Preface

While artistic, literary, and musical creativity are perhaps the most fascinating of all human achievements, their basic brain counterparts remain poorly defined. It is likely that the brain participates as a whole in creativity, which can be defined as the ability to produce new and original works which stimulate interest or appeal esthetically. Creativity is a general feature of all humans, and everyone is indeed 'creative' on numerous occasions during his or her life. On the other hand, only a very limited number of individuals achieve what can be called 'extraordinary creativity', and which refers in particular to an ability to deconstruct established executive habits and tastes leading to truly novel productions, be it in science, art or other domains. When disease, especially brain disease, challenges the capabilities of one of these 'extraordinarily creative' individuals, the changes that consequently occur in their productions provide a unique opportunity to explore the mysteries of creativity, particularly in the artistic field.

Sometimes creativity is lost through disease and sometimes it is modified and occasionally, though more rarely, it may be enhanced or augmented. In the previous volume *Neurological Disorders in Famous Artists* edited by Dr. François Boller and one of the current editors, we presented a large series of famous painters, writers, poets, musicians, and philosophers who had developed some form of neurological dysfunction, and we focused on the influence of these pathologies on their work. We soon realized that several other artists whose style and output changed following a stroke, meningitis, or other cerebral disorder demanded a similar approach, since their personal lives and creative output were enormously modified by their disease.

Mozart, Baudelaire, de Kooning, Proust, Heine, von Bülow, Reuterswärd, Corinth, Füssli, Fellini, Visconti and others are all striking examples of how extraordinary creativity can be challenged and modified or destroyed or restored within the individual drama of disease. There are examples of de novo creativity following cerebral lesion, although we are not aware of any world-famous artist whose creativity first developed subsequent to brain damage. An alteration in the creativity of an artist can provide unique and fresh insights into the complex relationships between cerebral dysfunction and behavior. It may also be useful in better understanding the evolution of certain artists, particularly when the course of a disease corresponds with what is recognized as a new chapter in their work.

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