

Art and psychoanalysis – 15 June 1988

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Speakers:

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Professor Sir Ernst Gombrich

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Sandler I suppose I ought to ask if you are all sitting comfortably, then we can begin. The arrangement today is rather different from the arrangements in the previous Dialogues, in that, in self-defence, I have dispensed with the chairman and will be, I think, rather more in the role of interviewer, than someone who might have unwelcomed questions thrust at him.

We are going to talk today about psychoanalysis and art, but before going onto that I want to first welcome you all in the name of the British Psychoanalytical Society, and secondly to introduce Professor Sir Ernst Gombrich, who is with us today.

Professor Gombrich was born and studied in Vienna and came to this country, I believe, in 1936 and until the War worked at the Warburg Institute. During the War – and this is something which I think is of great interest to us – he worked with the BBC monitoring service and had to listen to broadcasts from abroad with...free-floating attention presumably...?

Gombrich No!

Sandler No?

Gombrich With *great* attention!

Sandler With great attention. Which of course we advise against in our profession [laughter from the audience]. But during that time he became very interested in problems of perception and in the processes involved in making sense out of what was heard. Well, after the War, leaving the BBC monitoring service, Professor Gombrich progressed from being a research fellow at the Warburg, (I think he spent a great deal of time at the Warburg), and became then Director. He was also appointed Professor of the History of the Classical Tradition in

London University and during this time spent time as a Slade Professor at Oxford and at Cambridge and many, many other places and retired eventually. He is now Emeritus, [since] 1976 from the University, (the University throws one out willy nilly at a certain point).

I won't list his numerous honours and honorary degrees and appointments and invitations all over the world, it would take us the whole evening: the prizes and fellowships, the numerous publications in both the history and psychology of art and art appreciation. Certainly in the view of many, and I would very much subscribe to this, he is the greatest living art historian and it this a rare opportunity for us.

I think that there are a number of factors which made Professor Gombrich interested in psychoanalysis, some of them I hope you will tell us about, I would hope that being in the monitoring service of the BBC contributed to it, but I do know that there were other, perhaps more important, forces operating. In 1953 the British Society was honoured by having an Ernest Jones Lecture – a beautiful piece of work, which I would recommend to everyone – from Professor Gombrich, and I think one of the best Ernest Jones Lectures we have had.

Well that is the introduction and now I have the embarrassing task of introducing myself, which of course puts me into conflict, I have to say. I will solve this by saying simply that I am Freud Memorial Professor in the University of London, my Chair is situated at University College London; I am a training analyst at the British Psychoanalytical Society. And one of the reasons – of a number of reasons – I am here today is that I suggested that we invite Professor Gombrich for the Dialogue assuming that he wouldn't accept the invitation, and in that way I could escape the request that was put to me [audience laughter]. Another is, though, that I have had, in that I trained first as a psychologist, a great interest in perception, in the processes of perception, and this of course is an area of interest which I believe that we share. I do want to say that the views that I will put forward in the discussion won't be shared by all my colleagues, but I hope possibly by some of them. There are differences in points of view, and certainly in the application of psychoanalysis to the area which we are going to discuss.

Well let me just end at this point by reminding you that all good analysts start with a quotation from Freud and in *Dostoevsky and Parricide* Freud said 'Before the problem of the creative artist analysis

must, alas, lay down its arms'¹. Well perhaps we can make an attempt to pick the arms up a little bit today. But with that I would like to start by asking Professor Gombrich to say whatever he would like to say as an introduction and perhaps to comment on how psychoanalysis can help us to understand artistic creation and our enjoyment and appreciation of art. Now that will give us an opportunity to talk, I believe, because psychoanalysis has developed since its origin and very recently, and I rather hope that Professor Gombrich has not been able to keep up with all the developments in psychoanalysis, because that will give me an opportunity to say something.

But I know that one of the first influences on Professor Gombrich was that of someone who later became an extremely distinguished psychoanalyst; Ernst Kris, who was Director of the Art Museum in Vienna. But at this point I would hand over to you and ask if you have any introductory comments or if you would like to tell us perhaps about your experiences in Vienna.

Gombrich Certainly.

Thank you. Actually Ernst Kris, if I may be so impolite and correct you, was not the Director of the Art Museum but was the Keeper in the Department of Applied Art. He wrote the catalogue of goldsmith work, he wrote excellent books on intaglios and engraved stones. He was a great expert in the field of goldsmith work and other such. What one today calls minor art. Art of course which was very much represented in this court collection that Vienna preserved in its museum. So he was thoroughly steeped in the practical work of an art historian before he ever turned to a knowledge of psychoanalysis. And I believe this is rather important also for our discussion that here was a practicing art historian who really knew also about the past and did not like general evasions. You started with a quotation from Freud, I if I may, shall start with a quotation from Ernst Kris from his introduction to his *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* when he said 'in discussions on psychoanalysis and art, the tendency to simplify or to abbreviate psychoanalytic thinking is particularly noticeable'. It was of course a polemical remark and he goes on

the structure of the problem which exists while the artist is creating, the historical circumstances in the development of art itself which limits some of his work, determined in one way or another his

¹ Translated from 'Leider muss die Analyse vor dem Problem des Dichters die Waffe strecken,' and cross-referenced with the same quote in S.E. Liedman, *The Postmodernist Critique of the Project of Enlightenment*, Amsterdam, 1997, 72

modes of expression and thus constitutes the stuff with which he struggles in his creation.²

This is a formulation we couldn't easily improve upon and I think it is very important right from the beginning of our discussion to agree that to talk vaguely about 'The Artist' – meaning maybe a Chinese ink painter who is a mandarin, and let us say the stonemasons who did the colossal statues in ancient Egypt – is really an illicit generalisation. Art, or what we so call, has had very many different functions, different statuses in society and I think we must all realise that in this respect we must be a little careful before we formulate a theory which is supposed to apply to practically every maker of an image, writer of a poem, a play or a piece of music. These are very different activities and they were very different in different times. But this is I think something which most people by now realise, but it is a kind of warning with which I wanted to preface our discussion. You asked me about my work with Ernst Kris. Should I go on about this a little?

He had become a psychoanalyst and was of course immensely interested in the aesthetic problems which Freud had raised. He suggested that we might work together on the theory and history of caricature. The model for this, for him, was Freud's book on wit, or the joke, or whatever you would like to call it, and I have learnt immensely from him in what the two fields have in common, and also in their differences, which may come out in our discussion. At the beginning of our discussions, our work, Kris had accepted a rather simplified evolutionist schema. For him caricature was for an outlet for aggression, he saw in it originally the magic act – if you pin a needle into a doll, image-magic in this case – in order to harm an opponent. He was well aware of the survival of this kind of attitude in, let us say, medieval culture: hanging in effigy³, things of that kind, where you could actually see the survival of magic belief in cultural context. It is an immensely interesting fact that what we call personal portrait caricature is indeed a relatively late development in our culture, it comes only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and for him this was originally proof of a progress of the process of civilisation when, instead of magic, aesthetic attitudes took over. I think I should add that when we met again after the War and had seen all the horrors of the War, this optimistic view of a progress of civilisation had worn a little thread-bare and we knew that magic attitudes, primitive attitudes could surface any moment again. But the problem remains of how it came that something which originally was

² E. Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, New York, 1952, 15

³ E.H. Gombrich and E Kris, 'The Principles of Caricature' in E. Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, New York, 1952, 193

sheer aggression became a kind of play, a kind of social institution for laughter and entertainment.

- Sandler Of course this was reflected in his work later on the notion of regression in the service of the ego.
- Gombrich Precisely, a notion from which I have learnt a very great deal. The idea of regression of course means that everybody can turn to more, call it more primitive states, and does occasionally turn to more primitive states, and there is in that respect not so much difference between the so-called savage and the so-called civilized person, only we [ie. the civilized] are more many-layered perhaps. In other words the earlier approach to primitive mentality, of Lévy-Brühl and others, have in all fields become somewhat obsolete. I think this is true to say, and therefore also the schema which we originally used had to be modified if we wanted to go on with our work.
- Sandler Yes. What you say about caricature is very interesting because I think that the tendency within psychoanalysis has been to shift from the idea of everything that is on the surface being a manifestation of one or other of the instinctual drives, or of some mixture of libido and aggression, to greater emphasis now being placed on something which you have mentioned elsewhere, that is the problem-solving aspect of the mind in – well, one has to simplify, as analysts have to simplify – in artistic production, if one can use that term generally. I think we are more aware, as Freud became in 1926 in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, of the role of reality. And if I remember correctly in the quotation that you have given from Kris right next to it he refers to the importance of reality, the reality in which the artist creates, and says that it is often neglected. And he does not mean there, if I remember, the restricted material environment of the artist, but the reality, really the social reality, the conventions, the historical circumstances, in which the artist is operating. One would add of course that there is the so-called psychic reality, the reality of the internal object relationships, as we would say now, I think perhaps Ernst Kris did not use that phrase. And of course we know also that we cannot reduce the motives in psychoanalysis to libido and aggression, but that one of the strongest motivating forces is unpleasant affect, anxiety, pain, the pain of loss, the pain arising from conflict and that ties in with the problem-solving as well.
- Gombrich What we encounter, perhaps I may suppose here, in the history of art, among the works of art which we really treasure, is something which one can quite simply call mastery, and it is this problem of mastery I think which is not always sufficiently addressed. Freud was perfectly aware of it in his discussion of the motives of Michelangelo or of other

work, he had no doubt about the importance of mastery, in fact he was very sceptical about styles or movements, as you know, which he considered not to pay enough attention to skill or mastery, including Expressionism and Surrealism. Freud was, if you like, a reactionary in this respect, in his attitudes to contemporary movements. He considers them, and called them 'mad men', and one of his reasons was certainly that he had imbibed from early on a great respect for the masters, for mastery. So I don't think he can ever be used as an authority for an identification of works of art with pure fantasies or dreams, if there is no mastery in the realisation behind them.

Sandler That brings us of course to another interesting point (and this is an area in which psychoanalysts differ, I think) which is a whole range of attitudes among analysts towards that which is gratified in say a painting, something which the artist may struggle to produce. Clearly there is pleasure in mastery, clearly there is pleasure as you've pointed out in enjoying the symmetry, the dance, the movement, in the relationship of one aspect of the form to another and so on, in a sense, the music of it. There are pleasures Karl Buhler spoke of 'Funktionslust' if you remember, the function pleasure, the pleasure in doing something satisfactorily. It gives I believe a feeling of safety, also [experienced] when one can actually master that which one sets out to master, and this is very important. But where analysts differ is in the interpretation, particularly in the symbolic interpretation, in relation to the painting or any other work of art. The question of meaning, how much of it links with unconscious fantasies (which again is something we emphasise much more nowadays than we did in the past)? How much of the form as well as the content is an expression of unconscious instinctual wishes or unconscious wishes of one sort or another? And the question arises really of what differentiation we can make. There are analysts, and I would number myself among them, who would say that one has to make a clear distinction between skill and artistry, in the sense of creative art, between the content which is conveyed through the use of one's skills, the use of one's craftsmanship, and that which is conveyed by the content of what one is representing. And what I would like to ask really is what your views are about making any sort of distinction between form and content, if you like, between the skill, the craft involved in producing something...and the genius on the one hand of the artist and on the other hand the symbolic significance, the unconscious representation, that finds an allusion in the work of art. I don't know whether you have any comments to make?

Gombrich Perhaps if you allow me I'll dodge the question for a moment and go to another subject which has more to do with form and content and psychological reaction. I have warned you Professor Sandler that

having been a Professor of the History of the Classical Tradition I would read a long passage from Cicero and this is what I am going to inflict on you and the audience because it sums up something which I hinted at in my Ernest Jones Lecture, to which you so kindly alluded, but in fact I did not know at the time that Cicero had put it much better than I had [audience laughter]. He speaks in *De Oratore* on the reaction to certain easy forms and jingles and sweet ways of putting things, and he says:

For it is hard to say why exactly it is that the things which most strongly gratify our senses and excite them most vigorously at their first appearance, are the ones from which we are most speedily estranged by a feeling of disgust and satiety. How much more brilliant, as a rule, in beauty and variety of colouring, are the contents of new pictures than those of old ones! and nevertheless the new ones, though they captivated us at first sight, later on fail to give us pleasure – although it is also true that in the case of old pictures the actual roughness and old-fashioned style are an attraction. In singing, how much more delightful and charming are trills and flourishes than notes firmly held! and yet the former meet with protest not only from persons of severe taste but, if used *too* often, even from the general public. This may be observed in the case of the rest of the senses – that perfumes compounded with an extremely sweet and penetrating scent do not give us pleasure for so long as those that are moderately fragrant, and a thing that seems to have the scent of earth is more esteemed than one that suggests saffron; and that in touch itself there are degrees of softness and smoothness. Taste is the most voluptuous of all the senses and more sensitive to sweetness than the rest, yet how quickly even it is likely to reject anything extremely sweet! Who can go on taking a sweet drink or sweet food for a long time? whereas in both classes things that pleasurably affect the sense in a moderate degree most easily escape causing satiety. Thus in all things the greatest pleasures are only narrowly separated from disgust which makes this less surprising in the case of language.⁴

In other words his psychological approach is really through what one might call – and I want to ask you how much psychoanalysis would agree there – the biological programming of the organism. We are all somehow programmed to like the sweet, the soft, the bright, and after a time we move away from these simple gratifications to more complex ones. The question he does not answer, and what I wanted to ask you, is whether I would be right, from what I have learnt from Ernst Kris, to see in this disgust, this repulsion, of simple

⁴ Cicero, *De Oratore*, translated by H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library, 1940

gratifications, something of a defence against seduction, which so easily happens in what we call sophistication. Perhaps you can also call it sublimation, I am not so sure. In other words there is such a thing as a primitive gratification, which I would not call unconscious: it is the gratification of a child also risen in simple pleasures which are biologically conditioned, and in the moving away where this is the material which isn't used. But it is muted, it is transformed into more complex and more, therefore, intellectually satisfying developments of what a work of art offers us. I think something of these gratifications are always or nearly always present and there is also a social anxiety in liking too much of what is too easy. You get it in pop music and you get it in other simple forms of folk art, you get it in the pearly king, and then the movement of sophistication away from these gratifications seems to me to open a field of research also for the psychoanalyst in the distinction between regression and sophistication and the refinement of which civilisation, culture, exists in one form or another. In nearly all societies I think this refinement of the civilised plays a great role. In Japan, in the tea ceremony or wherever, you have the estimation of the simple form, the rustic form, something that is not gaudy. And you find it, if you like, in this room, you find it in Neoclassicism, you find the reaction against too-simple visual or auditory pleasures again and again in the history of art, and I am not so sure whether the scheme of unconscious and conscious is all that important there, as there are other developmental dynamic reactions which play a part in it.

Sandler I think you raise in this a great many points, let me try and respond to a few of them. I think in line with what you yourself have written elsewhere I would agree absolutely that very often works of art, pictorial representation – for example of primitive gratifications – represent a seduction, an invitation to regress, and this may arise conflict in an individual. I would say that this is unconscious conflict, although people may become aware of it, and that then the turning against it is experienced as a feeling of revulsion. It's too cloying I think, at one point, too saccharin-like perhaps, and so there is the temptation, the seduction. Of course the parallel in the analytic situation is the seduction of the regressive aspect of the transference where say a more primitive feeling of love or hostility or whatever towards the analyst is created and the patient, the analysand, experiences a conflict and perhaps defends against it by rejecting, by having resistance of some sort or another. I think the question of the general structure, the simplicity, that one might get to dislike after a certain point... I think you do say somewhere that the more sophisticated, the more intellectual a person is the more he will fight against seduction in the work of art. But I think that with the influence

of culture, with the influence of what one has learned from one's teachers with the development of the so-called autonomous functions of the ego – and if you recall Kris has spoken there of secondary autonomy, things which derive from conflict perhaps, but become autonomous – that questions of taste and pleasure in certain forms may represent autonomous appreciation, dimensions of appreciation in the individual.

But I do agree very much that the invitation to regress is something which does very, very much influence our liking or disliking of what we see and this may vary from one individual to another; not everyone likes the same picture but there does seem to be a certain commonality in our culture that people can agree on. What it *is* I think we all find very difficult to explain. This leads on to something which has intrigued me very much in the literature and in your own writings and that is the role not simply of the seduction but of the mechanisms that are involved, and you speak of projecting oneself into the picture. My own preference would be to speak in terms of *identifying* with what is in the picture and as you know, clearly, there has been a great deal of writing and controversy about the way in which we identify with what is in it. I always think I have to apologise for this [reference to] pictorial representation because that's my own tendency; other people will think of music, of literature, but I speak about pictures: one would tend to identify and at the same time of course to project (in other words *to attribute*), part of one's self to what is in it, what one sees in it, and at the same time to feel in one's self – and here the question of the kinaesthetic element in identification comes up, to a certain extent controversial – but I believe it is a very strong component in the seduction that you refer to. For example, if one is watching skating, if one is watching horse-riding cowboys one moves with the person one is watching and I believe that every time one sees another person, or thinks of another person, that there is enough evidence to indicate that there is a momentary primary identification – which can be measured electrically, incidentally – in the action-potentials in the muscles with the person that one sees. If you see someone stumble in front of you, you will temporarily, momentarily, right yourself, as if it were yourself, and I think that something of this comes into one's empathy (if one wants to call it that), the empathic identification, the resonance identification, in what one sees. And I am sure it does not only apply to people but also to form as well. That which is comfortable and that which is not comfortable. So there, there is a seduction via the invitation to identify with what one sees. I don't know how that fits with your own view.

Gombrich I am absolutely convinced that this empathic reaction is an absolutely basic one, it has played a part in aesthetics ever since Lipps⁵ whom actually Freud quotes in *Wit* [ie. *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*] and it plays a great part in Wolfflin's theory of architecture – the idea of identifying with a column: with a squat column, a lean column, and all these matters. I think the reaction, I agree, is sometimes painfully strong. There is a painting by Rembrandt, *The Blinding of Samson*, in the Stadel Institute in Frankfurt which I find very hard to look at. It is very painful, you see these lamps thrust against the eyes of Samson, blood, and it is really very unpleasant to see or to look at. You might call that proof of its mastery but maybe a less-good painting would cause a similar reaction. At any rate I entirely agree with you that some sort of dancing with the forms, if you like, plays a part. You can of course train it, you can also refrain from it more or less, but it does constitute an important aesthetic element in our reaction to forms and colours. Though of course the question of colour is different from that of shape. The enjoyment of drawings – there are of course many different [aspects to] this reaction – and certainly the more trained part of the public enjoy the lines drawn by a master and empathise with the speed with which we imagine he has done it...

Sandler You said 'we recreate'? [Gombrich has not said this in the conversation]

Gombrich We recreate what he has done. All of this certainly plays an enormous part in our response, it is not the whole of the response, but it is one of the many elements. And one of the points I think I might stress if you will allow me is that there are always very many elements in the enjoyment of a great work of art, or in the response to a great work of art, because what a great artist does is to combine very many elements and we cannot, therefore, over-simplify. This again if I may give a quotation of which I am very fond, in a letter by Van Gogh, where he writes to his brother – you know there are these wonderful letters to his brother – and his brother was worried that he was drinking too much, and he *was* drinking too much I think, so Van Gogh answers that:

While painting this is not possible. The mental effort of balancing the six essential colours, red, blue, yellow, orange, violet, green. This is work and cool calculation, when one's mind is utterly stretched like that of an actor on the stage in a difficult part, when one

⁵ Theodor Lipps.

has to think of a thousand different things at a time within half an hour.⁶

and then he says

Afterwards one might relax and drink but I'd like to see a drunkard before his canvas or on the stage.

Which is perfectly what we were talking about, the act of concentration that mastery requires is one which, in a way, the beholder also should share. I think that the identification of artistic creation with regression which is rather rife, has been rather rife, in the twentieth century, and which was *not* Freud's opinion for anyone at any time – but for which perhaps certain vulgarised psychoanalysis may be partly responsible – contradicts this need to do something with one's impulse rather than to rely simply on one's impulse and on one's regression.

Sandler Yes I think the need to do something with one's impulse, whatever that impulse may be, is tremendously important. I think one could look at the artist – the creative artist – as having like everyone else a set, a constant set of preconscious (but by preconscious I mean it is not necessarily accessible to consciousness), fantasies which represent solutions, which involve projections, identifications, displacements and so on, in an attempt to solve the impulse, and the conflict arising from the impulse, or arising in the relation to reality. And that for the artist this may not be enough simply to have the fantasies, it may do for some of us, but I think that for many people there is a need to *actualise*, a word which I think is insufficiently used in English, although in German and French is used much more: to make real, to turn into reality that which one is thinking about or wishing or fantasising. And in this process of actualising one can then anchor the solution that has been created in one's mind, the fantasy solution, in the outside. But, of course, it doesn't – and this is the point that you have stressed, and others, and perhaps where many analysts have gone wrong – it does not represent a picture of the fantasy, what we get are *allusions* to the unconscious fantasy, allusions to the conflict and that raises the whole question then of communication, which is another area we probably don't have time to talk about, but it ties in with this question of identification. What I did want simply to add to the points we were discussing is that not only is there a primitive resonant identification with what one perceives but there is also the tremendous reassurance of the disidentification. So the blinding of

⁶ Cross-referenced with the same quote used in Ernst Gombrich, *Ideals and Idols: Essays on Values in History and in Art*, Oxford, 1979

Samson is happening to Samson and not to one's self, so after that moment of painful identification there is the reassurance that it is him and it isn't me.

And that is one of the reasons that one can tolerate such painful pictures around one, I believe, because one can put a frame around them, and this is something which enters into mourning processes, into... Well, there is the whole dimension of people who have suffered traumas and who, in the course of suffering the trauma have identified with the aggressor... The need really to distance themselves from the aggressor and to see the horrors (or the boxed-in, framed horrors) from time to time, to be able to reassure themselves that it is not themselves, but someone else; to get it out of themselves in a sense.

Gombrich If I may continue a little along that line, of course what psychoanalysis has taught us is in this respect a continuity of the oeuvre of certain artists. Not of all artists, there are more or less changeable artists, but sometimes there is perhaps a childhood experience or something that turns up again and again in work, and it depends very much on the freedom the artist has to realise what you call his fantasies are – to actualise [them]. If he is employed as an icon painter in Ancient Byzantium the likelihood that he has a lot of freedom to do this is very small, in other words he is a craftsman who works to commissions and we must never forget that this is really rather the norm than the exception. What distinguishes a great icon painter from the less-great one is sensitivity to nuance: not only mastery but the mastery of the medium, the ability to do more with his medium and I think within this continuity this is the other aspect which must be attended to. I wanted to tell you, because it is not absolutely known to everyone, that in the *Lives of the Artists* by Vasari there is a curious anecdote or remark about a fourteenth century painter called Parri Spinelli and Vasari tells us – Vasari's *Lives* written in 1550 I should perhaps explain – and he tells us about this artist who lived 150 years before him, that in his youth that he was once attacked by some armed man – or members of his family were – over a law suit. Some people came to his rescue and he suffered no harm, but it is said that nevertheless the fear that he experienced caused him to make his figures leaning to one side and nearly always looking frightened [audience laughter]. So you have the psychoanalysis of Parri Spinelli in Vasari. However, I think if you read the whole life of that artist you will also see how Vasari admired that artist for certain innovations, contributions he made to the fresco technique, to the facility of his frescoes and so on. So he would not identify his whole work with the result of this experience, he would only say his work was *modified* by that experience because he remained a great fresco painter of the

fourteenth century, before and after the attack. So if you go into this question of continuity and modification and motivation of an artist I think this duality seems to me very important also. Certainly in many cases you may find continuities which are not seen from outside but which exist in the whole creative work – in the oeuvre – of one man, but this is within the role he plays in society.

I venture to talk about it in the case of Constable. In my book on *Art and Illusion* where I use Constable always as a witness I talk a lot about Constable's attitudes to his art, to painting, and all that, and I also towards the end ask whether we can say a little more about this motivation in becoming the kind of painter he did become, and if I find the passage... I have just found it. I quote from a remark he made to his friend on a walk in East Anglia:

The sound of water escaping from mill-dams, etc., willows, old rotten planks, slimy posts, and brickwork: I love such things. I shall never cease to paint such places, painting is with me but another word of feeling and I associate my careless boyhood with all that lies on the banks of this tower, those scenes made me a painter.

And the observant Leslie⁷ tells us even more, a piece of information as I say in that book which needs no further elucidation for those who know how to assess the categories and equivalences of the dreaming mind.

In passing some slimy posts near an old mill Constable said I wish you could cut off and send their tops to me [laughter from the audience].

So that we have here a very strange revelation of a very early inclination. But of course if, as I also say in that book, if that had been all he would have been a mad man collecting slimy posts all his life [laughter from the audience] and not Constable. The way in which he transformed and modified his impulses in seeing, in landscapes and in the tradition of landscapes, things that appealed to him, *that* I think is what makes the question of this continuity only interesting. In other words Constable played on the instrument of landscape painting as he had inherited it and as he modified it and he made new discoveries which found a response, an echo if you like, in his unconscious. But without the mastery of playing with the medium and with the motifs of watermills which had been painted in Holland in the seventeenth century, without that it would never have happened. And I think, the

⁷ Charles Robert Leslie (1794-1859) was a friend of Constable's, and his biographer. See C.R. Leslie, *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable*, 1843

more I think, about the psychological questions, the more this playing with the medium, experimenting with the medium 'til you find an inner response is of enormous importance. In other words what we call the creative process does not happen from scratch – a simple translation of some early experience or motivation or instinct into the medium – it is the master again who works *within* the medium and I have talked in the essay I wrote about Freud's aesthetics of a *centripetal* idea of creativity, it is not the centrifugal projection *into* the work of art, it is the finding, the discovery. Just as it is in the wit: you *find* the joke, or the pun, in the language, if it weren't there you could not find it, it must be discovered, and if it weren't sort of pre-figured in the language – let us say in the language of English or German – [it would be impossible as] you cannot make the same pun in different languages, you cannot realise the same motivations in different media.

If I may, because time is short, and in a way I promised myself to bring this matter to our discussion. I have learnt a lot from a beautiful sonnet which I. E. Richards wrote towards the end of his life in a series of poems he called *Ars Poetica* and there he speaks of the creativity not of the artist but of language, and if I may read it, I am very fond of it, it goes like this:

*Our mother tongue, so far ahead of me,
Displays her goods, hints at each bond and link,
Provides the means, leaves it to us to think,
Proffers the possibles, balanced mutually
To be used or not, as our designs elect
To be tried out, taken up or in or on,
Scrapped or transformed past recognition,
Though she sustain, she's too wise to direct.*

*Ineffably regenerative, how does she know
So much more than we can? How hold such store
For our recovery, for what must come before
Our instauration, that future we will owe
To what? To whom? To countless of our kind,
Who, tending meanings grew Man's unknown Mind.*

Man's unknown mind, in other words the tradition of an art, plays an enormous part in this process of discovery and the question really, if you like, is a critical question: whether psychoanalysis has always asked the right questions in confronting artistic creations. Not that the diagnostic point is uninteresting but what is really more interesting is how within a great tradition which a Rembrandt, or a Michelangelo or

a Mozart inherited, such miracles are possible which are not possible if you start, I repeat, from scratch.

Sandler I think the poem you read really illustrates your point beautifully and in a way renders one rather speechless because if one wants to make the same point in a non-poetic way it does not sound that good.

Gombrich [Chuckles] That's not so easy...

Sandler But I would say of course that what is produced from a psychoanalytic point of view has to be regarded as a compromise formation, and not just a compromise between unconscious wishes, unconscious fantasies, but between those and all the other things which you've mentioned. Analysts of course have a selective attention, when listening to a patient one tends to whittle away the things which are regarded as irrelevant. The schemata which the analyst has in his or her mind in listening to the patient make for selective attention and for the emphasising [of certain things] – and of course makes these things stand out for one – as one looks for the threads related to infancy, related to current conflict, related to perverse impulses of one sort or another, to the transference and so on. But I think that analysts, many analysts, have gone overboard in trying to give an interpretation of unconscious meaning to pretty well everything they can find in the work of art. I think possibly we agree on that, although I have to assure the audience we have not had a prior discussion.

Gombrich [Laughs] If I may add an anecdote about Kris here, there was an article in a journal trying to analyse the famous painting *Angelus* by Millet in which the fact was mainly stressed that the man has a hoe and that this is a sexual symbol, he is digging in the earth, and I tried to make Kris read it but he refused, he just thought it was so silly he should not waste time on it. In other words his main message to me and to others as you may remember was always that it was always more complicated than this vulgarised use of the history of art suggests.

Sandler Of course one can't really say that Freud did a vulgarised abuse of psychoanalysis, but nevertheless he allowed himself to go to town in spite of his own warnings to others [chuckles] in his interpretation of Michelangelo's *Moses* and...

Gombrich Well if I may say so the interpretation of Michelangelo's *Moses* is not psychoanalytic, it is an attempt to read into the posture of this figure exactly what he thinks Moses did before and after. No art historian would look at the figure in this way because for Michelangelo Moses – among many figures of prophets – was a man who wrote the tables of

the law and is marked by certain attributes and had a certain posture, and the question 'what has he just done?', 'what will he do next?' probably is not very relevant. But Freud was aware of the fact that he was looking at it...

Sandler Yes, he qualified it...

Gombrich He qualified it.

Sandler Also with Leonardo of course...

Gombrich Well with Leonardo that is a slightly more embarrassing episode, it is embarrassing not necessarily because it was Freud's fault, he read in the translation by Mary Hatzfeld a passage from Leonardo that in his youth he had been visited by a vulture. But there was no vulture, there are no vultures in Tuscany, [audience laughter] and the whole thing was a mistranslation which misled Freud very much. But I don't think we need to waste a lot of time on that, because that is just too bad.

Sandler But it does show the ingenuity of psychoanalysis [audience laughter] and of course I am quite sure that my colleagues here will immediately have thought not just of Constable's castration preoccupation but also of... Well, those belonging to a rather different school of thought from my own would see his wish to bite off the nipple in the reference to the post, again that is the selective attention, that's when one pricks up one's ears and hears the things which are important for one.

I was interested in what you said now about the centripetal as well as the centrifugal process because of course analysts have always taken the comparison between the dream and the work of art as their starting point, or most of them have, and one can say the dream is centrifugal. You have wishes, one sort or another, conflicts about these and then in the dream you have, with the use of defence mechanisms, identifications, displacements, projective identifications and so on, an expression really of the latent content in the manifest content. But really this now we don't accept any more, I would say most analysts [would not accept], the idea that wish-fulfilment is a discharge of energy and I think we are moving much more in the direction of centripetal processes in a sense, that the function of the dream is the looking at the dream, I would say, so that one can see something. I think the rapid eye movement during dreaming have something to do with that, that really if one dreamt but did not consciously experience the dream at the time it really would not have much use because I don't think much energy is discharged, and I think that I would speculate that unconsciously the dreamer is aware of, can decode, that

which has been made plausible, made acceptable in the dream. That takes us into the whole question of the unconscious of the artist speaking to the unconscious of the observer and so on which is another issue, but I think that the point which I know you have emphasised about the dialogue, so to speak, which the artist has with his production, the back and forth movement, is tremendously important. What of course is so interesting is the parallel between the artistic creation and what the scientist does, the making and matching that you refer to in *Art and Illusion*. You have a schema, you have a model, an image if you like, which you apply to the outside, but it does not fit quite so it comes back, it modifies the schema, or the scientific theory, if you like. One may use more controlled methods of experimentation and there is a back and forth and this contributes to the dialectic of development of one's science and so on. But it is exactly the same process I believe which occurs in psychoanalysis, and to my knowledge this extension has not been made. But when one listens to a patient one starts off with a set of schemata which derives from one's training from one's past experience, identification, one's teachers and so on and then you know something about the specific patient perhaps from the history and he starts to talk – my children tell me I have always to say 'he or she' – he or she starts to talk and the analyst begins to modify the more general schema about the patient on the basis of what is experienced, but one needs to have that space to allow for the modification. Some people cannot allow themselves to modify their internal schemata, others can, and this touches then on the question then of creativity which I think has to do with bringing aspects of one's unconscious models together which were not brought together before and allowing them to come to the surface in a way which is plausible. Scientific theories, but also analytic understandings – if they are creative – these of course can be turned, not always, but can very often be turned into interpretations, some of which I think do qualify as works of art. Perhaps works of imaginative art in some cases, but I think works of art like scientific theories appropriate, having a good fit and having the effect that one wants them to have on the patient.

So it seems to me there is a great parallel there which I find very exciting – that one can move from this to and fro applying and modifying in the artistic area, to science, to the psychoanalytic process itself.

Gombrich Yes I agree with you entirely that flexibility, trial and error, modification, self criticism, which is an important point in all that, plays a part of course in scientific endeavours and in artistic endeavours. I sometimes think that the word 'creativity' is much misused when it is applied wholesale to every kindergarten scene.

The splashes of a child are very charming but they are very different from Rembrandt and the difference is also important to stress. The control element, in other words. And the same is true, let us say in Piaget's view of mental development: you have something about this flexibility, the adaptation of schema to new experiences and surely this is part of the way in which the human mind, and possibly even to some extent the animal mind, reacts to new situations. It must, otherwise we would not survive. The adaptation, in other words, to new stimuli, to new situations must play a great part. Again I would say that how this activity or this element operates within various periods or styles must be immensely different. I mean [if] somebody asked an architect who works in a period where houses have a certain characteristic to work with very different kinds of problem-solutions in another situation... And again our icon painter or whatever, as he has not so much leeway as the twentieth century painter has; even he is restricted by social and other circumstances. We all know that nowadays, strangely enough, many artists are tied down to a type of manner because their dealer says 'if you go too far away from this nobody will recognise your work and nobody will want to buy it'. In other words it is a very strange type of roleplaying, which I think we must take seriously too. People can become the prisoners of their own personality, in actors this can happen and in others too.

Sandler In psychoanalysis also.

Gombrich Kris has written about this question of roleplaying in the artist and in other activities, the way in which we in other feedback situations – by the way, another centripetal – once you have established yourself you have to live up to certain expectations and cannot easily switch to an entirely different expectation unless you feel very safe, that comes into your field of safety. Some people can feel safe enough to surrender the image which other people have of them and others feel they have to live up to it, [as is] the case in art and possibly even in science. 'Why do you meddle in medieval history this is not your field, you know?', and some people's anxiety will prevent certain scholars from going outside that field because this is not where they feel at home. So I am sure that this is very important: psychological constraints play a part in the play of flexibility within an oeuvre of a scientist or of an artist.

Sandler Yes, Thomas Kuhn of course has drawn attention to the...

Gombrich Paradigm...

Sandler ...yes, as a factor in inhibiting development until one gets a revolution in science.

I think that the time has come to throw the discussion open to anyone who wants to comment or ask questions. I have to explain something about the system for those of you not familiar with it. You will see a button in front of you. If you want to speak you should press the button with the fingers of one hand and I would appreciate it if you raised the other hand in the air as well so that I know approximately where you are. The number of your seat gets flashed on to this apparatus in pecking order, in order of quickness, speed of pressing the button, and then it's... Ah, as I am functioning also as controller of this, it is up to me to either switch you off or press the button, to give the number of the seat to indicate to the technicians that they can switch on your microphone. When the microphone goes on a little red light will appear. We will try to avoid having more than one person speaking at the same time. So there it is. Who would like to begin?

We are asked by *my* controller to ask you to give your name, say who you are before you speak, and I'll try to remember to remind you of that if you have forgotten. So there you are. We now wait for someone to take the plunge. Please would you press your button. Number 67.

Audience Well I will take the plunge as nobody else is willing. You talked about art as expressing not only the creativity of the artist but the creativity of language.

Sandler Could you tell us your name?

Audience Kenneth Bruter. I am a Professor of philosophy in California. You mentioned not only the creativity of the artist but perhaps more importantly the creativity of language. Which reminds me of the aesthetic of Martin Heidegger who talks about the artist expressing the unspoken, and language expressing the unspeakable, and that this is somehow a quite mysterious process. And it seems to me within psychoanalysis... I find it difficult to find the place where... what is the source of this new meaning, of the new connectiveness of this, the beauty of language, the beauty of art, where does that arise? Does it arise out of the reality principle? I mean do we have to become mystics to discover the source of beauty?

Gombrich Wherever you find it, I don't think you will find it in Martin Heidegger [audience laughter]. However, I think is that so mysterious? Have we all not seen beauty? I mean we see beauty in nature, we see beauty notoriously in a beautiful sunset, in a young radiant face, where is the problem there? We don't need to be mystics, we have to acknowledge that we are, if you like, biologically conditioned into certain responses. I have sometimes said that we are

phototropic animals, we are not photophobic like termites who crawl away when the light comes, we turn towards the light, all these are biological reactions but I don't think in a sense they are so strange. How these very simple responses, about which we talked for a moment, transmute more and more into more complex ones is certainly mysterious but I don't think you must become a mystic in order to speak of them, as I say certainly you needn't read Heidegger for it.

Sandler Well I think that psychoanalysts are in the same boat. Perhaps it was Freud's emphasis on the theory of psychic determinism which has led analysts to tend to try to explain *everything*, but I think this is a point at which they really ought to take care. I think that we know many of the factors and we have heard some of them, which enter into things feeling good, feeling enjoyable and so on, but the ultimate factors that operate of course are still a mystery but the fact they are a mystery does not make us mystics, otherwise every scientist would be a mystic.

Gombrich May I add there, we talk grandly about art but we do not talk so grandly about food. I mean there are – or drink or things – there are enjoyment in the world of the senses which nobody denies or doubts...

Sandler ...but the cooks speak about art...

Gombrich ...the cooks are right in speaking about the art of cookery in a certain sense [audience laughter], so are the landscape gardeners or dancers. Many other media are engaged on creating enjoyment, I do not doubt that for a moment, [nor] that this enjoyment is probably or possibly confined to human beings and would not appeal to tigers. I admit it may not appeal to people arriving from Mars, they may not have these responses of phototropic, or enjoyment of rhythm, or other things and may be utterly puzzled when they go to the National Gallery but that we must sort of accept – that art is for us.

Sandler Very interesting because for the mathematicians who will rave about the elegance of the solution, which of course is incomprehensible to the rest of us, and yet they see beauty, and talk about it...

Gombrich Very much so. I recently received a prize together with a famous mathematician and he talked after that and he said he can perhaps explain what he's doing but he could never explain why it is so wonderful to do it. [Audience laughter]

Sandler As a psychoanalyst I feel prompted to reassure Professor Gombrich that we will be having dinner afterwards. [Audience laughter]

Anyone with any food for thought? Please. Have you pressed your button? Number 64.

Audience Yes, it strikes me that it is more than just the pleasure principal that creates art, which is where we are at now it seems, but that perhaps psychoanalysis would have something to say about the process of sublimation which seems to be relevant.

Sandler Yes would you give your name Mrs Arundale, please.

Audience Jean Arundale.

Gombrich Would you answer first? I know you have written about sublimation and I remember you saying that learning to ride a bicycle is not sublimation but riding it may be! [Audience laughter]

Sandler I think the definition of sublimation is – and the theory of sublimation is – a very difficult area, because people have confused the development of skills which have become autonomous on the one hand, with the activities which theoretically, (certainly in the old days), were supposed to render something crude and instinctual – sublime. Lifted to a higher level. Of course painting was seen as a wonderful sublimation, if you worked with clay of course you were sublimating your anal erotic impulses and so on. Now I think we tend much less to talk that way, but one of the things that is so confusing is that people who are very artistic, and I use the term knowing it's a generalisation, will very often be the people who allow themselves instinctual gratification to a greater degree than most other people. One cannot always say that it is a drive, a sexual or an aggressive drive that is being transformed into something sublime, but I think that if we think about sublimations we have to think, and this will tie in perhaps with one or two of the things that we discussed, of the way in which in using all these other things: the media, the autonomous factors, the function pleasure, the mastery, and so on, one can actualise a wishful fantasy. So that the person doing the activity which we might well call a sublimation – and it is a very elastic concept it is true – one would say at the same time there is the unconscious making real, in a coded way, of the unconscious wishful fantasy, whether it is a sexual fantasy, a fantasy of mastery, an Oedipal fantasy of some sort, or an aggressive fantasy. And if this has social value we tend to call it a sublimation, but it is a problematic area.

I would like to take the opportunity to refer to something which Freud spoke about in the *Interpretation of Dreams* which may be relevant to the whole topic we are discussing, where he spoke of gratifying an impulse, and he was talking of the oral drive of the

infant through the obtaining of an identity of perception (Wahrnehmungsidentität). The feedback there – more than one sense of course – of experience, the actual experience of that which is wished for, gives the gratification. He came to a theory of gratification which he put aside in moving to the energy theory, the energy-discharge theory which was not really compatible with it. I think we have to come back to that view – he did refer to it again briefly in 1915 and then dropped it – but I think if we can create, even in disguised form, that which we wish to feel is real that is the way wish fulfilment comes about. And *that* I would say is the way that wish fulfilment, the making real of a compromise formation solution, will enter into various forms of artistic production. However, one has to couple that with a warning not to do wild analysis of everything that the artist produces and to interpret it all in terms of reconstructing the childhood or (as is usual) the history that we know or reconstruct for the artist. I don't know if that is any answer to your question but it triggered off some association.

Gombrich Perhaps if one might add that the problem of the two questions I raised remains, it may be entirely true that certain activities, let us say Constable's way in which he painted is to some extent a sublimation but what interests us in Constable isn't *that*. That is to say, if the theory of the human mind you present is valid then this must be true of everybody – that our activities have an element of childhood. But then we want to ask other questions of what Einstein did than what he did in his childhood. There is here the reality principal of enormous importance: was he a mad man who thought that everything was relative or was he the greatest scientist who could point to a flaw in the Newtonian system?

Sandler Well people seem to be a little hesitant, there is really no need to be, the silly questions are always the best ones. [Laughter]

The lady in green, number 59 I think.

Audience My name is Celia Reid, I am a psychotherapist and a painter, and perhaps I am about to ask the first silly question, I don't know. But I wanted to ask you to say a bit more about the artist's relationship with the medium that he uses, which both has a life of its own, and must be allowed to have a life of its own, and is under his control.

Gombrich I agree, if I may answer, this is an absolutely vital question. I think I told you before that I am not terribly fond of speaking about the 'The Artist' but if we accept this for the moment, it is certainly true that any artist worth his salt is in love with his medium and constantly interacts with his medium. That is to say, the experimentation which I mentioned, the trying-out of a medium, can tell him what he can get

out of his medium. That is really what is going on, in periods at least, where this is allowed and possible, where there is this degree of freedom. And whether you speak of ancient Chinese ink painting – with this incredible mastery of calligraphy in China – or of acrylic, you will always find this. I am sure that such artists dream within and of their medium, they live in it, it lives for them.

Sandler I think from a psychoanalytic point of view, one could perhaps put it that the medium and the product become an extension both of the self and the objects to which the artist relates. And that, going back to sublimation, perhaps one of the things which is necessary to define an activity as a sublimation is that the artist, if one may use the term, has a *relation* to what he produces. The person who only on impulse, from time to time, paints and doesn't look after brushes and clean up the studio and so on, and just leaves it in a mess, and does not systematically *relate* to the activity, even when he does not feel like it, I would say is not sublimating. I would say that it is necessary to be able to relate to the activity as if it were to a love-object, which I think it fits in with what Professor Gombrich was saying...

Gombrich Of course again one generalising is dangerous, [as] I think Hokusai moved out of every studio when it was too messy and moved into another, [audience laughter] and Beethoven did something a little similar. In other words there are ways in which people come to terms with the problems of their craft but even so it is surely true that this has an enormous meaning even if there is an attraction and repulsion involved...

Sandler ...Of course some people treat their objects this way...[laughter] There was someone else I think, number 84. Your name please.

Audience My name is Carol Hughes and I am a trainee child psychotherapist and I was thinking about what you brought up Professor Sandler about the dialogue between the artist and the work that went on, and I was thinking about those of us that work with children and I see there are some art therapists here as well – people who use art in the process of doing psychotherapy. And it started me on a train of thought really, which became quite interesting: there is a dialogue that is going on between, say, the child and the work going on, but there is also someone else, which is me as the therapist. And I was thinking about a girl that I see who is really very, very despairing and very hopeless, and thinking of one particular drawing that she did, a felt-tip drawing, which was the back of her head facing just a chasm of blackness stretching ahead, and I was thinking that even though that was a hopeless and despairing drawing there was an element of something in it which was about reaching someone else. Or a sense of

hope of a relationship – and that by drawing it someone would be seeing it, and I was thinking that a lot of psychoanalytic thought is moving away from perhaps straight sublimation and things like that but about primacy of objects and object relationships and that there is in her most despairing moment, her drawings are expressing some hope that there is someone, a relationship that she can strive for. Perhaps not a whole object but some kind of relatedness and I was wondering if that wasn't some element in the process of art production that makes art, even the most despairing artworks that one looks at, quite transcending, or lifting or enlightening of something. If one thinks of Munch and *The Scream* there is something about it, even though it is a despairing image, is it something which is touching on some kind of element of hope or hope of relatedness in some way?

Sandler I was very impressed in what you said by your pointing, among other things, to the possible effect of the therapist intervention in this dialogue and that this might have an effect on the person painting, or doing something else. The parallel there which immediately came to my mind was how we tend nowadays to think not so much in terms of initially what went on in the past if we want to make an interpretation, but we are very concerned with *what is going on now* in the patient very much more. And what you talk about refers to an awareness of something that is occurring in the present in the patient, say the reaching out for the object. Now I think from one point of view, from the point of view of it being a work of art one would have to say it needs to fulfil certain other conditions, some of which we can specify, some not, and which we have talked a bit about. But from the point of view of it having meaning to the art therapist let us say, I am sure that through such processes as identification with what is *in* the picture... Certainly there is a link between colours and affects and the whole of the Rorschach is based on the interpretation of colour responses based on this. Clearly there is some sort of connection there, there are all sorts of hidden messages, non-subliminal, some of them not at the centre of attention, non-verbal cues which will communicate something to the observer. Now this is not to say that everything in the patient's unconscious is understood by the psychoanalytically-orientated observer but I think there will be bits here and there which will come through and will communicate themselves in an affective way and will convey this sort of thing you have spoken about. I don't know whether you agree with that?

Gombrich Well I am sure I must agree, the only question is, or the only marginal note I shall like to make is the kind of situation you describe is very much one with which the student of art history isn't concerned. That is to say the situation in the nursery class of the creation of this image,

it is something totally different from a Florentine workshop of the fifteenth century, and the two shouldn't be confused as they sometimes are. The question of the influence of the therapist or teacher on the children has always interested me very much. If you look at the published work of the first reformer of art education, Cizek, in Vienna, one of the first, before the First World War – I have such a folder at home – he was supposed to let the children work quite freely with what they imagined. It looks to a degree Art Nouveau for us now, [so] that it is really ridiculous. In other words they were of course guided by his taste and their surroundings, what else should they be? I once was shown the work of children in an American Museum class, and I looked at the group and said strange they look exactly like German Expressionist painting, and the person who took me around and yes the teacher is actually German. You see, the way in which it gets through, it may not be verbal at all, it may just be an encouraging nod or perhaps the length at which the teacher looks at one of the drawings with a smile which guides... Children I believe are very sensitive to approval and disapproval and they may know exactly what is going on and that is part of the message of course.

Sandler

Of course, we do know that analysts who are interested in dreams have patients who produce tons of dreams. And Klein analysts who produce breasts, and more orthodox analysts have patients who produce phallic symbols and so on in their dreams, and certainly the little nods and noises from behind the couch have a reinforcing effect I have no doubt. On the other hand this is a question really affecting the style, if one can distinguish it from the content of what is brought, and I think it's the content really that we have been concerned with.

The framework... In child therapy of course one is very pleased because children allow themselves to draw so often, and we can see their current preoccupations because we know the child and we know the sorts of preoccupations and so on that children have, so we can interpret something, perhaps say something to the child about a conflict. I think we are much more limited with an adult where there is much more constraint, much more of a framework around to inhibit and disguise that which is brought. So of course part of one's therapeutic work is to get people to loosen up, I believe also that art teachers do the same thing. I remember having art lessons, and the Professor, as he was called, whose usual comment on my drawing was 'very interesting', which was not all that encouraging. But one of the things I remember right at the beginning was he said don't just draw in the corner, go right across the page. This encouragement to be free, of course, one tries to get in the analytic situation with children and with adults of course in what one conveys.

We have time for a question or two, I think you were next actually.
Number 35.

- Audience I am Hugh Davies, I am a paediatrician, so perhaps I am carrying on the theme of childhood. I just wanted to toss out the idea that I think the observer's reaction to a picture and education is particularly important, and perhaps I can illustrate this also by an anecdote. I work with children with cystic fibrosis and one of the things that kills them is a particular germ, and we got one of our children to draw this germ and she drew a huge, big, black blob with a green ring on the outside and to me that picture said more than a lot of other pictures. To me it was a work of art and it summarised the desperation that this child had, the battle she was having with this particular infection.
- Sandler There must be something in the desperation, in the energy, that people put into depicting things which adds to this mysterious element.
- Gombrich May I add to this, this raises precisely the question to which you also alluded, Professor Sandler. If I saw this painting and did not know about the situation of the child, what would it really convey to me? This is a very important question, the question of communication about which we have not yet spoken a lot and will have probably have little time to do. I once asked a class when I taught at the Slade to draw something on the blackboard or whatever it was – on the easel – and all the students in the seminar should try to find out what it conveyed. And there was of course, perhaps not surprisingly, total divergence of interpretation, it turned out that the student had tried to convey a headache, but nobody guessed a headache, it is not possible...
- Sandler The question the analyst would ask is would some of the people have got headaches? [Audience laughter]
- Gombrich I think that it is quite easy to guess a headache if you have a paired question, 'is it a pleasant dream or a headache?' Then of course immediately once you have binary – or even three (there are experiments of this kind which have been made) – it becomes progressively more difficult the more alternatives you put to the subjects. If there are two, it is often very easy to say which of the two it is, but out there in the void I think it is not possible.
- Sandler I think this is a very important point isn't it, a very interesting one, the whole mental set that one has when one looks at something. Is there an artistic quality, a quality of beauty over and above the context? I think that's a question that has come up.

The lady...will you press your button again, number 33?

- Audience Iris Fudge, I am a nurse. I was very interested in this question that the child who was painting was expressing some hope and what came into my mind were the pictures of Goya's Black Period in which, to my mind, there does not appear to be any sublimation whatsoever and I wondered if you could speak a little bit about those pictures and how they fitted into Goya's life and what they represented.
- Gombrich I am afraid I don't know. I mean the paintings are immensely gripping, immensely depressive, he painted them for his own house. Goya was certainly, I can't venture on the diagnosis, but something like a manic-depressive, he must have been, and he went through various periods of mental distress and this must have been one of them. But whether we really know what exactly it was in his mind, after all it was also in the period of Romanticism, though not quite the height of it: of *Weltschmerz*, of Byron, all the dwelling on the sad aspects of the world, were not confined to Goya in this sense. So again there may be a cultural element there but it is certainly not the only one.
- Sandler The question is an interesting one from the point of view of sublimation because of course many artists have put depressive affect in their pictures and we value these pictures as works of art even though we recognise the gloom and despondency in the picture. The question is what is sublimation? Is it the skill in the painting and the capacity to depict this in a way which will last, or is it that here is a representation of an underlying mood, an underlying feeling, is that the sublimation? I would say the sublimation would be the former rather than the latter, that the development of the capacities, and the relationship to them in the interest in the painting – which someone like Goya had highly developed – became the vehicle then for communicating something which was preoccupying him. We might do this with doodling on a piece of paper and you would not call it a sublimation.
- Gombrich But he communicated it more or less to himself. It was *not* a commissioned work.
- Sandler Which raises this whole question of the audience. Is there an unseen audience in such a case? And of course the analysts among us would say that there are the internal objects for the audience.
- Gombrich Of course.
- Sandler Number 15.

- Audience David Morris, paediatrician, since we are talking on art and psychoanalysis I wonder if the panel, would like to comment on Winnicott as a psychoanalyst using his squiggle form which is something quite unique and I would like to hear your comments on squiggling and Winnicott.
- Gombrich I was part of a group called *The Image Group*⁸ which met regularly, and often in Winnicott's⁹ home. I enjoyed that very much, Adrian Stokes was of that group, Anton Ehrenzweig was, and a number of other people, but I cannot identify exactly what you meant with your question. I mean, he was a very understanding and intelligent commentator on papers we read to each other. But could you perhaps explain.
- Audience Shall I explain or shall you?
- Sandler Perhaps we could both. But please go ahead.
- Audience Well, Winnicott used a particular form of art in his relationship to the child where he would squiggle something and then get the child to squiggle with him and this became known as Winnicott's Squiggling.
- Gombrich Ah, I see, I didn't know it.
- Sandler I think it was a very useful technique of course because in a way by doing the initial squiggle I think that a licence was given and a framework for the child to be freer in completing the picture than the child might otherwise be, and of course then he related to this and interpreted it and this was then called the Squiggle Technique.
- Audience I think it was actually the artist in Winnicott coming out, personally.
- Sandler I think we have to stop now, looking at the clock. It remains only for me to thank Professor Gombrich and all of you for this afternoon. I hope that you have got something out of it, I feel certainly I have a great deal, I hope it has not been a waste of time for Professor Gombrich?
- Gombrich Thank you very much.
- Sandler I think we should indicate our appreciation in our usual way.
[Applause] **End of interview**

⁸ This is a mismemory, it seems, because Gombrich was actually part of a group called the *Imago Group*, also known as simply *Imago*, founded 1953 by Adrian Stokes and Robert Still. See the Gombrich Estate in the Warburg Archives, Stokes-Gombrich correspondence.

⁹ Further research has suggested this may also be a mismemory. No mention is found of Winnicott anywhere else in evidence of the Imago Group. Could he be mixing him up with the analyst R. Money-Kyrle, a known member of Imago, and a regular host of the group's meetings.