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Mad Pride And Prejudice

This essay first appeared in T. Curtis - R. Dellar - E. Leslie - B.

Watson (ed.), *Mad Pride. A Celebration of Mad Culture*,

Spare Change Books, London 2000

The Splitting of Madness

People talk about madness as if it is a known quantity, fixed for all time. But this is not so. The shape of madness changes over

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time. One time of changing understanding in Europe happens as feudalism jolted into early capitalism. In Europe, two hundred years ago, as a rising bourgeois class struggles to establish new economic and political forms, madness is re-conceived in terms of the newly important concept of 'reason'. Madness is the loss of reason. Curing means the re-introduction of this missing reason – and contemporary doctors and philosophers believe it might be re-introduced through useful occupation and the internalisation of order. This marks a break with what had gone before in still feudal times. The mad had had a place in feudal society, sheltered by and incorporated into the family, the village, or the community. New economic arrangements through the 17th and 18th century shifted them into workhouses, prisons and poorhouses. They formed part of a growing class of lumpen types, and were not sufficiently distinguished from other categories of transgression – the poor, beggars, criminals - to warrant special institutions. But by the end of the eighteenth century, attempts at reform were undertaken. The mad were removed from everyday life. They were split off from other deviants and placed in special homes, with the aim of healing and then reintegration. Doctors were introduced to mad houses, and these places were often built to afford greater social isolation and a concealment of those diagnosed insane. Where in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, madness was an experience capable of expressing essential truths about the world, in the period of the Enlightenment it was silenced, for there could be no truth in those realms where reason did not rule. The interment of the insane in therapeutic institutions was a result of the re-evaluation of the causes of

madness and the possibility of its cure.

Reason and the Sorrows of the Young Bourgeois

Before 1600, official discussion of melancholia and mania remained fixed within the perception of the four humours and the qualities that dominate when the humours are not in balance. This causality of substances is then increasingly substituted by a movement of qualities. No longer is the body the focus (with its production of bile and juices sending people out of control), but rather the soul is to be scrutinised. No longer is it a question of the physical substance of the humours, but a question of ideas. Physiology is swapped for pathology. The myth of the humours disappeared and in this new understanding only the schema of coherent qualities remained, interpreted as psychological notions, for example, that which had previously been interpreted as heat-fibrous tensions metamorphosed into the exaggerated veracity of internal impressions, rapidity in the association of ideas and distraction from the external world. Most important in this new spectacle of madness is the idea of reason – for the Enlightenment's pivotal idea is that each man possesses reason, or else he is not fully a man. There were few medical-scientific theories of nervous illness. The dominant idea was to conceive 'the passions' as the cause of disturbances. Madness is brought on by an excess of passion, unbridled by reason, probably triggered by unhappy love. Madness and melancholia fascinated the German *literati* in the eighteenth century. Hospital, prison and mental asylum visits belonged to the itinerary of most educated people staying in a strange town. A literature on madness began to be produced, and it reflected the governing ideas of the time. Suicide is judged mostly to be a consequence of an 'illness of the soul', and as such is result of a disturbed relationship to psychic forces which reason can no longer steer. That reason is displaced supposes, in a sense, the incurability of such 'illness', for how could missing reason, insert itself once more, through nothing, to trammel the passions. Indeed, such manifestations of an excess of feeling must result necessarily in a 'sickness unto death'. Johann Wolfgang Goethe expressed it most notoriously in his epistolary novel about unrequited love, derangement and suicide, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, published in 1774, with a second edition in 1787:

...we call it a sickness unto death when nature is so severely attacked and her strength so far exhausted, placed so out of action that she is unable to recover, and no matter what happy change take place is unable to reassert the usual course of life. (...) Observe a man in his natural confined condition; consider how ideas work upon him, and how impressions affect him, till at length a

violent passion seizes him, destroys all his powers of calm reflection, and utterly ruins him.[1]

Human nature can "...endure a certain degree of joy, sorrow and pain, but collapses as soon as this is exceeded".[2] Suicide is an illness and it is fatal: "Nature can find no way out of the labyrinth of confusion and contradiction and so the person must die."[3] Goethe's book told the story of a young man who suffers the extremes of unrequited love and takes his own life. The book was a bestseller and became famous as an opportunity for fashionable ladies to read, empathise and weep. "Werther fever" swept Germany and scores of young men dressed up in Werther's garb of yellow waistcoat and blue coat and, like him, shot their brains out.

Moses Mendelssohn's 'On Sensitivity' (1755) states that there is no excuse for a rational person to commit suicide. The person who allows the soul to be darkened by passion is to blame. A person is the author of the pain and sadness experienced. Spiess, in his tales of deranged, jilted lovers, writes of each unhappy wretch as "...the author of his unhappiness".[4] In this sense, Goethe's heartbroken hero Werther also insists that it is not the world that is responsible for his pain but himself.

I feel only too well that all blame lies with me ... in me is concealed the root of all misery.[5]

Werther locates his drive towards suicide within his own self, however, in contrast to the predominant attitude of the time, Goethe's book does not condemn suicide moralistically. Suicide is aligned with heroic deeds – with the assertion of autonomy.[6] Suicide – brought about by depression - is a contradiction of the Enlightenment belief in human perfectibility and rational social organisation. It is a battle over the very form of rationality and reason. Werther opposes a subjective life-principle to bourgeois order. Life rhythm is the rhythm of the seasons. Rationality as such, lies within nature, not within the inhumane wheeling and dealing of bourgeois society. Through Werther, Goethe calls into question the bourgeois ideal of 'reason' or 'rationality'. He investigates the antinomies of individual freedom and conformation to the social order. He illustrates the sensual nature of persons, which must antagonise the categories erected by the social order. Werther's suicide is inevitable and compulsive and yet, in taking his life, he also asserts his 'self-control' and autonomy (both Enlightenment ideals). He insists upon his rights as he dies with an autarchical self-consciousness and an understanding of his situation. The knowledge of self-determination is a consolation. "...however confined he may be he still preserves in his heart the sweet feeling of liberty, and knows that he can leave this prison whenever he likes".[7] The harp player, in another, later, work

by Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796), carries poison on his person to ensure the same autonomy of choice.

Goethe's study of melancholy was a product of the anthropologically oriented philosophy of the late eighteenth century, in which the progressive intellectuals undertook an intimate engagement with their own humanity. For some sections of the intelligentsia, the Enlightenment was understood as a revolution inside of the person. In Germany, the particular cast of this soul-searching was by-product of the intellectuals' actual distance from any real political power. Goethe had been part of the *Storm and Stress* movement, a grouping of 'angry young men' who became involved in questions of individual psychology. Moritz's journal of experiential psychology (1783-93, Berlin) contained a collection of reports on journeys into the human "inside", to observe psychic curiosities. Doctors, teachers, preachers and other 'friends of truth' presented countless pathological or psychiatric cases of neurosis, depression and so on. These mental disturbances were then often related back to psychological causes and the suggested cures lay in the realm of psychic treatment and "moral management". Again then the shift is perceptible from bodily treatment to psychic, mental approaches. Goethe is a part of this in his search for the inner causes of Werther's melancholy.

The German bourgeois intellectual of the eighteenth century, denied hegemony by an oppressive aristocratic regime, falls into a melancholia that turns away from a world that is still in possession of the nobility. The refuges of bourgeois melancholy are outside of society in an appreciation of 'loneliness'. The causes of melancholy are correspondingly positioned within the individual. The tragedy of this melancholia is the ever-narrowing tube inwards, where the only destination is absolute removal from that order which oppresses. The journey inwards into the self works on the self – the ego crumbles, the self disperses in the discovery of fragments, impulses, dreams, fantasies, and in the end there results the absencing of the self from the everyday world of bustle. This loss of rationality might have its compensations – ensuring the removal from the burden of actuality. Heinrich, the village madman whom Werther encounters is happiest when completely beyond reason, "beside himself":

God in heaven! Is this the destiny of man? To be happy only before he has acquired his reason and again after he has lost it![8]

If the only possible strategy of resistance to alienation is self-isolation and a journey into the soul, then inside these stony vaults too might lie the causes and possibility of cure. German philosophers and philosophical doctors characterised madness as a form of illness whereby the 'mental' faculties of an ill person come into disarray and

lead to the obsession with an *idée fixe* and hallucinations or intense sadness. A prevalent understanding of madness relied on the conception of the person outlined in Immanuel Kant's anthropological writings. Kant insisted that the person is a "free-acting being" or a "self-determining being gifted with reason". Kant postulated that only the subject itself – asserting its reason – can cure its own madness, release itself from "mental immaturity". Only the subject can save itself and yet only the subject (or its blood relations) have put it in such a position. For Kant there are no causes of madness. Madness is innate and inherited, not elicited by external, social factors. It is the disposition of a person, such as is the case with Werther and another of Goethe's characters, mad Lila who was "always too little on the earth with her thoughts".^[9] In 1798, Kant wrote:

One often asserts the chance causation of this illness, so that it may be understood not as inherited but acquired, as if the unhappy wretch is himself to blame. "He became mad through love" (...) But to fall in love with an inappropriate person with whom any thought of marriage would be the greatest madness, is not the cause but the effect of madness.^[10]

The cause is internal. Madness is for Kant an "inherited disturbance of the mind" and the "outbreak of a unbalanced (*verrückt*) disposition". 'Mental immaturity' means an 'understanding' with "weaknesses in respect of its exercise". Reason is absent. These weaknesses exist in women, children and the insane. Madness precludes the possibility of ever attaining 'mental maturity'.

There is little use in doing anything about it, for it is a case of the powers of the subject not participating (unlike in the case of physical illnesses) and because only the self-exercise of reason can achieve this goal, all methods of cure must be fruitless in this regard.

This is truly a sickness unto death. Kant continues in his exposition of madness.

The tendency to be turned in on one's self, together with the resulting delusions of the inner senses, can only be brought back into order in leading the person back into the external world and with that into the order of things which lies before the external senses.^[11]

Once the exercise of common sense ceases, the subject is no longer a

person or moral being. This rests on its integration into a community

The only general characteristic of madness is the loss of a common sense (*sensus communis*) and the logically ensuing singular sense (*sensus privatus*), e.g. in the bright light of day a person sees a burning light on his table, which cannot be seen by another person who is present, or he hears a voice that no-one else can hear. For it is a necessary test of the correctness of our judgements and so too the health of our understanding that we share it with others and are not isolated with our own and yet at the same time judge publicly on the basis of our private ideas.
[12]

Now the flaw in Kant's psychiatry becomes apparent. Kant postulates that the subject itself in a loss of "common sense" produces the irrationality of madness. Madness, then, is a portrayal of the subjective as objective. This is the 'self-willed mental immaturity', a phrase which implies guilt and immorality. But the origin of madness is also viewed as the effect of a "particular nature", inherited or innate. This would preclude moral castigation. Somehow though Kant maintains that 'unreason' is both produced by the subject and is the innate nature of the subject – it is "blameless blame".

The philosopher Georg Lukács presumes Kant's dilemma is a consequence of the structure of bourgeois society, where "natural" bonds have been exploded (in the break with the fixed feudal-agricultural order) and exchanged for, equally as rigorous, "self-generated" bonds – the bourgeois personality who is fixated on accumulation and order. The bourgeois subject is, as the violence against itself necessitates, still an unfree subject. The violence of rationality against itself – the Kantian imposition of unfreedom in the act of exercising rationality - is comparable to the status of the mental patient, who is under the rule of an *idée fixe*. The mental home is the externalised operation of 'reason'. Instead of self-administration, it is the "being held in order by alien reason". Inside and outside the mental home, the violence of reason rules.

Mesmerising Doctors

Until the end of the eighteenth century, the world of the insane was peopled only by the abstract, faceless power that conducted confinement. Within these limits, everything that was not madness was excluded. Then William Tuke, a quaker philanthropist, established a mediating element between guards and patients, between reason and madness in setting up a retreat in York in 1796. Compassionate moral treatment was the avowed aim. The isolated space of the asylum

reserved by society for insanity was invaded by the prestige of the confining authority and the vigour of judging reason. 'Self-control' was rewarded, useful occupation encouraged. The 'keeper' now intervenes, without violence, instruments of torture or quack treatments, without what in Goethe's play *Lila* is called '..dissection, syringing, electrifying...'.^[13] The play recounts the story of baroness Lila who is being cured from madness. After she has been mistakenly informed that her husband is dead, she is unable to recognise anybody. When her husband returns, she can no longer recognise him either. Doctor Verazio finds out that she believes her husband to have been imprisoned by evil spirits. These spirits are pursuing her too, and she must find a way to rescue her husband. As part of her cure, Lila has been subjected to violent measures unsuccessfully.

I shudder when I think of the cures that have been tried out on her, and I shiver to think of the sort of cruelties that I could have been led to and almost was led to carry out on her.^[14]

With the transition to the new organisation of society, a realm is now entered which operates on the level of language and observation. Madness is confronted as a being imbalanced, displaced, evident in the common German word for madness, 'Verrücktheit' – which literally means such displacement. If something or someone has been displaced, knocked off balance, then they can be righted again. The mad person can be led back under the guidance of a figure who has been deemed rational. Thus, the idea of Dr. Verazio leading Lila back into the world. Cure means here leading the figure back from where they have strayed, in order to illicit, ultimately, the desired self- administration. Dr. Verazio is the figure of rational authority. "With his subtlety"^[15], he works without torture or witchcraft, utilising only the exertion of a powerful personality. Dr. Verazio appears as an early psychotherapist, a persuasive patriarch exercising cautious "leading of the soul". This is the scientific age of observation, Moritz's "dissection of the soul", the finding out of individual conditions, to enable penetration into the inside, so as to carry out a quite individual course of cure.

...the moral doctor must study these illnesses in respect of their appearance, their causes and their results, if he intends to cure them.^[16]

And yet the violent component exists latently. Dr. Verazio grasps at it when it seems necessary. Even in the age of the self-declared humanisation of healing, shock treatments were still inflicted. Shock treatment is applied when Lila's dream appears too stubborn and

resistant to reason. Fear chases away the fantasy in its concrete brutality. The doctor thinks of the types of violence and injustice that could be used against Lila in order to shake her from her delusion.[17] Dr. Verazio's status as Magus is significant. Michel Foucault outlines the new role of the doctor within the asylum in this period.

The doctor's intervention in the asylum is not made by virtue of a medical skill or power that he possesses in himself and that would be justified by a body of objective knowledge. It is not as a scientist that homo medicus has authority in the asylum, but as a wise man.[18]

The medical profession is here required as a moral and juridical guarantee, rather than as a representative of science. Pinel wrote:

Must it not be an inviolable law in the administration of any establishment for the insane ... to grant the maniac all the liberty that the safety of his person and of that of others permits, and to proportion his repression to the greater or lesser seriousness of danger of his deviation ... to gather all the facts that can serve to enlighten the physician in treatment, to study with care the particular varieties of behaviour and temperament, and accordingly to use gentleness or firmness, conciliatory terms or the tone of authority and an inflexible severity.[19]

The idea of a strong personality exerting influence over another subject was popular in medical thought, at the time that Goethe wrote *Lila*. In Vienna in 1777, Mesmer healed, at least temporarily, the blind pianist Marie Paradies. This made the 'mesmerist' famous throughout Europe. The woman had already been subjected to leeches, electrification and the like. Mesmer's theory rested on more subtle psychic influences – the gaining of confidence of the patient and relations, the therapeutic use of music – instrument was called a glass armonica. The magnetising Mesmer saw himself as the mediator of healing. He regarded his therapy as dependent on the benevolent effects of cosmic powers. Magnetism - his healing medium – was seen as a fine, light-like material (*materia luminosa*) which streams over the nervous system healing mind and body. This is a combination of modern psychotherapeutic thought, whereby a strong patriarchal figure reinforces authority through his aura ("Your word, your voice attracts me"[20], and a metaphysical belief in cosmic power and the healing effects of nature which directly effect the body-soul, the physical and psychic, as yet unsplit in this remnant of non-rational, 'scientific' thought. It is reminiscent of Goethe's understanding of cure in *Lila*.

Goethe presents madness, in part, as the possession of the soul by an uncanny thing; an evil spirit, strange powers. The battle is between friendly godheads and the monstrous 'demonic'. But in part, Lila's madness is, more conventionally, more modernly, a fault in her capacity to understand rationally, caused by the violent passions unleashed in tragic love.

Drawing on the eighteenth century idea that violent emotions are 'illnesses of the mind, by whose appearance 'reason' no longer has control of 'powers of the soul', Goethe shows how the harmonic balance of Lila's inner powers is disturbed and 'apparition' and 'reality' are no longer distinguishable. Lila's cure involves the 'vocal use' of reason. Lila's freedom is in recognition and labour – the concrete understanding of reality and the self-conscious appropriation of actuality and self. Finally fantasy and reality will coincide. When Lila holds her husband in her arms, having saved him, or rather believing that she has saved him from the demons,[21] it is an individual action.

The person helps himself best of all. He must go strolling
to find his happiness, he must put his hand out to grab it.

[22]

The peculiarity of Dr. Verazio's method is that thereby "one allows the madness to enter, in order to heal the madness". Medics in Goethe's time tended to stress that the patient must be distracted from their fixed delusions. A few had, however, recommended a practice that involved the temporary entering of the patient's delirium (Johann Christian Reil, Philippe Pinel, Jean-Baptiste Pussin). Reil stated that sometimes when the cause of madness is not understood it is "better not to contradict, but to afford belief to his tales".[23] The idea of psychodrama (entering the fiction) is an extraordinary procedure. In conventional terms, theatrical representation is a technique opposed to the awakening of the patient by the labour of reason in slow pedagogy or imposition through authority. The pact sealed here is a complicity of the unreal with itself. Imagination forced to play its own game, cure itself, paradoxically perhaps because there is no visible dialectic. ("If we could cure fantasy through fantasy"[24].) If the illusion can appear as true, then perception can flood the dream, fill in its gaps and integrate the irreality of the image into the perceived truth without the latter seeming to contradict the former. The role of the magus, the master of ceremonies, is to continue the discourse of madness in the same language, leading it to paroxysm and crisis, whereby the dilemma is confronted by its self and forced to argue against the demands of its own truth. The magus is compelled to remain within the boundaries of Lila's illusion. It is fortuitous that she renounces her belief that her husband is dead and offers the possibility of a dramatic confrontation in inventing his

imprisonment by the ogre.

Martin Luther had theorised psychodrama, but it was Reil who made it a practical method, considerably more brutal than what Goethe portrayed. On delivery to an asylum the patient was met with terrifying scenes, drumbeats, cannon fire, thunder. All this to rouse him or her from 'sunkeness into apparition' and compel 'alertness'. Throughout the treatment, dramatic situations are enacted, until finally the patient moves from passive observation of scenes to active participation, to 'self-activity' – the Enlightenment exhortation. The plays unfold in a shocking theatrical world in which the patient as acting subject must show a willingness to fight with wild animals or demons. The patient is continuously encouraged to new efforts. Reil called for a grandiose scheme of therapy and organisation of asylums, and psychiatry as an academic discipline. He positions the doctor at the point where nature combats the distortions of the 'unnatural'. The psychotherapeutic ringmaster is the medium of the nature 'untuned' by the soul. He retunes. Battie's influential *Treatise on Madness* (1758) conceived the programme of 'moral management' or regimentation of madness. This was a steering of the mentally ill linked to the old principle of 'regimen sanitatis', necessitating an intimate relationship between doctor and patient. The mediating psychotherapist's role is creative, his characteristics are those of the artist, maintained Reil. This bears new significance considering that Goethe performed the role of Dr. Verazio when *Lila* was performed in 1777.

***Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and the Retreat to Order**

A country priest describes the 'assimilation method' of treating the insane in the fifth book of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. He says that he finds the methods to cure insanity very simple:

They are precisely the same by which healthy people are prevented from becoming mad. If their spontaneous initiative is aroused, if they are made used to order and if they are given the thought that they share their life and fate with so many others, and that extraordinary talent, the greatest happiness and the most intense misfortunes are only slight deviations from what is usual, then no insanity will creep in, and if it is there it will gradually disappear. I have given the old man a timetable. He teaches the harp to a few children. He helps with work in the garden and is already much more cheerful. He wants to enjoy eating the cabbage that he has planted (...) As clergyman I try to say only little to him about his strange scruples, but an active life brings with it so many events that he must soon feel that every kind of doubt can only

be removed by activity.[25]

The clergyman wants to remove the cowl and beard from the old man, in order to make him the same as the others. Conformity is the cure. At the close of the eighteenth century there was general outrage at the incarceration of the insane. Reil spoke of wretches "thrown like state criminals into dungeons where the eye of humanity never penetrates" A new humanitarianism advocated a transposing of the patient into a rural environment where the ordering cycle of daily labour and season changes would restore reason.

The origins of the harp player's madness lie in unhappy love, an incestuous love affair, which unleashes a conflict of conscience. On one level he is driven insane by the inconceivability of his demanding the right to love in a society which sanctions incest as immoral. On another level he internalises the guilt which he is made to feel for his transgression.

I have never seen a mind in such an unusual state. For many years he did not make the slightest response to anything outside himself, in fact to anything at all; he merely turned in upon himself, he contemplated his hollow, empty self that seemed to him an immeasurable abyss.[26]

The harp player's madness leaves only the feeling of guilt.

...no emotion is left except the feeling of my guilt, which none the less can only be seen in retrospect as a remote, amorphous ghost.[27]

The guilt, which the harp player feels, stems from a strictly upheld taboo on incest, which ignores individual desire. The split between vital claims and renunciation is unbearable for Augustin. The consciousness of guilt is essentially the cause of the mental disorder. Sperata too is mad due to the guilt imposed by the priest.

No sooner had the child been weaned, no sooner did he believe that her body was strong enough to bear the most fearful torment of mind, than he began to paint the transgression to her in terrible colours, the transgression of having yielded to a priest, which he treated as a kind of sin against nature, as a form of incest. For he had the strange idea of making her remorse equal to the remorse she would have felt, if she had learnt about the truth about her misdemeanour.[28]

Goethe demonstrates how the harp player is returned to 'reality' by a therapy that demands self-activity, invoking a desire for order and conformity in an ordered generality. The country priest expresses his belief in conformity, as an essential component of reintegration:

...for nothing brings us nearer to madness than when we make ourselves different from other people, and nothing preserves our normal reason so much as living in general accord with many people..[29]

The cure is a forcing back into universal bourgeois morality. This is not without some critique of existing social reality, such as a reproach of the church for its fostering of guilt feelings – both the harp player and Sperata are by nature religiously inclined – and a progressive recognition of social determinants of madness – that schooling and civic institutions might play their part in causing madness.[30] What this omits to mention is that bourgeois normality – an economic system that instituted the slave trade, generated war and imperialism and condemns its populations to soulless drudgery – might itself be mad.

The modern classicist approach sees ideally, in its treatment of madness, chaos dissolved into cosmos, the sensuous-empirical and intelligible character of a person brought into a hierarchical order of reason, whereby irrationality is chased out by the internalisation of rationality. In the early nineteenth century, ideas of 'fulfilment of duty' began to gain credence in the medical profession. The pedagogic Prussian care method involved an administration of reason and ethical duty, with liberal intent. The aim was a 'internalisation of compulsion'. Curing moves from a medieval mechanical-physical (a knock on the head) to a psychic-moral (a rule in the head) conception. Though Goethe dismisses guilt as a repressive reaction on the part of the clergy, he still understands madness as arising not from a somatic or even ultimately social externality but from within the subject's individual nature. The cure undergone must be a change in the constitution of the individual who returns – through conformity – to the world of order and universality. The harp player is sent to a retreat to be kept under the watchful eye of the pedagogy of good sense, truth and morality. Foucault identifies the therapeutic retreats of this period as milieus where the patient is kept in perpetual fear and anxiety, ceaselessly threatened directly as an individual by the law and the injunction against transgression. The stifling anguish of responsibility is imposed. Through work the patient returns to the order of God's commandments. The avoidance of physical constraint was part of a system whose essential element was the constitution of self-restraint, made manifest in the submission to labour. Pinel's retreat was based on the moral power of consolation and a docile fidelity to nature. He aimed to resume the

moral enterprise of religion, exclusive of the bible, on the level of virtue, labour and social life. The underlying notion is that, beneath the phenomenon of insanity, the social nature of the essential virtues is not disrupted. At his retreat, Pinel effected moral syntheses to ensure an ethical continuity between the worlds of madness and reason. He erected an environment that guaranteed bourgeois morality a universality of fact. Writing of Saragossa he stated that there had been established

a sort of counterpoise to the mind's extravagances by the attraction and charm inspired by the cultivation of the fields, by the natural instinct that leads man to sow the earth and thus to satisfy his needs by the fruit of his labours. From morning on you can see them (...) leaving gaily for the various parts of a large enclosure that belongs to the hospital, sharing with a sort of emulation the tasks appropriate to the season, cultivating wheat, vegetables (...) the surest and most efficacious way to restore man to reason.[31]

The changing perception of madness has moved here from the sixteenth century view of insanity as the product of human animality – a break out of the primitive nature within – to an understanding of the *break* with nature as the cause of unreason. This nature, mediated by morality, is perceived as the very ontological justification and reflection of bourgeois order. Liberty in the retreat is put on a level with the laws of nature. The retreat's enforcer of reason bears a different perception of madness to Dr. Verazio. Madness is illusion and as such is cured by the suppression of theatre and artificiality in the return to an illusion-free world of labour. Life in the asylum is essentially a microcosm of structures in bourgeois society and its values.

Psychology itself is in question in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. Wilhelm must learn the pitfalls of introspection, self-analysis, diary-keeping. The journey, the external movement is the 'true' way to discover the self, through social interaction. The heroics of Werther's suicide are no longer relevant. It is the drive to conform, to accept the necessary and control the coincidental. Wilhelm is instructed,

The texture of this world is made of necessity and chance; man's reason comes between the two and can dominate them. It treats necessity as the basis of existence, and it can steer, lead and make use of chance factors. Only when it stands firm and unshakeable does man deserve to be called a god of the earth. Unhappy is he who from early age becomes accustomed to trying to find something arbitrary in what is necessary, who would like to attribute to chance elements a kind of reason, the following of which would in fact itself be a matter of religion.[32]

The Kantian categorical imperative entails a setting of limits on the urge towards freedom.

A person is not happy until his unrestricted striving determines for itself its own limits.[33]

The weakness of the characters in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, the harp player, Mignon, Sperata, the Countess and Aurelie, is that they have not successfully integrated themselves into the objective world, by imposing certain limits upon their subjective perceptions of reality. They withdraw into the inwardness of hallucinatory fantasies. The harp player's deluded conviction that he will injure and be injured by a young boy is ultimately more powerful than the healing nature of ordered activities. Nothing can dispel the Count's premonition that he is to die, nor the Countess's belief that the physical imprint of her husband's medallion has caused her to contract cancer. These fixations arise, on the one hand, because of a nature natively predisposed to effusion and rapture, as well as because of a lack of activity and distraction in the external world. The doctor in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* says,

It is a misfortune for anyone to get fixed in his mind some idea of other which has no influence on active life, or even withdraws him from active life.[34]

This motif of a lack of activity causing mental instability is repeated in the later sequel, *Wilhelm Meisters Wandering Years* (1821). Lenardo is haunted by the memory of a scene which "whenever I was alone, whenever I was unoccupied, that image emerged before my soul. It was an insoluble impression, which could be overshadowed by other images and sympathies, but could never be completely purged."

In this context it is revealing to note Goethe's later assessment of Werther's psychoses in his autobiography, *Poetry and Truth* .

Suicide is a phenomenon of human nature that demands everyone's attention and needs reassessment in every epoch, however much it may already have been discussed and treated. Montesquieu grants his heroes and great men the right to take their lives at will, saying that everyone must be at liberty to conclude the fifth act of his tragedy as he pleases. Mover, my subject here is not those who have led a significant and active life, who have dedicated their days to some great realm or to the cause of freedom. When the idea that inspired such people has vanished from the earth, we do not begrudge them the wish to carry it into the other world. Here we are concerned with those who actually become disgusted with life because – out of a lack of deeds – have placed exaggerated demands on themselves in the most peaceful situation

imaginable.[35]

Werther's melancholy and suicide is seen as caused by lack of occupation and a youthful error. These are the thoughts of an old, complacent man, who has found a place in the new bourgeois world – he is a Prussian bureaucrat by now and has been admitted to the ranks of the aristocracy – and no longer understands rebellion. The harmonic synthesis after which Wilhelm Meister must strive is outlined in *Maximen und Reflexionen*.

The botanists have a type of plant that they call incompletae; one can also say that there are incomplete, unfinished people. It is those whose longing and striving is not in proportion with their activity and achievement.
[36]

Conclusion. The Reorganisation of Madness

In the Middle Ages madness was associated with forbidden knowledge of the Fall and with the divine madness of Christ's redemption. During the classical Enlightenment period, madness came to be perceived as a violation of the orderly and rational laws of nature. It is telling that beggars and criminals were not seen to have transgressed reason, but rather the codified norms of society, and so they could often be immediately usefully reintegrated into the labour market. Anyway the need for a large subsistence level workforce allowed for social reintegration of the dispossessed – the poor were forced to work. But the mad had to be put away – for they could not work, because they were said to possess no 'reason'. They had to be brought back into labour. A moral stigma afflicted the insane, who were to be punished for not conforming to the orderly laws of nature.

Foucault has been influential in detailing the shapes of madness over the last half-millennium. He pinpoints three stages of punishment-treatment of deviance in the development of western civilisation: firstly, the 'monarchical', in which punishment is 'technical', that is, a visible attack on the body using torture; secondly, the 'law of the reforming jurists', a 'corrective' practice whereby, in Hegelian terms[37], the criminal or insane person re-qualifies as a juridical subject by self-willed punishment; thirdly, the 'Disciplinary', which involves the normalisation of individuals, understood as the training and mastering of the body, the reintegration into bourgeois morality, through discipline and the making-conscious of individual guilt.

Goethe, a truly omniscient intellectual, fascinated by biology and anthropology, had contact with medical theorists and practitioners throughout his life. Many of Goethe's medical acquaintances, including his pietist-chemist doctor, J. E Metz, had studied at Halle, where a

tradition of 'university psychiatry' set out from the premise of the superiority of the soul as determinant of good or ill health. Goethe would have been involved in discussions on madness, its apparent composition and supposed causes. Traditional understandings of madness based on the effects of the four humours were in turmoil and subject to revision and debate in this epoch. From time to time in Goethe's writings, a person, diagnosed as mad appears, signalling a certain attitude on the author's part to insanity. Goethe's understanding of madness and the possibility of cure shifts as the debates on madness reshape through an epoch of change. In his work there is a movement from a championship of madness as emancipation to an increasing burdening of guilt and moral compulsion on the lunatic. Madness becomes pushed out of the harmonic cosmos, rearing its head perhaps only as the symbol of artistic intoxication, not a real madness but the symbol of genial manifestation, which compels to create. Madness and melancholia are for the mature Goethe manifestations of an inactive self. Inactivity is an unacceptable attitude in bourgeois society. Madness is an affront to, and dialectical opposite of 'bourgeois order.

Note

1. *Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers*, Reclam, Stuttgart, 1985, p. 54.

2. *Werther* , p. 54.

3. *Werther* , p. 56.

4. C.H. Spiess, *Biographien der Wahnsinnigen*, Sammlung Luchterhand, Darmstadt und Neuwied 1976 p. 7.

5. *Werther*, p. 99.

6. *Werther*, p. 53.

7. *Werther*, p. 13.

8. *Werther*, p. 106.

9. *Lila* : in G. Diener, *Goethe's Lila: Heilung eines Wahnsinns durch psychische Kur*, Athenäum, Frankfurt/Main 1971 (contains 3rd edition of *Lila*), 1. 35, p. 234.

10. I Kant, *Anthropologie in Pragmatischer Hinsicht*, Werke Band 12, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/Main 1964, p. 533

11. I Kant, *Anthropologie in Pragmatischer Hinsicht*, pp. 457-458.

12. I Kant, *Anthropologie in Pragmatischer Hinsicht*, p. 535.

13. *Lila* , 1. 6, p. 232.

14. *Lila* , 11. 35-40, p. 232.

15. *Lila* , 1. 4, p. 230.

16. G. Diener, *Goethe's Lila: Heilung eines Wahnsinns durch psychische Kur*, Athenäum, Frankfurt/Main 1971 p. 164.

17. *Lila* 22-23, p. 248.

18. M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, Tavistock Publications, London 1971 p. 270.

- 19.** P. Pinel, quoted in M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, pp. 270-271.
- 20.** *Lila* , 1. 30, p. 239.
- 21.** *Lila* , 11. 22-25, p. 237.
- 22.** *Lila* , 1. 19, p. 244.
- 23.** Reil quoted in G. Diener, *Goethe's Lila: Heilung eines Wahnsinns durch psychische Kur*, Athenäum, Frankfurt/Main 1971 p. 180.
- 24.** *Lila* , 1. 24, p. 236.
- 25.** *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Hamburger Ausgabe, BK7, 1959, pp. 346-347.
- 26.** W.M.L., p. 436.
- 27.** W.M.L., p. 436.
- 28.** W.M.L., p. 586.
- 29.** W.M.L., p. 347.
- 30.** W.M.L., p. 347.
- 31.** P. Pinel, quoted in M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, pp. 196-197.
- 32.** W.M.L., p. 71.
- 33.** W.M.L., p. 553.
- 34.** W.M.L., p. 348.
- 35.** Hamburger .Ausgabe Ed 9, p. 583. (book 13)
- 36.** Hamburger Ausgabe Ed 12, p. 532.
- 37.** c.f. his *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 100



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Liberazioni Rivista di Critica Antispecista - ISSN 1825-6465

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