

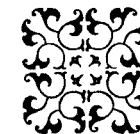
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To the doctor, Freud transferred an... pictures Pinel and Tuke had set up within confinement. He did deliver the patient from the existence of the asylum within which his "liberators" had alienated him; but he did not deliver him from what was essential in this existence; he regrouped its powers, extended them to the maximum by uniting them in the doctor's hands; he created the psychoanalytical situation where, by an inspired short-circuit, alienation becomes disalienating because, in the doctor, it becomes a subject.

The doctor, as an alienating figure, remains the key to psychoanalysis. It is perhaps because it did not suppress this ultimate structure, and because it referred all the others to it, that psychoanalysis has not been able, will not be able, to hear the voices of unreason, nor to decipher in themselves the signs of the madman. Psychoanalysis can unravel some of the forms of madness; it remains a stranger to the sovereign enterprise of unreason. It can neither liberate nor transcribe, nor most certainly explain, what is essential in this enterprise.

Since the end of the eighteenth century, the life of unreason no longer manifests itself except in the lightning-flash of works such as those of Hölderlin, of Nerval, of Nietzsche, or of Artaud—forever irreducible to those alienations that can be cured, resisting by their own strength that gigantic moral imprisonment which we are in the habit of calling, doubtless by antiphrasis, the liberation of the insane by Pinel and Tuke.



CONCLUSION

THE Goya who painted *The Madhouse* must have experienced before that grovel of flesh in the void, that nakedness among bare walls, something related to a contemporary pathos: the symbolic tinsel that crowned the insane kings left in full view suppliant bodies, bodies vulnerable to chains and whips, which contradicted the delirium of the faces, less by the poverty of these trappings than by the human truth which radiated from all that unprofaned flesh. The man in the tricorne is not mad because he has stuck an old hat upon his nakedness; but within this madman in a hat rises—by the inarticulate power of his muscular body, of his savage and marvelously unconstricted youth—a human presence already liberated and somehow free since the beginning of time, by his birthright. *The Madhouse* is less concerned with madness and those strange faces one finds elsewhere in the *Caprichos*, moreover, than with the vast monotony of these new bodies, shown in all their vigor, and whose gestures, if they invoke their dreams, celebrate especially their dark freedom: its language is close to the world of Pinel.

The Goya of the *Disparates* and the Quinta del Sordo addresses himself to another madness. Not that of madmen cast into prison, but that of man cast into darkness. Does Goya not link us, by memory, with the old world of enchantments, of fantastic rides, of witches perched on the branches of dead trees? Is not the monster whispering its secrets into the ears of the *Monk* related to the gnome who fascinated Bosch's *Saint Anthony*? But they are different for Goya, and their prestige, which overshadows all his later work, derives from another power. For Bosch or Brueghel, these forms are generated by the world itself; through the fissures of a strange poetry, they rise from stones and plants, they well out of an animal howl; the whole complicity of nature is not too much for their dance. Goya's forms are born out of nothing: they have no background, in the double sense that they are silhouetted against only the most monotonous darkness, and that nothing can assign them their origin, their limit, and their nature. The *Disparates* are without landscape, without walls, without setting—and this is still a further difference from the *Caprichos*; there is not a star in the night sky of the great human bats we see in the *Way of Flying*. The branch on which these witches jabber—out of what tree does it grow? Does it fly? Toward what sabbath, and what clearing? Nothing in all this deals with a world, neither this one nor any other. It is indeed a question of that *Sleep of Reason* which Goya, in 1797, had already made the first image of the "universal idiom"; it is a question of a night which is doubtless that of classical unreason, that triple night into which Orestes sank. But in that night, man communicates with what is deepest in himself, and with what is most solitary. The desert of Bosch's *Saint Anthony* was infinitely populous; and even if it was a product of her imagination, the landscape that Dulle Griet moved through was marked by a whole human language. Goya's *Monk*,

with that hot beast against his back, its paws on his shoulders and its mouth panting at his ear, remains alone: no secret is revealed. All that is present is the most internal, and at the same time the most savagely free, of forces: the power which hacks apart the bodies in the *Gran Disparate*, which breaks free and assaults our eyes in the *Raging Madness*. Beyond that point, the faces themselves decompose; this is no longer the madness of the *Caprichos*, which tied on masks truer than the truth of faces; this is a madness *beneath* the mask, a madness that eats away faces, corrodes features; there are no longer eyes or mouths, but glances shot from nowhere and staring at nothing (as in the *Witches' Sabbath*); or screams from black holes (as in the *Pilgrimage of Saint Isidore*). Madness has become man's possibility of abolishing both man and the world—and even those images that challenge the world and deform man. It is, far beyond dreams, beyond the nightmare of bestiality, the last recourse: the end and the beginning of everything. Not because it is a promise, as in German lyricism, but because it is the ambiguity of chaos and apocalypse: Goya's *Idiot* who shrieks and twists his shoulder to escape from the nothingness that imprisons him—is this the birth of the first man and his first movement toward liberty, or the last convulsion of the last dying man?

And this madness that links and divides time, that twists the world into the ring of a single night, this madness so foreign to the experience of its contemporaries, does it not transmit—to those able to receive it, to Nietzsche and to Artaud—those barely audible voices of classical unreason, in which it was always a question of nothingness and night, but amplifying them now to shrieks and frenzy? But giving them for the first time an expression, a *droit de cité*, and a hold on Western culture which makes possible all contestations, as well as *total* contestation? But restoring their primitive savagery?

Sade's calm, patient language also gathers up the final words of unreason and also gives them, for the future, a remoter meaning. Between Goya's broken drawings and that uninterrupted stream of words continuing from the first volume of *Justine* to the tenth of *Juliette*, there is doubtless nothing in common except a certain movement that retraces the course of contemporary lyricism, drying up its sources, rediscovering the secret of unreason's nothingness.

Within the château where Sade's hero confines himself, within the convents, the forests, the dungeons where he endlessly pursues the agony of his victims, it seems at first glance that nature can act with utter freedom. There man rediscovers a truth he had forgotten, though it was manifest: what desire can be contrary to nature, since it was given to man by nature itself? And since it was taught by nature in the great lesson of life and death which never stops repeating itself in the world? The madness of desire, insane murders, the most unreasonable passions—all are wisdom and reason, since they are a part of the order of nature. Everything that morality and religion, everything that a clumsy society has stifled in man, revives in the castle of murders. There man is finally attuned to his own nature; or rather, by an ethic peculiar to this strange confinement, man must scrupulously maintain, without deviation, his fidelity to nature: a strict task, a total enterprise: "You will know nothing unless you have known everything; if you are timid enough to stop with Nature, she will escape you forever."¹ Conversely, if man has wounded or changed nature, it is man's task to repair the damage through the mathematics of a sovereign vengeance: "Nature caused us all to be born equal; if fate is pleased to disturb this plan of the general law, it is our responsibility to correct its caprice, and to repair by our attention the usurpations of the stronger."² The slowness of revenge, like the insolence of

desire, belongs to nature. There is nothing that the madness of men invents which is not either nature made manifest or nature restored.

But this is only the first phase of Sade's thought: the ironic justification, both rational and lyrical, the gigantic *pastiche*, of Rousseau. Beyond this demonstration-by-absurdity of the inanity of contemporary philosophy, beyond all its verbiage about man and nature, the real decisions are still to be made: decisions that are also breaks, in which the links between man and his natural being disappear.³ The famous Society of the Friends of Crime, the project of a Swedish Constitution, once we remove their stinging references to the *Social Contract* and to the proposed constitutions for Poland or Corsica, establish nothing but the sovereign rigor of subjectivity in the rejection of all natural liberty and all natural equality: uncontrolled disposal of one member by the other, the unconditional exercise of violence, the limitless application of the right of death—this entire society, whose only link is the very rejection of a link, appears to be a dismissal of nature—the only cohesion asked of individuals is intended to protect, not a natural existence, but the free exercise of sovereignty over and against nature.⁴ The relation established by Rousseau is precisely reversed; sovereignty no longer transposes the natural existence; the latter is only an object for the sovereign, which permits him to measure his total liberty. Followed to its logical conclusion, desire leads only in appearance to the rediscovery of nature. Actually, for Sade there is no return to the natal terrain, no hope that the first rejection of social order may surreptitiously become the re-established order of happiness, through a dialectic of nature renouncing and thus confirming itself. The solitary madness of desire that still for Hegel, as for the eighteenth-century philosophers, plunges man into a natural world that is immediately resumed in a social world, for Sade merely

casts man into a void that dominates nature in a total absence of proportion and community, into the endlessly repeated nonexistence of gratification. The night of madness is thus limitless; what might have been supposed to be man's violent nature was only the infinity of non-nature.

Here is the source of Sade's great monotony: as he advances, the settings dissolve; the surprises, the incidents, the pathetic or dramatic links of the scenes vanish. What was still vicissitude in *Justine*—an event experienced, hence new—becomes in *Juliette* a sovereign game, always triumphant, without negativity, and whose perfection is such that its novelty can only be its similarity to itself. As with Goya, there are no longer any backgrounds for these meticulous *Disparates*. And yet in this absence of decor, which can as easily be total night as absolute day (there are no shadows in Sade), we advance slowly toward a goal: the death of Justine. Her innocence had exhausted even the desire to torment it. We cannot say that crime had not overcome her virtue; we must say inversely that her natural virtue had brought her to the point of having exhausted all the possible means of being an object for crime. And at this point, when crime can do nothing more than drive her from the domain of its sovereignty (Juliette expels her from the Château de Noireuil), Nature in her turn, so long dominated, scorned, profaned,⁵ submits entirely to that which contradicted her: Nature in turn enters madness, and there, in an instant, but for an instant only, restores her omnipotence. The storm that is unleashed, the lightning that strikes and consumes Justine, is Nature become criminal subjectivity. This death that seems to escape from the insane domain of Juliette belongs to Nature more profoundly than any other; the night of storm, of thunder and lightning, is a sufficient sign that Nature is lacerating herself, that she has reached the extreme point of her dissension, and that she is revealing in this golden flash a sovereignty

which is both herself and something quite outside herself: the sovereignty of a mad heart that has attained, in its solitude, the limits of the world that wounds it, that turns it against itself and abolishes it at the moment when to have mastered it so well gives it the right to identify itself with that world. That lightning-flash which Nature drew from herself in order to strike Justine was identical with the long existence of Juliette, who would also disappear in solitude, leaving no trace or corpse or anything upon which Nature could claim her due. The nothingness of unreason, in which the language of Nature had died forever, has become a violence of Nature and against Nature, to the point of the savage abolition of itself.⁶

For Sade as for Goya, unreason continues to watch by night; but in this vigil it joins with fresh powers. The non-being it once was now becomes the power to annihilate. Through Sade and Goya, the Western world received the possibility of transcending its reason in violence, and of recovering tragic experience beyond the promises of dialectic.

After Sade and Goya, and since them, unreason has belonged to whatever is decisive, for the modern world, in any work of art: that is, whatever any work of art contains that is both murderous and constraining.

The madness of Tasso, the melancholia of Swift, the delirium of Rousseau belong to their works, just as these works belong to their authors. Here in the texts, there in the lives of the men, the same violence spoke, or the same bitterness; visions certainly were exchanged; language and delirium interlaced. But further, the work of art and madness, in classical experience, were more profoundly united at another level: paradoxically, at the point where they limited one another. For there existed a region where madness challenged the work of art, reduced it ironically, made of

its iconographic landscape a pathological world of hallucinations; that language which was delirium was not a work of art. And conversely, delirium was robbed of its meager truth as madness if it was called a work of art. But by admitting this very fact, there was no reduction of one by the other, but rather (remembering Montaigne) a discovery of the central incertitude where the work of art is born, at the moment when it stops being born and is truly a work of art. In this opposition, to which Tasso and Swift bore witness after Lucretius—and which it was vain to attempt to separate into lucid intervals and crises—was disclosed a distance where the very truth of a work of art raised a problem: was it madness, or a work of art? Inspiration, or hallucination? A spontaneous babble of words, or the pure origins of language? Must its truth, even before its birth, be taken from the wretched truth of men, or discovered far beyond its origin, in the being that it presumes? The madness of the writer was, for other men, the chance to see being born, over and over again, in the discouragement of repetition and disease, the truth of the work of art.

The madness of Nietzsche, the madness of Van Gogh or of Artaud, belongs to their work perhaps neither more nor less profoundly, but in quite another way. The frequency in the modern world of works of art that explode out of madness no doubt proves nothing about the reason of that world, about the meaning of such works, or even about the relations formed and broken between the real world and the artists who produced such works. And yet this frequency must be taken seriously, as if it were the insistence of a question: from the time of Hölderlin and Nerval, the number of writers, painters, and musicians who have "succumbed" to madness has increased; but let us make no mistake here; between madness and the work of art, there has been no accommodation, no more constant exchange, no

communication of languages; their opposition is much more dangerous than formerly; and their competition now allows no quarter; theirs is a game of life and death. Artaud's madness does not slip through the fissures of the work of art; his madness is precisely the *absence of the work of art*, the reiterated presence of that absence, its central void experienced and measured in all its endless dimensions. Nietzsche's last cry, proclaiming himself both Christ and Dionysos, is not on the border of reason and unreason, in the perspective of the work of art, their common dream, finally realized and immediately vanishing, of a reconciliation of the "shepherds of Arcady and the fishermen of Tiberias"; it is the very annihilation of the work of art, the point where it becomes impossible and where it must fall silent; the hammer has just fallen from the philosopher's hands. And Van Gogh, who did not want to ask "permission from doctors to paint pictures," knew quite well that his work and his madness were incompatible.

Madness is the absolute break with the work of art; it forms the constitutive moment of abolition, which dissolves in time the truth of the work of art; it draws the exterior edge, the line of dissolution, the contour against the void. Artaud's *oeuvre* experiences its own absence in madness, but that experience, the fresh courage of that ordeal, all those words hurled against a fundamental absence of language, all that space of physical suffering and terror which surrounds or rather coincides with the void—that is the work of art itself: the sheer cliff over the abyss of the work's absence. Madness is no longer the space of indecision through which it was possible to glimpse the original truth of the work of art, but the decision beyond which this truth ceases irrevocably, and hangs forever over history. It is of little importance on exactly which day in the autumn of 1888 Nietzsche went mad for good, and after which his texts no longer afford philosophy but psychiatry: all of

them, including the postcard to Strindberg, belong to Nietzsche, and all are related to *The Birth of Tragedy*. But we must not think of this continuity in terms of a system, of a thematics, or even of an existence: Nietzsche's madness—that is, the dissolution of his thought—is that by which his thought opens out onto the modern world. What made it impossible makes it immediate for us; what took it from Nietzsche offers it to us. This does not mean that madness is the only language common to the work of art and the modern world (dangers of the pathos of malediction, inverse and symmetrical danger of psychoanalyses); but it means that, through madness, a work that seems to drown in the world, to reveal there its non-sense, and to transfigure itself with the features of pathology alone, actually engages within itself the world's time, masters it, and leads it; by the madness which interrupts it, a work of art opens a void, a moment of silence, a question without answer, provokes a breach without reconciliation where the world is forced to question itself. What is necessarily a profanation in the work of art returns to that point, and, in the time of that work swamped in madness, the world is made aware of its guilt. Henceforth, and through the mediation of madness, it is the world that becomes culpable (for the first time in the Western world) in relation to the work of art; it is now arraigned by the work of art, obliged to order itself by its language, compelled by it to a task of recognition, of reparation, to the task of restoring reason *from* that unreason and *to* that unreason. The madness in which the work of art is engulfed is the space of our enterprise, it is the endless path to fulfillment, it is our mixed vocation of apostle and exegete. This is why it makes little difference when the first voice of madness insinuated itself into Nietzsche's pride, into Van Gogh's humility. There is no madness except as the final instant of the work of art—the work endlessly drives madness to its limits; *where there*

is a work of art, there is no madness; and yet madness is contemporary with the work of art, since it inaugurates the time of its truth. The moment when, together, the work of art and madness are born and fulfilled is the beginning of the time when the world finds itself arraigned by that work of art and responsible before it for what it is.

Ruse and new triumph of madness: the world that thought to measure and justify madness through psychology must justify itself before madness, since in its struggles and agonies it measures itself by the excess of works like those of Nietzsche, of Van Gogh, of Artaud. And nothing in itself, especially not what it can know of madness, assures the world that it is justified by such works of madness.