

Eros, Creation and Thanatos – The Artist’s Emotional Triangle

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Abstract: This present work is qualitative research using the grounded theory approach based on the creative process of six artists selected from different fields. The application of exploratory analysis found three major themes that were encountered during the creation process. The first theme is represented by mechanisms of defense involved in the creative process which are found at both the unconscious and conscious level. Sublimation can come from both Eros and Thanatos. The second theme found that during the creation process artists entered into a trance of creation, which has the effect of self therapy. Furthermore, a subtheme emerged as another triangle: expression, self discovery and overcoming oneself through the act of creation. The third theme uncovered the artist’s specific irrational beliefs mixed with internalized cultural patterns. The practical implication of our study is represented by using the trance of creation as a therapy method. The theoretical implications emerged from the notion that the mechanism of sublimation can come from Thanatos.

Key words: art, creation, catharsis, trance, self defense mechanisms, self therapy, irrational beliefs, internalized cultural patterns, system of values

Introduction

The main theme of this research came from a great burst of involvement in art after a life threatening, traumatic event suffered by the author. While going through this restructuring of his world, some spark of creation appeared, manifesting itself in the art fields of ceramic, painting, music, landscaping and aircraft model design. During the creation process, the author observed some other processes were taking place and wanted to investigate whether this kind of phenomenon occurs with other creators. The author suggests that creation may be a process which emerged from a clash of Life and Death, a will to survive and the idea of possible imminent death. The aim of this study was to find and analyze the relationships among Eros, Thanatos and Creation encountered during the creative process undergone by the artists.

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The theoretical approach of such mechanisms should start with the mechanism of sublimation. What is and – if one goes deeper – what are the dynamics of sublimation? According to Laplanche and Pontalis (1994), sublimation is a process postulated by Freud, who was trying to give an explication to human activities similar to artistic and intellectual activities done without any apparent link to sexuality but which are fueled by the energy of Eros. The process is explained further: the sexual tension is sublimated when it is deviated to a new, asexual goal, and this goal targets socially valued objects. Freud emitted two hypotheses regarding the mechanism of sublimation: the first refers to a sort of malleability and opening of sexual and non sexual energies; as the self preservation drive can support the sexual drive, so too can sexuality contaminate non sexual functions. The second hypothesis refers to narcissism: the transformation of a sexual activity into a sublimated one necessitates an intermediate time, the withdrawal of the libido into the Ego, which makes desexualization possible. This desexualized and sublimated energy can be used for nonsexual activities (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1990). Laplanche and Pontalis recognize the insufficient theoretical work on sublimation, the existing theory being vague and lacking in some respects. Klein (1929) sees in sublimation a tendency to repair the “good” object which was damaged by the destructive drive. Sublimation comes from the battle between Eros and Thanatos as a reparatory function of the Ego.

Gemes (2009) approaches the mechanism of sublimation in depth. There is a danger when it comes to mistaking sublimation for a mechanism of neurosis formation. The only distinction, in Freud’s definition, is that sublimation has a socially valued goal. Freud analyzes the difference between repression and sublimation. There are two components: an ideatic one and an energetic one; in repression both components are repressed; in sublimation the energetic component passes the Superego and manifests itself in socially valued behaviors. Gemes proposes Nietzsche’s solution. The first who used the term sublimation was Nietzsche in the introduction of his work *Human, All Too Human – A book For Free Spirits* (1878). In his view there is no unselfish behavior, nor is there an uninterested point of view. These are only sublimations in which the base element has almost evaporated, an element revealed only by close observation. For Nietzsche the aggressive drives are split; they do not become conscious, and this split creates resentment, a man with his soul divided. Seldom can these impulses reunify and engage sub-ordered capacities when obtaining secondary goals, parallel to the initial one. During sublimation the primary goal is substituted with a secondary one, which allows for the expression of the impulse in a manner consonant with the primary one. The sublimations allow for the reunification of the divided Ego; instead, the pathological tendencies cause

more division and disintegration of the Ego. Contrary to Freud's theory, in this way both sexual and aggressive impulses can be sublimated without losing their sexual or aggressive characteristics.

Anzieu (2004) analyzes creation from a psychoanalytical point a view. The distinction between creativity and creation is that creativity is a predetermined ensemble of character and mind that can be cultivated and found in a lot of people. Creation is a process of invention and composition of an artistic or scientific work that satisfies two criteria: to bring something new and to see this novelty recognized, sooner or later, as a value by the public. Creators succeed in detaching from creative people through their work, materialized in their creation. Creators can dissociate themselves and go into regression in order to create. The process of creation resembles one of dreaming or mourning, with the addition of tertiary elaboration, which is the product of creation. A crisis is a necessary condition of any creation process. During this process, the Ideal Ego goes into conflict with the Superego, the first one directing the unconscious processes, the second one putting them in a certain order. To summarize what Anzieu wrote, any creation is a product of our passing through life, while whining with the obsession of death. The Being lives with the idea of the non Being, Eros with Thanatos, and from the collision of these two energies creation is born. Metaphorically, creation is an erotic dream of eternal life.

Some connections between creation and mental disorders, in particular seen in schizotypal personalities, were analyzed by Bowman and Turnbull (2009). The divergent thinking correlates with creativity in artistic fields, inventions and innovations. Convergent thinking is necessary to exact sciences and mathematics. Divergent thinking is found in schizotypal personalities. There is a positive trait of schizotypy in which there is magical thinking and there are also audio-visual hallucinations, and a negative one characterized by social anhedony as well as social withdrawal. The authors hypothesize that the genes that carry creativity but also pathological tendencies could be transmitted through the reproductive success of the schizotypals with a positive trait because they are more attractive than ordinary people. Yalom (2010) writes that approaching the thought of one's own death is a good thing to do along one's life, fostering functionality while repressing it does not. The functionality comes from the fact that the human being becomes conscious of his/her existence, surpassing the conscious fact of how they exist. This surpassing of the condition of being caught in the vortex of life resembles dissociation; it's necessary to look at one's own existence and understand it. After significant life-death experiences, one reframes his/her view of world and life and significant changes take place at the personality level; experiences are lived more intensely, minor events or things that were seen as important are seen now as

insignificant, and those who bring happiness are sought and held as precious. These are the added benefits of experiencing an adverse situation.

Creation can become a means of resilience against adversities, including death. Artists found in adverse situations have used the process of artistic creation to overcome, at least psychologically, their adversity. Artistic creation can cause resilience even in the public, as it can be transferred from the artist to the public (Zausner, 2010).

Material and Method

In order to find the main themes and subthemes, exploratory research was used. A grounded theory approach was chosen, which is a qualitative method. Regarding the number of subjects, there is generally no established number of subjects for the grounded theory approach. Sources have given different numbers, from 15 as the smallest number (Bertaux, 1981), 20-30 for Creswell (1998) and 30-50 for Morse (1994). Kuzell (1992) recommended 6 to 8 interviews for a homogeneous sample and 12 to 20 data sources “when looking for disconfirming evidence or trying to achieve maximum variation.” The above information was mentioned by Guest et al (2006). Further, they write that the number of subjects depends on whether the saturation of research has been achieved or not. The interviewing stops when no more themes emerge from the analysis. For this study, we used a total of six subjects. After four interviews, three themes emerged, and the rest of the interviews (two) found things that could be seen as part of the themes already found.

The subjects consisted of three male and three female artists working in the following fields: painting, theater, writing, leather crafting, ceramics and garment designer. The age of the participants varied from 25 to 52 years old. The selection of subjects followed the snowball procedure, however two filters were applied, one specifying that the subjects must be creators, not replicators and the second specifying that each one should create in a different field of art than the previous one.

The research question was: “How do creators describe the relation among Eros, Thanatos and Creation in their creation process?” while the subquestion was: “What do artists feel and think while working on a specific workpiece of their choice?”

The interview guide contained the following questions:

1. What drives you to create? What does a muse represent to you? You can elaborate on the link between your muse and creation.
2. How does Eros intervene, if it intervenes at all, in your artistic creation? (If Eros is not recognized as a concept, use “surviving instinct, joy of life”).

3. How does Thanatos intervene, if it intervenes at all, in your artistic creation? (If Thanatos is not recognized as a concept, use Death, fear of Death).
Subquestion: How do you cope with the fact that someday you’re going to die?
4. To you, what are the meanings of your creations? Please elaborate on the relationship between your creations and you.
5. Please choose one of your creations that was born from Eros. What were you thinking while working on it? What did you feel while working on it?
6. Please choose one of your creations that was born from Thanatos. What were you thinking while working on it? What did you feel while working on it?
7. If you feel that there is a question that’s significant for you to describe the relationship among Eros, Thanatos and Creation, what would it be? What would you answer?

The interviews had an open style, encouraging the subjects to speak freely, although whenever the subjects went on a path not related to creation or creativity, they were respectfully reminded that the research was interested in the creation process, feelings, thoughts and behaviors related to their creation style. Each time a subject touched a path that was considered interesting for the study (from the researcher’s point of view) additional questions were asked in order to explore that path. The time necessary for finishing the interviews was between 30 and 80 minutes.

Regarding the grounded theory, there are no initial hypotheses to be confirmed or infirmed, as theories have to emerge from the qualitative analysis. However, the initial general hypothesis about the creation process was that creation arises as an effect of the conflict between Eros and Thanatos. A second hypothesis was that in the creation process the phenomenon of trance occurs, and this trance has therapeutic effects on the creator. Confirmation or rejection regarding these hypotheses was not the focus of this study and since the phenomenon did appear, the focus was on how the phenomenon took place.

The interviews were audio and video recorded, with the consent of the subjects. Some artists gave their consent to publish some of their artwork significant to the study. The audio-video material was transcribed and then the operation of coding commenced. The operation of coding included several steps: open coding, axial coding, selective coding and elaboration of a theory (Creswell, 1998). Regarding the freedom of coding – it was preferred to recognize the expressions from the text that point to unconscious mechanisms, so some sort of psychoanalytical interpretation was involved – at least the one referring to mechanisms of defense, such as sublimation,

repression. The preference was to use the concept of coding as derived from Coffey and Atkinson’s book (1996) – *Making Sense of Qualitative Data*.

Results

Three main themes arose from the study. All mechanisms of defense of the Ego and any conscious mechanisms of adaptations were included in the first theme.

Theme 1. Eros, Creation, Thanatos – mechanisms of adaptation.

An overview of the mechanisms uncovered by this research is presented in Table 1. More interesting than this short review of mechanisms of defense is the way in which each one of them are used by artists.

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|---|-------------|--------------------------|------|---|
| Mechanisms of adaptation found during the process of creation | Unconscious | Those come from Eros | that | Dissociation, Sublimation, Fantasizing, Intellectualization, Rationalization |
| | | Those come from Thanatos | that | Dissociation, Sublimation, Repression, Reaction Formation |
| | Conscious | Both for and Thanatos | Eros | Altruism, Creation as a voluntary mechanism of one’s defense against fear of death, Acceptance of Death, Transfer and Using one’s emotions in creation. |

Table 1. Mechanisms of defense / adaptation during the process of creation

Unconscious mechanisms

Sublimation of Eros

For the painter, while exploring Pompeii, he badly desired to see the lupanarium. However, he got lost in the maze of the streets of Pompeii and never found it, leaving him with an unsolved problem, which generated frustration. The whole journey was captured in a painting, and the Rubik cube inserted there represents the maze and the unsolved puzzle of finding the lupanarium. On the other hand, the process of creation – painting in this case – generates pleasure. The painter claimed there was a positive energy in it. Literally he said that the process of painting is like a sexual act to him, and the success at the end of the day or a finished painting is an orgasm.

Sublimation can come with intellectualization – for the painter, Eros is completely desexualized, and it becomes a play of colors, shadows and lights and “the body vibrates to this dynamic image”. For the designer, sublimation is used to redirect erotic tensions and therefore to vent frustrations through her work.

The writer first uses fantasizing, then sublimation. He said that women who arouse him but don’t engage him in sexual intercourse drive him to fantasize about them, maintaining an “unconsumed fire” which gives birth to a story. The lust for an untouchable woman makes him write a story, the “purity” of his feelings is given especially by the fact of “what would have been but never was”. That fits exactly in the theoretical parameters of the sublimation process – expressing erotic/sexual energy in a form allowed by society, artist or desired object, while the raw act - specific sexual intercourse - couldn’t be achieved. The ceramist has been using different types of seeds as parts of her works. She felt uncomfortable because she didn’t allow the life from the seeds to grow, but used rationalization to comfort her. She gave the seeds another meaning, creating and sharing beauty from them to people.

Sublimation of Thanatos

Although sublimation is reserved in theory only for Eros (except in the theory of Melanie Klein [1929]), from the research it resulted that sublimation can come from Thanatos, too.

The actor was obsessed with death after a personal loss in her family and from that resulted a dramatic script, and she actually said that Thanatos, as well as Eros, are both sources of inspiration, of expressing herself, working with her emotions to become a better performer. The writer came up with a story where a character at an old age is killed by the same character at a younger age. Here the drive toward self-destruction is recognized; however, the survival instinct kicked in and while writing or remembering the whole story, the writer felt anger when confronted with the perspective of death. Anger was a revolt of his Life’s drive in front of Death.

The painter usually uses the symbols of the Sun and the Moon in his painting. Consciously, he thinks that the Sun represents the male and the Moon, the female, but at an unconscious level the Moon represents Death, as it became clear during the interview. Instead of the Sun, on a sunny hot day in Pompeii he places a Moon in his painting. “The Moon is older and more present, Pompeii existed, and it’s gone [...] Instead of the Sun, we discover a huge Moon on the sky, which is an eternal Moon, a symbol of womanhood, fertility, timelessness, something round that has no beginning and no ending.”

The sublimation of Thanatos is mixed in with the reaction formation in the designer. The fear of Death is transformed into joy, and this comes

with an acceptance of one's own death, too. "It could be that type of Death, sublime, the tango, pure passion". Here, Eros coats the idea of Death, so the fear of Death is transformed into erotism. With the leather crafting artisan, Thanatos manifests in an unusual way. Most artists want their work to be preserved for the future; instead, he said he is content that his works in leather wear off with the passing of time, mostly because he is not always satisfied with the quality of his art work. He only likes it when it possesses a supreme quality, which arrives somehow from outside of himself. This exquisite art work creation is a rare event, and he is not in control of producing it, otherwise he would do it again and again, but any attempt to replicate the "exquisite creation" fails. His work is done by trial and error, and the supreme satisfaction comes only with a supreme creation, one that eludes his power of replication. So he is okay with the fact that most of his productions that do not achieve his standards of "piece of art" will be destroyed by time and wearing.

The ceramist said that sometimes the act of creation is like death. Rationalization is involved here, too. There is a fear of death, but it is a fear of the unknown, passing from a world that is known into another world. Similarly to creation, at first there is a struggle, a fight, a tension when she creates, as she tears something apart from herself to enter into another world. "When you create, it's like going into another world. In that sense, creation is like death. The tension is caused by the fear of death but once you say, "This is it," everything unlocks, and you live an extraordinary experience". So, in that sense, death is supposed to be like a creation, an extraordinary world as the one where creation brings its creator. This is how she conquers the fear of death.

Dissociation

In the process of creation, dissociation is not understood as dissociation that comes as a mechanism of defense, like derealization or depersonalization but as dissociation similar to hypnotic trance. The body remains in one place, but the mind and emotions wonder through the past, present or future, hypothetical worlds of what could have been if... The painter says: "... So this is the state of mind: inspiration brings you in front of a gate. You open the gate and pass through that gate into a Universe, into a room, into anything, and that is where the trance starts, the process of creation".

The dissociation doesn't send the creator completely into the unconscious: there is an instance that controls what has to appear on canvas. "A condition that must be fulfilled is that when you paint you have to possess that state of trance, that inspiration; if you don't have inspiration it is harder, everything becomes a routine and you no longer have anything in common with art". The designer even describes time lapse as modification

of perception: “It is exactly as in a trance because in that moment I feel like time is expanding, but I look later to what I have done and calculate the time that has elapsed. I say [to myself that] I could not possibly do that. Usually, in a conscious mode I could not do what I just did with so much precision, so much originality.” The state of being in a trance is necessary, according to the writer: “It helps so that one doesn’t ruin the story. You leave the hand to write without intervening with censorship; if you allow censorship to intervene, [the story] it would be like a chimera”.

Reframing

The writer uses this technique to avoid the fear of death; Eros creates tension and Thanatos represents the end of the creation process:” [...] can creation be Eros and Thanatos at the same time? Yes, love gives the momentum for creation, while Thanatos... is not seen as the end of the spring but as a sigh of relief, that something within you was expressed, not as an end but as a salvation”.

Conscious mechanisms of adaptation

Creation as a way of defense against the fear of death

Three of the subjects see their creations as what remains after their disappearance, extensions of them, a way to survive death through their creations – seen as their children. The painter describes the first way to survive as the one that takes place through his biological children and the second as the one that comes from being an artist: “If I died today, I would die in peace because I have accomplished two essential things: I have a family and I have children, so a part of me will continue. I did not pass through this world in vain. I wasn’t a simple consumer. I tried to understand, in my way, to learn in this life, to acquire knowledge and other aspects than these, to express how I see the world, so I tried to offer my view of the world to others through images I like to paint. In a metaphysical way, [...] an artist creates, and his/her works are his children, his legacy and this is how s/he will exist [after death]”.

Acceptance

In the end, the mature mechanism of defense against Death is one’s acceptance of it and survival through one’s own creations. The painter says: “Thanatos would be a sort of an apogee in art, which comes with the age, self acceptance of one’s own age and acceptance of the fact that all things must pass; nothing in this world is forever”.

Eros and Thanatos used consciously in one’s professional life

The actress uses her emotions in a voluntary way while acting on the stage. Eros and Thanatos fuel her acting consciously in a formal, educated form: “If the script concentrates on a type of sexuality, it is obvious that my fundamental base point is in my Eros, the way in which I express it, how I bring it up front on the stage, how I feel myself sensually”. Regarding

Thanatos: “there is an energy. The thought [of Death] creates in you an energy, and you transmit fear [...]; in my mind there is fear [...]; the idea is that it can be a drive for me, as an actor, to create, move, act and speak on the stage”.

Theme 2. The Trance of Creation as a Self Therapy

The unexpected result of this study was not that the artists go into a trance while creating artworks, but the fact that they are aware that this trance of creation has the capacity to heal trauma, failures and frustrations from the past. Moreover, artists use this trance to reframe their perspective and/or emotions, to move their psyche toward balance. “When I paint, I usually separate; it is good to separate from this world. As a matter of fact, you have a relationship, a dialogue with the canvas”... “I create a wall between the outer world and myself. It’s as if I transported myself to another world in which there are all kinds of scenes, mostly from the past, a sort of imaginary past, characters clearly defined whom I know, dialogues that happened and were not supposed to happen and what would happen if these dialogues took place differently [...] it’s like the surrealism of the Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s “Little Prince” – there are all kinds of travels in the past but not exactly in a past that really happened but a modified past”.

The trance is a trance of rebuilding the past, a trance of change, of reframing, of different integration of artist’s memories and exploration of the possibilities of parallel worlds if a word, a dialog, an act were changed. These parallel worlds are ones that heal tensions, conflicts, even traumas that have remained unconscious. The resemblance to the process of psychotherapy is amazing. It does not matter that something happened in the past nor that the past cannot be changed; the unconscious does not know about time frames. What matters is the emotional reflection of something that hurt so much in the past. That reflection can be changed while living in that parallel world.

“For me, the process of painting is a way to heal the wounds, frustrations and complexes [...]; these pile up on every person ... we live in a society full of all kinds of rules, laws that we have to obey... each one is a sort of a Rubicon you have to go through, overcome and surpass. The human being is not a mechanism, [...] it is a being much more complex and not an eternal one. We wear off faster than a mechanical body. And a mechanical body doesn’t have a soul. So a machine cannot acquire complexes. Or a machine cannot be offended. Because we are very fragile human beings we are exposed to all other factors. When I paint, and I am human, I am exposed to these factors. Willingly or not, even if I don’t show it, I consume myself, as every human being. [...] What is painting for me? It is a sort of escape from problems, an attempt to escape from this system with which I

don’t always agree, from these rules, laws, from those wounds that life has brought on me or which were brought by everyday life”. The trance of creation comes with catharsis, the healing of wounds as well as purification from misery and illness:

“In painting I escape; there, I find a place where... a spring where I start to immerse myself and the process of painting is like a cleansing in the spring [...], I go there to recover myself”. The writer uses the trance with the same purpose as self therapy, building a “might-have-been” parallel universe in which even he is different. “[...] there are faces of myself, part of my life, not necessarily from my personal, lived, happened history but from my life as it could have been; maybe it won’t ever be that way, but these are parts of me, of my inner reality, so to speak. They are expressions of another part of me, of another me, especially since I wrote most of my stories in a near to trance state of mind”.

Subtheme. Expressing, self-discovering and overcoming oneself through the act of creation

The subtheme associated with the trance of creation is linked with the artist’s expression, self-discovery, and overcoming of own limits through art. The painter says: “Everybody is searching for themselves. [...] When I paint I express the child within me”. Expressing oneself is not enough; it is necessary for this expression to be communicated and received. An emotion that was transferred to the buyer brings contentment and satisfaction: “[...] if you feel that you, as an artist who has been raised and educated, could leave behind something that stirs emotions in the eyes of someone who looks at the painting and in his/her soul... s/he receives something in their soul, then I feel a great happiness”.

The designer feels joy and contentment when he/she pushes their limits through creation, too. This process of evolving boosts one’s confidence: “...and the “addiction” that occurs in your creation... the moment when you are content, you feel that you have given all you could, that’s joy. It’s about surpassing your own limits: the moment you like what you have made, you gain confidence, and you demonstrate that it could be done this time, too; practically, it is overcoming barriers. And all of this comes as a revelation [...]. Creation is spiritual evolution”.

For the actor, all of her roles were ways to discover herself: “[...] the first question during the first acting class was why we came there. I have kept this idea with me to this day: to know myself. All plays in which I perform, all projects I do, not necessarily [performing] ... and dance and anything else, any way of expression is to know myself, to know that I like this and I don’t like that and this is how I move forward. [...] I have learned to be present”.

At the end of this theme one can notice that there are remarkable similarities and differences between the artists' acts of creation and art therapy. Both use artistic expression as a way of healing; the differences are that in art therapy the focus is placed on the process, while the object of creation does not matter too much. As an artist, creation has significant importance – see how much it means for the painter to see that his/her painting has successfully communicated an emotion to the watcher. In art therapy the session can take a couple of hours, while in the case of artists the process of creation lasts all of their lives. The scale of magnitude of the creation process is very high for artists. Art therapy can produce things to hang up in the kitchen or in a room, with the purpose of reminding the former client about the positive feelings he or she experienced during the art therapy session. Artistic creations end up in collections, masterpieces end in museums and the main issue is that they are meant to transmit to the public the emotions of the artist, a part of his/her soul.

Theme 3. Irrational beliefs specific to the artist and internalized cultural patterns

This study revealed that each artist has central irrational beliefs, deeply rooted in their unconscious mind. These beliefs resemble the dysfunctional postulates from Beck's theory of depression. But for artists, these beliefs can be dysfunctional for their state of mind but quite functional in generating creations. Other irrational beliefs could be both functional for the mental health of the artists and for the process of creation.

In the case of the painter, I asked him "what is the significance of the fact that in your paintings there are no people"? After 30 seconds of silence he said: "In the world as I see it, the game, this geometry that I present to the public... [matters]. You know, the place of man is important, but I don't know why it should be part of that composition. I don't know, from my point of view, to tell you the truth, sometimes he doesn't deserve to be [present], [because] he destroys everything. Along with the fact that I am fascinated with the work of man, the man of the future, the human being is very cruel, very damaging. The enemy of man is man himself. That's why I don't see the place of the human in my paintings, you know"? We see the irrational belief, a postulate like the one above: that man doesn't deserve, because he breaks, he is cruel, he is damaging and he is his own enemy. So what does the painter do? He eliminates people altogether from his paintings. Why does the painter have this belief? This is the task of the therapist, not the purpose of this study.

The actress has her irrational beliefs: "today people are meeting for reasons that are not human, not for pleasure... We meet each other for coffee; I don't want anything from you, you don't want anything from me. It

seems to me that these people meet each other... I don’t mean that I have met real things because I didn’t live in the 1800s... when people didn’t meet each other ... this is at least my understanding, that people met only to socialize, to exchange ideas, not to exchange businesses”. The irrational belief is that people, under the pretext of socializing, meet now only to do business, not for pleasure or for humanitarian issues: they have a hidden purpose. So people wear masks; they are not authentic. This belief interferes with her way of expressing her identity; she hides behind masks, role plays, becoming a conceptual chameleon in the sense that she doesn’t fight for her ideas but instead becomes defensive, submits and adopts others’ ideas for the purpose of being accepted socially or in the group.

This belief is most probably a projection: in order to adapt to life one has to be false, wear masks. Where can one perfect this way of adaptation? Of course, they can become a professional actor in order to learn to wear a mask professionally for the rest of their life. When I asked her what she learned about herself after all this time, she answered: “I found that I am a very emotional person, very fatalistic, anxious, sometimes very false and superficial. [...], the best way to be with people is to be false, socially. [...] I don’t adapt well socially, so I put on a mask and then I am who I am not, in that moment”.

The designer has an irrational but functional belief: “I will not disappear after death, but I will transform”. The functional part is that this is the way in which she resolves the anxiety of death. The writer possesses an irrational, optimistic but functional view about his life and relationship with God: “After kicking my ass, God took me in his arms”. This is the way for the writer to maintain his positive attitude regardless of past traumatic events. With respect to integrated social patterns, some artists have a dilemma whether or not to include “dark” emotions and symbols in their creation. Their moral values forbid them to use people as their own garbage bin. Here we have moral issues interfering with expressing negative emotions through their art. The ceramist said, “I don’t think it’s of any use to express my fears, revolts and other [negative] stuff. [...] when I was not in such a good mood, I didn’t want to transmit it to others”.

The leather craftsman said, “I make things to give people pleasure, not things to squeeze them. I don’t think there’s a sense of transmitting to others, the dark parts and struggles. I think that what you can transmit is the beautiful. [...]; people want things to relax them, enlighten them; they don’t much seek the tenebrous”. The moral issues and their inner definitions of art can create cognitive dissonance; on one hand it is good to transmit only positive emotions through art, and on the other they know great artists who have transmitted all emotions, positive and negative. So somehow, eliminating the negative emotions in their artwork because of moral grounds

prevents them from being true artists, and being true artists prevents them from being moral: "I fit more in with the decorative field, so they can't place me in the category of artists but in one of an engineer, craftsman" (feeling uneasy, moving in his chair). These irrational beliefs and the internalized cultural patterns have had an influence on the creative behavior of the artist; the artist can express or forbid himself/herself from expressing themselves through creation.

Discussion

The results confirm most of the theories regarding the process of creation. The exception is that the study showed that sublimation can come from Thanatos, not only from Eros. As a consequence, the Nietzschean theory suits sublimation better than the Freudian theory. It was neither confirmed nor infirmed that sublimation, since part of Eros transforms into a non sexual object and so the balance between Eros-Thanatos is destroyed, leaves the way open to Thanatos to affect the psyche of the creator (as Freud's interpretations and analysis concluded on sublimation). It is hard to measure the energy level of both of these drives before and after sublimation to conclude towards one hypothesis or the other.

What was confirmed was the healing power of the process of creation on the artist. What was not confirmed was the healing power of the object of creation on the public, because the study had as subjects only creators, not receivers, not subjects from the audience but the public. The process of creation is a mechanism of defense against the Eros. But, what was unexpected in the study was that sublimation came from a real obstacle from the real world that stands in the way of direct gratification. In the author's initial view, the obstacle was deep down in the psyche, at the level of the unconscious, acting as a permanent barrier to Eros. The research showed that sublimation occurred when a very real fact obstructed immediate gratification. The process of creation is a mechanism of defense against the anxiety of one's own death, and when this process occurs at the conscious level, it is a mature way in which death can be accepted, along with surviving through one's own creations.

The stages of the process of creation described by Anzieu (2004) were found, including the less evident stage when there is a conflict between the Ideal Ego and the Superego. The Creator is in a trance, but he is not totally unconscious; the Superego brings order, makes expressing the Ideal Ego in the real world possible. The painter said: "the hand works but this doesn't mean that everything I place on the canvas is something chaotic. It doesn't mean that in that moment I was unconscious".

The studies referring to the link between schizotypy and creativity could not be confirmed or infirmed. This qualitative study did not come up

with theories for a general field but tried to explore the phenomenon within a narrow field. The level of schizotypy from the subjects of this study was not assessed. The existentialist approach of Yalom in therapy was confirmed as efficient: during the process of creation the artist ruminated the idea of his or her own death sufficiently enough that, in the end, with maturity, acceptance occurs as well as the integration of one’s own death. The idea of creation as a way to increase the resilience to adverse situations could not be confirmed or infirmed. No subject was exposed to near-death physical trauma in his/her past, so the study could not explore that idea.

Limitations of the study

With respect to the one who did the research, there is a limit of the author’s own personal experience. Regarding the subjects, there is still concern for the small number of subjects involved in the study. Two more subjects from four to six did not reveal any more themes, but who knows what additional subjects could bring, so a larger number of subjects could offer more reassurance regarding the issue of saturation. Moreover, a critic could consider as limits the subjects’ defensive attitude, the avoidance response and the insufficient maturity of some subjects. Another issue with this study is that it is a mixture between a grounded theory of qualitative research and a case study research. The author could have stripped the study of quotes from the subjects and presented only the themes and the theory that emerged from the exploration, but it would have been a dry, not very interesting study. The quotes from the subjects, followed by an interpretation, give this study “flavor”, which the author considered important for readers not involved in the field of psychology. This study can be continued on creative subjects of different ages: young, mature, elderly; on creative subjects from other fields within art, i.e. music, architecture and, perhaps most interestingly, on subjects who are creative in the field of science.

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