
Schizophrenia, Modernism, and the “Creative Imagination”: On Creativity and Psychopathology

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ABSTRACT: In this article, I consider the relation between creativity and the schizophrenia spectrum of personality and mental disorders in the light of differing notions of creativity and the creative process. Prevailing conceptions of creativity in psychology and psychiatry derive from romanticist ideas about the creative imagination; they differ considerably from notions central in modernism and postmodernism. Whereas romanticism views creative inspiration as a highly emotional, Dionysian, or primitive state, modernism and postmodernism emphasize processes involving hyper-self-consciousness and alienation (hyperreflexivity). Although manic–depressive or cyclothymic tendencies seem especially suited to creativity of the romantic sort, schizoid, schizotypal, schizophreniform, and schizophrenic tendencies have more in common with the (in many respects, antiromantic) sensibilities of modernism and postmodernism. I criticize a book by psychologist Jamison (1993), *Touched With Fire: Manic–Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*, for treating romantic notions of creativity as if they defined creativity in general. I also argue that Jamison’s denial or neglect of the creative potential of persons in the schizophrenia spectrum relies on certain diagnostic oversimplifications: an overly broad conception of affective illness and an excessively narrow conception of schizophrenia that ignores the creative potential of the schizophrenia spectrum.

No one who wishes to understand the relation between creativity and the schizophrenia spectrum of personality and mental disorders can ignore the empirical findings of the last 15 or 20 years. Impressive studies by Andreasen (1987; Andreasen & Glick, 1988), Jamison (1989), Richards and Kinney (Richards, 1998; Richards & Kinney, 1990; Richards, Kinney, Lunde, Benet,

& Merzel, 1988), Schuldberg (1990), and others have demonstrated a strikingly high correlation between affective disorders or propensities and various indexes of creative potential or achievement, along with an often surprisingly low association of creativity with schizophrenic conditions (Andreasen & Powers, 1974, 1975; Richards, 1981, 1993). The import of this work is not, however, immediately obvious. Perhaps even more than is usual in psychological or psychiatric research, considerable critical reflection and theoretical analysis is required to clarify the implications of these empirical findings and place them in proper context.

Creativity is not, after all, the most unproblematic or transparent of theoretical constructs. Despite the surprising confidence of some psychologists and psychiatrists who write on the topic, it seems unlikely that the term *creative* refers to a single, underlying essence or that its application can be separated from culturally determined and socially generated forms of interpretation and evaluation. It is not that a definition is so difficult to formulate. The cognitive and experimental psychologist Martindale (1989) averred that the creative process in poetry, science, and virtually all other domains is “really the same thing,” and he defined the creative product in terms of three essential attributes: “It must be original, it must be useful or appropriate for the situation in which it occurs, and it must actually be put to some use” (p. 211). This seems fair enough, as far as it goes. However, on reflection one suspects that Martindale’s definition may only push the problem

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back a step or two. For what, after all, is the criterion of being “put to some use” (of usefulness or appropriateness), of innovativeness or originality? Can these features be readily defined? Are they not themselves highly context bound, taking on real definition only in light of the varying viewpoints and values of individuals and communities on which they depend?¹

I am particularly concerned with how the recent research can be used, indeed to some extent already has been used, to support a purely deficit view of schizophrenia, a condescending, sometimes denigrating attitude that sees schizophrenia, the prototypical form of madness, entirely in terms of the loss of higher or more quintessentially human capacities of mind and spirit. Madness has long been seen as irrational. In the past, however, this was often compensated by acknowledgment of a special wisdom available to such persons or of the ready access they supposedly have to the deep, unconscious wellsprings of human imagination (Foucault, 1972). Such a (romantic) vision continues to be associated with the affective psychoses (Jamison, 1993). However, in the rather neo-Kraepelinian climate of contemporary psychiatric thinking, schizophrenics are said to lack not only reason but creativity and imagination as well.²

In the following sections, I consider four issues. In “Notions of Creativity: Romanticism and Its Legacy,” the longest section of this article, I examine the concepts of creativity that have prevailed in Western culture at large, at least until fairly recently, and that have been dominant as well in psychology and psychiatry. Far from being universal or inevitable, these concepts actually have a fairly specific lineage in the history of European thought. The prevailing view is one that came to dominance with the romantic movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It is a view that understands creativity in organicist, holistic, and emotivist terms, as a spontaneous rather than deliberative or mechanical process, a process that operates under the impulse of feeling and that seeks to heighten the

¹Consider, in this regard, some of the bizarre concoctions produced by schizophrenics, who may build peculiar assemblages or invent imaginary machines. Certainly, these concoctions can be innovative or original; clearly, the patients find them useful and will sometimes put them to some kind of use. If one wishes to deny that these are truly creative, other criteria, probably involving external consensus judgment, will have to be introduced.

²Actually, this is a view that has been common since the Enlightenment (Foucault, 1972).

vital sentiment of being by overcoming the felt separation between person and world, mind and body, thought and emotion (Abrams, 1971, 1984).

One may well expect such a vision of creative process to overlap less with the characteristics of schizoid, schizotypal, or schizophrenic individuals—with their sense of inner fragmentation and their lack of attunement with emotion and the social world—than with the temperament and cognitive style of persons who suffer from affective disorders or who have a predominantly cyclothymic or cycloid temperament. The latter sort of temperament is described in the classic work of Kretschmer (1925) as characterized by spontaneity, ready emotional reactivity, and a harmonious sense of unity (*syntony* is Bleuler’s, 1922, term) both with the world and within the self.

In “Modernism and Postmodernism,” I consider, more briefly, some alternative visions of creativity or aesthetic worth that are prominent in 20th-century modernist and postmodernist movements. (I employ *modernism* and *postmodernism* in accord with standard usage in art history and literary studies: The former term refers to the formally innovative, often avant-gardist, art and literature of approximately the first half of the 20th century, and the latter refers to cultural and artistic developments largely occurring after World War II; Sass, 1992, pp. 417–418.) In “Madness and Modernism: Affinities Between 20th-Century Culture and the Schizophrenia Spectrum,” I look at the nature of schizophrenic and schizotypal conditions in relation to these latter concepts or visions, pointing out a series of close affinities or parallels between these types of psychopathology and modernist forms of creativity. By this point, some widespread assumptions about both creativity and schizophrenia are questioned, thereby opening up new possibilities for thinking about their relation.

In “Explanations of Schizophrenia,” I examine some prominent explanations of schizophrenic consciousness from contemporary cognitive psychology and brain science, showing that these accounts are compatible with my emphasis on forms of hyper-reflexivity and alienation akin to modernism and postmodernism. In the final two sections, I consider some limitations of previous empirical research on schizophrenia and creativity in the light of these various issues and suggest some new ways of understanding the potentially creative aspects of schizophrenia spectrum conditions. I focus on interpretations put for-

ward in an influential book by the psychologist Jamison (1993): *Touched With Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*. After discussing diagnostic considerations in "Evaluating Recent Research: Diagnostic Issues," I turn to broader issues concerning concepts of creativity in "Evaluating Recent Research: Conceptions of Creativity." As we shall see, the modernist and postmodernist orientations appear to have much in common with the schizoid, schizotypal, or schizophrenia-like sensibility. An understanding of these orientations, which are strongly antiromantic in spirit, can help one to recognize and to appreciate the particular forms of creativity that are characteristic of persons in the so-called schizophrenia spectrum of personality types and mental disorders.

Notions of Creativity: Romanticism and Its Legacy

What is the relation between creativity and the schizophrenia spectrum of personality types and mental disorders? The question needs to be examined in light of the diversity of what is liable to be considered creative in different fields of endeavor, media, genres, stylistic traditions, cultural settings, and historical epochs. Like the concept *game*, that of creativity seems likely to be an instance of what Wittgenstein (1953) called a "family-resemblance concept," a grouping based on an open set of overlapping similarities or shared features, no one of which need be present in all instances of the category. What merits the honorific term *creative* will vary according to the context of production and the perspective, largely culturally determined, in which the product is seen, interpreted, and judged.

To deal with all the relevant forms of diversity would require more space than is available in this issue. Particularly important, however, is the profound dependence of contemporary notions of creativity on conceptions of the "creative imagination" that crystallized in European (especially English and German) romanticism in the first decades of the 19th century, a tradition that viewed the poet or artist as both the paradigm of creative endeavor and the epitome of human worth (Engell, 1981). The romantics' notion of what they called the "creative imagination" is associated with an expressivist conception of art, as opposed to the mimetic or didactic conceptions that had been more common in previous centuries in the West or the

objectivist conceptions that came to prominence with 20th-century modernism (the latter involving a focus on the artwork itself rather than its message, audience, or inspiration; see Abrams, 1953).

In the romantic view, aesthetic experience requires achieving several things: a sense of unity between self and world, temporary escape from the self-conscious ego and consequent liberation of the vital organic forces of instinct and emotion (e.g., "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," Wordsworth, 1800/1957, p. 321), and a sloughing off of conventional schemata of perception and understanding. These optimal conditions for aesthetic experience were generally seen as characteristic of early childhood; to experience them was, therefore, to return to an earlier and more primitive condition of grace.³

The glorification of the primitive and the instinctual is especially clear in Wordsworth (1977), who tended to presuppose a polarity between nature, understood as signifying all that is instinctual, emotional, and spontaneous, and art, understood in the special sense of signifying what is studied and deliberate, the product of self-conscious intellectual control. Although Wordsworth did not reject altogether any role for the ego, secondary process, or more mature psyche, he usually relegated these to a subordinate and inferior plane (Abrams, 1984, p. 126). In Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, conscious revision is described as "the very littleness of life ... relapses from one interior life that lives in all things" (p. 165).

Coleridge (1907) subjected Wordsworth's polarization of nature and art to a sustained critique. Coleridge, who was profoundly influenced by such German writers as Schiller (1966), spoke not of an alternation but of an intimate integration of psychological processes that are more and less primitive, more and less controlled. In this way, the natural and the artificial blend into a "higher third" with "an interpenetration of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose" (Coleridge, 1907, p. 50).⁴ Coleridge argued that one can no longer oppose nature to art or to mind

³The following paragraphs overlap somewhat with Sass (1994b), which contains a more extensive discussion of the romantic assumptions inherent in psychoanalytic theories of creativity and art.

⁴Emotion itself cannot, for example, be conceived of as a mere passive outburst, according to Coleridge (1907). To be aesthetically useful, it has to be "voluntarily encouraged and kept up for the sake of that pleasure" that derives from the creation of "forms and figures of speech" (p. 50).

once one understands nature itself in an appropriately organicist fashion, as a domain not merely of blind or mechanical forces but of spirit and purpose. Coleridge nevertheless argued that the greatest poetry “still subordinates art to nature” (p. 12). He may have rejected Wordsworth’s tendency to treat mind and purpose as antinatural. Yet, like Wordsworth and virtually all the romantics, he was acutely aware of the devitalizing effects of self-consciousness and self-constraint: Like a tree that grows purposively but unconsciously, creative thoughts and perceptions needed to germinate spontaneously, without the deadening intrusion of rational, critical, or distancing self-awareness (Abrams, 1953, p. 205). Coleridge (1907) also considered a certain Dionysian element to be a *sine qua non* for creative expression; he agreed with Wordsworth that poetry “does always imply passion” (p. 56) and that all successful figures of speech had to be based in emotional states.

In his attitude toward childhood, Coleridge (1907) resembled Wordsworth (1977) and many other romantics. The proper goal of art, in Coleridge’s view, is

To give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind’s attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us. (p. 6)

Both Wordsworth and Coleridge saw childhood as the time when such conditions were fulfilled and maturation as alienation from this state of grace. Both poets glorified childhood for its freshness of sensation and also for its greater sense of union, both within the self, where intellect and emotion were not yet sundered, and between the self and the world, where a quasimystical sense of participation prevailed. According to this romantic view, art recreates the original oneness from which maturation is a falling away.

Romanticist notions of creativity and the arts remain influential, not only in contemporary psychoanalysis, psychology, and psychiatry but also, more broadly, in the public mind and in more traditional and mainstream areas of artistic and literary endeavor. Accordingly, the most prevalent views of artistic experience and expression continue to emphasize the central role of developmentally primitive, irrational, and impassioned modes of experience. The creative core of aesthetic creation and perception is widely assumed to involve a regression or shift backward or downward to forms of consciousness having one or more of several key qualities:

ready access to emotional, instinctual, and sensorially concrete modes of experience; a heightened sense of fusion between both self and world and signifier and signified; and freedom from the rationality, conventional rules, and intellectual categories of everyday or scientific modes of awareness. In a classic formulation of this vision of creativity, not just in art but in all fields, Koestler (1967) spoke of the

Temporary relinquishing of conscious controls [that] liberates the mind from certain constraints which are necessary to maintain the disciplined routines of thoughts but may become an impediment to the creative leap; at the same time other types of ideation on more primitive levels of mental organization are brought into activity. The first part of this sentence indicates an act of abdication, the second an act of promotion. (p. 169)⁵

According to the psychoanalyst Kris (1964), “ego regression (primitivization of ego functions),” which requires “relaxation ... of ego functions” and involves “a greater proximity to the id” (pp. 253, 312), is a necessity for any sort of creative or aesthetic experience. In similar fashion, the aesthetician Ehrenzweig (1967), who combined psychoanalytic ego psychology with Kleinian object-relations theory, believed creativity to be “closely related to the chaos of the primary process” (p. 35). Writers in the tradition of psychoanalytic object-relations theory stress the reevocation in aesthetic experience, whether of creation or of appreciation, of states of quasimystical union rooted in the symbiotic phase of infancy or else of the somewhat more mature forms of symbolic connectedness characteristic of transitional objects (e.g., Bollas, 1978; Fuller, 1980; Milner, 1978; Spitz, 1985).⁶

In emphasizing the primitive, the instinctual, or the spontaneous, most psychoanalytic writers do not deny that more advanced, mature, or rational forms of consciousness also play a role in the production and appreciation of art. Even classical psychoanalysis recognizes that the creation of a work of art (like that of a dream) must include secondary elaboration, the unconscious but ego-dominated process whereby raw in-

⁵Jamison (1993) quoted a very similar passage from Koestler on pages 103 and 104 of her book.

⁶According to the psychoanalyst Rose (1980), the “‘source’ of aesthetic form arises in the fluid boundaries of the child’s primary narcissism, now autonomously flexible in the adult;” the artist is a person who “keeps resampling the early undifferentiated stage of psychological development” (pp. 15, 92).

instinctual fantasies are, partially in the interest of disguise, recoded and given a semblance of rationality. Similarly, Kris (1964) emphasized the necessity that aesthetic regression be “in the service of the ego,” and spoke of “a shift in psychic level, consisting in the fluctuation of functional regression and control” (pp. 253–254). Still, most theorists do associate the truly inspirational, productive, or generational element of the aesthetic process with regression to more primitive layers of consciousness, whereas they see more mature, secondary-process modes as serving the subordinate functions of selection, elaboration, or formal smoothing. Whenever symbols have aesthetic force, wrote Kris, they are evoking the resources of the primary process; although he conceded in one essay that artistic creation may not always derive from inspiration, Kris insisted that all art of high quality will have this kind of regressive source (pp. 59, 255).⁷

Similar views appear to be only slightly less prevalent among psychologists and psychiatrists outside the psychoanalytic tradition. Thus, in a review chapter on “Personality, Situation, and Creativity,” Martindale (1989) took the relation between creativity and regression for granted, stating that primary process states of consciousness are a necessary element for all creative activity (see pp. 215, 226). Even the behavioristically inclined psychologist Eysenck (1993) associated creativity with a weakening of “higher centers” and a consequent disinhibition of lower and more primitive functions of the mind and brain (p. 341). The romanticist inflection is especially obvious in Jamison’s (1993) eloquent book, *Touched With Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*, in which the “tumultuous passions” of Lord Byron are presented as the very paradigm of creative activity. “From virtually all perspectives,” wrote Jamison (with considerable exaggeration), “there is agreement that artistic creativity and inspiration involve, indeed, require, a dipping into prerational or irrational sources,” an ability to regress to earlier, more primitive levels of mental life to “summon up the depths,” and to experi-

ence the “sheer force of life” that is inherent in a passionate emotional existence (pp. 103–104, 113, 116; see also p. 52).

To Jamison (1993), the seasonal cycling of manic-depressive illness suggests heightened affinity with the periodicities of the natural world that brings the artist “closer to the fundamental pulse of life” (p. 129; compare Abrams, 1984, pp. 126ff). She defended an organicist-vitalist vision of creative imagination while espousing Wordsworthian ideals of reunion with nature as the route to creativity and a heightened sense of life. Without denying the contribution of more mature or nonregressive modes of consciousness, such theories stress, as the productive or specifically aesthetic aspect, those psychological processes that derive from and resonate with key characteristics of the young child (viz., emotional and instinctual vitality and immediacy, freedom from rational and realistic constraints and categories, or lack of differentiation from objects and other persons).

It is important to recognize that despite their prominence, such conceptions of aesthetics are by no means universal or inevitable; indeed, they are largely the product of a particular historical epoch, an epoch whose influence on the less avant-garde areas of contemporary culture is, however, still profound enough to make its assumptions seem virtually self-evident, thus invisible. The regression view does apply rather well to a great deal of art from the last two centuries or more, much of which actually inspired, or was inspired by, the organicist and expressivist ethos of romanticism or closely related postromanticist trends. However, to conclude that the regression view is adequate as a general theory of art or of creativity in all its forms betrays a lack of historical perspective. Preromantic, neoclassical aesthetics, for instance, was far more rationalistic in important respects, stressing the importance of rules and advocating a “pleasingness” based on the achievement or perception of verisimilitude in accordance with certain ideal standards of harmony, proportion, and rational order. Irrationality, spontaneity, the passions, and a sense of union with the ambient world have, in fact, been far less central in most of the conceptions of aesthetic experience that have been dominant both before and after romanticism (Abrams, 1953; Becker, 2000–2001).

Modernism and Postmodernism

For over 100 years, many of the most influential and innovative artists, writers, and critics have been sharply

⁷Some later psychoanalytic theorists, such as Noy (1978, pp. 743–744), have portrayed creative consciousness as a more intimate synthesis, a “new entity” in which primary and secondary, or instinctual-affective and rational-realistic, processes would operate simultaneously. Still, for Noy (1984/1985), “the most interesting ability of the creative individual [is] the ability to enrich his secondary-process cognition with techniques and strategies derived from the primary process” (p. 430).

critical of the organicism, personalism, and emotivism central to the romantics, with their valuing of nature, emotion, and spontaneity over calculation and self-consciousness and their yearning to overcome the Cartesian division of subject from object. Neither Baudelaire nor Mallarme, the key protomodernists of the 19th century, considered spontaneous, irrational processes of free fantasy to be the key to artistic creativity. Baudelaire emphasized instead the role of dispassionate deliberation, conscious craft, and an alienated stance; he placed artifice above nature in his hierarchy of aesthetic worth and praised the dandy's "unshakable resolution never to be moved" (Abrams, 1984, p. 135, pp. 109–144). Mallarme called on the poet to cede his initiative to words, that is, to eliminate his own personal and emotional contribution and signature by standing back and letting words clash and interact like objects independent of the poet's intentions: He called for "*la disparition elocutoire du poete, qui cede l'initiative aux mots* [the elocutionary disappearance of the poet, who cedes initiative to the words]" (as cited in Abrams, 1984, p. 138). Both were precursors to the sometimes virulent antiromanticism of T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, and Wyndham Lewis, influential formulators of a modernist aesthetic that recoiled from (what they saw as) the mushy emotivism and personalism inherent in the pathetic fallacy of romantic subjectivism, which Hulme described as "the state of slush in which we have the misfortune to live" (as cited in Bate, 1952, p. 561; see also Schwartz, 1985).

It would be naive to take modernist antiromanticism completely at face value or to deny all continuity between these two periods (see Kermode, 1971; Rajan, 1980). Still, there seems to be a fairly sharp difference between romantic yearnings for unity with the world, heightened emotional arousal, and intense personal engagement and the modernist preference for isolation, coolness, and detachment (see Abrams, 1984, pp. 109–144). Some of the psychological processes that can be involved in these modernist developments are especially clear in the writings of the formalist critics who were allied with the Russian futurist movement. Shklovsky defined art as "defamiliarization," and the Czech formalist critics spoke of "deautomatization" (Jameson, 1972, pp. 50–51). They all saw the essential role of art as to overcome the numbing of perception that occurs with habituation. Unlike the romantics, however, most modernists did not associate this renewal with a return to early childhood; they advocated instead

the adopting of a highly detached, often fragmentingly analytic or microscopic perspective on the world. The latter involved a stripping away of all normal affective, practical, or cultural associations of objects, which come to be viewed instead in terms of their mere existence or abstract geometrical form or to take on a curious and tantalizing, pseudo-allegorical quality in which meanings seem to be suggested yet can never be attained (Sass, 1992, pp. 62–67).⁸ An early illustration of some of these trends can be found in the weirdly precise, yet disconcerting cityscapes painted by the protosurrealist artist Giorgio de Chirico. De Chirico himself brilliantly described the mood state and worldview that inspired his paintings and is evoked in the viewing of them:

Day is breaking. This is the hour of the enigma. ... One bright winter afternoon I found myself in the courtyard of the palace at Versailles. Everything looked at me with a strange and questioning glance. I saw then that every angle of the palace, every column, every window had a soul that was an enigma. ... And then more than ever I felt that everything was inevitably there, but for no reason and without any meaning. ... Above all a great sensitivity is needed. One must picture everything in the world as an enigma. ... To live in the world as if in an immense museum of strangeness. (as cited in Jean, 1980, pp. 5–6, 8–9; discussed in Sass, 1992, chap. 2)

Antiromanticism is, if anything, even more prominent in so-called postmodernist art and theory. Such thinkers as Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man and such artists as Marcel Duchamp (a major precursor of postmodernism) and Andy Warhol (perhaps the key postmodernist figure in the visual arts) seem to have banished every vestige of romanticism, rejecting any aspiration toward the ideals of authenticity or unity of the self, passionate spontaneity, intense personal engagement, or immediacy in one's contact with the world. "I want to be a machine," said Warhol (as cited in Hughes, 1984, p. 48). Many of his works, such as the silk-screened photographs of the aftermath of automobile accidents and other disasters, have a deliberately flat, derealized, and affectless quality. In line with modernist trends, these artists and critics tend to view forms of alienation or ironic detachment, often accom-

⁸Many instances of this perceptual stance may have something in common with what Prentky (1989) described as the "C-type" attentional style (i.e., concrete type, a potentially misleading label), a style that involves constriction of the attentional field and that is commonly associated with schizoid-like symptomatology, including blunted or flat affect or withdrawal (see p. 263).

panied by intense self-consciousness or a kind of relativistic speculation, as the key element of significant aesthetic achievement. Included among the targets of the postmodern critique is, in fact, the very notion of creativity itself, a notion that in its prevalent, postromantic incarnations, is criticized for overemphasizing the notions of spontaneity, originality, and individual genius.

Madness and Modernism: Affinities Between 20th-Century Culture and the Schizophrenia Spectrum

I have focused on differing notions of creativity. To address the possible relation between creativity and the schizophrenia spectrum, it is necessary to consider as well some differing conceptions of the latter forms of psychopathology.

Some influential views of schizophrenia and related disorders, prominent in most schools of psychoanalysis as well as in radical antipsychiatry, have seen these disorders as involving regression to a primitive and essentially Dionysian state, to infantile forms of irrationality and symbiotic union or an overwhelming by the polymorphous passions of the id (Sass, 1992, pp. 1–23).⁹ (Schizoid and schizotypal individuals have been seen as having a special propensity for or vulnerability to such regression.) Given such a view, those who assume the romantic view of the creative process may well expect schizophrenia to undermine the capacity for formal shaping or editorial pruning (secondary-process consolidation) but, at the same time, to facilitate the more central, inspirational moments of creative work because the latter supposedly require more primitive, chaotic, and affect-ridden forms of consciousness. It is this primitivist or Dionysian view of schizophrenia that has, in fact, been adopted by most theorists who emphasize the potentially creative aspects of this psychiatric condition.

The primitivist or Dionysian vision of schizophrenia has never had universal acceptance, however, and, in recent years, has been receding in influence—with good reason. Although such a vision of madness

may apply to certain phases of hypomania or manic psychosis, it utterly fails to capture the distinctive features or overall qualitative “feel” of either schizoid, schizotypal, or schizophrenic existence. The most salient features of these latter conditions are not, in fact, overwhelming by the passions or a recovery of primal unity but an almost opposite set of characteristics: flattened or peculiar affect, apathy, withdrawal, or seeming indifference to real-world events, a general sense of inner disharmony or discordance, what the psychiatrist Eugene Minkowski aptly termed *loss of vital contact with reality*, and, finally, delusions and hallucinations with an ineffable yet distinctive quality of bizarreness (see Parnas & Bovet, 1991; Sass, 1992, 1994a).

In mainstream American and British psychiatry, most of these just-mentioned features are closely bound up with the so-called negative symptoms, a set of features, including alogia or poverty of speech (decline in the fluency and productivity of thought and speech), avolition–apathy, flattened affect, and anhedonia, that have increasingly come to be seen as defining features of schizophrenic disorder. These so-called negative symptoms are frequently understood in quantitative rather than qualitative terms, as defect or deficit states involving a straightforward loss of higher or more complex psychological processes or capacities that occurs in the course of a dementing process fundamentally akin to senile dementia. Such a defect or deficit, conceived in this way, would indeed seem incompatible with imaginative production or sophisticated forms of mental life, so it is not surprising to find that those who adopt such neo-Kraepelinian views are inclined to deny the creative potential of schizophrenic individuals. However, it is important to realize that rejecting the Dionysian and primitivist visions of schizophrenia need not force one to adopt this purely deficit view. Indeed, there are serious grounds for doubting the adequacy of concepts and distinctions on which the neo-Kraepelinian, deficit view is based.

Various critics (Parnas & Bovet, 1994; Sass, 2000) have questioned the aptness of what may be termed the purely negative, deficit-oriented understanding of negative symptoms. As they have pointed out, the positive–negative distinction actually plays rather uncritically (and nondialectically) on commonsense notions of presence and absence and increase and decrease and often involves the assumption that the absence or infrequency of some overt normal behavior must derive

⁹This view, common in psychoanalysis, was also held by J. Hughlings Jackson, the 19th-century neurologist who has had a profound influence on psychoanalysis, neurology, and psychiatry (Sass, 1992, pp. 377–382).

from some dearth or deficit within the person, when in fact these symptoms can often mask psychological processes of a rather complex and sometimes at least quasi-willful sort (see also McGlashan, 1982).

It is true that as a general rule, schizophrenics tend to perform more poorly, often more slowly, than normal individuals on a wide variety of tests of cognitive functioning; this, however, is not always the case; on some tests their performances can be superior (Chadwick, 1997; Sass, 1992, p. 415). Also, as Bleuler (1950) noted, it is all too easy to make the mistake of assuming ignorance or incapacity when one is really encountering indifference, negativism, or reluctance to think, which can make patients profess ignorance or give random answers. The mistakes schizophrenics make (unlike those of patients with organic dementia) do not, in fact, closely correlate with the difficulty of the task: A patient who fails a simple problem of subtraction will, a moment later, solve a much more complex arithmetic problem with ease (Bleuler, 1950, p. 72). Also, “whenever the patient has an earnest aspiration, he shows himself capable of making exceptionally sharp-witted and complex deductions to achieve his desired ends” (Bleuler, 1950, p. 77).¹⁰

The German phenomenological psychiatrist Blankenburg (1971/1991) devoted an important volume to the analysis of what would now be termed *negative-symptom schizophrenics*. He argued that the central feature of their mode of experience is a loss of the sense of the taken-for-granted background of natural evidence, of obviousness or self-evidence, that guides the action and experience of normal individuals. Although in one sense a loss or deficit, this often leads to a hypertrophy of attempts to cope in a self-reflexive and intellectual fashion. In two books, *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* (Sass, 1994a) and *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (Sass, 1992), I addressed this set of issues in some detail, in a way that illuminates their relevance for issues of aesthetics, creativity, and imagination.

In *Madness and Modernism* (Sass, 1992), I argued that the anomalous and often dysfunctional experience and actions of persons in the schizophrenia spectrum are not, in fact, best understood as either primitivity or dementia. They are better seen as manifestations or

consequences of a pervasive alienation or detachment from the lived body, the emotions, and the social and practical world that is combined with types of introversion involving hyperintense and often dysfunctional forms of self-consciousness. Similar forms of alienation and hyperreflexivity are also characteristic of the modernist and postmodernist sensibility, where they have been extensively studied. I argued that central phenomena of schizophrenia can best be grasped by comparison with these analogous cultural expressions. (For my purposes, the postmodernist style and sensibility is best seen as a further development and, in some respects, an exacerbation of the hyperreflexivity and alienation central to the modernist art of the early 20th century. See Sass, 1992, pp. 29, 417–418, for more extensive discussion of the relation between modernism and postmodernism.)

There are seven interrelated features of the modernist and postmodernist stance that closely parallel the modes of experience and expression typical of schizophrenia-spectrum individuals (Sass, 1992, pp. 28–39); all can be seen as manifestations of hyperreflexivity and alienation:

1. *An adversarial stance*: This is a tendency to defy authority, to flout or ignore convention, and, in general, to go against the grain of natural habit. Schizophrenics have been described as manifesting a devious perversity and as adopting the path of most resistance, traits more than slightly reminiscent of what has been termed the *adversary culture of modernism*, where the only constant is revolution itself, the constant injunction to be different or to “make it new” (in Ezra Pound’s famous phrase; quotations in Sass, 1992, pp. 30, 110).

2. *Perspectivism and relativism*: This sometimes results in a disconcerting or dizzying effect as one perspective collapses rapidly into the next. What is particularly characteristic of modernism and postmodernism is a shifting or fusion not of objects but of perspectives; this is akin to what has been called the *fluidity, slippage, or contaminatory quality* of schizophrenic thinking and perception, a tendency that can be distinguished from the combining of objects of perception or thought that is more characteristic of patients with affective disorders (see Holzman, Shenton, & Solovay, 1986; Sass, 1992, pp. 119–147).

3. *A certain fragmentation and passivization of the ego*: This is a loss of the self’s sense of unity and con-

¹⁰This paragraph is taken from Sass (1992, p. 24).

trol and of its capacity for voluntary action or effective interaction with the objective world. Analogous phenomena occur in many of Schneider's first-rank symptoms of schizophrenia (Mellor, 1970) and may also be implicated in the apathy and withdrawal so often found in schizophrenia.

4. *Loss of the "worldhood of the world"*: This is a phenomenon that manifests itself in two distinct ways. The external world may come to seem devoid of value and significance for the observer, a sentiment expressed in Sartre's (1964) *Nausea*, Camus's (1953) *The Stranger*, and various works by Robbe-Grillet (1965). Alternatively, the world may seem subjectivized and unreal, as exemplified in Woolf's (1919/1984) image of separate human consciousnesses as mutually isolated canopies of light or in Bradley's statement that the whole world can be "regarded as an existence which appears in a soul" (as cited in T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland") and hence is "peculiar and private to that soul" (Eliot, 1934, p. 74; Sass, 1992, p. 280). Schizophrenics, too, can lose the sense of the meaningfulness of the world, as when visual objects shed their aura of familiarity or practical valence and stand forth as what one patient called "geometric cubes without meaning" (Sechehaye, 1970, p. 33). In their more chronic or withdrawn periods, they may experience the world as private to themselves, even as depending on themselves for its very existence. As one patient put it: "The world must be represented or the world will disappear" (Jaspers, 1963, p. 296; see Sass, 1992, pp. 268–323; Sass, 1994a).

5. *Rejection or loss of the sense of temporal flow or narrative unity*: This is in favor of more static or timeless ways of organizing the world, the latter involving what the critic Frank (1968) termed the *spatial form* found in many works of modern art and literature. Similar transformations of lived time or narrative flow in schizophrenia were described by Minkowski (1927), who spoke of the "morbid geometrism" characteristic of schizophrenic experience and expression.

6. *Forms of intense self-reference*: These forms foreground the formal structures or underlying presuppositions of thought, action, or expression, usually at the expense of more normal worldly commitments and concerns. The central impulse of modern art, wrote the art critic Greenberg (1973), is "the intensification, almost the exacerbation of [the] self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant," a cultural tendency "to turn around and question [one's] own foun-

dations" (p. 67). Analogous tendencies are manifest in the hyperreflexivity, self-questioning, and often dysfunctional intellectualizing of schizophrenia (see Blankenburg, 1991; Sass, 1992).

7. *Extreme and pervasive detachment or emotional distancing*: This is sometimes accompanied by a pervasive, often disconcerting kind of irony. It is exemplified in modern art by the all-encompassing meta-irony of Marcel Duchamp or the "umour" of Jacques Vache, who was a key influence on Andre Breton and surrealism (Sass, 1992, pp. 35–36, 421). Similar tendencies can underlie the flatness and incongruity of affect found in schizophrenics, who will often manifest a peculiar facetiousness, antagonism, or mockery, and who may be prone to a kind of laughter that suggests a sense of being set apart from, or above, all normal forms of human interaction (Blankenburg, 1991, p. 181; Sass, 1992, pp. 108–115).

The aforementioned are seven parallels or affinities, pertaining, in each case, to characteristics that are fairly distinctive of schizophrenia or the schizophrenia spectrum and that would be far less common among affective disorder patients. The existence of these parallels may help to explain an observation made by Jaspers (1963, p. 733; 1977, p. 200), namely, that a remarkable number of schizophrenics have had a significant influence on Western culture since around 1800, whereas hardly any such individuals seem to have been of comparable importance in earlier centuries.

Explanations of Schizophrenia

So far I have remained on a descriptive level, listing affinities in the structure or formal aspects of consciousness and expression in the domains of madness and modernism. If we examine some prominent hypotheses that attempt to explain the special nature of schizophrenic or schizophrenia-like consciousness, whether from cognitive psychology or neurobiology, these too may seem to suggest a particularly close affinity with the modernist or postmodernist sensibility.

One influential neurobiological approach to schizophrenia is the *hypofrontality hypothesis*, the idea that schizophrenic signs and symptoms reflect or derive from a lowered activation of certain parts of the prefrontal cortex. Originally, hypofrontality was interpreted in ways consistent with the views of the influen-

tial neurologists J. Hughlings Jackson and Kurt Goldstein, that is, as indicating a decline of higher intellectual capacities and also of inhibitory functions along with a concomitant release of lower functions associated with affect, instinct, and archaic memory and as being associated with a general decline of higher functions involving the capacity for abstraction (Goldberg, Weinberger, Berman, Pliskin, & Podd, 1987; Weinberger, Berman, & Zec, 1986). However, more recently, the main proponents of the hypofrontality hypothesis describe the pattern of brain activation rather differently (Weinberger & Lipska, 1995): as being associated (both as cause and as consequence) with an inability to engage effectively in controlled, sustained, and self-monitored forms of practical activity coordinated with external cues, possibly in conjunction with disturbances of working memory, or with a predilection for withdrawal from such activity. (The latter propensity or inability could, incidentally, be associated with exaggerated tendencies toward ideational speculation, the latter being manifest in hyperactivation of some of the posterior lobes; see Sass, 1992, pp. 388–390.) Such a pattern could be seen as the neurobiological equivalent of the propensity for extreme detachment and withdrawal that is so characteristic of modernism, in which it is personified in the poet Valéry's (1973) imaginary character and alter-ego Monsieur Teste (literally, Mr. Head), a personage Valéry described as a "monster of isolation and peculiar knowledge" (p. 30), an "eternal observer" (p. 119), a "severed head" (p. 110), and a "mystic and physicist of self-awareness, pure and applied" (Sass, 1992, p. 260).

Another prominent hypothesis postulates dysfunction or attenuation of the neurobiologically based feedback system that allows a person to recognize that a given thought or action was performed willfully or intentionally (Frith & Done, 1988). This offers a very direct way of accounting for the typically schizophrenic self-disturbances captured in Schneider's (Mellor, 1970) first-rank symptoms of schizophrenia, including the experience of thought insertion and the sense that one's own actions or sensations are not under one's own intentional control but are somehow imposed on one from without. Attenuation of such feedback may also help to bring on the disengaged and observational states of mind that the poet Mallarme and other writers of an antihumanist persuasion have considered to be necessary for true poetic inspiration, for creating what

Mallarme (1951) described as the work of art that "in its complete purity implies the disappearance of the poet's oratorical presence," in which the independent clash of words replaces "that respiration [of the poet] perceptible in the old lyrical aspiration or the enthusiastic personal direction of the sentence" (p. 366; Sass, 1992, p. 198).

Among the most prominent neurocognitive hypotheses concerning schizophrenia are a family of closely related theories that focus on the perception of novel stimuli and the use of past experience for the categorization and control of ongoing cognitive-perceptual processing. All of these theories postulate abnormalities of frontal as well as temporal lobes of the brain (especially the hippocampus and related areas) or of tempero-limbic connections between these areas. The deficit or anomaly of schizophrenic consciousness at issue has been described variously as a difficulty with "probability prognosis" (Polyakov, 1969; Sass, 1992, p. 127), as a dysfunction of the (hippocampally based) "comparator" system (Gray, Feldon, Rawlins, Hemsley, & Smith, 1991), or as a defect of "working memory" (Goldman-Rakic, 1991). Disturbance of probability prognosis or of the comparator system affects one's ability to register or assess the degree of expectedness of a given stimulus and would result in a tendency to respond to old or trivial stimuli as if they were new and startling. Disturbance of working memory could have similar effects; this factor also seems well suited to explaining the schizophrenic tendency to shift or drift between different frameworks or orientations toward thought and experience (Sass, 1992, pp. 129–134), given that a difficulty in holding information online for current processing would undermine one's ability to maintain a steady set or framework of understanding. The slippage of context that results from a less stable working memory may have some affinities with the kaleidoscopic shifting of perspective that occurs in some modernist and postmodernist art.

An altered functioning of working memory, probability prognosis, or the comparator system does not constitute a mere deficit of cognitive functioning; it can also confer advantages. As the research of the Russian psychologist Polyakov and his coworkers have shown, the schizophrenic person's failure to let his or her thinking be channeled by habitual expectations can actually result in superior performance on certain cognitive tasks because it makes such a person more open to unconventional ideas and creative solutions

(Ostwald & Zavarin, 1980, p. 83; Polyakov, 1969, pp. 376–382; Sass, 1992, p. 127).¹¹ In addition, this may give the schizophrenic a special affinity for the aesthetic of radical innovation and discontinuity that is characteristic of modernist and postmodernist art, an aesthetic illustrated by the peculiar juxtaposition in the line from Lautreamont (from *Les Chants de Maldoror*) so beloved by the surrealists: “beautiful as the chance encounter, on a dissecting table, of a sewing machine and an umbrella” (Short, 1980, p. 74), or by the startling shift that jolts the reader at the start of Eliot’s (1934) “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” where the evening is described as being spread out across the sky “like a patient etherised upon a table” (p. 11).

Each of these three cognitive hypotheses (disturbance of working memory, comparator system, or probability prognosis) can also provide a way of accounting for the distinctive combination of passivity and activity in what may be termed the *modernist stare*, the perceptual stance in which a person desists from applying normal, action-oriented perceptual schemata to experience even as he or she adopts a highly focused (and in this sense active) mode of hyperconcentration that transforms the world into what the influential protosurrealist, de Chirico, once described as “a vast museum of strangeness” (Sass, 1992, pp. 43–74). When actions (and action-oriented perceptions) are frequently performed, they tend to become automatized. This leads to a numbing of perception, to a form of categorical perception in which recognition is so dominant that it precludes any possibility of revelation. To overcome this numbing, it is necessary to destroy not memory itself but all the ways memory usually provides an implicit framework, an omnipresent, constantly updated set of expectations or schemata that channel and domesticate our perceiving. Interestingly enough, de Chirico, who was himself a markedly schizoid individual, emphasized precisely this aspect of memory in a description of a (quintessentially surrealist) frame of mind that he associated with both creativity and madness. He wrote of Schopenhauer’s definition of the madman as:

¹¹This affinity may also be understood in a neo-Bleulerian, associationistic fashion (on creativity, see Eysenck, 1993; on schizophrenia, see Spitzer, 1993, regarding the tendency toward distant association in schizophrenic persons). I am dubious, however, about the ability of these essentially associationistic accounts really to capture the relevant phenomena.

A person who has lost his memory. It is an apt definition because, in fact, that which constitutes the logic of our normal acts and our normal life is a continuous rosary of recollections of relationships between things and ourselves and vice versa.

... But let us suppose that for a moment, for reasons that remain unexplainable and quite beyond my will, the thread of this series is broken. Who knows how I might see the seated man, the cage, the paintings, the bookcase! ...

The scene, however, would not be changed; it is I who would see it from a different angle. Here we meet the metaphysical aspect of things ... which can be seen only by rare individuals in moments of clairvoyance or metaphysical abstraction, just as certain bodies that exist within matter which cannot be penetrated by the sun’s rays, appear only under the power of artificial light, under X-ray for example. (Chipp, 1968, p. 450)

Evaluating Recent Research: Diagnostic Issues

In the last two sections, I consider some recent research findings mentioned at the outset of my article, work that demonstrates a strikingly high correlation between mood disorders and various indexes of creative potential or achievement, along with a surprisingly low correlation of creativity with schizophrenic conditions. I devote my remarks to the most widely read and influential recent interpretation of this research, Jamison’s (1993) *Touched With Fire: Manic–Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament*. Jamison’s book is not primarily concerned with the creativity–schizophrenia connection, but in it she draws strong conclusions not only in favor of an affective disorder–creativity association but also against any association between schizophrenia and creativity: “As we shall see, virtually all of the psychosis in creative individuals is manic–depressive rather than schizophrenic in nature” (p. 60). Her conclusion is highly dependent on some unstated and controversial assumptions about the nature of both psychopathology and creativity. In the next (and final) section, I address the relevance of romanticism, modernism, and postmodernism. In this section, I examine Jamison’s deployment of certain diagnostic or nosological concepts.

In *Touched With Fire*, Jamison (1993) said little about the ambiguities or controversies pertaining to the differential diagnosis of disorders in the schizophrenia as opposed to the affective spectrum. Because her book is directed to a broad and largely nonprofessional audience, avoidance of such apparently technical issues is under-

standable. Still, this does have a seriously misleading effect. It obscures the extent to which her conclusions and inferences derive not from empirical findings alone but from definitions and conceptual presuppositions that are far from being universally accepted. The first of these assumptions is Jamison's implicit acceptance of a neo-Kraepelinian view of schizophrenia as a "dementing illness" akin to Alzheimer's disease (see p. 96).

Given current knowledge (and given a certain fluidity in definitions of schizophrenia), such a view can certainly be defended, but it is by no means established or even generally accepted. The assumption of inevitable, progressive decline is contradicted by the long-term outcome studies of Harding (Harding, Zubin, & Strauss, 1988), Bleuler (1978), Ciompi (1980), and others, whereas the assumption of an essentially irrational condition involving dementia-like deficits in higher cognitive functions is countered by a considerable amount of research as well as close clinical observation (Chadwick, 1997; Cutting, 1985; Sass, 1992). It is obvious that a reader who unwittingly accepts this neo-Kraepelinian portrayal as simple fact will be primed to accept the denial of creative potential to schizophrenics and, perhaps, also to those who resemble them (residents of the schizophrenia spectrum of disorders). At the limit, in fact, such a conception generates a near tautology: It may be assumed that if someone is creative, he or she cannot (*ipso facto*), be schizophrenic or, at the very least, must be creative entirely in spite of his or her schizophrenia.

The second nosological assumption I criticize is Jamison's (1993) adoption of an exceedingly wide notion of affective psychoses and an excessively narrow definition of schizophrenia, along with neglect of the important concept of the schizophrenia spectrum.

Oddly enough in a book of this nature, Jamison (1993) completely ignored the intermediary category of schizoaffective illness and also failed to mention either schizoid personality or the contemporary concept of schizotypal personality disorder, which most experts view as a *forme fruste* of schizophrenia (the same is true of Jamison's, 1990, chapter on creativity and eminence in Goodwin & Jamison, 1990, pp. 332–368).¹² Jamison

¹²The index of Jamison's (1993) *Touched With Fire* contains entries neither for *schizoaffective illness* nor for *schizotypal* or *schizoid personality disorder*. I found no references to these disorders either in this book or in her chapter on creativity in *Manic-Depressive Illness* (Jamison, 1990).

seemed, in fact, to accept something very close to the extreme position (influentially stated by Pope & Lipinski, 1978, 1980) that tends to deny or downplay the existence of any distinctively schizophrenic symptoms and considers almost any sign of mania or depression (in nonorganic, psychotic conditions) to imply a purely affective diagnosis. Such a view has been attacked by critics who dispute the Kraepelinian dichotomy of schizophrenia versus affective psychosis (see Liddle, Carpenter, & Crow, 1994) as well as by critics who have argued that some affective symptoms, particularly depressive phases secondary to psychotic illness, are almost an inevitable accompaniment of schizophrenic disorders (DeLisi, 1990). This position was also contradicted by careful studies that demonstrated distinct patterns of formal thought disorder in schizophrenia as opposed to manic or depressive conditions (Holzman et al., 1986),¹³ and studies that have shown certain kinds of hallucinations and delusions, the so-called first-rank symptoms, to be more characteristic (although not pathognomonic) of schizophrenia (Hoenig, 1984; O'Grady, 1990; Sass, 1992, p. 492).

The extremism of Jamison's (1993) diagnostic approach is apparent in her treatment of the playwright August Strindberg. She was correct to dispute the previous writers who have diagnosed him as schizophrenic (p. 60), but Jamison stated without qualification that Strindberg suffered from affective psychosis (pp. 112, 234, 340), not mentioning the possibility of schizoaffective illness, a diagnosis that more adequately accounts for some schizophrenia-like features in Strindberg's clinical presentation (see Jaspers, 1977). Even stranger is her unexplained categorization of both Friedrich Holderlin (p. 267) and Antonin Artaud (pp. 60, 248, 267) as having suffered from affective psychoses. A schizoaffective diagnosis could perhaps be defended in both these cases (although I think it rather dubious in the case of Artaud). A purely affective diagnosis is not, however, consistent either with

¹³Jamison (1993) criticized the traditional belief that certain forms of thinking or speaking are distinctive of schizophrenia (p. 59). In *Touched With Fire* (e.g., p. 107), she cited work such as that of Holzman et al. (1986) but did not mention that these researchers did find certain qualities and features that appeared to be quite specific to schizophrenic as opposed to manic or normal cognition, namely, certain forms of fluid or contaminatory thinking or perceiving. (The latter point is acknowledged in Jamison, 1990, p. 251.) On the creative potential of these typically schizophrenic types of thought disorder, see Sass (1992), chapters 4 and 5.

the largely unremitting course of illness or with the distinctly schizotypal or schizophrenia-like symptomatic presentation of these writers (regarding Holderlin, see Stierlin, 1977; regarding Artaud, see Sass, 1996). Jamison's inclination to treat the presence of affective symptoms as ruling in an affective diagnosis (rather than, say, treating schizophrenia-like features as tending to militate against such a diagnosis or, at least, against a purely affective as opposed to schizoaffective diagnosis) clearly has the effect of increasing the apparent overlap of creative tendencies and affective conditions.

As I noted earlier, Jamison (1993) made no mention of personality disorders in the schizophrenia spectrum, such as schizotypal disorder as defined in the recent editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (e.g., American Psychiatric Association, 1994) or the (admittedly broader) Bleulerian concept of the schizoid or the Kretschmerian concept of the schizothymic type. It is well known that such persons can have prominent depressive symptoms as well. The cases of Franz Kafka and Charles Baudelaire are instructive. If one reads either the writings or the biography of these writers in the light of Kretschmer's (1925) eloquent description of the *schizothymic* personality type, one can hardly doubt that both writers do fall into the schizoid or schizothymic category (a *schizothyme* is a person with mild schizoid traits; Sass, 1992, pp. 79–88). Both suffered from significant periods of depression, and doubtless their creative productivity and general aesthetic orientation was potentiated and otherwise channeled by their periods of affective disturbance. However, it is also clear that central features of their aesthetic sensibilities and creative productions (not to mention their depression itself, which is not unconnected with their schizoid isolation) were bound up with aspects of their schizothymic temperament and schizoid set of defenses (e.g., with the paradoxical combination of hypersensitivity and coldness or of yearning and disdain for intimate contact, as well as with sheer unconventionality of perspective, that are characteristic of such personalities).

In one study of nearly 300 world-famous men, schizoid, schizotypal, and paranoid dispositions were quite common (Post, 1994; also see Chadwick, 1997, pp. 15–16). A number of studies have demonstrated certain similarities in the cognitive styles of creative individuals and of schizophrenics (Hasenpus & Magaro, 1976; Prentky, 1980), for example, in the ability to imagine nonstandard or divergent uses for a common

object such as a brick (Keefe & Magaro, 1980; Sass, 1992, pp. 124–134).

In her discussion of creative individuals, Jamison (1993) concentrated almost exclusively on depressive and manic features; she totally ignored the schizoid character and schizotypal cognitive style of certain individuals and dismissed the schizophrenia-like features of their psychotic or near-psychotic periods. Obviously, it is no easy task to weigh the relative contributions of these different aspects of an individual's temperament and psychological functioning. Clearly, however, there is no reason to associate a person's creativity entirely with affective tendencies rather than with underlying character traits or cognitive propensities that, in some instances, have a schizotypal or schizophrenia-like quality.

Now let us turn from issues of diagnosis to the conceptions of creativity that are implicit in Jamison's perspective.

Evaluating Recent Research: Conceptions of Creativity

As I noted before, a striking feature of the romantic conception of creativity is the glorification of the artist or poet as the epitome of the creative imagination. Artistic creativity was especially admired by the romantics because, unlike apparently more cerebral activities such as physics or philosophy, it so clearly evokes emotional reactions and demands an intensely personal form of engagement that overcomes any polarizing of participant from object. To the extent that artistic pursuits do indeed fit this characterization, persons with cyclothymic tendencies or manic–depressive traits may well be expected to be overrepresented in artistic pursuits, especially as compared with persons with schizophrenia or schizotypal characteristics.

The argument for the affective–creativity connection does appear to be strongest for the creative arts (and perhaps especially for literature; see Post, 1994, p. 31), which is the main focus of Jamison's (1993) book. By now it should be clear, however, that we cannot assume artistic creativity to be a homogeneous psychological capacity or process that transcends differing cultures, epochs, styles, or media. It is significant that Jamison's sample of literary figures (e.g., p. 292, note 30; Jamison, 1990, pp. 342–346) is dominated by persons from the last three centuries who seem to fall into

an admittedly broad definition of the romantic tradition, one that includes not only Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Blake but also such (in some respects) protoromantic figures as William Cowper (1731–1800), Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774), Thomas Gray (1716–1771), and Thomas Chatterton (1752–1770) and such writers in a post- or late-romantic tradition as Lord Tennyson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Delmore Schwartz, John Berryman, and Robert Lowell.

In one study of the occurrence of mood disorders and suicide in poets, Jamison (1993) examined information concerning major British and Irish poets born between 1705 and 1805 (see p. 61), a cohort whose creative productivity overlapped considerably with the period of romanticism, whose heyday was circa 1780 to 1830. One wonders how different the results might have been if there had been more focus on such neo-classical writers as Pope, Addison, or Dryden;¹⁴ on such protomodernist figures as Mallarmé and Flaubert; or on some of the key modernist and postmodernist figures whom I mentioned previously (and especially if this were done with the broader definitions of schizophrenia and the schizophrenia spectrum indicated previously). In a careful biographical study, Felix Post (as cited in Chadwick, 1997, pp.15–16) found traits suggestive of schizophrenia-spectrum disposition in W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce, to mention only a few English-language writers.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that so few of

the major modernist or postmodernist artists, writers, or theorists are included in Jamison's list and that those who are included (e.g., Artaud and Strindberg) actually have traits that would argue for placing them in the schizophrenia spectrum.

It seems dubious to assume that the romantic notion of creative imagination captures creativity in general, even outside the arts. On anecdotal, intuitive, as well as theoretical grounds (and on the basis of a small amount of empirical evidence), there is reason to believe that creativity in certain other fields, including philosophy, physics, and other intellectual fields, and possibly also in architecture and engineering (MacKinnon, 1962; Post, 1994), may sometimes be closely associated with schizoid and schizotypal features, a point consistent with Storr's (1972) discussion of the distinctly schizoid personalities of Descartes, Newton, and Einstein.

We must also recognize the culture-bound nature of the ways in which fields or realms of creative endeavor are defined and distinguished. Actually, in many traditional or so-called primitive cultures, art, science, religion, and philosophy are not distinct realms at all; until fairly recently, they were not so clearly separated in the West. Also, when cultures or epochs do distinguish these domains, they often do so in radically different ways. Some work in modern Western literature or visual art deviates dramatically from romantic ideals or resembles work in certain other fields, such as philosophy or other theoretical endeavors; this is the case with conceptualism and certain Dadaist and absurdist trends in the visual and performing arts as well as in the experimentalist fiction and poetry of the *nouveau roman* or "language poetry" schools. One may expect such work to be associated with temperaments or personality types other than the cyclothymic or the *syntonitic* (the latter being Bleuler's, 1922, term for persons characterized by a natural spontaneity and sense of harmonious union with self and world; see Sass, 1992, p. 80). Such a speculation is borne out if one considers the personalities of such persons as Marcel Duchamp, Samuel Beckett, Alfred Jarry, Antonin Artaud, Raymond Roussel, Jean-Pierre Brisset, and Jacques Vache, all of whom demonstrate markedly schizoid or schizotypal or even (in the cases of Artaud and Jarry) schizophrenic characteristics (Sass, 1992).

Although Jamison's (1993) main claim concerned creativity and the artistic temperament, she did hint at an association between mood disorders and creativity in general. At times, she presented findings showing an

¹⁴Jamison's (1990) reference to "the large number of psychotic or severely disturbed poets in the 18th century," which she found "striking in an era designated as "The Age of Reason" (p. 344), could be somewhat misleading, given the predominantly protoromantic qualities of so many of her examples.

¹⁵On Joyce, see Andreasen (1973). Jamison's (1993) treatment of T. S. Eliot is interesting. She cited his famous line about poetry being "not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion, ... not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" (pp. 122–123) as an indication of strong affective tendencies, which he was presumably defending against, rather than as indicating a schizoid personality orientation. It is true that Eliot went on to write, just after the previously quoted lines, "but, of course, only those who have personality and emotion know what it means to want to escape these things." However, by no means does this indicate that Eliot did not have strong schizoid tendencies; schizoid (and schizophrenic) individuals often have strong feelings underlying their appearance of distance or control or of flattened affect. Regarding Eliot's sense of marginality, see Gardner (1993, chap. 7). See Sass, (1992, pp. 76–82, 439–440) on the complex, almost paradoxical combinations of hypersensitivity and coldness to be found in schizoid and schizothymic personalities, a theme emphasized by Kretschmer (1925).

association between psychopathology and creativity in other fields, architecture and chemistry, for instance, as being consistent with her hypotheses, although the type of psychopathology was not specified in the relevant studies (Jamison, 1993, pp. 82–85, 48).¹⁶ The evidence for a more general association of creativity with manic–depressive illness in particular is, in fact, quite equivocal. However, as one can see, such an association is liable to seem especially plausible to a person who takes artistic creativity of the romantic sort as a paradigm, an ideal that other creative activities will tend to approximate.

Another point worth noting is the necessary dependence of all such empirical studies on judgments of creativity and the inseparability of such judgments from prevalent social values, attitudes, and conventions. This is obvious when eminence, worldly success, or public endorsement are taken as the criteria of creativity, but studies that use psychological tests of creativity must also rely on someone's judgment of what is a worthy, interesting, or creative response. Even engagement in so-called creative activities in one's spare time are dependent on social judgments of what counts as a creative activity (e.g., Richards et al., 1988). I neither mean to criticize researchers for using these criteria (indeed, it is hard to imagine how empirical researchers could avoid using criteria such as these), nor do I deny the importance or value of being able to produce work that is of interest to a decent proportion of one's fellow human beings. Still, it is important to recall that what is being examined in such studies is not some timeless or intrinsic essence but, rather, an interaction between a given personality and the milieu in which the person finds him or herself. Two key questions must be asked: What is one actually acknowledging when one applies the epithet *creative* to some product? What, specifically, are the psychological processes or capacities required for such a product to be produced? I take the second question first.

I think it is fair to say that in Jamison's (1993) view, the key contributions that affective disturbances make to creative accomplishment pertain to the inspirational moment; thus, she described mania as tending to liber-

ate and quicken associational processes and melancholia as deepening a kind of tragic vision. Like the good postromantic thinker she is, Jamison treated the emotionally charged moments of creative inspiration as the crucial element, associating these with exaggerated mood states. Although Jamison was fully aware of the need to prune and structure inspirational material, she clearly assigned to this a secondary status, ascribing it to the less affectively charged periods of normal or only mildly depressed mood (see p. 98). However, can we really be so sure that it is a superiority of inspirational capacity that accounts for the higher proportion of persons with affective rather than schizophrenic disorders in Jamison's samples?

We should recall, after all, that success depends in large measure on factors extrinsic to the inherent originality or cogency of one's work, including the ability to promote oneself by networking, the ability to share the concerns of one's audience, and perhaps most important, the instinct to deviate just enough but not too much from social expectations and norms. At most of these tasks, schizotypes and certainly schizophrenics may well be at a disadvantage in comparison with normals and perhaps especially in comparison with many persons with affective disorder. (Recent findings showing that persons with multiple schizotypal signs demonstrated a high degree of involvement in creative activities and that this was especially marked on avocational activities, such as poetry writing and sophisticated photography, may be relevant; see Kinney et al., 2000–2001; presumably, engaging in avocational pursuits, hobbies done for one's own pleasure, does not require either self-promotion or congruence of perspective with a potential audience.)

It is worth recalling Kuhn's (1970) famous distinction between "normal" and "revolutionary" science. The distinction may have relevance beyond the domain of science alone. The normal scientist, in Kuhn's view, is a person who works within a prevailing cultural paradigm, engaging in the puzzle-solving activity of making and verifying predictions and of resolving anomalies in accord with some widely accepted worldview, model, and set of practices and techniques. The revolutionary scientist is the one who postulates a new paradigm, a radically different framework that changes the prevailing rules of the game so radically as to render it incommensurable with earlier perspectives. Although normal scientific work can certainly be creative (here, of course, there will be important differ-

¹⁶Jamison (1993) also went on to suggest a more general association between mood disorders and achievement (pp. 86–88). Incidentally, the category "achievement" would seem to be at least as problematic and as context-dependent as that of creativity.

ences of degree), it is surely less profoundly innovative than the revolutionary kind. What is true in science is true as well in literature and the arts; like scientists, creative artists also differ in the degree to which they adopt and work creatively within prevailing stylistic conventions as opposed to shattering these conventions and recasting them anew.

Various writers have questioned Kuhn's (1970) concept of paradigm, and several have disputed his nearly dichotomous way of separating normal from revolutionary science. Few, however, doubt that his distinction does capture something of importance. For our purposes, Kuhn's ideas have two significant implications.

One implication is to remind us of the degree to which much successful creative work, although not perhaps innovativeness of the highest degree, actually relies on considerable conventionality of perspective (viz., the ability to presuppose and work within traditional frameworks of understanding). A second implication is that there will inevitably be many more normal scientists than revolutionary ones; indeed, if we speak of scientists who have had reasonably successful careers (and if we accept Kuhn's [1970] narrative of long periods of normal science punctuated by more brief-lived crises and sudden change), this last point is true virtually by definition. One should expect, then, that in a broad-based sample of so-called creative individuals, especially those who are successful in the eyes of the world, there will nearly always be a predominance of individuals who are conventional in this specific sense; that is, conventional enough to work comfortably, albeit creatively, within standard frameworks, to do the puzzle-solving and controlled innovation inherent in normal science or in normal art. This raises the possibility that what accounts for the higher proportion of persons with a connection to affective than to schizophrenic psychosis might, surprisingly enough, have as much to do with the greater conventionality of the former as with their superior originality or innovativeness *per se*.

Of relevance is the work, well-known in Europe, of the phenomenologically oriented Heidelberg psychiatrist Tellenbach (1961) on what he called the *Typus Melancholicus* personality orientation or type. As Tellenbach and his student, the psychiatrist Kraus (1977, 1982), argued, many of the persons who have a predisposition to endogenous depression seem, as people, to be extremely preoccupied with and dependent

on social norms and social approval and to have little sense of distance or alienation from social roles. In empirical work, Stanghellini and Mundt (1997; Mundt et al., 1997) found this to be especially true of persons with unipolar depression and with the Bipolar II type of illness. Tatossian (1994, p. 300) and Stanghellini (1997, p. 8) argued that a similar norm orientation is characteristic of many manic individuals, who may well be overtly rebellious yet whose manic self-assertion and occasional iconoclasm actually betrays a remarkable preoccupation with and dependence on social roles and expectations (see also the several psychoanalytic references that Jamison [1990, pp. 284, 312–313, 316] cited but whose significance for the psychology of creativity she downplayed; see p. 313; especially Cohen, Baker, Cohen, Fromm-Reichman, & Weigert, 1954). Kretschmer's (1925) conception of the cyclothymic and Bleuler's (1922) of the syntonetic type have many affinities with these notions of *Typus Melancholicus* and *Typus Manicus*. The originality of such persons may be highly dependent on the way acute phases of mania or melancholia can heighten one's pattern of perception sufficiently, but without transforming it overly much, so that one may be roused out of a more chronic conventionality of perspective that is a more trait-like feature of one's underlying personality style.

Perhaps mania and melancholia should be seen, then, not as a source of radical innovation so much as of a heightening and subtle transmutation of modes of perception that remain reasonably familiar to the majority of other people in the culture. This would contrast with the situation of the schizothyme or schizotype, whose basic orientation tends to be unconventional or even aconventional.¹⁷ (This contrast corresponds, on the nonpsychotic plane, to that between the understandability of affective delusions and the supposed bizarreness of those characteristic of schizophrenia; Jaspers, 1963.) Another difference is that in the case of the schizotype, the move from eccentricity into psychosis or near-psychosis seems liable to fragment or block rather than to potentiate imaginative productivity, or to move it too far off the rails of the

¹⁷One may mention as well the creativity that Asperger noted in certain autistic individuals, people endowed with an intelligence that is "scarcely touched by tradition and culture—unconventional, unorthodox, strangely pure and original, akin to the intelligence of true creativity" (as cited in Sacks, 1996, p. 253).

normal human form of life to lead to much in the way of creative production that will be socially acknowledged. (Overtly psychotic phases of mania or melancholia are also unlikely to be productive, especially if we speak of socially acceptable work, but the less persistent nature of these psychotic periods prevents them from having such a devastating effect on overall creative productivity.)

As Blankenburg (1991) argued, a schizophrenic or schizotypal orientation involves detachment from the world of “natural evidence,” from all that is socially and practically taken for granted by the members of a given society. Blankenburg pointed out that this has some similarities to the process of “bracketing” in Husserlian phenomenology, the act whereby one withdraws commitment from assumptions that are usually so taken for granted as to remain invisible. Through a detachment that, from a psychological standpoint, has a certain schizoid quality, one gains the capacity to free oneself from the constraining perspectives of normal experience. In this way, two things are made possible: explicit awareness of what usually remains tacit and assumed and an opening up to the possibility of alternative perspectives or frameworks. Storr (1972) argued along related lines. He suggested that the capacity to create a wholly new model of the universe that was demonstrated by such figures as Newton and Einstein (the classical examples of revolutionary scientists in the Kuhnian sense) is itself dependent on an ability to detach from conventional perspectives, an ability that can only be achieved by individuals with a predominantly schizoid orientation (see p. 67).¹⁸

Bearing all this in mind, I return now to modernism and postmodernism, recalling two features of these movements mentioned previously: first, an intense self-consciousness, especially about the normally presupposed aspects or features of an experiential world, and second, a constant seeking of radically new perspectives. Modernism differs from previous eras of art precisely by its constant demand for innovation, its avant-gardism, if you will. It is as if in much modernism only art that aspires to be revolutionary in a

Kuhnian sense is acceptable. “Normal” art may not be considered to be art at all but only kitsch, mere academic painting, middle-brow fiction, or the like. The modernist emphasis on rule-breaking tends, paradoxically enough, to normalize radical innovation; this necessarily calls into question its truly radical nature, thereby to some extent undermining the Kuhnian distinction I have postulated. This is but one of many paradoxical features of modernism, which Paz (1974) aptly referred to as “a bizarre tradition and a tradition of the bizarre” (pp. 1–2, as cited in Sass, 1992, p. 30). Much postmodernist art questions the possibility of real innovativeness, recognizing instead our inevitable belatedness, our inability, as it were, not to be quoting whenever and however we speak.

So it seems that, neither in modernism nor in postmodernism, does the Kuhnian narrative truly apply: Either we are in the age of constant crisis, of permanent, even institutionalized, revolution (modernism), or else we are in an age of permanent self-consciousness and ironic mockery in which no single paradigm can provide a structure or background against which normal creativity may take place (postmodernism). Both these orientations are ones for which schizoid, schizotypal, and schizophrenic individuals may seem to have a special affinity and where they would seem to have a better chance of achieving some kind of recognition or acceptance. I do not mean to imply that persons in the schizophrenia spectrum or those with a schizothymic disposition will necessarily be more numerous in certain creative populations than are persons in the affective spectrum or with a cyclothymic disposition; the aforementioned advantages of those in the affective realm (practicality, ability to network, residual conventionality of perspective, etc.) may still be decisive. This does imply, however, that successfully creative schizophrenics, schizotypes, and schizothymes may at least be more common in the modernist and postmodernist periods or contexts than they are in romanticism and postromanticism and that the relative advantage of persons of the affective type of disposition will at least be lessened in the former contexts. (Obviously, the arguments I offer are largely theoretical in nature; to establish whether such predictions hold true would require empirical work that goes beyond the admittedly selective and anecdotal evidence I have presented in this article.)

It would be difficult, in any case, to deny the profound influence on 20th-century modernism and post-

¹⁸See also Kretschmer (1925) on the “predominance of schizothymes [viz., persons with mild schizoid traits] among philosophers, rigid systematizers, and metaphysicians” (p. 245). Kretschmer described such persons as having a “preference for rigid construction, for formalism, the taste for the intangible and unreal” (p. 245).

modernism and its accompanying sensibility that has been exerted by such probable schizophrenics (or, possibly, schizoaffectives) as the poet Friedrich Holderlin, the writer and man of the theater Antonin Artaud, and the dancer Vaslav Nijinsky; by such probable schizoaffectives as August Strindberg and Gerard de Nerval; by such severely schizotypal (or possibly, schizophrenic) persons as Alfred Jarry and Raymond Roussel; as well as by many individuals who appear to be of a markedly schizoid or schizothymic temperament including Baudelaire, Kafka, Joyce, Beckett, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, de Chirico, Salvador Dali, Marcel Duchamp, and Warhol (on Wittgenstein, see Ogilvie, 2000–2001; Sass, 1994a, in press). These writers, philosophers, and artists are (for better or worse) responsible for encouraging some of the most profound innovations of modern art and of modern consciousness, including a rejection of traditional narrative and naturalistic representation in fiction, painting, and the theater; an overturning of standard notions of beauty and the art object; and a revision of widely held notions about the essential unity of the individual ego or self. In none of these instances of innovation can the aesthetic or philosophical contribution in question be said to be a simple consequence of personal characteristics of the author or artist; many other factors are obviously involved, including larger cultural trends that transcend factors of individual personality. Yet, it would be equally naive to think that these innovations occurred entirely in spite of these personal tendencies: After all, in each case, the distinctive contribution does in fact resonate with or reflect one or another aspect of what can be termed the creator's schizoid or schizotypal propensities.

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