

**ON THE CONDITIONS FOR ENTERING AND
MAINTAINING,
A CREATIVE STATE OF MIND:
A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF SELFOBJECT
FUNCTIONS AND OBJECT RELATIONS
IN CREATIVITY¹**

by

WILLIAM H. RICKLES, M.D.

"For most writers, the hardest thing about writing is getting started".

Donald Goodwin Alcohol and the Writer, 1988

"Conversation enriches the understanding, but solitude is the school of genius...."

Edward Gibbon in Solitude by Anthony Storr, 1988

INTRODUCTION

¹ Presented at THE TWELFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SELF at San Francisco, California, October 12-15, 1989.

There has existed a myth that creativity is similar if not identical with madness. At least, so the myth goes, there is a strong association of mental illness with creative genius. Much has been written about this connection beginning with the first systematic study of the relationship between insanity and genius published by Lombroso in 1864. After 25 years of research he concluded that genius was often a "degenerative psychosis of the epileptic group" (Lombroso, 1864). Fascination with this association between the peculiar and the extraordinary spawned a more than substantial literature detailing the various mental aberrations of the famous artists, writers, musician/composers, and scientists. In his comprehensive book, Prentky (1980) listed an impressive group of geniuses with psychiatric problems and subdivided the list into three groups with the presumed diagnoses of Schizophrenia, Non-Psychotic Psychiatric Disorders (i.e., character disorders and neurosis), and Affective Disorders (unipolar and bipolar depression). Karlsson (1978) studied the genetics of "creative intelligence" and in the process tabulated the rate of psychosis in 132 famous creative persons whose lives were chronicled by living biographies. Of this sample, 42 were stated to have psychosis, clearly a much higher rate than in the general population.

Contra-wise, there is another perspective which holds that creative genius is a kind of super-normal achievement. The study by Ellis (1926) of 1030 names of British "geniuses" in the Dictionary of National Biography revealed only 44 (or 4.2%) to have a demonstrable mental disorder. While surveying the literature on the controversy pitting genius as healthy vs. genius as pathology, Storr (1976) wrote:

"It seems probable that the idea that genius is somehow allied to madness did not originate in observing that creative people had more neurotic or psychotic symptoms than anyone else, but in the feeling that both creative people and mad people had mental experiences which the ordinary person found *incomprehensible or did not share*" (p.261) (italics added).

My own experience with creating scientific papers and research projects, as well as my clinical observations with several writers in analysis, suggests that aside from quantitative gradients in opportunity, intelligence, technique, and talent, what "ordinary people" do not often share is the requisite concatenation of circumstances that allow an individual to consistently experience, identify, or value a state of mind conducive to creativity. Perhaps a more fruitful approach to this dialectic may be to identify "creativity" or "creative behavior" as a content of the mind so that we can separate creativity from the state of mind *within which creating is taking place*. Accordingly, we can examine the various psychological modulators of the state of mind which facilitates creativity without being troubled by the problem of understanding creativity itself. Using the analytic tool of the container and the contained, this study will probe the mental container of creativity and only indirectly be concerned with creativity, the behavior.

Correspondingly, it is the thesis of this paper that there exists a distinct **CREATIVE STATE OF MIND(CSOM)** which is ideally objectless and selfless to be maximally creative. Accordingly, the maximally **CSOM** requires that the search for selfobject functions be abandoned (Stolorow, Atwood, and Brandshaft, 1987) or that selfobject functions are being carried out nearly ideally, and therefore the object invested with the power of supplying selfobject functions is experientially invisible or taken-for-

granted to the person in a **CSOM**. Similarly, the characteristics of a self in a **CSOM** dictate the experiential circumstances which precede entering this state and might be properly called a pre-**CSOM**. Exit from the **CSOM** returns the individual to a post-**CSOM** characterized by the particular dynamics of meaning which the **CSOM** experience and the creative product holds. This object relations oriented analysis of the creative experience allows a fresh look at pathological situations such as writer's block, work inhibition, and the frequent association of alcohol abuse found in professional writers (Goodwin, 1988; Dardis, 1989).

THE pre-CREATIVE STATE OF MIND

Most creative work is done alone.² Not only is the romantic image of an isolated creative genius doing his or her extraordinary thing well described by the biographies of artists such as Van Gogh, and others, but it is common experience that we need to be left alone when preparing term papers, writing reports, organizing, planning and carrying out the lower level creativity of everyday life. In his paper on a self-psychological perspective of work inhibition, Stark (1989) described a young man who was unable to work on papers for his college course until near the deadline because:

"doing school papers early would be particularly lonely, would make him feel he was working for himself and by himself....Lateness seemed to create the experience of a dyadic relation; it produced a tension and aliveness that did not exist before the deadline (p.148).

One gets the impression of a person experiencing a deficiency in selfobject functioning which is exacerbated when he attempts to write without the pressure of a deadline and its enabling meanings.

Similarly, a research scientist entered analysis for treatment of a chronic low-grade depression and lack of scientific productivity. Often he would come to his Monday session feeling depressed and "mushy inside," an affect that would regularly develop on Sunday afternoons and evenings. After the Monday session, his "mushy" feeling was regularly replaced by an energetic, assertive feeling of well-being. The "mushy" feeling also would recur most evenings when he would attempt to write-up his research results, and he would seek relief in television and social activities instead. This "evening depression" existed in contrast to an energetic enthusiasm for creative work during the day while at his laboratory and oft disappointed his intentions to carry on writing and study during the evening. The origin of these dysphoric self-experiences as the result of a chronic selfobject function deficiency was confirmed when they disappeared after he

² Of course one can cite significant creative achievement that has been done in groups or pairs. These situations might be considered special cases, like the psychology of groups, and will not be examined in this paper.

ended a chronically disappointing marriage and established a positive, gratifying, and affirming new relationship. Like Stark's patient, he was able to work creatively with enthusiasm and immersion when under the pressure of a deadline which he never missed. Analysis revealed the genetic origins of this means of dealing with stalled creativity and procrastination. As a teenager he recalled pleading with his mother to engage with him more authentically by urging him to better academic achievement. This deficit of selfobject mirroring function was traced back to early childhood when he recalled the mother giving a positive but artificially enthusiastic response to his request of "look mom, no hands" when he exhibitionistically pedaled his bicycle with his hands removed from the handle bars in front of her to garner mirroring approval. These illustrations highlight the **barrier** of dysphoric affect associated with leaving behind the temporary defense against experiencing a selfobject function deficiency (Kohut, 1977). Entrance into the **CSOM** is blocked unless some way is found to traverse this barrier. Both Ronald and the scientist used the threat of narcissistic humiliation in not meeting deadlines to bridge the "mushy" or unbearably "lonely" feeling which emerged when they faced the solitary selfobjectless **CSOM**. In the case of the scientist, the new relationship provided such a sufficiently powerful selfobject function that the scientist was able to maintain a firm self when alone at his desk even without a deadline. Such a relationship also is suggestive of the environmental mother relationship, described by Winnicott (1958) and elaborated by Ogden (1986) and Grotstein (1989), that is taken for granted and forgotten about by the toddler as long as the mother is reliably available but temporarily not interacting with the infant. Then the infant is free to roam and explore unselfandother-consciously while he is "alone in the presence of another." Kohut (1971, 1977) characterized these vague, poorly verbalized fears and feelings of disintegration as deriving from pre-oedipal stages of development as opposed to more definite affective, object-related fears and experiences that stem from conflict with objects. In his paper, "Creativeness, Charisma, Group Psychology: Reflections on the Self-Analysis of Freud," Kohut (1978) explains a pre-creative period of restlessness and emptiness by postulating a decaethesis of values required to free up narcissistic energy for employment in creative activity.

THE CREATIVE STATE OF MIND

When entering the **CSOM**, often one must overcome a depleted sense of self experienced as feelings of fatigue and insubstantiality or ambiguity and confusion, if the sense of self-cohesion has been maintained through a more primitive selfobject bond which cannot be sustained while being alone with the not yet actualized creative product. Writers in the grip of creative block often speak of the dysphoric experience of the blank sheet of paper staring at them while they have no creative thoughts with which to fill up the blank page. Perhaps the blank page concretizes their experience of themselves when deprived of necessary selfobject functions. The most characteristic experience of a **CSOM** is that entirely **new** connections are formed from previously unrelated facts or mental experiences. In order for these new connections to be made, the self must be substantial enough to experience the task without reference to previous contextual

meanings and bear the resulting experience of ambiguity without defensively retreating to the familiar and hackneyed. Additionally, the affective and cognitive influence of object relations, including selfobject relations, must be *experientially excluded* from influencing the self-experience in a **CSOM** to further "clear the decks" for the creative task at hand. Depending on the capacity of the self to maintain cohesiveness while turning attention away from these object and selfobject bonds, the experience immediately preceding the **CSOM** as one sits down to write, draw, etc., may release quite different types of feelings. In the case of a strong self, feelings of relief from the responsibilities or conflicts associated with one's object relations matrix may free the self to focus totally on the creative task at hand. When the self structure is weak and being maintained by more primitive selfobject functions or biochemical substitutes, then feelings associated with loss of self-cohesion will obtain and interfere with entering the **CSOM**. Because the state of mind just described is free of object experiences as well as a sense of self in a relationship with these objects, the term objectless, selfless state of mind seems appropriate. (In this case selfobjectless is also subsumed under objectless.) The less the matrix of internal experience requires stabilization by interaction with others (i.e. the selfobject function) the more readily one can exist comfortably supported by the intrapsychic relationship with the internalized environmental mother of Winnicott.

What is being described here is a state of mind relatively free of the influence of intimidation by objects, internal or actualized, as well free of superego constraints. Kris (1952) in his landmark paper on creativity conceived of this state as "regression in the service of the ego." Karen Horney said it in a more humanistic way:

"The less self-conscious, the less intimidated, the less a person tries to comply with the expectation of others, the less his need to be right or perfect, the better he can express whatever gifts he has" (N. Levy, 1961).

Einstein seemed to be describing motivations for the objectless, selfless state of mind conducive to creative thought when he wrote:

..."I believe with Schopenhauer that one of the strongest motives that lead persons to art and science is flight from the everyday life, with its painful harshness and wretched dreariness, and from the fetters of one's own shifting desires. This motive can be compared with the longing that irresistibly pulls the town dweller away from his noisy, cramped quarters and toward the silent, high mountains, where the eye ranges freely through the still pure air and traces the calm contours that seem to be made for eternity.

"With this negative motive there goes a positive one. Man seeks to form for himself, in whatever manner is suitable for him, a simplified and lucid image of the world, and so to overcome the world of experience by striving to replace it to some extent by this image. This is what the painter does, and the poet, the speculative philosopher, the natural scientist, each in his own way. Into this image and its formation he places the center of gravity of his emotional life, in order to attain the peace and serenity that he

cannot find within the narrow confines of swirling personal experience"
(Holton, 1973; pp. 376-78 -- from Prentky, p. 41) (*italics added*).

Einstein, not being a psychoanalyst, did not consider that in some cases he could be describing individuals with selfobject deficiencies in a state of mind described by Kohut and Wolf (1972) as the "overburdened self." Such people commonly experience amazing relief from the "painful harshness and wretched dreariness" of everyday life when selfobject needs are met. Einstein's comparison of creativity with the escape of the city dweller from the cramped confines of city life to the open mountain vistas is in keeping with another thesis of this paper: the **CSOM** is similar to that of the meditator who often encapsulates his experience during meditation by visualizing bucolic scenes in order to obtain relief from actualized object relationships which are overwhelming an infirm and overburdened self (Horton, 1981; Lichstein, 1989). Because unself-consciousness and "un-other-consciousness" is a prerequisite for psychophysiological relief from conflictual internal and actualized object relationships, the terms "selfless and selfobjectless" or simply "objectless state of mind" seem most descriptive.³

If one is successful in entering into the **CSOM**, the selfobjectless, selfless state is replaced by a growing sense of relatedness with the created product. Commonly this relationship between the creating self and the created product is highly idealized and influences the affective tone of the self in a way characteristic of an idealized selfobject relationship. An energized, exciting, manic-like state results such as one might expect with an intense and idealized "birthing" relationship. The created product is often experienced as a "newborn child of the mind" and referred to as "my baby" with the pride associated with proud parenthood.

In the **CSOM**, the self feels excited, energetic, and a need and ability to be quick. For example, when the scientist analysed was writing the creative discussion section of his papers, he described his ideas as forming more rapidly than he could write, and he was imbued with a sense of excitement at the greatness and uniqueness of his ideas. There is a sense of elation and total absorption in the work. The result is a highly focused attention and experience which is temporarily split-off or dissociated from other aspects of the self and reality. This highly developed capacity to narrow attention in the **CSOM** has been of interest to several authors (Prentky, 1980; Holton, 1978). Holton writes,

³ The objectless or autistic state of mind postulated by Tustin to describe autistic children is achieved by the child in order to avoid a devastating experience of diminished sense of self when objects are perceived. The devastating consequences preclude development of psychological structure. (Tustin, 1986) The situation envisioned here allows an already structured psyche to function without reference to object relations and in the case of the **CSOM**, may become self defining and renewing through the generation of a creative product. Without psychic structure generating meaning, the result would be autism. This conceptualization of a non-pathological, objectless state of mind derives some support from a psychological analysis of meditative practices. (Naranijo and Ornstein, 1971)

"There is narrow, intensely focused attention, almost constant concentration on one area within which the more creative persons roam freely. (The powers of concentration in scientists such as Gauss are legendary. At moments they have amounted to voluntary sensory deprivation--for example, Fermi reported that he had failed altogether to hear the blast of the atomic bomb at the Alamogordo test because he was working on a problem of measuring the intensity of the blast by a simple, improvised method.)"

Sometimes the split is so complete and the ablation of self-as-agent is so total that the creative composition is felt to issue from the mind without intention. Mozart described his **CSOM** in a letter:

"When I am, as it were, completely myself, entirely alone, and of good cheer--say, traveling in a carriage, or walking after a good meal, or during the night when I cannot sleep; it is on such occasions that my ideas flow best and most abundantly. Whence and how they come, I know not; nor can I force them" (P. Vernon, 1970; p. 55).

The connection between the **CSOM** and prayer or worship was also made by Einstein (1954) when writing about the brilliant physicist, Max Plank:

"...I have often heard colleagues try to attribute this attitude of his to extraordinary will-power and discipline--wrongly, in my opinion. The state of mind which enables a man to do work of this kind is akin to that of the religious worshiper or the lover; the daily effort comes from no deliberate intention or program, but straight from the heart."

Martindale (1977-78) considered the **CSOM** to be an altered state of mind and provided several samples of what he called "irrational inspiration":

"Nietzsche remarked concerning the composition of Thus Spake Zarathustra:

'Everything occurs quite without volition as if in an eruption of freedom, independence, power and divinity, the spontaneity of the images and similes is most remarkable.'

Rimbaud in his famous letter to Paul Demeny says:

'I is someone else. If brass wakes up a trumpet, that is not its fault....I witness the breaking forth of my thought: I watch it, I listen to it.'

Blake's comment on the composition of his poem on Milton is particularly straightforward: 'I have written this poem from immediate dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time without premeditation, and

even against my will.' Even Thackeray felt the same possession: 'I have been surprised at the observations made by some of my characters. It seems as if an occult power was moving the pen.' Mallarme said much the same thing in more opaque and poetic language:

'The pure work implies the elocutionary disappearance of the poet, who abandons the initiative to words mobilized by the shock of their inequality: they light one another up with mutual reflections like a virtual trail of fire upon precious stones"' (p. 70).

The conditions conducive to intuition were summarized by Beveridge (1974). The following quote from his conclusion is given with the conditions describing the selfless, objectless state of mind in italics:

The conditions most conducive to intuition, a first cousin to creativity, are as follows: a) The mind must first be prepared by prolonged conscious puzzling over the problem; b) Competing interests of worries are inimical to intuitions; c) Most people require freedom from interruptions and distractions; d) Intuitions often make their appearance when the problem is not being worked on; e) Positive stimuli are provided by intellectual contacts with other minds such as in discussion, critical reading or writing; f) Intuitions often disappear from the mind irretrievably as quickly as they come, so should be written down; g) Unfavorable influences include, in addition to interruptions, worry and competing interests, also mental or physical fatigue, too constant working on a problem, petty irritations and distracting types of noises" (pp. 80-81).

At the peak of the **CSOM**, there is a feeling of flowing with experience as well as impatience with others not in tune with this "flow." Indeed, the world formed between the self and its self-created selfobject may be so complete that not only is there no concern for others, but the presence of others may not be noticed. With this "flow" the sense of time is lost, but memory is excellent. Thinking is characterized by experiences of discovering new relationships between ideas, facts, etc. Many artists (including composers and writers) experience this sense of discovery as self discovery. Shershow (1988) adduces evidence that Van Gogh simultaneously consolidated a sense of himself as an artist as well as perfecting his original technique by painting a series of self-portraits while living with his brother in Paris. This series was accomplished just prior to his explosion of creative productivity in Arles, France. Similarly, Aaron Copeland (1959), the composer explains,

"But why is the job [of composing music] never done? Why must one always begin again? The reason for the renewed creativity, it seems to me, is that each added work brings with it an element of self-discovery. *I must create in order to know myself--and since self-knowledge is a never-ending search, each new work is only a part-answer to the question 'Who am I?'*"

An internal sense of correctness prevails, and impatience is quick to occur when mastery of the technique interrupts the "flow" and delays immediate creative results. Such delays, if too extensive, will interrupt the **CSOM** by requiring resumption of self and object experience to deal with the interruption and thereby restore the sense of self in continuity with time and objects and their particular ongoing affective implications. If all goes well, the creative product is finished, or there is an experience of the **CSOM** slipping away and the self enters into the **post-CSOM**.

THE post-CREATIVE STATE OF MIND

The particular dynamics of the individual seems to determine the nature of the post-**CSOM**. The self may be exhausted, satisfied, or empty. Similarly, feelings of excitement, pride, and exhibitionism may predominate. Conversely, many artists lose interest in their work when it is completed (Storr, 1970). Re-entry into interpersonal relationships is determined by the individual's dynamic responses to reunion anxiety in general. Additionally, methods of handling the actualized created product are highly variable. It may be abandoned, treated with contempt, or highly valued and retained as a idealized child which is exhibited and cherished. Essentially, the characteristics of the post-**CSOM** will be determined by the characterological method of handling used-up or ripened, self-made objects and the attendant idiosyncratic implications of success or failure (Schafer, 1984). The post-**CREATIVE STATE OF MIND** is a subject worthy of study in itself but is not immediately relevant to the subjects of this paper and will not be considered further.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

The pre-**CSOM** is most interesting clinically because of the devastating effects of a creative block to the artist or person depending upon his creative productivity for his livelihood. In the pre-**CSOM**, the self must withdraw from selfobject bonds and suffer a depressive trough. This trough is more "shallow" and easier to cross successfully for individuals who have mature selfobject relationships and the self-sustaining functions have been internalized to a large extent. Also, on the pathological extreme of the self-cohesive spectrum, crossing is easier in people who are able to enter into a selfobjectless, self-soothing mode, or who are already in a chronic, schizoid selfobjectless, self-soothing mode of being. The pre-**CSOM** is harder to bear if there are no solid selfobjects bonds or if the individual is using selfobject substitutes such as drugs or enactments (Goodwin, 1988; Stolorow et al., 1987). Kohut (1976) suggested that some creative people require a particular selfobject relationship with another person, termed a "transference of creativity," during periods of intense creativity. Baker (1988) discusses the relationship between Van Gogh and his brother Theo, from this perspective. In some cases, the required withdrawal and regression may "overshoot" the healthy **CSOM** and a perverse creative state of mind or psychosis results (Prentky, 1980).

Many and diverse reasons bring people to enter the pre-**CSOM**. There may have been a narcissistic injury and a loss of selfobject, so that the self turns to creativity and

the hedonically positive **CSOM** as a defense against the painful affects associated with narcissistic injury or insult. Such a situation is beautifully documented by Shershow (1988) in his paper on Van Gogh when he quoted from Van Gogh's letter from Arles,

"I was ill when I came here, but now I am feeling better....' (letter 4894a)

'...when I left Paris, seriously sick at heart and in body, and nearly an alcoholic because of my rising fury at my strength failing me--then I shut myself up within myself without having the courage to hope!' (letter 544a)" (italics added by Shershow).

Kaplan (1985) demonstrates how Freud turned to creative activity out of narcissistic indignation to produce the Irma dream with its establishment of paradigmatic dream analysis.

More commonly, a deadline is approaching and anxieties related to dyadic object relationships are mounting. Dreams of glory may drive the more naive to creativity, or a wish to re-experience the pleasure of giving birth to larval ideas may move one to action. Altshule (1989), somewhat arrogantly insists that boredom is the motivation for creativity. The defensive use of creativity may occur not only with narcissistic injury, but in cases where an individual is trapped in circumstances of chronic selfobject function deficiency and suffering depressive despair (Storr, 1970). Imprisonment is an extreme example. The narcissistic pleasure of the **CSOM** brings relief from boredom, loneliness and depressive feelings or fragmentation associated severe curtailment of contact with selfobjects (Storr, 1989). More mundanely, the chronic, recurring low-level depression seen in many well functioning professionals is overcome by some through accessing the **CSOM**. The degree of defensiveness in this paradoxically creative maneuver is belied by the pride displayed in **self**-management of the crippled self. Csikszentmihalyi has studied high school students who were gifted in mathematics and found that the students who became highly involved with math tournaments and math clubs:

"...liked spending time alone, they like solitude and in their solitude they find the time to pursue...their passions. Most people cannot put up with solitude for very long. After a few minutes and certainly after a few hours, they start to feel a kind of psychic entropy. They are unable to coordinate their thoughts and feelings and actions in orderly ways....To keep from feeling unhappy or bored, they pick up a telephone or turn on the television" (in Roark, 1989).

Clearly, these "committed" students may have been motivated by unconscious forces, and analysis might reveal that their "preference for solitude" to be defensive in nature and a way to maintain an infirm self. Still, there is the suggestion here that the "committed" students may have been **endowed** with a capacity for maintaining the requisite solitude for entering a **CSOM** and thus facilitate the ability to give themselves the associated positive hedonic experience and develop a creative passion which in some cases might even be subsumed by the dynamics of addiction.

Kohut (1978) considered the **CSOM** in his paper on transformations of narcissism. He likened the creating person to being in a state of mind similar to the omnipotent infant who breathes life into the meaningless matter of the external world, and he alludes to the biblical verse about God breathing life into dust and thereby creating man as described in Genesis. He wrote:

"Artist and scientist are attempting to re-create a perfection that formerly was directly an attribute of their own; during the act of creation, however they do not relate to their work in the give-and-take mutuality that characterizes object love" (p. 450).

Kohut conceptualized the work, and presumably the created product, as a transitional object and invested with "transitional narcissistic libido." In later publications he would come to speak of such objects as "selfobjects."

DISCUSSION

Most psychoanalytic studies of creativity or creative individuals have derived an understanding of creativity from the Freud-Kris model of creativity (Freud, 1911, 1913, 1914, 1916; Kris, 1952). This model, originated by Freud, has four parts (Shershow, 1988):

Part 1: *Creative acts are motivated by instinctual dissatisfactions.*

This assertion implies that creativity is essentially a neurotic symptom, an assertion to which many, especially artists, etc., take umbrage. Additionally, it is too global, ignores healthy aspects of creativity and has spawned much speculation that goes far beyond the data available from creative products.

Part 2: *Creative people have special ego capacities.*

Kris (1952) termed this special ego capacity "regression in the service of the ego." More recently, in reaction to the pathological implications in the term regression, the International Psycho-Analytic Association panel (Kligerman, 1972) preferred the term "primary process progression towards ego." More relevant to this paper, Glynn's (1977) concept of fusion in service of the ego emphasizes the loss of self and object boundaries aspect of the **CSOM**. I prefer this formulation as it also carries with it the implication of a loss of Self and Object experience (the selfless, objectless state) and the concurrent loss of a sense of agency commonly experienced in the **CSOM**, as documented above. (Similar losses of the sense of agency obtain with states of psychopathological fusion of self and object in psychosis but these states are also associated with violent and extensive loss of ego boundaries and near total ablation of differentiated self experience (Kernberg, 1975).

Kohut emphasized the altered sense of boundaries of the self in "creative people" when he wrote:

"The creative individual...is less psychologically separated from his surroundings than the noncreative one; the 'I-you' barrier is not as clearly defined." (Kohut, 1978a, p.448)

Part 3: The creating person retreats from the external world.

Stated in more modern terms, the creating person enters a **CSOM** by retreating from his/her actualized object relationships to a selfless, objectless state of fusion with the original selfobject, the environmental or matrix mother described by Winnicott and Ogden and referred to as the background presence of primary identification by Grotstein (1989). This part is not well developed in the literature, perhaps because it implies a schizoid pathology if seen from a defensive perspective such as that described by Fairbairn who saw the exhibiting of artistic products as a schizoid way of relating to others (Storr, 1971).

Part 4: The artist disguises personal conflicts presented in the creative product in a way that they form a more universal symbolic imagery, allowing a broader audience to empathetically resonate with the artist's underlying conflicts.

This assertion is undoubtedly true. One can never escape one's self. Metapsychological analysis of the artist through his works is highly aversive for alexithymic or hysterical artists who deplore psychological thinking and self-analysis (Shershow, 1988; Rickles, 1981,1986). Indeed, they often fear that psychoanalytic resolution of conflict will destroy the source of creativity. Kernberg (1975) notes that creative people with great promise and early success sometimes do not fulfill their potential or fade rapidly from productivity because of a narcissistic personality organization which lacks the capacity to find a non-pathological adjustment to life. Such people become increasingly dysfunctional and depressed and lose artistic, creative development and productivity. The life trajectory of many well known writers, for example Hemingway, Faulkner, and others (see Goodwin, 1988 and Dardis, 1989) exemplify this destructive effect of untreated narcissism.

Fame and wealth as well as narcissistic pathology may interfere with establishing selfobject bonds which could permit the resumption of a derailed self-development and acquisition of living skills necessary for successful passage through adult maturation.

The Freud-Kris model of creativity calls on a similar unconscious avoidance of pain as the prime mover for the artist's work and postulates that the product is a reworked, disguised rendition of unconscious conflict similar to neurotic symptoms or sublimated drives. Such a model predicts loss of creative drive with resolution of conflict. Not only does this not happen but the model tells us nothing about creative blocks (i.e.,

when an artist wants or needs to produce but is unable to get going). Further, such a model using sublimation as a kind of second-best solution to constraints imposed by the reality principle emphasizes pathology and defense rather than expressive and integrative operations of the personality and/or self-structure.

In his paper on "Work Inhibition" (a more mundane term but entirely relevant to the problem of switching from pre-**CSOM** to **CSOM**), Stark (1989) did a most apt job in succinctly stating possible pre-oedipal and oedipal determinants for problems in doing creative work:

"...a Freudian approach would see inhibition as deriving from conflict over what work represents, a self psychology view would suggest that inhibition issues more from fear of the threatening experience of work" (p. 138).

Stark presents two cases which he uses to demonstrate that "fear that immersion in work will threaten the cohesion of the self" (p.143). These fears may be based on a resonance with childhood experiences of abandonment anxiety as well as merger or annihilation anxiety.

Stolorow and Lachman (1980) describe a case of a work block in a graduate student who was unable to "immerse" herself in writing her thesis because such immersion interrupted contacts with her idealized friends. When these contacts were interrupted, she became depressed, was unable to work, and spent her time eating compulsively, sleeping excessively, and becoming preoccupied with her appearance and weight in an attempt to restore her endangered self-representation.

Taking a somewhat different tack, Schaffer (1984) has analyzed cases of "those wrecked by success" and found a pathological ego or self-ideal which secures a sense of identity and selfobject bond when experiencing failure or unhappiness. Clearly a psychoanalyst could uncover multiple unconscious complications surrounding work, creativity, creative success, creative products, and the **CSOM**, not to mention the changes in life circumstances and social identity brought by extraordinary creative success and fame. These important and diverse dynamics are impacted by the essential solitary nature of the **CSOM** (Storr, 1989) and the absolute necessity for the working artist/composer/writer to have a capacity to comfortably, even joyously be alone for significant periods of time.

Kohut (1977) has asserted that oedipal problems are breakdown products of a disintegrating self and therefore of secondary dynamic importance. He asserts that the determining factors maintaining the self are of primary importance in normal functioning.

Deficiencies in identity formation result from lack of development of firm self and object representation and necessitate excessive recourse to actualized object relations for the selfobject functions provided by ideal and mirroring selfobject ties. As Winnicott (1958) demonstrated, the infant gradually develops this capacity to be alone, first in the presence of mother who functions as a taken-for-granted "holding environment" of emotional safety. Later the Transitional Object is endowed with this function and allows the child to carry out his/her own self-soothing repairs when none other is available. Other selfobject functions having to do with superego formation and function remain with the parents or their transformations during the life trajectory. Transitional Phenomena have been found to evolve into creative play and eventually artistic and cultural creations

either as life work or avocational hobbies (Horton, 1981). In other situations, transitional phenomena are used defensively to self-soothe (Rickles, 1981) but continue to carry maturational potential (Straetz, 1976). There is some clinical evidence beginning to amass that the capacity to enter a selfless, objectless state of mind is biologically determined and related to the capacity to focus attention (Rickles, 1989, 1990).

In summary, I am postulating a state of mind which has loosened referents to objects, internal and external, that are supplying identity and self-maintenance. Such a state of mind functions as an unobtrusive container of mental processes such as fantasies and work. If no work or fantasy is active, a deep sense of quiet and peace is experienced as in meditation, prayer or quiet contemplation of beauty. If a perceptual-motor task is attempted, maximum accuracy and timing performance is possible in this state of mind. If an artistic, literary, or scientific creation is the task at hand, then this state of mind frees the individual of pre-conceptions and object relations related moods and facilitates creative new associations of the elements of the particular task addressed (i.e., words, paint, musical instruments, theories, reports, etc.). I have labeled this experience a **CSOM** and tried to demonstrate the influence of object relations on its attainment.

SUMMARY

This analysis of the **CSOM** and pre-**CSOM** highlights the sensitive interdependence of the self's capacity or temporary capacity for objectless, selfless states of experience required to enter the **CSOM**, and the function of selfobject relationships to facilitate such states. The idealized selfobject function of the created product interacting in a positive feedback loop with and maintaining a grandiose self characterizes the **CSOM**. The post-**CSOM** is not discussed. Some evidence is adduced to demonstrate that the positive hedonically tinged **CSOM** may be put to defensive purposes. The capacity to be alone and maintain self-cohesion during solitude is essential for entering and maintaining the **CSOM**, and may be akin to meditative states of mind.

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