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## THE PERSONALITY OF ARTISTS

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IN THE COURSE of a study on the effects of the use of alcohol on the creative process (2), personality studies were made of twenty leading American painters. The sample was limited to males, 38 to 68 years of age, resident in or near New York, and native-born, or residents of this country since their early teens. It was so selected as to include most of the major current styles of painting: traditional, romantic, realist, abstract, modern, surrealist, and social painters. It was also so selected as to include men who could be classed from very moderate to very heavy drinkers. This may have somewhat biased the sample with respect to the incidence of severe maladjustment, but in general I believe it to be representative in this respect of the successful members of this vocational group.

The personality studies are based on material gathered in interviews, on study of the work of the man, and on the results of two personality tests, the Rorschach and the *Thematic Apperception Test*. The technical aspects of these test results are discussed in some detail elsewhere (3). Here it is proposed to discuss the results generally and the implications for testing practice and interpretation. For greater simplicity the two tests will be discussed separately.

The Rorschach method was easily administered to all but one of these men and although a few of them were compliant rather than interested, to most of them it was an amusing task. The one exception was very disturbed at the time. Outstanding among the results is the fact that there is no personality pattern common to the group which is, in fact, extremely heterogeneous both with respect to the total picture and with respect to the use of individual determinants.

The general adjustment level of the men, as reflected by the total score on the Munroe Inspection Technique (1) was also varied, total scores ranging from 3 to 18, with a mean of 10.3. This measure is an extremely satisfactory method for group analysis, and corresponds very closely with the clinical estimate of maladjustment, higher total scores indicating more severe degrees of maladjustment. This measure is not available on other adult male groups so far as is known, with the exception of a group of vertebrate paleontologists who were given the Group Rorschach and whose Inspection Technique scores ranged from 1 to 15 with a mean of 7.7. In college students, Munroe estimates that scores of 10 or over are likely to indicate sufficient maladjustment for difficulties to appear in the college situation.

Detailed results are most easily summed up in terms of choice of location (whole, detail or space responses), content of responses and determinants (human movement, form, color, etc.) used. In the use of locations, the most consistent finding in the group was the common tendency to increased numbers of whole responses. Seventeen of the group gave more than the 20-30 per cent considered average and only one gave fewer than this. In addition, 5 of these subjects had more than 10 per cent of unusual details, and 7 had unusually large numbers of space responses. There were 5 whose succession was loose or confused, that is whose use of different location areas was erratic and without system.

One striking situation appeared in the content of the responses. This was the number of anatomy and sex responses which, even taking into consideration the general sophistication of the group in these respects, was extremely high. There were only five in the group who did not show a noticeable increase in this type of response.

A few group tendencies can be seen in the use of determinants, but no tendency was shown by all members of the group. The per cent of form responses tended to be neither especially high nor especially low. It was surprising, however, that 7 of these artists were noted to have made excessive use of poor or vague forms.

Shading shock, usually mild, was noted for 12 in this group. Six of the group had more than 20 per cent of Fc or form-shading reactions, which is abnormally high.

There were 2 men who gave only one human movement response and 2 who gave none. In addition there were 3 whose human movement responses were restricted, either in terms of preference for parts of the body rather than the whole, or in terms of marked passivity of the movement seen. Both animal motion and inanimate motion were sometimes excessive.

Color shock was present in all but two of these subjects (according to Munroe's criteria which include milder degrees than most). Interestingly enough, the two who did not show it were the two with the lowest and highest Inspection Technique scores; in the latter its absence is a rather serious indication. Eight of these men gave none or only one form-color response, and 5 gave excessive numbers of color-form responses.

Again it should be emphasized that there is great variation in the group, but a few general comments may be made. As a whole, quantitative analysis shows these men to be characterized by above-average intelligence, unusually great use of whole responses, marked prevalence of color and shading shock, and overproduction of responses of sexual content.

In addition, but less generally, there is some overproduction of space responses, some use of loose succession, frequent use of vague or poor forms, diminution in the use of human movement responses with a tendency to excessive movement in general, and underproduction of form-color responses with above-average production of form-shading responses. Prolonged search, however, failed to disclose any "signs" whose presence indicates capacity to function successfully as an artist.

Qualitative analysis brings out other points. For a number of these subjects there are in their Rorschachs no indications of creative ability, as this has usually been estimated. In view of the fact that these men are all at the top of a creative profession this is a very striking finding. Some of the protocols, of course, abound in elements which have been interpreted as indicating creative ability, but so many of them had few or none of these that it seemed important to have another opinion than my own.

For this reason the protocols were submitted for blind analysis to Dr. Bruno Klopfer. His only information about the subjects, other than age and sex, was that they were professionally successful. For obvious reasons, he was not asked specifically about their creativity. His comments amply confirmed my own opinion. It was impossible to delete from the protocols of two of the men remarks that made it apparent that they had some connection with art. Klopfer noted these and added that one was probably a successful creative artist, but that it was likely that with the other it was an avocation since it was so improbable that he could be successful at it professionally. Of the others, he remarked in 5 instances that creative ability was evident (limited in one of the five and probably not usable by another because of neurotic conflicts). In 5 others he remarked its absence, and by inference he remarked its absence in 3 more. Of the remaining 5 he made no comments which would indicate an opinion one way or another, but it is obvious that he was not struck with the presence of such ability.

In short, no competent Rorschacher would have been able to recognize from their protocols that these men are all successful artists. We have, however, long believed that the Rorschach did show "creative" ability. Creative ability, then, may exist without being shown in the Rorschach (or we may recognize some indications of it but not others). The alternative possibility<sup>1</sup> is that one may be a successful artist in our society without having creative ability. The two hypotheses are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and certainly there are not sufficient data at hand to suggest that one is more likely to be true than the other. It seems extremely important, however, to recognize that, whatever the explanation, we are in no position to say to any subject on the basis of performance on the Rorschach that he is incapable of becoming a successful painter. In view of these results it would seem highly desirable to re-examine our theories of creativity and to examine, too, the precise function of the artist in our society.

<sup>1</sup> The possibility that part of the difficulty is the logical fallacy of a shifting middle term must be considered; it may be a factor, but it seems in any case to be a minor one here.

Qualitative analysis also revealed the presence of considerable similarity in members of this group with regard to the nature of their sex development. This was confirmed by the *Thematic Apperception Test* findings and will be discussed following discussion of other results on that test.

The *Thematic Apperception Test* was extremely difficult to administer to this group of men (it was given to 18 of the 20) because of the fact that they were, without exception, so appalled by the poor quality of the pictures, artistically speaking, that they had repeatedly to be recalled from critical comments to the task at hand. This reaction was sufficiently strong that interpretation at some points is difficult. For example, there is generally great curtailment of time reference, attention being largely limited to the immediate moment, with disregard of the past and of the future. It may be legitimate to interpret this at face value, but it must be considered that it was possibly influenced by their critical attitude and by a wish to be through with the thing as quickly as possible. In general, too, they characteristically ignored details, but again one cannot be sure of the interpretation. It is likely that this objection would not be met with in other groups, at least to the same extent, but it is unfortunate that it should enter at all.

Very probably, however, the protocols can be largely interpreted at face value, with only moderate limitations. In general, the information which can be derived from them nicely supplements the Rorschach material and supplies leads to the development of the personality structure seen in cross section in the Rorschach.

It is difficult to discuss group performance on this test, but some group analysis has been made. The great curtailment of time reference has already been mentioned. There are not many unusual stories in the group, although most of the men put in an additional unusual twist here and there. There were 8 "unacceptable" stories, in Rapaport's meaning of the term: stories of homicide, suicide, etc. This is not many in a total of 180 stories (only 10 cards were used for each man). There was only one man who told stories unrelated to the picture. Otherwise there was little out of the ordinary in the content of the stories.

A list of formal characteristics drawn from various sources was made, and the stories were analyzed from this point of view. Eleven of the subjects tended to "overspecification" of events reported in the stories, and 9 occasionally overgeneralized. Nine introduced personal judgments, i.e., expressions of approval or disapproval of the indicated action. Seven subjects referred to events in their own lives which the cards reminded them of; this was most often in response to Card 1, and was probably a way of feeling out the situation. Seven introduced non-existent figures into the stories. Rapaport considers this a serious indication and it may be, in general; in this group it most often occurred on Card 5 where I suspect it is of less import. Seven of them referred to Card 4 as a movie, ballet, etc. This may reflect a tendency to wish to shy away from strong emotional situations of a particular type, which would certainly be in accord with the picture of the group as a whole. On the other hand this is perhaps the "cheapest" card in the group and this interpretation may largely be a reflection of this judgment.

There were a few very common perceptual disorders. The gun in Card 3 was frequently misrecognized or omitted from the story. This accords with the generally non-aggressive character of the group which will be discussed below. On this card, also, the figure was most often taken to be that of a woman. In fact only two of the men took it as that of a boy without any hesitation and both of these had difficulty determining the sex of one figure in Card 10, which also caused difficulty to others. The implications of this are in close accord with implications about sexual development which appeared in the Rorschach analyses.

Almost all of these men, whatever their general personality structure, seem to have a type of social and sexual adaptation which is of a markedly non-aggressive sort, and hence rather more "feminine" than "masculine" according to our cultural stereotypes. It is important to remember that this type of development has not precluded either vocational success or success in social relations, even though many of them may have some difficulties with the latter. At the same time many of them in spite of their unaggressiveness have persevered in their vocation in the face of severe economic and social hazards.

There is no overt homosexuality in this group and the latent homosexual trends are not generally excessively strong. All but one of them are married—a number of them have married several times—and nine of them have children. It is perhaps pertinent that most of them are married to professional women, artists, singers, dancers, who probably have an analogous sexual development.

One problem is whether this type of adjustment is uniquely characteristic of this particular vocational group. It seems clear that this is not so; it has often been remarked, e.g., that such an attitude is characteristic of physicians, and it is my impression that it is also characteristic of scientists, and, in fact, generally of the sensitive, intelligent man who follows more or less intellectual pursuits. How important a factor this may have been in determining the choice of a vocation is not known. It is very possible that intellectual pursuits have become a refuge for men who do not follow the culture pattern in this respect and whose deviation from it is of this sort.

In many respects this pattern seems a richer and socially more desirable one than the "frontier" type which well represents the pattern which seems to be culturally accepted and which clearly lacks a number of social and spiritual values found in the other. Nevertheless, when it is considered that to a large extent our social ideals are developed by the men who follow intellectual pursuits, if only because they are in a better position to express their thinking adequately, and that to a considerable extent our politically active men seem to be drawn from the aggressively masculine type, it is obvious that serious difficulties are inevitable. Further, a man whose own personality does not contain some freely usable aggressive elements is not equipped to deal, even across a council table, with men whose major adaptation is basically an aggressive one.

It would be well worth while to study our cultural stereotypes of male and female emotional development and the actual distribution of these types in our society. It is not certain whether we have in fact one or several abstract stereotypes. To maintain as an abstract cultural ideal a single type from which a high percentage of persons deviate is to in-



sure a high incidence of neuroticism. To maintain several ill-defined and overlapping ideals, accepting one type in some groups or situations and different ones in others, necessarily introduces misunderstandings of a profoundly serious nature. Studies of personality as related to vocation and social status are urgently needed as an aid to an understanding and eventual solution of many social problems.

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