The creative genius has long been an object of awe, fear and envy; perhaps none but the "sinner" can rival him as a recipient of interest. He has been alternately sanctified as a God-inspired prophet, reviled as a sinner who bargains his soul for a demonic power and feared as a madman who fashions the twisted images of his mind into works of art or science.

In recent years there has been considerable interest demonstrated by psychiatrists, behavioral scientists and educators in studying the various aspects of the creative process. Attempts have been made to define the process, to enumerate the steps essential to its functioning and to devise methods of testing individuals for their creative potentiality. Unfortunately, theorizing and research upon the creative process have too often taken place within one of the various behavioral disciplines with little attempt to integrate the experience and conceptualizations of others in related fields. A unified explanation of the creative process still eludes our understanding.

It should be noted at this juncture that the creative process is not restricted to the production of works of art alone. One must admit anyone as a creator who perceives a new unity in the flux of nature and fashions this insight into a permanent expression of his understanding.

This paper attempts to present an interdisciplinary survey of some of the questions, theories and research of the past and present which have stimulated the interest of those concerned with elucidating the nature of the creative act. Finally, drawing upon these previous investigations, the writer will attempt to sketch an action model of the creative process; this will include the mental patterns that appear intrinsic in any creative act.

*The opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, but are solely those of the author, who is an officer of the United States Public Health Service, at present on detached service (from the U.S.P.H.S.) at St. Elizabeths Hospital (which is not a part of the U.S.P.H.S.).
does not pretend to be a final statement, but rather a model based on a synthesis of the material that has been available to the author.

From antiquity onward, certain questions have repeatedly arisen whenever the human mind has addressed itself to the problem of creativity. Perhaps of greatest interest has been the enigma of the origin of creative inspiration. Is the source of this inspiration some power lying outside the bounds of the creator which uses him as a passive instrument to fashion its own purposes? Does the germ of this generative burst lie solely within the unique being of the “poet”? Through these questions attention has been paid to both understanding the nature of the external influences which impinge upon the person of the creator and to elucidating the very essence of his inner self.

Plato set the basis of aesthetic theories for many years with his statement, made by Socrates to Ion, that “…God takes away the minds of poets and uses them as his ministers as he also uses diviners and holy prophets….” For Plato, again Socrates to Ion, there is “no invention in the poet until he has been inspired and is out of his senses and the mind is no longer in him.”

However, even from the days of the Greeks, there has been the darker suspicion that has haunted all inquiry into the nature of the creative gift, the suspicion that the gift must be paid for by some personal sacrifice on the part of its possessor. To the critic Edmund Wilson and the author André Gide, the myth of Philoctetes symbolized the nature of the sacrificial wound of the creator. Through the dramatist Sophocles one discovers that the warrior Philoctetes possessed a bow which would never miss its target—a truly wonderful and miraculous gift. However, soon after coming into possession of this bow he was bitten by a mysterious snake and suffered a deep, suppurating and odoriferous wound. He was shunned by his fellow warriors and exiled to the island of Lemnos. Legend sprang up about this pathetic figure, and many wondered whether the magic of the bow was not inexorably bound to the agony of the wound. Wilson has applied this symbolism to studying the lives of creative geniuses in “Philoctetes: The Wound and the Bow.” He reviewed the experience and work of several well-known literary figures and attempted to discover the sacrificial roots of their power. The history of the creative arts is replete with examples of men who bore deep and sometimes disabling wounds. One recalls the blindness of Milton, the