

INVITED REVIEW

Pathography in Japan: Exploring the relationship between creativity and the psyche

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Abstract

Pathography is a medical anthropological approach that examines the relationship between creation and psychiatric disorders through psychopathological and psycho-analytical lenses using case studies. Since it was first defined in the mid-1960s, pathography in Japan has kept pace with current advances in psychopathological research. However, to date, the findings of pathographic research in Japan have not been published in English. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to introduce the history, methodology, and development of pathography in Japan to the English-speaking world, accompanied by some classical examples. The paper first describes the history of pathography, from its origins in ancient Greece to important research in the field, including examples of publications and translations. Next, the paper presents the methodology of classical pathography as an approach that shares clinical psychopathology and psychiatric evaluation methods. This topic also introduces five main theses on the relationship between creativity and psychiatric disorders: opposition (“in spite of”), parallelism (“because of”), substitution (“instead of”), intrinsic (“belonging to”), and sublimation (“subsequent to”). Finally, the paper describes the development of pathographic research in Japan by summarizing the pathographies of several figures, including both creators and characters in literary works, and introducing the latest research on salutography, a newly developed field of study that explores the relationship between creativity and mental health. The paper concludes with a few words about the current limitations of pathography and suggestions for ethical considerations with respect to privacy legislation.

KEYWORDS

creativity, pathography, psychoanalysis, psychopathology, salutography

INTRODUCTION

Pathography is the field of study that describes the mental trajectory of creators as subjects. It examines the nature of when and where subject creators lived, the character of the people with whom they interacted, the kinds of lives they led, the kinds of psychiatric

disorders from which they suffered (or did not suffer), the details of the physical and mental conditions they experienced, the ways in which they exhibited their creativity, and the kinds of creative activities they engaged in.¹ In a narrow sense, it is a medical anthropological approach that examines the relationship between creation and psychiatric disorders through psychopathological and

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psychoanalytical lenses by the method of case studies.¹ Therefore, in this paper, I do not include art activities, such as “art brut,”^{2,3} or bioscientific fields, such as genetics, neuroaesthetics, and neuro-pathography, within the definitional scope of pathography.

In Japan, pathography was defined by Tadao Miyamoto, a second-generation psychopathologist and pathographer,^{4,5} as “the psychiatric biography of mentally outstanding historical figures and the systematic study thereof” (first published in 1964).⁴ It was also defined by pathographer Akira Fukushima^{6,7} as “a method of studying the creative processes of mentally outstanding people, namely geniuses, from the perspectives of psychiatry and psychology” (first published in 1978).⁶ Incidentally, both of these definitions refer to the German philosopher and psychiatrist Karl Jaspers’s description, in *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (General Psychology), of pathographies as “the term given to biographies which aim at presenting those aspects of psychic life of interest to the psychopathologist and clarifying the significance of these phenomena and the particular events for the creativity of the individuals concerned”⁸ (from the 5th edition, 1946).⁹

Since that time, pathography in Japan has developed in various ways, keeping pace with current advances in psychopathological research that were mainly achieved by second-generation psychopathologists.^{10,11} Satoshi Katō, a third-generation psychopathologist and pathographer,^{10,12} points out the importance of pathography’s existence as a discipline, stating that “the uniqueness of pathography, which is situated at the intersection of several disciplines and seeks to explore the relationship between creativity and mental deviance, is sought through a problem framework that illuminates human creativity from perspectives established by psychiatry, such as those of the concept of illness and the understanding of the patient’s condition, as well as that of healing” (first published in 2001).¹²

To date, the findings of pathographic research in Japan have not been published in English. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to introduce the history, methodology, and development of pathography in Japan to the English-speaking world, accompanied by some classical examples.

THE HISTORY OF PATHOGRAPHY

Europe

The origins of pathography can be traced back to philosophical questions about creativity and madness in ancient Greece. Later, in Europe, from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries, pioneering pathographic studies blossomed with the establishment of modern psychiatry.^{4,7,13}

In *L'uomo di genio* (The Man of Genius)¹⁴ the Italian psychiatrist, criminologist, and forensic pathologist Cesare Lombroso listed the signs of mental and physical degeneration seen in geniuses based on the then prevailing theory of degeneration, establishing himself as a dominant authority with his arguments linking genius to degenerative psychosis. Next, the German psychiatrist Paul Julius Möbius

published a book¹⁵ distinguishing and discussing Nietzsche’s migraine attacks from progressive paralysis, and coined the term “*Pathographie*” in a 1907 monograph on Scheffel’s illness.¹⁶ In Germany in the 1920s, pathography in its classical form was completed with the publication of Jaspers’s *Strindberg und van Gogh*,¹⁷ Wilhelm Lange-Eichbaum’s *Genie, Irresinn und Ruhn* (Genius: Insanity and Fame),¹⁸ and Ernst Kretschmer’s *Geniale Menschen* (The Psychology of Men of Genius).^{19,20} These amounted to character studies using the methods of psychopathology.¹³

On the other hand, around the same period, the Austrian founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud published his essays on “*Der Wahn und die Träume in W. Jensens ‘Gradiva’*” (Delusion and Dream in Jensen’s *Gradiva*)²¹ and “*Eine Kindheitserinnerung des Leonardo da Vinci* (Leonardo da Vinci and A Memory of His Childhood).”²² These were criticisms of the literature and character studies using the methods of psychoanalysis.¹³ Later, after psychoanalysis arrived in the United States, a number of books in a similar vein were published, including *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*²³ by Ernst Kris, a former art historian and psychoanalyst, and *Young Man Luther*²⁴ by Erik Homburger Erikson, a psychoanalyst noted for his life cycle theory and psychohistorical studies.^{4,7,13} However, after World War II, with the subsequent decline of psychoanalysis and growth of personality psychology in the United States, there was a paradigm shift toward psychobiography based on quantitative psychological methods.²⁵

In France, too, publications such as *La psychographie de Marcel Proust*²⁶ by Charles Blondel and *La jeunesse d’André Gide*²⁷ by Jean Delay, who proposed psychobiography, appeared later than the development of pathography in Germany, but these are seldom referred to in Japan.

The classical pathography described here, which began with data from collective pathographies of authors such as Lombroso, Kretschmer, and Lange-Eichbaum and the single case pathographies of authors such as Möbius, Jaspers, Freud, Kris, and Erikson, can be summarized as having converged in a single case pathography that combines character studies with artistic criticism.¹³

Japan

In Japan, Lombroso’s *L'uomo di genio*¹⁴ was translated as early as the 1910s, and quickly spread through Japan’s intellectual milieu with its simple thesis that “genius and madness are two sides of the same coin.” According to research by the most prolific author in this field, pathographer Masao Takahashi,^{28,29} before World War II, pathological studies in Japan were carried out by physicians, writers, literary scholars, and psychiatrists. In most cases, however, these represented character studies that attempted to find psychiatric symptoms in the biographies of prominent figures of the past and present and to outline them as psychiatric case studies. With the exception of psychiatrist Ryūzaburō Shikiba’s *Fuan Hohho no shōgai to seishinbyō* (Vincent van Gogh, His Life and Psychosis),³⁰ many of these articles and books were immature at the methodological level.

After the war, following the publication of Japanese translations of works such as *Strindberg und van Gogh*,¹⁷ *The Psychology of Men of Genius*,^{19,20} *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*,²³ and *Young Man Luther*,²⁴ many classical pathographic treatises began to be published as the discipline gained increasing social recognition. The Forum of Pathography (now *Nihon Byōuseki Gakkai* [the Japanese Association of Pathography]) was founded in 1966, followed in 1969 by the first issue of *Nihon byōsekigaku zasshi* (The Japanese Bulletin of Pathography), a publication that is still in print today. Incidentally, the Japanese Society of Psychopathology of Expression & Arts Therapy was founded in 1969 to help develop artistic therapeutic methods using such methods as drawing, painting, writing, music, dance, and drama.

By the 1980s, in addition to the previously mentioned *Psychoanalysis of Genius: An Adventure of Pathography*⁶ and *Psychoanalysis of Genius, Continued*,⁷ pathographies dealing with Japanese novelists (such as Sōseki Natsume,^{31,32} Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, Osamu Dazai, and Yukio Mishima), European scientists³³ (such as Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Freud, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Niels Bohr, and Norbert Wiener), and modern painters³⁴ (such as Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Henri Rousseau, James Ensor, and Edvard Munch) had been published.

THE METHODOLOGY OF PATHOGRAPHY

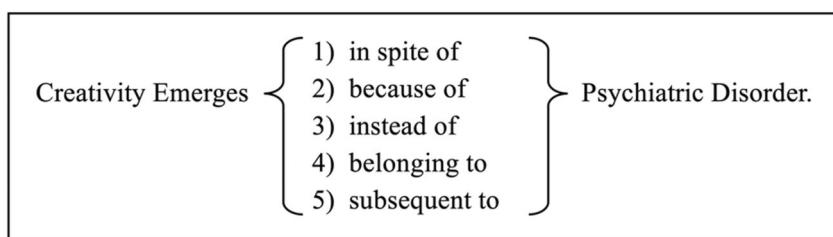
Five theses of classical pathography and other viewpoints

Methodologically, classical pathography is an approach to the case study that is shared by the methods of clinical psychopathology and

psychiatric evaluation. Typically, it involves an initial investigation of the history of the subject creator's psychiatric disorders, followed by a psychopathological or psychoanalytical exploration of his or her creativity and mental states, especially in relation to psychiatric disorders.¹ This is notably done in reference to the following theses (Figure 1).

The first and second theses are Jaspers' questions of "whether the creativeness was in spite of the illness or came about among other things because of the illness,"⁹ which Kretschmer rephrased as "is genius genius in spite of this psychopathic component, or because of it?"²⁰ These are the basic questions that classical pathography seeks to answer from the standpoint of psychopathology. For example, according to the first thesis, psychopathologist and pathographer Shichiro Chitani focused on Sōseki's and the characters' severe anxieties due to recurrent endogenous depression.³¹ In contrast, psychoanalyst and pathographer Takeo Doi interpreted his and the characters' conscious or unconscious dependence (*Amae*), and resultantly asserted that Sōseki must have suffered from schizophrenia.³² Miyamoto, referring to the second thesis, demonstrated Edvard Munch's hallucinatory conscious in the spatial expression of his works such as "The Scream" (1893), "The Voice/Summer Night" (1893), and "Anxiety" (1894), which he had painted before experiencing psychotic symptoms.^{4,11}

The third thesis, proposed by writer and psychiatrist Otohiko Kaga (real name Sadataka Kogi), is that "the break from madness leads to creation, and this creation takes the place of madness."³⁵ In response, Shin Iida, a second-generation psychopathologist, proposed that "if we trace the lives of geniuses with morbid predispositions who nevertheless escaped illness through creative activity, then the conditions for the nonoccurrence of illness could be elucidated from an analysis of the conditions that inhibit illness, and if



C: creativity
PD: Psychiatric disorder

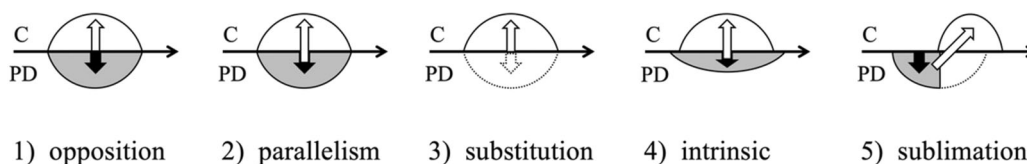


FIGURE 1 Schema of five theses on the relationship between creativity and psychiatric disorders. The five theses on the relationship between creativity and psychiatric disorders are as follows: (1) opposition: creativity emerges "in spite of" psychiatric disorder; (2) parallelism: creativity emerges "because of" psychiatric disorder; (3) substitution: creativity emerges "instead of" psychiatric disorder; (4) intrinsic: creativity emerges "belonging to" psychiatric disorder; and (5) sublimation: creativity emerges "subsequent to" psychiatric disorder. These theses should be investigated first, but other possibilities should also be considered when starting a pathographic study.

a theory of the nonoccurrence of illness could be derived in this way, it might be useful in clinical psychiatry.”³³

The fourth thesis, by Takeshi Utsumi, a leading proponent of psychopathology and pathography in Japan, posits that “creation takes place in the context of attenuated illness.”³⁶ Utsumi believes that “individuals with an affinity for bipolar disorder exhibit creativity when the scale of their synchrony is huge and they shake hands with the demon of the manic component.”³⁴ These two theses are the applied concepts of pathography from the standpoint of psychopathology, but further case studies are necessary to verify them.

The fifth thesis is that of “regression in the service of the ego” as posited by Kris,²³ characterized as the notion of “maladie créatrice (creative illness)” by the Canadian psychiatrist and historian Henri Frédéric Ellenberger.³⁷ Ellenberger’s question is whether, in certain cases, there may be some kind of “creative process hidden under the appearance of the apparent neurosis or psychosomatic illness;” he explained that the creative product becomes manifest by passing through this illness.³⁷ The last thesis constitutes the key concept of pathography from the standpoint of psychoanalysis.

The relationship between creativity and psychiatric disorders can be schematized hermeneutically as: (1) opposition (“in spite of”), (2) parallelism (“because of”), (3) substitution (“instead of”), (4) intrinsic (“belonging to”), and (5) sublimation (“subsequent to”) (Figure 1).

Other second-generation psychopathologists have also enriched Kretschmer’s classical typology of temperaments,^{33,38} in which Kretschmer hypothesized that temperaments are within normal limits, but nearer to psychiatric disorders. For example, Iida and one of Japan’s most famous psychiatrists, Hisao Nakai,³⁹ once pointed out that the characteristics of creativity are defined by the temperament of the creator.

An entire disciplinary system is created in a stroke by scientists in the schizophrenic sphere and then scientists in the manic-depressive sphere flesh it out, make it real, and develop it. In some cases, scientists in the manic-depressive sphere take on the mantle of a scientific tradition and play the role of passing it on to the next generation. In other cases, they synthesize previous theories and facts to create a comprehensive theory. Scientists in the neuropsychiatric sphere give the impression that they are working to bridge disparate facts and different disciplines and to explore their interrelationships.³¹

Hiroshi Yasunaga^{38,40} proposed the concept of the “centrothyme,” a temperament characterized by “the image of a child between 5 and 8 years old ... artless and innocent, simply and clearly either happy or sad. Children have an intense curiosity about the concrete things around them. Such children can be enthusiastic, but they can also become bored quickly. They enjoy movement for its own sake and sleep happily when tired.... They do not worry about tomorrow, and do not dwell on yesterday.”³⁸ This original

temperament is considered an important clinical concept underlying schizothymic and cyclothymic temperaments.

Contemporary pathographers in Japan do not seek a single psychopathology, but tend to focus on these types of temperament of their subjects.

The status of pathography in the English-speaking world

The English-speaking world has a flourishing tradition of psychobiography, which attempts to elucidate creativity using quantitative psychological methods.²⁵ Since 1980, statistical studies on the relationship between creativity and mental illness have been attracting considerable attention.^{12,25,41–43}

After conducting structured interviews with 30 American writers, the American psychiatrist Nancy Coover Andreasen found that the writers were more likely than the control group to suffer from affective disorders, especially bipolar disorder, and that, in many cases, the writers’ first-degree relatives also suffered from affective disorders. She also verified the absence of any relationship between creativity and intelligence.⁴¹

Another American psychiatrist, Kay Redfield Jamison, uses the term “creative episodes” with reference to the close relationship she identified between creativity and mood swings in prominent poets, novelists, playwrights, biographers, and artists.⁴²

The Swedish psychiatrist Simon Kyaga surveyed data relating to 300,000 patients with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or depression who had been hospitalized between 1973 and 2003, as well as their families. He found that persons with a history of hospitalization for bipolar disorder and the family members of persons with a history of hospitalization for schizophrenia or bipolar disorder were more likely to be employed in creative occupations than were healthy controls.⁴³

These studies are positioned as nomothetic (quantitative) psychobiography associated with data from collective pathography.¹ From the viewpoint of classical pathography, they are generally consistent with Kretschmer’s conclusion that “This periodic undulation is a definite characteristic peculiarity of much of the work of genius.”²⁰ However, it is not sufficient to understand the creative act as simply being performed in a hypomanic state of elevated mood and increased activity; it is important to note that creators cannot exercise their creativity unless they have opportunities to withdraw from the people around them and retreat to a site of creation while finding the necessary time to be creative.¹

After the turn of the century, ideographic (qualitative) psychobiography was revived under the influence of the narrative approach. American writer and psychobiographer William Todd Schultz edited the *Handbook of Psychobiography*⁴⁴ in which he stated that, while classical psychobiography overemphasized psychoanalytic interpretations, modern psychobiography requires cogency, narrative structure, comprehensiveness, data convergence, sudden coherence, logical soundness, consistency, and viability.⁴⁵ Schultz also stressed that psychobiographers should avoid using the following theoretical

and methodological aspects: pathography (“psychobiography by diagnosis”), single cues, reconstruction, reductionism, poor theory choice, and poor narrative structure.⁴⁵

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PATHOGRAPHY IN JAPAN

Pathographic research in Japan seems to have overcome Schultz's criticism of classical psychobiography, and is still expanding in scope as it experiences continued modifications in terms of its subjects and methodologies.¹ In this paper, after summarizing the pathographies of several figures, including both creators and characters in literary works, I introduce the latest research on salutography, a field originally conceived at the time of the 63rd Annual Meeting of the Japanese Association of Pathography held in 2016, under the theme of “salutogenesis and pathography.”

Pathographies dealing with multiple persons

In his discussion of how the poet and sculptor Kōtarō Takamura composed much of his poetry while remaining devoted to caring for his wife Chieko, who had schizophrenia, Miyamoto coined the term epi-pathography, or dual pathography, to describe the genre of pathography that examines how healthy creators exercise their creativity while being influenced by people around them living with psychiatric disorders.⁴

Katō proposed the use of epi-pathography in the context of ideological genealogy, discussing, for example, how Martin Heidegger, a healthy philosopher, developed a pathological ideology under the influence of the poet Friedrich Hölderlin, who was thought to have suffered from a psychiatric disorder.¹²

Takuya Matsumoto,^{11,46} a brilliant psychoanalyst in the Lacanian tradition, has lucidly summarized how the issues of creation and madness have been dealt with in a sweeping historical survey encompassing the past 2500 years.⁴⁶ Matsumoto's study was highly praised by the *hikikomori* expert and pathographer Tamaki Saitō, who called it “an achievement of meta-pathography that addresses the paradigm of pathography itself.”⁴⁷

Utsumi discusses the novel *Kinkaku-ji* (The Temple of the Golden Pavilion), written by Yukio Mishima, a novelist who was thought to be healthy but later committed suicide in public.⁴⁸ The novel was based on the life of Yōken Hayashi, a Buddhist monk who was responsible for an arson attack on the pavilion of the same name and later developed schizophrenia. Utsumi's work took on a psychopathological standpoint, discussing the intricate relationships among Mishima's creativity, Yōken's criminal behavior, and the encounter (in the novel) of Mishima's psycho(patho)logical detachment (*Rikaku*) with Yōken's schizoid temperament.⁴⁸ Utsumi explained Mishima's innate derealization and the resulting growth of his literal narcissistic world based on his autistic temperament, which temporarily intersected with Yōken's arson attack due to latent schizophrenia.⁴⁸

Consequently, from the viewpoint of pathography, this work reveals Mishima's literary genius, which was distinctly close to the psychopathology of schizophrenia from the outside of the schizophrenic sphere. In addition to the high acclaim the work received as a pathography, it also won the 47th Osaragi Jirō Prize as an outstanding work of prose.

Epi-pathography behooves the researcher to conduct his or her examination while accurately unraveling the intertwined relationships among multiple subjects, and can be viewed as relying heavily on the researcher's powers of observation, insight, description, conceptualization, and ultimately, the power of extensive knowledge and various life experiences.¹ In contrast, multiple case psychobiography is a new field of life story analysis, and explores the parallel processing of two (or more) persons, who have some commonalities.⁴⁹

Pathographies of *manga* characters

Numerous pathographies of Sōseki have been published in Japan in the form of parallel pathographies of Sōseki the novelist as well as the characters in his novels. One could point out, however, that in most cases these are character studies in which Sōseki himself, a polymorphous genius who enjoyed a privileged position in the society of his day, is interpreted as a psychopathological or psychoanalytical case study. As such, they may not represent pure character pathographies.^{50,51}

The characters created by novelists, *manga* artists, screenwriters, and film directors—all of whom have a professional interest in understanding human beings—can also be thought of as objects for case studies, and a new genre of “character pathography” that seeks to “examine the relationship between characters' words and actions and their mental states” has emerged.¹ In recent years, there has been a burgeoning interest, particularly in Japan, in the pathography of characters in *manga*, a graphic narrative format that has become popular around the world.⁵²

Drawing on Japanese *shōnen manga* (a genre aimed primarily at adolescent boys), pathographers Yayoi Imamura and Shinichirō Tanaka were the first to give a lecture on pathographic *manga* studies to discuss the relationship between the mental states of the protagonists and their words and actions.⁵³

Psychiatrist Shirō Suda and psychopathologist and pathographer Toshiyuki Kobayashi^{5,54} were the first to provide their students with homework on the psychiatric assessment of Japanese *manga* protagonists and to then have discussions on the topic during a period when ward-based training was difficult owing to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This is evidence of the potential utility of *manga* as material for elementary medical education, provided that appropriate guidance is available to prevent easy stigmatization.⁵⁴

It is also worth noting that Saitō has discussed several Japanese *manga* and identified the concept of the “etiological drive” to demonstrate how creative works themselves can be pathological quite apart from the psychopathology of the author. Accordingly,

Saitō cautions against making easy associations between the author and the work in a single psychopathology.⁵⁵

A consideration from the perspective of salutography

A new field of pathography known as salutography, which is defined as a field that describe the mental trajectory of creators by exploring the relationship between creativity and mental health from the perspective of salutogenesis as opposed to pathogenesis, is being pioneered in Japan.⁵⁶⁻⁵⁹ Kobayashi, for example, offers a psychopathological discussion, informed by salutography, of the words, deeds, and creativity of great composers, such as Richard Strauss and Dmitri Shostakovich, in relation to their social backgrounds, the geopolitical situation, and the cultural context of their times.⁵⁶

Psychopathologist and pathographer Minoru Sugibayashi discusses the case of the healthy novelist Junzō Shōno. After extracting cyclothymic descriptions with unwavering calendrical structure from Shōno's work, Sugibayashi adopts the perspective of salutography to examine the author's "'weak health,' in which life is lived healthfully and peacefully while avoiding the ever-present danger of collapse, and 'encompassing health,' which embraces illness."⁵⁷

Tanaka takes up *Wagahai wa neko dearu* (I Am a Cat), the first novel by Sōseki Natsume, perhaps the most studied writer in Japan, to examine ways of "life and death, entrusted to a Cat" and ways of "dealing with neurasthenia and persecutory insanity" from a salutographic perspective. Tanaka reveals how the novelist himself, while writing the book, had engaged in the same kind of conversations he depicts in the work to break away from his own reclusive nature.⁵⁸ Moreover, he argues that although Sōseki has been retroactively diagnosed from a psychiatric standpoint as suffering from a psychiatric disorder by a pathographer, it may in fact be the case that he did not suffer from such a disorder, but merely from fragile health.⁵¹

Pathographer Haruki Kazano discusses the science fiction writer Project Itō (real name Satoshi Itō), who died prematurely of cancer, and brings the perspective of salutography to his examination of the worldview and view of humanity that characterize Itō's full-length works *Gyakusatsu Kikan* (Genocidal Organ) and *Harmony*.⁵⁹ In Kazano's view, the author's efforts to distance himself from his own situation and express this in works of science fiction set in fictional worlds promoted what the Israeli medical sociologist Aaron Antonovsky calls "meaningfulness"⁶⁰ and mental stability.⁵⁹

CONCLUSION

Pathography has become an interdisciplinary field that not only explores the relationship between creativity and psychiatric disorders, but also describes the trajectory of human speech, behavior, and mental states, including creativity, by opening up a new field of study called salutography, which targets creators and/or their

creative activities while mobilizing knowledge from psychiatry, psychology, and the humanities.

Fukushima once said that "pathography should inevitably be a discipline with the character of a 'whole-life history.'"⁷ Thus, pathography, which is limited to exploring the relationship between creativity and psychiatric disorder, will only be able to acquire its unique identity when it is complemented by salutography. However, salutography started in Japan only about 7 years ago. I hope that in the future, many researchers will join in the lively debate and discussion around salutography.¹

Finally, I would like to add a few words about the ethics of pathography, with reference to previous studies.^{7,25,61} In accordance with privacy legislation, one should obviously not disclose medical information about the patients in one's care without their consent, and in accordance with the Goldwater Rule, the ethical choice for a physician is to refrain from making diagnostic comments about public figures whom he or she has never met. In the context of pathography, however, the relationship between a researcher and a subject is not a clinical relationship that has any direct bearing on the subject. Accordingly, it should go without saying that what is expected of the researcher when undertaking a pathographic examination is to give careful consideration to the relatives and relationships of the creator, and, as a matter of scholarship, not to compromise, deceive, or falsify facts.

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Shinichiro Tanaka is the only author of the manuscript.

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The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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N/A.

ETHICS APPROVAL STATEMENT

Not applicable.

PATIENT CONSENT STATEMENT

Not applicable.

CLINICAL TRIAL REGISTRATION

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