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AN ESSAY ON ROMANTIC GENIUS, RORSCHACH MOVEMENT, AND THE DEFINITION OF CREATIVITY

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Summary.—I have interpreted a recent *Saturday Review* article (1) most specifically, as a new variation on the theme of anti-psychometrics, (2) less specifically, as a new manifestation of humanistic dissatisfaction with scientific psychology, and (3) generally, as a protest from Snow's "traditional culture" regarding who in our society shall be called intellectually great. The variation involves attacking aptitude tests of creativity for their failure to measure aptitude for *artistic* creativity. I have suggested that the movement dimension of the Rorschach test does precisely this—although it does not measure what the Guilford originality tests measure, namely, aptitude for unusual, remote, and/or clever response. This aptitude is relatively independent of Rorschach's "capacity for 'inner creation'," a capacity which must be well above-average to qualify as a genius in Romantic terms. Because this independence has long been recognized by Romanticism, it is to be expected that an abundance of the Guilford aptitude will not much impress the Romantically-oriented critic, even if the aptitude is coupled with lofty IQ, and the two are confirmed by achievement of the order of a Nobel Prize. The Romantically-oriented critic will call "genius" only someone rich in Rorschach's capacity, i.e., in capacity for "artistic inspiration, religious experience, etc." Only someone, I add (in the phrase of the article's title), who is something more than a "useful genius."

A recent article in the *Saturday Review,* co-authored by two teachers of history and American studies, rhetorically asks whether current creativity tests "may be ignoring those forms of creativity that do not conform to [the test-developer's] own predispositions about the kinds of creative activity that are 'worthwhile' in American society" (Kreuter & Kreuter, 1964, p. 66). The teachers are referring specifically to such work as Torrance's which, they say, is clearly oriented toward recognition and development of scientific ability: his "very definition of creativity shows this orientation" (p. 66). They question the wisdom of this current emphasis upon fostering scientific creativity, and they question it partly on the ground that "the related concepts of creativity and genius have been so long associated with artistic endeavor" (p. 66).

The article is interesting in that it represents a new phase of the continuing attack on psychological testing. Intelligence tests have been attacked for not measuring creativity. Now creativity tests are being attacked for not measuring artistic creativity, or more precisely, the kind of creativity presumably involved in artistic but not in scientific endeavor.

Another interesting feature of the article, and the one with which I shall be mainly concerned, is its claim of discontinuity between the definition of creativity underlying contemporary measurement efforts, on the one hand, and on

the other, the definition of creativity underlying the eighteenth-nineteenth century conception of original genius. Thus:

> For the nineteenth-century Romantics in particular, the genius was characterized by his devotion to beauty and by his access to a kind of truth that escaped other men. Most often the genius was seen as an artist or poet, vastly different in appearance and mode of life from the generality of men, and with little reverence for social convention. Of one thing in particular the Romantics were absolutely certain: neither the scientist, the inventor, nor the man of commerce could be a genius (Kreuter & Kreuter, 1964, p. 65).

They are claiming, in other words, that if current tests of creativity aptitude were based on the Romantic definition of creativity, it would be an unusual scientist, inventor, or man of commerce who would score high.

The discontinuity claim is, in my opinion, a reasonable one. Originality in psychology today means much more what Guilford says it means—"uncommon, clever or remote responses" (Wilson, Guilford, Christensen, & Lewis, 1954, p. 305)—than what, for example, Edward Young in *Conjectures on Original Composition* says it means:

> Learning we thank, genius we revere; That gives us pleasure, This gives us rapture; That informs, This inspires; and is itself inspired; for genius is from heaven; learning from man (Morley, 1918, p. 17).

The Guilford meaning of creativity is embedded within an action context of life, the Young meaning within an experiential context. In the *action* context, originality is defined primarily in terms of the product's relation to other products and to the problem to which they are all responses; thus, in the action context, originality is defined primarily in terms of *problem-solving.* In the *experiential* context, on the other hand, originality is defined primarily in terms of the product's effect on its producer and especially on its consumers; thus, in the experiential context, originality is defined primarily in terms of *consciousness-expansion.*

In the action context, therefore, it becomes relatively insignificant whether the producer of the original product was reverent, rapturous, inspired, etc., during his act of production, or whether consumers are in their act of consumption. To *whom* does it become relatively insignificant? To the research sponsor, if it is a governmental or industrial bureaucracy, seeking indirect, long-term help to improve its action in a competitive situation; but also to the typical psychologist as creativity researcher—for the typical psychologist, like the typical natural scientist, is primarily committed to the improvement of man's action in a survival and prosperity situation, or, as it is more familiarly described, the improvement of man's adaptation to his environment. The typical psychologist as creativity researcher, then, is concerned chiefly with identifying antecedents and correlates of ability for creative *action.* The Romantic, on the other hand, was recoiling from what we are calling the action context of life—in his case, scarcely less than in our own, a context of rapidly-advancing science and technology, commerce

and industry, etc. Hence *his* chief concern, in theory and in practice, was with ability for creative *experience.*

This difference in commitment to the two contexts of life, the context of action and the context of experience, makes it predictable that there will be a difference of the sort specified by Kreuter and Kreuter, i.e., the difference between the definition of creativity underlying the eighteenth-nineteenth century conception of original genius and the definition underlying many contemporary measurement efforts.

So I take no issue with the teachers' discontinuity claim. Nevertheless, I do want to propose, to them and to my fellow psychologists, that there exists within scientific psychology, and has existed for close to half a century, a measure of ability for creative experience. I take no issue with their discontinuity claim because this measure is not ordinarily associated with the phenomenon that prompted their article, i.e., "a new enthusiasm of educational psychologists—the measurement of creativity, both potential and actual" (p. 64). The measure of which I speak is a dimension of one of the oldest tests in the clinician's repertoire, and from a scientific viewpoint, one of his most uncertain. I refer to the movement dimension of the Rorschach test, a dimension that apparently (Barron, 1955) is uncorrelated with the Guilford measures of originality. It is, I believe, a test of that kind of creativity which one does *not* find abundant (just as Romantic philosophy claims) in the typical scientist, engineer, or businessman.

That natural scientists do not score high on Rorschach movement—even eminent ones, the ones who "work in science at a level which almost certainly involves genuine creative activity"—is nothing new to psychologists, at least not since the publication of Roe's studies (e.g., 1946b, 1949, 1950, 1951a, 1951b; see also Knapp, 1956, pp. 210, 240).[1] But that Roe's finding may have something to do with the difference between the Romantic definition of creativity-genius-and-originality and the corresponding definition currently prevalent in American scientific psychology—this is an idea I believe fresh and worth exploring in the remainder of this essay.

Novelty vs Meaning

Before proceeding, I need one more distinction—the distinction between creativity in its sense of novelty and creativity in its sense of meaning. The *novelty* sense of creativity clusters with *action* and *problem-solving.* The *meaning* sense of creativity clusters with *experience* and *consciousness-expansion.*

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[1]For evidence that artists *do* score high on Rorschach movement, see Myden (1959) and Hersch (1962). As for the protocols of Roe's painters—so few of which, she thought, "could, by any criteria commonly employed, be called the records of 'creative' personalities" (1946a)—they contain a higher proportion of *M* responses (median total movement divided by median *R*) than those of her three eminent scientist groups (Roe, 1951a; Roe, 1951b; Roe, 1953) as well as those of two normative groups (Cass & McReynolds, 1951; Brockway, Gleser, & Ulett, 1954). For related discussion, see Stark (1964).

For example, if my need for meaning greatly outweighs my need for novelty, I might say of your creative product: "Yes, it is novel all right but I can't say it provides a meaningful or enriching experience; it leaves me pretty much unmoved—so I can't honestly rate it very high in creativity." And you, with your much greater need for novelty than for meaning, might say of *my* creative product: "Yes, it's an experience all right but it's really nothing new; it leaves us pretty much where we were before—so I can't honestly rate it very high in creativity." And a third creative product might greatly please the two of us, and a fourth not a bit, either of us.

The novelty sense of creativity is the sense of departure from past or preceding practice—from convention, correctness, custom, habit, orthodoxy, prescription, propriety, regularity, respectability, tradition, usage, etc. The meaning sense of creativity is the sense of that kind of imagination which I qualify as follows (depending on the context and purpose): aesthetic, analogical, animistic, anthropomorphic, artistic, biographical, cosmic, cultural, divine, dramatic, dreamy, dynamic, empathic, ethereal, ethical, evolutionary, exalted, existential, expressionistic, fiery, ghostly, glowing, godly, gothic, hallucinatory, haptic, historical, holy, humane, humanistic, hypnagogic, idealistic, inspired, intuitive, journalistic, jurisprudential, literary, lively, marketeering, medieval, metaphorical, metaphysical, moral, mystical, mythical, mythological, occult, ontological, organismic, otherworldly, personalistic, phenomenological, philosophical, physiognomic, poetic, political, private, prophetic, psychological, qualitative, religious, reverential, romantic, sacred, saintly, soaring, sociological, spiritual, subjective, sublime, supernatural, supersensible, teleological, theatrical, theological, transcendental, unearthly, vital, and vivid.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this essay is that the eighteenth-nineteenth century conception of original genius is based at least as much upon the cluster that the Guilford measures of originality do not tap, i.e., the *meaning-experience-consciousness-expansion* cluster, as it is based upon the cluster that they do tap, i.e., the *novelty-action-problem-solving* cluster.

In support of this hypothesis I shall present excerpts from William Wordsworth on the subject of genius. In these excerpts the presence of the novelty cluster is obvious—but just as obvious, it is my wish to show, is the presence of the meaning cluster.

Wordsworth on Genius

It is in Wordsworth's remarks on *taste* and on *popularity,* in his Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815 (1962), that we find overlap between his concept of original genius and his concept of ability to create experience in the consumer's mind, or to incite the consumer's mind to the creation of experience.

He begins (for the present purpose) with the claim that "every author, as

far as he is great and at the same time *original,* has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed . . . . The predecessors of an original Genius of a high order will have smoothed the way for all that he has in common with them;—and much he will have in common; but, for what is peculiarly his own, he will be called upon to clear and often to shape his own road" (Wordsworth, 1962, p. 66). This leads him to try to identify the difficulty of creating taste. He mentions various possibilities; then he considers the meaning of "taste" in the fine arts; he criticizes its use in the fine arts because of its connotation of passivity:

TASTE, I would remind the reader . . . is a word which has been forced to extend its services far beyond the point to which philosophy would have confined them. It is a metaphor, taken from a *passive* sense of the human body, and transferred to things which are in their essence *not* passive—to intellectual *acts* and *operations* (pp. 66-67).

Such a faculty is adequate to the passive elements in aesthetic appreciation but not to the active—the active for Wordsworth being the pathetic and the sublime:

Proportion and congruity, the requisite knowledge being supposed, are subjects upon which taste may be trusted; it is competent to this office; for in its intercourse with these the mind is *passive,* and is affected painfully or pleasurably as by an instinct. But the profound and the exquisite in feeling, the lofty and universal in thought and imagination; or, in ordinary language, the pathetic and the sublime—are neither of them, accurately speaking, objects of a faculty which could ever without a sinking in the spirit of Nations have been designated by the metaphor—*Taste.* And why? Because without the exertion of a cooperating *power* in the mind of the Reader, there can be no adequate sympathy with either of these emotions: without this auxiliary impulse, elevated or profound passion cannot exist (pp. 67-68).

It is this "*power* in the mind of the Reader" that the original genius, more than any other writer, must incite to cooperative action—for to call it forth *is* to create taste:

If every great poet with whose writings men are familiar . . . before he can be thoroughly enjoyed, has to call forth and to communicate *power,* this service, in a still greater degree, falls upon an original writer, at his first appearance in the world. Of genius the only proof is, the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before. Of genius, in the fine arts, the only infallible sign is the widening of the sphere of human sensibility, for the delight, honor and benefit of human nature. Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe; or, if that be not allowed, it is the application of powers to objects on which they had not been before exercised, or the employment of them in such a manner as to produce effects hitherto unknown. What is all this but an advance, or a conquest, made by the soul of the poet? Is it to be supposed that the reader can make progress of this kind, like an Indian prince or general—stretched on his palanquin, and borne by his slaves? No; he is invigorated and inspirited by his leader, in order that he may exert himself; for he cannot proceed in quiescence, he cannot be carried like a dead weight. Therefore to create taste is to call forth and bestow power, of which knowledge is the effect; and *there* lies the true difficulty (pp. 68-69).

Immediate or even contemporary popularity is therefore out of the question for the original genius: masses of men are not *overnight* "invigorated and in-

spirited" to "exert" themselves to that "progress" I refer to as "widening the sphere of human sensibility." In this kind of leadership, the "soul of the poet" leads the soul of the reader, or, leads the reader through activating (in the phrase of the earlier passage) "a cooperating *power* in the mind of the Reader." Other channels than this are for the new seeker of popularity—shallow channels, channels through which no souls pass and meet and leave forever changed:

> Away, then, with the senseless iteration of the word, *popular,* applied to new works in poetry, as if there were no test of excellence in this first of the fine arts but that all men should run after its productions, as if urged by an appetite, or constrained by a spell! The qualities of writing best fitted for eager reception are either such as startle the world into attention by their audacity and extravagance; or they are chiefly of a superficial kind, lying upon the surfaces of manners; or arising out of a selection and arrangement of incidents, by which the mind is kept upon the stretch of curiosity, and the fancy amused without the trouble of thought. But in everything which is to send the soul into herself, to be admonished of her weakness, or to be made conscious of her power; wherever life and nature are described as operated upon by the creative or abstracting virtue of the imagination; wherever the instinctive wisdom of antiquity and her heroic passions uniting, in the heart of the poet, with the meditative wisdom of later ages, have produced that accord of sublimated humanity, which is at once a history of the remote past and a prophetic enunciation of the remotest future, *there,* the poet must reconcile himself for a season to few and scattered hearers (pp. 70-71).

When Wordsworth here refers to "qualities of writing best fitted for eager reception," he is referring largely to what I mean by the *novelty-action-problem-solving* cluster of creativity. Thus I say (1) that the writers who can "startle the world into attention by their audacity and extravagance" can probably score higher in Consequences-remote, Plot Titles-clever, and Unusual Uses than can writers who are incapable of so startling the world (whether they choose to or not); and (2) that this is even more likely to be true of writers capable of works whose creativity can be viewed as "arising out of a selection and arrangement of incidents, by which the mind is kept upon the stretch of curiosity, and the fancy amused without the trouble of thought" than of writers incapable of such works (whether or not they would want to write them). I say, in other words, that to possess aptitude for rare, remote, and/or clever response is to possess aptitude for what Wordsworth means by "qualities of writing best fitted for eager reception"—but that to be a high producer of Rorschach movement responses is *not* necessarily to possess aptitude for what Wordsworth means—although it *is* to possess aptitude for inciting "the profound and the exquisite in feeling, the lofty and universal in thought and imagination; or, in ordinary language, the pathetic and the sublime."

Wordsworth finds his age susceptible to novelty and impervious to meaning, but he consoles himself by recalling the greater survival prospect of meaningful creation:

> Let us not shrink from following up these principles as far as they will carry us, and conclude with observing—that there never has been a period, and perhaps never will

be, in which vicious poetry, of some kind or other, has not excited more zealous admiration, and been far more generally read, than good; but this advantage attends the good, that the *individual,* as well as the species, survives from age to age; whereas, of the depraved, though the species be immortal, the individual quickly *perishes*: the object of present admiration vanishes, being supplanted by some other as easily produced; which, though no better, brings with it at least the irritation of novelty, with adaptation, more or less skillful, to the changing humors of the majority of those who are most at leisure to regard poetical works when they first solicit their attention (p. 71).

"Vicious poetry," "depraved"—these, I say, are Wordsworth's terms for successful poetry in which the novelty cluster greatly outweighs the meaning cluster—poetry whose writing requires abundant aptitude for what Guilford means by originality but requires little or none of what Rorschach meant by "capacity for 'inner creation'" ["in its finest development we call this artistic inspiration, religious experience, etc." (Rorschach, 1949, p. 65)]. What Rorschach meant by *inner creation* I mean by the imagination called aesthetic, analogical, animistic, anthropomorphic, artistic, biographical, cosmic, cultural, divine, etc.; it is this kind of creativity that the Guilford measures of originality tap very little of, likewise, that is very little required for most of what we today consider to be creative science or creative engineering. "Vicious research," "depraved"—these suggest the terms a Wordsworth-equivalent might hurl at most of the research that government and industry support today. This is because most of the research evinces nothing of the " 'Vision and the Faculty divine'," i.e., will do nothing "to extend the domain of sensibility for the delight, the honor, and the benefit of human nature" (Wordsworth, 1962, p. 73). Had Wordsworth thought this to be true of his volumes of *Lyrical Ballads,* "he would not, if a wish could do it, save them from immediate destruction; from becoming at this moment, to the world, as a thing that had never been" (p. 73).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I say that "neither the scientist, the inventor, nor the man of commerce could be a genius" in the Romantic sense of genius because Romantic philosophy perceived science, engineering, and industry as depreciating, if not excluding altogether, the kind of thinking dearest to its heart—the kind that movement in a Rorschach response represents, the kind that a half-century ago Bleuler called *autistic* (1951a), and that within the past decade McKellar has redefined as "Autistic thinking: thinking which is dominated by processes of the fantasy kind, rather than geared to reality, e.g., hallucination, hypnagogic imagery, etc." (1957, p. 199). Unless and until academic psychology can persuade the humanistic and lay community that its tests also measure *this* kind of creativity, the attack on mental ability testing may be expected to continue. That this persuading is much more easily prescribed than implemented is deducible from the fact of deep disagreement within academic psychology over whether Rorschach movement *is* a measure of such creativity (e.g., Rust, 1948; Zubin, 1954;

Levy, 1955; Griffin, 1958)—to say nothing of disagreement over whether such thinking is to be considered "creative" in the first place, or even desirable in *any* sense. It is such thinking, after all, that as early as Bleuler had been identified with daydreaming,[2] poetry, mythology, animistic metaphysics, animistic religious philosophy, etc.—toward all of which American academic psychology, even more than American society, has been cool and reserved. Can one reasonably expect a science to call "creative" that kind of thinking it also calls "prescientific"?

Nevertheless, it is that kind of thinking that is central to the difference in cognitive values between Snow's *Two Cultures* (both in his between-disciplines sense and in the within-disciplines sense). Whereas both cultures esteem what Bleuler and Rorschach referred to as *disciplined thinking* (Bleuler, 1951b; Rorschach, 1949, e.g., pp. 118-119), only the literary-humanist culture esteems what they respectively called *autistic thinking* and *inner creation.*

Thus, I propose that when Roe finds natural scientists, especially physical scientists, below expectation in their Rorschach movement production, she is encountering a phenomenon significantly correlated with what Snow encountered during his interviewing of engineers and applied scientists:

> We were able to find out a certain amount of what they read and thought about. I confess that even I, who am fond of them and respect them, was a bit shaken. We hadn't quite expected that the links with the traditional culture should be so tenuous . . . . we came across several who had read everything that literary people talk about. But that's very rare. Most of the rest, when one tried to probe for what books they had read, would modestly confess, "Well, I've *tried* a bit of Dickens," rather as though Dickens were an extraordinarily esoteric, tangled and dubiously rewarding writer, something like Rainer Maria Rilke. In fact, that is exactly how they do regard him: we thought that discovery, that Dickens had been transformed into the type-specimen of literary incomprehensibility, was one of the oddest results of the whole exercise (1962, pp. 12-13).

Dickens is so transformed, I say, partly because the Dickens' kind of creativity presumes, among other things, a certain level of capacity for creative experience—a level in excess of that typically found in engineers and applied (especially physical) scientists. I further say the same of what Snow calls "the traditional culture," i.e., that it presumes, among other things, a level of capacity for creative experience which exceeds the level typically found in such professionals. From this more general formulation, I infer that the creativity of the traditional culture is not nearly as satisfying to such professionals as is the creativity of the Modern Age, i.e., the *novelty-action-problem-solving* kind of

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[2]On correlation of daydreaming and Rorschach movement production, see Singer (1955), Page (1957), and Singer and Schonbar (1961). As for which *kind* of daydreaming, I mean "the more 'fantastic' use of daydreaming" distinguished by Singer and Antrobus (1963) from the "more controlled, scientific, or problem-solving approach" (p. 208)—which they related to Snow's *Two Cultures* in the way we are doing (p. 206). The two kinds of daydreaming can also be related to the two continua Kris finds in preconscious processes—which also he finds reference to in Freud's introduction to the Varendonck book (Kris, 1964, p. 311).

creativity that the Guilford approach is fully geared to but that leaves an emptiness in Kreuter and Kreuter, the two teachers of history and American studies.

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