

Creativity and Madness: Fact or Fiction

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This paper explores the relationship between Creativity and Madness. The two constructs are defined and anecdotal examples are given dating from the Greeks through to today. Everyday examples of creativity are given in the home, classroom, consulting room and in the construction of bridges.

Psychiatrists have noted how creativity is related to mood disorders with an increase in production as the mood begins to rise but productivity is destroyed as the mood becomes manic. Productivity returns as the manic state settles but again it is lost in depression.

In recent times there have been a number of studies and although the methodology is not rigorous there is an agreement that there is a relationship between creativity and mood disorders especially bipolar depression.

Research using brain scans at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden have shown that creative people and those suffering from Schizophrenia lack receptors to filter and direct thought and this may facilitate divergent thinking, increase fluency and flexibility but can also cause very disturbed thinking.

Robert Power from King's College MRC unit reported that genes linked to creativity could increase the risk of developing schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. It is probable that creative people have a predisposition to thinking differently which when combined with other harmful factors could lead to mental illness.

The author concludes that research is moving towards clarification of the relationship and that we as human beings like the stories of people struggling with suffering and producing something creative which advances the human race.

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