ideal so that work is no longer a felt necessity or (2) an impossibly demanding ideal which renders all work futile. A proper relationship to one's ideal leaves room enough to be able to move a little closer to it at the same time one participates in it through empathic vision.

**Freud (1914)** warned against confusing the ego-ideal with sublimation but noted that the ego-ideal can prompt sublimation. **Blos (1974)** has attempted to delineate some aspects of the positive motivating appeal of the ego-ideal, particularly in its role of creative inspiration. Both Freud and Blos emphasize the importance of the father principle in sublimation and creativity. In this regard **McDougall (1972, 1974b)** and **Chasseguet-Smirgel (1974, 1976)** have indicated that patients who are "pseudocreations" or who have failed to attain genuine psychic generativity are frequently patients who have excluded the father principle. In basic ways such a patient's "ego is its own ideal" (**Freud, 1914**) in a primitive and undeveloped sense, stunted by mother fusions. In the course of his analysis F affirmed the integrity of the father principle in ways that B did not. This involved a basic modification of the structure of the ego-ideal which for F became paternal. However, a purely paternal ego-ideal, the mature end point for **Aarons (1970)** and **Blos (1974)**, was a transitional phase in F's development. F's more developed ego-ideal absorbed both maternal and paternal qualities. It did not only stimulate unceasing approach but gave some of the encouragement and support which made approach possible. The musical activity itself which formed part of

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the content of F's ego-ideal provided a comforting mothering function in addition to presenting a challenging, "limitless future."

As the ego-ideal undergoes further development, the primal couple is transformed into a symbolic expression of the active and receptive aspects of the creative process in general. Identifications with mother and father proper are transcended by assimilating the various active and passive currents each represented. Insofar as this is accomplished more direct encounters with representations of the ideal imago as such, no longer fused with individual personalities, becomes possible. The self once again may emerge as its own ideal but with a richly developed structure and a new, coherent meaning.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For related work on ideal feelings and images see **Eigen 1979a, 1980a,b, 1981, 1982**.

<sup>2</sup> A study of the image of a female urinating from a standing position, particularly with reference to female orgasm, may be found in **Eigen (1977b)**.

<sup>3</sup> The vernacular, "ass", seems most aptly descriptive of the entire anal zone, inclusive of buttocks, anus and in some instances rectum. More generally, crude usage is inevitable in work with disturbances at the psychic levels addressed here. **McDougall (1974)** offers a complementary description of what may occur if such raw imagery fails to be evoked.

<sup>4</sup> A related description of a patient's experience of God is recorded in **Eigen (1975a, p. 20)**. **Elkin (1972)** offers an account of the Primordial Other which may underlie such phenomena.

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Eigen, M. (1982). Creativity, Instinctual Fantasy and Ideal Images. *Psychoanal. Rev.*, 69:317-339

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