



## HISTORY OF MENTAL CONCEPTS

### On mania

#### BENJAMIN RUSH

Classical text from: Rush B. (1812) Medical inquiries and observations upon the diseases of the mind. Kimber & Richardson, Philadelphia:141-170.

*Benjamin Rush is considered by many as the father of American Psychiatry. In his book he presents a complex taxonomy of mental disorders where many criteria (including severity, course and causality) apart from the kind of symptoms shape the classification. In this paper his ideas on mania are presented. It is a strictly medical approach, with an emphasis on somatic symptoms which is incommensurable to current psychopathology. It appears clearly that at the beginning of the Nineteenth-Century American psychiatry was deeply influenced by European descriptions. As the reader can see at that time mania was a wide concept including many symptoms which were later severed in different diagnoses. On this respect, in Rush's mania there is no sign of the distinction between affective and cognitive illnesses, a distinction that had to characterize the end of the century and (thanks to Kraepelin) had to inform Twentieth-Century nosologies. In this paper, the concept of agitation is enlarged to include many phenomena that current classifications would consider as part of schizophrenia. However, the current tendency to enlarge the concept of bipolarity in order to include so many forms of agitation and excitation spread a new light on this old book evoking the return of an old, pre-Kraepelinian stance.*

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I shall divide [General Intellectual Derangement] into three grades or states.

I. Mania, by which I mean what has been called tonic madness by some writers, and mania furibunda by Vanswieten.

II. Manicula, or madness in a reduced, and most commonly in a chronic, state.

III. Manalgia, or that state of general madness, in which a universal torpor takes place in the body and mind.

This division of general madness into three states, accords with similar divisions, which have lately been adopted of several other diseases, particularly rheumatism, and inflammation of the liver. The former is known by the names of rheumatismus, rheumaticula, and rheumatagia, and the latter by the names of hepatitis, hepaticula, and hepatalgia. The propriety of thus conforming madness to the divisions of those two diseases will appear when we consider the unity of their proximate cause, and that they all depend upon similar morbid actions in the blood-vessels. Rheumatism and hepatitis, therefore, may be considered, if I may be allowed the illustration, as madness in the joints, or liver; and madness, as rheumatism, or hepatitis, in the brain.

#### MANIA

I shall begin with the history and cure of general madness of the first grade, or of what I have called mania. Its premonitory signs are, watchfulness, high or low spirits, great rapidity of thought, and eccentricity in conversation, and conduct; sometimes pathetic expressions of horror, excited by the apprehension of approaching madness; terrifying or distressing dreams; great irritability of temper; jealousy ; instability in all pursuits; unusual acts of extravagance, manifested by the purchases of houses, and certain expensive and unnecessary articles of furniture, and hostility to relations and friends. The face is pale or flushed, the eyes are dull, or wild, the appetite is increased, the bowels are costive, and the patient complains sometimes of throbbing in the temples, vertigo, and headache.

[...] The symptoms of this state of derangement, when completely formed, as they appear in the body, are, a wild and ferocious countenance, enlarged and rolling eyes, constant singing, whistling or hallowing, imitation of the noises of different animals, walking with a quick step, or standing still, often with the hands and eyes elevated towards the heavens ; wakefulness

for whole nights, weeks, months, and, according to Dr. Morely's account of a boy at Naples, for years; great muscular strength, uncommon adroitness in performing certain acts, and uncommon swiftness in running. The nerves are insensible to cold, heat, and to irritants of all kinds. [...]. Sometimes the nerves exhibit, in great mobility, several of the signs of hysteria mixed with general madness. The chief of these signs are laughing and weeping. They occur oftener in women than men.

The skin is dry, cool, and sometimes covered with profuse sweats. A coldness often affects the feet only, for days and weeks, while the head, and other parts of the body, are preternaturally warm, or of their natural temperature.

The senses of hearing and seeing are uncommonly acute. This is obvious, from their hearing so distinctly low and distant sounds, and from their prompt recollection of long unseen and forgotten faces, and of the resemblance of persons, whom they have never seen before, to their parents, or to some other of their ancestors.

The tongue is generally moist, and frequently has a whitish appearance, such as occurs in common fevers. There is sometimes a preternatural secretion of saliva and mucus in the mouth and throat, which is of a viscid nature, and discharged with difficulty by spitting. From the constancy of this symptom in some mad people, they obtained the name of sputatores, or spitters. There is generally a stoppage of the secretion of mucus in the nose. [...] The appetite for food is great, or there is a total want of it. The bowels are generally costive, and the stools white, small, and hard. The urine is scanty in quantity, and, for the most part, of a high colour. The pulse is synocha, intermitting, preternaturally slow, frequent, quick, depressed, or morbidly natural, exactly as we find it in other arterial diseases of great morbid action. It is generally depressed, where the muscles are in a state of violent excitement.

The symptoms of mania, as they appear in the mind, vary with its causes. When it is induced by impressions that have been made upon the brain through the medium of the heart, all the faculties of the mind discover marks of the disease in all their operations. In its highest grade, it produces erroneous perception. In this state of derange-

ment, the patient mistakes the persons and objects around him. This may arise either from a disease in the external senses, in which case it is called morbid sensation; or from a disease in the brain. It is when it arises from the latter cause only, a symptom of the first or highest grade of intellectual derangement.

We have a striking illustration of this diseased state of perception in the character of Ajax, in the tragedy of Sophocles. He becomes mad, in consequence of Ulysses being preferred to him in the competition for the arms of Achilles. In one of his paroxysms of madness, he runs into the fields, and slays a number of shepherds and their cattle, under a belief that they were Agamemnon, Menelaus, and others, who had been the instruments of his dishonour. Afterwards he brings a number of cattle to his tent, and among them a large ram, which he puts to death for his rival and antagonist Ulysses.

Persons under the influence of this grade of madness sometimes mistake their friends for strangers, and common visitors for their relations and friends. They now and then fancy they see good or bad spirits standing by their bedsides, waiting to carry them to a place of torment or happiness, according as their moral dispositions and habits in health have prepared them for those different abodes of wicked or pious souls. Not only the eyes, but the ears likewise, are the vehicles of false perceptions, and to these we are to ascribe the soliloquies we sometimes observe in mad people. They fancy they are spoken to, and their conversation frequently consists of replies only to certain questions they suppose to be put to them. These false perceptions are more common through the ears than the eyes in mad people. The latter occur constantly more or less in delirium, but we occasionally see them in the highest grade of intellectual madness. When these errors in perception take place, madness has been called *ideal* by Dr. Arnold, but more happily *diseased* perception by Dr. Creighton. It is in this state of madness only that it is proper to say, persons are "out of their senses", for the mind no longer receives the true images of external objects from them. To account for these erroneous or diseased perceptions, it will be necessary to remark, that the correspondence of ideas

and thoughts with impressions, depends upon the *sameness* of the impressions which produced the original ideas and thoughts. Now this correspondence can take place only when the brain is in a healthy state. When it is *diseased*, impressions induce unrelated ideas and thoughts, as in the case of Ajax just now mentioned. It will be necessary to remark further in this place, that no idea can be excited in the mind, however erroneous it may be, from a want of relation between impression and perception, that did not pre-exist in the mind. Ajax could not have fancied a large ram to be Ulysses, had not his image from a former impression of his person upon his brain, pre-existed in his mind ; and it was because the part of his brain which was stimulated by the image of the ram did not emit a corresponding perception, but conveyed the motion excited by it to that part of the brain in which the image of Ulysses had been imprinted, that he saw him instead of a ram.

The nature of this error of perception may be understood, by recollecting how often impressions upon a sound part of the body produce sensation and motion, in parts that are affected with a morbid sensibility and irritability, that are remote from it. These errors, as applied to the body, have lately received the names of error sensus, and error motus. They occur in all the senses, as well as in the nerves, muscles and brain.

Where these erroneous perceptions do not take place, the associations of a madman are often discordant, ludicrous, or offensive, and his judgment and reason are perverted upon all subjects. He sometimes attempts to injure himself or others. Even inanimate objects, such as his clothing, bed, chairs, tables, and the windows, doors, and walls of his room, when confined, partake of his rage. All sense of decency and modesty is suspended; hence he besmears his face with his own excretions, and exposes his whole body without a covering. When he roams at large, or escapes from a place of confinement, lonely woods, marshes, caves, or grave-yards, are his usual places of resort, or retirement. What is called consciousness is at this time destroyed in his mind. He is ignorant of the place he occupies, and of his rank and condition in society, of

the lapse of time, and even of his own personal identity. Shakspeare has very happily described a part of this state of mind, when he makes King Lear utter the following words:

“I am mainly ignorant  
What place this is ; and all the skill I have  
Remembers not these garments, nor I know not  
Where I did sleep last night”

This grade of derangement is generally of short duration. It gradually leaves the memory, and appears with less force in the passions and moral faculties, but still occupies, in a greater or less degree, every part of the understanding.

The sameness in the operations of nature, in thus gradually contracting the seat and extent of this disease to one faculty of the mind, and in contracting the seat and extent of violent fevers to the blood-vessels, was noticed in a former part of these Inquiries.

In this reduced state of madness, the mind becomes more coherent, and perceives, and associates correctly, but judges incorrectly, that is, draws erroneous conclusions from false premises. But there are cases in this reduced grade of derangement in which the patient perceives justly, associates naturally, judges correctly, but reasons erroneously, that is, draws false conclusions from just prepositions. Sometimes he discovers the reverse of this state of mind, by drawing just conclusions from erroneous perceptions, associations and judgments. Thus, when he fancies himself to be a king, he errs in all the ways that have been mentioned. But observe his conduct: he covers himself with a blanket which he calls a robe, he puts a mat upon his head which he calls a crown, struts with a majestic step, and demands the homage due to royalty from all around him. In this respect he reasons justly from false premises, and acts conformably to the high opinion he entertains of his rank and power.

In a more advanced state of the disease, the hostility of the patient is confined to his friends and relations only, and this is frequently great in proportion to the nearness of the connection, and the extent of the obligations he owes to them. Its intensity cannot be conceived of by persons who have observed that passion only in ordinary life. I once advised a ride in a chair, for one of my private patients in this state of mind, in the Pennsyl-

vania Hospital. Before he got into it, he made the steward of the hospital, who was to accompany him, declare, that no one of his family had ever rode in it. But further, while the disease occupies the whole understanding, the patient discovers more derangement in talking upon some subjects than others. These subjects are sometimes of a pleasant, but oftener of a distressing nature. The disease varies with each of them by putting on the appearance of amenomania in the former, and tristimania in the latter case. It differs from them both in the errors and prejudices that are entertained by the patient, being accompanied with more corporeal and mental excitement ; in being less fixed to one object, and in occupying every part of the understanding.

From a part of the brain being preternaturally elevated, but not diseased, the mind sometimes discovers not only unusual strength and acuteness, but certain talents it never exhibited before. The records of the wit and cunning of madmen are numerous in every country. Talents for eloquence, poetry, music and painting, and uncommon ingenuity in several of the mechanical arts, are often evolved in this state of madness. A gentleman whom I attended in our hospital in the year 1810 often delighted, as well as astonished, the patients and officers of our hospital, by his displays of oratory, in preaching from a table in the hospital yard every Sunday. A female patient of mine, who became insane after parturition in the year 1807, sang hymns and songs, of her own composition, during the latter stage of her illness, with a tone of voice so soft and pleasant, that I hung upon it with delight, every time I visited her. She had never discovered a talent for poetry nor music in any previous part of her life. Two instances of a talent for drawing, evolved by madness, have occurred within my knowledge; and where is the hospital for mad people, in which elegant and completely rigged ships, and curious peices of machinery, have not been exhibited, by persons who never discovered the least turn for a mechanical art previously to their derangement. Sometimes we observe in mad people an unexpected resuscitation of knowledge; hence we hear them describe past events, and speak in ancient or modern languages, or repeat long and interesting passages from books,

none of which we are sure they were capable of recollecting, in the natural and healthy state of their minds.

The disease which thus evolves these new and wonderful talents and operations of the mind may be compared to an earthquake, which, by convulsing the upper strata of our globe, throws upon its surface precious and splendid fossils, the existence of which was unknown to the proprietors of the soil in which they were buried.

Sometimes the cause which induced derangement is forgotten, and the subjects of the ravings, as well as the conduct of patients, are contrary to their usual habits ; but they both more frequently accord with their natural tempers and dispositions, and with the cause of their disease.

Are they naturally proud and ambitious? They imagine themselves to be kings, or noblemen, and demand homage and respect. Are they naturally avaricious? They fancy they possess incalculable wealth. Are they ferocious and malicious? They assume the nature of wild beasts, and attempt to injure their friends and keepers. Are they sensual and slovenly in their dispositions and dress ? They discover marks of both in their conversation and appearance? Are they pious and benevolent? They are inoffensive in their deportment, and spend much time in devotional exercises. But the conduct and language of madmen are much influenced by the specific cause that induces it. Does it arise from reciprocal love, opposed in the object of mutual wishes by interested friends? It vents itself in sighs and songs, or sonnets and love letters. Is madness induced by perfidy in a lover ? It discovers itself in all the usual marks of resentment, rage, and, when practicable, of revenge. Ariosto has with great elegance and correctness described these marks in the conduct of Orlando, when deserted by his beloved Angelica. He lies down upon a bed in order to rest a few minutes, but the moment he recollects that Angelica once slept upon that bed, he instantly starts from it, tears up the tree by the roots upon which she had cut her name, and finally dries up the water in which she had been accustomed to view her face.

Has the disease been induced by a conflict between the moral faculty, and the sexual appetite, or by the undue gratification of it ? The habitual

and morbid impurity of the mind discovers itself in corresponding conversations and actions. Several cases of this kind in both sexes, have occurred in our hospital.

But, further, is madness induced by the ingratitude or treachery of friends, or by the unjust calumnies of the world ? The conversation and conduct of the patient indicate a coldness or hostility to the whole human race. In this state of mind, the walls of a cell, and even darkness, are welcomed, to protect the miserable sufferer from the sight of the supposed monster - man. [...]

Is it induced by misfortunes in business, and by the rapacity and cruelty of creditors ? He sees a sheriff, or one of his deputies, in every person that opens his door, and talks of nothing but of the horrors of a jail. [...]

Is madness induced by remorse for real or imaginary crimes ? The wretched sufferer fancies his bed room a dungeon, and his physician an executioner, or he cries out to be delivered from infernal spirits, which he supposes to be waiting around his bed, to carry his soul to a place of torment.

Is it induced by false and gloomy opinions of the attributes of the Deity, and a belief of being destined to endless misery ? His apartment becomes vocal day and night with the groans and sighs, and the excruciating language of despair.

Is it brought on by a belief in his being a peculiar favourite of heaven, and destined to fulfil some of its high and benevolent decrees? His mind overflows with enthusiastic joy, and he stands aloof from an intercourse, and even from the contact of mortals. Two instances of this kind have come under my knowledge in this city.

Has the sudden and unexpected acquisition of great wealth perverted the natural operations of the mind? The maniac from this cause is elevated, cheerful, sings and laughs from morning till night. I have seen one instance of this state of madness in our hospital from the cause I have mentioned. It is from such cases of madness, that it has been said to be attended with pleasure. Horace's madman complained of his physician, for restoring him to his former humble grade of life by curing him, and Dr. Thomas Willis mentions an instance of a man, who was so happy in his paroxysms of madness, that when he was

well he longed with impatience for their return ; but such instances of happiness in madness are very rare. It is more frequently, I shall say hereafter, accompanied with misery, or a total insensibility to it.

The nature of a paroxysm of madness is much diversified, by its affecting the moral faculties, or leaving them in a sound state. [...]

To the history that has been given of the correspondence between the ravings and conduct of mad people, and their natural tempers and dispositions, there are several exceptions. These are, all those cases in which persons of exemplary piety and purity of character utter profane, or impious, or indelicate language, and behave in other respects contrary to their moral habits. The apparent vices of such deranged people may be compared to the offensive substances that are sometimes thrown upon the surface of the globe by an earthquake, mixed with the splendid fossils formerly mentioned, which substances had no existence in nature, but were formed by a new arrangement in the particles of matter in consequence of the violent commotions in the bowels of the earth.

Not only the ravings of mad people, for the most part, accord with their habitual tempers and dispositions, and the causes of their disease, but their conduct corresponds in like manner with their habitual occupations. [...]

There is a considerable variety in the forms of general madness. It appears,

I. In a single acute and violent paroxysm, such as has been described, which continues for days, weeks, and sometimes months, and ends in death, a remission, or a perfect and durable recovery. In one of the cases of a protracted paroxysm of madness which came under my notice, the disease continued from June 1810 until April 1811, with scarcely any abatement in the excitement of the body and mind, notwithstanding the patient was constantly under the operation of depleting remedies. I have seen another case, in which the same remedies were insufficient to produce an interruption of five minutes of speech or vociferations, except during a few short intervals of sleep, for two months.

II. General madness appears in a chronic but more moderate form, without paroxysm.

III. It appears with paroxysms, with chronic, but moderate, derangement in its intervals. In these intervals, the patient sometimes recovers so far as so discover derangement upon one subject only. In these cases, a return of general madness is easily excited at any time, by touching upon the subject of his partial insanity in conversing with him. Thus the touch of one of the cords of a musical instrument causes all its cords to vibrate with it. In this, I remarked formerly, general madness differs from the two forms of partial madness which have been described.

IV. It appears in paroxysms, with the restoration of reason in their intervals. These paroxysms occur annually, or at longer intervals, twice a year, particularly during the equinoxes, monthly, weekly, and according to Lazoni, an Italian physician, every day. Perhaps this diurnal attack of madness was what has lately been called the maniacal state of fever. Successive paroxysms of madness, with perfect intervals between them, occur most frequently in habitual drunkards ; and they would probably occur much oftener, were they not prevented by a vicarious affection of the stomach, known by puking, redness of the eyes, an active pulse, and a peculiar and specific foetor of the breath. From the correspondence of several of the actions which take place in this disease of the stomach, with those which take place in the brain in madness, and from the sameness of the ordinary duration of a paroxysm of each of them, I have called the former, derangement in the stomach.

The longer the intervals between the paroxysms of madness, the more complete is the restoration of reason. Remissions, rather than intermissions, take place when the intervals are of short duration, and these distinguish it from febrile delirium, in which intermissions more generally occur. In many cases, every thing is remembered that passes under the notice of the patient during a paroxysm of general madness, but in those cases in which the memory is diseased, as well as the understanding, nothing is recollected. I attended a lady, in the month of October 1802, who had crossed the Atlantic Ocean during a paroxysm of derangement, without recollecting a single circumstance of her voyage, any more than if she had passed the whole time in

sleep. Sometimes every thing is forgotten in the interval of a paroxysm, but recollected in a succeeding paroxysm. I once attended the daughter of a British officer, who had been educated in the habits of gay life, who was married to a Methodist minister. In her paroxysms of madness she resumed her gay habits, spoke French, and ridiculed the tenets and practices of the sect to which she belonged. In the intervals of her fits she renounced her gay habits, became zealously devoted to the religious principles and ceremonies of the Methodists, and forgot every thing she did and said during the fits of her insanity. A deranged sailor, some years ago in the Pennsylvania Hospital, fancied himself to be an admiral, and walked and commanded with all the dignity and authority that are connected with that high rank in the navy. He was cured and discharged : his disease some time afterwards returned, and with it all the actions of an admiral which he assumed and imitated in his former paroxysm. It is remarkable, some persons when deranged talk rationally, but act irrationally, while others act rationally, and talk irrationally. We had a sailor some years ago in our hospital, who spent a whole year in building and rigging a small ship in his cell. Every part of it was formed by a mind apparently in a sound state. During the whole of the year in which he was employed in this work, he spoke not a word. In bringing his ship out of his cell, a part of it was broken. He immediately spoke, and became violently deranged soon afterwards. Again, some madmen talk rationally, and write irrationally ; but it is more common for them to utter a few connected sentences in conversation, but not to be able to connect two correct sentences together in a letter. Of this I have known many instances in our hospital.

V. Mania is sometimes combined with phrenitis. [...]

VI. Mania is sometimes combined with the burning, sweating, cold, chilly, intermitting, and even hydrophobic states of fever. [...]

VII. There is a form of mania which is seldom the object of medical attention, either in hospitals, or in private practice, but which is well known, not only to physicians, but to persons of common observation in every part of the world. Dr. Cox has described it very happily and cor-

rectly in the following words.

“Among the varieties of maniacs met with in medical practice, there is one, which, though by no means rare, has been little noticed by writers on this subject : I refer to those cases, in which the individuals perform most of the common duties of life with propriety, and some of them, indeed, with scrupulous exactness ; who exhibit no strongly marked features of either temperament, no traits of superior or defective mental endowment, but yet take violent antipathies, harbour unjust suspicions, indulge strong propensities, affect singularity in dress, gait, and phraseology; are proud, conceited, and ostentatious; easily excited, and with difficulty appeased ; dead to sensibility, delicacy, and refinement; obstinately riveted to the most absurd opinions ; prone to controversy, and yet incapable of reasoning; always the hero of their own tale, using hyperbolic high-flown language to express the most simple ideas, accompanied by unnatural gesticulation, inordinate action, and frequently by the most alarming expression of countenance. On some occasions they suspect similar intentions on the most trivial grounds, on others are a prey to fear and dread from the most ridiculous and imaginary sources ; now embracing every opportunity of exhibiting romantic courage and feats of hardihood, then indulging themselves in all manner of excesses”

“Persons of this description, to the casual observer, might appear actuated by a bad heart, but the experienced physician knows it is the head which is defective. They seem as if constantly affected by a greater or less degree of stimulation from intoxicating liquors, while the expression of countenance furnishes an infallible proof of mental disease. If subjected to moral restraint, or a medical regimen, they yield with reluctance to the means proposed, and gener-

ally refuse and resist, on the ground that such means are unnecessary where no disease exists ; and when, by the system adopted, they are so far recovered, as to be enabled to suppress the exhibition of the former peculiarities, and are again fit to be restored to society, the physician, and those friends who put them under the physician’s care, are generally ever after objects of enmity, and frequently of revenge”

VIII. There is a form of madness which is altogether internal, and of which I have met with several instances. It consists in the same kind of alienation of mind that takes place in common madness, but which is subject to the command of the will: persons affected with it feel all the distraction of thoughts and anguish of madness when alone, and sometimes in company, when they are silent, or inattentive to conversation, but without discovering any of its signs in their countenances or behaviour. It resembles, in this respect, that feeble grade of the delirium of a fever, which is chased away by the visit of a physician, or by speaking to the patient upon any interesting subject. I have suspected the cases of suicide, which sometimes occur in persons apparently in a sound state of mind, are occasioned by this form of madness. They may be compared, in this situation, to patients in the walking state of the yellow fever, in whom all the sympathies of the body are destroyed, in consequence of which its internal parts appear sound and healthy, while the stomach, and other vital parts are perishing by disease. I have called this internal form of madness *mania larvata*.

