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The Vital Role of Adaptive Grandiosity In artistic creativity

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Introduction

Over the years, I have been struck by the paradox that most of my patients who are creative artists: actors, dancers, painters, musicians, and screenwriters, displayed infantile, narcissistic traits, especially flagrant egocentricism and grandiosity, and yet they could be exceptionally mature and productive in their work. What came to mind was the popular stereotype of the “enfant terrible” or the “prima donna.” Although the public seems to accept this infantile sector of the artist’s personality as, perhaps, the necessary price of creative achievement, implicitly assuming a linkage between creativity and grandiosity, most of the psychoanalytic literature, with the notable exception of Kohut’s and Rank’s writings, has suggested that grandiosity interferes with artistic creativity. From this perspective, grandiosity results in delusional expectations for instant, magical productivity that can undermine the secondary process functioning required for creative work. As a manic defense, grandiosity or omnipotence is said to deny the existence of the separate reality (the separation of self and other) that the artist requires in order to adequately perceive subject matter and to manipulate the chosen medium effectively (Segal, 1957, 1981).

For creativity to occur, psychoanalytic theorists claim that infantile grandiosity must dissolve, either: (1) through sublimation, and the neutralization of sexual and aggressive drives (Freud, 1905); (2) through mourning, guilt, and reparation in working through the depressive position (Klein, 1975; Segal, 1957); (3) through the neutralization of narcissistic libido (Kohut, 1971); or (4) through transitional process operations and the acquisition of internal objects (Winnicott, 1951).

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I believe that this is only partly true. In my artist patients, I have observed a type of adaptive grandiosity that seems to be necessary for their creativity. Through clinical observation, the psychoanalytic literature on artistic creativity as well as biographies of famous artists, I have formulated a theory concerning the role of the artist’s grandiosity in the creative process.

In attempting to understand the psychodynamics of adaptive grandiosity, I have assumed an eclectic perspective, applying the concepts of various psychoanalytic theoretical orientations, in order to determine which of them fit best. In this investigation, Kohut’s writings on creativity come closest to describing the data, whereas the Kleinian belief that mania is always pathological does not appear to account for its healthy function in adaptive grandiosity. These theoretical differences are amplified in the paper.

Synopsis of the Role of Adaptive Grandiosity in Artistic Creativity

The artist attempts to create something out of nothing (ambiguous material) and, therefore, must confront nothingness or nonbeing. The conventional world of the known and the familiar must be separated from in order to create something new and original. The artist’s experiences of separation-individuation throughout the creative process, but especially when confronting the blank page or its equivalent, unconsciously represent separation from the maternal introject, resulting in a loss of maternal protection [primary omnipotence (Winnicott, 1971)], particularly the loss of a sense of immortality in mother’s protective embrace, so to speak. This loss induces conscious or unconscious annihilation anxiety (fear of death) and depression, a sense of meaninglessness and nonbeing in facing what Freud (1920) described as an overwhelmingly dead, inanimate, inorganic universe. In other words, in creating something new out of nothing, the artist is forced to confront mortality and biological finiteness. It takes more than self-confidence to do this. In my opinion, it requires adaptive grandiosity.

What exactly is adaptive grandiosity? It is the artist’s exhilarating conviction of potential for greatness, the extremely high value that is placed on the uniqueness of feelings, perceptions, sensations, memories, thoughts, and experiences, and on the importance of

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publicly exhibiting the content of the inner world through the creative medium. This type of grandiosity involves the artist’s total confidence and powerful belief in personal capacity to perform creative work. It includes the conviction that the work will be an extremely valuable contribution to humanity, deserving of public adulation and possible self-immortality. It is an ego state that can be conscious or unconscious. This clearly differs from normal healthy self-confidence in which an individual believes in the value of perceptions and in the capacity for successful achievement, but lacks the pervasive grandiose qualities described above. Adaptive grandiosity provides the motivational fuel to confront the blank canvas, which psychologically represents the void or nonbeing.

For example, Mrs. D, a middle-aged actress, who also aspired to becoming a successful screenwriter and producer, had an incredible belief in her artistic power. She felt exceptionally skilled at taking an acting role that stretched her artistic capacity and creating a

character that portrayed complex facets of her inner psychic life. She could do this with equal facility in acting or in fleshing out an interesting character in her screenwriting. Her adaptive grandiosity, not only sustained her in confronting the ambiguity involved in creating but also motivated her through years of stressful auditions, sporadic bit parts in the theater, television, and film, and numerous rejected development proposals that would have been unbearably frustrating for most people.

Creative artists like Mrs. D assume that merely by expressing facets of their inner being through their preferred medium, they will make an extraordinary impact on humanity and be adulated, immortalized, and financially supported for it. In order to do this, like Mrs. D, they must have an unusually strong conviction of their potential for greatness.

In contrast, Mr. G, a 21-year-old man, was considering becoming a graphic artist. He had shown his work to a famous painter who told him that he possessed the talent to pass the graduate art review for admission into a prestigious training program. Mr. G seriously thought about art as a career and became extremely dejected. It didn't seem worthwhile to spend the rest of his life expressing his feelings and perceptions through art and have people admire him for it, to do something that "revolved around my own navel," as he put it. He realized that he was more inclined toward the helping

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professions, such as law or medicine. Although Mr. G may have been talented, he didn't have the necessary belief in his own internal greatness and in the vital importance of artistic expression. He lacked sufficient adaptive grandiosity and exhibitionism.

Without this ego-bolstering grandiosity to fuel and empower the creative process, the artist may become so anxious or depressed as to stop creating and/or find oneself clinging to something safe and known, instead of immersing oneself in the ambiguous raw material of art. Adaptive grandiosity is largely a manic defense against the artist's potentially disruptive depressive reaction to separation from the maternal introject during the creative process. Of course, manic defenses can also be maladaptive in which case they are manifestations of omnipotence (maladaptive grandiosity).

Because of its fragile, defensive nature, adaptive grandiosity can easily become maladaptive, and result in omnipotence (e.g., magical control and fusion states) or paralyzing fear or depression. Under the sway of omnipotence, the artist becomes subjected to the delusion that creativity occurs through instant, magical will power and not through persistent effort, painstaking discriminations, and complex technical skills. The regression to omnipotence depends on the strength of secondary process functioning attached to the artist's grandiosity. The stronger the secondary process connection, the less likely the artist is to regress to omnipotence. During the creative process, the artist must often walk a tightrope, struggling to maintain adaptive grandiosity in order to avoid falling into the realm of omnipotence, fear, or depression, all of which can hinder the creative process.

The Artist's Precarious Maintenance of Adaptive Grandiosity

Learning the Tools of the Trade

Creative artists often resent having to learn the techniques of their craft. Many of them omnisciently believe that they were "born artists" and should know it all. For such artists, the need for training implies a lack of natural talent, and is a crushing blow to their omnipotent self-images. Those who submit to training frequently fear losing their creative originality and potency as a result of subjecting

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themselves to the influence of a teacher. This is similar to the artist's common dread of losing creative power on entering analysis.

Picasso, for example, resented attending art school, but his father insisted that he do so. Probably as a result of his father's influence, Picasso's *modus operandi* throughout his lengthy career was to learn from other artists as much as possible (**Ghiselin, 1952**).

With adaptive grandiosity, artists are able to idealize their teachers, but in this process there is often an omnipotent fusion with them, on the order of what **Kohut (1971)** described as a narcissistic twinship. The teacher, in effect, is perceived as part of the artist's own ego-ideal, so that artists can freely consume what the teacher has to offer and also maintain their own grandiose creative identity. The teacher, functioning as a self-object from Kohut's perspective, unconsciously represents part of the artist's grandiose self image. This permits a relatively fluid transition between consuming artistic knowledge and being able to create independent work. The artist with adaptive grandiosity can maintain an omnipotent artistic identity throughout the learning process in contrast to the artist who learns without adaptive grandiosity. The latter consumes knowledge from a separate object and consequently lacks an omnipotent twinship with the teacher. In this case, dependency on the teacher is harder to break, since there is no fusion of self and object operating, and no adaptive grandiosity to help the student cope with separation anxiety in confronting the blank canvas alone.

In contrast, omnipotence (maladaptive grandiosity) impedes artistic learning as well as independent creativity. Artists may present obvious omnipotent delusions about their artistic capacities but not demonstrate any meaningful productivity. For example, Mr. M, a 25-year-old manic depressive, prided himself on being a natural "rock song" writer and an abstract artist. In treatment, he would often brag about having learned these crafts by himself, with no outside help. His short periods of creative activity usually occurred as he was in transit from depression to mania. He desperately wanted to publish his hundreds of songs as a book of poetry, but resisted showing his work to an agent since he was terrified of criticism. He lived with a sense of phoniness, never having learned the rules or techniques of his craft.

Mr. M. was primitively fused with his manic-depressive mother, and had totally rejected his father, a harsh, punitive figure. Without

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sufficient paternal identification in resolving his positive Oedipus complex, he brought little secondary process functioning to his song-writing, which largely consisted of loose clang associations (see Metapsychology section). He instantly and magically identified himself as an artist after seeing some drawings hanging in my office, and then brought me some drawings that looked like doodles the next day as evidence of his great artistic talent. His most ecstatic fusion experience was in the height of a manic episode when he delusionally believed himself to be on the Johnny Carson show, being interviewed for his superlative artistry and admired by a nationwide audience. Through such magical fusion states, Mr. M unconsciously defended himself against confronting and working with his artistic limitations and creative isolation. The latter represented a dangerous separation from his fused maternal introject.

During the learning process, adaptive grandiosity can easily become maladaptive if primary process elements are employed to ward off annihilation anxiety. An artist may have absorbed the teacher's instruction, but then, on the verge of leaving school, through omnipotent possession, swallow the teacher whole and unconsciously become the teacher. In such cases, the artist employs an omnipotent fusion state to avoid developing a separate artistic identity or facing personal limitations during creative work (Safan-Gerard, 1989). Or some artists magically assume that merely by calling themselves "artist" automatically makes them one. Of these individuals, Gertrude Stein (Ghiselin, 1952) said: "They cease being creative men and soon they find that they are novelists or critics or poets or biographers ... but that is silly! When a man says, 'I am a novelist', he is simply a literary shoemaker" (p. 162).

Through adaptive grandiosity, aspiring artists could begin to learn their craft from the masters in their field but then be dirown off course by an omnipotent reaction to their envy of the masters. For example, a young man pursued a career in creative writing, but after reading the works of Shakespeare, Hemingway, O'Neill, and Tolstoy, he concluded that he couldn't possibly write as well as they did, and quit his pursuit. His omnipotent, magical expectation to be instandy as creative as they were overwhelmed him, and he retreated from writing. He lacked a powerful belief in his own creative power to learn from them. Ultimately, artists must have the adaptive grandiosity to consume, synthesize, and assimilate the knowledge

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of the masters without losing their own creative impetus. But then they must abandon their omnipotent possession of the specific voice of the masters in order to find their own, which means facing the blank page alone.

Confronting the Blank Page

In no other phase of creativity do artists need adaptive grandiosity more than when they face the loneliness of the blank page or canvas. With the pressure to create something meaningful, they can easily become terrified of experiencing their emptiness in the face of nonbeing. During this phase, artists need to accept chaos as a temporary stage until they are inspired (Milner, 1957). The urge of many artists is to fill the void immediately in order to escape the experience of unbearable separation anxiety and, in my opinion, the unconscious fear of death. This often involves magical, omnipotent control. According to Milner (1957), at the deepest level, artists who do this are magically attempting to avoid the despair about anything good to believe in.

Mr. M, the manic-depressive song writer mentioned earlier, would write down everything that came to mind, just to fill the page, and then, feeling stuck with what he put down, would try to arbitrarily squeeze some meaning out of it. Artists, like Mr. M, who lack adaptive grandiosity, are often too fearful of giving themselves sufficient "alone time," a creative period for their artistic ideas to percolate.

Artists are notorious for avoiding the blank canvas altogether, sometimes developing arcane and superstitious rituals with which they procrastinate. Many writers wait for the "right" magical mood to strike. One writer established an ever-increasing sequence of procrastinating rituals, such as smoking a pipe, going to the bathroom, reading the newspaper, doing a crossword puzzle, taking a 2-mile walk, etc., until there was hardly any time left over to sit alone at the typewriter. He was convinced that all of these activities were absolutely necessary to facilitate his artistic flow.

The endless search for the perfect artistic studio is another popular omnipotent dodge. Mr. O, a well-known local painter, produced no work for over a year and a half, using the excuse that he needed to finish his studio first. But it soon became clear in treatment

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that he was fearful of having nothing to say. Working on his studio was a concrete attempt to consolidate his self-confidence and regain the necessary adaptive grandiosity to step into the primal void again and confront his emptiness. Rank (1932) spoke of the need for a "strong creative will" to overcome this dreaded experience. When sufficient adaptive grandiosity is lacking, artists frequently turn to drugs or alcohol to induce an oceanic fusion state or they may turn to significant others for compensatory support.

Mr. N, an extremely successful writer and graphic artist, for example, could not face his typewriter alone unless he was completely taken care of by romantic partners according to his exact specifications. Without this encompassing maternal support system, in which virtually everything in life was done for him, down to the shopping, cooking, housecleaning, laundry, clothes purchasing, chauffeuring, etc., facing the blank page became too frightening and he would lapse into horrible depressions. Mr. N ended up with a succession of caretakers, each of whom he would completely drain and eventually lose. As long as he sustained the sense of magical, omnipotent control over a maternal object, he could face separation and nonbeing effectively. But when he lost his caretaker, his adaptive grandiosity

collapsed and he was unable to create. In this instance, adaptive grandiosity was made possible through maladaptive omnipotent control over a supportive object.

Numerous creative artists have vitally depended on the caretaking of significant others in order to confront creative ambiguity, such as Thomas Hart Benton, Picasso, Van Gogh, and, in an extreme example, Brian Wilson, the lead singer of the Beach Boys, whose therapist became his manager and personal promoter. In the transference, creative artists often seek this type of support from their analysts.

Finding Inspiration

The process of inspiration involves the grandiose feeling of absolute entitlement to follow your own bliss, to choose the material that turns you on, and to reject that which does not; to feel like a god over your subject matter and your creative medium. The artist may experience this either passively or actively. Mozart, for example, in describing his creative process, said, "When I am, as it were,

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completely myself, entirely alone, of good cheer—my ideas flow best and most abundantly. Whence and how they come, I know not; nor can I force them. Those ideas that please me, I retain in memory, and am accustomed, as I have been told, to hum them to myself" (Ghiselin, 1952, p. 44).

Mozart experienced inspiration passively, as if it came from some other source. But he absolutely knew that his creative ideas would flow. Some artists feel as if their inspiration comes directly from God or that it is like giving birth, an activity that they have no control over. Others, like Picasso, more actively and consciously experience their grandiose control, selecting what they like from a vast cafeteria of internal and external stimuli. But this may still require a period of uncertainty until they discover what turns them on.

With maladaptive grandiosity (omnipotence), actively inspired artists may not be discriminating enough with their selection of material and believe that anything that stimulates them is appropriate subject matter, whereas passively inspired artists may sometimes wait around indefinitely for some magical spark for inspiration. Others may perfectionistically cling to the notion of an ideal, right way to be inspired, possibly derived from a magical fusion experience with some idealized creator in the same field. Such artists often believe they must cultivate a creative style, as if it were something they needed to graft on to themselves, rather than having it emerge naturally from within. They lack a sufficient grandiose sense of the uniqueness of their personal selections of artistic subject matter and do not realize that their artistic creations carry their own special stamp.

Mozart believed that what gave his music its special character was "owing to the same cause which renders my nose so large or so aquiline or, in short, makes it Mozart's, and different from those of other people. For I really do not study or aim at any originality" (Ghiselin, 1952, p. 45).

Creative Activity

According to **Rothenberg (1979)**, the artist usually begins creative activity with Janusian thinking, named after the Roman deity, Janus, who had two heads facing in opposite directions. The artist

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divides the artistic material into broad, conflictual strokes; like god, initially taking a glob of primordial matter and separating heaven from earth, or like Mozart, taking a tasty musical motif and making a "good dish" of it, enlarging it (Ghiselin, 1952, pp. 44, 45).

For this, artists need the adaptive grandiosity to trust their own artistic vision, no matter how anxiety provoking, weird, or strange it may be at the outset. This again may catapult them into the primal void by radically separating them from the conventions of parental, social and even religious standards. Such grandiosity can go awry if artists lack secondary process functioning in their rendition of the work and make it so idiosyncratic and bizarre that the public cannot relate to it.

Janusian creativity is complemented by what Rothenberg described as homospatial thinking in which two or more objects simultaneously occupy the same space. This involves processes of merger and fusion. With adaptive grandiosity, the artist can employ homo-spatial thinking to modulate the unacceptable bizarreness of Janusian creations, but this can become maladaptive if artists get hooked on the oceanic experiences of fusion, and their work can end up too dull and undifferentiated. Thus artists continually vacillate between individuating and merging during their creative activity, and struggle to maintain adaptive grandiosity during these oscillations.

Artistic Editing

Artists need to be able to detach from work-in-progress, judge it objectively, and then change it in the direction of the artistic vision. They need the adaptive grandiosity to believe that they can possess and transform the artistic material into anything they want it to be. But this can readily become maladaptive if, unlike Mozart, they have difficulty separating themselves from their creation and seeing it objectively. The ecstatic fusion experience of merging with the work, in order to avoid the annihilation anxiety induced by artists' experiences of their own creative limitations, can become so all consuming, that they may lose themselves in minute details or in the ecstatic pleasure of creating and neglect the overall picture. Or, artists may get hooked on an ecstatic fusion experience of the initial creation and be unable or unwilling to engage in the objectivity

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required to finish the work. Mr. G, a young sculpture student rendered beautiful figurative pieces in terracotta, but when it came time to hollow out the sculptures and put a patina on them, he became too bored and was never able to finish his creations.

Sometimes creative fusion experiences flow adaptively and the work proceeds effortlessly toward the desired goal, but much more often the process involves editing and changing what one has already created. Artists who are too omnipotently identified with their pieces cannot stand the sense of personal annihilation and self-destruction involved in editing. They often will idealize inferior products in order to avoid the experience of separation that is necessary for desirable modifications, and they frequently have long dry spells, waiting for their ecstatic creative flow to begin again.

In adaptive grandiosity, the work remains separate from the artist as something being formed, but the artist is extremely confident in being able to alter it. Artists with adaptive grandiosity are able to take advantage of accidents through serendipity. They do not have to maladaptively control every aspect of the work in order to perfectly create the vision they have in mind. But they respond to the work as process, with passive receptivity to their inner flow and listen to where the music leads. They allow for spontaneity and surprise, surrendering to their eccentricities, and they can permit experiences of omnipotent control and passive surrender to flexibly alternate because of their belief in their great artistic capacity.

In contrast, artists with maladaptive grandiosity are often unconsciously fearful of losing control, and try to rigidly regulate every aspect of the creative process, e.g., in jazz, sticking perfectly to the written notes rather than risking improvisation; or in sculpture, making the figure look perfectly formed and smooth instead of leaving it rough for emotional expressiveness. Milner (1957) spoke of this as the artist's clinging to a world of fact and protecting himself against the world of imagination. Certainly unconscious fears are triggered off by venturing into ambiguity, and, in my opinion, the artist's clinging to a world of fact is a misguided attempt to preserve omnipotence in response to the ultimate unconscious fear of death. This has been confirmed in my patient artists' dreams in which taking creative initiative is equated symbolically with entering a desert or an abyss of loneliness, isolation, and decay.

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Artistic Promotion and the Danger of Success

Some artists experience their greatest confrontation with non-being in the business end of their work, which many of them reject as completely unrelated to art. They omnipotently defend themselves against their anticipation of rejection in a competitive marketplace with the laudatory ideal of creating art for art's sake, and devalue the importance of financial or popular success. Many such artists retreat to their studios and never give themselves the opportunity to become successful, comforting themselves with the grandiose defense of being true to their artistic values.

Mrs. S, an actress-screenwriter, never lost faith in her artistic capacity. Her greatest difficulty was in assertively presenting herself to agents, casting directors, and producers. In the transference, she expressed the magical, omnipotent wish to have me provide her with professional contacts that would facilitate her career.

It turned out that this replicated her experience as a child, when her egocentric stage mother set up all of her auditions, and she blindly went along like a puppet. Stepping out professionally on her own behalf was equivalent to separating from mother and entering the primal void. At these times, her dreams would be strewn with imagery of abandonment and death, and of herself as a three-year-old child, wandering aimlessly and lost in an objectless world. The more she related to me as a separate person in the analysis, the more terrified she became, not of persecutors, but of meaninglessness and dying. During these times, although terrified, she felt that her creativity was more authentic and powerful than ever. To confront agents and casting directors, meant yielding her infantile fusion with mother and becoming a separate individual. On the deepest level, this involved losing her sense of immortality in mother's womb.

The fear of rejection can also provoke omnipotent reactions that hamper creativity. For example, without any prior connections, Mrs. T contacted one of the largest talent agencies in Los Angeles, and through her adaptively grandiose self-confidence, she won a contract to have them represent her first screenplay. After receiving three rejection notices from producers, she felt devastated and refused to try further, even after a director for whom she worked, begged to read her script. The possibility of another devastating challenge to her omnipotence, which at this juncture had become

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maladaptive, was intolerable. She lacked the adaptive grandiosity to believe that her judgment was at least as good as that of her critics, and to put her considerable energy into promoting her work rather than magically trying to control the response to it by retreating.

Success is one of the greatest threats to adaptive grandiosity because it can easily induce regressive fusion states that result in expectations for magical control over the creative process and make confronting artistic limitations extremely difficult. Picasso, in the twilight of his spectacularly successful career, became much less discriminating about his creative products, and seemed content to produce anything regardless of its quality. Many artists in the entertainment business have one or two major successes and then disappear from the limelight, frequently lapsing into alcoholism or drug addiction, which helps them to omnipotently deny their loss of creative momentum while preserving the magical expectation that success will spontaneously recur without a serious effort on their behalf. We see here how when adaptive grandiosity loses its secondary process functions, it becomes maladaptively omnipotent.

Brief Review of the Relevant Literature

This review focuses exclusively on psychoanalysts whose theories of creativity included the concept of grandiosity. As a result, many important writers in the field of creativity have been omitted.

Ferenczi, according to Fenichel (1945, p. 39), saw omnipotence as arising from primary narcissism, which lasts as long as the infant is unable to conceive of objects. In Freud's (1905) theorizing about creativity, he focused on art as a form of neurotic Oedipal conflict resolution, resulting in the neutralization of libido through the process of sublimation and didn't deal with the role of grandiosity at all, although he did say that primitive man employed art to magically and omnipotently manipulate animistic forces (Freud, 1913).

Klein (1975) and particularly Segal (1957, 1981) viewed omnipotence as a manic defense against the experience of envy, dependency, and separation during the creative process and was therefore an impediment to artistic creativity. Omnipotence was seen as undermining the main creative objective that was to restore the destroyed maternal object through mourning and reparation while working through the depressive position.

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The concept of adaptive grandiosity, as suggested earlier, is most similar to Kohut's concepts (1971), particularly his view of the grandiose and idealizing selves as necessary building blocks for ambition, goals, achievement, and self-identity. Omnipotence (maladaptive grandiosity) is similar to Klein's view, except that manic defenses are viewed as capable of facilitating artistic creativity when connected with the secondary process operations of adaptive grandiosity. These perspectives are elaborated next.

Formulations on the Metapsychology of adaptive grandiosity

In my opinion, adaptive grandiosity is an ego state that derives from (1) primary narcissism or primary omnipotence, as Winnicott (1971) called it, and (2) secondary narcissism and the Oedipus complex in relation to the fate of the ego-ideal. At times, it functions as a manic defensive. The thesis here is that the creative artist's original infantile grandiosity emanating from primary narcissism has not been sufficiently projected onto parental imagos during the establishment of secondary narcissism and the formation of the ego-ideal. In this case, the ego-ideal derives from an excessive residue of primary narcissism rather than mostly through an internalization of idealized qualities from the parental objects.

The expressive form of the grandiosity depends on whether the archaic grandiose ego or the idealized parental imagos are stronger. If the archaic grandiose ego is stronger, artists create their work feeling that power emanates from within, whereas if the idealized parental imagos are stronger, artists believe that their grandiose creative power comes through them from another source, as if they are merely the conduit for creativity.

To the extent that the differentiation between self and object has not been fully achieved, artists' ego-boundaries are somewhat weakened, thereby making them more sensitive to stimulation and more prone toward fusion experiences, accounting for what Green-acre (1957) described as the artist's "love affair with the world." As a result of their hypersensitivity, artists would be more susceptible to disappointments and depression, and more likely to enlist omnipotent manic defenses to reinstate a sense of oceanic well-being.

Moreover, there is probably only a partial resolution of the

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positive Oedipus complex, with some crucial identifications with the paternal object to form the final ego-ideal. Such identifications facilitate the connection between grandiosity and secondary process functioning. Chasseguet-Smirgel (1984) said that achieving an identification with the paternal object helps the child separate from the primary fusion with mother and is a major developmental step toward separation-individuation. This step represents a change from the pleasure principle to the reality principle, and from primary process thinking to secondary process thinking.

A likely developmental model for the psychological constellation mentioned above consists of excessive parental adulation that undermines the complete separation of self from object and reinforces archaic grandiosity. Of course, there may be other developmental scenarios resulting in the same constellation, but this developmental model is evidently typical of numerous artists (Arieti, 1976) who were regarded as the special children in their families, receiving unlimited admiration and support for their artistic activities, such as Picasso, Camille Claudel, etc. The secondary process functions of artistic creativity were strongly encouraged.

For example, as a child, Picasso was so hypersensitive to visual stimulation that he constantly doodled in class and had enormous trouble mastering reading and arithmetic. His parents gave their complete support to his drawing, and minimized the importance of correcting his scholastic difficulties. Picasso's mother idolized him and his abilities. She told him that he would be great in anything he did, and that if he pursued religion, for example, he would become the pope (Huffington, 1989).

His father, who was also an artist, was extremely supportive of Picasso's artistic endeavors, providing him with his own studio at the age of fourteen. He encouraged Picasso to do his best and, to Picasso's dismay, pointed out when his work could stand improvement. Some paternal idealization and identification in working through the Oedipus complex was apparently essential for Picasso's grandiosity to become linked to secondary process functioning and the experience of "otherness." Without this paternal identification, his grandiosity in the creative realm would probably have been maladaptive (omnipotent), and resulted in poor performance, a pathological consequence of the persistence of primary maternal fusion along with Oedipal victory and a negative Oedipal resolution.

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This is likely to result in a false artistic identity and phoniness of the creative work (See **Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1984**, for further elaboration).

Thus Picasso's ego-ideal, although merged with his ego, derived in part from an identification with an idealized paternal imago. As Kohut might say, a constellation of archaic grandiosity persisted into adulthood. This does not mean that Picasso's grandiosity did not impair his object relationships, but it certainly empowered his creative drive and self-confidence as an artist.

To the extent that excessive primary narcissism continues to prevail and that a positive Oedipal resolution is not fully achieved, with the creative artist's ego-ideal partially merged with his ego, the artist becomes the embodiment of his own ideals. This results in a grandiose confidence in his artistic capacity and in an extremely high sense of personal self-worth. Moreover, the artist has achieved sufficient individuation and object relatedness to be able to create with the full use of secondary process functioning.

Segal (**1957, 1981**) viewed omnipotence as always a deterrent to artistic creativity, since it functions as a manic defense that denies the separation between self and object which the artist needs in order to create. Unlike Segal and the Kleinians, I believe that grandiosity can be adaptive when it serves as a manic defense against the fear of separation, particularly annihilation anxiety. Perhaps the most convincing evidence for this comes from a plethora of historical and current research linking mania with artistic creativity, particularly in writers, graphic artists, and composers (**Arieti, 1976; Andreasen, 1987; Jamison, 1989**). These studies suggest that artistic creativity is inextricably linked to manic solutions to depressive problems. In the midst of coping with depression through mania, many artists have a grandiose belief in their creative power and are able to use it successfully to create good work. This is true of a number of renowned musicians, painters, and writers, and a few, who, even during manic episodes, created great art, such as Monet, DeMau-passant, and Camille Claudel. Van Gogh, during the last ten years of his life while at Aries and in a mental hospital at St. Remy for bipolar depression, was exceptionally prolific and created what many consider to be his greatest paintings during a heightened state of manic productivity. From letters to his brother, Theo, during this period, it is not only clear that Van Gogh relied on his mania for

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greater inspiration and motivation, but also that he used exceptional judgment and perseverance to optimally render his artistic visions (**Gaunt, 1970**).

If mania is always a deterrent rather than a facilitator of artistic creativity, it would be impossible for such artists to be so creative. For they would be so influenced by magical thinking and omnipotent control that they would barely be able to produce art at all, let alone great art. Clearly, there must be a domain of adaptive grandiosity within the artist's mania that can work in concert with secondary process thinking, a domain which remains impervious to primary process disruptions. This phenomenon is, perhaps, similar to the experience of an idiot savant, who, in the midst of retardation can enlist excellent secondary process functioning to perform unlikely creative or intellectual feats. Of course, the mania could also involve omnipotence (maladaptive grandiosity), in which case the artist's secondary process applications of creativity would be overwhelmed by primary process intrusions.

Adaptive grandiosity, therefore, can be enlisted as a manic defense to cope with depressive anxiety associated with separation. Magical thinking prevails in the artist's grandiose belief in creative capacity, but rather than completely denying the existence of separate objects, it denies the *fear of separation* and the fear of death. By providing motivational fuel and supportive backup, adaptive grandiosity can help the artist surmount these fears that are triggered by the limitations of primary fusion during the creative process.

In contrast to adaptive grandiosity, omnipotence does deny the separation between self and objects and results in magical fusion experiences that can impair artistic creativity, such as when an artist confuses the ecstatic experience of at-onement with the subject matter, with the actual quality of the work. Such ecstatic fusion experiences can severely limit judgment and objectivity during artistic editing, as indicated earlier.

Kohut (1971) wrote that the artist invests work with less neutralized libido and remains more closely identified with the result. "Too strict a rein on an artist's exhibitionism will tend to interfere with productivity while, on the other hand, intrusion of unmodified grandiose and exhibitionistic claims of an archaic grandiose self will be an obstacle to valid scientific production" (Kohut, **1971**, pp. 309, 310).

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Kohut suggested that the artist needs more unmodified archaic and exhibitionistic grandiosity to perform creative work than the scientist.

Kohut claimed that only extremely gifted creative individuals can make adaptive use of archaic grandiosity whereas the achievement of those of average endowment would be impaired by it. "A gifted person's ego may be pushed to the use of its utmost capacities and thus to a relatively outstanding performance by the demands of the grandiose fantasies of a persistent, poorly modified grandiose self (Kohut, **1971**, pp. 108, 109). Kohut suggested that it is the artist's compensatory structures of talent and skills that surmount the detrimental effects of archaic grandiosity rather than the attachment of secondary process functioning in general.

I believe that the artist's talent is not the crucial factor. If primary process functioning is dominant, the artist's talent would be in the service of omnipotence and magical thinking rather than reality testing. It is the linkage of secondary process functioning to archaic grandiosity, regardless of talent, that seems more logical, and would be supported by clinical evidence of creative artists of average endowment who could perform effectively while under the influence of manic processes.

Implications for Treatment

The theoretical and technical treatment of artists suffering from omnipotence requires another paper, but I would like to make a few brief comments in this area.

One difficult issue concerns the artist's frequent dread of losing creative power through psychoanalysis, particularly with respect to overcoming depressive trends which the artist may perceive as a major creative resource. Although most psychoanalytic orientations promise greater creativity in living as a benefit of successful treatment, it may be omnipotent to believe that mental health will always result in greater artistic creativity. Considering the relationship between depression, mania, and artistic creativity, it is possible that happiness and contentment may, in certain cases, dampen artistic inspiration and creative work. However, it is also possible that the artist can establish creative isolation, producing artistic neurosis, so to speak, to facilitate the creative process without having to be

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emotionally ill. Ultimately, the artist may choose creativity over mental health, and the question is whether the analyst should always side with mental health. Certainly, this subject becomes even more complicated, both ethically and pragmatically, when the artist is psychotic.

At any rate, from the vantagepoint of creative productivity, if the artist lacks sufficient adaptive grandiosity, the analyst must discover what is unconsciously blocking it from developing and find ways to bolster the artist's belief in his or her own uniqueness, specialness, and the importance of creative endeavors. If the artist's grandiosity is maladaptive, that is, tied to primary process operations and lacking sufficient integration with secondary process functioning in the realm of creativity, the analyst should obviously use clinical skills to help the artist move toward the reality principle, particularly with respect to better tolerating ambiguity, emptiness, and ignorance, and perceiving art as a process rather than a matter of magical control. These issues, of course, are likely to manifest themselves in the transference, especially in response to the analyst's silence—the psychoanalytic equivalent of the primal void.

Conclusions

What renders grandiosity adaptive in artistic creativity is the motivational power it provides for creative work when the artist confronts death in the form of experiences of separation from the maternal introject. Adaptive grandiosity is manifested in artists' enormous beliefs in their own capacities and in their tremendous abilities to persevere and master their media. When this aspect of grandiosity is operating, whether consciously or unconsciously, artists feel that nothing can stop them; no frustration can get in their way. And when this occurs, they can deny the hopelessness inherent in their artistic limitations and separation experiences in confronting the blank canvas and its equivalent. This constitutes a denial of the danger of separation, rather than a denial of the separation itself, which would be maladaptive. For grandiosity to be adaptive, it must be inextricably linked to secondary process functioning and good reality testing with respect to the creative process, and this gives the artist the courage to confront nonbeing rather than avoid it. This is

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in contrast to omnipotence, which is in the service of magical control and fusion and denies separation and nonbeing.

The aim of the grandiosity therefore defines its form. If the artist's grandiosity is identified with the ability to work hard, productively and to create a masterpiece, it becomes useful. But to the extent that it is invested in regressive, primary process operations, which require omnipotent magical solutions to problems and result in poor judgment, it impairs performance.

Summary

The artist needs adaptive grandiosity in order to create. Adaptive grandiosity is an ego-state that derives from primary narcissism and a partial resolution of the positive Oedipus complex, with the ego-ideal merged with the ego. It functions as a manic defense to overcome the artist's annihilation anxiety when confronting the blank canvas or other aspects of creativity which unconsciously represent separation from the maternal introject. Because of its fragile, defensive nature, adaptive grandiosity can readily degenerate into maladaptive grandiosity (omnipotence), which can block creativity. Clinical examples are used to illustrate the differences between adaptive grandiosity and omnipotence.

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