

association between psychosis and genius, otherwise they would surely not have dismissed the possibility so cavalierly, i.e. without providing some negative evidence in support of their assertion of mythicity. Can I therefore briefly mention a few of the studies which refute the 'mythicality' of an association that is strongly held in the popular imagination?

Lange-Eichbaum¹ found that, of a group he considered the outstanding geniuses in human history, almost a half had at some time suffered from psychosis. Karlsson² showed, in a sample of 132 world-famous creative persons, that their lifetime risk of psychosis was consistently of the order of 25–40 per cent (philosophers having the highest rate). Various personality (MMPI)^{3,4} and projective (Rorschach)⁵ test studies have purported to demonstrate a 'schizophrenic' personality structure in persons of creative genius, such as renowned American architects, painters and writers. The loosening of associations in such individuals leads to heuristic 'lateral' (De Bono) or 'allusive' thinking, reminiscent of the tangentiality of schizophrenic thought disorder. These people put together ideas or imagery most of us would not; they prefer complexity and novelty. To give but a few examples: Sir Isaac Newton and Michael Faraday were psychotic by middle age, Oliver Cromwell and Abraham Lincoln had their spells of madness, as had William Pitt the Elder and Younger. Goethe (whose sister was also psychotic), Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Wolf, Schumann, Wagner, Guy de Maupassant and probably Edgar Allan Poe and Victor Hugo all had psychotic periods. Siegfried Sassoon, Florence Nightingale and Nijinsky were all mentally unstable. The psychoanalysts Tausk and Reich had tragic ends, as did Frank Fish and Richard Asher.

Insanity might also be linked to genius in corollary fashion, i.e. close blood relatives might show an elevated risk of psychosis. Thus Karlsson⁶ showed that the likelihood of being listed in the Icelandic Who's Who was almost twice as high for close relatives of psychotic patients (especially manic-depressives) as for the population at large. Juda⁷ surveyed a large group of gifted Germans with similar results Myerson and Boyle⁸ reported an elevated psychosis rate in

eminent American families. The fathers of Shelley, Chaplin and Hans Christian Anderson, the sisters of Charles Lamb and Tennessee Williams, the brothers of the Brontë sisters and of Victor Hugo (whose daughter was also affected) were all known schizophrenics. The mother of Camus, the sons of Einstein and Coleridge, Wordsworth's daughter and sister may, too, be mentioned in this context.

The evidence for an association is persuasive rather than conclusive. The definitive studies have yet to be done, but there is surely a prima facie case which merits more than a blanket dismissal.

(It is interesting in this context that your correspondent (*Bulletin*, July 1983, 129) referred to Arthur Koestler as being especially perspicacious in terms of creativity, in the light of the recent suicide of him and his wife.)

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