

Seeing what others don't: Do genius and madness walk hand-in-hand?

[Given the various so-called mad geniuses in history, many people assume] that creativity and psychopathology are intimately related...But some recent psychologists argue that the whole idea is a pure hoax.

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Opponents of the mad genius idea can point to two solid facts. First, the number of creative geniuses in the entire history of human civilization is very large. Thus, even if these people were actually *less* prone to psychopathology than the average person, the number with mental illness could still be extremely large. Second, the permanent inhabitants of mental asylums do not usually produce creative masterworks.

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So should we believe that creative genius is connected with madness or not? Modern empirical research suggests that we should because it has pinpointed the connection between madness and creativity clearly. The most important process underlying strokes of creative genius is cognitive disinhibition—the tendency to pay attention to things that normally should be ignored or filtered out by attention because they appear irrelevant.

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But cognitive disinhibition has a dark side: It is positively associated with psychopathology. For example, schizophrenics find themselves bombarded with hallucinations and delusions that they would be much better off filtering out....[H]igh intelligence is essential to creative genius, but only insofar as it collaborates with cognitive disinhibition.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [If You Think You're a Genius, You're Crazy](#)