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The Articulation Process in Psychotherapy

The Creative Process of Psychotherapy

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e-Book 2015 International Psychotherapy Institute

Created in the United States of America

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By the Same Author

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The Articulation Process in Psychotherapy

The therapist focuses on form and structure and uses both homospatial and janusian processes to develop understanding and construct particular interventions. Responding to the therapist's guidance and activity, the patient develops insight, resolves conflicts, and works to create new and valuable personality attributes and structure. As 1 have emphasized throughout, in order to engage in this mutual creative process, active choice and selection are necessary. The patient must, at many points along the way, actively choose to adopt a new pattern of behavior, just as the creative artist actively chooses to produce new patterns of form and content and the creative scientist actively chooses new theoretical formulations. Such active selection and choice are cardinal features of a particular factor that operates prominently in all creative processes. This is the factor of *articulation*.

ARTICULATION AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS

In the process of creation in any field, there is a progression from emptiness or disarray to the development of tangible order. Every piece of literature begins with an empty page, every painting starts with a blank canvas, music arises from the absence or obliterating profusion of sound, and scientific discovery from confusion, loose ends, and disorder. Responsible to a large degree for progression to tangible order is the factor of articulation.

Articulation, which technically means simply to join, is a word with a double sense. The articulation or joining of an element with another one produces both a coming together and a separation at the same time. This is demonstrated quite clearly in the common use of the word "articulate." A person described as "articulate" or as an "articulate speaker" is a person who is able to present ideas and words clearly and smoothly. Such a person articulates or joins his words and ideas by bringing them together and keeping them clearly distinct and separate at once. It is in this double sense that articulation characterizes creative processes. These processes involve a constant bringing together and separating, separating and bringing together, throughout their course. This occurs in many different dimensions — conceptual, perceptual, volitional, affective, and physical. Both janusian and homospatial processes are types of articulation. The janusian process involves articulation of propositional ideas; the homospatial process involves the articulation of mental imagery. However, articulation functions throughout creative activity; it includes both processes and follows after them, leading directly to a creative result.

In producing a work of literature or art, as well as in developing a scientific theory, the creative person separates out critical aspects of the material he works with, and he fuses or brings these separated elements together. For example, in Eugene O'Neill's creation of the play "The Iceman Cometh," the metaphoric title of the play developed from a process of

articulation.[1] Conceived by O'Neill from the idea of Christ as an epiphanic bridegroom coming to the virgins (Matthew 25:5-6) and from an old bawdy joke about an adulterous iceman, the iceman cometh metaphor simultaneously brought together and separated out elements of the sacred and the profane, salvation and icy death, sexuality and chastity, marriage and adultery, and other complex factors. On the basis of evidence from manuscripts of the play, several of these factors were in O'Neill's consciousness when he created the metaphor, and some are both felt and comprehended by a thoughtful audience hearing "The Iceman Cometh" as a serious phrase. The fully articulated sense of numerous factors brought together and separated out, however, is only experienced by an audience after seeing or reading the entire play.

As with homospatial and janusian processes, articulation differs from ordinary problem-solving by analogic, inductive, and deductive reasoning. All of these types of reasoning may play a role at some point, but they do not account for the phenomena of making, presenting, and creating that directly result from articulation. In scientific fields, the creative thinker uses ordinary problem-solving modes but approaches large questions in his field by separating out and bringing together key factors underlying controversy and confusion. In the example of Einstein's use of a janusian process in the development of the general theory of relativity, cited in Chapter I, he had separated and brought together, as an articulation, the physical facts and

principles of motion and rest. This step resulted from neither inductive consideration of a series of empirical findings, nor a direct deduction from theory, nor consideration of an analogy. Such processes primarily set the stage for the particular articulating conceptualization and also operated later in the working out of the fully developed theory of general relativity. In a similar way, Niels Bohr's janusian formulation in the development of the principle of complementarity involved the separating out and bringing together of the conflicting elements of wave and particle theories of electron and light behavior.

Articulation in the creative process serves many functions. Its creative function is to produce tangible entities that are new and separate from previously existing entities and, at the same time, are connected to their forebears. Creations always bear resemblance to preexisting natural entities and events, such as Cezanne's resemblance to the Impressionists mentioned in Chapter I. However, they are also separate and *sharply* different in some way. With respect to the natural world, they are separated out and joined to nature rather than being a submerged pan of it. Hence, they are to some extent free both of nature and past events.

In art, articulation functions to produce tangible created products and also has direct psychological functions for the artist himself. Together with articulating an artwork, the creative artist struggles to articulate aspects of

his own inner world. His struggle to articulate on both aesthetic and psychological levels concomitantly produces effects that are important for the emotional appeal of art.

A short and concise example of aesthetic effects of articulation in an artwork is the beginning passage of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. This literary creation manifests separating and bringing together in many ways. The speaker indicates his own uniqueness and separateness from other men —a strangely erudite sometime-sailor who calls himself by the name of the biblical outcast Ishmael — and at the same time indicates his connectedness to all humanity. The language itself is highly articulate—rhythmically clear and distinct and yet flowing smoothly together, e.g., "Whenever I find myself growing grim . . . ; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November." The entire passage is unified and can be appreciated separately and alone, and at the same time it strongly connects and leads into a story to come. Here is the passage:

> Call me Ishmael. Some years ago —never mind how long precisely— having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery pan of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before a coffin warehouse, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hopes get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically

> knocking people's hats off—then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish, Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, sometime or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me.[2]

Note the explication of the speaker's unique and separate way of dealing with depressive feelings and his immediate insistence on a similarity and connection with "almost all men." Although we can only guess at the manner in which this passage was created, and its relationship to the author himself, data I have collected on the creation of a poetic metaphor from a poet research subject is directly pertinent to such matters. It is the metaphor "A mastermind/Kept track above the mantel" in the following two stanzas from a poem entitled "18 West 11th St:[3]

> The carpet —its days numbered —
> Hatched another generation
> Of strong-jawed, light besotted saboteurs.
> A mastermind
> Kept track above the mantel. The cold caught,
> One birthday in its shallows, racked [The weak frame . . .]

The poem is about a house in Greenwich Village where the poet lived as a child and which the Weather Underground organization, in a famous incident, accidentally destroyed in 1971 while making bombs in the basement. The metaphor "A mastermind/Kept track above the mantel" is pivotal in the poem because the "mastermind" is a mirror that allows a

passing through in imagination of both the poet's childhood images and the world of the Weather Underground. The poem took more than two years to create. In articulating this particular metaphor, the poet wrote at least 3 3 versions of the lines. The first version contained no reference to a mantel, but suggested the reflection of another world in a mirror by a reference to a "magic room," as follows:

> Or is it Christmas
> And from the first queen mother evergreen
> Stark with unmelting ornament
> I am running toward a further
> Magic room Jamb and lintel of scarred leaf
> Tilt benevolently forward. From its depths [A little boy is
> running . . .)

The articulation of the final version of the metaphor from this beginning involved dogged and persistent bringing together and separating for the purpose of making and creating. The phrase "jamb and lintel" was brought together several times with the idea of an ideal room in the mirror, then with an idea of a mirror "leaning forward like a matriarch" and next with an idea of "an abstract realm," until the term "*mantel*"[4] was actually separated out and formulated. It developed from superimposition of the words "lintel" and "mantel," in a homospatial process, resulting in the phrase: "The lintel gleams/The magic world above the mantel." After that, the poet proceeded to bring "mantel" and the areas or realms above the mantel together within 15 different variations, e.g., "Above the mantel/A realm of infinite shabbiest

poverty began," and "Another realm began over the mantel/Its catching cold/Glazed the flowers as with sleet." In one of these 15 versions, he returned to the earlier phrase "jamb and lintel" and brought that together with the mantel idea, as follows: "Another realm/Began over the mantel. Jamb and lintel of gilt." Then, the precursor to the "mastermind" metaphor was separated out in the following form: "A mental world/ Began above the mantel." After bringing together "mental world" and "mantel" in six different ways, the poet formulated *"A mental world/Kept track above the mantel."*[5]

The poet made no further changes in those lines for several months, but he continued to work on other portions of the poem. When he hit on the final idea of using "mastermind" instead of mental world, his verbatim description of the process to me was as follows:

> Well, I just thought it ["mastermind") was better than the "mental world" and it connected obviously with "saboteurs." I mean one . . . one imagines behind any plot there is a mind. And to make it the mirror! ... I just turned my attention to that line and . . and then, that came to me. I suppose from the word "mental" it's not so far to get to "mind." *But it seemed to me it was already there, in a way, an embryo in the original phrase*. But in a way obscured by the temptation of rhyme- mental and mantel.[6]

In this final sequence of articulating steps producing the metaphor, the poet had focused on the off-rhymed, i.e., an inexact rhyme, pair "mental" and "mantel." He separated out the idea of *mind*, which, as he put it, was "obscured by the temptation of rhyme" —referring to a poet's tendency to

make and hold onto rhymes. At the same time as he separated out the mind idea, he brought it together with another idea in the poem, the idea of "saboteurs," and articulated the word "mastermind" into the metaphor and the poem. This step also had connections with earlier versions in that "mastermind" is related to all of the following: the "abstract" aspect of "abstract realm"; the "magic" of the earlier "magic world"; the idea of the use of a mirror; and in the "master" aspect, to the earlier "matriarch."

The poet's sense that "mastermind" was already present as an embryo in his original phrase was an apt and meaningful description. He had indeed articulated it from the original phrase and the original idea in several different ways. Through progressive separating and bringing together, he produced a metaphor that joined an aspect of the magic room idea of his childhood to the idea of saboteurs of the Weather Underground organization. Also, although he did not refer to this in our sessions, he separated out the initial consonants of the off-rhymed words, "mental" and "mantel," and, in a final step, joined them into another poetically effective sound similarity. In using "mastermind" with "mantel" he produced both an alliteration of "m" sounds and an assonance of "a" sounds together. On another level, I have reason to believe—from information I have from my previous intensive work with this research subject —that he associated mirrors with his mother (N.B. the early idea of the mirror leaning forward like a matriarch) and that the mastermind idea could readily relate to her intelligence and domination.

Therefore, in settling on the word "mastermind," he articulated an underlying unconscious meaning of the original idea focusing on the mirror. This was not a breakthrough of unconscious material but a gradual unearthing and shaping of what the poet indicated to be "already there."

The final created metaphor, "mastermind keeps track above the mantel," suggests many of these personal and poetic articulations and, in itself, it is an articulated structure. It is unique and stands alone at the same time as it connects to other aspects of the poem. It evokes ideas of the realms of an inanimate mirror (or family portrait) and an animate mind that are separated but also connected to each other. These independent ideas relate to and modify each other and dynamically interact within the whole metaphorical phrase. This metaphor, therefore, is a dynamic and aesthetically effective literary structure that both separates and connects many levels of meaning and of word use, all at once.

Another more extensive illustration from the literary process concerns the creation of a novel by John Hersey.[7] This novel, *Too Far to Walk*, concerns a college student embroiled in a struggle for identity and selfesteem in the America of the 1960s. Caught in a web of rapid value changes and a concomitant sense of unbridled impulses and temptations, he loses interest in his classes and school work and searches for gratification in debasement, sex, and drugs. Much of the novel involves the student's relationship with his

parents. Through a series of scenes involving telephone calls to the parents, a visit home, and an LSD fantasy in which the parents appear, the novel unfolds a complex son-parent interaction. It is the unfolding and development of this interaction that accounts in part for the aesthetic effectiveness of the novel. The son's efforts to cope with his past and to move onward catch us up in the story. These are efforts at what I have described as articulation. In his movement toward freedom and independence, the son articulates his experience and his personality; he attempts to separate himself from those elements in his past and his parents that he finds unacceptable and to clarify and continue those that he accepts. He joins himself to the past, present, and future by both separating and bringing together.

In my work with Mr. Hersey during the course of his writing the novel, in which we systematically discussed the sections as they were written, it appeared that he too was engaged in a process of articulation on both a psychological and an aesthetic level. Thinking about his own sons during the period of time the novel was being written, he alternatively shifted his vantage point between the generations. At various points throughout the process, he sometimes felt himself to be in sympathy with the viewpoint of the son, and at other points he felt in sympathy with the parental view, particularly the view of the father. This meant that a process of temporary and shifting identifications was taking place. In the creation of the father- son relationship, the author alternatively identified with his own sons in relation

to himself as the father, with himself as father in relation to his sons, and with himself as son in relation to his own father. In our discussion of scenes or events in the novel, Hersey indicated connections to his experience as a father, his sons' experience with him, and his feelings about his father or a father-figure.

Also, during the course of writing the book, he made a decision to move to Yale and to a position involving active daily contact with young adult college students, and thoughts related to this move connected to various elements and scenes. This does not mean that the characters in the novel were copied from the author's sons, his father, particular young adults from Yale, or even from himself. On the contrary, they were independent, created characters produced in a process of articulation in which the author attempted to separate and bring together elements from his own past, present, and future relationships. Fueled by his involvement with his sons, his relationship with his father, and his anticipation of his future move, Hersey juxtaposed a father and a son in order to separate out and bring together elements in that relationship. At the same time as he consciously articulated a story, he was articulating some of the unconscious factors in his own relationship with his sons, and in his relationship with his own father. It is this struggle to articulate unconscious factors in the course of the process that accounts for some of the aesthetic power of this novel, indeed such a process seems to relate to this power in any novel. The struggle to articulate is a

struggle to become free of the past; it is a struggle to become independent in the sense of being both separated from the past and brought together in a meaningful continuity with the past. An audience senses this struggle and participates in it vicariously. Contrary to the view of many psychoanalytic critics, it is not the successful appearance (symbolic or direct) of unconscious factors in the work of art that is gratifying to an audience. It is the dynamic process of struggle toward independence and freedom. I say this for many reasons stated elsewhere[8] but will only repeat again here that an author is never very successful in gaining much insight into his own unconscious content when he is creating. This is not to say that he should be; it is merely an affirmation that *artistic* creating is not, in itself, a form of psychotherapy.

From early on in the conception of the novel, Hersey had juxtaposed the father with the son in a significant way. The son is seen as following the father's footsteps. He has enrolled in his father's college and he is taking the same history course with the same professor his father had 26 years before. And the professor still remembers the father and his work! Indeed, it is a particular incident with this professor in the novel that accelerates the young man's anti-academic slide.

In the first face-to-face meeting between son and father in the novel, the son John has brought a young woman home for the weekend, and there is an immediate air of male competition established as follows: "The principal

feature of her costume, drawing John's father's eyes ever down, down, down, was a pair of black patent-leather knee length boots." As the scene at home continues, however, the father is described rather sympathetically and there is a feeling of closeness between the older and younger man.

When writing the first draft of this scene, Hersey had constantly separated the two and also brought them together. This can be seen most clearly in his initial changes and revisions in this chapter, as follows: When the son says his girlfriend is mature for her age, Hersey first wrote a separating phrase for the father's response: "Everything seems to happen earlier these days," but crossed that out and wrote a bringing-together one instead: "I suppose she is (as if something of the sort hadn't occurred to Daddy-O)." Later in the text, at an important point, he described the father as feeling he had to be stern in order to give his son something concrete to rebel against. This sharp separating of father and son he then revised and modulated by writing that the father was "pretending to be" stern, and adding the phrase "How out of character!" In the very next sentence in this scene, he at first described the father as talking together "man to man" with his son, and then changed "man" to "boy" to make it a separating idea of talking together as "man to boy."

In the subsequent major change in the following paragraph, Hersey initially described the father as weak and permissive but after that inserted

the bringing together phrase "until now, John really thought himself wiser than his father." Finally, he ended this chapter by vacillating between a separation and a bringing together of the father and son in these three versions of the son's leave-taking encounter:[9] (1) "Excuse me, Pop (he said, going into his bedroom to dress, leaving the *non-king* staring at himself in the mirror)"; (2) "Excuse me, Pop (he said, going into his bedroom to dress, leaving *his friend* staring at himself in the mirror)"; (3) "Excuse me, Pop (he said, going into his bedroom to dress, leaving the *old man* staring at himself in the mirror)." He started with a description of the father as a *non-king*, a phrase related to an earlier discussion in the chapter of the competitive separation between the two. He changed this to a bringing-together phrase, *his friend*, and ended with the separating reference to the discrepancy in their ages: *old man*.

In the chapter following, the son has an argument with his parents and angrily leaves without saying goodbye. When the author and I discussed these two chapters shortly after he wrote them, he told me that he had felt primarily identified with the son during their composition. At the point when he described the young man leaving in anger, however, Hersey felt that he "resumed the role of the father." He therefore experienced the shifting identifications involved in juxtaposing father and son and articulating their relationship.

Finally, the son decides to take LSD, following which he "sees" himself as in Vietnam along with his father. The father in the hallucinatory experience is the commanding officer of the company and a sniper is slowly killing off their "good" compatriots. The following section, beautifully written and articulated on a verbal level, had been revised several times in the course of the first writing:

> They were moving again. John's eyes roved through the noble woods. There! Ten feet off the ground. In the crotch of a twin-trunked giant—was it a species of beech? *Fagus grandifolia*? In the vee, a roundness. A burl? No! Surely a helmetless head; surely the sniper himself. Word came forward to hold up a minute, the bearers were having it rough. The men stood in fear. John, saying nothing, stared at the tree crotch. Now he felt the familiar onrush of feelings, the flood of everything at once, in every direction. With unprecedented force. He spoke to his father:
>
> —The whole operation is ridiculous.
>
> —We can't help that, son. It's out of our hands.
>
> —Is it really? I mean, that idea gives me a real pain in the ass. Aren't you in charge?
>
> Keep your shirt on, fellow.
>
> As they talked, John felt that he was maneuvering his father. There were some slender saplings between where they stood and the tree-crotch where the round shape was. Stepping aside little by little keeping the talk going so that his father, too, inched sidewise to catch the murmured words, John constantly faced the tree- crotch; his father's body, shielding his own, was placed with its back exposed to the double tree. Now they were in the open. John, his heart on the run, suddenly became convinced that the odd shape was, after all, a queer growth, a burl, perhaps a paper wasp nest But then a whine came ridden hard by a snap.

> As his father fell, with the faintest sign of reproach on his otherwise empty face, John felt such an exquisite pain in his chest that he thought the bullet must have passed through both generations.[10]

The author's decision to include a scene in which the father was, as he later put it, "killed off" was made shortly before he wrote this section. He had planned it neither when starting the novel nor at earlier points along the way. The clarification of the son's impulse to murder the father as a factor in the father-son relationship, therefore, resulted from the articulation of unconscious factors during the course of the writing and the concomitant working out of the novel's plot and of the nature of its father-son relationship. I know it did not come from other sources, such as therapy or any direct exploration by Hersey of his own feelings toward his father or his sons, because I saw him shortly before and shortly after the decision and we explored the circumstances under which it occurred.[11]

By clarifying and articulating the murderous impulse, the author was also able to describe the psychological articulation between the father and son in a moving and telling way. Describing the sniper's bullet passing "through both generations," he indicated that the son was more definitively linked to the father than he realized. And he suggested the nature of the link. Through dropping out of school, corrupting himself and taking drugs, the son was trying to destroy his father, his internal father, and was thereby destroying himself. Still separated from the father, as indicated by "the

faintest sign of reproach on the father's face," the son was also brought together with him, and they were articulated.

ARTICULATION AND THE CREATION OF PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTES AND STRUCTURE

Unlike the individual literary artist engaged in creating a literary work on his own, the therapist and patient in psychotherapy are together engaged in creating the patient's personality attributes and structure. Together, they embark on a process of articulation, separating and bringing together elements from the patient's past, present, and future. As an end result of this process, the patient achieves active psychic separation from factors in the past and concomitant clarification and acceptance of continuity with his own past experience. In this sense, the patient develops meaningful independence and psychological freedom. Because of the psychic separation of the past and the present, the patient is freed from the need to repeat the past. On the other hand, because there is also an active affirmation of his connections with his own past, there is also preservation and affirmation of the patient's unique experience and individuality. Articulation is both the enemy of the repetition compulsion and the ally of uniqueness. Therefore, it is one of the prime modes through which patient and therapist accomplish the creation of attributes of personality and self.

I will briefly emphasize the difference between this perspective on

creativity in the therapeutic process from traditional ones that focus on inspiratory experiences or from those that derive from Kris's formulation of creativity as a "regression in the service of the ego."[12] Inspiratory experiences, prototypically, are sudden bursts of understanding or new ideas that seem to come from nowhere, usually accompanied by feelings of excitement and gratification. Because these bursts are dramatic and exciting, they have often been erroneously considered to be the exemplification of creativity. Although such inspiratory experiences do sometimes occur in creative processes, they are by no means a major factor producing creations. They are decidedly not a major feature of the creative process involved in psychotherapy. While inspiratory experiences involve an experience of understanding and illumination, and may therefore seem to be the same as, or similar to, attainment of psychological insight, such is not the case. Inspiratory experiences are properly related to defensive or abreactive phenomena. The feeling of dramatic illumination and certainty, usually accompanied by a good deal of affect, results often from a partial defensive repudiation incorporated in the inspiratory ideas.[13] Abreactive discharge of pent-up emotions with temporary overcoming of repression may also often operate to produce a sense of certainty and an affective experience of relief. Psychological insight, however, consists of both affective and cognitive apprehension of unconscious and preconscious contents rather than either discharge or repudiation. Usually far less dramatic than inspiration, insight is

psychologically a more productive phenomenon. Although an inspiratory experience can at times lead to psychological insight, those therapists who seek for constant inspiratory breakthroughs, or for an inspiratory experience as a therapeutic endpoint, are practicing in a spiritual rather than in a scientific mode.

I do not mean to disregard inspiration altogether in creative processes, because it plays a role at certain points. I do mean to indicate that inspiration is neither the *sine qua non* of creativity nor a proper goal of therapy, nor is it the usual mode of appearance of new ideas. As seen in the example of the poet's creation of the "mastermind" metaphor described earlier, new ideas occur in a nondramatic manner—as he said, "I just turned my attention to that line and . . . and then that came to me" —as a result of a long process of articulation. Because creative ideas appear most often in just this way, they are properly included within a discussion of the articulation process rather than considered as radically separate events.

As for creativity in therapy as a "regression in the service of the ego," Beres[14] has presented a model of therapeutic collaboration in which the patient regresses and characteristically presents primary process material to a therapist, who characteristically reacts on a secondary process level, until such times as the patient can control the regression with his own observing ego. In other places, I have presented extensive data and observations that

challenge the validity of "regression in the service of the ego" as a formulation of the dynamic structure of creative processes in general.[15] This challenge also pertains to the creative process in therapy. The dynamic structure there also does not consist of a "regression in the service of the ego"; rather, it is a mutual articulation by therapist and patient on many different psychic levels. Although guided by the therapist, both participants engage in bringing together and separating throughout the process; both may use secondary process, or sometimes primary process, concomitantly, and both articulate material from conscious, preconscious, and unconscious levels, and from cognitive and affective modes at different points along the way.

The two case examples following shall, in some detail, illustrate the process of articulation in psychotherapy. They represent two different types or levels, as follows: (1) verbal or linguistic articulation; (2) articulation of a mother-daughter relationship.

VERBAL OR LINGUISTIC ARTICULATION IN THERAPY

The most immediate and straightforward illustration of the process of articulation in psychotherapy is on the level of verbalization and the use of language. This should come as no surprise, of course, because therapy is carried out verbally and, therefore, there must be intrinsic connections between laws of verbal or linguistic interaction and psychological change.

This precept has been emphasized in varying degrees by Jacques Lacan,[16] Edelson,[17] Rosen,[18] and Rycroft.[19] I do not, however, mean to say that therapy is a process of helping a patient to speak better in the traditional sense of the term, to articulate. That would be patently absurd and misleading, as the skill of articulation in speech has little to do with psychological health except in a most remote way. I am rather speaking of the verbal and language interchange between therapist and patient as a concomitant bringing together and separating in psychological and verbal spheres. Much of the actual verbal interaction going on in a therapy hour can be understood in just this way.

Presenting the matter schematically, the patient talking in therapy puts forth a series of verbal phrases that manifest varying degrees of organization and connectedness. As we well know, elements that appear consciously quite organized and connected may represent severe disorganization and disconnectedness on a preconscious or unconscious level. Contrariwise, disconnected conscious elements often have both preconscious and unconscious connectedness and organization. As the therapist listens and interacts, he endeavors to identify numerous factors in the patient's productions, such as: anxiety, conflict, affect, nature of object relations, defenses, and so on. In his attempt to facilitate insight, he is most often interested in identifying preconscious and unconscious matters. He uses both janusian and homospatial processes to develop his own conceptual and

empathic understanding.

Also, because he is aware of the need of persons to have secure ego boundaries and to function effectively as individuals, he is interested in identifying the qualities of independence, separation, and uniqueness as well as identifying connections with other persons and with society. He helps the patient to verbalize and elaborate in order to accomplish many different psychodynamic goals. Although he may not have been explicitly aware of it, a major mode of the therapist's interaction with the patient, in order to accomplish these goals, is to engage in an overall process of articulation similar to that in the examples of literary creativity I have described.

The following excerpt is from a psychotherapy session occurring at a middle point in the course of a two-and-a-half-year treatment. In a manner similar to the poet's articulation of the "mastermind" metaphor, this therapist and patient separate and bring together elements of the patient's psychic life. While the poet articulated the metaphor by himself and was concerned with aesthetic effect, the therapist and patient carry out the articulation together and are directly concerned with psychological effect. The session begins with the patient focused on his problems with money, which he attributes to his upbringing and family background. The therapist's first comment, "Is it too late to correct this?" functions to separate out the factor of learning and the patient's apparent stagnation in this area. At the same time, it brings together

the patient's past with a possible future. From then on, separation and bringing together occur on both sides. The patient's fear, for instance, is separated out and brought together with other elements in several ways.

P: I've been thinking about my problems with handling money [pause]. I've always had money; money has always been given to me but I don't know how or why. Having money that way has stopped me from learning to do anything.

TH: Is it too late to correct this?

P: I'm scared shitless of taking responsibility for myself.

TH: How does that make you feel afraid?

P: I'm afraid I might fail.

TH: Are you really afraid of failing?

P: Maybe I'm . . . afraid of doing . . . well; that's . . . possible [in saying this, the patient has paused and hesitated repeatedly].

TH: You seem also to be afraid of doing well in this session with me— afraid of doing well in therapy.

P: I seem to feel that I must punish myself for something.

TH: Is it just *one* thing?

P: I'm not sure. I think it's one thing. It has to do with sex, I think [pause]. I always liked climbing trees; did a lot of that in my life.

TH: What is the connection?

P: [several pauses] There was a tree in front of my house. I climbed it when I was

three years old . . . never was able to climb to the top, but later I did a lot of tree climbing. [At this point, the patient looked very anxious and began staring.]

TH: What happened just then?

P: I feel vacant.

TH: Perhaps that feeling in here has something to do with a feeling that you are climbing high up and succeeding in something.

The therapist's interpretation, just stated, served to relieve the patient's anxiety. He then went on to clarify that he had a sexual sensation when climbing the tree. This issue became further clarified in the sessions throughout the remaining months of therapy as the patient increasingly connected his fear of success to sexual issues with his mother.

Just as the poet earlier brought together and separated ideas of "realms," "jamb and lintel," and "mental world" in his several versions leading to the articulation of the "mastermind" metaphor, in this session the patient and therapist separate out and bring together several contexts and words pertaining to the patient's feeling of being afraid. The patient says first that he is afraid of responsibility, then of failure, and then of success. When he falters on the idea of success —at this point, he pauses repeatedly and literally becomes verbally inarticulate—the therapist connects his fear of success with a current fear of success right in the session. This focus on form and sequence is the same as I described in Chapter II, and is a factor in the articulation

process.

Following the connecting remark, the patient separates out a new issue, the issue of punishment, and the therapist responds with a question geared directly toward separating out the factors in the punishment, “Is it just one thing?” When the patient separates out the sexual issue and the climbing of trees, the therapist then directly asks for a connection. Finally, in this particular excerpt, a specific formulation is articulated by means of the therapist’s interpretation. This interpretation brings together the elements of the patient’s past tree climbing with his present fear of success as well as with his symptom of vacancy.

That the therapist’s interpretation was psychologically meaningful is indicated by the patient’s response of introducing new and important material which had thereby separated out yet another factor, sexuality, in his anxiety. Effective interpretations are cardinal examples of articulating interventions on a therapist’s part. Indeed, a prototypical interpretation — one that connects a factor in the transference to an ongoing issue in his present life and to his past life as well — represents an extensive articulation. Although bringing together and separating often are temporally distinct —i.e., alternating or sequential, as in this particular session —the overall effect is one of joining or articulation. Thus, other interventions, such as clarifications, may all at times contribute to an overall effect and serve as part of the

articulation process.

In the excerpt presented, many psychological issues enter into and affect the course and effectiveness of the articulation process. There is the apparent trust in the therapist, the patient's drive toward improved interpersonal relations blocked by his fear of growing up and taking responsibility, his guilt about sexuality, and an apparent yearning for a lost childhood. The therapist's awareness of and sensitivity to such issues play a critical role in the therapeutic movement, but his ability to participate in the articulation process is also important. Meaning and psychodynamic significance of the issues articulated, as well as factors such as timing, defensive state, and level of personality integration, are vital factors in the therapeutic effect. So, too, meaning and expressive features of the "mastermind" metaphor presented earlier were vital aspects of the aesthetic effect. For the poet, as well as for the therapist and patient, however, articulation is the means for facilitating restructuring, integration, and creation.

ARTICULATION OF A MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

Another example will serve to illustrate broader effects on the total context or content of the patient's life. The previous example primarily illustrated formal aspects of articulation; the next example, like the earlier

description of the novelist's creative process, traces articulation on the levels of both form and content together.

A 28-year-old woman executive with a borderline personality became severely depressed and excessively suspicious of friends and co-workers shortly after receiving an important job promotion. Previously, she had suffered from depressive episodes, and at the age of 19 she had required a brief psychiatric hospitalization. Following that hospitalization, she became enrolled in a business training program that later enabled her to get a job with a very large corporation. Starting at the bottom of the clerical ladder, she was extremely perfectionistic and very highly organized in her work, and so experienced a surprisingly rapid rise through the ranks of the organization to a rather high level of administrative responsibility. She could not, however, face the idea of another promotion that involved a major change to another department and even more responsibility. She quit her job.

The background of these events showed that the patient had been able to accomplish her rapid rise partly because of a very supportive therapy with the same therapist over the entire nine-year period, but especially because of the constant rock-bound support of her mother. Throughout this period of the patient's life, her mother, just as in the years before, had made virtually all her decisions and cared for her hand and foot. Despite having a full-time job of her own, the mother did all the cooking and cleaning in their shared

apartment. She accompanied the patient on all shopping trips and decided on her clothes, chose her friends, wrote all letters and cared for all money affairs, and reviewed with her on a daily basis every detailed event of her life. With respect to her therapy, the mother insisted that she tell her everything that was said and then provided her own formulations. When working on her job, the patient would call her mother several times a day to ask for support and solace. And on several occasions, she called her every 15 minutes throughout the day!

In the course of psychotherapy within a hospital setting, many aspects of the patient's relationship with her mother were addressed. At the beginning, the patient forcefully and flatly asserted: "I have only one friend in the world —my mother." Gradually, however, she began to modify that assertion and recognize some strongly negative feelings. Indeed, the ambivalence toward her mother emerged as so extreme that soon she began to attribute the worst of motives to her, believing that she was intensely jealous and wanted her to be always sick or dead. At the same time, she displayed the characteristic splitting of borderline patients and came to believe that the therapist was completely responsible for her noxious view of her parent.

A turning point in the therapy occurred after the development of a peculiar financial difficulty. On the basis of an unforeseen technicality, it

appeared that her hospitalization insurance coverage would run out much sooner than expected. Therefore, she had to make plans to leave the hospital before she felt ready. Because she now felt that it would be impossible for her to return home and live with her mother, and because she could think of no other alternatives, she believed this to be a disaster.

The therapist, however, while well aware of the seriously problematic symbiosis of mother and daughter, decided to challenge this position. Each time she brought up the impossibility of her living together with her mother, he, to her surprise and chagrin, questioned why that seemed to be so. Over and over, in session after session, this issue was a central theme. With rage and anger, the patient talked about her relationship with her mother. She spoke of her mother's undue influence and apparent need for her, and also of her own feelings of attachment and disgust for her mother.

Out of this therapeutic juxtaposition of herself with her mother, produced primarily by the therapist's challenge to the patient's splitting defenses and false pretense of separation from her mother, an effective articulation began. Together, the patient and therapist were able to designate a continued lack of separation between daughter and mother (and between patient and therapist as well). By continually juxtaposing and bringing herself together with her mother in the therapy sessions, she began to look for, specify, and try out some of her own separate and real attributes. This was

the beginning of an ongoing process of articulation of her relationship with her mother. In the process of separating and bringing together, she, for the first time, came to recognize and acknowledge that, like her mother, she experienced feelings of jealousy and possessiveness. This led to a reduction in suspicious and paranoid thinking about other people in her life.

While attempting to articulate her relationship with her mother, the patient was also articulating her own personality. She began to take on increasing responsibility for herself and to feel better. In her mind, however, she reserved many areas of nonseparation and fusion with her mother. One was the working out of her financial responsibility for her treatment. Telling herself that "this is the last thing I will let my mother do for me," she took no action whatsoever to work out the insurance problem. Instead, her mother made constant calls to the insurance company, to a lawyer, and to the hospital administration.

Although it appeared on the surface that there was little the patient could do —she received a good deal of sympathy for her difficulties with finances from other patients and some members of the staff—the therapist again challenged her position. He raised the question of why the mother, rather than she, was working out the problem. Thus, the mother and daughter were again actively brought together and separated in the therapy. This led to a severe outburst on the patient's part; she at first became outraged at the

suggestion that she should do anything more. Then, accusing the therapist of not helping her with the financial problem, she furiously insisted that she was being cast away and thereby forced again to live with her mother and be under her domination.

The fury gradually subsided and, in subsequent sessions, the patient and therapist both pursued the articulation of her relationship to her mother. Together they clarified areas of overlap between some of her symptomatic behavior and her mother's behavior toward her as a child. They clarified how she was carrying out in her life her mother's explicit as well as implicit wishes. And, again, they tried to separate out her own goals and wishes. Frequently, during this time, the patient became quite moody and depressed. As the process of bringing together and separating continued, she became increasingly aware of the possibility of choice and intention in her life. Although not conceptualizing it in this way, she became increasingly aware of articulating her own personality. She experienced the challenge of creating aspects of her self.

In the face of this challenge, sometimes this patient yearned for death and for self-destruction. In her moodiness and depression, she hovered between creation and destruction. It was a very difficult time. In continuing to work and to articulate, she chose the course of creation.

ARTICULATION IN THE PRACTICE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Although patient and therapist together do not create an entire personality anew in the way that an artist creates an entire artwork or a scientist a complete theory, aspects of the patient's personality are distinctly new. These aspects, as discussed in Chapter I, are stamped with the patient's uniqueness, new to the patient himself, but often also related to ordinary ways of functioning. The articulation process, taken as a whole, consists of helping the patient to develop his uniqueness while recognizing and accepting intrinsic connections with others. Because it clarifies and produces connections and separations within the patient's personality, it results in a structural personality integration.

While the creative artist's or scientist's struggle to create is often quite dramatic and socially far-reaching, patient and therapist together struggle toward less dramatic but, for the individual, often far-reaching effects. Creative artists or scientists develop new ideas and discoveries as a result of an overall articulation including homospatial and janusian processes; they separate and bring together and make what is potential into actuality. The patient and therapist develop insight and personality structures by also articulating the patient's potential into actuality. Articulation of insight is the specific process leading directly to the creation of insight referred to by Loewald.[20]

Articulation in any creative process applies both to form and to content. In these examples of the literary creative process and therapy, the emphasis alternated between form and structural factors and more extensive aesthetic or psychodynamic content. In both of the examples emphasizing form and structure, i.e., creation of the "mastermind" metaphor and the excerpt from a therapy session, however, many content psychodynamic factors also operated in the choice of particular elements articulated. The nature of the poet's relationship with his mother, for instance, entered into the creation of the metaphor. In the therapy session excerpt, there were aggressive transference elements as well as probable additional factors of primal scene experience and masturbation fears. In both the examples emphasizing more extensive content, the writing of the novel and the mother-daughter relationship, formal verbal and interaction factors as well as structural issues of ego boundaries[21] played a prominent role.

Awareness of the articulation process can serve as a special guideline to creative practice. While facilitating goals of attainment of insight and understanding, analysis of character and of symptoms, and working-through, awareness of articulation can help the therapist to listen and interact directly on the basis of goals of creating personality attributes and structure. The creative process involves making as well as understanding. The constant focus on bringing together as well as separating in each therapeutic session and in the longer sequences of the ongoing therapeutic interaction serves to

facilitate insight and understanding together with creation and personality integration.

Focus on the articulation process entails a type of concentration on the therapist's part that is receptive, wide ranging, and not persistently evaluative or judgmental. Keeping in mind the dual goals of separating and bringing together, the therapist is interested in encouraging the patient to speak and elaborate on what he says and feels. Within this wealth of material, the therapist seeks to separate out pertinent issues and trends, largely by questions and other clarifying interventions. Simultaneously, the therapist bears in mind possible analogies and connections between what the patient is immediately addressing and other areas of the patient's life, past, present, or future. For example, the therapist may listen for analogies between material about a boss or a teacher and issues in the transference. Or, he may hear connections between hostile feelings toward a spouse and competitive feelings with a sibling or hostility to a parent. Although he does not necessarily comment about these connections at any given point, he is actively listening in this manner. Such listening involves a specific type of concentration primarily on the formal aspects of the interaction in the therapeutic session. Concentration on articulation as a formal aspect of therapeutic interaction serves to reduce various tendencies to judge, dissect, categorize, or compartmentalize in a persistent way the content of the patient's productions.

The principles of neutrality and nonjudgmental acceptance of the content of a patient's productions are not mechanically or artificially applied in a therapeutic hour, but arise intrinsically and naturally in conjunction with an active focus on articulation. Persistent judging, categorizing, and compartmentalizing of content have little to do with the goals of restructuring, making, and creating. Rather than the fluid flow of articulation with its alternating or simultaneous separating and bringing together, the operations of judging, categorizing, and compartmentalizing involve either firm and static separation or connection alone. Moreover, the state of mind associated with intense concentration on articulation involves a sense of broadened awareness. In this state of mind, the therapist is constantly receptive to, and is himself developing, new ideas. He is able to hear new material introduced by the patient and to develop new formulations from what has already been presented. While the process of therapeutic articulation is an ego function, this does not mean that it operates solely on a secondary process level. The therapist is focused on both primary and secondary process cognition in the patient, and he uses both modes himself. He searches for separations and connections on the levels of unconscious, preconscious, and conscious in both the patient and himself. Many psychic levels are articulated conjointly. This is similar to the state of mind of the creative artist.

The patient also needs to adopt a state of mind that is similar to certain

aspects of the state of mind of the creative artist. This was recognized and stated by Freud in an early exposition of the methodology of the therapeutic process. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he cited the poet Schiller's famous exposition of the mode of facilitating creative thinking as the model for dream analysis as follows: "Where there is a creative mind, Reason —so it seems to me—relaxes its watch upon the gates, and the ideas rush in pell-mell, and only then does it look them through and examine them in a mass. —You critics . . . complain of your unfruitfulness because you reject too soon and *discriminate too severely*."[22] Although dream analysis is somewhat more specialized and routinized than other aspects of the therapeutic process, the actions of separating associations and connecting them to other elements and experiences in the patient's life are prototypes for much of therapeutic activity and prototypes of the articulation process.

The creative process of therapy is a matter of integrating rather than simply combining or reconciling. By this I mean that combining and reconciling may involve only adding together, submerging, or compromising —bringing together *without* separating—of various component elements. Integration, on the other hand, involves component elements operating together in an organic whole. These component elements of personality maintain separateness and identity while connected and interconnected with each other. They are therefore related and connected, rather than added, submerged into one another, or combined. Homologous with the structure of

the nervous system of the physical organism, which is integrated through the joints or articulations known as synapses and synaptic functions, personality and behavior are also integrated through articulations.

Notes

1. See Rothenberg, *op. cit.*, 1969. The term "articulation" was not used in this article to describe the process, as the concept had not at that time been formulated. See also Chapter VIII here.

2. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick,* New York: Random House, 1930, pp. 1-2.

3. The poem is protected by copyright; quotations from the poem and manuscripts are used with permission. Author's name withheld upon request.

4. Italics added.

5. Italics added.

6. Emphasis added. Italics for the word "mind" added in the following paragraph.

7. John Hersey, *Too Far to Walk,* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966.

8. Arousal and anxiety evoked by artistic works are contributory factors in aesthetic appeal. See, for findings regarding arousal in aesthetics, David E. Berlyne, *Aesthetics and Psychobiology*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971. It is, however, the modulation of anxiety and the struggle for psychological freedom from the past and from the effects of repressed unconscious elements that constitute a major aspect of positive aesthetic experience. I discuss these issues at length in Rothenberg, *The Emerging Goddess.*

9. Italics added in the quotations from the manuscript versions.

10. Hersey, *op. cit.,* pp. 211-212.

11. Of course, we cannot rule out transference feelings to me, but these are also incorporated in the articulation process.

12. Kris, *op. cit.*

13. For discussion of the role of inspiration in creativity, its history as a construct, and evidence

regarding its defensive and revelatory functions, see Albert Rothenberg, "Poetic Process and Psychotherapy," *Psychiatry,* 3(1972):238—254.

14. David Beres, "Communication in Psychoanalysis and in the Creative Process: A Parallel," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association,* 5(1957):408-42 3.

15. Rothenberg, *The Emerging Goddess,* Rothenberg and Sobel, *op. cit.,* 1980, and *op. cit.,* 1981; Sobel and Rothenberg, *op. cit.,* 1980.

16. Jacques Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," *Ecrits. A Selection,* translated by A. Sheridan, New York: W. W. Norton, 1977, pp. 30-113; for a good presentation of Lacan's concepts, see also John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, *Lacan and Language: A Reader's Guide to the Ecrits,* New York: International Universities Press, 1982.

17. Marshall Edelson, *Language and Interpretation in Psychoanalysis*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975.

18. Victor H. Rosen, "Sign Phenomena and Their Relationship to Unconscious Meaning," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis,* 50(1969): 197-207; "The Nature of Verbal Interventions in Psychoanalysis," *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Science,* 3(1974): 189-209.

19. Charles Rycroft, *Imagination and Reality,* New York: International Universities Press, 1968.

20. Loewald, *op. cit.,* pp. 242-243.

21. Articulation has particular effect upon ego boundaries, as boundaries of any type involve both separation and connection of adjoining areas or factors.

22. Sigmund Freud, *op. cit.,* 1900, p. 103. Emphasis added.