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FUNDAMENTALS OF THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CREATIVITY

Contents of Article: Introduction, Past and Present Functions of Creativity, The Psychoanalytic Approach to Creativity, Depth Psychology and the Problem of Creativity, Creativity as a Regulator of Mental Health, From Projection to Creativity, The Creative "I", Conclusion, Bibliography.

INTRODUCTION

Views concerning creativity have their beginnings in religious sources. Socrates described creativity as a manifestation of the divine powers of the Demiurge, Plato as discovering the eternal, timeless ideas by the artist, Aristotle as creating new objects in the likeness of nature, Neoplatonists and St. Augustine as the imitation of God's creation.

Thanks to creativity, an individual fulfils his needs of mental equilibrium, well-being, mental health and personality development. Creativity favours the arising of a health, defence and therapeutic dynamics. This is confirmed by the existence of an extensive diagnostic system based on the analysis of art, musical and theatrical works. These problems are dealt within, inter alia, psychoanalysis, depth psychology, and the Theory of Positive Disintegration.

PAST AND PRESENT FUNCTIONS OF CREATIVITY

In ancient Greece apart from the concept of mimesis (imitation) that described creativity as a recreation of nature, there existed a concept of catharsis (purging) connected with the preparation of man to religious rituals. The purging function has also been noticed in the realm of art, especially the theatre. Already Gorgias "described the influence of poetry as an emotional shock that he associated with magic and illusion (...) Perhaps those were Pythagoreans, as some people wish, since for them catharsis – purging was the natural and chief concept of all philosophy. The body is purified by medicine, and the soul is purified by music: that was their motto" (Tatarkiewicz 1982, p. 110).

The concept of catharsis referred to feelings evoked by poetry, music and drama. However, it was a theory that approached the spectator in a passive, not active way. Socrates was the first to point out the role of creative expression. In his conversation with the sculptor Parrhasius passed on by Xenophon, he stated that a painter also reflects in his work "his inner qualities, especially feelings that one can always see in the eyes" (Tatarkiewicz 1962, p. 48). In modern psychology, the following three functions of creativity are analysed first: expression, therapy and development. They all serve to maintain the person's mental health.

THE PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH TO CREATIVITY

According to the analysis model assumed by S. Freud (1968), the creative process consists of two stages. The first one is inspiration and the second is elaboration. Inspiration leads to creativity only when it is combined with the active controlling of primary processes by the "I" (ego), with the organization of technical aspects of producing and overcoming the resistance of the external world. Inspiration is the intrapsychic communication between the "it" (id) and the "I" (ego). Impulses, fantasies and desires coming from the "id" occupy the central place in the consciousness. Elaboration means the returning of the "I" to a higher level, the activation of powers of control and synthesizing abilities. In the creative process, there are mechanisms that allow the "I" to control and arrange the primary processes. It includes, inter alia, repression and regression. They may cause illness, but they may also stimulate creative processes.

In his work "Civilization and its Discontents" (1993), S. Freud juxtaposed the flexibility of repression in neuroses with sublimation in the creative process. He points out that regression combined with suppression may lead to neurosis, but connected with the "I", may lead to the creation of artworks. The "I" mechanism that blocks the path to neurosis and opens it to creative work is sublimation. The sublimation of drives means its fulfilment, but in a different way. It is the process changing the direction of energy to a more socially acceptable aim.

Identification, projection and transformation are mechanisms that are active in the process of sublimation. In this process, we deal with such phenomena as substitution and transformation. Substitution means the change of instinct aims, whereas transformation means neutralising the energy.

The problem of sublimation is connected with the phenomenon of symbolisation. According to S. Freud these processes result from the same psychological dynamics along with the conflict between the instinctive drives and the moral censorship of the "I". However, sublimation opposes the symbol, because transferring attitudes from one sphere to another is not the same as a picture generated by the psyche with all its richness of meanings. The symbol is a form of indirect representation. It may come from unconscious sources, and its expression assumes ambiguity and a variety of possible interpretations. The creator through sublimation and by elaborating a work finds his way back to the real world. We find similar observations in everyday reactions and behaviour, e.g. writing, drawing, playing a musical instrument, reading literature, etc.

Thanks to them, a discharge of energy and obtaining inner control takes place. Freud assumes that the main function of art is experiencing an aesthetic illusion: "pleasure comes from double source, from freeing the instincts and then again from taking control over them. The presence of the aesthetic illusion guarantees security and frees one from the sense of guilt, because we take part not only in our own, but also in someone else's product of fantasy" (E. Kris, quotation from Rosińska 1985, p. 143).

Concluding, I would like to quote a longer passage from an outline by Freud on mental life principles: "Art, in its characteristic way, brings together both principles (pleasure and reality, author's note). At first an artist withdraws from reality, because the demanded resignation of his own drives cannot please him. By doing so, he satisfies his erotic and ambitious desires in the world of fantasy. However, he finds his way back to the real world. This happens thanks to his artistic talent that allows him to transform his own fantasies into a new reality, which is particularly appreciated by people as a valuable reflection of the real world" (S. Freud 1975, p. 64).

DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF CREATIVITY

According to C. G. Jung, the creative process is about reviving timeless symbols of mankind hidden in unconsciousness, and their development and transformation into a finished artwork. Images, symbols and visions emerging from the depth of the unconscious combine with the consciousness. This is a benefit for the process of mental diversification, and thus desirable for personality development. Experiencing images allows one to assimilate and integrate them, and not push them into the sphere of unconsciousness.

The creator not only takes on a passive attitude, but also an active one towards the appearing symbols of vision. It is confirmed by the following words: "He who speaks using archetypes, speaks a thousand voices, at the same time he tames and overcomes, moves upwards what defines the passing, makes everlasting, transforms individual fate into the fate of mankind, and thereby frees in us immense powers that always gave us rescue from every danger, and let us sustain even the longest nights" (Jung 1993, p. 41).

The forming consciousness may be flooded by stimulated and accumulated unconsciousness. Its contents depict the character of the inner conflict. It can be easily deciphered by the analysis of the works "on the subjective level", e.g. by the interpretation of dreams, visions, fantasies, creations. It is important here to withdraw split projections, illusions and delusions.

Man has great fear of deep desires and problems. They reveal themselves as symptoms of the unconsciousness. Symbols are transformers of creative energy that is covered under negative psychological contents. However, C. G. Jung emphasises that in unconsciousne, the positive contents follow the negative contents. They cannot be found directly, but through an indirect route of projection because: "the unconsciousness first manifests itself to us through projection" (Jung 1993, p. 37).

This thesis was developed in a positive way by K. Dąbrowski, who assumed that creativity and personality development consist of "increased projection". Thanks

to this, all that is not experienced, latent, non-diversified in the psyche reveals itself and goes through assimilation, relieving primeval tensions and conflicts. An example of "increased projection" can be literature, music and theatre which function as the "basis" of personal impressions, feelings, visions and experiences. Contents stored in the structure of tales, fables, or myths free one from the tendency to overestimate the subjective point of view in favour of what is collective. Increased projections free an individual from being absorbed by the excess of inner images and from the inflation of the "I".

The artist when choosing motifs draws from the depth of his unconsciousness. Objects that he created move the spectators' unconsciousness, reactivate in it emotions such as love or anger, fascination or dislike, fear or ecstasy. The imagination shapes images and thoughts: "It is an activation of the deepest parts of the soul in order to facilitate symbol generation, their creative and healing effect" (Jung 1993, p. 197). Symbols operate as expressions and impressions, they articulate inner processes in a figurative way, they stimulate sensations and the flow of mental energy. Symbols are transformers of mental forces, they influence the whole psyche, its conscious and unconscious parts, and many of their functions. "Whether something is a symbol or not depends first of all on the attitude of the observing consciousness" (Jung 1993, pp. 135-136).

Images saturated with inner emotions create a psychological frame that prevents the neurosis from developing. They balance the disturbed or overexcited psyche and its stable part. Through creativity, the disturbed or separated fragments of the psyche gain meaning as elements of the "I" located in the "creative objects". They already exist not inside, but outside the personality, they do not make the psyche uneasy, but bring it joy.

CREATIVITY AS A REGULATOR OF MENTAL HEALTH

Creativity is an important factor of man's personality development, it expresses his drama, gives shape to inner crises and torments. It also has perfectionistic, healing, therapeutic, and developing functions. Painting or writing even when a minimal nucleus of an "inner milieu" exists, elevates the person's activity and gives perspectives to define the borders and meaning of his own existence: "healthy means a developmental impact of art; it has a multilayer, multilevel character, and that is its role in the psychohygienic approach" (Dąbrowski 1985, p. 45). Creativity is an impulse to develop mental health and to explore the inner psychic milieu.

Creativity at early stages of life is an expression of spontaneous activity that leads to development of inborn cognitive and therapeutic tendencies. It serves as a prophylaxis of mental crises that always accompany rapid personal development processes. Creativity is a healthy element of nervousness, neuroses, psychoneuroses, and even psychoses. Thanks to that, ambivalences and ambitendencies, the changing moods of depression and excitement, the changing feeling of superiority and inferiority, ecstatic syntony and rebellion, and other phenomena accompanying development do not change into mental degradation.

An important development objective is the recognition of one's own interests, giftedness and talents that function as mental dynamisms. Discovering one's own mental richness, e.g. during a personality test, causes a "positive shock" and stimulates latent or repressed capabilities. The diagnosis of creative capabilities increases the sensitivity to one's own "I", and then increases the sensitivity to others.

Creativity takes place by means of inner examination that changes the point of view for one's own experiences. It increases the tendencies of stratifying reality and one's own perception, it induces the need for a new synthesis of this stratification, which manifests itself in treating one's own personality as an "object – subject" in oneself". Thanks to this, it is possible to verify, distinguish what is more mine and what is not in creative work.

Creativity linked with the need to change oneself facilitates the experience of traumas and the completing of "shortages" in the personality. In anxiety states, depressions or obsessions, one can discover elements of creativeness, positive elements of accelerated development (Dąbrowski 1989, p. 104) and build upon them a positive personality diagnosis.

Interesting research was conducted by the team under the direction of K. Dąbrowski concerning the personality of exceptionally gifted children and youth. The research conducted refers to the discussion on neurosis and psychoneurosis in personal development. To settle the discussion, Dąbrowski compared personality and creativity of oligophrenics with the personality and creativity of gifted persons.

Considering K. Dąbrowski's definition of mental health as the ability to develop towards personality, it is worth to cite the interpretation of T. Kobierzycki (1994, p.10), who writes that thanks to creativity, man gains an outstanding ability to obtain insight into hierarchical structure of his own being. During creative acts, there happens an integration of dynamisms: somatic, energetic, imaginary, feeling, intellectual.

FROM PROJECTION TO CREATIVITY

Projection based on an anxiety attitude towards the world is stereotypical, unstructured and concerns the sphere of sex, eroticism, illness and death (Freud 1975). Projection observed in everyday behaviour also contains messages inadequate to the situation. It is an expression of unrealised needs or fears. We can therefore speak of a specific projection rigidity that appears in certain distressing situations. An individual takes on a defensive, submissive, serfdom, ambivalent attitude. He cannot use emotions, feelings, desires for inner change.

As consciousness develops self-control appears that consists of aiming at achieving accordance between one's own behaviour and the perceived behaviour of the surroundings. It can be called the introjection of social norms. Thus the projection connected with the situation is also "dependent" on it, influenced by the situation. It is confirmed by the projections of small children. However, when research is done on adults, it turns out that projections are influenced by inner problems, they are "dependent" on them. It happens likewise with creative work that concentrates on external objects or inner objects (cf. A. Brzezińska, quotation from H. Sęk 1987, pp. 145-165).

Surrounding elements are incorporated into the experience of the developing person, they enrich his inner environment. In consequence it leads to differentiated forms of self-projection, and also to the enrichment of already possessed forms of expression. We can speak of a primary creative attitude (Maslow 1986) that is based upon spontaneous play and fantasy. Considerable self-consciousness will facilitate the projection of chosen qualities and the manipulation of the images of oneself in difficult social situations.

In the case of developing people we can speak of intended projection, in which an individual pursues a creative goal chosen by him: "Projection of this kind occurs in the life of an adult and mature man who acts purposefully. The projection of oneself is objectified in the matter of the creative work, it is subject to the vision, concept, goal or principles defining the construction of the work" (Tatarkiewicz 1986, p. 49). The effects of spontaneous projection and the expressing of oneself have creative features. They are creative, but it is not an artistic creation. The condition that decides whether something is artistic is its aim, intentionality and sense, visible in the object of creation. Unconscious creativity, the so called "creativity without rules" has a protective, defensive character, and not purposeful, developing one.

To some extend each creative act expresses the creator's personality. However, there are different levels of this expression. They are the creative attitudes of the first and second degree (Maslow 1986). The first is emotional, spontaneous, intuitive and inspirational, it is the basis for the formation of a vision of the creative object. The second is intellectual, self-conscious and controls the content passed through the creative object. There is a transition between what is irrational in the creative process and what is rational, between what is located in the creative object and the contents of projection.

THE CREATIVE "I"

The dynamisms of creativity build an alternative personality structure. We can speak here of a "creative instinct" or of a "creative personality" (K. Dąbrowski, F. Barron, R. May). The creative instinct offers a different path of development, when dynamisms of feelings are broken, it integrates the healthy "I" of the individual. The imagination, intuition, motor skills and somatic dispositions are sufficient for the development of the creative "I" around one of the mentioned dynamisms.

At a lower level, the "creative instinct" means an unconscious striving to express one's own problems using archetypal images (concerning tales, dreams, fears). Then the "I" is unstructured. At a higher level the creative dynamism is an ambivalent type of activity. And the "creative instinct" breaks through from the dream

to the consciousness. At the third level imagery is replaced by emotional (colour) projections. Images can be constructed, composed, and expressed not only as unconscious projections. This marks the activation of the creative "I". Further personality development "through creativity" is conscious. Unconsciousness is included into transcendence.

In cases when the development dynamics is weak due to weak dynamisms of feelings, the creative "I" is identical with the "creative instinct" and does not cross the level of projection. The unconscious dominant is then expressed as an alternative world of the individual, as his second "I" that comes to life especially in situations of crisis or relaxation. It protects the individual from destruction and a threatening mental breakdown.

CONCLUSION

Creative projection favours the gaining of new experiences and incorporating them into one's own psychological system. However, projection is not creativity. The concept of creativity based on projection assumes a simplified vision of man. It discounts the antinomy between projection and introjection, primary and conscious creativity. Creativity based on projection is the opposite of introjection, and is not, strictly speaking, creativity.

It is essential to introduce the category of "positive projection" to the analysis of creativity. K. Dąbrowski describes it as an intensification of projection up to creativity. It is possible to surpass the ambivalence of introjection and projection through transcendence which frees the individual from "the impasse of introjection" (Kobierzycki 1994). During a crisis, transcendence takes the form of projection or introjection and due to this it is less visible and concealed. Revealing it is a task for psychological and philosophical analysis. The creative process is never painless, automatic and often takes the form of crisis.

Creativity is not an easy adventure. It functions as a bridge between health and illness and is one of the essential dimensions of human life. It helps to explore, protect and develop it.

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