



Writing Stories in Time
The Unfolding of the Objective Biography
in Life and Work

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In this paper I will deal with creativity and the creative process. I will not discuss the causes, or the origin of creativity¹, but I will try to share some reflections on one of the possible ways the creative process unfolds.

I would like to start my thoughts from three universally known Greek maxims. The first one is a Delphic saying which commands us: **Γνῶθι σεαυτόν** – Know thyself!, and thus indicates to us the ultimate – yet infinite – goal of human development.

The second one describes the general path that one must take: it is related to a sentence that Pindar said to its tyrant Ieron I: **Γένοιο οἶός εἶ** - Become who you are! This maxim is very intimately related to this article, as it indicates how one may know himself: by becoming himself, or, in other terms: by matching himself with himself in the most crucial *coniunctio* that I can think of.

The third and last advice is Epicurus' admonition, which goes: **Λάθε βιώσας** – Live hiddenly!

If, as it is obvious, it is possible to write *about* creativity as something happening to and through someone else, (discussing it - so to say - in the third person), it is also possible to do it in the first person. By choosing to approach the study of the creative process through one's own experience, one makes explicit the unavoidable personal contribution to the formation of *any* theory. Therefore, I will write through and about my *personal* experience with creativity, and, in so doing, I have myself resolved to break Epicurus' advice.

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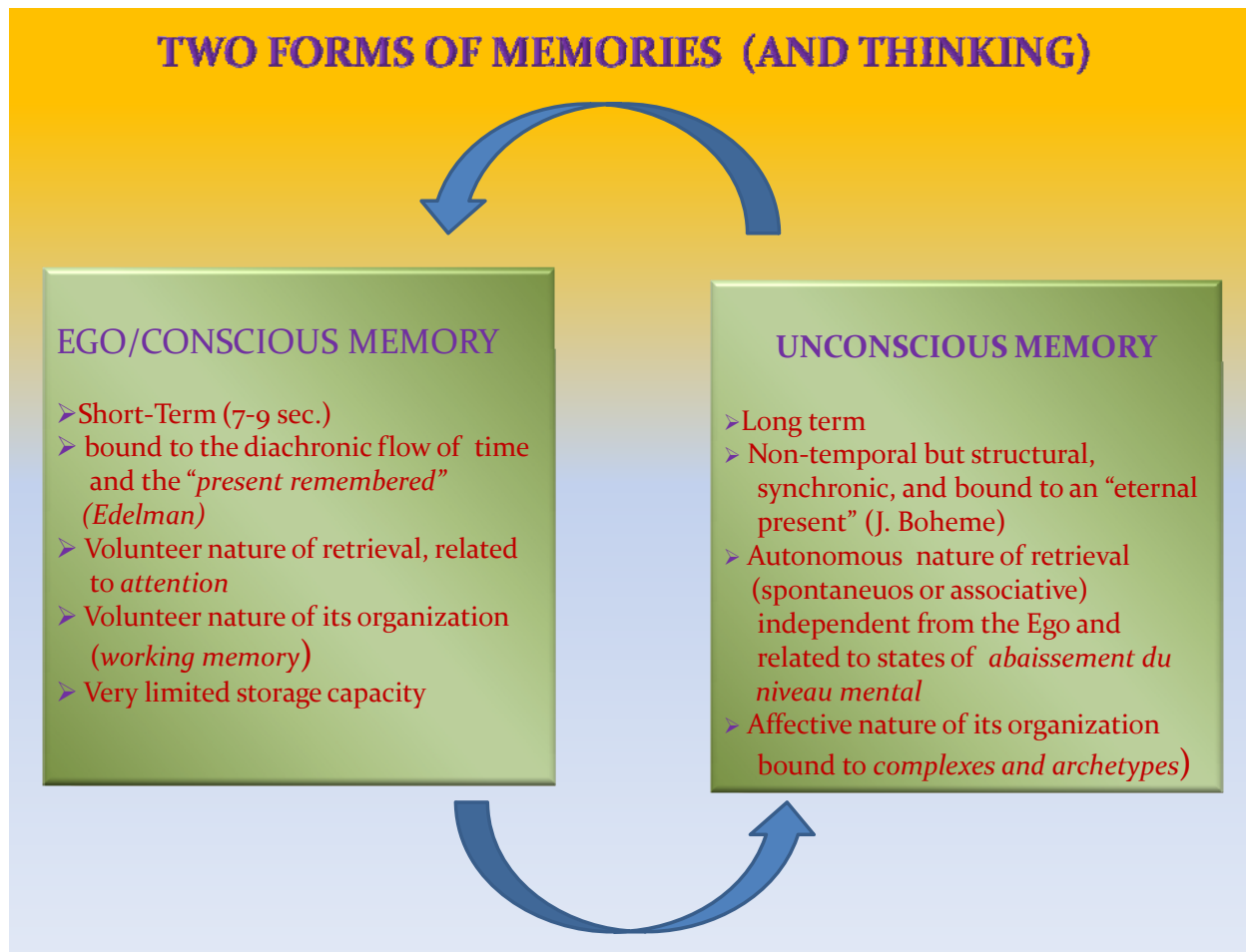
I may only say that I do *not* agree with the mainstream, reductionist theory (shared also by many Jungians, especially those following M. Fordham [see, for example: Colman, 2006]) for which creativity is essentially a reparative process following an original loss. I agree with Jung's idea that creativity is a fundamental pre-psychic "instinct" (sic!), as it is already present - so to speak - embedded in physical nature, in the dynamics of non-linear systems, and is already noticeable in non-mammalians, such as birds (see: Portmann, 1986)

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Therefore, in the pages that follow I will first sketch my personal theory of creativity as an unfolding confrontation with the unconscious, and as a process of becoming who I am. When I refer to this theory as something *mine*, I am referring to Jung's fundamental tenet that there cannot be a theory – and most of all a psychological theory – that does not belong to the author's "personal equation" (Jung, 1921). Far from meaning that no theory could be "objective", but just a pure "subjective" product, Jung's claim refers to the fact that the very possibility of saying anything "objectively valid" (in Winnicottian terms: "found" [Winnicott, 1971]), is also a product of a *psychic*, imaginal process (must be, therefore, "created"). So, by taking into account the personal aspect of my contribution to the issue of creativity I will try not to do it in an inflated attempt to establish something valid for all, but only to give shape to my personal experience, i.e., to share it as what the epistemologist Michael Polanyi called *personal knowledge* (1958).

1. TWO KINDS OF THINKING - SUBJECTIVE BIOGRAPHY, OBJECTIVE BIOGRAPHY

I would like to begin these reflections reformulating a bit in my own way Jung's fundamental contributions on these two kind of thinking in *Symbols of Transformation* (1911/1954). Inspired by this work, we can think of the Unconscious as a *synchronic* mode, and thus an a-temporal mode of reality, whereas the fundamental characteristic of consciousness is the *diachronic* or sequential and often arbitrary organization of events, which are therefore experienced through time.



In keeping with Jung’s theory, there are many forms of consciousness, both from a quantitative point of view (I will speak shortly about the *abaissement du niveau mental*), and from a qualitative one (here the theory of the plurality of forms of consciousness is crucial, as is the theory of *Umwelt*, that is the representation of the internal / surroundings world of animals, [Carta, 2008]).

In *Structure & Dynamics of the Psyche* (Jung, 1947, 1954), illustrating the alchemical figure of the *luminositas*, Jung makes explicit that there are various forms of *unconscious consciousness*, each one belonging to an affective-representational complex so that each complex, but also each archetype, represents its own reality in a particular

form, often very different from the perception of the Ego. This means that, while we are awake and self-conscious, there is a non-determinable number of unconscious complexes that, as sub-personalities – *are actually conscious* in ways that may differ quite a lot from Ego self-reflective consciousness. As a matter of fact, as the prototypical (and forgotten) case of Victor Race (the peasant hypnotized at the turn of the 18th century by the Marquis de Puységur) has already demonstrated, the unconscious consciousness may be even *more intelligent* than the conscious one (Ellemerger, 1970).

It is marvelous and surprising how this theory of non-reflective forms of consciousness is currently being confirmed by observations from neurobiology and clinical practice, especially with anencephalic patients – those born without the cerebral cortex – that demonstrate that they still possess a representational (noetic) form of consciousness (Merker, 2007). These findings show that consciousness is a very ancient acquisition of evolution. As a matter of fact, current neurobiological research confirms that both non-self-reflective representational consciousness and the capacity to dream are already present in birds. This affective consciousness is representational but is not self-reflective. Studied after Jung by Bion, it can be experienced every night in the form of dreams. According to Jung, in fact, dreams have a non-discursive, imaginal structure. In dreams events are not organized according to a before and after but are presented like a Gestalt that occurs at the same moment.

Nevertheless, the most impressive description that I know of the atemporal and imaginal nature of the primary forms of thinking, that is, the Unconscious, can be found in a letter that Mozart wrote to his cousin, in which the musical genius describes in what way the creation of music comes about for him, although to us, writing music would seem to be a process completely kneaded into time:

This kindles heat in my soul –that is, if I am not disturbed– and it gets bigger and bigger, and I spread it out and make it wider and brighter; and the whole thing is almost finished in my head, even if it is a long piece, so that afterwards I can see it in my mind at a single glance, as if it were a beautiful picture or an attractive person, and similarly, when I rehearse it over in my imagination, I do this not at all in sequence, as it will have to be produced later, but I hear it all together, at the same moment. That is a feast, if you like! The whole process of finding and making the music only takes place in me as it were a lovely vivid dream; but the best part about it is hearing everything all together like that! (In: Meier, 1989, p. 11)

Now, consciousness is linked with *short term* memory and with the so-called working memory, and is bound to the capacity of the Ego to retrieve memories. In this context Edelman equates the 7 seconds-long interval that corresponds to our experience of the present as a *remembered present*. (Edelman, 1979)

On the contrary, the Unconscious corresponds to a pre-organized structure of potential configurations of images deposited in the *long-term* memory that are not retrievable in a voluntary way, but emerge autonomously, or through associations. This emerging process is what governs the flow of creative contents, so that they erupt in *intermittences du coeur*, or they are recaptured by indirect pathways, through associations. Shortly, you will understand why I consider it important to emphasize the theme of memory and the ways of recovering images or thoughts that are unconscious, especially during the course of analytical work.

On the basis of what I am describing, the Unconscious thus corresponds to that a-temporal state of long-term memory in which reality is presented (and not re-presented) in the form of images that transform from one into the other. Temporality, on the other hand would be considered a rather recent property of self-reflective ego consciousness.

It is clear that this has to do with the *Unus mundus* – the implicate order of David Bohm (1980) - as well as with synchronicity (Jung, 1952).²

This cohesive and a-temporal quality of the unconscious contents can be experienced and seen psychologically by the Ego as an occurring-together, a *matching* that binds two or more contents or events. As Jung teaches us, the synchronistic bond comes from the co-belonging of two events that *happen at the same moment* and that are linked to each other by a common meaning. The Ego, in order to gather experience from the relationship, must, as Mozart did, organize these elements in a sequential series in time in which there is a before and an after, a cause and a consequence. Thus time, in a certain sense, can be considered a creation of the Ego.

Our subjective biography unfolds itself through time. Within time, each one of us must adapt to the world outside ourselves, to protect, express and safeguard our ego identity through the codes that are as necessary as they are conventional. The Persona provides this for us.

On a certain level, a superficial level (but here “superficial” does not have a negative connotation: the profound cannot help but present itself on the *surface*), we must little by little choose between the different alternatives of life. In so doing, within the flow of time, day by day, each one of us builds and negotiates his/her own subjective, “familiar” biography, weaving within it a historical sense of self.

Nevertheless, when the subjective biography is unraveling, the creative

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The synchronistic relation between the causal-temporal level and the synchronic-imaginal a-temporal level of reality is that described by Chinese Taoism and in the *I Ching* as the matrices of the Ho-Tu and the Lo-Shu that Von Franz discusses in two exceptionally important books: *Number and Time*, (Von Franz, 1974), and *On Divination and Synchronicity* (1980).

personality³ perceives the eruption, as through a breach, of a *second* a-temporal level through which progressively into time enter experiences and contents which, presenting themselves sporadically, tend to describe a sort of latent *second biography*. This is a biography that is personal, yes, but has not been chosen by me (the Ego). Rather, it has represented itself to me. I wish to call it an *objective biography*. It refers to the biography of the Self, vs. that of the Ego. A biography which, since “the relation to the Ego to the Self is like the mover to the mover” (Jung 1940/54: par 391) is of the utmost importance for any individuation process.

The individuation process may be described (also) as a continuous connection between the Ego and the Self, in which the latter expresses in a potential form the “Truth”⁴, while the former is called to interpret it and embody it.⁵

Encouraged by the ideas that Jung discusses in an essay of 1922, *On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry*, I am convinced that the creative process corresponds to the more immediate and direct (not pathological) experience of a-temporal unconscious contents in time.

I agree with Jung’s Aristotelian vision of entelechy and the image of the acorn that contains the oak tree, so magnificently developed by Hillman (Hillman, 1997), for which the creative process corresponds in the most objective way possible to a superordinate unfolding into time of our *objective* biography.

The synchronic (not synchronistic) and a-temporal biography of the Self is often

³ With “creative personality” I do not refer to a creative person, but to the creative part of any person. Therefore I am *not* referring to any “special” person or to any “artist”.

⁴ Here I have in mind not only Jung, but also Winnicott True Self, as an innate potential (1960), and Bion’s concept of O (1965).

⁵ In Aion (...) Jung describes a sort of objective history of the Self as a historical, collective unfolding of something, through the huge number of historical egos (persons) that have carried it through their cultural, social, historical life throughout the centuries.

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quite different from the subjective one of the Ego. Therefore, in fully accomplished creative products (such as works of “art”)⁶ one should *not* expect any reference to the author’s biography. Yet, in my opinion, every creative content has, and must keep, a relation to the ego and its identifications, but in a way opposite from the one we may normally think of. As a matter of fact, the creative work is *not* a confession made by the ego; it is the ego that is challenged to somehow recognize itself and its own biography in the creative content.

In fact, if the objective biography emerges to consciousness in an autonomous and associative form, it lends itself to be liberally used, often in a self-serving way, by the consciousness of the Ego. This allows voluntary recovery of those contents that can be organized in a sequential fashion in a chain of cause and effect. The Ego, in fact, *when it is in a vigilant, attentive state*, voluntarily recovers and attributes to itself only those contents that it feels coherent with the editing that it wishes to do to its own narration, and does not always perceive the presence of the a-temporal configurations underlying the unconscious images that constitute the unitary picture of the Self. Through the emergence of creative contents, personal complexes are redeemed within the wider – perhaps universal – container of their underlying archetypal background.

In truth, I really am not saying anything new. I am just trying to describe what Jung alludes to when he writes that Goethe wrote Faust just as much as Faust wrote Goethe. The biography of Goethe corresponds to the subjective biography, while that of Faust, is the objective one. In an accomplished life, the two biographies tend to fuse one into the other, little by little, as the Ego progressively leaves space for the Self.

The emergence of the objective biography corresponds to the triggering of a

⁶ Later I will briefly differentiate creativity from narcissistic “paracreativity”

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creative moment and the realization of a piece of creative work: for example the writing of a story. The characters and their vicissitudes correspond to a side of the creator's personality that, thanks to them, he/she is able to perceive, in an ever more precise way, as the part of him/her that he/she must become.

To describe this sporadic, gradual process of self-revelation of the objective biography through time I could use the image of those figures that emerge progressively as you "connect the dots." From beneath the flow of time-consciousness, in which one minute follows another seamlessly, the creative personality progressively, sporadically, recognizes itself through the emergence at the surface of creative contents.



Looking back, at a certain point in his life, the creative subject may see ever more clearly how many of his subjective "thoughts" were nothing other than an *arrangement* to allow and contain the emergence of other "thoughts" that he thinks and he actually *is*. Each of these emergent, essentially autonomous thoughts represent a different window

to reality, a special form of consciousness.

Seen this way, the emergence of the second biography – the biography of the Self - corresponds to the completion of the second Greek maxim that I quoted early: **Γένοιο οἷος εἶ**. Become who you are.

Now, this “becoming” on the one hand can be expressed Platonically and Proustianly as a *remembering* what you are, although, as I tried to hint earlier, this memory, which is autonomous and independent from the Ego, is profoundly different from the voluntary sort that belongs to the Ego. On the other hand, and this is a crucial fact, this remembering reveals itself as a deeply productive and not reproductive process - a process thus that is absolutely *creative* and in which the creative personality feels to be progressively reaching a self-knowledge (and this is the creative quality) *as if* he/she is recognizing him /herself (and this is the actual characteristic of reminiscence).



Little by little, as the creative autonomous contents are integrated, the creative person *remembers what he is*, and may feel with precision and amazement that something totally independent from his consciousness is literally *creating* what he is

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and what he was destined to be. Thus, the emergence of creative contents, as a story, a picture or a piece of music is, as Jacob Boheme wrote, *a perpetual beginning, a creatio continua*.

This is why I would like to strongly underline that, seen through this lens, the creative process as a progressive emergence of the objective biography does not respond to the usual question that one asks in front of a creative object such as a work of art: *What does it mean?* (For instance, see: Ogden, 1995).

Instead, it deals with a totally different question, this time not addressed to the object, but to the subject: *Is this you?*



A crucial aspect of this creative process is learning to *recognize it*. To learn to distinguish what Paracelsus called *True imagination*, that is the creative situation in which the contents are absolutely real, and that must not be confused with *imaginatio phantastica*, which belongs to daydreams and that I like to call *paracreative*, in which the contents that the Ego manipulates are arbitrary and not necessary, that is: *false*.⁷

At this point, I would like to emphasize that, in referring to the experience of the creative process, I am conscious that this is tied to my specific typology, which is extraverted intuition with thinking as the main auxiliary function. For this reason, it does not surprise me that my way of realizing the creative object is through my inferior function: introverted sensation.

The experience of creativity is different depending on one's psychological type. A patient typologically opposite to me, for instance – a woman who was an introverted sensation type - one who was quite alone in the world and had never made a love relationship in her life - produced in miniature and with marvelous skill the objects and the settings of the world, transforming them into a poetic cosmos. She even reproduced to perfection the room in which her analysis took place, down to the miniscule pack of

⁷ The distinction between these two kinds of imagination is based on a key condition, as “true imagination” is something that happens “in accordance with nature”.

In Arnaldo da Villanova's *Rosarium Philosophorum*, we read: “Ego vero volo quod tu ita facias, *imo secundum naturam* tua fit imagination. Et vide secundum naturam, de qua regeneratur corpora in visceribus terrae. Et hoc imaginare per vera imaginatione et non phantastica.” (my italics). [I truly want that you shall do it so, that your imagination be deep and *in accordance with nature*. And be aware that it is in accordance with nature that the bodies are regenerated in the depth of the earth. And therefore imagine through true imagination and not phantastic one.” (my translation)]

This mentioning of “nature” refers, at a minimal level of interpretation, to some objective, i.e. non-subjective condition. Our modern sensibility cannot not take into account a second feature (after objectivity) of this “nature”: its non-deterministic quality, derived by Heisenberg's and Pauli's principles. The “nature” we refer to today is an objective potential that *cannot* reveal itself in a conclusive, final, stable form. When, in my footnote 1. I wrote that I agree with Jung's notion of creativity as something pre-psychic embedded in “nature” (and not as a product of an original loss), I also had in mind this intrinsic “natural” creativity of nature.

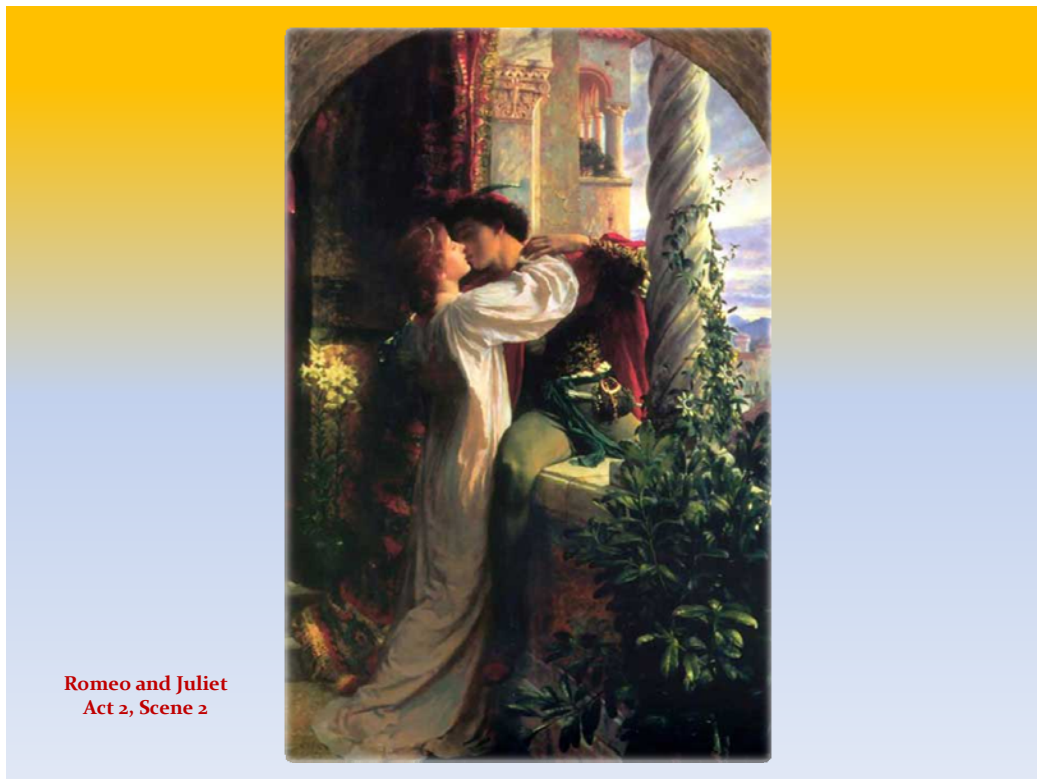
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tissues on the tiny table. The exceptional precision of these reproductions was creatively misleading though, because, in reality, the perfection of their likeness to a reality made so small, freed them from their nature of mere objects of the outer world and transformed them into poetic symbols that burst from within her. Through her highly differentiated sensation, she could express in “sensory form” her autonomous intuitions of her own relational situation. By miniaturizing her objects, they were transformed into material carriers of emotional contents pointing to wholly-formed, potential (intuitive) images of new relational configurations and, at the same time, literally re-presenting possible solutions for her *empasse*.

For me, the recognition of the creative process presents itself through my inferior function of introverted sensation in the form of a sort of a psycho-somatic “sense of rightness”, that is a mainly emotional/physical sensation, which always comes together with a sense of awe. I can describe this complex sensation by comparing it to what Cinderella must have felt when she encountered the slipper; or the infant feels when, coordinating the movement of his hand and shaping it around the object, he grasps it for the first time; or that intense pleasure that the tennis player experiences when he hits the ball with the right point of the racket so that ball, racket, arm, body, space and target become one dynamic whole.

Or perhaps, as when a startled Romeo asked himself:

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?



In this last case, the recognition of the objective biography passes through the sudden, unexpected understanding of something chaotic that reveals its secret order.

2. THE PROCESS OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE CREATIVE OBJECT IN SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

It is finally the moment for me to outline the unfolding of the experience of the creative process. In doing so I will refer to my own experience, wondering whether this might be extended to others.

In the first place I will deal with creativity as a hermetic, intra-psychic process, a *circulatio*, that takes place between the Ego and the Unconscious, in which Hermes, the

great trickster and liar, subverts judgement and, through what appears subjectively false, reveals a bit of what is objective truth.

This process, in my personal experience was described well by Edgar Lawrence Doctorow when he said that to create is like driving a car in the dark: the headlights illuminate only a few meters into the darkness in which we are immersed, yet, nevertheless, even at night we arrive at our destination.

Obviously, Doctorow suggests, as Winnicott would, that until the Ego of the artist reaches it, the destination is unknown to him. I can only add here that *we will know with absolute certainty that we have reached our destination and that the creative object is accomplished* thanks to the emotional/somatic form of feeling that I described before (the slipper on Cinderella's foot, the tennis ball, etc). In this sense, the created object is a symbolic object, transactional *par excellence*. The object, as Winnicott writes (1971), that is simultaneously *found* and *created*. The object that is absolutely necessary, never arbitrary, always completely true. The only difference is that in the case of the creative act in a strict sense, it is not the empathetic mother that will present it (as in Winnicott), but Hermes in person, and its result, in psychotherapy, is the birth of the patient's true story.



The most beautiful example I know of this is the moment at which the memorable beginning of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970) , one of the high points in the history of literature, erupts in the mind of Garcia Marquez. After Marquez had gone through a long crisis, not only creative but also economic, he decided to go to the ocean with his wife and son. While he was driving, a phrase exploded in his head like a lightning bolt, the first phrase of his masterpiece:

Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.

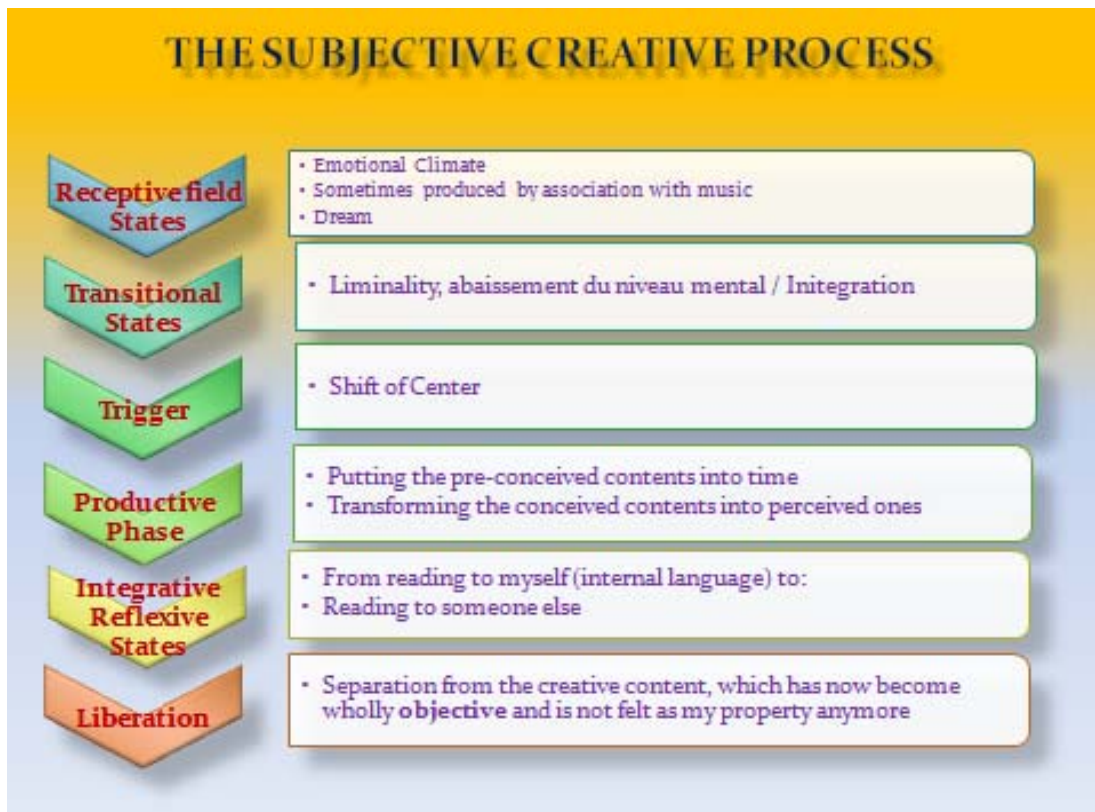
It was Hermes, the thief and trickster beginning to dictate. For Garcia Marquez’s human mind, the impact with the divine was so violent that he made a sudden, immediate u-turn to get back home as soon as possible, and he almost ran over a cow, so that his little son screamed all excited: “Dad! When I am a grown up I will run over cows, too!”

In six months of continual work, eight hours a day (four in the morning and four

in the afternoon), only once could Marquez not keep writing and had to stop. He was too shaken and crying, because old Buendìa, bound to a tree, had died.

Today no one would dare change anything Marquez wrote of Aureliano Buendìa, or the beautiful Remedios, because they are *objective* beings. They are at the same time wholly real, true and absolute as much as we are, if not, in a certain sense, even more than we are. They shine through what in alchemy is called *solificatio* (Jung, 1955-56), the archetypal light of consciousness, which does not belong to our titanic Ego, but to the god Hermes.

But how does the creative act unfold?



The first phase ushers in what I call **receptive field states**.

These can be an emotional climate, and for me often they are associated with music, and/or with a dream. In the first case this climate is like a sort of emotional internal space that is similar if not identical to what Bollas calls *the unthought known* (Bollas, 1989).

In the case of the dream being the source, besides Jung there is quite a lot of literature that demonstrates its creative function: from the theory on *Hintergrundphysik* by W. Pauli, that links the hermetic creative-cognitive action of the Unconscious with the sudden and obviously crucial moment of scientific discovery, to the analysis of the “great dreams” of Descartes or Socrates recounted by Marie Louise Von Franz (1998).

In fact, the capacity of science to see the invisible derives itself from this hermetic, creative, imaginative capacity, because the highest epistemological organ that us humans possess is the *imaginatio vera*, true imagination.

Emily Dickinson (1976) described it like this:

Nature is a haunted house but art is a house that tries to be haunted.

A dream of mine that preceded by a few hours the inspiration for a novel, was the following:

I am about to give a University lesson to a large crowd of people. One person is late and I decide to wait for her: I do not want to begin without her even if all the others are already waiting in the large amphitheater. On one side of the corridor is a mirror, on the left. I turn and look in the mirror. I am a beautiful girl about 20 years old, a bit of a hippie with Rasta braids.

The thought from which the novel sprang forth struck my mind the next morning

like an explosion, during a lesson at a Psychiatry specialization school. It struck me dumb. I had to stop for 5 minutes from the emotional impact and my sense of surprise. I want to clarify here that, in some cases dreams, or series of dreams, which prepare the way for a creative emergence, may proceed it even by several years. In the moment in which the content of the dream makes its entrance into consciousness, it is still in an a-temporal, suggestive, and essentially affective state, like the music of Mozart.

Vygotsky's description of the genesis of language from thought helps me to illustrate this state:

Thought can be compared with a threatening cloud that pours down a rain of words [...] we must, to follow this imaginary comparison, identify the motivation of the thought with the wind that moves the clouds. A true and complete understanding of others' thoughts is only possible when we discover their true affective and volatile background. (Vygotskij, 1962, p. 390)

With regards to the unfolding of the objective biography through creativity, the wind of which Vygotsky speaks, is that which moves the process of individuation around and towards a center.

In my own case, it often happens that this affective cloud that rains down words is constellated by music--almost always by pieces of music I have heard many times in the past, but that just at that moment function as a catalyst. Just as can happen in analysis, when the analyst repeats 99 times the same thing and only the 100th time does it ignite a spark in the patient. When this happens it is often accompanied by amazement on the part of the patient, as if he has seen the object, heard the phrase pronounced by the analyst, for the first time.

If one abandons oneself to these receptive field states, they lead one to a second phase that I call **transitional state**. *Through this state, one enters into a liminal*

poliverse. This transitory state is characterized by an *abaissement du niveau mental*, a situation that Winnicott describes with the term *non-integration*. (Winnicott, 1962)

Today there is growing clinical and neurobiological evidence of the central role of these states of vigil inactivity, which allow for the Unconscious' direct flow of activity. In my personal experience, to remain in the transitional state is very complicated and painful. Progressively, an intense, magnetic emptiness begins to fill me. My wife is the first victim. It can last for hours or days. While I handle my daily duties I feel something inside myself begin to swell, to grow and expand, producing a state of both tension and growing uneasiness.

If I do not try actively to avoid this situation, almost in desperation the internal pressure forces me to put aside more and more the affairs that are occupying my Ego, up until the unforeseeable moment in which a fundamental passage occurs, a turning point I call **trigger**.

The trigger signals the end of the transition. It is like reaching the mountain top, from which a powerful, absolutely astonishing autonomous force, after hours, days, months, and in one case years of creative work, will carry me down to the valley below. This phase, the fourth, I call the **productive phase**.

From this moment on it is no longer I that decides, but I must execute. From this point on the story begins to write itself more or less on its own, while I am overcome with the emotions of the characters and by the events that I transcribe.

After the trigger, the center moves from the Ego to the Self.

This experience for me has always been astonishing. The story unfolds until the end, without my having consciously foreseen anything.

In this phase, the Ego is essentially the translator and executor, but it is definitely

not the creative protagonist: it is Sancho Panza, certainly not Don Quixote. As I have said, the fundamental task of this Sancho Panza is double:

1) to arrange diachronically (rationally) the elements that in the Unconscious were part of a synchronic, atemporal Gestalt - an image. And:

2) to stabilize these elements, which before were like Bion's *preconceptions* (Bion, W.R., 1963), in their new form of perceptions. This requires the translation of these *preconceptions* into thoughts (*conceptions*) that may be then manifested into reality through the senses, after I have felt them emotionally and often somatically.

In the case of poetry or literature this fundamental phase corresponds, for example, to *shaping a phrase generated by a creative impulse, and then writing it in the form most faithful to the affective cloud from which it came*; or, as another example, if one is speaking of a painting, *to reproduce an internal vision, as a perceptual image on a canvas*.

This transfer from the synchronic conception (unconscious and potential) to the diachronic perception ("realized" and conscious) corresponds to the passage of the creative content from the Unconscious to the Ego and thus its definitive *realization* through a suitable action. To complete this function, in the course of his life Sancho must practice for thousands of hours, while always feeling, so to speak, that he is sitting on a mule.

To learn to recognize the impulse, thus, requires many years of work, and the mastery of technique. In other words, lots of patience and tenacity. Nevertheless, the creative process does not end at this point – the point in which a poem, a painting, a piece of music are composed.

As a matter of fact, following the productive phase is a long phase made by **self-**

reflective, integrative states. In my experience – because it is only this that I can speak about - this phase is characterized by the *reading* of what I have written. This reading has the function of *assimilating* a text not written by the Ego even though it is thanks to the Ego that it now exists fully in the perceivable world. This form of reading has the same function of mirroring that occurs in the eyes of a subject *other than ourselves*, as described from Winnicott, Tronick, down to the mirror neurons of Rizzolatti and Gallese.

This initial reading is followed by *reading to others*, a reading out loud and not only through our internal language. The emotional experience of this second form of reading can be quite different and much more emotional than the first, because, in my opinion, it completes in a much more cogent and definitive way the objectification of the creative process. This is a very, very delicate passage. It refers to the moment in which a creative psychological expression is exhibited to a public. A moment that calls for a developed balance between a narcissistic form of concealment (never sharing with anybody our creative objects) and an equally narcissistic exhibitionist need.

Due to our mammalian nature, the risk of an unbalanced exposure of the creative object is to fall into the regressive narcissistic trap in which we feel that we exist because someone is mirroring us. Even if this is somehow so, the trap is to fall into a sort of a *self-reflecting glass* experience, like that by Cooley and Mead, for which there *is* actually no self to be reflected, but just a self-produced by these reflections. On the contrary, it is obvious to me that what it is really crucial is what we call *individuation*, which we may here describe in Jungian / Winnicottian terms as the process through which the potential Self enters into existence. This process may take place only *within* a relationship, yet, it must be clear that the latter – the relational component - is not the

goal, but is the medium, the means, the instrument for the process. (In fact, the self – what today by the neuroscientists is called *core* self - was evolutionarily present long *before* the appearance of mammals, with their integrated relational containing structure).

Therefore, exposing our created object may ruin the whole process, as what is important is not to be famous or admired, but to come into existence. For this reason I am critical of the often too easy way in which the products of some art therapies are exposed to the public.

A clinical reference for all this may be the case of Lucia, a patient of mine, daughter of a schizophrenic mother and of a sexually abusing father. She could be defined as a serious borderline with highly sexualized, hysterical characteristics. After many years of analysis she started to write a novel – somehow *her* novel. Through this process she was progressively able to contain and mentalize her hyper-excited libidinal body and relationships. When the story was almost finished, she started to daydream about publishing it at a famous publishing house. The risk was to *spoil* the whole attempt to self reflect and finally symbolize her psychic constitution by hysterically being recognized in a grandiose way. She dreamt:

“I take too much sun. My skin does not turn tan, but is heavily burnt”.

I leave to you a possible interpretation.

This second phase of reading is followed by the final phase, that of **Liberation**, in which the object is no longer felt as “mine”. It now separates from me forever and can

go on its way in the world autonomously. Simultaneously though, I have become part of it and my personal story has been enriched, like a kaleidoscope, with one more story.

3. **CREATIVITY AND *PARACREATIVITY***

At this point we must make a distinction between creativity and *paracreativity*.

Analysis with creative patients, such as artists (actors are an interesting, special case), has absolutely specific features since it often deals with transforming what is a paracreative activity into a creative one, and never into a reduction of the *imaginatio* in favor of “factual reality”.

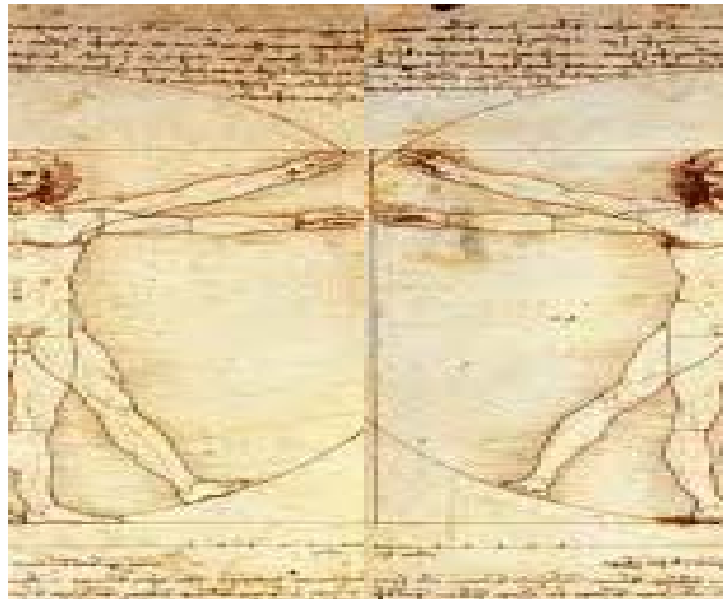
With *paracreativity* I refer partially to Jung’s discrimination between *aesthetics* and *aestheticism* (Jung, C.G.,1922), and I refer to an activity that does not lead to a redemption of the Ego in the Self, but describes an action through which, on the contrary, the Ego alienates itself and combines with the object without taking full responsibility for the object’s meaning. From a typological point of view, i.e., seen from the way consciousness works, paracreativity differs from creativity because it uses the superior function not in order to foster a process towards *completion*, but titanically strives towards *perfection* by polarizing and increasing more and more the light of Ego-consciousness. This is not what I imagine to be creativity, if by creativity we mean the developing of one’s objective biography, because here nothing radically *other* is ever discovered and understood. Through the unilateral use of the superior function we may say that we may create objects, but not the deep and truly rooted objective subject that we are. Only the shards of consciousness that pulsate in the unconscious *may bring a new light to the darkness in which the Ego is immersed*.

In the paracreative state “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it.” (John, 1:5), because only the *fifth* function may transcend the polarity of superior/inferior functions so to get to the potential subject. This fifth function is the transcendent function.

In paracreativity the Ego is not transformed, but inflated. This implies a catastrophic failure in the appropriation of the subject’s objective biography, which is always bound to the *parties inférieures de la personnalité*, the *Lapis exilis*.

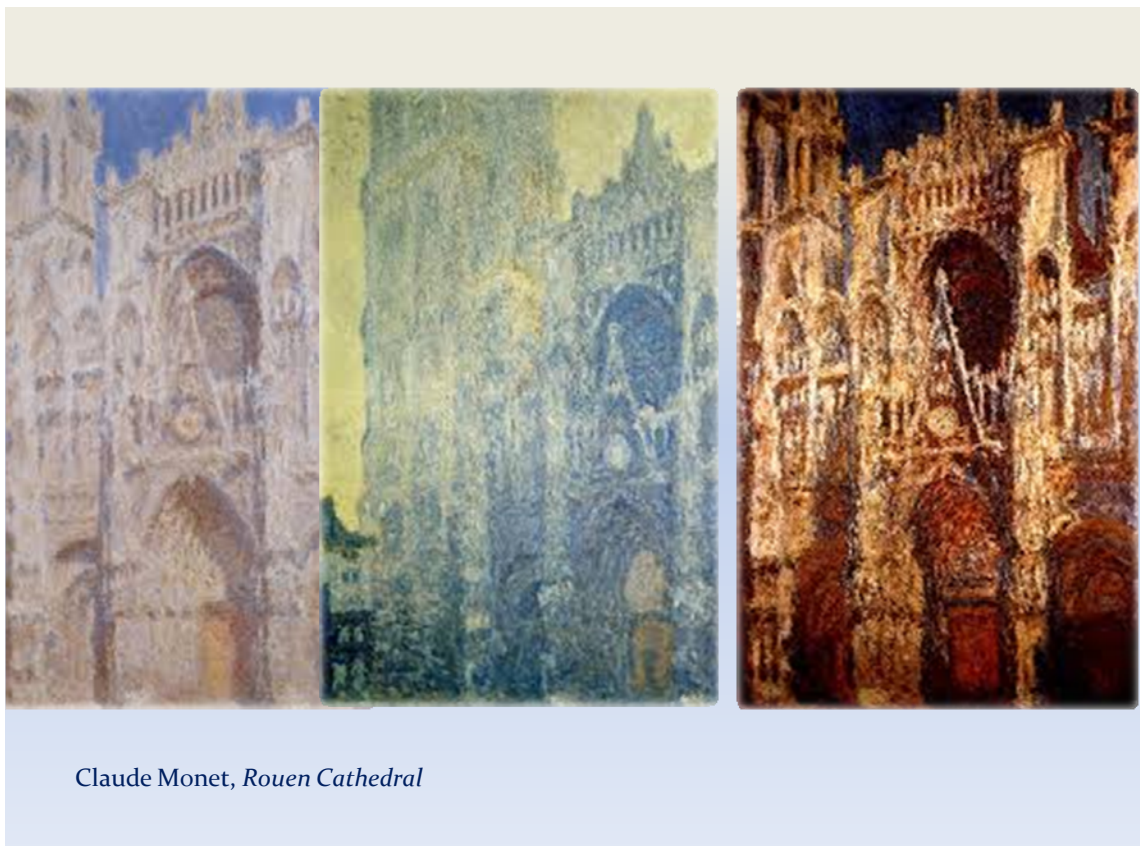
Perhaps the difference between creativity and paracreativity lies in two aspects. The first is the Ego’s use of creativity, which, instead of de-centering itself, takes on a defensive nature. Instead of sacrificing to this process, as so wonderfully described by Goethe in his *Stirb und werde*, the Ego wears his creative image to keep his reputation high. Here is the meaning – for Jung catastrophic – of Freud’s sentence on the ship, when they were heading towards the *Clark Lectures*, in the United States. This meaning is catastrophic because it *reverses* the relationship between Ego and Self.

In a patient of mine, an exceptionally (para)creative man, such reversal was represented by the obsessive image of the Vitruvian Man, split and tilted, that haunted him throughout his youth.



The second aspect of this difference between creativity and paracreativity, on the other hand, regards the supremely real nature of the *mundus imaginalis*. I could describe it thus: in the paracreative image the bread *represents* the flesh of Christ and the author's Ego uses and manipulates this allegory for his own subjective purposes.

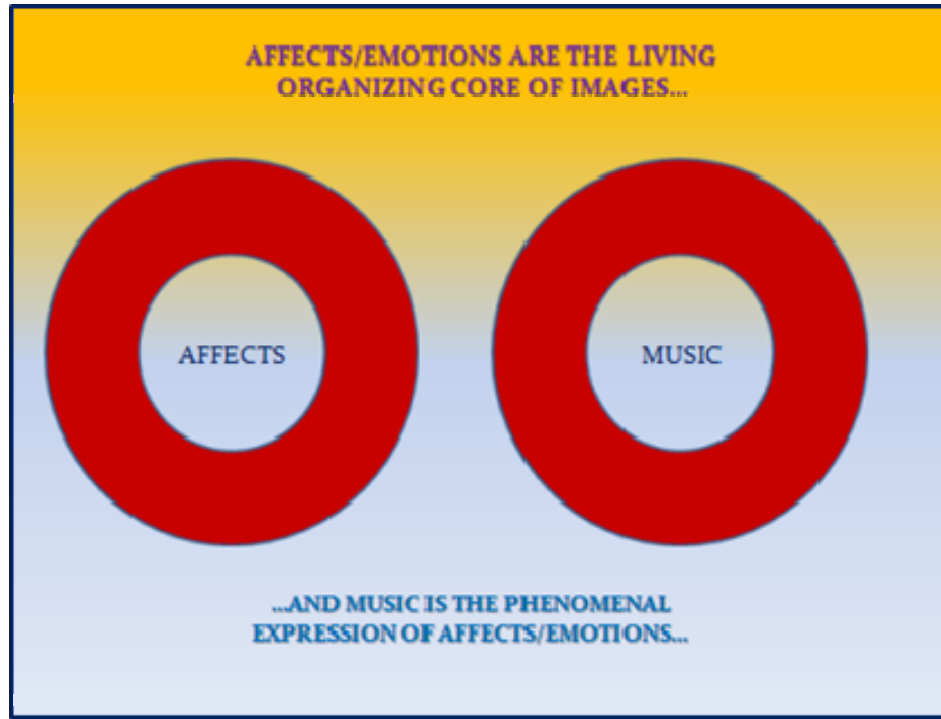
For the creative image, on the contrary, the bread *is* the flesh of Christ. In this sense, the qualitative intensification between content and representation implies a real transformation of what we normally think of as real and true, so that the Ego itself not only beholds its creative object, feeling it as its own like the transitional object, but, at the same time, the ego is also assimilated by the meaning of the object itself. Jean Valjean, Humbert Humbert, or Rodion Romanovič Raskol'nikov, or Monet's Chartres' cathedral, or Burri's sacks, *do not re-represent reality*: they *are* reality; reality at its highest degree of symbolic manifestation.



Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral*

But the true mystery is music. In its non-semantic nature, what is most archaic and fundamental – the affect – and what is most spiritual and formal – mathematics –

reveal in music their identity in an accomplished expression that points to the ultimate sense of all representations (Carta, 2009).



The third aspect of the difference between creativity and paracreativity involves the artists who, paradoxically enough may not be considered fully creative. As a matter of fact, seen from this perspective even a true artist, whose creations, springing from the archetypal realm will change his cultural world, may not be considered fully creative if he does not take upon himself what Jung used to call the “moral obligation” *that is involved in* his art. An obligation that must be carried also in one’s personal, private life. Analysis with creative patients may be quite complex because, while we must at all costs

safeguard their creative energy, we must also help them to tilt it towards its true individuating function.

The use of creativity in a paracreative way does not transform reality: it distorts it. It is the case of my Vitruvian Patient, who once dreamt of an adolescent imprisoned in a Bat-cave, and who was begging: “May I come, too?” The implicit answer was “no, you can’t”, like the asocial loser of a very famous Italian song of the past.

While this patient was a unilaterally extraverted, quite manic *puer*, the adolescent locked in the Bat-cave was progressively ageing and de-vitalizing. This younger, masturbatory defensive part was the legacy of a very creative Self that had to nourish, since the beginning of the patient’s life, two very depressed and severely disturbed parents. The patient’s creativity, in other words, had been distorted into a paracreativity that had made my patient daydream of a world in which, one day, everyone would love and admire him.

A quite disturbing dream of another struggling patient, a famous film director who was using his creativity for his Ego’s sake, was that of a man seen from behind who suddenly turned towards him and, looking straight into his eyes and pointing his finger to him, said: “You are not creative!” He was Christ in person.

4. THE EMERGENCE OF THE CREATIVE OBJECT WITHIN THE INTER-SUBJECTIVE FIELD

Up to this point, I have dealt with the entrance of a creative object into perceptual reality, within a *subjective* field. Now I would like to consider the same process, but now as it takes place within the *intersubjective* field. As a matter of fact, the analytical

situation is profoundly involved in the themes I am discussing here for two reasons. First of all because the analytical process, even when is carried by expressive activities such as painting, molding, sand-playing, etc., intrinsically remains a discursive process, the re-writing of a story.

The second reason is that it often happens that the turning points during the analytical process involve creative dynamics similar to those that I have just briefly described.

In this regard, I wish to quote an aesthetic philosopher and jurist of the Neapolitan eighteenth century, Gian Vincenzo Gravina (1973). Although not much studied, he is an important thinker. Together with the fundamental issues regarding science and creativity, in Gravina we find a definition of creativity as a *delusional experience* that I find very interesting.

Reading Gravina (and with the due differences), I find many resemblances between his and Jung's thought of what must be considered as *real* as something that affects us, that acts upon us. I find the same resemblances between Gravina and the vision of the *mundus imaginalis* by Corbin (1989), or the theory of *illusion* by Winnicott.

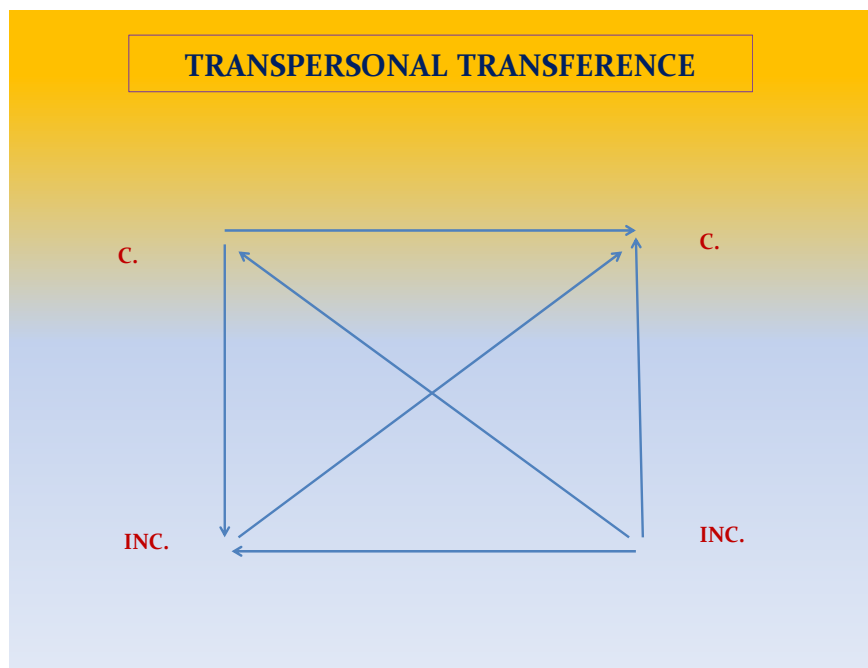
For Gravina the *False* is the domain of implausible fantasies (his criticism of Baroque poetry), against what he considered to be the True-Fictional (*Fake*) nature of the genuine profoundly hermetic creation. My loveless patient's miniaturized world is a perfect example of the True-Fake (Fictional) nature of the creative object, more real than the perceived one, and opposite to the *false* nature of para-creative fantasy.

However, a further characteristic shared by Gravina and Jung makes of the former, in the opinion of one of the most important historians of aesthetics of the

twentieth century, Wladislaw Tatarkiewicz (1982), “a true theorist of the esthetic experience”. For Gravina the artist’s *delusion*, which fuses the Fictional (the *conception*) with the True (the experiential *perception*) does not belong just to the author, *but belongs at the same time to the recipient of the creative object*.

For Gravina, the alteration provoked by the experience of beauty causes in the recipient a painful alteration, as it exposes him to the true knowledge of human nature. This moment is then followed by a cathartic state, related to the shift from a state of anguish to the pleasure produced by the attainment of what is true. From this, Gravina, confirming the introspective function of poetry and literature, and describing the ways in which the poetic images lead to catharsis, considers this art as the only means to grasp the “knowledge of truth”, and thus beauty. Therefore, in Gravina, truth and beauty are finally united and involve, in the delusional experience, also the recipient. This is a crucial point, which allows me to show how the creative experience can happen within the transferential relationship.

I shall try to describe a particular type of this “delusional esthetic experience”, which we now have to place in the transpersonal field that Jung discusses in his *Psychology of Transference* (1946), in which the consciousness and the unconscious of the analytical couple are intertwined in a complex relationship.



Here I am referring to what it might be thought as the cornerstone of any psychological encounter – therefore of any psycho-therapeutic encounter: the notion of co-transferential field.

In 1929 Jung wrote:

In any effective psychological treatment the doctor is bound to influence the patient; but this influence can only take place if the patient has a reciprocal influence on the doctor. The patient influences him unconsciously none the less, and brings about changes in the doctor's unconscious which are well known to many psychotherapists: psychic disturbances or even injuries peculiar to the profession, a striking illustration of the patient's almost “chemical” action. One of the best-known symptoms of this kind is the counter-transference evoked by the transference. But the effects are often much more subtle, and their nature can best be conveyed by the old idea of the demon of sickness. (§ 163)

In my opinion, Gravina’s theory of the aesthetic experience is deeply connected to

the quaternary structure of the transferential field.

The particular model of delusional esthetic experience that I am proposing here is based on Winnicott's paradigm of the *object presenting*. For this very elegant theory, we normally think that the analyst's interpretation or the amplification will produce an experience of change (Strachey) if it will match the psychic object that the patient was ready to conceive, so that the analyst's object may be lived by the patient as something at the same time found and created and therefore, as Winnicott writes, inscribed in the patient's "area of omnipotence".

Nevertheless, if we consider Jung's theory of the transferential field, then the analyst, too, may *create* not his own object, but the *unconscious object of the patient* – the object that the patient is about to offer him unconsciously. Only after having *created* it in his own mind thanks to the activation of the transferential field, will the analyst *find* it, now fully realized, in the patient's answer– in his response.

Therefore, within the analytical field, I, as the analyst, may dream the patient's dream so that he may dream it. Or I may pre-conceive thoughts that belong to him, but that are still unconscious. This process is similar to that described by Bromberg, when he speaks of "Knowing the patient from inside out". (Bromberg, 1991)

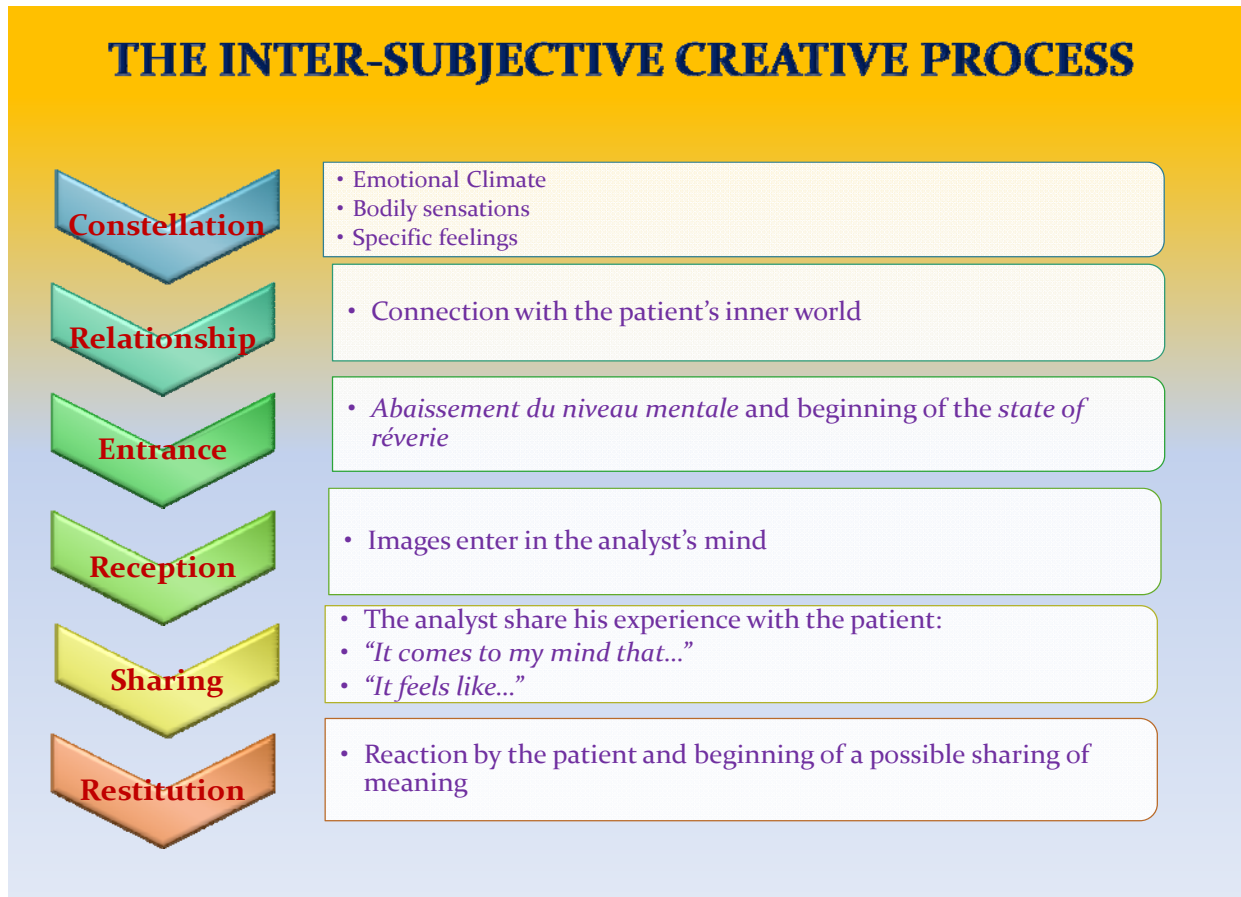
Here I am proposing to radicalize Bion's theory of the *reverie* (Bion, W.R., 1962), for which analysis becomes a process in which the analyst *creates* the story that the patient is presenting him unconsciously. In other words: his yet unconscious, unrealized, not-yet-found, potential story.

The origin of this narrative is the transpersonal Self of patient *and* analyst, yet the biography that will unfold will be the patient's own. This is a process that flows with a spiral form within the creative dialogue between the unconscious and conscious of

the analytical couple, and describes what Gaddini called *empathic intuition*. (Gaddini, 1960)

Here I will briefly sketch the steps through which this process takes place:

- Affective and somatic constellation of the transferential field;
- Establishment of a relationship with the patient's internal pre-imaginative world.
- Analyst's entry into a *réverie*, liminal state and reaching of a pre-creative disposition, thanks to a *abaissement du niveau mental*;
- Reception of images and conceptions - perceptions belonging to the patient;
- Sharing with the patient. This sharing must not be done under the form of an interpretation, but may be introduced by sentences such as: "It comes to my mind that...", which may transform the patient's unconscious consciousness into a self-reflexive Ego consciousness.
- Restitution by the patient who is taking possession of the image that was created in the analyst's mind.



What follows is a clinical vignette that illustrates this creative inter-subjective process.

The patient – I will call her Anna - was a young, rigid psychologist specializing in psychotherapy, who worked in an office that had nothing to do with psychology.

One day, roughly one year after the beginning of her analysis, she tells me that a dream of hers has come finally true, as she had asked her boss to use her psychological competences – Gestalt – for the firm's human resources. The boss responded positively and she felt she had united two parts of herself *that before were divided*.

The session suddenly becomes quite emotional and she goes on telling me about a flight-phobic patient of hers that had been able to get into an airplane and, very happy,

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had just sent her a photograph of herself in the plane, by smartphone.

Anna is very happy and says: “it is wonderful”. We will soon see that at an unconscious level a very deep dissociation was starting to be healed.

What follows is an excerpt of our dialogue, at first about her job:

P. I had not understood that I could do it. I was keeping things separate.

A. You were keeping things separate outside, but most of all in your mind: school, psychotherapy, your job...

P. Yes.

A. And so you could not even feel the desire.

P. I just felt uneasy.

At this point, I feel a particularly intense emotion, as if I was about to understand something and I was about to have a vision of a part of my patient that had always been exiled. In my mind, the thought arose of a blanket covering something. “The desire” I think in an associative way. And it is at this moment that I see her: little, young, under her bed, while I am lying next to her on the floor.

I decide to tell her what I have seen. I tell her:

A. It is as if a part of you had always been under a bed.

Anna’s expression changes dramatically. She looks very hit and surprised, and tells me:

P. Only now I remember something: when I was a little child I used to spend a lot of time under my bed, or under the kitchen table. Maybe it was so that my parents would look for me and find me?

Now another memory enters Anna's mind:

P. I remember the feet, the black shoes that I used to see from under the bed. But now I remember that I was scared.

A strong tension rises in the back of her neck, which she begins to massage.

A. I find myself asking myself: "Who is talking? Whom is she talking about?"

A thought/image enters my mind: *Being always beneath*. Then I form a better formed thought: *"Perhaps all of her has been repressed under the bed. She wished to be found. But the climate was agitated"*.

While this happens the patient starts telling me of an associative memory. It is a dream. She was in her office. Inside it was safe, but outside there was a storm, so strong that the billboard with the firm's name was crushed by the wind.

I associated the climate in her child's bedroom or kitchen with the storm, and the billboard with a false self, and I ask myself in a loud voice:

A. The storm was outside of the bed. In the room perhaps? Who knows if something has fallen (caduto), happened (accaduto).

It is right now that, for the very first time, she starts talking about her babysitter, as if, up to now she had put her in an isolated area within her mind. Quoting her mother's words, she tells me that she had been "a second mother for her".

From now on, there is an opening of a wholly different past, a past very different from that which Anna had remembered so far. A youth in which Anna's mother had voluntarily "abandoned" her when she was just eight week old to go back to her job. She had left her with her babysitter, who was too young and much too anxious. From that moment, the memories of an insecure and troublesome child and of a perfect mother,

which before were inexplicable to her, start making sense.

As a matter of fact, new memories begin to emerge. Memories of a very worried and anxious little Anna, whom had been replaced, after the birth of her slightly disabled sister, by a perfectly reasonable girl, and later a rigid young woman.

Not only was the image of the blanket and the bed, which was created in my mind actually by hers, but, among the flow of new memories and associations, Anna realized that her babysitter was from Cagliari. My hometown! She had unconsciously chosen me as a second babysitter. It was now my turn to take care of her Self, traumatized by a dissociated mother.

From that session on, our analysis changed its course.

I think it was so because Anna could finally begin to come out from under her bed, and in so doing she could eventually re-integrate her phobic aspects that had been projected onto her patient, whose photograph had anticipated the emergence of a new creation, which corresponds, of course, to the coming into the world of Anna's Self.

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publications in English are: *Ideas for an Ecstatic Politics*, in: S. Carta, A. Adorisio, R. Mercurio, *The Analyst in the Polis*, Streetlib, 2017, and: “The Affective Core of the Self: a Neuro-archetypal Perspective on the Foundations of Human (and Animal) Subjectivity”, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2017 (with A. Alcaro and J. Panksepp). He writes fiction and novels. His latest novel, *Bon Voyage, Santa Claus*, has been published in 2017 by Bookabook. He lives and works between Rome and Cagliari, Italy.

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