

**Barron F.** *Creativity and psychological health: origins of personal vitality and creative freedom.* Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1963. 292 p.

[Institute of Personality Assessment and Research, University of California, Berkeley, CA]

*Creativity and Psychological Health* is a theory-animating, measurement-based book reporting a coherent set of studies by the author and various colleagues on such topics as ego-strength, originality, independence of judgment, personal soundness, ability to rally from setback, complexity-simplicity in personality, and the relationship of all these to creativity. [The *Science Citation Index*® (SCI®) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI®) indicate that this book has been cited in over 230 publications.]

Frank Barron  
Institute of Personality Assessment  
and Research  
University of California  
Berkeley, CA  
and  
University of California  
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

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To link creativity with psychological health was certainly not the fashion in 1950 when my research for *Creativity and Psychological Health* began. The romantic movement had pictured creativity and genius as "to madness near allied"; intense and extreme feelings, alienation, even suicide, all too often went along with creativity. Such notions still prevailed in the mythology of mind of which professional psychology was a part. Genius and evil was another theme, personified by Hitler and the Frankenstein side of science. But systematic research was lacking.

My own training at Minnesota before World War II had emphasized both psychobiography and psychometry. I was drawn to both approaches, as well as to the philosophy of life, as the rhizome from which all sorts of psychic and behavioral foliage grew. So I designed my research to yield numbers, as well as intuitions and impressions; to be susceptible to quantitative analysis as well as capable of expression in words and images. The focus was to be upon creativity as the deepest of human potentials and the highest of human expressions, and, therefore, upon creativity as issuing in and from health and vitality, no matter what

opposites might also be at work in the process. And of opposites there were plenty, of course. The sentence most often quoted from my book tells the story: "The creative person is at once both naive and knowledgeable, destructive and constructive, occasionally crazier yet adamantly saner...." More positively: "Without knowledge, no creation; without stability, no flexibility; without discipline, no freedom." The engagement unto resolution of such antinomies is the hallmark of the creative process.

The research itself, the substance of the book, had been accomplished over a period of some 12 years, and it represented a sustained view of human nature, in luck and out. The backdrop of all psychology from World War II to the present day is necessarily the sudden change of situation produced by the feat of atomic fission and the "dirty," in all senses of the term, explosion of the atomic bomb to destroy cities of people. I saw it as a central paradox that an intellectual feat so awesome should be made to serve a purpose so debased. This fact was foremost in the beginning and the ending of my book. Both as symbol and fact, the unlocking of the secrets of physical reality and the psychological penetration of the darkness and huge force at the center of human consciousness are of a piece.

A new synthesis was, in fact, in the making in psychology, a new way of looking at creativity not just in science, not just in art, even not just in personal relationships, but as a universal generative principle in Nature, from the burning of the sun to a child learning to speak.

Putting these insights into words—the writing of a book that others might read—came in two bursts, the first during my year as a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (1958-1959) and the second in 1960-1961 when all sorts of exciting things were happening. During the early part of that year (fall 1960), I helped launch the Harvard Psychedelic Research Project, and in the spring semester, I taught a research seminar for freshmen on "Psychological Problems in Disarmament." In between those times my not-yet-wife Nancy and I got married and our son Francis Charles was conceived. We all went to Europe on the newly commissioned S.S. *Rotterdam* on her maiden voyage out of New York that summer, and I wrote the rest of the book in Paris and at Lake Annecy in France. The book was thus born in happiness and excitement, manifested in the name I gave it. Its optimism, its inclusiveness of opposites, and its grounding in new data were, I think, the reasons for its widespread use and influence.

In my research and writing, I have continued to investigate the psychology of creativity.<sup>1-4</sup>

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2. Barron F & Harrington D M. Creativity, intelligence, and personality. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* 32:439-76, 1981.
3. -----, Creativity. (Kuper A & Kuper J, eds.) *The Social Science Encyclopaedia*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. p. 167-9.
4. Barron F. Bergson and the modern psychology of creativity. (Papanicolaou A C & Gunther P A Y, eds.) *The legacy of Henri Bertrand: toward unification of the sciences*. New York: Gordon & Breach, 1986. (In press.)