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Psychoanalytic Theory and the Problem of Creativity

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It is, I believe, increasingly obvious that psychoanalysis is now going through a crisis whose magnitude is difficult to evaluate and whose outcome cannot easily be foreseen.

In the sphere of scientific research, this phenomenon manifests itself in various ways: in the formulation of lines of research that are increasingly abstruse and increasingly less demonstrable; in proposing more and more clinical material in a backward-turning nostalgia for the untroubled pioneering days; in attempting an impossible equilibrium between new scientific discoveries and psychoanalytic concepts no longer tenable; in the proposal of new paradigms which are received with hostility or total neglect. In our literature the apparent lack of interest in creativity is a direct consequence of all this. The theoretical concepts (metapsychological) that gave our first authors the illusion of possessing an all-explanatory key to understanding are now in crisis, and only the Kleinians believe they have found a new one. Other schools of thought, after having attempted to apply some more or less novel viewpoint to the question of creativity, seem to have paused for breath. The theme itself is a risky one, complex and vaguely defined; even the possibility and utility of isolating the phenomenon has been questioned. Moreover, the subject may arouse conflict in the author himself, through obvious identificational dynamics. I personally must also reply to the accusation of iconoclasm, since the conditions of our theorizing leave me no other choice, as well as to that of being banal and reductive, since what I have to propose may seem very little, especially for those who attribute scientific validity to the usual metapsychological concepts.

For several years (1980), (1981a), (1981b), (1984) I have been trying to formulate a consistent view of the difference between clinical theory and metapsychology. The former is based on empirical generalizations, i.e. statements that can be fully demonstrated and defined and publicly controlled. This type of theory has a limited power of explanation, unlike the hypothetical type (to which Freudian metapsychology is closely related), which introduces entities that cannot be directly observed, has greater generality and more explanatory power and characterizes sciences in an advanced stage of development. The difference between these two kinds of theory is in my opinion determinant also for an understanding of the significance of the psychoanalytic contribution to the investigation of creativity. The psychoanalyst can utilize his clinical practice with creative persons to obtain data on meaningful personal experiences, both recent and remote, on traumas and conflictual dynamics which have operated to determine the subject's character traits, his choices, interests, etc. It will then be important to compare these data with similar ones obtained from the analysis of non-creative persons, and to differentiate between creative subjects who have entered analysis because of problems interfering with their activity and those who have done so for other reasons. Other clinical areas suitable for investigation include the psychological significance of the created object, both for its author (ambivalence, compensatory value, etc.) and for the public; and lastly, the application of empirical concepts to the biographies of famous persons.

The level of empirical generalizations, though rich in suggestions and hypotheses, can obviously give us no explanations as to what 'mental' procedures constitute the essence of creativity. An explanatory-causal theory instead will propose to clarify how these processes, leading to the realization of an original work, either scientific or artistic, take place, and what differentiates creative mental processes from non-creative ones. The explanatory concepts used by psychoanalysis

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at the theoretical level, the well-known ones of instinct, unconscious fantasies, ego, id, regression, primary or secondary process, are entirely inadequate. If we reject body-mind dualism and consider our psychological life to be an epiphenomenon of the activity of the neurological structures, psychoanalytic theorization will turn in a very different direction, no longer reifying the mind and looking on it as providing thoughts and images. In this context, psychoanalysis would no longer stake out for itself a private field of investigation, where it feels authorized to claim exclusive rights, just as religion has always done with the soul.

As regards creativity too, the position and the results achieved will be entirely different. In the first case, psychoanalytic investigation will be conducted in collaboration with other empirical studies, differing from them in its methods of observation and its final aims. In the second case, it will give origin to deductive metaphysics. This metaphysics would be less dangerous had not other elements been added as well: (1) confusion between metapsychological and empirical concepts (see unconscious fantasies, for example); (2) hypotheses based on fallacious psychological conditions in earliest infancy (hallucinations, omnipotence); (3) undue faith placed in the method of reconstruction; (4) neglecting to seek confirmation, even when this was possible (**see the particular sensorial sensitivity in infancy hypothesized by Greenacre, 1957**), (**or the positive effects of traumatic situations described by Niederland, 1976**).

I believe it is possible to identify in our literature, albeit in schematic form only, a number of directions of study, which are largely overlapping. We can identify a libidinal-energetic model, one based on unconscious fantasies, an anthropomorphic one with the intervention of the ego, an aggression-reparation one, a phenomenological one with the psychology of self, and one of object relationships.

As usual, we may begin with Freud. Of prime importance in 1908 are the fantasies (whether conscious or unconscious seems to make

no difference) on which the artist models his production. His work gives expression to his fantasies, oedipal ones in particular, of infantile desires in a socially acceptable form, thus awakening pleasure by stimulating repressed desires in the public. Later (1910) the role of sublimation as the basis of talent and artistic ability was emphasized. In 1911 and 1916–17, Freud stressed the importance of achieving reconciliation between the reality principle and the pleasure principle, accomplished by combining wish-fulfilment with the utilization of fantasy adapted to reality. In other words, the artist recuperates reality by using his capacity for remodelling fantasies into a new kind of truth. Thus in Freudian psychology, centred on the unconscious, importance is given both to elements of content (unconscious fantasies) and to those of energy-instinct (sublimation).

The former liken artistic activity to childhood play, to dreams, symbolism, psychopathology. These phenomena have in common repression and disguised wish-fulfilment. It has been noted that it is impossible to differentiate, on the basis of unconscious fantasies, the above activities, even from normal behaviour. It should be emphasized that these fantasies aim at the fulfilment of unacceptable wishes which must be disguised. The essence of artistic activity consists not in representation or manifestation of what truly exists, but in concealing and masking reality. Perhaps even less specific is the energetic-instinctual moment. The artist possesses plentiful sexual energy (the only driving power of our mental processes), which he neither represses nor blocks with defences of the obsessive type, but sublimates. Undoubtedly the question then arises, if this explanation fits Leonardo da Vinci, who seems to have had little interest in sex, what can be said of the many other artists who have lived their sexuality fully and completely?

Subsequent literature was to insist on the pre-oedipal stage, on the relationship between unconscious fantasies and instincts (occasionally equated), without, however, resolving any of the contradictions intrinsic to Freudian thought. An attempt has been made to overcome this difficulty and above all to account for a number of more highly-evolved aspects of mental functioning which seem to have been neglected by Freudian theory, by confronting the problem in a different perspective, usually termed that of ego psychology. This direction, in the view of Noy (1979) is actually the beginning of our study of the creative process. The focus of interest shifts here from the latent content of the mind to the

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mechanisms that process this content, thus permitting psychoanalysis to deal with the crucial issues of artistic creativity, the creative process, its form, the structure of the creative personality, the relationship between creativity and psychopathology.

The chief exponent of this approach is undoubtedly Kris, who in 1952 introduced the concept of regression at the service of the ego (controlled regression), applying it to both the artistic and the scientific fields. This is a functional modality of the ego which permits it to gain access to materials in the id while maintaining control of the primary process. It serves not as flight from reality but rather as a means for enriching it with new perspectives. Creative inspiration is said to be based on a process of projection and introjection which utilizes neutralized energy derived originally from hallucinations of the breast during the oral stage, and from subsequent homosexual conflict. As the artist uses these mechanisms of projection and introjection, activity is converted into passivity, thus avoiding guilt linked to the forbidden instincts utilized in creation. Regression at the service of the ego is said to embrace various phenomena: elimination of the anticathetic defensive barrier between the ego and the id, fluctuation in the amount of energy available for the various activities of the ego, emergence of preconscious material into consciousness.

An author who has attributed special importance to the preconscious processes is Kubie (1958), who challenges the assertion that the source of creative inspiration is the Freudian unconscious. He maintains that inaccessible and unacceptable conflicts, objects and impulses produce a condition of rigidity in the unconscious. Conscious mental life, for its part, is equally rigidified by precise, literal relationships, with specific perceptive and conceptual unities. The Freudian preconscious, located between these two petrified terminal points, is the creative department of the mind, free to accumulate, reunite, compare and mingle ideas.

Not lacking, however, are authoritative voices denying any utility to the various phenomena, first among them regression, described by this line of research. For example, Glover (1950) states that creativity is the response of the libido which tries to keep its hold in the world of objects, and constitutes an auxiliary expedient for maintaining the efficiency of repression. Other authors are even more emphatic in discrediting the concept of regression (**psychosis without regression for Weissman, 1969**), sometimes preferring to speak of progression (**Eissler, 1961**), (**1963**).

Still within the context of ego psychology, Weissmann (1967), (1971) hypothesizes the existence of a function, in itself normal, which is desynthesizing or disassociative of the ego, and may offer a better explanation of the functioning of creativity than does regression. In this view, one stage of development is desynthesized to permit its replacement by a more mature phase. The external object (the mother's breast) may be disinvested while its image is hyperinvested (the infant hallucinates the maternal breast even apart from oral needs).

The model I have indicated as aggressive-reparative is typical of Kleinian theorization. In good part, it overlaps that of object relationships. Although Freud was certainly aware of the importance of object relationships on the clinical level, a complete theory was formulated only by later authors. A number of attempts to connect this theme with that of creativity have been made. For psychoanalysis, the most significant and consequential object relationships are those of infancy. From Freud, who started with the Oedipus complex (first during adolescence, then at about the age of 4), we have arrived at intra-uterine object relationships (with the passage of unconscious fantasies and of sentiments) and from the triangular relationship we have arrived at that of part object.

Keeping pace with the formulation of the object-relationship theory have been theories of development, as expressed in the works of Klein (1932), (1961), Mahler (1952), Kohut (1971), (1976), (1977) and to a lesser degree Winnicott (1953). Robbins, for example (1969), in line with Mahler, connects artistic creativity with the modalities used in resolving the separation/individuation phase.

In the Kleinian perspective, everything hinges on the death instinct, on envy, on fantasies of destruction and the need to make reparation to objects thus damaged or destroyed in fantasy. Here creativity is one of several possible modes of dealing with and overcoming the depressive position. To demonstrate how far these concepts are removed from any empirical observation, we

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may recall that Hagglund (1978), although he attributes to creative activity a special function in the work of mourning, has it originate in the earliest mother-child experience, identifying it with a highly developed form of reciprocal oral eroticism which is free from the emotion of envy. The transitional objects described by Winnicott (1953) have also been placed at the origin of creativity, through the establishment of an intermediate area lying between reality and illusion. The vicissitudes and destinies of transitional objects are said to serve as guide-posts for any other object that will be created.

The theme of object relationship has been developed in a different manner by Greenacre (1957), who has pointed out the capacity for flexibility and attachment in the object relationships of creative persons. This capacity may be observed in the atmosphere of a 'love affair with the world' that derives from the ability to integrate personal objects with 'collective alternates'. In other words, artists have demonstrated fluctuation of cathexes in the earlier development from a limited number of personal objects to a much vaster number of peripheral ones.

Along with object-relationship theory, the psychology of self and of narcissism has received much attention in recent years. The creative process has been investigated by one of the foremost exponents of this theory, Kohut, precisely within this context. For this author, the importance of creativity is specifically correlated to the mobilization of narcissistic cathexes previously frozen in the area of the grandiose self and the idealized parental imago. The sector of creative activity is said to include a central model of exhibitionism, of grandiose ambitions, of solidly interiorized ideals of perfection, and a correlated system of attitudes and capacities which mediate between these characteristics.

In investigating some special aspects of creativity, it should be recalled that a salient point characterizing any artistic expression is that of form (the means used to express, represent, organize meaning) and its relationship to content, which, for the psychoanalyst, has special characteristics. While for non-dynamic psychologies and for art scholars in general, content is identified as all that of which the artist makes conscious use to give form to his creation, for psychoanalysis the conscious content is already a form, that adopted by the unconscious contents (instincts and mental representations). In this sense, for the psychoanalyst, the creation of form includes all the mental functioning (Noy, 1979) that takes part in the control and discharge of desires or unconscious motives, in the regulation and adaptation of inner needs to the requirements of reality.

In this case too, the conscious-unconscious duplication-counterposition presents more problems than it resolves. According to the classic texts, the ego on one side controls the emergence of certain contents (passion, desires, fantasies) into the consciousness of each individual. It is not clear whether these contents are different in creative persons from those of others. On the one hand it would seem that they are, especially as regards scientific work; on the other hand, a work of art reveals contents, themes, conflicts of which the author may not be aware. There may be a direct passage from the unconscious to the artistic product, side-stepping the conscious. Or is it that a deformed version reaches the consciousness of the artist, as it does that of the public? Or does the artist have a third version? And what can be said of those artistic creations whose form aims not to conceal, but rather to render explicit a content that should be most dangerous and most strongly repressed? I believe it is for this reason that Freud had to reject certain forms of modern art that threatened his theoretical formulation.

Certainly not of secondary importance, even within the context of creativity, are psychological problems concerning consciousness. In psychoanalysis, the theory of consciousness is based on well-known principles: infantile hallucination as gratification of an instinctual need, omnipotence of thought, imaginative activity, the reality principle, insight. Even a superficial review of our literature reveals the importance attributed to these phenomena. As regards neonatal hallucination, we may recall the importance given it, though in different perspectives, by Kris (1952) and by Weissman (1969). We can only object that many psychoanalysts have now accepted what general psychology maintains as to the incapacity of the infant to represent absent objects and thus to hallucinate them. As for the omnipotence of thought, we may recall Freud's statement (1913, p. 90): 'In only one field of our civilization, that of art, has omnipotence of

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thought been maintained'. This is an assertion whose meaning is not easily comprehensible. By omnipotence of thought the author means the 'unswerving faith in the possibility of controlling the world and inaccessibility to experience ...' (p. 89). What does this mean? That artists (together with neurotics and primitives) are actually delusional subjects? The statement is derived from unacceptable theoretical premises such as infantile hallucination, primary narcissism, etc., which I have discussed at length in another publication (1981a).

A centuries-long tradition maintains that creativity and genius depend on some type of mental disorder. This viewpoint was bound to find confirmation in psychoanalysis, given its theoretical bias. Freudian metapsychology places the same reified entity, first the unconscious and then the id, at the basis of the most diverse phenomena, to which positive characteristics are very rarely attributed (equating pathology, dreams, primitives, artists, etc.); hypothesizing for the artist an excessive flight from reality into fantasy and expressing a negative judgement on the world of fantasies; having the reality principle intervene from the very beginning of life to exclude a phenomenon typical of pathology (hallucination), etc. This aspect was to be accentuated by a number of authors after Freud. For example, Eissler (1961), (1963) has hypothesized that psychopathology (the tendency to psychosis) is a necessary precondition of creativity. Weissman (1969, p. 122) is even more decided: 'The creative state may be viewed as a transient hallucinatory or delusional psychosis without ego regression ...'

Klein too (1929), (1932), and her followers have contributed to linking creativity and pathology, reducing everything to the usual paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. Moreover, according to this author, a work of art is for the artist the most complex and

satisfying means of alleviating the depression arising from the depressive position. Stokes (1955, p. 415), writes: 'the artist's depression is far more acute. And again some artists undoubtedly have strong hypomanic tendencies'. In spite of the fact that the concepts used here are poorly defined and good for all uses, I believe that obvious contradictions may be found in this. Thus Segal (1955) first states 'the wish to create is rooted in the depressive position and the capacity to create depends on a successful working through it ...' (p. 390), then asserts, 'He [the artist] shares with the neurotic all the difficulties of unresolved depression' (p. 398).

It is, however, important to note that a part of our literature emphasizes the diversity between these two themes. Thus Noy (1979) writes that neurosis is characterized by redundancy and repetition, by the tendency to congeal a situation and to resist change, while creativity is marked by untiring attempts to renew and reorganize one's form, to seek new solutions to new problems.

I believe that these correlations between psychiatric pathology and creativity are fundamentally equivocal. In the past, and the present too in good part, this kind of correlation may have derived from fear of the mysterious and the new, from aggression felt towards successful individuals, from the artist's indulgence in anticonformistic behaviour, from the difficulty of differentiating between truly creative persons and strange, bizarre subjects, etc. As regards psychoanalysis, the analogies derive from the use of many inadequate theoretical concepts and also from uncertain definitions of neurosis and psychosis. Association between creativity and psychosis is possible (though increasingly rare in proportion to the severity and length of the mental disorder), but in my opinion psychopathology has only a negative effect on creativity.

In discussing the subject of psychoanalytic psychopathology (1980), I proposed the concept of sectorial organization (S.O.), which I believe can be utilized for a superficial but useful approach to the study of both pathology and creativity, without the risk of confusing the two. S.O. are complex organizations of the psychological structures designed to deal with the more complex aspects of reality, modifiable in their functioning throughout life, but especially so in the early years. They may be at the basis of pathology, when in some manner altered in their development and functioning, or at the basis of various forms of artistic sensitivity which in favourable conditions can lead to creative, innovative solutions. They are functional units which, though in an artificial and schematic manner only, we may isolate in several aspects from the rest of the personality and which can be either thwarted or developed electively. This

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isolation does not mean that the S.O. are not influenced in their functioning by other aspects of the personality (from intelligence to body experience), but that, apart from these, they represent a functional ensemble whose final product is the activity of the subject in a certain field.

In speaking of creativity, it is impossible to neglect symbolism, since it is often placed at the basis of the most complex human activity. The Freudian viewpoint, later developed by Jones (1916), seems to derive from ancient philosophical beliefs: sense-perceived reality as symbol of intelligible reality. Thus the symbol is the conscious half of another half, the truly important one, the unconscious image or fantasy (only the repressed is symbolized). In psychoanalytic symbolism, as distinguished from symbolism in its widest sense, the affect which invests an idea cannot be sublimated. Because of conflict it is necessary to give up the object of desire (repression), which may be replaced by another, i.e. by its symbol. Thus symbolizing activity assumes both the significance of detective sublimation (like the symptom, it is a form of compromise between the repressed material and the repressing force) and that of an arcane, primitive mode of thought; schizophrenics are attributed with a special capacity for guessing the meaning of the most occult symbols.

The conclusions reached by the Kleinian school are completely different. For these authors the shaping of the symbol is an activity of the ego, which attempts in this way to elaborate anxiety arising from the object relationship. The symbol is said to arise from the conflict experienced by the child in regard to his mother's body. His libidinal and aggressive interest in his mother's body, then in those of his parents, induces guilt and anxiety which force him to direct his interest toward the external world. To salvage the object, the ego thus shifts its aggressive or libidinal feelings from the original object to its symbols, and the most primitive of these are called symbolic equations, perceived as the object itself and used to negate the absence of the ideal object and to control the persecutory one. The lack of differentiation between the symbol and that which it symbolizes is part of a disturbance in the relationship between the ego and the object, and is found in the concrete thought of psychotics.

The ego's inhibition of the instincts acts as a powerful stimulus for the creation of the symbol, through which guilt and fear of loss are abated. The capacity to create symbols is constituted when inhibition of instinctual aims has taken place. Thus the symbol, seen only in a positive aspect, lies at the basis of all complex mental activity, creativity included.

The Kleinian position sees symbolism as an almost facultative activity which may be achieved after having reached, or overcome, the depressive position. Both of the two most widely accepted positions in our literature seem to be equally untenable. The first for its conscious-unconscious duplication-counterposition and for the role played by repression (what does it mean to repress the mental representation of an organ?); the Kleinian because, in addition to considering symbolism facultative, it sees the process as set in motion by anxiety which originates from the usual unacceptable death instinct.

Symbolizing is an activity which appears when the conscious reaches a high level of functional integration. The psychoanalyst can tell us very little about its normal development. On the other hand, psychoanalysis could contribute richly by investigation of the elements, especially conflictual ones, which may intervene, conferring special characteristics on the process. Some of these characteristics may be involved in the various creative activities.

A further aspect in which psychoanalysis has been involved is that of the relationship between creativity and body experience. Although studies on individual aspects of the development of creativity and on the psychological significance of body experience are very numerous, the attempts to connect them seem to me inadequate. The nature of this issue spotlights the basic defects in the relationship between psychoanalysis and biology: body/mind dualism, non-critical transposition of biological concepts to psychology, our continuing to base our concepts on an out-dated biology, isolating psychoanalysis more and more from other branches of science.

Let us briefly recall some of the perspectives in which this theme has been viewed in our literature. Up until a few years ago, the most commonly used terms were those of body ego, body image, etc., which were then replaced by the expression 'self' (body self). Often it is unclear

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what these terms are supposed to indicate, whether the same term is used with the same meaning by different authors, and even what variants in these conditions might intervene in creativity. At times it is physical defect itself to act, furnishing the determinant thrust. Adler (1920) is the most typical and also the most superficial exponent of this position. At other times it is emphasized that with creative work, fantasies of being ugly, incomplete, or physically defective are replaced by others with opposite characteristics. In more dynamic terms, the creative act might be seen as an unconscious reconstruction of the artist's body image. Other authors (Rado, 1922); (Waelde, 1926) place emphasis on projection of the perception of self as the source of creative thought. The usual tendency, in any case, is that of presenting the influence of the corporeal self on creativity in a positive light. Sharpe (1935) hypothesized an extreme neuronal sensitivity, corresponding to intense infantile experience, and for Greenacre (1957) the artist had been endowed in infancy with heightened sensitivity to sensations and body rhythms.

A widely different view of the relationship between body experience and intellectual activity is represented by Ferenczi (1913), for whom the child sees in the external world only images of his own corporeality, and learns to represent through his own body the multiform reality around him. It is obvious that in this perspective, which has been widely developed by the Kleinian school, creative activity as well as all other mental activity originates in the corporeal sphere. Biven (1982) instead writes on the role of the skin, maintaining that it can be projected in the form of action. The best example of this is provided by the painter. The canvas on which he paints may at times represent his skin, while the artist's hand and eye libidinize this substitute skin in the manner of precocious auto-erotic activity.

Another long-debated issue, that of the difference between men and women in the field of creativity, has been dealt with on the basis of the dynamics deriving from anatomical 'differences'. A typical example is given by Greenacre (1960) who, starting from the analysis of talented women blocked in their achievements, reaches the conclusion that the necessarily different attitudes toward the genitals implicate different attitudes toward the fantasies involved in artistic creativity. For example the girl may fear her own imagination, because this unconsciously means the possible reconstitution of an illusory phallus and the torturing repetition of the experience of castration at each menstruation. Another possibility is that the woman, having associated her activity and her talent with a phallic illusion, sees these as impossible to achieve when the signs of her femininity begin to appear. The position of Erikson (1951), (1968) is different. Investigating the differences between boys and girls in their manifestations of creativity, he identifies the characteristics of the latter in a procreative pattern, i.e. femininity as expression of a specific organ for possessing, containing, enclosing and protecting.

Often, however, in our literature, it is unclear whether the characteristics of the body self are attributed with a determinant value for creativity, or whether this is only one of many intervening factors. At this point it may be worthwhile to examine the issue from a more general point of view. Historically, we must remember that Freud proposed to base his psychopathology (which quickly became a general psychology) on sexuality. In the context of instinct, sexuality was considered as organized on the biological level by a special form of energy (the libido) which, somatic in origin and coming from various areas of the body, arrived at the brain, to be transformed into mental energy. Another crucially important point was that of considering the conscious as an inert system (see principle of inertia) which requires a special energy to set it in action. This energy could derive, depending on the various moments of development of the theory, either from sensorial stimulation coming from the external world, from biological needs (hunger) or from instincts. It must be remembered that, for Freud as well as for a great part of subsequent literature, the conscious (and the mind) flees from stimuli, does not open of its own accord to the outside world, but relates to it only on the basis of a thrust coming from the body which may consist of libidinal energy, the energy of the death instinct, or the stimulus of hunger. Even our literature (Peterfreund, 1978); (Lichtenberg, 1981, etc.) is now beginning to accept what experimental psychology and the most banal observation has amply demonstrated, i.e. that the

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neonate actively seeks various kinds of stimuli, even at the cost of momentarily interrupting feeding, and expresses preference among these stimuli. The infant's activity is considerable, and seems to be independent of stimuli and somatic needs.

A theoretical position which takes these data into account will undoubtedly be different from the usual one. The role played by body experience in psychological development is not denied; it is denied that it constitutes the only, essential condition around which psychological life is organized. I certainly do not intend to propose the image (entirely unacceptable) of a brain living independently, isolated in a world without body stimuli, but only that these stimuli (on a par with the actively sought ones coming from the outside world) serve to direct and modulate its activity, not to determine it primarily. Confirmation of this is provided by a number of neurological conditions. For example, Dubovsky & Groban (1975) have described a subject who was from birth devoid of all sensitivity, superficial, enteroceptive, thermic and dolorific. Never had he felt hunger nor thirst, nor even the passage of urine and faeces. And never had he received any form of pleasure from the various possible sensorial experiences other than sight, smell and hearing. This subject, in spite of his difficulties, showed psychological, affective and intellectual development within the range of normality. The authors speak of a defective feeling of self, which, however, they do not define more clearly. To return to the classic viewpoint of psychoanalysis, we see that it proposes a biological theory of psychological development, always centring it on the development of the somatic libido. This matures by stages, becoming in succession oral, anal, phallic. These evolutionary stages of the libido have very often been attributed, as we know, with a determinant role in the development of the creative process, with the intervention of fixations, regression, a certain type of unconscious fantasies, etc. This theory, not only based on the no longer acceptable economic theory but also confuted by observation of the

infant under many aspects, conforms to the iron rules set down by Haeckel's biogenetic law (1866), also no longer credible.¹

The imprecise use of a number of concepts is also highly important. Here we may begin with a well-known statement by Freud (1923, p. 26): 'The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface'. In the note added in 1927 (p. 26), Freud states specifically that the ego derives from sensations arriving from the body's surface: 'It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides, as we have seen above, representing the superficies of the mental apparatus'.

On this point it is especially evident that Freud does not make the differentiation between ego and self which will appear in subsequent literature, and that what refers to the ego may in this case be attributed to the self. Even though Freud attributed the development of mental activity to the libido, it seems unlikely that he intended that those neurological or discriminational activities without which it would be meaningless to speak of sensations depend on bodily sensations. Quite different is the condition of the self, with a phenomenological structure which sees the personality as experience, and in this perspective the statements quoted from Freud are acceptable; but the relationship between self and creativity is quite a different matter, and it is difficult to attribute to the self, in the development of creativity, all those functions usually assigned to the ego. The role of the self, as subjective experience at the somatic level, can only place the issue on a clinical-empirical plane; the role of ego instead is situated on the plane of metapsychological explanations. This having theorized by reifying the mind, thus constituting a metaphysical fact, has not only caused psychoanalysis to inherit all the problems of religion (Home, 1966), but also to face a series of pseudo-problems such as the so-called body/mind differentiation. How and why the activation of complex neurophysiological structures can be accompanied by consciousness is not a problem for psychoanalysis. When it attempted to formulate an explanation, by having the genesis of all

¹ This law states that ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis, i.e. that man, in his development from foetus to adult, repeats the entire history of the race. This in its turn repeats the course of evolution. Starting from the hypersexed and perverse animal, as expressed by the development of the olfactory structures (see **Flieiss' influence, 1893**), we arrive at the point of overcoming the individual part components under the primacy of mature genitality.

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significant psychological phenomena, including creativity, originate in this metaphysical point, it was able to provide only second-rate, antiquated philosophical speculation.

A discussion of the mind must necessarily include mention of metapsychology and related concepts. The economic principle and sublimation, the ego and regression, unconscious fantasies, the id and the primary and secondary processes are metapsychological concepts, which underlie practically all psychoanalytic theorizing on creativity. As regards these concepts, I might follow the example of Schafer (1976) or Gill (1976), inviting the reader to reject them *in toto*, or I could restate my criticisms formulated on previous occasions (1981a), (1981b), (1984). The latter solution would require too much space but since the hope that it may be of use persists, against all evidence to the contrary, I will try to summarize them.

The contributions of Rosenblatt & Thickstun (1970), of Gill (1976), of Swanson (1977), of Schafer (1976) and of many others have shown that the concept of mental energy and the relevant economic principle propose anew a body/mind dualism (with the mind as reified entity to be activated by a special form of energy) and an unacceptable vitalism. These concepts belong to outdated nineteenth century principles (the principles of constancy and Nirvana derived from that of neuronal inertia); they recur to tautology and circular reasoning; they reify metaphors, provide pseudo-explanations which are seductive because they are based on the subjective experience that things really happen in this way, etc.

Linked to the concept of energy is that of sublimation. Given the importance attributed to it in creativity, the criticisms advanced by Rosenblatt & Thickstun (1976) should be mentioned. By maintaining that all behaviour originated or took energy from sexual instincts, Freud created the problem of explaining activity, artistic or scientific for example, which seems to be neither sexual nor conflictual. He attempted to resolve this problem by proposing the concept of sublimation (a displacement and change in the nature of the energy) described first as a vicissitude of instinct and then as a function of the ego. It seems obvious that, since the nature of this hypothetical energy can be deduced only from clinical observation, the use of an energetic definition to explain these very observations constitutes tautology. If we abandon the energetic-instinctual reference, the concept of sublimation becomes not only superfluous but misleading. Behaviour which has never manifested characteristics linked to sexuality (see **Hartmann's primary autonomy, 1939**) is a pseudo-problem. For behaviour which has lost its original sexual component, the authors speak of the change in goal of a motivational system in the course of its maturational integration into a hierarchy of current motivational systems.

No less drastic, and in my opinion no less valid are the criticisms addressed by Peterfreund (1971) to the concept of the ego. The ego constitutes the maximum in anthropomorphism (not in the sense of a useful descriptive expedient, but as the highest level of explanation that can be reached by the theory); it is ambiguous whether the concept consists of a useless list of functions or of a structure in the sense of an objectively existing entity; it provides an *ad hoc* explanation in the vain attempt to resolve body/mind dualism; it cannot be counterposed to the id, since it is expressly the id which is attributed with the functions of integration, organization, etc.; its development is said to take place under the effects of experience, which is utilized through the intervention of the functions assigned to the already-developed ego. In conclusion, the concept has only a pseudo-explanatory value and the term 'ego' could be deleted from all psychoanalytical texts not only without detriment to them, but also to the advantage of clarity and precision.

Equally open to criticism is the concept of regression (formal), defined as a change in modalities of functioning from the secondary to the primary process. It is often unclear whether, and when, this process should be seen as a return to archaic modes of functioning or rather as the emerging of a coexisting modality. At times it seems to mean the emergence into consciousness of repressed contents. In the following pages we will see why, in my opinion, the concepts of reified contents lying in the semi-anatomic unconscious and that of

opposite modalities of functioning of the mind are untenable. The worthlessness of these concepts as applied to creativity can in any case be deduced from the fact that psychoanalysis itself has pointed out the role played by unconscious processes in all our

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activities, those considered creative as well as those which are obviously not.

If we take regression to be a return to early infancy, the concept has even less meaning. To maintain that infancy is creative is to deny the facts, unless we consider creativity to be the individual achievement of modalities of functioning and levels of development of a general nature.

A discussion of the primary process necessarily includes the instincts and the id. Obviously, no one wishes to cast doubt on the importance of sexuality and aggression or the fact that the greater part of our psychological functioning takes place at the level of unawareness. What must instead be criticized and rejected is the explanation provided by metapsychology.

If, as Freud states, instinct is a biological concept, it must be biology to tell us what is meant by instinct or drive, and this science abandoned many years ago the Darwinian concepts still abounding in our literature. If this is instead a clinical-empirical concept, it should be expressed by terms belonging to these levels, such as wishes, motives, etc.

Inconsistency in the concept of the id is even more apparent, and has often been pointed out in our literature. First of all, the concept holds up only within the context of a body/mind dualism. If it had to do with anatomical structures, we would have to yield to neurophysiologists. If we leave aside neuro-anatomy, where can we locate this reified entity? It would be totally inappropriate to consider it a metaphor, when the question arises as to what its sense organs are. Moreover, major contradictions exist within the theory itself. The id is described as a seething cauldron, devoid of structure and order but at the same time it is said to preside over instinctual life, rigidly organized throughout the epigenetic stages of libidinal development, and thus of sexuality. Those products considered most typical of the id are certainly not lacking in organization and structure. Faced with these contradictions, some authors have attributed maturational processes to the id, and thus structures. But at this point the concept becomes something quite different from the Freudian one.

The contradictions are no fewer when we speak of the difference between primary and secondary process. This distinction was first introduced by Freud (1895) in a neurological framework. The concept was then transferred unchanged to psychology, after having had it bathe, not in the river Styx which would have rendered it invulnerable, but in the mind, which has filled it with contradictions: the possibility that one process precedes the other during development is first affirmed, then denied; fluidity and rapidity are much more characteristic of the secondary process than of the primary one to which they are attributed; the amplitude with which it is applied (to children, primitives, dreams, pathology, creativity, etc.) renders the concept devoid of any explicatory value. This is actually a primitive procedure for resolving difficulties. When a phenomenon appears very complex, we introduce an entity whose nature and characteristics we do not specify (the instincts for example) and when this is not enough we introduce two entities with opposing characteristics (Eros and Thanatos, primary and secondary process, God and the Devil), and from their interaction we obtain the desired explanation.

The defects in Freudian metapsychology also apply to the concept of unconscious fantasy, which has nothing empirical about it. First of all, it should be stated that in current literature this term has come to assume various meanings, the distinctions between them hardly ever clearly drawn, including the following: (a) the derivative of the repression of a fantasy or experience that was once conscious; (b) subliminal or preconscious fantasy; (c) a mental content which has never been conscious; (d) the direct transformation on to the mental level of a biological entity, the instinct; (e) a Lamarckian heredity of ancestral experiences. When formal aspects are described, the contradictions are again numerous; though unconscious, and thus dominated by the primary process, unconscious fantasies are said to agree in the smaller detail with the conscious and preconscious ones which lie under the reign of the secondary process; at times they are described as immutable, at times as capable of adaptation and modification. From the dynamic point of view unconscious fantasies, though kept under control by the counteratheses of repression, luxuriate in the unconscious and reach, through their derivatives, the conscious and preconscious systems. In the final analysis, in comparison to conscious fantasies, the only constantly mentioned difference to be found in the

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literature consists of an economic factor, devoid of any scientific value. All theorization on fantasies is moreover influenced by Freud's negative opinion; he considered fantasies to be characteristic of unhappy persons and even of neurotics. Moreover, it seems impossible to equate the production of fantasies with the fulfilment of a wish. Obviously, many conscious fantasies may have a theme different from that of wish-fulfilment (unless all of psychological life is to be considered such), and we know by definition that the position cannot be different for conscious, preconscious and unconscious fantasies. By considering unconscious fantasies to be something different from wish-fulfilment, we would open the way to an unconscious of merely neurological functioning. If then these fantasies constitute the fulfilment of a wish, why should they send products and derivatives into the conscious or the preconscious? If the unconscious fantasies that are repressed because they go against the pleasure principle (which is the express cause of their repression) were different, the homology between fantasies on various levels of consciousness would collapse. Moreover, we can hypothesize at will as to the type of fantasies that would have to be repressed or kept far from consciousness at all costs. As if this were not enough, the relationship between instinct (affect, energy) and fantasies (or ideas) is highly confused, with emphasis placed now on one, now on the other, with various links and disconnexions and even with the transformation of the one into the other, ignoring the fact that instincts, however they may be considered, do not constitute and do not generate primary categories of significance. Even more mysterious is the Lamarckian heredity. The infant is said to inherit fantasies which by definition are identical to the conscious ones of the child or adult. The list of inconsistencies inherent to this theorization could be continued almost indefinitely, at least as regards the way in which the concept is used in our

literature. The logical conclusion of all psychoanalytic theorization on unconscious fantasies would lead us to assume that, while a certain course of ideas is unfolding consciously, a multitude of others are simultaneously streaming through the unconscious mind; all this of course without ever asking the question of what is happening in the central nervous system. The reasons listed by Schimek (1975) for which the further development of psychoanalysis requires abandonment of the concept of unconscious mental representation, are of course valid also for what is indicated as unconscious fantasy. The formulation is Freudian in origin, and derives from the content approach (first traumatic experience and then unconscious fantasies), currently no longer tenable for a number of reasons, many of them the same as those which have led us to reject the concept of unconscious fantasy. Others regard the fact that the conscious is an open system where the principle of multiple causality reigns together with that of equifinality. Moreover, without wishing to diminish the clinical importance of the personal past on which psychoanalysis justly insists, it seems evident that our methods permit a reconstruction of that past which is vague and hypothetical. The negative results of having ignored this fact are expressed by the descriptions of fantasy occurring at too early an age and by contrasting, contradictory psychoanalytic theories of psychological development.

Kleinian theorization has accentuated these defects, both by terming all psychological processes unconscious fantasies and by having them exist in great number from the moment of birth.

The other formulations mentioned in discussing the theory of object-relationship, centred on infantile development (Mahler, Klein, Winnicott, Kohut) are certainly no less open to criticism. The method on which they are based is almost always that of reconstructions made years after the event, in the firm belief that excavation in the mind can bring to light a perfectly-preserved archeological object. When direct observation of earliest infantile behaviour is conducted, it is profoundly influenced by the erroneous theoretical premises whose confirmation is sought in a potentially ambiguous material such as that offered by neonatal observation. If these two defects are not of primary importance, there are then the explanations utilizing the customary, unacceptable metapsychological concepts. As a consequence, we find theories describing life's earliest stages as a kind of hell side by side with others where it is a blissful union; theories in which the infant is considered incapable of differentiating himself from his surroundings and those which have him performing complex mental

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procedures; those which attribute a determinant role in the future development of creativity either to empathic relationships or to traumatic conditions. Practically all psychoanalytic contributions are now based on reconstructions and hypothetical subjective experiences of earliest life.

As regards Mahler, we need only recall Peterfreund's criticism (1978) which shows the derivation of her theory from implausible metapsychological concepts, the adultomorphism (along with denying the infant capacities easily demonstrable through observation), the adoption of an anti-evolutionary position, the persistent labelling of normal infantile conditions on the basis of adult psychopathology (with the infant seen as delusional and hallucinated). Observations of infantile behaviour conducted in recent years and all the concepts of modern science in the fields of biology, psychology and aetiology, etc., contradict Mahler's theoretical position.

I have recently (1983a) completed a critical review of the entire Kleinian system, reaching the conclusion that the work of Klein is based on the search for a theory of the genesis of psychosis. Her fidelity to the Freudian postulate that a psychopathological picture requires something analogous in infancy led her to describe the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, whose existence she then erroneously believed could be demonstrated by reconstructions made years later. In order for universal neonatal psychosis to develop, the necessary prerequisites were the intervention from birth of an extreme evil (the death instinct) and the presence of those structures and mechanisms considered essential in the Freudian formulation; this was the origin of the retrodating introduced by Klein. The Kleinian theory of infantile psychological development has been constructed on these principles, and the Kleinian approach to creativity cannot do without the death instinct, the neonatal inferno, attacks of envy and destructive unconscious fantasies. Without these premises, depression, the reparative mechanism and thus the creative process itself cannot be set in motion.

The defects inherent to dependence on metapsychology and reconstruction are clearly evident in the theory of Kohut. As for Winnicott, we cannot dispute the existence of objects that may be called transitional. What is unacceptable is the explanation given for them, based on neonatal hallucination, omnipotence of thought, libidinal movements. Moreover, the connexion between transitional objects and creativity is in no way demonstrated.

It is useless, I believe, to continue to list criticisms. Basically, they should serve to clarify the following points: (1) Explanations of creativity founded on metapsychological concepts are unacceptable. (2) The validity of the psychoanalytical contribution belongs to the empirical/clinical context. Hacker's statement (1953, p. 129), in short, 'our science has explained everything about art except art itself' is too optimistic because theory, at a higher explanatory level in psychoanalysis, not only has been incapable of explaining (if this were possible) the nature of creativity, but it has also severely damaged investigations on the clinical-empirical level. (3) The reasons why a new metapsychological theory must be sought, if it is held that psychoanalysis cannot develop within the context of a merely clinical-empirical theory.

As regards the latter point, I would like to summarize the theoretical hypothesis I have been formulating over the last few years (1981a), (1981b), (1984) in conformity with the scientific trend which has shifted emphasis away from the substantial element to structures and functional procedures. In psychology, this has meant renunciation of the view of mental representations (or unconscious fantasies) as atoms of thought, regarding them instead as transitory epiphenomena of the activity of cerebral structures that may be studied at various levels. The first level is the neurophysiological one, which does not involve psychoanalysis except in that, if we reject body/mind dualism, none of our hypotheses must contradict what we know from modern neurophysiological research. The second level is that of psychological or mental structures, although we must constantly bear in mind that we are speaking of a neuronal organization which not only contains no ideas or sentiments but possesses no finalism, and which functions on general biological principles such as that of causality (though not of linear type), that of equifinality, and the rejection of antideterminism. The structures develop in the sense of greater

organization, complexity and specialization, but tend also to repetition of the same patterns of behaviour. We may observe continuous interaction between

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genetic patrimony, organic causality and the influence of interpersonal relationships; an essential role is played by sexuality, by aggression, by the drive toward individual survival, by the quest for pleasure and by language. In order to explain the objective elements of behaviour, the structures have need of the so-called rules of correspondence (which might include some of the defence mechanisms, inhibition, induction, reinforcement, accommodation, generalization, convergence-interference, etc.). This group of hypotheses does not form part of the clinical theory of psychoanalysis but of its metapsychology. It could serve to explain in what manner the significant experiences and conflicts of each of us determine our ways of being.

In the clinical context, we may distinguish three types of hypothesis: (a) descriptive or classificatory, regarding particular conditions (Oedipus complex, transference relationships, etc.); (b) comprehensive, emphasizing how all behaviour may have multiple meanings, aims, motivations of which the subject is unaware; (c) genetic, aiming at identifying the personal experiences that have had determinant influence on the subject's current conditions.

On these hypotheses are based the interpretations of the psychoanalyst, which constitute a point of departure for a third level of structural analysis, termed the multiple-storey, or psychoanalytic narrative, level. This is constituted by having the structures operate in experimental conditions (the setting), filling in memory gaps through guided introspection which brings out the discrepancies between awareness and behaviour and renders concrete the existence of unconscious mental processes. Through memories of the past, daily experience, dreams, the analyst and analysand build up a story or group of stories where the logic of events, the sequences, the level, the actions and personages assume variable and even contradictory aspects. Motivational explanations have no need for the hypothesis that, behind all conscious purposes and intentions there exist others, under the form of fantasies, which duplicate them.

It is obvious that the proposed theory does not aim to explain the true nature of creativity, but only to provide a more adequate scheme of reference to be used in clinical practice. Only after the constitution of an adequate clinical theory (the current one being unsatisfactory) and its formalization, will it be possible for analysts to compare empirical data and arrive at adequately verified generalizations. These will have to do with our chief areas of investigation: conflict, especially in its unconscious aspects, object relationships, the psychology of self, the role of sexuality and aggression, etc. Data gathered from the analysis of creative persons may then constitute the only original contribution of psychoanalysis to the problems of creativity.

For the moment, we may limit ourselves to concluding with some general remarks. All possible explanations of the creative process must exclude any absolute originality of the product, unless we want to bring in a supernatural element. In other words, if we wish to explain a process, we must place it in a sequence where it is preceded by necessary causes and followed by logical consequences, through a series of continuities. If two successive modalities of existing are different from each other, these differences are indicative of a change from one state to another only in reference to a pre-existing reality that is unvaried. If successive stages were considered as different from each other and not as different forms of the same underlying reality, such states would not be indicative of a change, but would constitute isolated, discontinuous events. This perspective which Feffer (1982) has applied to the Freudian theory of development and I myself (1983b) to the psychoanalytical process, must be kept in mind, I believe, in an investigation of creative processes too. At this point it may be useful to recall some remarks of Feldman (1974). He contrasts, though not in sharp opposition, two possible directions to be followed in research on creativity: the 'trait approach', which aims at identifying lasting characteristics, and the process approach, which tends to explain the means by which creative acts are accomplished. The first approach, which guides empirical research and studies based on tests, presumes that the traits observed are relatively immutable, stable and quantifiable, and can perhaps allow us to predict behaviour in many circumstances. The emphasis on process, on the contrary, focuses on interaction between the organism and its environment, the progressive and changing structure of behaviour. Only long tradition as well as the practical requirements of a schematic framework for

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investigating our past tend to show us human progress as a series of isolated stages marked by the appearance of creative geniuses. A more thorough study, aiming at complete analysis of the transversal and longitudinal reticle (diachronic and synchronic) in which every event must be placed allows us to view creativity in a different light. Within the dimension of continuity, I believe, we may also include those hypotheses which hold that creative potential, i.e. the urge to seek new and better solutions, exists in each individual. For this creativity to be achieved, a series of causes and favourable circumstances (specified only in a very limited manner) will of course be necessary.

Psychoanalytic theory at a higher explanatory level confronts us with a very large set of discontinuities. We cannot know, for example, how the passage from libidinal to neutralized energy takes place, how the unconscious passes to consciousness, how we pass from an unconscious fantasy which constitutes as such the fulfilment of a wish to related behaviour. In this context too, metapsychology shows itself inadequate to deal with the theme of creativity. I believe that the structural hypothesis I have attempted to outline in this paper provides us with a more satisfactory approach.

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SUMMARY

The current crisis of psychoanalysis also involves studies of various forms of creativity. After having pointed out the need for distinction between clinical-empirical theory and hypothetical theory (such as metapsychology) the author identifies and summarizes a number of trends of investigation as reported in our literature: libidinal-energetic, contentistic (unconscious fantasies), anthropomorphic (of the ego), aggression-reparation, phenomenological, and object-relationship approaches. The role played by metapsychological concepts (the author, in agreement with those who consider them unacceptable, discusses some of the most well-known criticisms), and the confusion between theoretical levels are responsible for having made the psychoanalytical contribution entirely unsatisfactory at a higher explanatory level and for having hindered adequate reorganization of data of an empirical nature. After having examined several elements involved in creativity (symbolism, role of pathology and body experience, etc.), the author outlines a personal theoretical hypothesis of the structural type as a basis for the establishment of a clinical-empirical theory which, as regards research on creativity too, may constitute the chief field of investigation for psychoanalysis.

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