Creativity as a Construct in Personality Theory

Creativity, as a concept, presents a special challenge for theories of personality. This challenge is to describe and explain a phenomenon or type of behavior which does not readily lend itself to explanations in terms of cause, the discovery of antecedent conditions and empirical sequences or demonstrative reasoning. One way of dealing with this challenge is to decide that creativity is not suitable or meaningful as a separate construct in psychological theorizing and therefore need not be explained. This position is not so much one of ignoring behaviors commonly labeled creative as it is one of treating novel, original behavior as requiring no special explanation. This approach is often seen as less acceptable for personality theory which typically concerns itself with all behavior in an effort to describe the very essence of "humaness." Creativity as an abstraction or theoretical construct is thus likely to appear more often in theories of personality than in some other theories in psychology (e.g., "single-domain" theories).

The objective of this paper is to describe how a variety of well-known personality theories and other general theories of behavior have attempted to explain the concept of creativity. Most of the theories discussed can be placed within three main streams of psychological thought (psychoanalytic, humanistic or behavioral), although, as will be seen, some theories do not fit neatly into only one category. The intent of this effort is not to present an exhaustive list of all possible theoretical conceptualizations of creativity but rather to compare three major, often opposing, approaches to incorporating creativity within a theory of personality or a general theory of behavior.

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Any focus upon psychoanalytic thought must, of course, begin with Freud. Freud's contributions to abnormal psychology, psychotherapy and psychiatry are recognized more often than his contributions to personality theory. However, Hall (1954) believes that Freud's most important role historically is that of a psychological theorist. Just as a therapist may find Freud's ideas useful without subscribing fully to his theories of psychosexual development, so too have many of his ideas been seminal for personality theories both within and out of the psychoanalytic tradition.

Taylor (1976) suggests that Freud was the first to undertake serious work on creative ability. Certainly many of Freud's writings were concerned with the act of creation (Freud, 1953, 1957a, 1959b). It is important to understand that in Freud's view the basic tendency of all life is to maximize instinctual gratification while minimizing punishment and guilt (Maddi, 1976; Freud, 1957b). The investment of energy in an action which will gratify an instinct is called an object-choice or object-cathexis. Displacement to a new cathexis occurs when the original object-choice of an instinct becomes inaccessible. Displacement which produces cultural achievement is called sublimation (Hall & Lindzey, 1970). Sublimation, then, results in the diversion of libidoal energy from primitive sexual goals to more socially acceptable scientific or artistic activities (Dayton, 1976; Freud, 1961). For example, Freud (1957a) observed that Leonardo da Vinci's painting of Madonnas was a sublimated longing for a mother from whom he was separated at an early age. For Freud, all cultural achievement, including creativity, occurs through the process of sublimation. Indeed, the development of civilization itself was made possible through this process (Freud, 1959a, 1961).

The close relationship between creativity and the unconscious may be seen in Freud's essays on creative writing and daydreaming (1959b) and also in various writings about literature, art and love (1958b).

Should we not look for the first traces of imaginative activity as early as in childhood? The child's best-loved and most intense occupation is with his play or games. Might we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own or, rather, rearranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him?...The creative writer does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously—that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion—while separating it sharply from reality (Freud, 1959b).

Of course, ideas from the unconscious may be seen as undesirable. Often these freely rising ideas are suppressed during waking hours. The creative personality is more accepting of these impulses from the unconscious (Dayton, 1976). In general, Freud viewed creative persons, particularly artists, as having an unusual capacity to arrive at sublimation (Klein, 1971). The creative process thus originates from inside the individual and the creative product mirrors unconscious images which have been processed into socially acceptable forms by the ego (Freud, 1958a; Taylor, 1975). Freud's feelings toward the creative artist seem to have been rather ambivalent (Storr, 1972).

An artist is once more in rudiments an introvert, not far removed from neurosis. He is oppressed by excessively powerful instinctual needs. He desires to win honor, power, wealth, fame and the love of women; but he lacks the means for achieving these satisfactions. Consequently, like any other unsatisfied man, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and his libido too, to the wishful constructions of his life of phantasy, whence the path might lead to neurosis (Freud, 1963).

On the other hand, sublimation is considered the most mature and least rigidifying of the defensive processes. Sublimation is the defense generally associated with the genital stage of psychosexual development—the pinnacle of developmental and maturity (Maddi, 1976). Nevertheless, the Freudian position is that mental illness and creativity have identical origins in that they both arise from conflict within the unconscious. Freud believed that the psychoanalysis of creative individuals will show a blending of productive ability and neurosis (Taylor, 1976).

Getzels and Jackson (1962) summarized Freud's position as follows:

1. Creativity has its genesis in conflict, and the unconscious forces motivating the creative "solution" are parallel to the unconscious forces motivating the neurotic "solution."

2. The psychic function and effect of creative behavior is the discharge of pent-up emotion resulting from conflict until a tolerable level is reached.
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3. Creative thought derives from the elaboration of the “freely rising” fantasies and ideas related to daydreaming and childhood play.

4. The creative person accepts these “freely rising” ideas, the noncreative person suppresses them.

5. It is when the unconscious processes become, so to speak, ego-syntonic that we have the occasion for “achievements of special perfection.”

6. The role of childhood experience in creative production is emphasized, creative behavior being seen as “a continuation and substitute for the play of childhood.”

As did Freud, Jung also saw creativity as springing from the unconscious. “The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work” (Jung, 1966). Jung’s archetypes, it will be recalled, may be thought of as contents of the collective unconscious (Hall & Nordby, 1973), or predispositions to characteristic thoughts and feelings (Maddi, 1976) or primordial images (Rychlak, 1973).

Jung essentially postulated two types or processes of creativity (Jung, 1933, 1966; Slochower, 1974). First, there is a “psychological” type which deals with materials drawn from the realm of human consciousness and experience. There is, in addition, a “visionary” type of creativity which stems from the unconscious. Describing artistic creation, Jung further divided creativity influenced by the unconscious into “symptomatic art” which stems from the personal unconscious of the individual and “symbolic art” which stems from the collective unconscious of mankind. The process resulting in “symptomatic art” is to some extent subject to individual intent and purpose, and is similar to Freudian theory concerning the relationship between creativity and the unconscious, although Jung seemed to consider the personal unconscious to be closer to consciousness than did Freud. Jung criticized Freud’s attempt to explain a work of art solely in terms of the personal unconscious of the artist (Jung, 1933), and drew a distinction with his emphasis upon the collective unconscious which Freud did not make. This collective unconscious is in a sense a storehouse of racial memories handed down from the distant past in the form of archetypes (Taylor, 1975). The concept of a collective unconscious represented a radical departure from Freud’s concept of an unconscious consisting of repressed thoughts and memories.

In contrast to the personal unconscious, which is a relatively thin layer immediately below the threshold of consciousness, the collective unconscious shows no tendency to become conscious under normal conditions, nor can it be brought back to recollection by any analytical technique, since it was never repressed or forgotten. The collective unconscious is not to be thought of as a self-subsistent entity; it is no more than a potentiality handed down to us from primordial times in the specific form of archetypal images or inherited in the anatomical structure of the brain. There are no inborn ideas, but there are inborn possibilities of ideas that set bounds to even the boldest fantasy and keep our fantasy activity within certain categories... (Jung, 1966).

When the artist or any individual is creating, as it were, under the influence of the collective unconscious, he or she becomes “Every Man.” The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purposes through him. As a human being he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is “man” in a higher sense—he is “collective man”—one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind (Jung, 1933).

Later Jung extended some of these concepts from the artist to creative works or good ideas in general. Jung proposed some eight categories of personality types (Jung, 1946), but not one of these has a monopoly upon creativity. People may be differentiated psychologically yet have equal capacities to use imagination and fantasy. Some personality types, however, are more prone to be creative than others. In its discussion of personality types, Jung theorized that creative products and ideas do not depend solely upon the unconscious, but rather stem from the interaction between the conscious and the unconscious mind. Psychic energy is needed to bring unconscious thoughts to the surface. The personality contains or performs a “transcendent function” which mediates between conscious and unconscious during the creative process (Stein & Heinz, 1960).

It is interesting that Jung, despite his own attempts, was skeptical of science ever fully explaining creativity. Any reaction to stimulus may be causally explained; but the creative act, which is the absolute antithesis...
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Otto Rank

...of mere reaction, will forever elude the human understanding (Jung, 1933).

Rank devoted a good deal more time to an attempt to understand the creative personality than did most early psychoanalysts. For Rank, creativity was a construct central to the understanding of healthy human behavior. "...creativity is not limited to the root of artistic production and of life experience. That is to say, lived experience can only be understood as the expression of volitional creative impulse..." (Rank, 1932).

Rank's ideal personality type is called the "artist." His artist has no necessary relationship to the conventional meaning of the term but rather describes the personality who has successfully accepted the "fear of life"—fear of being a separate individual; the "fear of death"—fear of union and dependency; and achieved an integration of the two (Maddi, 1976; Rank, 1945).

Rank's choice of the term artist for the human ideal is an attempt to convey a sense of creative integration as the highest goal of man—in contrast to more limited ideals of spiritual or material achievement (Munroe, 1955).

Rank used the concept of will as an important force in the shaping of an individual's life. The will involves a sense of self and what one wants to accomplish. The concept of will is similar to Freud's ego (although more conscious) in that it represents the aspect of personality having an overall organization function (Maddi, 1976). The will manifests itself negatively in repression and control and positively in the urge to create. Describing this creative impulse, Stein and Heinze (1960) state:

The creative impulse of the artist springs from the tendency to immortalize himself. The artist uses the art forms that he finds in the culture but he also saves his individuality, and stands out from the mass, by giving his work the stamp of his individuality.

This creative impulse then may be considered the pressure or desire to be an individual ("life impulse") in the service of the individual will.

In creativity, as in many of his constructs, Rank placed greater emphasis upon the influence of consciousness than did Freud. Rank did not deny completely, however, the role of the unconscious in creative behavior. Very early in his career he recognized the effects of the unconscious, the role

of sublimation, fantasy and dreaming in artistic creation (Rank & Sachs, 1916). Nevertheless, it is clear that Rank did not consider the creative personality as totally controlled by his or her unconscious.

In spite of all "unconsciousness" in artistic production, there can be no doubt that the modern individualist type of artist is characterized by a higher degree of consciousness than his earlier prototype: the consciousness not only of his creative work and his artist's mission, but also of his own personality and its productiveness (Rank, 1932).

As do many personality theorists, Rank viewed the creative individual as representative of ideal functioning or ideal mental development in the human being. In this Rank might be said to be a blend of both the humanistic and psychoanalytic positions.

Kris is a psychoanalytic ego psychologist whose conception of creativity as "regression in the service of the ego" appears to be widely accepted among psychoanalysts today, at least as a partial explanation of the creative process (Rotenberg & Hausman, 1976).

...ego regression (primtivization of ego functions) occurs not only when the ego is weak—in sleep, in falling asleep, in fantasy, in intoxication, and in the psychoses—but also during many types of creative processes (Kris, 1951).

Kris reformulates Freudian theory, putting more emphasis upon the role of the ego in creativity (Dayton, 1976: Klein, 1971). For Kris, creativity stems from the "preconscious" rather than the unconscious. This preconscious is on the borderline between consciousness and unconscious and contains material "capable of becoming conscious" under the proper conditions.

In the state of inspiration, the psychic apparatus is in an exceptional condition. The barrier between the id and the ego has temporarily become permeable. Impulses reach preconsciousness more easily than under other conditions, and their translation into formed expression can proceed painlessly. Forces previously used for repression are being used by the ego for another purpose. All energy seems to be vested in the process of coming to consciousness....The coming to consciousness in the case of creative effort presupposes a long unnoticed process of shaping: it is this process which,
entrusted to preconsciousness, is geared to integration and communication (Kris, 1975).

Regression in the service of the ego refers to utilization of a defensive mechanism—regression—in a more or less conscious retreat to an earlier level of development. Rather than this regression being an unconscious attempt to avoid anxiety, as is commonly the case, it is a purposeful attempt to find inspiration or insight by relinquishing some of the layers of development or socialization of the more mature mind. “So while regression in the service of the ego retains the element of defensiveness comprising distortion of reality, it is not defensive in that it operates consciously and is under the control of the person” (Maddi, 1976).

Kubie expanded Kris’s position on the role of preconscious functioning in creativity. For Kubie, the preconscious is the source of true creativity; the influence of the unconscious is more likely to result in neurotic processes which block creative behavior (Kubie, 1967).

It has been my thesis that a type of mental function which we call technically, “the preconscious system,” is the essential implement of all creative activity; and that unless preconscious processes can flow freely there can be no true creativity (Kubie, 1958).

Unlike Kris, however, Kubie sees the preconscious processes important for creativity as being related to healthy and adaptive functioning rather than regression or sublimation. For example, Kubie states:

Together all of this carries the implication that the ad hoc postulate that there is a separate and special mechanism known as the sublimation of unconscious processes may not be needed to explain creativity, and may actually be misleading (Kubie, 1958).

Actually both conscious and unconscious processes may block creative functioning in the sense that they are fixed and rigid. Consciousness is anchored to reality; the unconscious is anchored to unreality. Creativity depends upon the free flow of symbolic imagery available only in preconscious functioning (Kubie, 1967). Kubie’s main theme, however, is that unconscious processes lead to a neurotic distortion of creativity; preconscious processes are associated with creative flexibility and production.
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or creative behavior. In his more recent work, Murray postulated a series of eras or stages in life which are based on genetic and maturational processes. This theoretical model allows for continual growth toward self-actualization and creativity (Murray, 1968).

As Murray is perhaps best known for his taxonomy of needs (Murray, 1938), it is not surprising to find that he also suggested that human beings have a "creative need" which is met by the construction of novel, useful ideas or objects. In addition to this innate need for creativity, Murray suggested that some degree of creativity is required for adaptation to novel situations. In the absence of this capacity, the personality may not develop normally (Murray, 1951).

Although he was not the first personality theorist to advocate a more humanistic psychology, Maslow represents, for many, the epitome of the humanistic position (MacKinnon, 1972). Like Murray, Maslow focused more upon the psychology of healthy persons than on pathology. Maslow also perhaps represents the clearest example of a common theme in the humanistic position — that creativity stems from attempts at self-actualization. Indeed, he wrote:

My feeling is that the concept of creativeness and the concept of the healthy, self-actualizing, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together, and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing (Maslow, 1971b).

The term self-actualization seems to have been first used by Goldstein (1939) as a description of the overriding drive in people to realize their full potential. For Maslow, self-actualization had a similar meaning. It refers to the desire of human beings for self-fulfillment — the desire to become everything that one is capable of becoming (Maslow, 1970).

"What a man can be, he must be."

In his studies of self-actualized people, Maslow identified a common trend toward creativeness (Maslow, 1968, 1970). Going further, he maintained that the capacity for creativity is fundamental to all human beings. Creativity exists as a potentiality present in all persons at birth.

The creativeness of the self-actualized man seems rather to be kin to the naive and universal creativeness of unspoiled children. It seems to be more a fundamental characteristic of common human nature — a potentiality given to all human beings at birth. Most human beings lose this as they become enculturated, but some few individuals seem either
to retain this fresh and naive, direct way of looking at life, or if they have lost it, as most people do, they later in life recover it (Maslow, 1970).

Maslow drew a distinction between "primary" and "secondary" creativity. Primary creativeness is that "which comes out of the unconscious, which is the source of new discovery—of real novelty—of ideas which depart from what exists at this point" (Maslow, 1971a). Secondary creativity is the type of rational logical productivity demonstrated by capable, well-adjusted, successful people. Primary creativeness in every human at birth but often the access to primary process material becomes blocked as one matures. For example,

In our culture, the tendency to equate imagination, fantasy, the arts, and other products of the primary processes with "femininity" leads to a blocking of creativity among men. The primary processes are felt to endanger masculinity and, consequently, are "walled off" from the rest of the personality (Stein & Heinze, 1960).

True creativity depends upon the utilization and integration of both primary and secondary processes in the personality. Maslow pointed out that healthy, creative (self-actualized) persons can be childish ...

...when they want to be (regression in the service of the ego) ... These same people can afterward ... become grown-up, rational, sensible, orderly, and so on, and examine with a critical eye what they produced in a great burst of enthusiasm and creative fervor ... A truly integrated person can be both secondary and primary; both childish and mature (Maslow, 1971a).

At another point Maslow distinguished between "special talent creativeness" and "self-actualizing creativeness" (Maslow, 1959). Self-actualizing creativeness is a creative capacity present in everyone, but particularly found in the fully integrated personality, and therefore correlated with mental health. Since it is apparent that not all creative people in history have been psychologically healthy, special talent creativeness is that creative capacity associated with genius and has no necessary relationship to healthy psychological functioning.

Maslow believed motivation or desire for self-actualization to be universal. And further,

I had to come to the tentative conclusion that many, perhaps most, people are capable of temporary
In Roger's personality theory the vigorous expression of the actualizing tendency leads to the development of a "fully functioning person." This person is characterized by his or her creativity. With his sensitive openness to his world, his trust of his own ability to form new relationships with his environment, he would be the type of person from whom creative products and creative living emerge (Rogers, 1961).

The healthy creative person, then, has a tendency to produce both effective and new ideas, behavior and things. Kelly called his personality theory "the psychology of personal constructs." The fundamental postulate of this theory is that a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he or she anticipates events (Kelly, 1970). Maddi (1976) interprets this basic tendency of personality in Kelly's theory as a continual attempt by the individual to predict and control the events he or she experiences. In order to predict and control experience the individual will engage in a process called "construing" (Kelly, 1955a) which means to "place an interpretation" on events so that they take on a shape or assume meaning. The end result of this construing is the "construct." A construct then refers to the "pattern or templet" with which an individual attempts to order his or her reality or understand his world. Further, "a construct is a way in which some things are construed as being alike and yet different from others" (Kelly, 1955a). Thus, from the perspective of personality theory, Kelly's construct is a patterned structure or style of viewing life which can be identified in an individual (Rychlik, 1973).

Now all of this relates to understanding Kelly's formulation of creativity in the following manner. Creativity may be viewed as a cycle moving from "loose" constructs to more "tightened" constructs. Kelly postulates this "creativity cycle" as explaining how a person develops new ideas. The Creativity Cycle is one which starts with loosened construction and terminates with tightened and validated construction. Loosened construction is that which is characterized by varying alignment of elements, while tightened construction involves rigid assignment of elements within the construct's context. A person who always uses tight constructions may be productive—that is, he may turn out a lot of things—but he cannot be creative; he cannot produce anything which has not already been blueprinted... But just as a person who uses tight constructions exclusively cannot be creative, so a person who uses loose constructions exclusively cannot be creative either... He would never get around to setting up a hypothesis for crucial testing (Kelly, 1955a).

Essentially Kelly saw any alteration or replacement of constructs as requiring creative effort (Kelly, 1969). But true creativity is never a single, isolated mode of thought; rather it follows the cycle just described. Unfortunately, many people perform only one half of the cycle. "What one man can imagine he cannot test, while another goes through life attempting only what others have imagined" (Kelly, 1955b).

Fromm, creativity stems from people's basic need for transcendence. This need may be defined as the urge to rise above man's animal nature or his "situation as a creature." In the act of creation man transcends himself as a creature, raises himself beyond the passivity and accidentalness of his existence into the realm of purposefulness and freedom. In man's need for transcendence lies one of the roots for love, as well as for art, religion, and material production (Fromm, 1955). According to Fromm (1955) the mentally healthy individual is characterized by the ability to be creative. Indeed, Fromm's ideal character type—called the "productive orientation"—has the abilities of creativity and transcendence. The process of creation allows people to productively relate themselves to their world (Fromm, 1947).

Fromm also differentiated between creativity "in the sense of creating something new" and creativity as an attitude. Creativity when viewed as an attitude or character trait "is the ability to see (or to be aware) and to respond" (Fromm, 1959). This creative attitude is characterized by the capacity to be puzzled, to wonder, the ability to concentrate, a sense of self or identity, and the ability to accept conflict and tension rather than avoiding them. When creativity is regarded as an attitude it becomes universal... creativity in this sense does not refer to a quality which particularly gifted persons or artists could achieve but to an attitude which every human being should and can achieve (Fromm, 1959).

In general, theories in the behavioristic tradition are much less concerned with personality than with other aspects of psychology. As Berlyne states: "It can hardly be overlooked...
that problems of personality have figured much less prominently in the writings of the behavior theorists than in psychological literature as a whole” (Berlyne, 1968). Berlyne (1968) goes on to point out that this lack of interest is partially a function of historical development. Behavior theorists have typically had a bias toward environmentalism, a preoccupation with learning and a preference for stimulus-response laws rather than the response-response laws which are often the focus of personality theorists.

Just as behaviorism has often shown little interest in personality, it is not surprising that creative behavior has also been frequently overlooked. However, it would seem to be recognized that behaviorism, as a “general theory of behavior” must account for creativity.

A primary objection to behaviorism and learning theory is that it makes of man a “reactive,” not a creative creature. It is said, and rightly so, that the simple conception that human behavior is learned does not provide for originality or creativity. The question is, how can behavior be novel and original if it first has to be learned? This is a paradox that requires resolution, for no conception of human behavior can be credible unless it accounts for originality.

Some of the most important behaviors in man’s continuing advancement are those that involve new behaviors hitherto not made by others. Such novel behaviors are ones the individual has not been specifically trained to make (Staats, 1975).

Despite the obvious shortcomings of grouping various S-R theories and learning theories together in the behavioristic tradition, these theories nevertheless often have more in common than the theories found in the psychoanalytic and humanistic traditions in regard to their approach to explaining creative behavior. This common theme might be summarized as: Creative behavior, despite its originality, is nevertheless learned and may be explained in stimulus-response terms. Because of this common approach, the remainder of this section will present what appears to be the basic behavioristic explanation of creativity and some notable variations on this common theme.

S-R psychologists have attempted to account for creativity in their own way, which involves the notion that human behavior is essentially a matter of building up links or bonds between stimuli and responses (Cropley, 1970). As an example, creativity may be explained in terms of instrumental conditioning which involves building S-R bonds. Simply put, desired responses are rewarded and unwanted linkages are not rewarded or are punished. Thus, a pattern of creative behavior may be established in a child and later in the adult by rewarding creative thinking and activities when he or she is very young (Cropley, 1970). In his work on social behaviorism, Staats moves beyond this most basic conception of S-R theory and attempts to explain how a single response to a single stimulus may be generalized to account for a wide range of novel behavior which has not been specifically learned. Staats’ well-reasoned position is representative of the behavioristic explanations of creativity. Staats concluded:

...individuals with certain repertoires of behavior, faced with certain novel stimulus situations, will come up with certain novel responses and products of those responses (discoveries, findings, and so on). These products will then serve as new stimuli which then produce additional novel responses, which then serve as new stimuli which then produce additional novel responses, which then serve to elicit yet other creative behaviors. It is suggested that a detailed history of such long-term acts of creativity, analyzed in terms of the learned skills of the men involved and the manner in which their findings served as stimuli to themselves and other individuals, would give us a more profound view of human creativity (Staats, 1975).

Staats argued that the exceedingly large number of behavioral repertoires coupled with the tremendous number of possible stimulus configurations provides ample opportunity for creative S-R combinations to occur. The process described above whereby a novel response becomes in turn the stimulus for additional novel behavior is called cumulative-hierarchical learning. Such learning sequences can be used to explain the development of both individuals and societies.

Sarnoff Mednick (1962, 1964) provides a variation of this behavioristic position based upon an associative explanation. Mednick views creative thinking as the formation of associative elements into new combinations which meet certain requirements or are in some way useful. A more creative solution or process will be built upon more mutually remote elements. That is, the creative person will form unu-
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S-R bonds — will tend to link stimuli with highly unusual responses. The formation of associative elements may result in attaining a “creative solution” in any of three ways (Mednick, 1962):

1. The requisite associative elements may be evoked continguously by the contiguous environmental appearance (usually an accidental contiguity) of stimuli which elicit these associative elements. This sort of creative solution is often dubbed serendipitous.

2. The requisite associative elements may be evoked in contiguity as a result of the similarity of the associative elements or the similarity of the stimuli eliciting these associative elements. This mode of creative solution may be encountered in creative writing.

3. The requisite associative elements may be evoked in contiguity through the mediation of common elements. This means of bringing the associative elements into contiguity with each other is of great importance in those areas of endeavor where the use of symbols (verbal, mathematical, chemical, etc.) is mandatory.

No treatment of a behavioristic position would be complete without a look at B. F. Skinner’s explanation of creativity. Skinner pointed out that an explanation of creative behavior presented an insoluble problem for classical stimulus-response psychology. If behavior is nothing but learned responses to stimuli it can never be novel even though the stimuli may be. Skinner rescues us from this dilemma with his principle of operant conditioning which allows for responses to be under the influence of their consequences rather than being only determined by a prior stimulus (Skinner, 1969). “Artists paint pictures because of the consequences, and people look at pictures because of the consequences” (Skinner, 1972). By combining operant reinforcement theory with Darwin’s evolutionary theory, Skinner presented an explanation for creative behavior.

Operant conditioning solves the problem of explaining creative behavior more or less as natural selection solved a similar problem in evolutionary theory. As accidental traits, arising from mutations, are selected by their contribution to survival, so accidental variations in behavior are selected by their reinforcing consequences (Skinner, 1974).

So, in Skinner’s view, creative thinking is primarily concerned with the production of “mutations.” The consequences of behavior determine which behavioral mutations will be selected. Contingencies of survival and contingencies of reinforcement are similar processes in that they both produce novelty. The myriad of species upon the earth may be explained by natural selection. So too may the consequences of behavior explain all behavior.

In the field of human behavior the possibility arises that contingencies of reinforcement may explain a work of art or the solution to a problem in mathematics or science without appealing to a different kind of creative mind or to a trait of creativity or to the possibility that “men of genius have more creative nervous energy than lesser mortals” (Skinner, 1974).

Psychoanalytic, humanistic and behavioristic explanations do not, of course, exhaust all the possible ways that psychology in general or personality theories in particular have attempted to account for creative behavior. Much of the research on creativity during the last several decades falls into a category of theory which Taylor (1975) called “trait-factorial.” Personality theory in this tradition emphasizes the distinct traits or characteristics of the individual and relies heavily upon the use of factor analysis. Representative of this approach, which focuses on the personality traits of creative persons, would be the work of Barron (1955, 1969, 1972), Nelson (1966, 1967, 1971), MacKinnon (1965, 1970) and Roe (1933, 1972). One of the better known theories in this area is Guilford’s “Structure-of-Intelligence” (SI) model (1959, 1967, 1975). In Guilford’s SI model intelligence is defined as a collection of abilities or functions for processing information. These intellectual abilities are organized along three dimensions: content, product and operations. Content refers to the kinds of information contained in or used by the human mind. Product represents the form of the information. Operations refer to the basic processes performed with information by the mind. In Guilford’s theory many different mental functions relate to creativity; however, the operation of “divergent production” is seen as being particularly critical for creative behavior. This term has become fairly widely accepted and refers to adaptive flexibility or the ability to generate logical alternatives.

As a general theory of behavior, a theory of personality is challenged to explain all behavior. As such, a theory which
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does not account for the creative act seems incomplete.
Nevertheless, some personality theorists have little to say regarding creativity. Many of the theories which do attempt to explain creative behavior fall into three major streams of psychological thought: (1) psychoanalytic, (2) humanistic and (3) behavioralist. Of course, any attempt to categorize personality theories with their rich diversity of content will be flawed and is suggested only as an aid in conceptualization. It is possible, however, to suggest some global statements which indicate the approach taken in each of these three psychological traditions. In general, theorists writing in the psychoanalytic tradition view creativity as somehow stemming from the unconscious or, in some cases, the preconscious. Humanistic theories typically relate creativity to the individual's striving for self-actualization. Theories which are behavioralist are often less concerned with creative behavior. When an explanation is advanced it is likely to recognize creativity as novel or unusual behavior which is nevertheless a learned response, fundamentally no different than other behavior and explainable in stimulus-response terms.

There is, of course, some overlap among the positions examined here. For example, many personality theories posit two or more types of creativity having different origins. Humanistic theories find some common ground with psychoanalytic theories, often seeing one of these sources for creativity in the unconscious. Despite some similarities, however, fundamental differences exist among these three major psychological traditions. For example, "...the extent to which the creative process is seen to be under cognitive control continues to be an emotionally laden issue...related, no doubt to one's reference groups." (Helson & Mitchell, 1978).

As Rychlak (1968) stated:

At heart is the image of man which is at issue in psychology's internal conflict...How shall we theorize about the human being? Shall we say that he can think, or not? Can he grow personally and rise above his environment, or not? Can he respond to the opportunity for independent action by taking responsibility, or not?

The attempts of personality theories and other general theories of behavior to explain the concept of creativity seem to highlight and dramatize some of these basic issues.
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