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An Axe to the Head

Madness and Creativity

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Psychiatrist and director of the psychiatry department at Paris' Sainte-Anne hospital, Raphaël Gaillard demonstrates in this lucid essay how highly creative people can suffer from painful illnesses that hamper their lives.

It has been shown that mental illnesses are common precisely because they are the price we have to pay for our creativity. To understand this link, we must recognize these symptoms of the human condition when engaging with a work of art. To create a work, the world needs to be represented in thought, but the elementary act of thinking is in itself an act of creation, and a power that is not without its risks: by fashioning our representations of the world, we become capable of enriching them endlessly, either to produce artistic works or end up losing ourselves entirely...
