

CHAPTER ONE

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND
CREATIVE LIVING

We must not forget that only a very few people are artists in life; that the art of life is the most distinguished and rarest of all the arts.

—Jung

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING VIGNETTE: “He makes her sit down in an armchair balanced on springs . . . certain levers and gears advance twenty daggers until their points graze her skin; the man frigs himself, the while explaining that the least movement of the chair will cause her to be stabbed.”¹ “He” is in control. He is the “author” or “director” of a scenario that “she” is enslaved to. He has the freedom to act; she is helpless, trapped, and immobilized. She is an object-for-the-director’s-use, not a subject with her own unique and independent wishes and needs. Any independent action on her part will be literally deadly for her. This is a *perverse* scenario.

We usually link perversity with sexual activities and practices such as voyeurism and fetishism, bondage and exhibitionism. But if we consider for a moment the common ingredients in perverse scenarios, there may be perverse relationships with people or ideas that are nonsexual. While most perverse scenarios do not have the explicit death threat in the vignette from the Marquis de Sade’s autobiography, they do have an author who is completely in charge and fashions a reprogrammed, rigid, and stereotypical script. The scene is always scripted beforehand, invariable, and compulsive. There is no originality. The author has all the power and implements a unilateral fantasy² on a person who

is weak and enslaved. "Problems of colonization," as Mannoni usefully reminds us, "did not only concern overseas countries."³ The people involved in perverse scenarios are psychologically colonized. They are treated by the author/director as things, not people,⁴ who have no shaping input on the relationship. They are merely a means, rather than being of ultimate significance themselves. They are *Its* rather than *Thous*, in Buber's sense.

A life of perversity is sterile, devitalized, and impoverished. One remains alienated from other people, whom one tries to control, have power over, and silence. Intimacy cannot grow on such soil. Dominance precludes dialogue. One cannot learn from other people when one has an authoritarian relationship to them.

So if perversity constrains and degrades the human spirit, what expands and elevates it? Creativity, that mysterious and multidimensional expression of originality, beauty and inspiration enlivens and enriches us. Psychoanalysts have been interested in creativity since the inception of psychoanalysis. There are twenty-two references to writings "dealing mainly or largely with Art, Literature or the theory of Aesthetics" in the *Standard Edition* of Freud's work.⁵ Freud had a keen appreciation and love of plays, novels, poetry and the visual arts. His writings contain more references to playwrights and novelists, especially Shakespeare and Goethe, than to other psychiatrists. He wrote about *Hamlet*, Dostoevsky, and Michelangelo.

The world of art and of creativity has also been of great interest to many of Freud's contemporaries (e.g., Rank and Jung) and successors (e.g., Kris, Eissler, Winnicott, Milner, Rycroft, McDougall, Rose, Rothenberg, Arieti, Roland, Oremland, Ogden, and Turco, among others). They have attempted to build on and enrich Freud's reflections on the nature of creation and art.

Psychoanalysis may be viewed, as Sheldon Bach aptly notes, as "the opposite of perversion, because in principle it embraces the difficult task of understanding a person, rather than using him, although it, too, can easily enough become a perversion itself."⁶

Let's briefly consider Freud's⁷ reflections on creativity and the artist in "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," which became paradigmatic for the views of many subsequent psychoanalysts, in light of Bach's⁸ cautionary warning about the perverse possibilities in psychoanalysis. The artist, claims Freud, is a neurotic, "oppressed by excessively powerful instinctual needs"; the artist "turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and his libido too, to the wishful constructions of his life of phantasy, whence the path might lead to neurosis."⁹ Furthermore, the artist seeks substitute satisfactions of "honour, power, wealth, fame and the love of women."¹⁰

Psychoanalysts who have worked with artists in psychoanalytic treatment have clinically observed the way this portrait illuminates a subject that is often idealized and romanticized. For the work of art can be, for example, a form of pathological mourning, in which earlier, formative psychic wounds, injuries, or

lacunae are recurrently embodied in the artistic creation, yet not psychologically worked through or transformed. Psychoanalysts have also witnessed the way that the work of art can put the creator in a kind of self-protective, narcissistic cocoon that impedes, if not precludes, availability for intimacy with others.

Freud's analysis of creativity in this essay became received wisdom for many of his successors. Psychoanalytic excursions into art and creativity, with rare exceptions,¹¹ have all too often been characterized by reductionism and a penchant for pathologization, treating art mostly as a matter of mastering trauma or escaping from reality.¹² Freud's study of Leonardo da Vinci, for example, was called a "pathography" not a biography.¹³ Reading the psychoanalytic literature, one gets the distinct impression that art is usually mired in autobiography (never transcending its roots in the artist's personal past) and linked to emotional illness.

But this analysis by Freud—who elsewhere recognized that the artist knew more than was dreamt of in psychoanalytic psychologies¹⁴—raises more questions than it answers: Is all artistic creation reducible to a single motive? Do artists create for any other purpose than achieving honor, power, wealth, fame, and the love of women? Don't the artistic works that profoundly move us such as the Greek tragedies, the plays of Shakespeare, the symphonies of Mozart, the sculpture of Michelangelo, and the novels of Dostoevsky illuminate rather than evade or escape from reality? While art can fuel neurosis, can it not also be adaptive, aiding the artist (or the audience) in processing, working through, mastering, and even healing disturbing realities?

Psychoanalysis is ambivalent about creativity. On the one hand, it can help artists work through or remove obstacles to the creative process and even elucidate creative products. On the other hand, psychoanalytic treatment of art and artists demonstrates a reductiveness—at times a "perversity"—that is anathema to creativity. Psychoanalysis as a discipline has often viewed itself as a master discourse, the One-Who-Knows the true meaning of art and literature, as well as religion and other complex human creations. From this intellectually imperialistic perspective, art is rarely viewed as a potentially valuable source of enriching knowledge for psychoanalysts. Psychoanalysis, consequently, is impoverished.

When psychoanalysts know too much ahead of time about what an artist's motivations really are or are reducible to, or what a work of art really means, and when art is nothing but an illustration of a psychoanalytic notion, then psychoanalysts may be uncannily enacting a perverse scenario, in which the work of art or the artist is a psychologically silenced and colonized underling in a psychoanalyst's unilateral and reductive scenario about art and creativity. In our highly reactive moral climate, the word "perversion" has an undeniable moral charge attached to it. I am trying to use the word without such conventional, nonpsychoanalytic moral overtones, deliberately taking the liberty of extending

the literal meaning of “perversion” in its sexual sense into the metaphoric sense of what might be called “perverse” relationships to artistic creations and ideas as well as people.

While “creative” writers are, as Freud admits, “apt to know a whole host of things between heaven and earth of which our [psychoanalytic] philosophy has not yet let us dream,”¹⁵ all too often psychoanalysts operate as if they have the final answers and the last word on art and artists. Instead of appreciating a work of art on its own merit—allowing a poem or painting to enlighten and enrich them—they often reduce it to an illustration of the thesis that the author had before encountering the creative work. The work of art is a means to the psychoanalyst’s egocentric ends. The author “finds” what he or she already believed.

From the eminent art historian Meyer Shapiro who objected to Freud’s¹⁶ study of Leonardo to various anthropologists who have challenged the presumed universality of the Oedipus complex, humanists have rejected psychoanalytic interpretations that purport to be comprehensive. But artists as well as humanists all too often fall victim to the mirror-opposite danger to psychoanalytic imperialism and “perversity.” If psychoanalysis has too often been guilty of assuming it can and should have the last word on the meaning and status of art, writers or literary theorists can presume that there is nothing new under the Literary Sun. Then it is too easy to confidently claim, as Walter Kendrick does in “Writing the Unconscious,” a study of how “literature came at the unconscious before Freud made a science of it,”¹⁷ that E. M. Forster, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf “did not need Freud.”¹⁸

One has only to read W. H. Auden’s¹⁹ “In Memory of Sigmund Freud” or the letter Virginia Woolf, Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, and 192 other writers and artists sent Freud on the occasion of his eightieth birthday hailing him as “the pioneer of a new and deeper knowledge of man,” a “courageous seer and healer . . . a guide to hitherto undreamt-of regions of the human soul”²⁰ to wonder whether Freud (and psychoanalysis) was as unessential to literature as Kendrick contended. And the subsequent artistic movements (e.g., Cubism, Surrealism, Dada, and Abstract Expressionism) and works of literature that draw on psychoanalytic theory and method or that have been shaped by psychoanalytic sensibilities raise crucial questions about the validity of these assertions concerning the limitations of psychoanalysis.

Many artists avoid psychoanalysis, fearing that it is benign at best and corrosive at worst, eroding or inhibiting their creativity by lessening their suffering or questioning their motives. Some artists I have worked with psychoanalytically have voiced this directly, fearing that their creativity would be compromised or diminished by psychoanalytic treatment. Other artists express this less directly. And others, such as the writer Rainer Maria Rilke, never even enter treatment because they believe psychoanalysis will hurt their creativity.

Playwright Arthur Miller illustrates the first kind of concern; author James Agee the third. “In the early fifties,” notes Miller, “I realized there was some-

thing obsessive in my thoughts about my marriage and my work; great swellings of love and hope for my future with Mary [his wife] were followed by a cycle of despairing resentment that I was being endlessly judged, hopelessly condemned." Attempting to break out of this, Miller sought psychoanalytic treatment. But Miller indicates that he was unable to remain in analysis because of the risk to his creativity. He writes, for example, of his treatment with Rudolph Loewenstein, a "Freudian of great skill, but it was ultimately impossible for me to risk my creativity, which he was wise enough not to pretend to understand, by vacating my own autonomy, however destructive it might continue to be."²¹

James Agee evinced deep interest in and terror of psychoanalysis. He wrote of the agony of his deep, self-destructive tendencies. "I realize that I have an enormously strong drive, on a universally broad front, toward self-destruction . . . I know little if anything about its sources. . . . There is much I might learn and be freed from that causes me and others great pain, frustration and defeat, and I expect that sooner or later I will have to seek their help." But, despite his agony, he avoided psychoanalysis, fearing its impact on him: "Psychiatry, and for that matter psychoanalysis still more, interest me intensely; but except for general talk with them—which I would like—I feel reluctant to use either except in really desperate need. . . . But I would somewhere near as soon die (or enter a narcotic world) as undergo a full psychoanalysis . . . I see in every psychoanalyzed face a look of deep spiritual humiliation or defeat; to which I prefer at least a painful degree of spiritual pain and sickness. The look of 'I am a man who finally cannot call his soul his own, but yielded to another.'"²²

Contrary to Miller and Agee's contentions, in my practice I have experienced the way psychoanalysis can actually help an artist's creativity, rather than threaten it. Interferences to creativity, at one time or another, afflict every artist (as well as every psychoanalyst). Despite the fact that creative products are deeply cherished and keenly awaited by their creators, they are frequently avoided or postponed. Procrastination and inhibitions undermine even the most promising project. Psychoanalysis can foster the creativity of artists in treatment by illuminating and elucidating the psychological obstacles to it. Psychopathology, according to Mitchell, leads to a "failure of imagination,"²³ that is, a tendency to relate to self, others, and the world in old and restrictive ways. Studying the way psychopathology hinders creativity could, in certain times of creative blockage, be illuminating for artists. Psychoanalytic authors have documented a range of factors that interfere with the creative process.

Let's briefly consider several. Creativity can be self-destabilizing as well as self-enriching. Certain artists who cannot "modulate excitement (and/or tension)" can avoid the "risk of overstimulation" by renouncing artistic experiences that are excessively stimulating.²⁴ Success, as well as pathology, can impede creativity, predisposing an artist to utilize a style or subject matter that "works," instead of risking new ventures with uncertain results. Otto Rank

stressed the guilt triggered by one's creativity and individuation.²⁵ The artist's success and acclaim may threaten colleagues and friends. Fearing aloneness, we inhibit our creativity in order to remain connected to less creative family members and peers. The artist's conscious or unconscious allegiance to these relationships may also endanger creativity, generating fear about exploring new vistas and thereby threatening the fabric of established relationships. Psychoanalytic authors have also illuminated other factors that impede creativity, including fear of "aloneness,"²⁶ the way society favors male artists, and the demands on women artists of procreation and parenting. Analysts have also elucidated the way noncongenial familial environments, as well as individual and societal dynamics, can inhibit creativity. In certain families with excessively utilitarian value systems and practical goals, artistic children are deeply discouraged from pursuing their artistic passion and their inchoate creative efforts are never appreciated or affirmed. Creativity has trouble sprouting from this soil.

In Tales from the Couch: Writers on Therapy, a wide range of novelists, poets, essayists, and nonfiction writers—including George Plimpton, Ntozake Shange, Adam Gopnik, Phillip Lopate, Diane Ackerman, Mark Doty, Susan Cheever, and Emily Fox Gordon—explore the myriad benefits of therapy for writers. These and other authors stress the way therapy cultivated increased self-awareness and self-trust, fostered greater candor and freedom, and stimulated an understanding of the creative process and renewed passion for their own creative efforts. "Psychoanalysis has made me a finer writer and a fuller person" writes Ntozake Shange. "Through the language of psychoanalysis I have learned—am always learning," says Susan Wood, "to speak my own language, the idiom of who I have been, who I am and who I will be, and to be comfortable with, even relish, the unknowable mystery of the self." "In my life successful therapy gave birth to successful writing," writes Rebecca Walker.²⁷

The commonly held belief among many artists that psychoanalysis will stifle their creativity misses the potentially creative role it might play in enhancing, rather than eroding or inhibiting it. But this can only happen if psychoanalysts work through their own ambivalence about creativity and their tendency to pathologize it. Otherwise, psychoanalysis will treat works of art as nothing but evidence for the pathography of the artist.

Still, it is not enough to rescue creativity from psychoanalysts who unwittingly 'shrink' it. Wresting creativity from the "psychopathological cast that it tends to assume in psychoanalytic writings" is a necessary, but insufficient project.²⁸ We also must work through the perversity that has haunted psychoanalytic excursions into the artistic realm. "Art must always say 'and yet!' to life," Georg Lukács writes. When psychoanalytic examinations of art generate interpretations that offer no new perspectives on life and living because they find what they already believe before they even encounter the work of art, then no matter how incisive and sophisticated these analyses seem, painters, poets, and novelists will

continue to be psychologically colonized by psychoanalysts even when their art is no longer overtly pathologized. Psychoanalysis will then be devitalized.

Why are we perverse and what can we do about it? In my clinical experience, perversions are often a substitute for something emotionally vital that is missing (George Atwood, personal communication, 1998)—namely, intimacy that is self-enriching rather than self-annihilating. Perversions also represent an attempt at self-healing of earlier trauma. Perversions often enact or defend one against the reexperiencing of exploitative, dissociated relationships in the past, by which I mean interactions that were traumatic and are repressed and often repeated in present relationships.

Perverse relations can also be seen as an attempt to create an environment of safety and satisfaction that banishes the anxiety of intimacy or exploitation. Self-vulnerability and enormous deprivation are warded off as one relates to others in the exploitative (or submissive) manner that one experienced with significant people in one's past. This can take two forms: adopting a position of dominance so that one is not controlled and exploited, or subservience so that one "identifies with the aggressor" and thereby aligns oneself with the world of the dominator. In either scenario, nonperverse relationships open up the deadly specter of profound betrayal and the eradication or the extreme diminishment of the integrity of one's experience of self. Although perverse relations lead to personal and interpersonal impoverishment, they may keep at bay horrendous experiences of self-loss or self-humiliation that one may not even remember, even as one continues to lead a life that reenacts such perverse connections with others.

Perversions ward off existential as well as psychological dangers. Animals are born with the instinctual equipment they need to survive in their world. But humans do not fit so seamlessly into their environments. The "intrauterine existence" of the human infant, according to Freudian anthropology, "seems to be short in comparison with that of most animals." Humans are "sent out into the world in a less finished" and therefore more helpless "state" than the young of other species.²⁹ The "unfinished" character of the human organism at birth, what Gehlen terms our "instinctual deprivation,"³⁰ the fact that our biological equipment does not match the demands of embodied, mortal existence, leaves us in a precarious ontological position. In addition, we are capable of raising questions about our existence and fate that we fundamentally cannot answer: "Why are we born?" "What is the purpose of our existence?" "Why are we mortal?" Humans seem to be the only species that can contemplate its own eventual and inevitable demise. We humans confront an unbearable complexity and heaviness of being; we are impotent in the face of the awesomeness of the universe, the reality of finitude and the uncontrollableness of others. Perversion may be related to what Ernest Becker³¹ terms *fetishism*, a conscious narrowing down of our reality. Perversions are safer than the agonizing immensity of

freedom. Freedom is terrifying for a creature without a map, sailing to a destination—death—that it cannot fathom or tolerate. Perverse relations are a way of taming the terror of mortal, embodied existence by denying and reducing the overwhelmingness of reality and our own all-too-human vulnerability and helplessness.³² When psychoanalysis has a nonperverse relationship to the imagination, then its latent capacity to enrich creative living may emerge.

Creativity is complex and multidimensional. The musical originality of Mozart, the literary inventiveness of Shakespeare, and the resourceful statesmanship (and capacity to foster social change) of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. are all different. Musicians, visual artists, scientists, religious innovators, psychoanalysts, and leaders in the civic arena can all be creative.

To be creative is to have a receptivity to oneself and the world, a great pleasure in exercising one's capacities, an internal openness and flexibility, an attraction to novelty, a sensitivity to discrepant perceptions and observations (John Keats's "negative capability"), an alertness to seize new opportunities, the courage to challenge traditions and conventions, the capacity to integrate apparent opposites (Jung's *enantiodromia*), and the ability to imagine and devise new approaches to a problem or question by bringing together two previously separate and segregated frameworks in a new and fruitful way.

Such Janusian thinking³³ generates new and surprising combinations. This will result in giving form to something novel and valuable through a deliberate (albeit unself-conscious and self-forgetful) process culminating in such things as a work of art, a new way of relating to the world, a novel career, an original style of parenting, or a unique plan for enhancing international peace.

People go to psychoanalysts for many conscious and unconscious reasons, including resolving disturbing symptoms, working out personal or interpersonal inhibitions, and freeing up the capacity to enjoy life and to love. But can psychoanalysis contribute to the art of creative living?

Creativity doesn't just occur in museums, concert halls, or jazz clubs. It can also happen in everyday life.³⁴ There is, as Jung aptly noted, an "art" of living.³⁵ Although one does not ordinarily associate going to a psychoanalyst with living more creatively, in this concluding section of the chapter I will briefly discuss how psychoanalysis could foster more creative living.

DREAMING INTO LIFE

We are such stuff as dreams are made on.
—Shakespeare

We seem to know more about what creativity is than how to facilitate it. "To make someone love the unconscious, *that*, is teaching art," Anton Ehrenzweig once said to Marion Milner.³⁶ In a good-enough psychoanalysis one experi-

ences a deep respect for dreaming and unconsciousness, which may be one important, and unexpected, way of fostering human creativity.

Freud's description of the dreamwork—the way experiences preceding the dream (“day residues”) link up with unresolved emotional conflicts from the past to form the nighttime dream composed of condensed and displaced images—affords a doorway into the creativity of the psyche.³⁷ “Freud democratized genius,” as Phillip Rieff evocatively noted, “by giving everyone a creative unconscious.”³⁸ Our capacity to dream demonstrates that all of us—not just the economically privileged or the intellectually talented—are more creative than we imagine.³⁹ Before Freud, Jung, and their psychoanalytic colleagues and successors, the psyche was seen and understood in more mechanical, flattened, and impoverished ways. Freud and Jung revealed that experience is usually more symbolic, imaginal, fertile, and complex than it seems, and that actions often have multiple meanings and purposes.

The creative status Freud bestowed on art in his less reductionistic moments was most fully explored and illuminated in dreams, art, mythology, and other imaginal forms by Jung and his followers. Viewing the unconscious as a seedbed of creativity, not simply a Pandora's box, Jung “depathologized” the psyche.⁴⁰ He widened the value of dreams by finding other meanings besides revelations of infantile reminiscences and disguised sexuality. Jung's “synthetic-constructive” approach toward interpretation of psychic activity, his emphasis on the goal or purpose of emotional life rather than simply its cause or source, complements Freud's analytic-genetic approach, his focus on reducing experience into its component parts (such as wishing and striving) and tracing its historical origins in infantile childhood experience and its antecedent causes.⁴¹ Jung saw the constructive method as complementary to the reductive method of classical psychoanalysis: “We apply a reductive point of view in all cases where it is a question of illusions, fictions, and exaggerated attitudes. On the other hand, a constructive point of view must be considered for all cases where the conscious attitude is more or less normal, but capable of greater development and refinement, or where unconscious tendencies, also capable of development, are being misunderstood and kept under by the conscious mind.”⁴²

Jung emphasized that the psyche is “prospective” or purposive, self-regulating, self-healing,⁴³ and oriented toward the present and the future, as well as profoundly shaped by formative experiences in the past. “No psychological fact can ever be explained in terms of causality alone” claims Jung,⁴⁴ “as a living phenomenon, it is always indissolubly bound up with the continuity of the vital process, so that it is not only something evolved but also continually evolving and creative.”⁴⁵ Jung was interested in elaborating the forward-moving direction of contemporaneous phenomena such as dreams and then integrating them into one's life as well as tracing their historical antecedents. “I use constructive and synthetic to designate a method that is the antithesis of reductive. The constructive method is concerned with the elaboration of the

products of the unconscious (dreams, fantasies, etc.). It takes an unconscious product as a symbolic expression which anticipates a coming phase of psychological development."⁴⁶

Jung's "wisdom of the psyche" has been correctly critiqued for neglecting the tragic dimensions of human existence and sometimes being too teleological (Don Kalshed, personal communication, 1999). But it provides an important antidote to Freud's pathologizing of mental life. A prospective approach explores the positive functions a symptom or dream provides in a person's life. It asks a different sort of question such as "What is this symptom for?" rather than "What does the symptom hide or evade?" A prospective approach can amplify the new possibilities a dream or symptom points to in one's present and future, as well as what imaginal phenomena mean.

A crucial and perhaps neglected implication of Freud's insights about dreaming is that the dreaming experience is not something that happens only in sleep. Freud implies a link between dreams and daily life when he writes: "The latent thoughts of the dream differ in no respect from the products of our regular conscious activity."⁴⁷ The dreaming experience and imaginal and unconscious phenomena are happening all the time in waking life as a relatively silent yet influential backdrop to our conscious secondary process experience. Most people, however, treat nocturnal dreaming as more crucial. The transformative potential of the dreaming experience is thus perhaps insufficiently appreciated and inadvertently segregated from our waking consciousness.

The dreaming experience is applicable to daily life. Think of the dream as a model for the unconscious operation of thought in daily life—the way that experiences during the day, like dreams, contain condensed and displaced symbols and hidden meanings triggered by some instigating force in our experience that can aid in self-understanding and self-healing. Unconscious facets of our experience are encouraged to emerge when we relate to experiences in daily life in the uniquely creative way that Freud and Jung, among others, taught us to play with dreams. Freud recommended listening to and speaking about dreams with that meditative state of mind he termed "evenly-hovering attention" and "free association."⁴⁸ Jung advocated, in his writings on "active imagination,"⁴⁹ that we amplify the meaning and resonance of the images through painting, drawing, sculpting, dancing, or singing. Then the world of daily life—sights and sounds, images and ideas in novels or movies, the art in our homes and offices, the people we converse with, the plays and music that move us, the sensuous pleasures we relish, soft reveries, roaring fantasies, quiet or noisy somatizations, passions, or addictions—contain unsuspected meanings. They may be triggers of or sites for condensed or displaced images and meanings that reveal the hopes and dreams, terrors and untapped potentials of their creators. Bollas, in a felicitous phrase, terms this process the "dream work of one's life."⁵⁰

Art can be an “externalized dream”⁵¹ as the films of Federico Fellini illustrate, containing symbols and meanings that exceed what the creator knew or intended to convey. An artist I once worked with in psychoanalytic treatment—call him Donald—initiated therapy because of a vague and diffuse sense of pain. He experienced himself as worthless and strange, which he described during the initial stages of therapy, in an ill-defined and general way. I knew from what he reported that he believed his parents viewed him as despicable and that he had felt deeply condemned by them and powerless in their presence. After about a year of therapy he had a memory of sketching, many years before, a dwarf that represented, for him, “all he hated of himself condensed into one figure.” His body. His feeling of being emotionally weird. His conviction of insignificance. His parents’ wholesale condemnation of his being. The drawing and his associations to it revealed an unconscious self-image that had haunted him his whole life and eluded representation and thus transformation. Once the image, and the accompanying feelings of self-loathing and alienation emerged, the therapy proceeded on a deeper and more productive level.

The dreamwork of daily life occurs not only when we create a work of art, but also in what we are drawn to, which may include more prosaic examples in addition to art. Exploring the meaning of symbols in art and life, as well as in dreams, reveals unsuspected creative potentials in our lives. A man on a vacation, a therapist who has finished his psychoanalysis, is deeply drawn to a sculpture on a wall in an open storage room in the back of a local art gallery. The sculpture, entitled *Triptych*, is composed of three narrow pieces of dark bronze, side by side, part of a face with eyes either closed or sightless, bursting through the center of each strip. After he returned to the gallery three times in the same week to see the sculpture he became curious about the source of his fascination. Although he loves art, this kind of enthrallment is unusual for him. He didn’t dream the sculpture. It was obviously something real that captured his attention and imagination. But exploring the meaning for him of the fractured faces, like an image in a dream, opened up new dimensions of himself.

He eventually realized that to survive the deadening atmosphere in his family, where talk about things and accomplishments substituted for the sharing of feelings, he developed passions and interests—such as art and soccer—outside of his critical and intrusive parents’ sphere of influence and control. Then his hobbies could be protected from being stolen or colonized by his parents. As a result, he was composed of several hidden and divided tributaries that did not flow into one main body of self. He felt internally at odds and pulled in too many directions. *Triptych*, the sculpture of one face fractured into three, each struggling to emerge, represented three fragments or faces of himself—the athlete, the healer, and the artist—that needed to be united into a single whole. Seeing such a concrete representation of his deepest self in the sculpture made the fissures in himself much clearer and more obvious.

The world has a hidden richness of a dream when we are willing to play with and decode it. Overdetermined, emotionally charged, condensed, and displaced images that symbolically encode unresolved emotional conflicts and unrealized potentials from the past are evoked by experiences in the present. As we develop the capacity to play with and associate to these images in an unfettered way, a variety of further meanings emerge and point in unpredictable directions. New insights, questions, pathways, and dreams are generated by our conscious reflection on and interpretation of these evocative trains of thought and emotion. Our capacity to engage in the dreamwork of our lives may lie fallow for a while until an experience in the present triggers new condensed and displaced images resplendent with evocative possibilities, which we then decode in our unique way.

The external as well as the internal environment can be reanimated when we are attuned to the dreamwork of our lives. A woman drives through a parking lot behind a small shopping center to humor her son, an in-line skating and skateboard enthusiast. He looks quite content. She is bored. As she drives around the garbage cans, torn railings, and steps at the back of the shopping center she asks him why he wanted to go there. "You are not looking at this place as a skater would," he informed her, as he noticed that the rail, fire hydrant, staircase, and ledge were a challenging and compelling course for a skateboarder.

Psychoanalysis cultivates the capacity to dream by day as well as by night and thus to treat the world as what Winnicott termed a potential space in which people, one's own history, nature, objects, and experiences can be imaginatively engaged and reanimated. Winnicott's writings on playing, creativity, and potential and transitional space add an important dimension to Freud and Jung's views of dreaming and unconsciousness by contextualizing and interpersonalizing them.⁵² Winnicott places the dream and unconscious mentation in transitional space. We ordinarily divide the world into two: the world outside ourselves and the world within. Winnicott wrote about a third zone of being, an intermediate or transitional space in which creativity (and, I will argue in a later chapter, spirituality) occur. This transitional space is neither inside nor outside but partakes of both. It draws on but is not reducible to either. It is in this intermediate zone of experience that dreaming, creativity, and creative living occurs. Winnicott teaches us that creativity is not a possession of a solitary individual but a process generated by a creative relation between a person who is internally receptive and an outer world that often includes another person.

The inner attitude of openness to the outer world, to surprise, to wonder, to people and to feedback enlarges rather than compresses psychic and interpersonal space. One approaches life and relationships in an alive, fresh, and vital way. There is more fluid communication between conscious and unconscious dimensions of ourselves. In creative moments, a person, like a sail, can be moved by the winds of life. One can be influenced or transformed by the feedback of

others and one's plans and direction can change in the moment. One questions inherited and conventional assumptions and practices, one makes novel connections—integrating two things that were formerly separate—and one imagines the currently unimaginable.

When psychic space is uncongealed, we can comprehend and tolerate complexity, ambiguity, and multidimensionality in ourselves, other people, and the world. Most of us are ontological dualists; we divide the world into innumerable sets of oppositions such as self and other, altruism and self-care, and mind and body, and so forth. We ordinarily treat such facets of being as separate and opposed. We favor one and neglect the other. Self-care becomes more important than altruism or the mind is more valued than the body. When psychic space is enlarged, apparent dichotomies and oppositions that ordinarily limit creative living are treated as interpenetrating and potentially enriching facets of being. Living beyond such dualisms affords a fuller and more fertile life. The capacity to make novel connections between spheres of our existence that are ordinarily separated and segregated is thereby intensified and enhanced. New ways of being can be actualized. The world may thus be reenchanting and reanimated. As differences and otherness in oneself and others are more accepted and valued, empathy for self and others is deepened.

Being an artist of one's life is thrilling but difficult. Dreaming and the creativity it fosters are "murdered" in certain people.⁵³ They cannot imagine, dream, or play. Imaginativeness is precluded if not foreclosed when we are too moored and mired in concrete reality or too lost in obsessive ruminations or fantasizing. Our inner psychic life then resembles a frozen tundra or a broken record more than a free-flowing river.

We impinge on social space, suggests Masud Khan, if we do not use our dream space. Not being able to use our dream space for the dreaming experience, we exploit social space and personal relationships to act out our dreams.⁵⁴ Let me mention three ways I believe we do this. Each inhibits creative living.

1. Everyday thinking reduces, dichotomizes, and essentializes; the world of dreaming respects complexity, multidimensionality, and ambiguity. The complexity of the world is eclipsed as we unreflectively divide the world into polar oppositions (e.g., good and evil and spiritual and profane). As we choose sides between them, we create false dichotomies, eclipse the interconnected nature of these apparent dualities, and neglect those facets of experiences that we have devalued.
2. Most of us follow Shakespeare's recommendation in *Hamlet* ("to thine own self be true") and seek our essential, singular essence. But our actual experience of identity in the world teaches us that the bard should have said "to thine own selves be true." The multidimensionality of our identities is reduced as we search for our

sole, authentic essence. This predisposes us to neglect certain important facets of our being.⁵⁵

3. The third result of our constrained capacity to dream in daily life is that we dissociate from actual living by fantasizing rather than imagining or dreaming.⁵⁶ In imagination and dreaming there is a creative engagement and reanimation of the world rather than an escape from it. Think of the adolescent in the parking lot. Fantasizing, in Winnicott's sense of the term, is a dissociated, isolating, non-symbolic activity "absorbing energy but not contributing—in either to dreaming or to living."⁵⁷ It is a type of daydreaming that has "no poetic value,"⁵⁸ by which he means it is repetitive, static, concrete, and cannot be symbolically elaborated: "a dog is a dog is a dog."⁵⁹ Fantasizing is illustrated by a woman in analysis who is unexcited by her loyal and loving husband and holds out hope without any evidence that a twenty-year-old affair with a man who is not willing to commit to her will one day lead to marriage. Fantasizing is unconstructive because it restricts if not paralyzes action and creative living as we remain entrapped within a personally constructed prison of feelings, fantasies, and relationships that remain virtual potentials but are divorced from contact with the world or our lives. Our lives are impoverished when fantasizing takes precedence over imagination.

The second major obstacle to being the artists of our own lives is the neurotic, uncreative way that most of us have attempted to heal ourselves of our childhood wounds. Our lives, from this perspective, are the compromised form that our efforts to cure ourselves of our childhood conflicts and illnesses take. Such emotional self-splinting or psychological self-medicating are our own best effort at self-cure. But they lead, even in the best of cases, to a failure of imagination and restrictive, uncreative living.

Psychoanalysis can transform the patient's "practice of self-cure,"⁶⁰ the old ways one has attempted to resolve one's core conflicts or developmental arrests and heal oneself. New ways of being and living emerge. A crucial aspect of doing this and appropriating our histories involves what I have termed "self-creation" in the present.⁶¹ Self-creation refers, not to creating ourselves without constraints, which as psychoanalysts we know is impossible, but, rather, to building a personally authentic and meaningful life in the present by creatively reworking and transforming our experience. Such a life is neither a sterile imitation of another's existence, nor a reactive rebellion against ways of living that we may in fact value, but a life that has texture, vitality, and depth and feels creative and alive and authentically one's own. Unsuspected ways of relating to ourselves and others emerge.

I have stressed dreaming and imagination as crucial components of creative living. Another crucial aspect is the style and form of our lives.⁶² In a good-enough psychoanalysis, one finds one's own unique voice/way of being, which is an essential precondition of creative living. Personal idiom is the unique nucleus or kernel that is us and that can, under favorable circumstances, evolve and unfold.⁶³ It is our unique aesthetic sensibility and the idiosyncratic form and rhythm that each of us is. In her moving poem, "When Death Comes," Mary Oliver writes: "When it's over, I don't want to wonder/if I have made of my life something particular and real/. . . I don't want to end up simply having visited the world."⁶⁴ We are all unique complexities—as different in our being as our fingerprints or faces—with inimitable brushstrokes that we (each individually) can potentially contribute to the canvass of life.

We live our uniqueness not by discovering a blueprint from our past that tells us how to live, but by finding and playing with the unique set of dispositions and possibilities and unknown and emerging potentials that are ours alone. Some may be more explicit, like our unique view of the world, or the cultural and sensuous pleasures we enjoy. Other facets can be subtler, like our unique dreams, the meaning of the art on our walls, the artifacts on our desks, or the rhythm of our being.

Psychoanalysis began as improvisation. The early analysts were playing mental jazz without too much psychological sheet music. As psychoanalysis became more codified, it aspired to be a science more than an art and was more systematized and routinized. That psychoanalysts are still hypnotized by the image of the psychoanalyst as scientist emerges in the unproductive debates about whether psychoanalysis is or is not a science. Defenders of psychoanalysis, from my perspective, are more revealing on this score than attackers. While the former defend psychoanalysis against externalized enemies (e.g., those critics such as Adolph Grunbaum who critique psychoanalysis for not being a science), they reveal an unconscious allegiance to science by accepting the problematic premise of their critics—namely, that psychoanalysis should be a science and is fundamentally weakened if it is not.

We analysts often unconsciously view ourselves as "customs officials" who make sure that "the rules are followed and that nothing foreign/illegal is smuggled in."⁶⁵ When the analyst is viewed more as artist than scientist, for example, as a jazz improviser who has a great deal of knowledge about the fundamentals of human development, mental functioning, and the analytic relationship and process, but improvises in therapy depending on the exigencies of the moment, then art and imagination may take on greater importance in understanding and elucidating the analyst's functioning, and thereby enrich the analytic experience for both patient and analyst.

Creativity is essential to human life. It is crucial to the health of both individuals and the larger society. Cultures and people need novelty and innovation

in modes of thinking and living in order to reach their potential. Many of the problems confronting us as individuals and as a culture could be more successfully addressed, and even resolved, if they were approached freshly and creatively.

To the extent that psychoanalysis fears its own unruly creativity by resisting its own most fertile and radical insights about unconsciousness and dream mentation, it will become fossilized and probably be viewed by more and more people as a historical remnant of a bygone age. To the extent that psychoanalysis remains open to its own unpredictable generativeness by eluding its own perverse tendencies, continually questioning its own insights, remaining open to feedback about its limits, learning from its own most emancipatory discoveries, to the extent that psychoanalysis is a ceaseless, unguarded opening that keeps expanding, it will speak to the needs of people in the twentieth-first century who will be enriched by the creativity it fosters.⁶⁶