Hysteria and Enlightenment

Mesmer, Mozart and Marie-Therese von Paradis

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CHAPTER I

WIEN, WIEN , DU ALLEIN

Striking out- at last ! - on his own, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart spurned the quaint Episcopal principality of Salzburg in March of 1781 and moved to Vienna.

He was 25, still quite young, his determination to create a career for himself at the level of his own estimation of his abilities (*which in his fortunate case was shared by anybody who knew anything about music*) undiminished. Hanging around in the provinces bored him to tears. It was largely his father Leopold's fault. If he really wanted his son to settle in Salzburg, marry a local girl and slip into the of staid and stodgy burger like himself, why then did he take the child Mozart on a succession of dazzling voyages, spoiling him with the delights and of world-class cities

like Rome, Naples, Munich, Vienna, Mannheim, Paris, London….?

Mozart's decision to take up residence in the capital of European music was over-determined; growing up on the border of the Austrian empire made it inevitable. In his special case it might possibly have figured as a crime against humanity to have done otherwise! However, although the entire city was mad about music, he was mistaken in assuming that the bourgeoisie of dream-laden Vienna would be eager to bestow its precious attentions on musical geniuses.

Mozart came just a bit too early in European musical history to take his talent directly to the affluent middle class . For most of his career he was largely dependent on aristocratic patronage and church commissions. Such arrangements had worked throughout the Renaissance, Baroque and Rococco periods. By the middle of the 18th century they'd grown threadbare. Haydn and Gluck were among the last of the Viennese school to fatten themselves on the Hapsburg geese.

By the time Beethoven comes around, he is able to survive quite well, (though hardly at the level of his accomplishments)

through a mixture of concert fees, publishers royalties, private commissions and (non-negligible) royal patronage. Even he could not have carried it off were it not for a brother who devoted his entire career to promoting his works. Public support made Brahms a millionaire. As for Wagner, it is always inadvisable to generalize from a single case history, no matter how outrageous.

Mozart, alas, was born to create music, he hadn't come into the world to make money. Economically he fared badly in all the avenues then open to his profession . The falling out (literally) with the Catholic church began from the moment in May, 1781, when he was kicked down the stairs of the Viennese residence of his Salzburg employer, Archbishop Colloredo, by Count Karl Joseph Maria Felix Arco. Arco had been engaged by Mozart's father, and Colleredo himself, to persuade the unruly young genius to settle down to a regular job. Arco's conduct, and he appears to have reacted spontaneously on his own inititiative, was not surprising, coming as it did from a mediocre civil servant confronted with a thriftless beatnik who refuses to learn the virtues of obedience and daily work routine.

Yet, officially Mozart was a Papal Chevalier. To be precise he'd received the "Order of the Golden Spur" , whatever that is, when he visited Rome as a child prodigy. Gluck , another recipient of this honor, wore its medallion at official receptions. Mozart never wore his.

Mozart's situation with respect to his sacerdotal employers did not improve very much when he joined the Freemasons in 1784. The record shows that he was a conscientious, even zealous member of his lodge. This did not affect his dealings with the monarchy. Compared to most other Catholic countries, Austria's attitude towards the Freemasons was much more accomodating. A papal ban had outlawed the society in 1738, but even Maria Theresa, a bigot if there ever was one, didn't enforce it. Joseph II tolerated them until 1785 when, in a single stroke, he bankrupted the fraternity by issuing a famous edict reducing the number of lodges to 3. The remaining ones were inaccessible to most of its membership.

It is doubtful, however, that Mozart's Freemasonry had very much to do with the relatively modest amount of religious music

in his portfolio. Though obliged, in public, to uphold the "Roman holiness" of his imperial title , privately Joseph II was quite anti-clerical. He hated his mother's ostentatious piety and love of grandiose sacred spectacles. In 1782 pope Pius VI made a state visit to Vienna. 200,000 devout souls swarmed into the city to bathe in his darshan. Yet Joseph II handed out no commisions for religious music to local (*translation: the world's greatest living*) composers.

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Stopping off in Mannheim on the way to Paris on December 10th, 1778 , Mozart writes to his father asking him to send a letter to the French queen and daughter of Maria Theresa , Marie-Antoinette , via the intermediary of Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer, close family friend and patron of the Mozarts.

Mesmer had been in Paris since February. Leopold Mozart did not write , and Mesmer did not pass along such a letter, (as far as we know), although Mesmer had direct access to the aristocracy.

In 1780 Anton Mesmer did however write a letter to Mozart's father, in which he offers the young Mozart living space in his grand Viennese estate on the Landstrasse, rent-free, for as long as

he wishes. He will not be there himself but Madame Mesmer and the rest of his family will be happy to accommodate him.

Mesmer himself was to stay away from Vienna for 14 years, by which time both his wife and Mozart himself were dead. Returning there briefly in 1792 he was rounded up by the security police under suspicion of Jacobinism, and expelled from Austria.

On the night of March 17th, 1781, after a turbulent journey from Salzburg, Mozart went directly to the Mesmer estate. It appears that he only stayed there overnight. Colloredo wanted him in his personal suite of apartments, where he could keep a tight rein on him and garnish his wages.

In 1768 the 34 year old medical doctor Franz Anton Mesmer married the wealthy widow Frau van Posch. The Posch - Mesmer estate had been one of the important centers of Viennese cultural and scientific life until 1778, when a storm of professional spite and public ignorance broke over his head and Mesmer was forced to emigrate. He'd totally re-converted the house, filling it with salons for gatherings and discussions and laboratories for scientific research. A first rate scientist by the standards of the time , he'd

earned 5 degrees: theology, philosophy, physics , chemistry, and medicine.

These had been acquired over an unusually long educational investment of 17-years, beginning in a monastic school at the age of 9. Graduating from Ingoldstadt University in Dillingen in 1759, he enrolled, at the relatively late age of 25, at the Medical Faculty of the University of Vienna . This was the period in which the University of Vienna, its Medical School in particular, was ridding itself of its reputation as a back-water institution and winning recognition throughout Europe. This transformation had been largely the work of Gerard van Swieten, Maria Theresa's doctor and a graduate from the clinic in Leyden of the renowned doctor, Herman Boerhaeve.

Mesmer graduated from the Medical School in 1761. The topic of his doctoral dissertation was the influence of the heavenly bodies on the human psyche and physiology. The ideas in this work are Paracelsian rather than astrological, and quite in keeping with the somewhat fantastic quality of theoretical science at that time. Its basic argument is that the tidal and gravitational forces of

the sun, the moon and presumably the other planets, are linked to observable cycles in human biology and derangements in behavior. It is going too far to say that Mesmer anticipated the circadian cycle, but scientifically it is no better nor worse than string theory or the once universally acdepted ether theory to explain the propagation of light.

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Mozart 's decision to return to Vienna in 1781 came on the rebound from a number of serious personal and professional disasters. Predominant among them was the sadly miscalculated second grand tour of Europe in 1778, designed to capitalize on his earlier exploits as a prodigy. The nostalgia for a glorious past is rarely a good augury for the future; though one may sometimes defy augury (*not a wit more!*) For the 20-year old Mozart, this journey, filled with innumerable disappointments, came to a bitter halt in Paris with the death of his mother.

There were other developments that must have figured in his decision to relocate. In 1780 Maria Theresa was succeeded by her son, Joseph. Joseph II was one of the most progressive rulers in all

of the 18th century, not excepting our own Founding Fathers. In his brief 10-year reign he dragged the Empire back from the medieval cesspool dear to his mother's heart. He abolished cruel and unusual punishments, capital punishment and torture. He curbed the power of the church and the aristocracy, built schools, hospitals and roads , introduced ideas of public health, and reformed the civil service and the judiciary.

Sadly, his personality was such that no-one liked him very much. He was that sort of intelligent but puritanical reformer who knows for a fact that his own tastes and ideas are enlightened, and intends to ram them down the throat of all and sundry until "ignorance and superstition" force him to back down.

With regards to music his attitudes, as with everything else, assumed a pragmatic cast . Ill-disposed towards sentimentality and with little use for religion, he was fond of music, played the violin well, and would probably have given Mozart a better situation, had he not himself died in 1790, a year before Mozart.

Like certain well-meaning if self-righteous rulers of today, Joe was also despotically enlightened; very P.C. and utterly

humorless. To give just one example , Joseph II hated funeral services and cemetaries. (As we will learn, the tragedy in the crypt of his wife Josepha may have been fresh in his mind). He therefore set about eliminating them. In a series of decrees he announced that all the corpses in the existing vaults were to be put into linen sacks and *re-buried* in communal graves. The sacks might be put into coffins for the funeral service, but once taken to the cemetery, they were dumped into the grave by a comical trapdoor and pulley method (well depicted in *Amadeus*) and the coffin returned to the church. Churches kept warehouses of re-usable coffins on their grounds. The tradition of linen-sack burials lasted into the early part of the 19th century.

Mozart, one is led to understand , not only lived at the wrong time, he also died at the wrong time. His "third class funeral" was very much to the taste of Joseph II. [i]

In due time the indignant, backward, superstitious populace of Vienna revolted against these measures . Even the Emperor had to give in. He saved face by issuing a proclamation to the effect that

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[i] There are however some unresolved mysteries surrounding the disgraceful disposal of Mozart's body. See Carr [5]

since it was obvious that he was, in morality and general civilization, so far above the heads of the ignorant unwashed peasants it had pleased God to give him to rule, he didn't give a damn what they did with the flesh of their dead relations. The populace of Vienna feted their freedom from Enlightenment when, in 1827, they formed the largest procession in the city's history to follow Beethoven's coffin to its final warehousing. It is amusing to read the text of Joseph's recantation:

> ***" Every day I see - unfortunately - how living people think in such material terms. They go to great lengths to insure their bodies will decay slowly after death, and thus remain stinking carrion for as long as possible. So I no longer care how they want to be buried. And you must explain to them that after I have demonstrated how practical and reasonable this method of burial is, I have no desire to force reason upon anyone who is not convinced. As far as coffins are concerned, each person may freely do in advance what he considers appropriate for his dead body." [Brauenbehrens, pg. 416]***

The romantic style in Mozart biography, from Marcia Davenport to Milos Forman (the word "romantic" hits a new low in *Amadeus*

[ii]) maintains that Mozart eventually succumbed, if not physically then psychically, to the "venom" discharged by the mephitic swamps of courtly conspiracy. The revisionist camp to which I belong, holds that his constitution, weakened by scarlet fever as an infant, obsessive overwork starting at age 3, and small pox at age 11, gave in to nephritis at the age of 35 . Dying young was not considered a mortal sin in those days. The doctor that was treating him died before he did (also of kidney disease) at the age of 26.

Vienna beckoned; Vienna promised freedom, musical excitement, frienships at his own level, girl friends and wives, career opportunities unimaginable in a cowpatch like Salzburg. Yet it was not without misgivings that he travelled there. In his brief span of two and a half decades, Mozart had already experienced the cruel fickleness of this great metropolis, that could exhibit such lavish generosity at one moment , then, without warning, turn a cold shoulder on its most honored and productive citizens.

He and his father discovered this when Leopold's ragtime

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ii "Anyone who has seen this film must admit, however reluctantly, that not a single word, scene, or location , to say nothing of the behavior and appearance displayed by the film's characters, has anything at all to do with historical reality." [[1] ,Braunbehrens pg. 409]

band returned to Vienna in 1768 and 1773 to profit from the adulation young Wolfgang had received there as a child prodigy in 1762 .The court of Maria Theresa was , like that of any queen Bee, a jungle of intrigue: pettiness, plotting, treachery, malice, inventions and rumors, envy, spite, mischief, gossip, lies, conspiracy, and all the other deadly vices of dullards, mediocrities and bores.

Aristocrats generally are distinguished by their bad manners. There is no evidence that Mozart was singled out for exceptional abuse by his erstwhile colleagues, the clique of music-makers attached to the royal household. To *their* minds he was a spoil-sport because he didn't know how to play the game. To *his* mind they had no right to their jobs because, as he understood it, they didn't know how to compose music. They kept the queen's (and later her son's) ears buzzing with all sorts of scabrous nonsense about him. One shouldn't forget however that they were saying similar things about each other. Their imaginations not being very large, there wasn't that much they could come up with.

One should also be aware of the fact that the ugliest of all the

fabrications in this dirty stew, the accusation that Salieri had poisoned Mozart, had been encouraged, (though not invented) , by Constanza Mozart herself. (It had originated with Salieri , who cried out "I poisoned Mozart" as he was being dragged off to the madhouse.)

In 1768 there was also another reason why the Viennese court, the powerful prince Kaunitz in particular , didn't exactly give the Mozarts the warm reception they'd anticipated. In the autumn of 1768 the queen's daughter, Josepha, was betrothed to another victim of Hapsburg incest, one Ferdinand. Leopold Mozart rushed his son and daughter up to Vienna to flush out lucrative commissions for the royal wedding.

A month or so before the wedding date a different Josepha, the wife of the future Joseph II, contracted small-pox. Maria- Teresa visited by her bedside and affectionately kissed her: the biographies of these feudal despots are filled with such laudatory revelations of their intrinsic saintliness. But now she too caught the infection. She learned that Josepha had passed away while she herself lay near death.

The queen recovered. Bells were set ringing throughout the city, and preparations for the royal wedding continued uninterrupted. Less than a week before the anticipated wedding Maria-Theresa and the living Josepha went to pray in the crypt of Josepha deceased. The coffin lid had not been properly sealed and the vault was contaminated. The expectant bride became infected and died within a few days.

The epidemic was now raging all over Vienna, and the Mozarts fled, to Oelmutz. Too late. The 11-year old Mozart contracted the disease and nearly disappears from musical history. When they returned to Vienna the following month the *wunderkind* 's pale face was carpeted with red pimples like a meadow covered with carnations.

To her credit, Maria-Theresa did give them an audience. The wedding was off, so what commissions could she give them? The reception given them by Maria-Theresa's son, the bereaved Joseph II, was chilling. The prince Kaunitz simply refused to see them altogether.

An imperial medallion from the queen. No commisions,

though there was talk of one, but it came to nothing. Arrigo, a functionary at the court, tried to raise the money to produce Mozart's first attempt at opera, *La Finta Simplice*. The project faltered. (Ariggo's later fall from grace was tragic. In the coming years he would be tried for embezzlement, condemned and sentenced to a term of imprisonment as a galley slave. Somehow he survived, but his life was ruined.)

One way or another the Mozarts, father and son found themselves stranded in Vienna without even the coach fare back to Salzburg. Perhaps Leopold was too old, and Wolfgang too young, to hitchhike![iii]

It was during the disastrous expedition to Vienna of 1768, that the destinies of the Mesmer and the Mozart families came together for the first time. When Mesmer became informed of their plight, he invited them to stay at his house. He even commissioned an opera from the young Mozart, thereby becoming Mozart's first prominent patron. *Bastien et Bastienne* is a satire based on the text of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's musical comedy , *Le Devin du Village* .

[iii] A joke.The author hitch-hiked from Vienna to Paris in 1968

Leopold Mozart writes home:

.....*" There is an incomparable garden with fine prospects and statues... a theatre, birdhouse, dovecote, and at the top a Belvedere that extends over towards the Prater." .....*

The Mozarts stayed with the Mesmers a second time when they returned to Vienna in 1773. Then it was Franz Mesmer's turn to give *them* a concert. He'd become a competent musician on an instrument invented by Benjamin Franklin, his Glass Harmonica. The instrument made quite a stir in Europe when it was first played in recitals by the Englishwoman Miss Davies. Mozart's celebrated piece for glass harmonica and string quartet was written as a gift for the blind musician Fraulein Kirchgessner.

Leopold in another letter:

.....*" Dr. Mesmer played for us on Miss Davies' "harmonica" or glass instrument, and played very well. The instrument cost him nearly 50 ducats, for it is very finely made." .*

He goes on to say that Mesmer is the only person in Vienna that knows how to play it. 5 years later there may well have be *no* glass harmonica players in Vienna: Mesmer would be living in

exile in Paris, using its' peculiar rasping timbre to set the eerie mood of the seances around the magnetic *baquet* in the Place Vendome.

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Returning to the setting that opens this narrative: Vienna, morning of the 18th of March ,1781. We extend an open invitation to ou readers to stroll with us out onto the terrace of the formerly fashionable, scenically located and still beautiful garden of the Mesmers' Landstrasse estate. Soon we discover the astonishing young Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart , who is delighted to be visiting here once again. He stands up to greet us, shake our hands. No, he does not know where Madame Mesmer has gone . She was not in the house when he arrived yesterday night. To his amazement he was greeted at the door by someone he'd first met here in 1773, now the Mesmers' daughter-in-law, so thoroughly transformed in her disposition and general state of health as to be unrecognizable: Fräulein Franziska von Oesterling, known familiarly as "Franzl".

In the long run, Franzl's would become famous in her own right. Her fame would not be due to any combination of talent,

intelligence or skill, nor indeed for anything she had done, but rather from her having been the subject of an experiment. A century and a half later her name would be enshrined as (depending on one's point of view) the first patient , or first victim, of Viennese psychotherapy. Unlike the hapless souls in the well known case histories of Dr. Sigmund Freud , Dora, the Wolf Man, the Rat Man, and so on , she really had been *cured* of her 15 hysterical symptoms by the application of Anton Mesmer's precursor of Einstein's Unified Field, the 27 principles of Animal Magnetism.

Since the days of his pioneering and courageous work, the superabundance of curious mental states provoked by hypnotism have been investigated by the Puysegur brothers, Braid, Elliotson, Bernheim, Liebhaut, Charcot, and in our own day, Ernest Hilgard and Erica Fromm among others. To this day no-one has come up with explanations for these phenomena that are scientifically more convincing than Mesmer's claim that there exists a:

" universally distributed and continuous fluid, which is quite without vacuum and of an incomparably rarefied nature, and which

by its nature is capable of receiving, propagating and communicating all the impressions of movement....."

Thus, on that afternoon in late winter of 1781, through a benevolent serendipity, it came about that the pair of persons strolling about the Mesmer's Landstrasse garden would be each a representative of the two fields most readily associated with Vienna: Music and Psychiatry. One might consider them the dual faces of a single vocation, the relief of psychic pain. One cannot doubt that the Viennese soul has ever been deeply wounded: in support of which claim I recommend any of the works of the playwright/novelist Bernhard Thomas.

Mozart writes home:

"I write this - where? - in Mesmer's garden on the Landstrasse - the gracious old lady (**Mrs. Mesmer was then 52***) is not at home - but the former Fraulein Franzl, nowadays Mrs. von Posch (* **she was married to Mesmer's stepson***) is - she has bidden and is actually still bidding me to send you and my sister a thousand respects - listen, on my honor I hardly recognized her she is so large and so fat - she has three children - two girls and a boy - the eldest girl is called*

Nannerl, four years old and one would swear she was six - the boy's three and one would swear he was seven - and one would certainly take her three-quarter-year-old baby for two - they're all growing up so healthy and strong.[iv]

That she was in fine fettle much have been little short of amazing to him; for she had hardly been that way when he saw her last in 1773. Age twenty-nine at the time, she'd been afflicted with acute hysteria for many years. This was the name given to a condition that found expression through violent symptoms erupting in sporadic fits. These fits would be preceded by a build up of emotional tension. Without warning the blood would rush to her head, she would experience great suffering and start screaming. Pains shot through ears, teeth and other parts of her head. The deliriumthat ensued included violent thrashing about and other manifestations of rage. These paroxysms climaxed with vomiting, then physical collapse and coma.

Freud and his ilk have made our world cynical: today one's tendency is to assume that people do things like that to get

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[iv] **(An Ode to Franzl's recovery, scored for glass harmonica, mandolin and arpeggione, is in the lost catalogue of Mozart's permanently lost works. Editor's note)**

attention. A decade before Mesmer was born certain people might also have said , and acted on their belief that she had been possessed by, or was the victim of witchcraft. The last recorded European witch-burning took place in Scotland in 1722. The belief in demonic possession persisted for some time after that, and many people, even in Westernized societies, still believe in such things today . One of Mesmer's most determined enemies at the Austrian court, Dr. van de Haen, was a confirmed believer in the existence of witches and devils.

Mesmer's response was characteristic of his immense curiosity and keen powers of observation, identifying him thoroughly with the spirit of the Enlightenment. Here is what he tells us:

" For me it was a highly favorable occasion for observing accurately that type of ebb and flow to which ANIMAL MAGNETISM subjects the human body. "

What he had observed was the existence of periodic cycles in her recurrent symptoms. They reminded him of the rise and fall of the tides. The magnetic fluid, so he argued, must undergo a similar

motion due to the presence of powerful sources of attraction. If he could control this tidal flow, he could perhaps bring about the salutary ' crisis', that would dissolve the 'blockage' of this fluid from her psyche.

These ideas are not so far from those of modern psycho-therapy, whether it be the 'catharsis' or 'cathexis' of Freud, the 'orgasm', of Reich, the 'primal scream' of Janov. They are also simpler, less encumbered with pseudo-scientific sub-texts and, being easier to falsify, are probably closer to the truth.

The great events of the scientific revolution of the previous centuries, the rising crescendo from Copernicus to Kepler to Galileo to Newton, had formed a mental disposition in educated society, a tendency to think of the entire universe as a kind of laboratory for doing experiments and making observations : stars, rocks, plants, weather, animals, numbers, shapes and bodies - even human beings.

In the long run it was inevitable that people should start regarding one another with that same curious, fascinated and yes, somewhat callous eye that was being focused upon the rest of

nature. What could be more natural than to treat the stranger manifestations of human behavior in exactly the same way that an astronomer looks at an unfamiliar planet or a zoologist classifies a new species? Why not try to cure a psychological condition in the same way that a surgeon extracts a tooth or sets a broken bone in plaster? Franz Anton Mesmer was the first scientist of distinction in our tradition to do this, and he immediately discovered hypnotism which had been present in human nature for a million years without once receiving a systematic scientific description.

The special horror that we feel at the experiments done on human beings by Nazi doctors - and it is obviously natural and right that we regard these as horrible - is due in part to the recognition that their evil activity was a pathological extension of a mentality that has possessed the entire world since the advent of the scientific age. We are so conscious of the benefits accruing to mankind from experimenting with everything, from encouraging an undeviating , systematic, cold, indifferent , curiosity towards all things that enter our field of vision, that we must be constantly reminding ourselves that this modality of relationship towards

Nature can and has also been productive of the greatest evils.

" For me it was a highly favorable occasion for observing accurately that type of ebb and flow to which ANIMAL MAGNETISM subjects the human body. "

At that stage, in 1773, Mesmer still believed that the hypnotic "force field" , what he called magnetism, was so universal as to embrace all gravitational, electrical, magnetic, chemical and psychic phenomena.

Through the experience of bringing about the cure of Fräulein Oesterline, Mesmer abandoned the use of magnets and claimed that the field associated with *animal* magnetism, was an autonomous natural entity, not connected in any way with metallic or terrestrial magnetism.

Anton Mesmer began his treatments of Fraulein Osterline on July 28th, 1774. (The Bibliography is at the end of the next chapter.)

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Chapter 2

Animal Magnetism

Around the same time that Mesmer was being inaugurated into the arcana of "magnetic" therapies, John Wesley and Benjamin Franklin were confessing their enthusiasm for electro-shock therapies. Franklin had been knocked unconscious twice during his experiments with electricity; how he survived the legendary kite experiment is still a mystery.

He'd observed that after his recovery - and Franklin was an extraordinary observer – there was a brief period of amnesia. He passed this insight along to Dr. John Ingenhousz, the "Court Inoculator" of Maria Theresa, and one of the most spiteful of Mesmer's enemies. Ingenhousz would later crown his career by becoming , until his death in the 1790's, the leader in the campaign to ban Jenner's improved methods of vaccination in England . We will be hearing more about him later.

Franklin and Wesley jointly concluded that zapping psychotics with electricity might cure them: "*let's*" , Franklin writes, "*try the practice on mad people !*" . Their unfortunate modern legacy is described and

analysed in an article published on Ferment Magazine:

www.fermentmagazine.org/FermentXI/FXI10.pdf

Several years later, in 1784, it would again be Franklin, at the head of the commission of the French Royal Society set up to investigate Mesmer's methods and cures, who would oversee and sign the report that would discredit Mesmer's reputation in Paris and lead to the withdrawal of royal support. Nor was this altogether a bad thing. By 1792, when Mesmer finally left Paris for good, any support from the crown might have become a one-way ticket to the guillotine.

It is my opinion that Franklin was just afraid of crazy people, like most of us, and was also afraid to admit it to himself. His extreme rationalism, co-habiting with a well-documented life of unrestrained debauchery, are indicators of the defences of a powerful mind against a soul that was largely out of control. Still, that mind served us well when it came to shaping up a Constitution.

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Few doctors have been so venerated and vilified, with so little concern for the historical record, as Franz Anton Mesmer. A particularly unfair denunciation of him fills the pages of Robert Darnton's

informative, at times delightful, yet unjustly biased book : *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (13) . Mr. Darnton believes that he possesses a uncanny ability to weed the charlatans out of the sciences. Were he allowed to roam at liberty with his scythe, hardly anything discovered in the past 500 years would be left.

He does have a point: although I am of the persuasion that Mesmer was a true scientist and not a charlatan, one cannot deny that his Parisian folies brought out a number of disagreeable traits in him, typical of "fashionable" doctors everywhere: paranoia, arrogance, greediness, etc. It's the age-long story: a "David pitted against the Goliaths of stupidity and humbug" in the medical profession, yet that same professional success which brings upon him the envy of the bureaucrats, the established, the mediocre and the occupants of sinecures, eventually turns his head as well, bringing about his downfall.

These articles will concentrate largely on his Viennese period. It was then that he best displayed his true character as a scientist.

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The case history and cure of Fräulein Franzl Oesterline would fail to satisfy the requirements of any Commission, past or

present, convened for the purpose of setting standards for the application of the scientific method. We know enough about hypnosis and suggestion today to recognize that the very close relationship of Franzl with Mesmer and his family over a period of years set up far too much interference to justify the claim that the success of her cure was due to Mesmer's ability to manipulate the universal magnetic fluid. The fact remains however, that although Franzl was virtually a member of the Mesmer family for at least a year before he beamed magnetic hypno-therapy at her psyche , her symptoms showed no marked improvement until this therapy was first tried in July of 1774.

There are two diagnoses of her condition by independant observers which have come down to us: the letters which Leopold Mozart sent back to his wife in the summer of 1773 , and the writings of Mesmer himself.

Leopold Mozart, not being a physician and having other things on his mind (notably his fatal obsession with finding patronage and a career for his brilliant son) does not describe her symptoms *per se* . He does however dwell at some length on her general state of health. He and Wolfgang arrived in Vienna in the third week of July, 1773. They stayed

at the Mesmer estate on the Landstrasse until September 26th: two whole months. Like so many of these journeys that ended in (sadly predictable) failure , its purpose was to seek an appointment for Wolfgang at some autocrat's court.

The mercenary, indeed philistine streak in Leopold's character has been described by all Mozart biographers. It comes prominently to the surface in this excerpt from a letter written to his wife on August 21, 1773:

"I have this moment received your letter. If I had known Frau von Mesmer's circumstances which, as you know, were very doubtful , I could have brought you both with us." **(Translation: I didn't realize how rich the Mesmers were; if I had known so before setting out, I would have brought along the whole family of 4 instead of just the 2 of us.)**

This derogatory judgement on the honest, earnest, cautious and respectable Leopold, one of the truly great music teachers, is not entirely fair. One needs be reminded of some of the circumstances of his origins. Putting it mildly, the fortunes of Leopold's family had been decidedly unstable for over a century. His brankrupted great-grandfather lived out the final 13 years of his life in the *Fuggerei,* the public poorhouse, what

we might today call the homeless shelter. His father, Johann Georg, escaped from poverty by marrying the daughter of an established book-binder. He then became one himself.

The family of Mozart's mother, Anna Maria Pertl, were destitute from the death ,when she was 4, of her father, an endetted civil servant, until she married Leopold in 1747. Despite his beginnings in the insecure lower middle class of artisans , Leopold Mozart rose to be acknowledged as the most accomplished musician in Salzburg, violinist, composer and Kapellmeister to the episcopal court. He became in other words, a most respectable bourgeois; yet the kind of middle class professional who never forgets that the street lies only a few inches away from his doorstep and that a whimsy of fate can toss him back into it.

We can therefore easily appreciate his state of frenzy whenever he gets wind of anything (such as falling in love with the wrong kind of girl) that threatens Wolfgang's chances for a stable and utterly boring life-long security . It is because Leopold's desperate yet understandable financial anxiety that we, to this day, imagine that Mozart somehow lived like a beggar in his final decade. Here is a more sober assessment:

" Mozart's biographers agree that during his first four years of his marriage, when he had no official position or salary, his talent as a composer and pianist brought him sufficient funds. We know that Mozart earned a considerable amount of money during those years...There is no evidence that either Constanze or Wolfgang was extravagant or uneconomical.. Of all Mozart's biographers, only Sacheverell Sitwell honestly admits that here we are truly confronted with a mystery.. The answer is clearly that we are ignorant of the true state of Mozart's financial position at this time. ." **(Carr, pg. 82)**

Leopold has also been accused of exploiting, even abusing, his son's talents. One must recognize that there is nothing whatsoever that the parents of a prodigy can do that will relieve them of the censure of history. Another viewpoint is at least equally valid: that his son received the best musical education possible at the time, together with a romantic life full of travel, excitement, adventure and acclaim. He did not judge his father nearly so harshly as later historians have done: In a letter written shortly after his's father's death in 1790, he says :*"I inform you that on returning home today I received the sad news of my most beloved father's death. You can imagine the state I am in."*

Returning to the case history of Franzl: she was already a member of the Mesmer household when the Mozarts arrived there in July of 1773. Her pathology was acute, with crises erupting periodically every day. It is clear that her illness cast a

despondant mood over the whole household: Leopold refers to her in almost every letter. In the first letter to his wife and daughter in Salzburg, dated July 21st, he writes: "*.....You can picture to yourself their joy (of the Mesmer entourage) in the Landstrasse at seeing us. Everywhere it has been the same. We found Fraulein Franzl in bed. She is really very emaciated and if she has another illness of this kind , she will be done for!... "*

On August 12th, 3 weeks later: "*....Meanwhile Fraulein Franzl has again been dangerously ill and blisters had to be applied to her arms and feet. She is so much better now that she has knitted in bed a red silk purse for Wolfgang which she has given him as a remembrance. She sends greetings as they all do, the whole litany of the Landstrasse, the two Frau Fischers and Herr Fischer, Posch, and so forth....*"

The cyclic recoveries and relapses of poor Franzl must have had the dramatic impact of daily thunderstorms.

August 21st: "*.... I could not write by the last post as we had a big concert in the Landstrasse. Fraulein Franzl has now had a second relapse from which she has again recovered. It is amazing how she can stand so*

much bleeding and so many medicines, blisters, convulsions, fainting fits and so forth, for she is nothing but skin and bone. Herr von Mesmer is adding three new rooms on the ground floor in order that he may be able to live downstairs during the winter, since although an enormous amount of wood is burnt upstairs, the rooms never get warmed up..."

These observations show that apart from his researches into hypnotism and psychotherapy, Mesmer was very much a doctor of his times. Bleedings, blisterings and medicines, (largely purgatives and emetics) were as much a part of the pharmacoepia of the late 18th century as they had been for centuries.

August 25 *".... Fraulein Franzl has now recovered..."*

August28th *".... The Mesmers are at the Rotmuhle, where Fraulein Franzl will probably fall ill again and possibly die.. Not only she but her sister are constantly at the Mesmers. We kiss you many 100,000,000 times and I am your old MZT."*

Leopold is forever kissing his wife a hundred million times; it must have been fatiguing. Wolfgang as usual, goes him one better. In a letter to his wife Constanze dated April 16, 1789, he writes: " *I kiss and squeeze you 1095060437082 times.."* **One wonders: if social customs in**

this age were naturally this warm and cuddly ,what need had it of Mesmer's magic touch? The Rotmuhle was a country estate owned by the Mesmers.

September 15th : ***"... So far I have not been out to the Rotmuhle, although the Mesmers have been there for a long time and Fraulein Franzl nearly died there again... "***

This is the extent of Leopold's recorded observations on the condition of Fräulein Oesterline. We learn from these letters that

(i) Her crises were dramatic;

(ii) Because of them, the entire household was charged with distress and a sense of forbodding;

(iii) They were physically exhausting;

(iv) The people around her were convinced that she was not going to live much longer;

(v) Old- fashioned medical practices were applied to her symptoms;

(vi) She had become emaciated;

(vii) Her bouts of hysteria were relieved by periods of partial or almost total recovery.

When the Mozarts take their leave in mid-September, both are convinced that Franzl will not last through the year. One therefore understands the astonishment conveyed by Wolfgang Mozart's letter of March 17, 1781 , described in the previous chapter .

More precise details on her condition and symptoms are given in several of Mesmer's own writings: in, for example, the "*Schreiben uber die Magnetkur an einen auswartiger Artz* "(1775) which I have not read, or his "*Memoire sur la decouverte du Magnetisme Animal*", printed in Geneva in 1779, which I have read, both in French and in the English translation of Gilbert Frankau (see Bibliography) . A comprehensive bibliography of writings about Mesmer in several languages, is presented on pages 174 -181 of Ellenberger (16).

Mesmer refers to 15 grave symptoms, among them: convulsions, delirium, rage, vomiting, headache, earache and toothache, involuntary bowel movements, retention of urine and fainting. It is quite interesting to see how, just like many of today's scientists , Mesmer uncovers analogies to Newtonian dynamics in the resurgence of her symptoms. The relevant passage is this :

" The desire to ascertain the cause of the imperfection and my own

uninterrupted observations brought me ... to the point of recognizing Nature's handiwork and of penetrating it sufficiently to forcast.. without hesitation, the different stages of the illness..... if I were able to discover the existence, among the substances of which our globe is made, of an action that is also reciprocal and similar to that of the heavenly bodies,.. I could imitate artificially the periodic revolutions of the ebb and flow just referred to... "

A great gulf separates this from conventional astrology ; one might call it " applied Newtonianism". Newtonianism has a long history; it does not begin with Mesmer and it is far from being extinguished today. One finds it in such places as the psychologist Herbart's strange theories of the rise and fall of hooked atomic ideas in the psyche, in several of Freud's numerous pseudo-scientific models for the unconscious, and in the Cosmic Lagrangian of the TM-guru Maharshi. It is a staple of degraded popularizations of scientific thought such as " The Dao of Physics" and "Godel , Escher, Bach".

Newtonianism works better in some places than in others: the least-squares law occurs naturally as a linear approximation to the Potential Function, whenever an attraction or repulsive force is produced from a

point source and radiates outwards on concentric spheres: the surface area of a sphere varies as *the square* of the radius and the constant energy on each spherical shell will therefore diminish as the *inverse square*.

Mesmer *,fortunately* , did not have the mathematical background to be able to quantify his ideas. He might have found the effort throughly engrossing , have consumed all of his time and energy in doing so , and might never have discovered a thing about hypnotism, psychotherapy, suggestion and so on. Mathematics is a good thing, certainly, but quantification can become the bane of scientific minds.

It is apparent by now that Mesmer was far too closely involved with Fräulein Oesterline and her symptoms to be able to know if her recovery came from him, his magnets, the magnetic fluid or simply her marriage with his stepson, Herr Fischer. He was occupied for more than a year in the minute recording of the etiology of her symptoms and developing theories about them, before making the attempt to 'cauterize' them, as it were, with oddly shaped magnets.

The therapy and even the technology for administering it did not originate with him. Both his methods and his theories can be traced to

the practices of certain Catholic priests in the empire with reputations as exorcists and healers. Notably, Mesmer's theory of the "curative crisis"owes much to the remarkable 'exorcisms' and cures of the priest, Johann Joseph Gassner.

He met this notorious faith healer in 1775, when Mesmer was asked to join a Royal Commision of Inquiry in Bavaria to investigate Gassner's claims. Mesmer was not as severe in his judgement of Gassner as Franklin was to be towards him in 1784: it was, after all, his own discipline and he knew something about it. The idea of using magnets shaped in peculiar ways came from his collaboration with another Catholic priest, Maximillian Hell, astronomer at the University of Vienna. (*The word "hell" in German means fair or beautiful, so the pun falls flat. One might otherwise speculate that the discovery of the Unconscious occured when Franzl told Mesmer to go to hell.*) It is quite ironic that it should have been the priest, Herr Hell , a religious thinker, who clung to the idea that the magnetic fields themselves 'cured' psychosomatic symptoms in the way that hydrogen peroxide will absorb the pus from an infection, while it was the 'agnostic man of science' , Mesmer, who reached the conclusion that the magnets were essentially

placebos and that a direct 'metaphysical' or 'transcendental' connection was possible between a suggestible patient and her doctor.

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Chapter 3

I. The Great Divide

" Heirate! Der Ehestand heilt alle Zaubereien. Das beste Mittel ist ein Mann."

-Bastien und Bastienne; W.A. Mozart, 1768

The grim picture of Fräulein Osterline's condition that is conveyed by the letters of Leopold Mozart, doesn't distinguish between the sufferings caused by the sudden onrush of hysteria , and the physical damage caused by her being routinely subjected to a barrage of fashionable, newfangled, far-fetched, standard therapies (including several of millenial antiquity) over a period of 3 years.

The symptoms of hysteria could be very painful, but many of them were psychosomatic and wouldn't do much direct physical damage: the distinction between a somatogenic and a psychogenic symptom is that a psychogenic symptom has no apparent physical basis.

The shifting meanings of the word "hysteria" in the history of medicine are the more remarkable in being themselves possessed by a kind of hysterical turbulence, far greater than one might expect from a simple scientific controversy. In what has become known as the golden age of hysteria, the 19th century, the term was applied by the same doctors to radically different conditions, and , owing to a confusion with such neurological malfunctions as epilepsy and Tourette's syndrome, erroneously by different doctors to the same condition.

The best contemporary definition for hysteria is a psychological state of acute suggestibility characterized by the somatic expression of symptoms rooted in emotional disturbance.

It is a remarkable feature of the 20th century, (all the more so

inasmuch as it has been a century of unbelievable horrors which have created acute psychological stress on a scale previously unknown to human history) , that the kind of hysteria that afflicted Franzl Oesterline has virtually disappeared from the Western world . To quote from the excellent study book by Edward Shorter, "From Paralysis to Fatigue[1] :

" In the social history of medicine there is no more striking phenomenon that the disappearance of classic hysteria. Enthroned in the middle of the nineteenth century as the quintessential illness of the 'labile' woman , the fits and paralyses that had been summoned from the symptom pool since the Middle Ages - spreading almost epidemically during the nineteenth century - virtually came to an end by the 1930s"

Hysteria is still very much with us , though the motor forms have been replaced by symptoms of psychogenic pain and chronic fatigue syndromes at all levels of intensity, loosely gathered under the vague portmanteau label of PTSD .

It is impossible for anyone today to draw upon his own experience to recreate those elaborate theatrical productions which, only a century ago, were frequently seen or experienced by the general public : "*les grand crises hysteriques*" . The young Mozart frequently witnessed them during his stay at the Mesmers. It is tempting to speculate about the subconscious influence of Franzl's attacks in his portrayal of Donna Elvira in Don Giovanni, or the Queen of the Night in the Magic Flute!

The closest living relative of the hysterical fit is the epileptic seizure. In fact the term 'pseudo-epilepsy' is sometimes used as a term for motor hysteria, a terminology which is both suggestive and misleading. There is always an element of "simulation", let us say "play-

acting" in a hysterical outburst, yet inasmuch as this simulation is involuntary or uncontrollable, it is definitely sincere. When Jean - Martin Charcot, the great 19th century neurologist, took over the administration of the Saltpetrière asylum/ nursing home in 1862 , he found hysterics, epileptics and anyone else with similar symptoms having a neurological basis, thrown together in the same ward. In a relatively short period of time, by regrouping them into wards characterized by specifically identified disorders, he turned this institution into a hospital and teaching college of international renown. In a tragic replay of a continually recurring scenario, Charcot then went on to contribute more to our *mis*understanding of the nature of hysteria than anyone since Galen, author of the strangulated womb theory, in the 2nd century CE.

Shorter offers a very good defense of his thesis that, historically, the symptoms of hysteria have always been drawn from a readily accessible "symptom pool" that is to a large extent culturally determined. All through the Middle Ages a symptom pool with its roots in classical antiquity was frozen. There was always a close connection between its invariant somatoform syndromes to superstitions about demonology and witchcraft. (Shorter tells us that the hysterical symptoms of Asia are quite different, but gives few examples.)

The first major paradigm shift in the theme pool of European hysteria occurred in just this period that we are concerned with, the world of Franz Anton Mesmer in the last quarter of the 18th century. His discoveries themselves were to make a significant contribution to the great scientific medical and cultural transformations set into motion by the Industrial Revolution. The great names in medicine associated with

this immense paradigm shift include the Swiss physiologist, Albrecht Haller (who discovered muscle and tissue irritability), theorists Friedrich Hoffmann and William Cullen (inventor of the term "neurosis" to distinguish mental from physical illness) the neurologist Whytt, and others. Shorter suggests that it is through the advances made by them, together with a reluctant yet evolving public belief in the credibility of Western medicine, that victims of hysteria began to shape their symptomology on the basis of what they imagined the doctors expected from them.

The catalogue of symptoms of the valetudinrian Franzl interfaces two worlds. Things such as the "nail in the brain" headaches; the rages, the rictusing, vomiting and shrieking, recall the dark world of nameless terrors one associates with medieval superstition. One thinks of the tragic fate of the legions of sick old women skilled in herbal remedies, casting spells and curses, their forbidden knowledge shouted through mouths brimming with convulsive foam, with neurologically damaged brains, their bodies writhing with motor spasms or frozen in the clenched postures of catalepsy, the world of Inquisition dungeons and of those brute fanatics , the Dominican monks, who condemned these pitiful creatures to torture and death. One hears in the accounts of Franzl's torments the faint echoes of that bottomless European Holocaust, the full account of which has yet to be told.[v]

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[v] One often has the feeling that the peculiar pathology of Hitlerian anti-Semitism has more in common with the tenacious witchcraft superstition that rotted in the European soul for so many centuries, than with traditional anti-Semitism arising out of a conflict of ethnicities or of religious beliefs. Heresy, demonology and anti-

At the same time, both Franzl and her doctor are quintessential Enlightenment figures. Her sickbed is in the elegant chamber of an 18th century millionaire. Her medicines are gleaned from the dense, exotic hothouse of 18th century pharmacology. While Mesmer plys her with his personal library of remedies culled from Hippocratic medicine , Galenic medicine, Paracelsian iatro-chemistry , Brunonian vitalism , Cullenite classification schemes , Boorhaevian clinical practices, Hoffmanian ether theories, the homeopathy of Hahnemann , Cartesian iatro -mechanism, Wesleyan electro-shock therapy, balneology, eudiometry and others, Franzl herself is busily indulging her hypochondraic heart to the fullest extent , buying every new-fangled remedy to hit the market. The 18th century , even more than today,(if possible) was the golden age of home remedies, cornucopian medicine chests and unrestrained pill popping. [vi]

Semitism are of course so intimately cross-braided in European history that it is impossible to separate them. See, for example "L'Ideologie Francaise", of Bernard Henri-Levi.

[vi] From Porter and Porter, Patient's Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in 18th Century England [2]:

"William Buchan thought a good home medicine chest should contain the following ingredients :

Adhesive Plaster, Agaric of Oak, Ash colored Ground liverwort, Burgundy pitch, Cinnamon water, Crabs claw prepared, Cream of Tartar, Elixir of Vitriol, Flowers of sulphur, Gentian root, Glauber's salts, Gum ammoniac, Gum arabic. Gum asafoedita, Gum camphor, Ipecacuanha, Jalap, Jesuit's Bark, Liquid laudanum, Liquorice root, Magnesia alba, Manna. Nitre or Salt peter, Oil of almonds, Olive oil, Pennyroyal water, Peppermint water, Rhubarb, Sal amoniac,

The science of medicine in the period being covered was a hopeless stew of untested therapies, physical, chemical, astrological metaphors, snippets of classical wisdom, old wives' tales, miracle cures and dubious analogies. Concurrently with this were several notable advances which were far from being universally understood or correctly applied, such as Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, or Leeuwenhoeck's discovery of micro-organisms. We pride ourselves today on being better informed, though pride often enough goeth before a fall.

The invention of the microscope is an example in point: Leeuwenhoeck discovered microorganisms in the 17th century; two centuries later Pasteur convinced the world that most diseases were due to invasions by these same tiny beasties. Once this was recognized, the human race implemented the only policy it has ever followed in any confrontation with alien life, human or otherwise: invasion , plunder, murder, extermination . To this day there are very few who raise their voice in favor of peaceable, negotiated non-violent co-existence with this fabulous world of exotic new animals.

And the results are predictable : new, peculiarly horrible diseases emerge to replace the ones which we claim to have wiped out: Ebola, Sars, AIDS. Benign or beneficial bacteria are wiped out along with the harmful strains. Rapidly evolving resistent strains of tuberculosis make a mockery of our antibiotics. Toxic after-effects from the poisons we employ to kill these life-forms frequently do as much harm as the

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Sal prunell, Seneka root, Senna, Snake root, Spirits of hartshorn, Spirits of wine, Sweet spirits of nitrate, Sweet spirits of vitriol, Syrup of lemons, Syrup of oranges, Syrup of poppies, Tamarind, Turner's cerate, Vinegar of squills, Wax plaster, White ointment, Wild valerian root, and Yellow basilicum ointment. "

diseases themselves. Iatrogenic sicknesses are on the rise in the sterile hospitals where we hope to cure the sick by insulating them as far as possible from the delicate ecology of the biosphere.

The difference between then and now, is that the "orthodox medical science" of today does provide a standard against which other mixtures of ideology and therapy may be compared, whereas in the late 18th century, there did not exist any such universal standard.

Yet it is also clear that things have gone too far the other way: the modern world has become thoroughly medicalized (or should we say 'medicated'). All of our thinking about the human body, disease, nutrition, healthful activity, mental health, procreation, the aging process and the stages of life such as infancy, adolescence, care for the elderly, even our diagnostics and prescriptions for the cure of social ills such as poverty, homelessness, drug addiction , gang violence and so on, very quickly fall into the barren handful of paradigms bequeathed us by medical science. The general public is led to believe that nothing else is available: medical models dominate all the applied social sciences, the examples being so numerous that merely in stating them one risks being charged with laboring the obvious.

This was not always the case : the trend towards the medical world-view began in the very period now under consideration. Naively stated, with the devalorisation of orthodox religion owing to the Renaissance and the Reformation, and with the fresh memory of two centuries of religious wars that had made a mockery of the institutions claiming to embody the teachings of the "prince of peace" , with the consequent decline in blind adulation of the Catholic priest or Protestant minister, the mantles of authority were hoisted from their shoulders and placed,

without a moment's hesitation, onto the shoulders of the medical doctor . One thinks of the custom of radio DJ's,who intercut a new pop song into the fade-away of the former one so that the listening public is spared the horror of a moment's naked thought.

Franz Anton Mesmer pursued his medical career at just the right time and place to receive, from priests such as Gassner, Hell, Greatrakes and others, the wand, the holy water, the religious aura, and the demagogic power of the medieval exorcist. Religion passed into psycho-therapy, gleefully the unconscious mind ran amok in search of fads and fancies, and the great benumbed mass of mankind lost less than a minute of its eternal slumber from that consuming anxiety that arises, whenever there is a vacuum in the domain of Canonized Authority.

Much research and writing is coming out these days around this historic transfer of sacral power . I began this series of articles with the intention of narrating a simple yet gripping human drama: the story of the emergence, in the Vienna of late 18th century, of the paradigms of mental illness . I quickly discovered that many others are fascinated by the same period. One may start with Michel Foucault's studies of the histories of the asylum and the clinic; the many articles by Dorothy and Roy Porter on 18th century medicine; the extensive publications of the Wellcome Institute in England for research in medical history; Elisabeth Roudinesco's fabulous 2-volume account of the history of psycho-analysis in France. [vii] Together with studies on the proliferation of quasi-theological and quasi-scientific systems in the Enlightenment, I've uncovered numerous studies devoted specifically to hysteria and its

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[vii] **Her lecture about the French psychogogue Jacques Lacan at the Boston University Philosophy Colloquium series in 1989 was a catalyst for this series of articles.**

symptomology, including the book by Edward Shorter cited above.

It is only now that , a full two centuries later, and in the aftermath of the long intellectual bondage to the mind-forged manacles of Freudian superstition, that thinking people are re-discovering that it was not only the material conditions of European life that were revolutionized by the intellectual, scientific and political developments of the 18th century; not only the world-views and the ideologies; but the *unconscious mind* [viii] as well ; and not only the unconscious mind, but the *collective unconscious mind* , as evidenced in the contents of the pool of generic hysterical symptoms, which quickly adjusted to the pace of advances in medicine.

II.Medicine and Living Conditions in the Enlightenment

In the period under consideration England was considered to be the healthiest nation in Europe. Even so, infant mortality was at about 20%. It must have been worse everywhere else. Across the Continent, all social classes were battered by disease from birth to death; the most trivial ailment , such as a sore throat or a mild infection, caused for example by the removal of a splinter from one's finger or the extraction of an abscessed tooth, could turn deadly . A famous example is that of the queen of Portugal, who died from a gangrenous complication arising from having one of her earlobes pierced.

Because medical practice was known to be so unreliable, intelligent people devoted a great deal of attention to promoting their health and preventing themselves from getting sick in the first place. Far more than

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[viii] ***not*** **an original discovery of Sigmund Freud**

today, the sick took responsibility for their own treatment: no sensible person would sit and wait for the arrival of a doctor whose knowledge and skill were not, in many cases, very far above the itinerant charlatan, quack or "empiric" [ix] hawking his snake-oils in the village square.

The neighborhood pharmacist was often more qualified to prescribe therapies and medicines than the general practitioner ; indeed the prestige of an apothecary could be quite high in some places. The best doctors, (and the 18th century did have some very great doctors: Herman Boerhaave, David Gaub, Edward Jenner, Giovanni Morgagni, Hartman Haller, etc.) received their training in famous hospitals like Edinburgh and Leiden. The university-trained doctors were something of a nightmare, qualified only to quote from ancient Greek and Chaldean texts, who'd never set a limb or examined a sore throat. Then, as now, severely enforced laws protected their privileges. Universities see themselves as protectors of civilization. Giving them their due, it is also true that they held back the practice of medicine for several centuries.

In 1719, a cynical doctor by the name of Edward Baynard published the following bit of doggerel concerning the art of medicine. It might be merely funny were it not so deadly in its accuracy:

For in ten words the whole art is comprised
For some of the ten are always advised:
Piss, spew and spit
Perspiration and sweat
Purge, bleed and blister

[ix] In those days the philosophy of "empiricism" was accorded the disdain it merits!

Issues and clyster
These few enunciations
Cure all the doctor's patients
If rightly applied
By a wise physic guide

" Clyster" is an obsolete term for an enema; an "issue" refers to the Galenic practice of *creating* an infection at some designated spot on the body because of the belief that some kind of "sympathy" between the illness and the localized pool of pus would draw the illness out of the body. These routine procedures derived from a fifteen hundred year tradition of humoral biochemistry. Its' influence persisted in Europe until about 1840. Since, until fairly recently, North America was backward relative to Europe in the medical domain, it must have lasted here a good deal longer.

III. The Cure

We will now attempt an imaginative reconstruction of the sickbed drama of July 28th, 1774. One can assume that over the previous 3 years Franz Anton Mesmer had used everything he'd learned in his training as a doctor to try to cure Franzl Oesterline. Hysteria in women was still commonly believed to be due to some kind of displacement of the uterus. Using the remedies prevailing in his day, he may have burned certain particularly foul-smelling, even toxic, substances under Franzl's nose, things like asafoedita, or dung-encrusted pigeon feathers.[x]

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[x] **Here is a quote from a doctor William Roots at the St. Thomas Hospital in London, in 1836: *" My impression is that one of the beneficial results of these foetid substances in hysterical conditions is the peculiar effect that they produce on the mind, through the medium of the olofactory nerves. You know that nothing is more common, when a***

Surprisingly, it would be in the considerably more advanced 19th century, and even in the 20th (particularly in the United States) that some very reputable medicos would recommend that Franzl have her uterus or ovaries removed. Mesmer would not be of that stone-age school. He was pre-eminently a disciple of the Stahlian or vitalist school of medicine ,attributing psychological ailments to disfunctions of psychic energy.[xi]

Though stopping short of surgery, Mesmer had applied a host of savage Galenic therapies without observing a split kopeck of improvement in Franzl's condition. she had been bleed, clystered, issued, purged, cauterized.[xii] Her weak, emaciated body had become a mound of bruises and wounds , covered with scabs , subcutaneous lice, and numerous infections arising from the incisions done for bleedings and issues . Her skin must have been puffy and waxen, sickly from excessive confinement.

Pots filled with bandages holding infected matter produced by 'blisterings and issues' stood by the side of her bed. Alongside the omnipresent spitoon stood other vessels holding the disgustingly swollen bodies of leeches and other bleeding agents. Others held vomit and stools from the regularly applied purgings and clysters. The odors from these accumulations of waste filled the room, mingling with the residual aroma of burnt pigeon feathers or asafoedita. Not the least, her bed was infested with generations of bedbugs, a universal plague, there

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woman is hysterical, than to see her relieved for a time by the burning of feathers under her nose. It would be difficult perhaps to find anything more disgusting than that. "

[xi] **So am I, up to a point, see http://www.fermentmagazine.org/essays/lle1.html**

[xii] **" In 1895 and 1896, ..., Fliesss cauterized the nasal mucosa of one patient of Breuer's, Selma B., and removed part of her middle turbinate bone for neurasthenia. Freud's circle was permeated in the early years by this kind of somato-babble, with its assumption of reflex links from the nose to pelvis and brain." Shorter, op. cit., pg.**

being no technology available yet for exterminating them. The monarchs themselves funded the office of a "bedbug destroyer royal" in their palaces.

We can use our imaginations to place Mesmer in Franzl's bedroom, sitting at the keyboard of his glass harmonica. All that afternoon, he has tried to soothe her nerves by playing familiar arias, like "*Auch du lieber Augustine*", or "*Que dirai-je maman*", or songs from Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne* : " *Ich geh jetzt auf die Weide, betaubt und ganz gedankenleer*" perhaps , or *"Lustig, lustig! preist die Zaubereien von Colas, dem weisen Mann!"* [xiii] As he strokes the goblets, he regards this unholy god-damned mess with undisguised loathing.

He knew , as did most competent doctors by that time, that any further excursions along the Galenist highway could only be stupid, brutal, and toxic. Thrown back on his own resources, he suddenly leaves the room: he has remembered his old MD thesis of 1765. He finds it sitting on a bookshelf on the third floor. He picks it up, dusts off the cobwebs and stares at it with bewilderment: *What a patchwork quilt of nonsense !"*, he thinks , " *mixing astrology, influences of the planets, Newton's theory of tidal forces, folklore about lunacy and the full moon, and suchlike junk.!*

" *My Meal Ticket*", he continues, chuckling ,tapping the faded cover of the old file : " *Hey; it got me my degree, didn't it? Without that, you can bet Madame Posch - Fisher - Mesmer wouldn't have looked twice at me; and then where would I be? Washing dishes for Archbishop Colleredo - if I were that lucky! Still*", he goes on, "*There might be something in it -*

[xiii] **And I have the nerve to fault Milos Forman!**

magnets; tidal oscillations; Newtonian forces; ebb and flow... everything else has failed; what have we got to lose?"

We quote from his own account:

" On July 28th, 1774.. I applied three magnetised pieces to the stomach and both legs. Not long afterwards ... extraordinary sensations; .... painful currents of a subtle material which ... made their way to the lower part and caused all symptoms of the attack to disappear for 6 hours."

Mesmer published differing versions of this event in journals in Vienna and France. He goes on to say that extremely painful sensations began to build up in certain key parts of her body, notably under the breast and in the arms. By pulling the magnets about he was able to cause these pains to flow around her body until they localized in the legs. From there he was somehow able to drain the currents of psychogenic pain through her lower extremities into the floor.

That a relief of six hours was evidently considered a great achievement at that point gives some indication of the severity of her her condition. A regimen of magnetic treatments was therefore set up that led to a steady improvement. There were several serious relapses along the way, which Mesmer describes. After a while he concluded that the magnets' effects were largely catalytic; the same results could be obtained by stroking with the hands, pointing and other gestures.

Franz Anton Mesmer now falls into the fatal trap that was to lure, and so often ruin the careers of almost every important practitioner and theorist of hypnosis in the 19th century: the Comptes de Puysegur, the Abbe Faria, Elliotson, Braid, Charcot and so many others. This was the well-nigh irresistible urge to create one's own "suggestibility circus" that is to say, to exploit one's patients as puppets in a comedy show

designed to show off the power of the hypnotist over mind and body.

After experimenting with the properties of Franzl's suggestibility over a few months, Mesmer contacted two prominent Viennese doctors, Anton van Stoerck and Jan Ingenhousz and invited them to his home to demonstrate his discoveries.

Anton von Stoerck **, one of Mesmer's teachers at the medical faculty of the University of Vienna, has a small place in medical history for his researches in toxicology.Therapeutically he appears to have nurtured a bizarre attraction to noxious and poisonous substances such as pulsitilla and valerian. A confirmed Galenist, he gained enough clout at the Austrian court to have been designated as physician in attendance in 1781, when Maria - Theresa was suffering through her final illness in Schönbrunn palace. A man of decidedly limited abilities, jealous and spiteful towards all competition and essentially hostile to medical progress, he will quickly become Mesmer 's implacable enemy.**

Jan van Ingenhousz **is not so easily dismissed. Ingenhousz championed the cause of inoculation against small-pox. This should not be confused with vaccination, the improved method invented by Jenner.[xiv] Against this Ingenhousz campaigned vigorously, for reasons that can only be attribute to envy. Inoculation consisted in taking a bit of infected small-pox matter from a human being and introducing it into another one's body through incision (*injection had not been invented at that time*). Inoculation was effective in reducing the length and severity**

[xiv] **Though not for over a century: death *from* vaccination would claim many victims until the end of the 19th century. Its opponents were not all vindictive reactionaries; they included such eminent scientists as Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-discover of the theory of evolution.**

of a smallpox epidemic.

In the 18th century Ingenhousz was held in high esteem as a doctor in 3 countries: England, Holland and Austria. He is remembered today chiefly in connection with his ideas about the importance of wholesome or healthful air in the cure of disease, the so-called theory of eudiometry. He'd been recommended to Maria- Theresa by Gerard van Swieten on the basis of his reputation in England. In Vienna, Ingenhousz would become known familiarly as " The Great Inoculator".

Here is Franz Anton Mesmer's account of Jan van Ingenhousz's visit to his house to observe the condition of Fraulein Oesterline:

" The patient was then in a fainting fit with convulsions. I told him to approach the patient and touch her. She made no movement."

Mesmer then "*communicated animal magnetism to him by taking him by the hand* **." Mesmer was already using the expression, "animal magnetism", coined by himself to distance himself from the theories of Maximillian Hell, who still believed that the power of the magnet was directly responsible for the relief of hysterical symptoms. When Ingenhousz touched her this time , it "***resulted in convulsive movements.***" He touched her repeatedly with the tip of a finger ; each time he did so, Franzl went into spasms ; each time he withdrew his finger, the spasms ceased.**

Mesmer's second experiment, with tea-cups, was a variant of the first. It showed that Franzl, out of a set of 8 cups, responded only to the one cup he'd touched. The third experiment was of particular interest, in that it seemed to confirm his association of action at a distance with that of the gravitational and magnetic field:

" I pointed my finger at her at a distance of 8 paces; the next instant

her body was in convulsions to the point of raising her on her bed with every appearance of pain.. "

After he'd witnesses all 3 experiments, Ingenhousz claimed that he was satisfied that Mesmer had made an authentic scientific discovery that could be employed in the cure of certain kinds of psychogenic illness. Once back in his own home Ingenhousz mounted a storm of disparagement and character assassination against him, possibly a dry run for the campaign he would be directing against Jenner in England in the following decade. Mesmer threatened to sue him but it came to nothing.

In the meantime Franzl's therapeutic regime was continued until she was completely cured, the first real success of the new methods that would make him notorious in Paris in the 80's, and the origin of all forms of hypnotherapy down to the present day. Once restored to health, she married Mesmer's stepson and became Frau Fischer. This may have accounted for a good part of her condition in the first place.

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Chapter 4

"Music is the shaping of the invisible".... Leonardo da Vinci

Colas:

" Diggi, daggi, schurry, murry; horum, harum, lirum, larum
Raudi, Maudi, giri, gari ; posito, besti, basti, Saron froh;
fato, mato, quid pro quo! "

Bastien : (furchtsam) : Ist die Hexerei zu Ende?

..... spell cast by the magician, Colas , to solve the emotional crisis of Bastien and Bastienne; from the opera of W. A. Mozart , 1768

Marie- Therese von Paradis

I. Prelude

The child prodigy - combining the unspotted innocence of infancy , the presence of innate mental formations, and a touch of noble savagery - maintained a cherished place in the Enlightenment cosmology. Much of the excitement generated by the young Mozart's international concert tours derived from the feeling that his very existence gave proof to the celestial connections of spirit and brain announced by the contemporary promoters of the scientific revolution. The prodigy demonstrated the boundless sea of Man's latent abilities, the power of Reason over brute Matter, the inherent benevolence of Nature, the exquisite craftsmanship of the Man-Machine (*glorified by the popular writer Julien Offray de La Mettrie*) , and, if you like, further evidence of the positive upward slope of the differential equations

which God had, at the beginning, insinuated onto the primal ooze.

No sector of persons in society suffers so much from the trite oversimplifications of an age as its children. It is they who must endure the consequences of its prejudices, religious dogmas, theories and systems of education, its psychologists, its criminal codes, its prisons and , not the least, the tyrannical abuse of its parents: it is the children who must bear the burden for their failure in life, their unhappiness , their frustrated loves, their dysfunctional family life and, if they be unnatural monsters, their physical, psychic and sexual attacks.

In this regard, the prodigies of the 18th century were particularly vulnerable. Mozart was lucky to be blessed with a good music teacher and a decent human being for a father. Beethoven and Paganini were forced to their miraculous heights by the kicks and blows of drunken fiddlers. They reached them, but at a price they should not have had to pay; that Art transmutes our sufferings is hardly an argument for turning artists into suffering victims. Yet a great many prodigies were, and still are, drawn from the ranks of abused children.

The case of the piano prodigy Josef Hofmann was something of a *cause celebre* in its day. [xv] At the age of 12, Hofmann could play rings around just about any living pianist. In 1897, his father Casimir brought him over from Poland intending to take the United States by storm. A dazzling triumph at the Metropolitan Opera House, followed by a concert tour so brutally overloaded that the Society for the Prevention of

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[xv] Hofmann remained among the handful of world-class pianists until his death in 1959. He led an unhappy and tragic life, marred by promiscuity, alcoholism and nervous collapse. There are no grounds, necessarily, to traces the roots of these personal difficulties to his treatment as a child prodigy, but the connection is unavoidable.

Cruelty to Children took out a lawsuit against the father. Finally a philanthropist gave Casimir $50,000 under the condition that his son retire from the concert stage until he had reached 18.

The record contains many such stories of parental greed and insensitivity, though rarely to this extreme: the accounts of the nervous breakdowns of John Stuart Mill, Norbert Wiener and Yehudah Menuhin make for disturbing reading. These are creative individuals, it must be remembered who went on to have distinguished careers and wrote books about themselves. One must raise their number by some orders of magnitude to include those who burned out, went into unrelated occupations, or didn't want to share their life story with a wider public. Most notable in this class is the Hungarian pianist, Ervin Niyerigazi. At the turn of the he century was one of the most astonishing musical prodigies on record. He was "rediscovered" in the 70s or so ago, hiding out in a flophouse in San Francisco's tenderloin. [xvi]

Often times their gifts and their treatment by abusive parents abuse have little connection; sometimes one serves as the ground for the other. It is not uncommon that abuse and neglect can destroy the gift that might have blossomed, had it been given the chance to develop in its own fashion.

The fascinating life- story of Marie-Therese von Paradis is best appreciated if it be told in full; in it one finds a bit of everything. Her gifts and handicaps were so intimately connected that they may well have been complementary aspects of the same psychic continuum. The mixture of parental solicitation and mistreatment, the "coddle/slam"

[xvi] **Lost Genius; Kevin Bazzana; DaCapo Press, 2008**

bind that made her prisoner, likewise created a phenomenon uniquely adapted to her circumstances and epoch; so much so that, despite one's moral outrage, one is tempted to find an inevitability in her personal tragedy. In some sense she embodies the darker side, the sinister undertow, the unspoken realities that were an integral part of the most extraordinary blossoming of the musical art in a single place in human history.

In addition, owing to her connections to the intellectual luminaries of late 18th century Vienna, scientists such as Mesmer and van Swieten, composers such as Mozart, Kozeluch, Haydn and Salieri, poets such as Burger and Pfeffle, through her role as an educator in the age of Schubert and Weber, and through her own European concert tours, she will ever remain the most poignant hologram , the veritable touchstone, of that brilliant, passionate and troubled time in European cultural history.

The theme of artistic excellence at the cost of sensory privation will also appear in her story, though in a somewhat incredible guise. Excellence in any field forces one to concentrae on its unique requirements. In an art as demanding as music this can often lead to one-sided, socially and spiritually deformed human beings . Generally speaking, since most of the arts are directed to specific sensory domains, limitations, natural or induced , in some of the other senses may sometimes have its advantages. Many societies, including our own, have approved the deliberate mutilation of artists to enhance their concentration or performance in the one area in which they are expected to excell.

It was the custom in the Ottoman Empire to blind singers in

order for them to better concentrate on their own voices. Kindred to this is the castration of singers in our own civilization (into the mid- 19th century).The Italian tradition of locking music students into a room from which they can't expect to be released until they have learned their piece or completed their compositions, is a much saner application of the same idea. Indeed, imprisonment in one form or another has often been seen as a necessary prerequisite for creative art. The French writer Colette was locked into their apartment by her husband and forced to produce novels, which he then sold under his own name (she eventually escaped). Other examples are Proust's confinement to his bed or Stephen Hawking's inhuman ordeal.

Prison in the literal sense, and its gentler, no less onerous cousin, exile, have often been the mothers of great literature: Homer, Dante, Cervantes, Charles d'Orleans, Hugo, Marx, Joyce, Beckett and Eliot .. In these examples, whether barbarous, only unjust, or simply arbitrary, the idea is the same: that one must sacrifice essential elements in what is considered a normal existence if one wishes to great heights in some artistic domain. The conditions of life must often be bitter if the fruit is to be sweet.

And, so very often, the final result is not worth the tradeoff. The familiar image of the concert artist bitterly and vindictively rueing the childhood that was stolen from him, just so that he could live a life of celebrity he did not want is, unfortunately, far more than just a sentimental metaphor.

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Born in Vienna on the 15th of May, 1759, pianist, singer,

composer, educator , Marie-Therese von Paradis, prodigy and blind invalid , is the most famous and controversial of Mesmer's patients. Her father, Herr Joseph von Paradis was of the minor nobility, a bureaucrat in the high reaches of the adminstration attached to the court of Maria-Theresa. Beginning his career as the "imperial and royal court secretary " to the Court Chamber of Commerce, later to the Austrian Court Chancellery, he finally reached and remained at the post of "Councillor of the Lower Austrian Government Board". He was about the same age as Anton Mesmer; they moved in the same circles and were acquainted with one another.

The next two quotations are from the account of Marie-Therese's illness and medical history written by Herr Paradis himself and published in the Wiener Zeitung in the 1770's:

...." On December 9th, 1762, it was found that when she awoke she was unable to see. Her parents were all the more surprised and grieved by this sudden infirmity because, since her birth, there had been no indication of any change in that organ."

That she was not born blind, yet became so at age 3, will turn out to be of some importance: it implies that she retained the vestiges of a visual memory. Many observables indicated to her doctors and to lay persons that the origins of her blindness were psychic rather than physical. The optic nerve was diagnosed as sound by all the doctors who examined her : Barth, professor at the Medical Faculty, specialist in the anatomy and diseases of the eye; Anton van Stoerck, personal physician to Maria-Theresa; and the Baron de Wenzel. Mesmer would reach the same conclusion when he accepted her case in 1777. Among

other things, they noted symptoms such as compulsive twitchings of the eye muscles which caused them to bulge out of their sockets at moments of emotional stress.

"It was ascertained that it was a case of perfect amaurosis, whose cause may have been a reverberating fluid or some fright the child had had that night - some noise at the door of her room."

Her behavior exhibited the basic traits of the hysterical personality syndrome familiar to the medical profession at that time : depressions, sudden rages, seizures, vomiting, delirium, and symptoms characterized simply as "mad behavior". The family was dysfunctional and quarrelsome, the mother being herself subject to hysterical episodes, while her father was of a violent, impulsive disposition.

Even before her personal catastrophe it had been recognized that Marie-Therese von Paradis was gifted for any occupation involving manual dexterity, things such as knitting, lace-making, piano playing, and card tricks.The blindness may have improved this skills by concentrating her attention on her muscular reactions. Her hearing was also amazingly acute. [xvii] Her natural endowments included absolute pitch, an enormous musical memory (in her prime she commanded a repertoire of 60 piano concertos), and the musical imagination of a professional composer, an occupation which few women were allowed to pursue until quite recently. Although it must be admitted that there still exists a great deal that we do not know about innate as opposed to developed musical talent, it is fair to say that these abilities could not

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[xvii] It has been suggested that blind persons excel in the acuteness of their hearing only because sighted persons tend to neglect its development.See [7], pgs. 250 -252.

have been instilled in her by any amount of specialized training . She was, in fact, a true musical prodigy born into a family that seemed to have lived quite happily on the razor's edge of psychosis. The home situation forced a rather cruel adaptation upon her that evidently worked - if by "working" we mean that it kept the peace in a stormy household, and gave her the breathing space in which to develop her exceptional gifts. Certain it is that her blindness helped her to survive (and to survive quite well) in a situation where she could easily have ended up spending most of her adult life in an asylum.

The Empress was moved to take an interest in her namesake ; as a matter of policy, Maria Theresa bestowed generous scholarships on young, gifted and handicapped musicians. To cover the costs of her education the family of the young prodigy received a yearly pension of 200 florins [xviii] Indeed, Marie-Therese von Paradis did receive the best musical education then possible.

And, given the time and place, what possibilities!

:piano with the Czech Kozeluch, the best pianist in the imperial capital before the arrival of Mozart, and with the Dutch virtuoso Joseph Richter; singing with the celebrated Vincenzio Righini; composition with, (no less!)Salieri! [xix] Another of her famous teachers was the Abbe Vogler; his students include Carl- Maria von Weber and Meyerbeer.

[xviii] After consulting sources on the purchasing power of the currency of the times, I estimate this to be equivalent to $6,000 today: a single person could live quite well on 550 florins per year.

[xix] Salieri's place in music history as a teacher of composition is very important; he also taught Beethoven, Schubert, Hummel and Liszt. Despite his feud with Mozart, which certainly influenced the methods and tastes of his students, { in 1816 he broke off his friendship with Schubert because of his frank use of the Mozartian style in his setting of Schiller's poem *Laura am Klavier*) , and his mediocrity as a composer, he may be said to have had as much influence on the composers of the 19th century as did J.S. Bach on the 18th through the education he gave his own sons.

It was the age of inventions, both large and small: Watt, Fulton, Franklin, Jenner, Hamilton … Ingenious inventions were designed by friends to make life easier for her: A pegboard for notating music was constructed by a close friend of the family, Johann von Riedinger. He may have been attached to her: Riedinger accompanied her on her concert tours and wrote the libretti of her two operas, mounted in Vienna in 1791-92. A precursor of the typewriter, a kind of miniaturized printing press for writing letters, was designed for her by Wolfgang von Kempelen. These instruments were passed on to her students at the institute for blind musicians which she opened in Vienna in 1808. Typewriters and word-processors have made them obsolete, but they must have served a major role in the education of the blind all through the 19th century.

It is clear that, apart from her handicap, her musical education would have been the envy of any aspiring artist of that time. Whatever responsibility for her psychosomatic illnesses one is sorely tempted to drop on the hunched shoulders of the irascible Joseph von Paradis, one cannot deny that he did everything within his power , both to educate her and to find the best medical treatment for her.

But, my Lord - the best medical treatment???!!!

What subtleties of meaning are contained in that commonplace yet sinister phrase! Enter from stage right, circa 1767 , the redoubtable Anton van Stoerck: Marie -Therese von Paradis is eight years old. Stoerck, bedside physician of *the* Maria -Theresa, who receives a

footnote in the toxicology section of medical encyclopedias, is enough of a physician to recognized that her blindness is psychogenic.

That's something at least!

Had the voice of duty so commanded, a man of his caliber would not have hesitated to operate. Had he done so, he would have discovered that the optic nerve was intact; but then it would have been too late. Perhaps it would have spared Marie-Therese a lifetime of misery by getting it over once and for all . Who is to say? Even hindsight would not have been of much help in this particular situation. The medical infrastructure and knowledge needed to help someone in her situation is not available even today. Yet, having made a correct diagnosis, to imagine what Anton von Stoerck then put her through is almost impossible, for most of us genteel folk.

For 5 or so years Stoerck persevered in the application of traditional Galenic remedies: blisters, bleedings, cauterizations and purgatives. He was quite fond of purgatives, making frequent and fulsome use of his beloved pulsitilla and valerian.

Anton van Stoerck was, however, no superstitious empiric from the Dark Ages! He was a modern doctor, lifted from blind ignorance on the shoulders of Paracelsus, von Helmont, Sydenham, and Boerhaave, fortunate indeed to be alive in the age of reason triumphant!

Anton van Stoerck was a true believer in the scientific method! In experiment! In Progress, and its inexorable advance! In the superiority of his "orthodox medicine" over the "unlicensed quacks" roaming the villages! How fortunate, indeed, was Marie-Therese von Paradis, to be

alive in the great age of enlightened medicine, and to be in the hands of such a one as he!

Galen having proven ineffectual for half a decade, it was high time to experiment. Everybody was inventing something-or-other these days, so why shouldn't he try his hand at it? Anton van Stoerck launched his campaign against ignorance and disease by encasing the head of Marie-Therese von Paradis, now aged 12, in a plaster cast.[xx] There appears to be a tendency, universal in human nature, to unconsciously desire the immobilization, whether by entombment or moth-balling, of others: loved ones, enemies, even complete strangers. Edgar Allen Poe was particularly adept at exploiting this universal human weakness for literary purposes. It was in the enlightened 18th century that Dr. Benjamin Rush, America's first psychiatrist, invented the restraining chair for immobilizing every muscle of the body, with a thick wooden felt lined box to be put over the head with only a single hole on the lower rim for the purposes of breathing. A patient in his mental asylum in Philadelphia afflicted with frenzy could be kept a prisoner in one these things for weeks at a time.

In the period 1953 -1964, this toy was resurrected by Ewen Cameron, president of the American Psychiatric Association and director of the Society for Human Ecology in Montreal. There it was used to conduct CIA-funded "depatterning"experiments investigating the possibility of creating of human zombies. (See [15], pgs. 131 - 143)

Marie-Therese von Paradis was forced to endure the persence of

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[xx] **The film "Mesmer" starring Alan Richman, does a great job with this.**

the plaster cast around her head for two months. Throughout this period an uninterrupted flow of supperating pus trickled down from the edges of the cast onto her neck and shoulders. As with the rashly administered neuroleptic drugs of modern-day alienists, this novel form of treatment produced side effects: seizures and hysterical paroxysms; rage, delirium, ranting and hallucinations. Like the ocean waves beneath a typhoon, her eyeballs were wracked with convulsive spasms, until the pupils drew themselves up under the upper eyelids and only the whites were visible.

We withdraw momentarily from this horror to collect our wits. One is not dealing here with unsanitary, illiterate peasants , abandoned, starving, destitute in the Austrian countryside, such as one might possibly found in the neighborhood of, say , the grand estate of Esterhaza. There, one can imagine, even as Franz Josef Haydn sits at leisure composing imperishable string quartets for an eminently over-civilized Baron, the impoverished populace are being carried off by epidemics and famines like micro-organisms massacred by bucketfuls of carbolic acid. In such a setting one would not be surprised to find atrocious heroic therapies applied by brutish quacks with some sort of license acquired, perhaps, from a few years apprenticeship to someone as ignorant as themselves.

Not at all! Herr von Paradis belongs to the Habsburg nobility; his daughter is therefore also a member of the nobility. There is no want of money: Herr von Paradis is a respectable civil servant with privileges of seniority and tenure, his daughter the beneficiary of a scholarship awarded expressly for her education and medical care. Anton van Stoerck is also from the nobility, personal doctor to the Empress, no less.

Mesmer , who will be taking her case in a few years is rich and (through marriage) also a member of the nobility. Baron de Wenzel is nobility.

It is within the drawing-rooms of this caste of privilege, at the very summit of the aristocracy of one of the great European powers, that we read of a 12-year old *blind* girl who is to have her head encased in plaster *for two months* , so that the pus and blood will dribble down her cheeks and chin and into her mouth , climbing up to her temples before surrendering to universal gravitation to run in rivulets over the ridges and gulleys of her ludicrous blindfold, seeping into the passages of her ears and trickling through her hair, so that she will scream in agony, succumb to seizures and exhibit "mad behavior" !

The lesson to be gained from this is one of the universals of history: that the victims of ignorance and stupidity aren't concentrated in a single social class, that wealth and birth are but paltry defenses against their implacable dominion.

One can also hazard the hypothesis that the psycho-physical decadence of the European royalty, the Habsburgs in particular, had a role to play in this tale. Even in that advanced age the pampered nobility were notoriously incapable of looking after themselves. The hideous farce is to repeat itself in just a few years time, with many embellishments, in the madness of George III. The cycles of therapy administered to him by a whole family of quacks, the Willises, constitute little more than aggravated torture over three decades (1788 -1820) (See [16]) . The authority of a medical quack with the right recommendations and credentials, evidently carried more weight with these enfeebled lords than any amount of native common sense. It is difficult to imagine a capable crafstman, blacksmith, merchant or financier of this bustling

era ever allowing a man like Anton van Stoerck anywhere near his daughter.

Somehow, by what means one knows not, even a van Stoerck realized that this radically innovative form of therapy wasn't working; yet he didn't give up. A good doctor never does. Do we ever read of Hippocrates giving up? Did Christ give up when his disciples deserted him? Did Paracelsus give up, when the children of ignorant peasants stoned him as he wandered from village to village? Did Isaac Newton give up, when he thought so long and hard about the rotation of the moon that he developed hallucinations and migraine headaches?

Don't give up! Persist, until you get it right! That's the first rule in the lexicon of every enlightened scientist

Thereupon Stoerck directed his attention to ever more radical innovations in his medical arsenal: electroshock therapy. Electroshock is not a new therapy. It was proposed by John Wesley, praised by Benjamin Franklin, and experimented with by many faculty members of the Medical school of the University of Vienna: van Stoerck, van Haan, and Ingenhousz among others. No more was known then about the effects of frequent and violent shocks on the human psyche than is known today, despite the widespread use of ECT. One harbors the suspicion that Stoerck was using Marie-Therese von Paradis as a guinea pig for gathering statistics for forth-coming papers in the prestigious medical journals.

Altogether, Anton van Stoerck administered 3,000 powerful shocks from a Leyden

jar to the eyeballs of Marie-Therese von Paradis.

This caused agonizing pain and a return of the former cycle of fits and delirium. To counter these anomalous side effects, battalions of leeches were marshalled into combat, fixed bayonets at the ready, and she was bled to within an inch [xxi] of the grave.

The only thing that saved her was the intervention of another doctor, the Baron de Wenzel. By declaring her case incurable he spared her further suffering. Now she was free, at the onset of adolescence, to inaugurate her coming-out in the world with a face that for many years would look as if it had come fresh from the butcher's block.

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[14] Abnormal Hypnotic Phenomena: A Survey of Nineteenth Century Cases - Volume I: France. Eric J Dingwall; J A CHURCHILL; 1967

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Chapter 5
Between Fact and Fiction

I. Introduction

The author of this historical account now finds himself face up against a singularity.[xxii] The problem is this :the author's immersion in materials related to the age of Mozart, Salieri, Mesmer, Maria- Theresa, Joseph II, Louis XVI, the two Georges (Washington and III), Benjamin Franklin, etc. - including histories , letters, biographies , analyses, essays, and other accounts, factual or fictional of the same events - has inflamed his normal tendencies to ditch his obsessive concern for historical accuracy to begin work on a play,movie script or novel.

The temptation to turn from a commitment to accuracy, or at least to credibility – not being a historian trained in this area of specialization he cannot hope to make a contribution at the professional standard - to the manufacture of a historical romance (in which he will be limited only by his talent for creating an aura of verisimilutude) is easily sympathized with. In fact one can go further: historical fiction worthy of the reading ought to be based on the principle that good fiction will be ,

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[xxii] **of the Maxwell potential type, producing a cusp surface in Catastrophe Space.**

in important respects, closer to fact than fact itself . How, indeed, is one to communicate the twilight ambience of the late Enlightenment,(*the Aufklärungdämmerung ?*) through the mere compilation of dates, deeds doings, death and data?

Yet - (the Dominant Seventh word!) - Yet (add a fermata)- Yet (full stop and a pause) ….I fondly muse (thank you, Milton) … once embarked upon the path of fictionalized biography, the author already anticipates the scrapping of the noose about his neck , (woven by so many micron-thin strands of the moral fibers of the Scientific Method), which may hang him if he dare add even one more grab-bag of lies in an area where there is already so much junky scholarship; through contributing yet more manifold distortions of the character and works of Franz Anton Mesmer, already so maligned, vilified, deified or venerated out of all recognizable proportions; through loading more fertilizer into the dung-mound of Mozart-Salieri fiction; by still one more romantization of the already over sentimentalized, saccarinated tale of Dr. Mesmer and Fräulein Marie-Therese Paradis! [xxiii]

Despite the bad press it has received since the dawn of history, truth

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xxiii A notorious example of the latter, with however a number of redeeming features, is the Dennis Potter film "Mesmer" (1993)

is **deserving of our respect. It is not often that we can say exactly what it is; we usually have a fairly good idea of what it is not. For example: we cannot prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Salieri didn't poison Mozart; yet we can show that he was actually in Paris, promoting his opera, Tarare, on the day that so many biographies tell us he was in Vienna sabotaging the first performance of Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro".(Ironically, The texts of both works are adaptations of plays by Pierre Caron de Beaumarchais.)**

We cannot prove (beyond a doubt's lurking shadow) that Mesmer did cure the blindness of Marie-Therese Paradis; but we can reproduce the detailed Memoir of her cure which her father, a highly suspicious man, wrote for German-language newspapers. Likewise, we cannot prove that the two French commisions that investigated and condemned the practice and ideas of Franz Anton Mesmer in 1784 were prejudiced against him. It is nonetheless true that that the French medical profession did not officially recognize the existence of the phenomena of hypnotism for more than a century afterwards, by which time it was being used by doctors all over Europe and the United States. And so on…..

Succinctly: the novelist in me is itching to supplant the historian; but the scientist will not permit the novelist to come out. My heart longs to discant upon *the story of Franz Anton Mesmer and Marie-Therese von Paradis* , perhaps entitled something like: " The Magnetic Sympathies", or "The Landstrasse Conspiracy" ; with John Gielgud and Juliette Binoche in the principal roles.

Concurrently it is his intention to supply an extended philosophical commentary. There is therefore a requirement that he invoke historical accuracy to the best of his ability.

The author therefore proposes an experiment. He will create accounts of 3 kinds, consecutively or, on occasion concurrently . At the beginning of each narrative he will indicate the mode in which he is operating: *Fiction ; History; Commentary* . The glaring errors which the writer of fiction is sometimes obliged to introduce into the film scripts at least, will be corrected in the footnotes.

I: Film Script

The sultry evening of July 29, 1776. Twilight over the Vienna glacis,

that magnificent caraval of fortifications, warehouses, gates, magazines, casernes and stone ramparts which had protected the city so well during the Turkish siege in 1683, yet which is already useless for military purposes. 33 years later Napolean will brush it aside with the disdain of a maid for aglomerated cobwebs.

The flat walkways on the ramparts that encircle the Old City are filled with strolling crowds: people seeking relief from the summer heat in the evening's breezes, perhaps to admire the glimmering sunset now bathing the spires of St. Stephens Cathedral, gazing at the gorgeous sculpted gardens of Schönbrunn Palace, watching the flocks of birds wheeling against the red sky. A street violinist doing a fair job with a Tartini sonata has put together enough coins for a visit later that evening to his favorite tavern.

On the ramparts to the right, just above the keystone of the Carinthian Gate, one's attention is drawn to a group of distinguished persons, all medical doctors with their wives. Standing and walking about, they watch the arrival of the splendid horses and coaches of the Habsburg nobility as they cross a bridge over the Danube, go through the gate and halt at the entrance of the Stadts-Komödienhaus, also known as the

Kärntnertor Theatre.

A new opera by the young Italian musical genius, Antonio Salieri, *Delmita e Daliso*[xxiv] , will be having its premiere in an hour's time. Though only 26, an age at which most composers are happy to be allowed in at the ground floor, Salieri is, in all but name, already the *Imperial Royal Court Kapellmeister* . There is a schmaltzy love story in his background[xxv] which may have softened even the famously unmeltable heart of the Emperor . Since Salieri is aready the *Kapellmeister of the Italian Opera* and *Imperial Court Chambermusic Composer*, the vantage of hindsight causes us to feel that by 1776 he aready wields more power at the Viennese court than he would ever merit. But, in that year of revolution, how was one to know that he was destined to reign as unchallenged musical dictator of Vienna for a full

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xxiv The first performance of Delmita e Deliso was probably held at the Bürg Theatre, not at the Kärntnertor. Joseph II was trying to build up the German language theatre at that time and eventually reserved the Bürg for this sole purpose. The script-writer however, insisted on using the setting of the Kärntnertor.

xxv Which must, without fail, be inserted into the script.

half century, during which time Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Kozeluch, Moscheles, Hummel, and others of comparable attainments would arrive, do their life's work, and pass on with little more than a few crumbs from the banquet tables of the Viennese royalty?

This conclave of respectable doctors include the aged and universally respected Gerard van Swieten[xxvi] , director of the medical school and Austria's Minister of Education; Dr. Anton von Störck; Jan Ingenhousze, known as "The Great Inoculator"; and the man whose name would someday become a word in the vocabularies of most of the world's languages, Franz Anton Mesmer.

Frau Mesmer and Frau Störck stroll about the ramparts together. Ingenhousze's wife stays close by her husband's side. Towering half a head over the rest of his colleagues, the appearance of Jan Ingenhousze is formidable. He is taller than the aged van Swieten, more upright than the corpulent Mesmer. He has swaddled his figure in a dark cloak of the kind that went out of fashion half a century before, and is now worn only by diplomats and attendees at a funeral. It gives him the air of an oldstyle professional man, vain and self-important. In his hands he holds

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[xxvi] The script-writer, in consultation with the director, plays a bit with history. The real Gerard van Swieten died in 1772. He is sometimes confused with his son, Gottfried van Swieten. It is the son who arranged Mozart's 3rd class funeral.

a document which he has been showing to the others.

" I received this just the other day. It was sent me from the American colonies by Dr. Franklin in Philadelphia. I am proud to be his friend. "

Mesmer takes it from his hands and examines it with great curiosity. Ingenhousze goes on, " It's some kind of declaration, signed in Philadelphia last July 4th. It's filled with all sorts of radical and hackneyed rhetoric, but what it boils down to is that the American colonies wish to break away - from the rule of the finest monarch on this earth, George the Third ! "

" I don't think its rubbish, Herr Ingenhousze. My English isn't good, but there's something here about", Mesmer points, " a 'right to the pursuit of happiness'. I couldn't agree more." Mesmer hands the document back over to him.

Ingenhousze beats the ground with his cane: " Seditious stupidity: a RIGHT to happiness!? Who ever heard of such nonsense? Why not - a right to fly like a bird? A right to get drunk every night? A right to smallpox? What nonsense!!"

" I beg your pardon, Jan; but the document speaks of the *pursuit* of happiness as a basic right: that's quite a different thing."

" A right to the *pursuit* of happiness? If you like. That would appeal to the kind of patients you have, wouldn't it, Franz? All pursuing "happiness" like little children playing with toys. No wonder you've ended up playing nursemaid to a lot of neurotics!"

" 'Neurotics'? I haven't heard that term before, Jan. What does it mean?"

" It was invented by another friend of mine, Dr. Cullen of Scotland. I of course have professional associates in over a dozen countries. It means - well, your kind of patient. They are unhappy so they get sick and look for someone like you to tell them something's wrong with their minds!"

"Did Mr. Franklin write it?"

"No. That's the funniest part of it. It's written by a Virginia planter, a slave-holder by the name of Thomas Jefferson!"

Störck is quick to interject: "I wonder if he's told his slaves about the pursuit of happiness?" General laughter; even Mesmer is obliged to concede the point.

van Swieten quickly interjects: "Now gentlemen, please don't quarrel tonight! All Vienna knows how much the two of you hate each other: Jan denounces all of Franz's cures, while Franz threatens a new lawsuit

against him for defamation every other day. We're here to enjoy the opera, not to quarrel. Though I must say", here van Swieten once again looks down at the manuscript, printed on Franklin's press in far-away Philadelphia. He rubs the page between thumb and fingers: "Is this the stuff they use for paper over in the Americas?" He looks at it again before handing it back to Ingenhouze:

" If the British colonies in North America succeed in breaking away, the world will never be the same."

As he is speaking the royal coach, decorated with the coat-of-arms of the Habsburg dynasty and bearing the person of the co-regent, Joseph II , Roman Emperor, Perpetual Enlarger of the Empire, King in Germany, heir to Hungary, Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slovenia, Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, Lorraine and Var, Grand Duke of Tuscany and King of Jerusalem , crosses over the wooden bridge spanning the Danube and disappears through the tunnel of the Carinthian Gate.

The doctors all remove their hats and bow from the waist; van Störck actually gets down in the dust and kneels. A dozen more coaches of the royal entourage pass through the gate before the doctors can relax. It is time to walk down to the theatre.

"Yes", van Swieten repeats, " A revolution in America will have serious consequences." [xxvii]

Frau Mesmer turns to Frau Störck: " I haven't been to this theatre in over a dozen years. I don't remember the Stadts-Komödienhaus as looking anything like this. Whatever happened to the elaborate Venetian style building that used to be here? "

Frau von Störck replies, " You're right. This building is has been built in the fashionable new style they've been calling 'neo-classic': a silly term if you ask me. They ought to call it Josephine Prudery since it's much like the Emperor himself: everyone admires it but no-one likes it very much."

Her husband smiles and addresses Mesmer : "Franz, I doubt that you had a chance to visit the old building. It burned down before you came to Vienna in the early 60's."

"True", van Sweten nods, " A dreadful story."

Both Franz and Frau Mesmer confess that they know nothing about it, even though she had been living in the city at the time. Staggering slowly down the hill and setting the pace for all the others, the venerable

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[xxvii] **Movies are not noted for their subtlety**

van Swieten, his silver grey hair falling over broad furrows of his brow, his chest covered with medals and decorations, fills them in on the details:

" I'm rather surprised, Franz, that Christoph Willibald Gluck never mentioned it to you; he gyrates between your musical soirees and mine. He probably just wants to forget ; it was a terrible tragedy.

"The date, to be exact, was November 9th, 1761. For the rest of you who may not know much about music, Gluck is our best opera composer. Salieri, whom you'll be listening to tonight, has still to make his mark, although I can't think of anyone else who's better than he is except, perhaps, Haydn."

" Joseph or Michael?" asks Ingenhousze.

" Oh, Michael. Certainly Michael! Joseph wastes his considerable talent on silly avant-garde experiments to titillate his ivory tower down there in Esterhaza. Well, Gluck's latest ballet, "*Don Juan ,or the Stone Guest*" was being produced that night in the old theatre that used to stand here."

" An odd subject!" Ingenhousze comments, "Who would have any use for music in honor of a notorious libertine?"

" Granted Jan: I'm totally in agreement with you. Naturally of course, the reprobate goes to Hell at the end. To increase the dramatic effect of the finale, the stage director asked that a real fire be built onstage. The ballet was already concluded and the audience out of the building before a workman noticed that the flames had reached the woodwork on the proscenium arch and were spreading through the theatre.

"The audience was safe; but the box office manager and his wife unwisely ran back into the house in an attempt to rescue the evening's receipts. A wall of flames blocked their return through the front door. They then tried to get out through the back, but found the wrought-iron doors were secured with massive chains. Th crowds struggled to break them but to no avail. Four horses were brought up and harnassed to the gates, but still they would not give .

"By then the couple had almost succumbed to the smoke and heat. So a priest was sent for so that they might receive the last rites. The crowds watched in horror as they, and the entire building, were reduced to ashes."

" Well, look who's here tonight! ", Störck speaks up as they enter the theatre. He points to a tiny, stiff man who walks with the formal dignity

of a seasoned civil servant. The young lady he is accompanying can only be his daughter: "That's Herr Joseph von Paradis and his talented blind daughter, Marie-Therese."

" I'm not surprised they've come. ", says van Swieten, "She's Salieri's most promising student. Not, mind you, that a woman has any business composing music . Still, since she's blind I suppose she's got to do something with her life."

" That's the saddest part, Gerard", Störck continues, " She's incurable. I know: I was the poor girl's personal physician . For ten years I tried everything I could think of."

While Ingenhousze coughs imperiously as if a wasp had just flown down his throat, Mesmer makes an exaggerated effort at re-adjusting the black silken bag at the back of his purse wig. Störck goes on, " …her condition is impervious to the most advanced techniques of medical science." Ingenhousze stares up at the heavens as if he's just discovered a new planet.

" Ah! But what a charming dress she's wearing!", cries Frau Ingenhousze, "A polonaise! The latest rage. Jan, you've got to let me get one for myself."

Ingenhousze removes his gloves and pus them in the pocket of his coat:

"I'm not made of money."

" Oh, they can't cost that much! You see? The overskirt is wide open and it's been hitched it up in three places so that the petticoat is exposed all the way around, flounced on the hem with blue taffeta, and those odd things called furbelowes. She looks just like a China doll. Why, the bodice is so low it might be considered scandalous; her little boobies are all but dropping out! What a shame she can't see the effect she's making."

" That doesn't shock me, my dear", Ingenhouze replies, "Heaven knows I see enough naked bodies in my daily practise. It's those – why, just look at them! - fruit salads, vegetables, flowers and fishes doing a minuet high up on that 2 foot wig ! I mean, how the deuce does she sleep at night? And how am I going to be able to watch my opera if I've got to sit in back of that horror?"

" It's the latest fashion, dear ; all those things are taken off before she goes to bed. She puts a net around her hair. It means that she has to sleep in one fixed position throughout the night, but one never counts

the cost when it's a matter of beauty. I'm too old for those things; the middle-aged matrons you see wearing those things look foolish. Just looking at her makes me wish I were 30 years younger!"

Störck merely comments: "If you knew the girl's mother, you'd understand. She must have sat up with her for 6 hours to make up that pastry cake."

All of them go into the auditorium and take their places. Herr Joseph von Paradis and his daughter sit in the second row from the front in an area reserved for the students and associates of Antonio Salieri. Herr Paradis is not in a good mood. One gathers that he's the sort of person who thoroughly hates the opera but is under an obligation to put in an appearance from time to time . However, on this occasion he is also accompanying his daughter. Obviously, he's very proud of her. Because he wants his daughter to be happy, he will try to enjoy himself. The family has reason to believe she will soon become famous in her own right.

Quite apart from the get-up the juveniles are crazy about these days, his daughter's appearance is very striking. She has known great suffering. She has been very sick and the doctors have not been kind to

her. Her face, already drawn and pallid with intense anxiety, is rendered frantic, even lunatic by the grotesque eyeballs. These jut out of their sockets like enormous hardboiled eggs. The pupils are hard, though not fixed as is the case with many blind persons. They rove from side to side in spasms, miniature hysterical seizures, cresting like the foam on ocean waves, reflecting a state of near constant panic, indeed a kind of wild animal terror that is indescribably painful to watch.

Yet in a way one doesn't know how to articulate her face suffuses a radiant afterglow of youthfulness and naïve idealism , the sweetness of a frightened, overly sheltered child. On this evening she is both agitated and happy. An opening night for a new opera by her favorite teacher, Antonio Salieri, one of the world's greatest musicians, fills all her soul with enthusiasm.

The movie's director has decided to place Franz Anton Mesmer and his wife in about the same place that Joseph Cotton is placed behind Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer in George Cukor's "Gaslight". The situations of Mesmer and Cotton are similar, witnesses to the psychological condition of a young woman musician caused in part by

the elderly gentleman seated beside her.

The orchestra slides on stage from the wings , dressed in the livery of the court. All rise when the Emperor arrives; the trumpets blow a fanfare. Once seated in the loge, Joseph II signals by a wave of his right hand that the conductor should begin the overture. Just then Franz Anton Mesmer leans over to whisper to his wife, concealing his face in her Japanese fan: " Did you notice?" He points towards Marie-Therese, "At the ending of the overture her swollen eyeballs leaped from their blackened sockets and darted about wildly, struggling to see."

The curtain lifts to the first acr: ***A lusty crowd of illiterate rustics, unspoiled by civilization and singing themselves hoarse in the throat, bounds upon the stage and engages in native dances and rude wrestling contests.***

" I didn't notice anything, dear."

" I suspect she's not really blind . Unless her hearing's very acute, she wouldn't have localized the dancing as well as she has."

" Well, dear, I've been told that she does in fact have exceptional hearing."

" Perhaps... but she intrigues me." They both recline in their chairs to enjoy the show; yet Mesmer's eyes do not for a moment quit the strange couple in front of him .

The swains, churls and milkmaids leave the stage.A village Burgomeister with his two garlanded daughters remain behind . He turns to them and sings: **" Or che siam soli, o figlie."** *(Now we are alone, O daughters).*

The audience bursts into hysterical laughter. The performers, anxious to discover the source of this unintended merriment turns their heads from side to side but see nothing. The comic effect brings down the house.

What happened was this: between the performance and the final dress rehearsal, the scene painter took it upon himself to 'improve' the décor by adding a few dozen figures peeping out from the trees, bushes and buildings. Far from being alone, the Burgomeister and his daughters appear to be surrounded by a throng of onlookers.

None of this is visible to Marie-Therese. She is unable to understand

what has caused the audience to laugh; she senses only that the opera is experiencing technical difficulties, and is mortified by the thought that her teacher is suffering embarassment.[xxviii] Her nervous agitation causes the whites of her eyes to tremble so violently that the pupils move up under her eyelids and disappear.

" Ahah!" Mesmer exclaims, standing up. In a loud voice, astonishing his neighbors he barks :" I'm almost certain of it now: the universal fluid is blocked!" Then he sits down abruptly, leaving no-one any more the wiser. Salieri's opera then proceeds smoothly through the first act and into the second.

Delmita stands alone on the stage, waiting for the appearance of the monster who is supposed to eat her up. She has been put into this predicament by the city of Athens, which placates the beast in this fashion about once every year.

Onto the stage springs her champion, Deliso, clothed from crown to toenails with scrap metal armor. With the visor of his helmet down he sings, brandishing his sword: **"Non fuggir, non temer, son'io Daliso!" (**

[xxviii] **It would turn out to be one of Salieri's notable fiascos. That's show biz!**

Fly not, fear not, I am Daliso.)

Now he attempts to lift the visor of his helmet so that Delmita will see his face and not be frightened. On this evening there may have been some poltergeists on stage, (or the spirit of Mozart may have been transmitting bad vibes direct from Salzburg.) The visor refuses to yield.

More hooting, screaming, guffaws from the audience. The cameraman zooms in to show the alert, intelligent, somewhat monomaniacal face of Dr. Mesmer, intently studying the reactions of the unfortunate Marie Therese. Once again the pupils of her eyes have disappeared upwards, as if seaching the contents of her skull. The camera dwells on the swollen blood-shot eyes and the wasted condition of the face.

Cut: **back to Mesmer, who is writing notes into a little journal that he keeps in the pocket of his waist-coat. The audience settles back, awaiting more mishaps. What is notable about this performance is that Salieri had the greatest difficulty in persuading Joseph II to attend. Between war, Enlightenment and his mother the Empress Maria-Theresa, the Emperor's head never stops swimming.Though he's known to be fond of music, his tastes are decidedly middle-brow. The Emperor doesn't care for** *opera seria; a* **burlesque** *opera buffa* **is much more to his**

taste. He's little patience with really serious classical music, which is why he will prefer Salieri and Piccini to Mozart and Gluck until his dying day. As for his mother, the Empress Maria Theresa, she hasn't entered a theatre since her husband died in 1765. It is beginning to look as if Joseph II is going to get his *opera buffa* after all.

The Finale begins: ***An idle shepherd,[xxix] having little better to do, strides upon the stage and declaims:*** **" Vedete come allo splendor di mille faci e mille feseggia Atene!" (** ***Behold ! Athens rejoices with the splendor of thousands upon thousands of torches.)***

Not a flicker of light illuminates the stage: the lighting cues were garbled. Choruses and soloists return and the opera is concluded in darkness. But as the curtain descends upon a perplexed crowd of Athenians and a mirthful audience, the lights of Athens burst forth in every direction!

Foot-stomping, howls and hoots: Salieri himself joins in the merriment. One bomb, more or less, won't hurt his career. His position at the Viennese court is secure.

Not so Marie-Therese. The comic mishapes have all been cast in

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[xxix] that is to say one of those idealized happy stage shepherds so beloved of the 18th century, not the real impoverished wretches up in the hills.

the form of unintended 'sight gags'. She does not know why pandemonium reigns. She imagines that her teacher is being subjected to some terrible humiliation. She stands up, sobbing and screeching. Her arms hysterically beat the air. Losing control she begins to yell in a demented fashion. Her father seizes her, roughly shakes her. Grasping her by the arms , he thrusts her before him out into the aisles. When he reaches the last of the rows of chairs, he finds himself confronted by the stern, portly figure of Dr. Mesmer.

"Here.Let me deal with her." Mesmer pulls a pocket watch from his waistcoat. With one hand he holds her at the collar bone; the other gently swings the pocket watch before her face. " Calmly; calmly", he repeats over and over again in a soft, sultry voice. "There's no need to get excited." He repeats this several times and indeed the young lady begins to relax. "Everything's all right. Calmly ,calmly.... that's better"

He puts to watch away. The cure is successful.

Herr Paradis looks on with amazement: "How did you do that?"

" Very simply, Joseph . The motion of the watch , combined with the sound of my voice, unblocked the universal fluid clogging the passages of the brain. There's no magic involved; it's all science."

" But she couldn't even see the watch! "

" I think, Herr Paradis, you will find that she can see a great many things. Her condition is largely psychological, not physical, and best treated by my methods. Can I have the pleasure of calling on you at your convenience tommorow afternoon?"

Some Movie, Isn't It?

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The History:

Franz Anton Mesmer began his magnetic therapy on the psychosomatic blindness of Marie Therese Paradis in the country house of the Paradis family. In the years since the cure of Franzl Österline his competence and understanding had steadily improved. He'd treated hundreds of hysterical patients in many places in the Germanic world, primarily in Bavaria where he was made a member of the Academy of Sciences . His clinics in Vienna were always crowded with patients. It was a delicate and insecure time for medical professionals, when the science of medicine was just beginning to acquire anything resembling what we would call legitimacy today, and its practitioners were all on the defensive. It is not surprising that the Viennese medical establishment had leagued against Mesmer and were waiting for an opportunity to ruin his reputation. He no longer used magnets; nor did he adopt the kinds of theatrical props, baquets, magnetized waters and eerie music, of the sort he would France. He worked only with his hands and voice, occasionally using a wand.

Some imaginative interpolation is rquired to reconstruct a picture of his methods in treating Marie-Therese. It is realized today that hypnotic

states may be induced, even in sleep, through both vision and hearing. He must have lulled her into a state of high suggestibility, deep somnambulism, by speaking to her in a soft, low voice, combined with slow hypnotic passes over the upper part of the skull, around the temples and eyes. Although she could not see what he was doing, she could feel his hands, and she could certainly hear the swishing of his silken frock coats , shirt sleeves and ruffles as he waved his hands about her head.

The sessions were long and fatiguing. On the first day there was no improvement. Mesmer is honest enough to record that her condition worsened. By the end of the first afternoon she was in a high fever, her eyes were convulsed, her body shaken by tremors and spasms.

The two accounts of the second day - that of Mesmer and of her father - contain the astonishing statement that although she was still unable to see, her eyes followed the motions of his wand as they appeared in a mirror. One must take this with some scepticism.

> ***" On the second day, Dr. Mesmer caused an effect very surprising to those who saw it. As she sat beside the patient, he pointed his wand at the reflection of her face in the mirror. Then, as he moved the wand, she moved her head to follow it. She was even able to describe the movements of the wand."***
>
> **(- from the Memoir of J. v. Paradis.)**

In all cases in which persons recover their sight after decades of blindness, it can is months, even years, before they are able to properly distinguish objects from their background. To see the tip of a wand in a dim room - to recognize its reflection in a mirror – is perhaps possible, yet highly unlikely. A number of explanations sugges themselves:

Psycho-somatic blindness is not true blindness: the mind can register the stimuli of light, but the brain is denied access to the data. Hippolyte Bernheim, in his classic treatise "Hypnotism and Suggestion", devotes several pages to psycho-somatic blindness in one eye, in particular those with partial achromatopsia (color-blindedness).There is a way to trick the mind in some of these cases: color filters and prisms contrive to combine colors to produce effects which, rather than following the laws of optics, are determined *by the ideas about how these laws work* in the

mind of the patient. An instrument, Ströber's apparatus, was invented for this purpose.

This method would not work on a totally blind patient, although other indications might reveal the presence of a psychogenic condition. The capacity in human beings for identifying the direction of noises and other sounds, for example, is far more diffuse, by an order of magnitude, than directional identification by vision. A person who identifies too accurately the direction and locations in which sounds originate, may possess some kind of partial vision. This may have been the case with Marie-Therese, whose hearing was far more acute than that of most blind persons. The general impression she gave of such precision in locating the sources of sounds may have due to some residual or subliminal vision, which may therefore have been present in her ability to follow the motions of Mesmer's wand. Or she may ,once again, have simply heard the motions of his clothing and intuited the directions in which his arms were going. Or the story may be pure invention. In our desire to set the record straight against his enemies and detractors, one must still remember that Mesmer had a vested interest in his theories, and was not above elaborating, or even fabricating a story when it suited him.

All accounts state that her eyes had deflated to normal size by the fourth day. Ever since Störck's novel application of electroshock methods her eyeballs had bulged out of their sockets like tennis balls, creating a frightening image of mental derangement. Every day that she spent under Mesmer's care was accompanied by a reduction in their size, until they returned to normal. The spasms also calmed.

The 6th day is notable in scientific history owing to a succession of dramatic transformations that occured in a short period of time. For years her sense of smell had been impaired. During the period of treatment her nose became inflamed and pudgy. In the morning of the 6th day there occured a massive discharge through the nose of some unidentified "green viscous fluid" , followed by a prolonged bout of diarrhoea. After the crisis had passed it was found that the nose inflammation had ceased, and that her sense of smell was fully restored.

The termination of one agony proved to be but the antechamber into another: a racking headache began in the occiput; sensations flared up along the optic nerve which she described as feeling as if a barrage of

sharp pins were being thrust into her eyes. These were the first signs of an emerging sensitivity to light. The pains increased in severity over the next few days, until her head felt as if it were being split open by an ax. Unshielded natural light would be too painful to bear for some time to come. Mesmer found that he could relieve her distress by wrapping a bandage 5 times around her eyes. He then persuaded the Paradis family to allow her to be moved to the clinic on his estate.

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What a sight their entry into Vienna must have made! The coach holds four persons. One of them is an fascinating, if not exactly beautiful, young woman, a pianist of great sensitivity and ability, pale and deathly in appearance , with face and arms ravaged by illness and medical treatment. Around her eyes a thick bandage has been wound several times. Could it be a blindfold? Does this not suggest an abduction? Were it not for her mother, Frau von Colnbach-Paradis, seen clutching her daughter to her busom throughout the journey, crying enough for the two of them and compulsively brushing the long unkempt hair out of her face, a distant spectator might well imagine an kidnapping in progress, with two agents, slavers in the service of the Turkish pasha, delivering their blindfolded vicim to the endless labryinths of the harem!

Further evidence for this is to be found in the appearance of these two forbidding middle-aged men. The one by the right window is easily recognized as the much respected court functionary, Herr Joseph von Paradis, known for his thoroughness, his parsimony and his occasional impulsive fits of rage. The other is even more famous: the controversial, indeed notorious, simultaneously celebrated and reviled Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer, a medical doctor with a broad range of learning. He's the one who's been claiming that he's established - *scientifically* - that the wisdom of the Middle Ages is superior to that of the Enlightenment - that spells, curses, sorcery, trances, exorcism, miracles, witchcraft and demons ought to be the basis for the true art of medicine, whereas advances such as inoculation and the remarkable increase in knowledge about physiology, anatomy, and the circulation of the blood are worthless.

It is late in the afternoon when the coach pulls up at the entrance to the Mesmer estate at 261 Landstrasse, at the trailing edge of the Prater and on the banks of the Danube. Formalities are exchanged, the servants run down the hill to receive instructions from master. The girl is taken back to the house and put in a bedroom on the second floor. Her mother wants to accompany her , but she is restrained by her husband. The parents of Marie-Therese then bid good-bye and climb back into their coach to go off into the twilight. Mesmer returns to his house to begin an astonishing chapter in scientific history, one that to this day is very far from being understood.

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Chapter 6

Vision & Revision

"The only means by which progress can be made is Nature, for the eye is trained by contact with Nature. ".... Paul Cezanne

" Elle s'occupait , ainsi patiemment , a decouvrir des harmonies, et je la retrouvais vers le soir, attentive, devant quelque consonance qui la plongeait dans un ravissement prolongé..." André Gide, La Symphonie Pastorale

"The reflections of specks of light off a surface are essential in producing an impression of bulk on the retina. They are called specularities..."

Talk by Andy Hanson on 4D visualization in Computer Graphics, MSRI conference, Berkeley, Ca., Oct. 11, 1992.

The History (continued):

Franz Anton Messer installed Marie-Therese von Paradis in a room in the estate inherited by his wife when her previous husband died. He then resumed the hypnotherapy experiments he'd begun at the country home of the Paradis family. This may have been the same room where Mozart would stay for one night in 1781, or perhaps the bedroom where Fraulein Oesterline had languished for some many long months.

He quickly discovered that he could not unwrap even one of the 5 turns of the bandage wrapped about his patient's eyes. The pain of exposing her eyes to sunlight was colossal. The phenomenon was new to the medical profession at the time but has since been well documented. Here is an excerpt from a report by a Doctor Franz, published in the Philosophical Transactions of 1841:

" On opening the eye for the first time on the third day after the operation, I asked the patient what he could see; he answered that he

saw an extensive field of light, in which everything appeared dull, confused and in motion. He could not distinguish objects. The pain produced by the light forced him to close his eyes immediately. "

Four days later:

" When he directed his eyes steadily towards an object, the visual impression produced by the object was painful and very imperfect, because the eye, on account of its intolerance to light, could not be kept open long enough for the formation of the idea as derived from visual sensation."

Beyond *the* physical pain, one can expect that the return of vision will be accompanied by a strong psychological shock, or trauma:

"The operation is always accompanied by some degree of mental shock, in virtue of the knowledge that the patient is confronted with a turning point in his life. In the early trials, moreover, the pain caused by the unaccustomed exposure to light has not yet subsided."

The many correspondences and cross-references between physical blindness, psychic blindness and moral blindness make for a rich banquet of metaphors that, for literary purposes, can last be drawn out indefinitely. The state of incredible pain in the presence of emerging spiritual or mystical light has often been portrayed in the writings of mystics. Here is a famous passage from St. John of the Cross:

"Yet a question arises: why, if this is a divine light, (for, as we claim, it lights up and purges the soul from her ignorance), is it called here a dark night? Two reasons may be given as to why this wisdom is not only night and darkness to the soul, but also pain and torture. .....When this light of contemplation enters a soul not yet entirely enlightened, it produces in her spiritual darkness, for not only does this light overpower the soul, but it deprives and darkens its own power to act from its natural intelligence..... this divine contemplation enters the soul with a certain force in order to strengthen and subdue her; and the soul suffers so much in feeling her own weakness that she almost collapses, particularly at times when

the divine contemplation enters with greater power. Both the sensory and spiritual parts of the soul, feeling as if they were under a threatening and heavy load, agonize to such a degree that the soul would take death as a relief and choice..."

When Franz Anton Mesmer realized that the efforts to cure Marie-Therese would demand as much of his resources and inventiveness as he could muster, he moved her from the main building of his estate to a suite of rooms in the clinic located in one of annexes around the grounds for his many scientific pursuits. One can think of this clinic, perhaps, as "Fisher-Posch Center for Research and Development in Therapeutic Hypnotherapy. [xxx]

After his marriage to Frau Posch in 1765, Franz Anton Mesmer had gone on a building spree. The grounds now abounded in laboratories and studios for all his interests: Astronomy, Chemistry, Physics, Medicine, Music, and of course, Psychology and Psychotherapy. Although the main mansion had been laid out and ornamented with all the lavish grandeur of the late Rococco style, the supplementary wings, music rooms, laboratories and annexes reflected the Neo-classic style that was now sweeping across Europe from France and England.

In addition to Marie-Therese, several other patients were also living at the clinic : A Fraulein Zwelferine, age 19 , blind in one eye owing to an opaque spot or albugo on the iris; Fraulein Ossine, age 18, subject to fits of hysteria in the grand manner of Fraulein Oesterline; and Fraulein Wipior, afflicted with staphyloma, or growths on the cornea.

Let us earnestly hope that something more than a vain reaching out for profundity has encourages the author to try to draw some sort of parallel between:

(A) the sheltering of the blind Marie-Therese, seeking her own form of "Enlightenment" in the darkened study of a Neo-classic research center on a Rococco estate; and:

(B) the multi-dimensional paradigm shift away from a view of the human condition as a baroque arena of cosmic dramas

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[xxx] **Research labs are generally named after the person who divies up the funds**.

involving human, semi-divine and divine forces, to a "reductionist mentality " , if you like, which sees the human condition as just one more neutral entity for scientific investigation, like the planets, the tides, colors, the atom, etc.

The frequent hysterical fits to which Marie-Therese was subject had given way to a state of relative calm. This gave Mesmer confidence in intensifying the magnetic treatments initiated at her family's country home. The numerous and repeated passes by his hands and arms over the temples, upper skull and eyes, produced a sensation, let us rather call it a climate in which the two of them were immersed, of a universal tidal force or fluid which Mesmer could manipulate at will, move about her body, concentrate in certain key locations and finally expel from her body. Mesmer may also have continued the use of magnetized pieces of metal; we know that he never entirely gave them up.

After the first week at the clinic, Marie-Therese's condition was sufficiently improved, provided that the sources of light in the room were dimmed , to allow the bandage around her eyes to be removed. Now she was able to sit quietly for several hours at a time. Franz Mesmer then set about inventing some demonstrative procedure that would convince his patient, her parents, the medical profession and ultimately himself, that the painful sensations burning along her optic nerves already represented a primitive form of vision.

A row of tall French windows stood at one end of the room. These opened up onto a balcony which looked down into a garden. When in full bloom in the late spring and summer, the garden of the Posch estate was considered one of the marvels of the Austrian capital, much admired by the Viennese and often pointed up to visitors from abroad.[xxxi] Now, in these final weeks of January, 1777, it was a desolate waste. On clear and bright days, Mesmer would open one of the shutters just a crack, enough so that a shaft of sunlight could enter the room and fall upon a table placed in position to receive it.

On the tabletop was assembled a collection of light-reflecting objects, coins, trinkets, statuettes, silverware, pottery, glassware and pins. The surface of these objects reflected light at different levels of

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[xxxi] **Rapaccini, where are you?**

intensity that he was able to arrange in a graduated scale from very dull to very bright.[xxxii]

Marie-Therese was placed in a corner of the room. Here she could sense the presence of the objects on the table without being affected by the shaft of light coming in from the window. One by one these objects were moved into the beam of light. The light reflected off them generated sensations in Marie Therese's eyes that ranged from a pleasant tension to irritation to real suffering; on at least one occasion these were so strong that the sharp and sudden pain caused her to faint away. These experiments gave Mesmer the evidence he needed to establish a meaningful correlation between her sensations and the perception of light.

By early February Marie Therese had become acclimated to ordinary light. She was also beginning to respond, if uncertainly, to color, motion and shape. She could not yet interpret what she was seeing, that is to say, she did not yet have 'vision' in the way that we normally understand the meaning of the word. Being unable to gauge size or distance she could not identify the shapes she saw. Picking up a potato at dinner she would swear, until it actually entered her mouth, that it was larger than her head. She was making progress on distinguishing colors, though she could not affix names to them.

The combination of long hypnotherapy sessions and coming to grips with a whole new world of sensations was very painful, difficult and exhausting. She frequently became depressed, even wishing that she were blind as before. This phenomenon is also familiar to the medical profession today, though it must have been perplexing at the time. The road to total vision, (literal or metaphorical road or vision) , is arduous. One finds several accounts of persons who gave up along the way and chose to remain in or return to the simpler, more familiar and less confusing state of partial or total blindness.

I don't know what the literature has to say about the kind of learning crisis provoked *by the possession of a new skill*, as opposed to those crises we are all familiar with stemming from the difficulty of acquiring

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[xxxii] **One is put in mind of the enormous range of dynamics in Beethoven's symphonies. This may have some relationship to his deafness, which may have led him to exaggerate effects of loud and soft so that he could hear them with his inner ear.**

this skill. It seems however to be a regular feature of the construction or re-construction of vision after a protracted period of blindness. Recall that even the sighted person does not see the world as it "really is:" a three-dimensional universe governed, at least locally, by the principles of Euclidean geometry: parallel lines, shortest distances, right triangles , perfect circles ,congruent shapes, transversal intersections, Cartesian graphs and so forth.

This is the world we normally encounter close at hand , (the "local context") and , more-or-less,except at astronomical distances, our measuring instruments[xxxiii] , but the world that appears on the retina and in our mind's eye is that of a (very!) non-Euclidean hyperbolic geometry ([3], [4])

The mathematical transformations gyrating in our brains that persuade us that a person standing at the far end of the street is actually the same height as the individual right next to us, are actually rather sophisticated. Even the dullest of sighted intellects, is a seasoned expert at *manipulating the conformal groups that translate hyperbolic into Euclidean spatial geometry,* although one may never , in half a century of trying, be able to make most people comprehend the meaning of the phrase in italics . [xxxiv] This branch of applied differential geometry is also part of the stock and trade of every art school graduate who has had to learn and master perspective.

From the newspaper memoir of her father:

"Once she had such a bad attack that, tearing the bandage from her eyes, she threw herself upon the sofa wringing her hands, groaning and sobbing in the utmost despair ..... Once in her displeasure she said to me, "Why am I less happy than I used to be? Every fresh thing I see causes me an unpleasant sensation. I was far more peaceful in my mind when I was sightless!"

[xxxiii] correcting for the earth's curvature, the refractive index of the atmosphere, the variations in the earth's gravitational field, the bending of our rulers from heat and cold, the warping of space-time predicted by general relativity , and quantum uncertainty.

[xxxiv] Piero della Francesca would easily have understood what we're talking about after an introductory course of perhaps half an hour.

Such depression may be, for persons who have been blessed with vision for most of their lives, just about incomprehensible. Those of us who are sighted naturally assume that blindness must be the most horrible imaginable. Wouldn't it therefore be the deepest wish in the heart of every blind person is to be able to see? By itself such an assumption is reasonable, were it not for the almost insurmountable obstacles faced by when someone congenitally blind experiences a sudden restoration of vision.

There are multiple and severe shocks at all levels of personal identity. Particularly distressing is the sudden collapse of simple competence in basic and essential muscular abilities.
Over the decades a blind person would have learned how to orient himself through rooms and even entire buildings with swiftness and accuracy, anticipating and avoiding obstacles, walking with confidence through familiar situations, and with intelligent caution through new ones.[xxxv] He has, perhaps only a few days before, celebrated the gift of restored vision, thinking that a new life automatically takes over after the clearing away of a few minor difficulties.

Yet now he is devastated to find himself unable to walk, unable to pick up or to hold objects, unable to establish or maintain any sense of direction, or hold or use tools or utensils, or even to dress himself. Motor confusion, partial or complete, may continue to exist for an extended period as the faculty of sight labors desperately to establish its dominance. It seems to be a basic property human psychology that one of the senses must be primary while the others assume supporting roles. For most of us most of the time this sense is vision.

Taken all together: the maddening pain that springs from a renewed sensitivity to light, the inability to distinguish objects from one another or their backgrounds, the long persistence of after-images resulting in overlapping impressions of distinct objects, the thoroughly unfamiliar appearance of everyday items that in the blind state were recognizable and well-understood through feeling, sound , manipulation , the terrifying re-occurring patterns of errors in judging size, shape, distance,

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[xxxv] A remarkable account of this is given in the biography of Ved Mehta, "Face to Face" See Bibliography

orientation, color, light and shade, placement, movement, the degeneration , then temporary breakdown of all motor coordination...

... combined with a new set of anxieties as to an uncertain future; the possible withdrawal of support - not only material, but the entire network of support relationships of family, friends and attendants that have been built up over the years - the cruel discovery that the restoration of vision is but the beginning of a long ordeal , with no guarantee of success at the end, but which one cannot now escape; the neat total lack of understanding by the outside world of one's inner chaos, (not excepting one's doctors, teachers and friends, being a phenomenon which even today is understood only by a few specialists) ;

... and, finally, the irretrievable loss of a limited, dependent, handicapped yet uncomplicated and even comfortable world of undisturbed darkness, and its replacement by an inhospitable environment of turmoil, confusion, impotence, defeat, and permanent uncertainty...

All this would be enough to throw even the strongest psyche into violent depression. One then has some picture of the agonies and the struggles of Marie-Therese von Paradis. In that terrible period of 20 days, from January 20th to February 9th, she had little to go on beyond her own determination, and Dr. Mesmer's reiterated assurances that she would eventually be able, to see as well as anyone else. He himself had almost no experience in this domain but merely spoke from that over-weaning pride and belief in his own ideas, that streak of paranoia which is essential in the making of a successful practicing hypnotist.

At a distance of more than 2 centuries, we are obliged to take on faith the statements by Mesmer and her father, that by February 9th she no longer needed the bandage, she had developed the ability to orient herself over short distances, could distinguish simple objects, including the basic features of the human face, and could also distinguish between colors when they placed next to each other.

Chapter 7

The Dream Sonata

On February 20, 1777, Dr, Franz Anton Mesmer took his most famous patient, the young and gifted, stricken pianist Marie Therese von Paradis out of the darkened room in which she had been confined for three weeks. Holding her by the right hand he guided her down a dusty road, then through the avenue of hedges separating the building in which she had been staying from the main mansion of his estate. She wore a pale blue dress secured by a bright red sash across the middle. Her face was pallid and worn, evidence of the ordeal she'd willingly accepted. Her black hair, blown across her haggard features by a stiff winter breeze, fell across her shoulders in ringlets. At that moment she looked more apparition that human. Although the coiffure was simple, totally unlike the get-up she'd put on public display at the Kartnertor opera, her mother, Frau von Colnhach-Paradis, had spent two hours with her that morning dressing her up for the occasion. Mother and father were waiting for them at the mansion.

This was a special day. Her progress in less than a month had been spectacular, and Mesmer had concluded that the opportune moment had arrived to introduce her to the room of mirrors, a salon and reception room on the ground floor of the mansion. It was here that literary gathering were organized, as well as the frequent musical soirees that had earned the Mesmers a major role in Vienna's cultural life.

As they approached the building, a horse-drawn cart pulled up in the driveway with a load of cut firewood. The doctor left her standing alone at the base of the spiralling stone and went away to converse with the driver. She was sufficiently protected from the winter cold by a coat passed along to her by Frau Posch, though it left her legs exposed. Standing alone in the chilly air she shivered with impatience. She listened to the sounds of music and revelry coming over from the Prater; these never diminished from the early morning until late at night.

The sunlight was brilliant; and although the bandage had once more been wrapped around her eyes, her condition had improved to the point where only two turns were adequate to protect her. Once they went inside it would be removed entirely.

To the right of the staircase stood a large rosebush. The time of year was February, the very depths of winter. The climate of Central Europe is known to the author only by reputation, but he presumes that it must match, if not exceed, in severity the identical season on the East Coast. How could it be otherwise: do we not have Schubert's *Winterreise* as testimonial? Yet, by some extraordinary violation of the sempiternal laws of generation - midwinter summer being its own season - the roses on this bush were in full bloom and throwing off a ravishing aroma which spread throughout the courtyard, attracting birds, small animals and insects, awakening the keenest delight in the mind of Marie-Therese. Sparrows and pigeons gathered at her feet; she could even sense, though not see, the flitting yellow bodies of butterflies.

The scent of these contra-factual flowers temporarily lifted the mantle of gloom from her shoulders; they awakened the realization in her, that even though she was still engaged in the depressing labor of restoring a lost sensory capacity, she had not been abandoned by her other faculties. She could still find comfort in the sounds of the music she loved above all else, and the radiant joy she felt, and which she could transmit to others with her unique gifts and craft. It gave her ample reasons for living, even for happiness, in this anguished period of her life.

Guided by their strong scent, she leaned against the wrought-iron railing of the staircase and grasped at the hazy patches of dazzling red roses. As she clutched at them, three thick thorns were introduced into the soft flesh of her left palm. The hot needles of pain shot through her hand as she cried out; a reflex motion returned her hand to her mouth and she sucked at the wound. Invisible to her were the newly shed bloodstains on the rose bushes.

It is not surprising that she interprets this as an accident, but the truth of the matter is that the three massy thorns were the carriers of a new dimension, transcendental and totally independent, like the dozens of dimensions that the physicists throw around so freely, onto the humdrum commonplace of ordinary living. Had she not reached out, on

this cold, gusty winter day, to touch this fabulous rose-bush - itself woven from the fabric of fantasy and imagination – Marie-Therese would have done nothing more than proceed onwards into the room of mirrors, to that interesting yet unremarkable gathering that anyone can read in the scientific or fictionalized accounts by Walmsley[xxxvi], Wycoff [xxxvii] , Buranelli, [xxxviii]Goldsmith [xxxix] , Ellenberger, [xl] Zweig[xli] , O' Doherty [xlii] and others.

Yet the brief, blistering injury inflicted on her by the 3 thorns - tenderly extracted by the good doctor when he returned from haggling with the woodcutter - have had the effect of transforming the next four episodes of this story - all with their factual basis - into legend:

(1) The legend of the room of mirrors;
(2)The legend of the music lesson;
(3) The legend of the starry night;
(4) The legend of the gardens.

As even the power of magical thorns is limited by certain cosmic laws - (including, yet extending far beyond Bangs, Inflations and Crunches) the inevitable recourse to historical fidelity will then reassert its natural prerogatives.

I. The Hall of Mirrors

Franz Anton Mesmer returned to the balustrade. The winter snows had covered the grounds with a treacherous mix of snow, ice and mud when he reached the staircase he had to spend a bit of time stamping his boots. After binding up Marie-Therese's hand, he opened the handsome double doors of the building then stepped in to alert his wife and Marie-

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[xxxvi] **D.M. Walmsley:** *Anton Mesmer* **Robert Hale 1967**
[xxxvii] **Wycoff, James:** *Franz Anton Mesmer*, **Prentice Hall 1975**
[xxxviii] **Buranelli, Vincent:** *The wizard from Vienna,* **London: Owen, 1976**
[xxxix] **Goldsmith, Margaret:** *A History of Mesmerism*, **Doubleday1934.**
[xl] **Henri Ellenberger:** *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, **Basic Books, 1970**
[xli] **Stefan Zweig:** *Mental Healers* **Viking Press, 1932**
[xlii] **Brian O'Doherty:** *The Strange Case of Mademoiselle P* **, Pantheon 1992**

Therese's father and mother that they'd arrived. They all met in the lobby. He told them that one ought to think of this as a kind of coming-out party for their daughter. He intended to show them that she could now recognize objects, even when seen as a reflection in a mirror. Mesmer walked them through the corridors of the ground floor, taking them to a large, elegant room with an elaborately decorated high ceiling.

Its floor had been inlaid with polished hexagonal flagstones about a metre in diameter, the whole partly covered by a large Persian rug. A welcoming fire wuthered in the hearth; before it slumbered a shaggy species of dog[xliii].

Upon their entrance the dog staggered to its feet, barking a gruff mixture of curiosity, hostility and friendliness. Marie-Therese ran over to pet it. With all of its features grossly distorted, It looked very strange to her, and she had to stroke its fur several times to recognize it: "Why, it's a dog!", she exclaimed: Then staring at it intently, she added: " They're far more attractive than humans! " This caused merriment all around.

Portraits of contemporary Viennese writers, scientists and musicians, friends or associates of Mesmer, hung on the walls: Gluck, the Mozarts, Joseph Richter, Maximillian Hell, Sonnenfels, Pfeffle, Gerard and Gottfried van Swieten, and the mathematician Hermann Bauer. Interspersed among these were also engravings of persons he could not have known but clearly admired: Paracelsus, von Helmont, Newton, Boorhaeve, Descartes. [xliv]

The most remarkable feature of the furnishings of this room were the 2 dozen mirrors hanging from the walls, on tables or set in frames on the floor. Possession of such a collection at that time amounted to a proclamation of great wealth. A single looking-glass designed to be hung from the wall in a sitting-room, with an ornate, well crafted frame, might normally cost the equivalent of $1,000 today. The value of the entire collection must have been in the range of $100,000.

[xliii] ***Canus Shagginensis*** **perhaps?**

[xliv] **Beethoven would have been around 6 at this time. Were this still the film script and not the novel, the director might put him in anyway- or at least his music, as Stanley Kubrik does with Schubert in Barry Landon, whose narrative is situated in the period just after the 7 Years War. Schubert would not be born for another 3 decades or more.**

Marie-Therese's mother and father stood together with Frau Mesmer in a corner near the entranceway, a solid structure decorated with the sculpted baby angels known as *putti*. Mesmer greeted them upon entering, then walked with Marie-Therese over to a body length oval mirror in a mahogany frame. Scrolls, fretwork and floral pendants dangled from the top and sides, and the frame decoratively gilded. Looking in the mirror one might imagine oneself reflected in a pool hidden beneath the canopy of a dense grove or arbor.

" Is that what I look like?" she exclaimed, seeing her body at full length for the first time in her life, "It doesn't look anything at all like my picture of myself. How can I be so ugly?" As she stepped back the heel of her shoe made contact with a tall candle-stand. It was a superb example of crafted wrought-iron work, and when it toppled over and clattered to the ground, her parents became anxious and upset. Marie-Therese herself jumped back, frightened, but Mesmer assured them that everything was all right, He picked it up and moved it safely to one side of the room.

" Don't worry about that…. *Ugly* did you say? Nonsense, my dear!", he pulled out the small pocket journal he always carried about with him and wrote something down, "I dare say there's something horrible in the appearance of everyone of us! By the way, I can tell you that your reaction is entirely at variance with the ideas of Descartes. That hardly matters, if you ask me: Philosophers don't bother their precious heads with empirical data, so they're forever making mistakes. Even Aristotle asserted that the sun turns around the planet earth, a simple error that set astronomy back for 2000 years!

" So you see, one must refrain from accepting anything a philosopher says at face value. Descartes maintained that our concepts of space and time are ideas of space are formed within our minds. Since the blind have minds, just like anyone else, their conceptions of the shapes of their own bodies must be identical to those of seeing persons. He even writes as much somewhere or other; I forget where. I was a student far longer than I care to remember, and read everything by him and anyone else I could get my hands on. Now I'm a medical doctor, and haven't got much time for reading.

'What I'm learning from you indicates that the blind don't know what space is, or shapes, even the shape of own bodies as they're seen by other people."

" It's as if", she turned to him and replied, "It feels to me exactly as it does when I'm learning a new piece of music, or rather a new kind of music. When I first began to study the harpsichord I memorized pieces by the Bachs, the Scarlattis and Handel. Then, when I began to study the fortepiano I learned a different kind of music altogether, that of Giustini, Haydn, Clementi or Kozeluch … or the brilliant young Mozart!"

"Indeed!" Franz Mesmer turned to address Herr and Frau von Paradis, "The Mozarts are very dear to both of us. I regret that my daughter-in-law, Fraulein Oesterline-Fisher is not with us today so she can tell you how delighted she was to meet him. They stayed here only a few years ago. But you shouldn't reserve your praise for little Wolfgang alone. His father and sister are also virtuoso musicians!" He returned to address his patient, "But go on with what you were saying, little Marie-Therese."

. 'Yes, doctor: *Seeing* is another kind of musical experience, yet even more unusual and original than all the ones I already know. Very grand … and bewildering …and frightening!

"When I pick up and examine some unfamiliar new object … like the glass goblet from Prague you put in my hands the other day … I study it using the same methods I bring to learning a new piece for the harpsichord: *very* slowly at first .. why , if you were to hear me then you would think I was nothing more than a beginner! Or even tone-deaf! … When I held the goblet in my hands, I stroked it repeatedly, turning it over many times and gazing at each little detail, muttering under my breath ..you might have said I was singing! …many times until I thought I understood what I was looking at.

"That's how I commit things to memory. Yet even that isn't enough …I'm talking about the harpsichord again … I then have to play it back over and over again in my mind until I get it right, comparing what I think I hear (or see) with the actual object until the recognition becomes automatic....."

Marie-Therese walked gravely back and forth before the oval glass, bowed and curtsied, did a swift gavotte, then an allemande, then a minuet.

" How thrilling, how pleasant it is to watch the way my body moves..!" She twirled around, and was astonished to see her reflection returning, as if it had forgotten something and was coming back to retrieve it … " Look! You see - first I move my arm, say - like this." She twisted her arm about in a graceful gesture - "This causes something to happen to the light over there – ", she pointed in the direction of the mirror, "It takes a real effort to identify the details.. What's that?" She peered intently at the silvered surface of the glass, "Those must be my fingers!" she moved them about as if performing some keyboard piece, just to convince herself "….there's my wrist? that's the elbow?"

She broke down in exasperation and something akin to rage, "Never, never will I learn it all! It's impossible! Impossible!" I'll never learn it all." Marie-Therese sank to the floor, covered her face in her hands, and began to weep with the thought of the heavy burden of work that seemed to stretch out before her endlessly. Mesmer picked her up off the ground:

"Don't cry, child. It will not be as hard as that. My magnetic therapies never fail; you must only be patient." Having reassured her and gratified his own megalomania at the same time, Mesmer took her by the hand and walked with her across the floor and to the left. Passing the imposing lithograph of Sir Isaac Newton, he commented, as if he were, all the same, aware of his own limitations, "I'm a just a dabbler, my dear, compared to that man."

They paused before a 'courting' mirror, then a popular item in Northern Europe. Its outer trimmings were rounded and richly decorative. Between the frame and the glass inset rows of marbellized glass tiles had been inlaid. Poised at a generic eye level, it was designed to transmit reflections of the head and shoulders. On the glass crest rising above the silvered surface an elaborate carving of acanthus blossoms stood aloft.

Cautiously Marie-Therese felt the contours of this carving with her fingers. " What does it remind you of?" Mesmer asked her

" I can't explain it to you except by using some examples from music", she turned to face her family and smiled, "That's the world I live in, it's all that I really know. These shapes seem to rise and swell and move upwards to a crest or climax, very much like the sequences that repeat themselves in the modulating phrases of a fugue, like the ones written around half a century ago; nobody knows how to write them anymore, I wouldn't even try. If the rest of the visible world is all music and musical form, like this, I may grow fond of it after all!" Dancing comically to its rhythm and moving her fingers as if she were at the keyboard , she hummed the Eb major fugue from the Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I. Everyone laughed, relieved that she was feeling so much better.

" Just wait her a moment, child. I'm going out to see what I can find in the garden." Mesmer left the room. A few minutes later he returned, cradling several lilac branches in his arms.

" I hardly understand it myself." he said " It's the middle of February, but the lilacs are in full bloom! " He shook his head with perplexity; indeed, the good doctor who always seemed to have all the answers was at a loss for words! The strong odor filled the interior. She reached over and took the lilac branches from his arms.

"What are they, doctor? Where do they come from? "

"These are *Syringa Chinensis*, sent to me from Rouen in France just a year ago. I've never been to France but intend to go there some day. I'm bound to do well there. There's no art in magnetizing a Frenchman!"

Grasping them tightly to her busom she danced about the room. She approached the hearth and paused to absorb the heat. Suddenly she was once more weeping bitterly.

" These flowers only depress me further, doctor. They belong to summer, but my life is a long, long winter. And their aroma reminds me of a funeral - my own, perhaps. Doctor, when I die I want to be buried on a mound of these lilacs." She gazed at him from a tear-stricken face. "Will that come soon, doctor? I hope that I do not have to live too much longer!"

" Daughter!", Joseph von Paradis walked brusquely over to her and clasped her hands in his, "Don't talk like that. All of us are very well pleased with your progress. You'll be able to see very soon, I know it.

Then life will once again be happy and beautiful, full of hope as it was before."

" There must always be pain in giving birth, child", Mesmer added, " A new world is being born within your brain. To tell you the truth, we scientists know remarkably little about how it works. The brain has an extraordinary ability to make adjustments, but one never knows if it will be slow or sudden.

" Someone with a broken arm or leg in a cast may be unable to use their limbs for days. Then, suddenly they wake up one day and find that they're just as good as new! Your feelings of despair are quite normal at this stage. But you must not give up! Come with me: I want to take you over to the next mirror."

The next mirror was on the other side of the fireplace: a *girandole,* or French convex mirror. As they walked past the hearth, Marie Therese leaned over to pet the dog, letting it lick her face and pulling its ears with affection:

"What a happy creature!" she laughed, then turned away again in sadness. " They can never know what we suffer."

The girandole, so named because of the pairs of candleholders on either side, was a shining round hemisphere, the size and shape of a half-pumpkin, set into an elaborately decorated brass plate. Four burning candles brightly illuminated its reflections, so that the entire room appeared to be contained in inverse perspective on its surface.

Dispersed throughout the image on the mirror were the many flickering reflections of the candles about the room and the flames in the hearth, as well as the multifold iterated reflections of these reflections from all the other mirrors in the room. These patterns of brightly dancing specularities created the illusion of a long torchlight procession, or of several orders of pilasters, real or ornamental such as one finds in the colonnades of baroque palaces. Marie Therese, having no firm ideas as of yet about the size or shape of objects, imagined she was standing at the threshold of another room, a much larger one than the one she was in, perhaps a church interior or the corridors of a palace.
Without being able to see them, she realized that her feet had mysteriously become encased by a pair of exotic sparkling crystal shoes that lifted her up off the floor and carried her inside the vast interior of

this edifice. She glided along the long row of tall gilded doors, feeling her way along until she came to the end of the hall. Exhausted and out of breath she leaned up against an elaborately decorated door and crumpled to the floor. Collecting herself turned around to look.

Rows of portraits of vague, unidentifiable figures lined the two sides of a corridor surmounted by a high vault from which descended a stately procession of chandeliers. Together they shed enough light for her to discern at least the basic features of her surroundings. Neither Herr or Frau Mesmer, nor her father or mother, were anywhere to be seen; there were at most some vague textures of patches of pale flesh tones that swirled around at the other end of the hall. Yet their voices could be heard, quite distinctly, as reverberations through the wood paneling of the walls and doors of the narrow hallway.

"Where am I?" she cried out in fear.

" It's self evident, my dear", replied Mesmer's booming, self-consciously over-confident bass voice: " You've been inducted inside to the world of the girandole! It's a rare occurrence, but it does happen. I myself have never seen an example of it before, but it appears to occur whenever a girandole intersects with a *monad*. "

The voice of Herr Joseph von Paradis came to her through the paneling as a softer, accompanying vibration:

" You are quite a learned man, Dr. Mesmer. Pray tell me then: what in blazes *are* these 'monads' that the philosophers are forever telling us about?"

Mesmer's face lit up. Pontificating was as natural to him as croaking to a frog:

" It's only a hypothesis, Joseph, or, rather one could call it a philosophical device. Monads were invented by the famous Hanoverian universalist Leibniz to explain the apparent coherence of the visible world. No one thought much of them until I verified their reality through a series of experiments, performed in my laboratories by myself and a team of research assistants over the past 6 years." Even Marie-Therese, trapped as she was inside the girandole, could not stifle a laugh. Mesmer went on:

"A monad, sir, is a macrocosm reflected inside a microcosm. Since the macrocosm is obviously teeming with life, as well as the mighty oceans of the magnetic fluid, so the microcosm must also be a living creature, the matrix of the magnetic flux. Flux and fluid, flux and fluid, back and forth! It's all explained in a learned treatise I'm sending off to the Bavarian Academy of Sciences.

" Each monad thus contains everything while at the same time it is also the building block of everything. I know that this is difficult to understand: think of 3 mirrors, opened like the sides and top of a trapezoid. At certain angles this creates a series of images inside images, like an endless procession of mirrors, each containing all the others and all the reflections of the others. One can see these effects right in this room, by walking around my hall of mirrors and standing in certain places. In some of the mirrors, the whole room appears reconfigured all of its contents *ad infinitum*. "

Frau von Colnbach- Paradis stood up and began walking about the room, stopping in certain places to look through the mirrors and confirm was Mesmer was saying.

"Whatever we experience", he continued, "is therefore compounded from trillions upon trillions of monads, each containing a complete image of everything else, and of all other monads, so that there are trillions upon trillions upon trillions upon...." (The way he spoke made it sound like *TRILLions upon TRILLions...*).

" But that cannot be correct, Doctor." interrupted Marie Therese. "I had no conception whatsoever of colors, visual space, lines, forms or shapes before I could see. "Distance" I did understand, because it takes a long time to walk a long distance, but I can walk a short distance in a much shorter time. I also have some vague idea of what is meant by a 'straight' line because I can walk along it without swaying from side to side. But I understood nothing else.

"If I am composed of so many monads, then the ideas of all these things must have been lying within me, in every pore and atom of my body. I should have been able to discover them by introspection, observing my mental images, or through my dreams, perhaps. But that hasn't happened. Unless", she sighed, "Doctor: are there blind monads as well as sighted ones?"

" Why, my dear little Marie-Therese … don't you understand? You have *always* possessed the capacity for seeing color, recognizing lines and shapes, even for imagining space! " He thought a moment,

"All of these things, I think, can be conveyed through music. The remarkable Wolfgang Mozart seems to have the ability to transform everything that happens to him, including all the impressions from the sense organs, into a musical phrase or gesture, so that one imagines it is actually taking place as it first occurred to him.

"Think of all that you've discovered and learned these past weeks in musical terms. Tell me: what does the color red remind you of?"

" I don't know … I see what you mean…" she paused a moment, concentrating on the task required of her before replying:

" A Soler sonata, on the clavichord. Or a tonic-six-four, dominant seventh, tonic root position cadence. Or perhaps a Paisello melody. In fact, the key of C minor makes me think of the color red." Then, as an afterthought "and Eb major is bright yellow!"

"And C major?"

"Something bright and brilliant, like Handel's Water Music!"

" And blue?"

" Gluck, of course… Or anything that resembles the sound of running water. I can't listen to anything from one of Gluck's operas without imagining myself on a raft, gliding forever down the Danube."

"My dear!" Frau Mesmer laughed, "Are you say that Gluck is soporific? Soggy, like a wet blanket?

"Maybe!" she laughed, "in any case his reputation is greatly exaggerated. Though I consider him a good composer."

"But", her father, who knew little about music, asked in some surprise, "They say he reformed the opera!"

"Opera doesn't need reforms", she answered, taking a mocking tone, "it needs to stop being so juvenile!"

"Quiet, little Marie-Therese", Herr Paradis smirked, wagging a finger at her in mock imitation of a scolding: "You musn't talk that way about the court!" She went on:

"The sky is blue; even I can see that much…. Perhaps the ornaments of a Couperin suite.." She thought some more: "Blue..

whenever there's a modulation, there's something blue coming into the process. Do you know …I've never thought of it in that way."

" And green, my young, bright, receptive patient?"

" Handel, of course. Anything wild and brilliant! Oceans are green, aren't they? So I've been told. Then there's that wonderful A-major toccata by my cousin, Domenico Paradis, in Italy"

Her father corrected her: "Darling, we think he may be my cousin, we're not sure. What matters more is that the public confuses your music with his, a great injustice!"

" That's all right, father. The public will never accept that a woman can compose music. If it insists on believing that my works are being written by a man somewhere in Italy, what can I do about it? Judging from his music he must be a nice man … Accaciaturas, you know, spicy ornaments, have a way of being green, but not always. Go on, doctor. This is actually fun! ", and her face, perhaps for the first time in weeks, brightened up.

" And space, my dear? Does the idea of space sound like the music of anyone you play?"

She thought for some time about this, then replied, slowly

"Yes, doctor. You are always talking to me about space, as it is some marvelous thing I will come to understand once my sight is restored, "Space" means... when I am unafraid to walk forward, or.. when I raise my arms up into the air"... like this", her remarks were accompanied with the corresponding gestures, "That is space. I can go no further. But I wonder…what is the color of space?

"The best answer I can find is in the magnificent Clavierubung, the Choral Preludes of the old master from Leipzig, J.S. Bach, you know, the father of the great Carl Phillip Emmanuel…..Then there is the Cat's Fugue of Scarlatti. Otherwise one must go way back in the past, to Gabrieli, or Monteverdi, or the really old masters like Lassus, or Palestrina….. The color of space? ... Well, a cross-relation combined with an inverted sub-mediant cadence ... wind instruments.. I don't know." She was fatiguing quickly.

" Well, my dear: there you have it. You *are* a monad! You have always had the capacity to see, and to understand what you see, within you. Your mind is a mirror of the cosmos, just as Leibniz says it is! Try to

do one more thing for me, will you? And that will be enough for today: Can you remember the colors of the petals on the lilac branches you were holding? It's called lavender. What does that make you hear? "

Even as he spoke, the melody of the flute solo accompanied with soft strings, *In the Elysian Fields* , from the opera Orpheus by Gluck , reverberated through the corridors of the palace, shedding like the arc of a rainbow its aura of immense sadness. To Marie-Therese's sharp hearing it appeared to come from behind the door at the end of the corridor where she'd been leaning for support. At the same time a shower of rose and lilac petals fell around her feet, and gusts of wind, saturated with the February fog, entered from the courtyard through the windows, strewing oak leaves about the polished marble floor. She quite forgot that she had ever been afraid.

" At last I understand! ", she cried, "I *am* inside the monad, and the monad has forever been inside of me. My 'self', which is only my experience of being 'me', in addition to being contained inside a monad, is also made up of an unbelievable number of them; 'TRILLions and TRIllions of them', just as you've been telling us!"

After a moment's pause, she added, wearily:

" Philosophy has its uses, doctor, but I still would like to know how I am to get back inside the hall of mirrors! "

" Ah, Marie-Therese! I'm not at all certain of how you're supposed to do that! Our researches have demonstrated to our satisfaction, that you must eventually find your way out: but there's nothing in them that indicates a method or a time table you can use. Why don't you try stepping through another mirror?"

Marie-Therese turned to the right and examined the walls of the corridor. They were covered with a garish, spinach-like painted wallpaper depicting scenes from the siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683.[xlv] As she Navigated towards the entrance she supported herself, step-by-step, by gripping the frames of tall paintings of stuffy jowled aristocrats and humorless officials, passing rows of ornate, gold-plated candleholders held erect on the wild Medusa-like hairdos of painted

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[xlv] **We know this because the author has invented it. The still pitiful state of her eyes made it impossible for Marie-Therese see anything other than masses of colored blobs against a diffuse and shaking background.**

wooden naiads. Her magically transformed shoes probed each step forward with the instinctive caution of the blind when walking through uncharted territory. In this way she came to a pair of vertical mirrors in simple metal frames. No sooner had she made the decision to go through the one on the left, and then her crystal slippers picked her up and carried her into another room.

This was a barren and dreary place, rather damp and tightly constraining, a kind of dungeon. Perhaps it was situated in the basement or the attic of the palace; orientation in a dream sonata is tenuous at best. Dirt and dust were everywhere. Cobwebs adhered to her arms and face; she tore at them with strong, frenzied gestures. It had to be a storage center of some kind, because there were trunks, carpets, chairs, cushions, tables and sofas piled up everywhere in dense clusters.

She reached out to a post for support; bits of wood broke off and left bruises on her hands. She coughed and sneezed both from the quantity of dust and the strange moldy odors, as from unburied corpses and lichenous sewage. Four reflections of herself,coming from the pair of mirrors through which she had entered, followed her as she staggered hysterically about the room. Finally she came to rest at a far window looking out into a courtyard; looking about to the left she discovered two more mirrors. Before she could decide which of them she wanted to go through, her shoes picked her up and carried her out of this room and into the next one.

The room she entered was, once more, in the elegant style of the palace corridors, and very similar to prototypes in the palace at Versailles. Its interior was riotously decorated with innumerable devices, statuettes, garlands, paintings, busts, bas-reliefs , pedimenta, architraves, cornices all covered with the nervously tangled foliage of the late rococco . Each of the walls was itself a mirror, holding enormous, highly distorted reflections of herself surrounded by an endless sea of pinpoints of light.

She stared wildly around the room, unable to assimilate the chaos of images swirling about her on all sides. As her eyeballs swelled to their former size and shape, her hair flew above in a mad dance, sucked into the ferocious turbulence of the vortex that now infected all objects in the room. Even her body, her heartbeat and her quickening breath had

become terrorized victims to the eternal tidal flux of the universal cosmic magnetic fluid!

Each wall grew larger and brighter, while at the same time bizarre and repulsive shapes and substances were being poured out from them and onto the floor: spiders, long fat snakes, toads, and an array of hideous monsters from the depths of the world's oceans. An overpowering, festering stench filled the room, along with a bewildering musical cacophony, medleys of all styles, ancient and modern, being performed simultaneously from scores of orchestras, organs, keyboards, batteries of percussion and live soloists. Noises of anger, of yelling, fighting and violence rained down from the high ceiling.

The mirrors, cracking and splintering, disgorging yet greater quantities of insects and reptiles into the room, began a relentless movement in her direction. In another minute she would have been crushed to death. Screaming with sheer terror, Marie-Therese collapsed to the ground in a dead faint.

When she recovered consciousness she found herself once more lying on a sofa in the hall of mirrors. Seated on each side of her were her father and mother, gazing at her with anxious concern. Her father had thrown a cover over her. In his right hand he held a fan with which he cooled her flushed and overheated face. Her mother was wringing out and applying vinegar soaked cloths to her temples. At the far end of the couch, by her feet, stood Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer, rocking back and forth on his heels, staring at his pocket watch and feeling her pulse.

" Where am I?" she whispered.

" You've always been here, little Marie - Therese. I've just used a bit of my notorious wizardry to carry you through dreams to the "salutary crisis". It's absolutely necessary for any effective cure by Animal Magnetism. You should feel much better now."

She did in fact feel better. It may have only been an effect of her imagination, but she had the impression that her vision had also undergone some real if moderate improvement.

Franz Anton Mesmer and Marie-Therese saw her family off from the balustrade, watching them as they walked to the coach that awaited them beyond the hedges. Then Mesmer walked her back to the clinic. As they crossed the gardens, Marie-Therese couldn't help noticing that,

although it was still the world of February inside the room, the climate, odors and appearance of the gardens were well advanced into the final weeks of April.

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Chapter 8

I. The Music Lesson

Loved by the Muse was the bard; but she
Gave her of good and evil
Reft was the light of her eyes, but with
Sweetest song was she endowed

Homer

"There is a kind of virtue inherent in the world-soul
that is suffused throughout the universe"

-Goclenius

Towards evening of a day near the beginning of April, 1777, Marie-Therese von Paradis was again taken over to the Mesmer mansion. During her stay in his clinic, the Mesmers frequently invited her and her parents over for dinner. Afterwards Marie-Therese would play for them on the piano set up in the ante-chamber adjacent to the dining-room. Tonight, because of the devotion that Frau von Colnbach-Paradis always invested in dressing, grooming, and fixing up her coiffure, mother and daughter were half an hour late in arriving. No matter; the presence of special guests had delayed the dinner.

To her amazement and delight, Marie-Therese found two of her music teachers already seated at the dinner table and waiting for her: Carl Friberth and the Abbé Georg Joseph Vogler.

Singer, pianist and composer, Friberth had only recently left the employ of Joseph Haydn to take up a post as musical director for all Jesuit church activities in Vienna. His work as Haydn's collaborator in the production anf performance of opera at the Esterháza palace in Eisenstadt had given him a solid reputation as a many-talented musician.

The Abbé Vogler has a more prominent position in music history. Only age 29 at the time of this reunion, he was court chaplain and second kapellmeister at Mannheim, the most important center for musical innovation in Germany at that time. A few years earlier he'd established his school of music. It soon became famous (some would say infamous) for its radical innovations in teaching, instrumental design and musical form. Mozart has some unkind things to say about him, which means nothing: it appears to have been considered unprofessional in that period for anyone to say (at least for public consumption) anything good about anyone else in one's own field. In fact, Vogler would soon be heading home to await the arrival, in a few months, of

Mozart and his mother. [xlvi]

Mesmer's dinner invitation had been extended to him after the Abbé Vogler had approached Mesmer with the request that he be allowed to meet Marie-Therese von Paradis and observe her at the piano. The passionate commitment to music education which would figure prominently all through his career, had aroused his curiosity: what could he learn about the way artistic understanding follows the period of mechanical study of a musical piece, from watching the painful process by which Marie-Therese von Paradis was struggling to translate a new world of unfamiliar sensations into full understanding of her surroundings?

Later that evening, after seeing her parents and the other guests to the door, Mesmer had also arranged to take Marie-Therese over to the small private astronomical observatory he'd set up in an octagonal stone building on the grounds. The Astronomer Royal, the Jesuit priest Maximilian Hell, inventor of the magnetic therapies developed by Mesmer, had promised to drop by around 10 PM to confirm for himself the reports he'd been getting of the progress of Marie-Therese in the

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[xlvi] **It was in Mannheim (perhaps due to the Abbé's instigation?) that Mozart would contract the deadly "Weber" virus!**

restoration of sight.

The dinner table was set off in an alcove next to a floor-to- ceiling French window. It was a charming place from which to look out onto the Viennese urban landscape. Spring had arrived early, the weather was warm; through the cautiously opened window circulated a slight breeze. Scarcely a cloud hovered above but the air was crisp; in a few hours once the sun had set, the temperature was expected to drop significantly.

Marie-Therese sat in a kind of rapture, absorbing her first encounter with the multi-colored pageant of twilight. Since going blind at age 3 she'd not experienced the series of changes that carry daylight into darkness, nor the many beautiful effects of weather, clouds and colors that play about the horizon. She'd been told what to expect; despite this, the spontaneous diminution of the natural daylight was frightening at first, much as a person may continue to experience fear of heights even when he knows that there is nothing to be afraid of.

But when the scarlet blush of the sunset spread itself over the basin of the Danube and beams of sunlight gleamed off the green patinaed cupolas of the Klosterneuberg monastery in the distance, her mood was

transformed from acute anxiety to something akin to awe.

" What an immense relief, Maman!" , she exclaimed, " Nature has not totally abandoned us poor mortals after all. If I were doomed to endure the uninterrupted sunlight forever, I would surely go out of my mind. "

As the sun finally disappeared below the hills, she felt the tension and strain of the day's hard labors, (due as much to her attempts to understand what she was seeing as the hypnotherapy itself), flow out of her system , giving way to a state of tenderness and comfort.

In the late 18th century people everywhere worked much harder than anyone does in the developed world today, and those who could afford to do so consumed what we would consider enormous meals. They were eaten rapidly, so that dinner of 15 dishes might be devoured in less than 45 minutes. Lacing every meal in the Austrian capital were many cups of thick black coffee. The Viennese had become addicted to coffee, heavy, syrupy and very black ever since the Ottoman Army had left behind their sacks of coffee after the failed siege of 1683.

The meal itself was something of a novelty. Carl Friberth had passed along to the Mesmers' cook several recipes taken from the banquets at Esterháza palace. Following a hors d'oeuvres of sausages,

patés and other snacks, the wine goblets were filled with sweet red Malaga wine and a big slab of boiled beef, heavily spiced, deposited on their plates. A ragout with dumplings was quickly devoured, followed by a brief pause.

Soon the silver serving plates, heaped with slices of pheasants imported from Bohemia were carried out from the kitchen. Following the instructions of Friberth, these had been garnished with salt, pepper and paprika, the fiery Hungarian spice that Haydn could never get enough of, then baked for over an hour. Not long afterwards, a new white wine made its appearance, the white frothy Bellingham Johannesberger.

Pastries, known as *Mehlspeisen* , croissants, tortes and other delicacies, appeared in cut glass bowls. These served as a kind of *nasherei* for occupying away the interlude before arrival of the desserts. While they waited, Franz Anton Mesmer asked Marie-Therese if she felt like playing something at the piano. She replied:

"I've developed problems coordinating my movements at the keyboard. These new visual signals seem to interfere with my muscular training. I've never had to worry about that in the past, but then my

arms and hands were used to responding to sound and touch only. For the moment I'm able to keep my eyes closed while playing; let us hope that this will not grow into a serious handicap! It will be dreadful, doctor, will it not, if I have to sacrifice my career as a musician to my ability to see?

"But right now I am overjoyed at the chance of playing for my two teachers! "

Everyone welcomed the suggestion, although Carl Friberth cautioned her to avoid virtuoso pieces until her cure was complete.

"Just a few pieces, professor Friberth, to get into shape. Then I hope you will recommend a piece from your days of working with Joseph Haydn."

The Abbé Vogler encouraged her. "Go and play anything you wish, dear. This isn't a formal concert. If you are like me, you just follow up on whatever catches your fancy! You can always learn from your mistakes. "

Mesmer and Friberth stood up with her. Leading her by the hand, they walked her through the opened lace-curtained door to the piano in the adjoining antechamber. The piano was so placed that her audience could listen and watch from the dining-room. Friberth sat down beside

her to the right .

Acting on a strong recommendation from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart himself (a young man rarely known to praise anyone or anything beneath his own Olympian sphere) the Mesmers' *fortepiano* had been purchased from the firm of Nanette Streicher. Daughter of piano maker Johann Andreas Stein of Augsburg, she'd recently opened her own shop in Vienna. It was very light, perhaps 1/10th the weight of a modern piano, shaped more like a harpsichord though already recognizable as the piano we are familiar with . The tone was beautiful and clear, but soft, rather pallid ,somewhat mechanical and with a relatively small carrying capacity. The sounding board was flat. There were only two thin strings (.012" in diameter) to each note, rather than the three one normally finds today. The feather-light hammerheads were covered with cloth or leather.

On the other hand the Viennese action was superb, better than that of the English piano, the rival that would eventually surpass it to become the standard instrument throughout Europe until the innovations of Erard in Paris, in the 1820's, to meet the requirements of Chopin and Liszt.

Gripping the side of the piano for support, Marie-Therese felt her way around the bench. Once seated she experimented a bit with the keys, testing their size and shape, then roaming about the extent of the keyboard.

"Every instrument is slightly different ." she explained " Five years have seen enormous changes in keyboard construction. Although I've played a few times on the Mesmers' piano, it's rather different from the one I use at home; it will take some getting used to. "

For 10 minutes she played scraps of pieces and melodies, parts of fugues from the old masters and scale studies from contemporary manuals. Finally she announced that she was ready.

Just as she was preparing to play the gathering was interrupted by the sudden arrival of two new guests: Mariana de Martines and another Abbé , the eminent musician and historian Maximillian Stadler. The Mesmers had indicated that they might be coming, without being able to say when they could be expected.

Martines rushed into the dining alcove ahead of the butler:

"I hope we're not late!"

Franz Mesmer smiled: "Musicians are always late for

appointments."

Friberth added, laughing: "Could that be because, my dear Anton, they have no sense of time?"

Stadler, coming up quickly behind Martines, and a more formal gait, nodded: " Indeed! I make up all my tempi as I go along!"

"Come on; sit down!" Mesmer stood up and directed them to their chairs around the dinner table, "We can't offer you much to eat, but dessert is on its way. "

Although French fashions had (notably for women) been dominant in Europe for half a century, Mariana de Martines still adhered to many charming touches of the Spanish style of dress that had prevailed through the earlier period. There was an emphasis on black lace, her face partly veiled by an elaborately crocheted mantilla, an ivory fan and high shoes. The bodice was tight, the waist correspondingly slender, and she wore more jewelry than was then considered fashionable. At the same time she clearly had little patience for those hairdos that climbed more than half the height of their bearer, and which had, like the plague (and in compliance to the follies of the Emperor's sister in Paris) been all the rage for the last 7 years. Instead, her hair was

secured by a large broach of the sort that wasn't being worn anymore, but served as an added adornment to the Spanish costume.

Rich, talented and well-connected – the daughter of the Papal nuncio to the Imperial court, no less! – she possessed at the same time a frank, benevolent nature that, in an age bristling with envy, disarmed the envious.

Only 33, Mariana de Martines was acknowledged everywhere as the most important woman composer in Vienna. The great librettist Metastasio lived with her family. Upon his death he would leave them his fortune. (He must have been paid lavish sums for his libretti, as copyrights and royalties did not yet exist.) It was understood throughout all musical Vienna that the only reason Mariana de Martines had not be given a prominent post in the musical hierarchy was that she was a woman. [xlvii]

[xlvii] **As an aside: this 'failing' did not appear to inhibit the careers of self-infatuated *castrati* , men damaged in childhood to give them woman's voices. Until well into the 19th century, and even into the 20th, they continued to strut on the opera stage and warble in the choirs of the Vatican . Injustice, however ludicrous, is someone one can often comment on, but rarely do much about.**

Neither blind nor financially dependent, with a solid reputation behind her as a composer of keyboard and church music, Mariana de Martines was blessed with a self-confidence that Marie-Therese, to whom Mariana was something of a role model, would never acquire. Warm-hearted and solicitous, she'd come that evening to watch the miracle of the restoration of Marie-Therese's vision in that critical period in which mere seeing was turning into the understanding we call vision.

The Abbé Stadler was highly respected as a multi-talented musician, composer, historian and theorist. As a dinner companion he could be a bit tedious, even a bit of a bore, on account of his erudition. Certainly he was welcome, although the other guests could be excused for breathing a collective sigh of relief that there were not two of him present.

As soon as the new guests were seated and served, Marie-Therese von Paradis began to play. Inspired by the presence of so many celebrities of musical life, and despite the admonitions of her teacher, she could not resist the temptation to show off.

The first piece was a rapid Scarlatti piano sonata, in G major,

tempo marking *Presto, quanto sia possible*. This was followed by another rapid baroque piece, the Prelude and Fugue of Padre Martini. Friberth applauded longer than the others. The Abbé Vogler commented: "I studied with Padre Martini for awhile, but didn't stay very long. I was much happier with Valloti. He made me into the odd bird of a musician I am today!"

Marie-Therese returned to the piano and played the rapid, difficult D-major Prelude from the first book of the Well-Tempered Clavier of J. S. Bach, followed by the Fugue. Friberth turned to address her audience:

"Little Marie likes to show off. She wants to make sure that you all know that she can play! But she's also an extraordinary musician." He opened up a briefcase standing beside him on a chair and pulled out a handwritten manuscript:

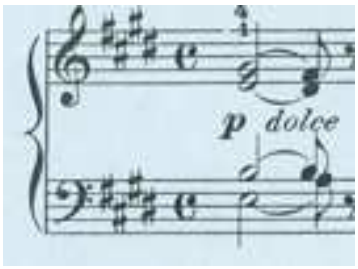
"This is my own arrangement of a movement for string quartet by Joseph Haydn. Marie, could you give us your analysis of the Adagio in E-major ?"

Frau Mesmer interjected: "Before you continue, Marie-Therese, the servants have told me that the dessert is ready. We should eat it before it

melts. I suggest we all return to the table and finish the meal. Then we can come back here."

The new dishes were quickly distributed to all the guests. Baskets of several new *Mehlspeisen* were put at the center of the table. Then came the oranges and other fruits, and a wooden tray holding Parmesan cheese and a knife. Glass containers shaped like inverted bluebells were placed in front of each of the guests, holding chocolate, vanilla and pineapple sherbets. Marie-Therese was about to play some more and abstained from alcohol, but the other guests regaled themselves liberally from a tun of Tokay freshly arrived from Hungary.

The dessert finished, they followed Marie-Therese with their chairs into the next room. Marie-Therese seated herself once more at the piano, with Friberth seated to her right and Vogler standing and leaning over the keyboard at her left. Placing her hands on the keyboard, Marie-Therese played a single chord:



and stopped.

“ Feel the power of that opening E-major chord in root position. So bright, so confident! You can just imagine the summer heat soaking into your face and arms and shoulders. You want to bathe in it forever, you never want it to go away. That’s why Haydn wrote *Adagio* : It is very slow, rich, and full of the sun’s heat.” She replayed the first chord, then went on to complete the first phrase:

Franz Anton Mesmer hazarded a question: “ My dear, I don’t wish to appear presumptuous in the presence of so many professionals, but I’ve been led to believe that musicians don’t approve of using pictorial images such as “sunlight” or “summer” or “arms and shoulders” when it comes to music. Isn’t it correct to say that you understand music entirely through abstract relationships of form and pattern?”

All of them broke into spontaneous laughter:

“Not at all”, Marie-Therese chided, “We think in images all the time. Heaven help us that we should do otherwise!”

Thus encouraged, the Abbé Stadler commented: “This is a

problem that has intrigued me for a long time. *Purely abstract music* is itself an abstraction, like 'absolute beauty' a kind of Platonic idea that doesn't exist in the visible or audible world; while real music is made with real instruments propagating physical sound waves through real air.

"When I play a chord I hear *something* , that is to say, a sound combined with all the affective sensations, memories and associations that it conjure up. Nor could music, as an art, exist if it were otherwise.

" Indeed, in the Baroque period, and to so extent even today, every key was assumed to have its specific affect or sympathy: C was joyous , E was associated with melancholy, G minor was only used for grim, even morbid music! Our 'enlightened' age (A cynical, though perhaps not entirely unsympathetic, chuckle went around the room) is more scientific. It considers excessive dramatisation in the baroque manner in bad taste, a kind of self-indulgence. We're supposed to value ideas over emotions.

"That's what got me into experimental music. I wanted to get as far away from personal involvement as possible, emphasizing the conceptual. I should tell you that, just recently, I've begun to experiment

with writing music by tossing dice!"

"Tossing dice??" Joseph von Paradis' bureaucrat's cough was followed by a perplexed sigh. Mariana de Martines laughed outright, while Franz Mesmer's face dropped with dismay:

"My word, Johann !" he cried, "What about the music of the spheres? Are they ruled by chance? As a religious man, you should know that God doesn't play dice with the universe!" [xlviii]

The Abbé Vogler smiled mischievously: "Oh-ho! Watch it, Franz! That's what got Galileo in trouble with the Pope!"

All of the 4 invited artists were connected with the ecclesiastical establishment and could therefore afford, without fear of reprisal, to be as mordanly anti-clerical as their imaginatins allowed:

"You mean, of course", the Abbé Stadler replied, " that ill-conceived phrase at the end of his Dialogue pro and con Copernicus, in which a simpleton expresses the view that God can violate all scientific laws whenever He chooses."

"Yes", Friberth mused, "but isn't that what the Pope told Galileo instructed him to do? Disobedience, reverend, disobedience!" , his words

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[xlviii] **From what I've been able to learn, this appears to have been the first recorded use of this phrase in history!**

terminating in a facetious grin.

"My good man, you don't understand at all!" Vogler chimed up, "The Pope was only instructing Galileo as to what God had instructed him to say the night before!"

"Dice?" de Martines quipped, "I don't think the good Lord likes to play dice! Cheating at cards, perhaps – because he knows he can get away with it!"

Stadler was amused: the great hypnotist could not acknowledge the usefulness of accident : "It's not so far-fetched as you might think, Franz. Artists waste too much time, you know, waiting around for – ahem- 'inspiration'. Why not employ some technique or device to give inspiration a boost? At other times I use a pack of cards, or open pages at random in a dictionary. I must say I've grown rather fond of these chance operations."

Friberth demurred: "My former employer, Joseph Haydn always has so many ideas going around in his head, he doesn't need to wait for inspiration! By the way, and this is off the record - he's written a *Surprise Symphony*! But it's a deliberate joke."

Stadler thought about this: "Well…I don't compare myself to

Haydn. I'm basically a historian. My head is much stronger than my heart. My intuition goes nowhere so I prefer experimentation. Sometimes I travel out to the countryside and transcribe the melodies of birds."

The Abbé Vogler laughed: "Why do that, when you can come to me? Just like my name! Vogel!" Everyone had become caught up in the general merriment. Vogler went on:

"I'm known as the most notorious tone-painter in all Vienna! The point is that one doesn't string these images together as a *story*. That's being literal: literature and music are not the same artistic medium . The visual or verbal images that arise in the mind of a musician are no more logical than dreams, but they can be helpful when it comes to interpretation. Let me think of an example … a *bright* chord is, well, played with more brilliance!"

"So ,Marie-Therese, " Mesmer, who had been struck by the similarity to the phenomena of hypnosis, asked "what is a *gentle* chord?"

She placed her fingers on the keyboard and played a softer, more delicate version of the opening chord of the Haydn. Mesmer's face lit up

with admiration:

"I see! "

Friberth beamed. His student was acquitting herself well tonight . She went on:

"That's why this new instrument is called a *pianoforte* or *fortepiano*-one hears both terms nowadays. What I've just done would have been impossible on the harpsichord." Friberth nodded affirmatively, but commented:

"Agreed. But, Marie, remember what I told you: Haydn writes *piano dolce* in the dynamics. Can you account for that?" Marie-Therese smiled:

" Yes. One can play it either way; soft, as opposed to loud, is compatible with both brightness and gentleness. This is the paradox isn't it? The effect I caused was due to something called the 'attack', the initial gesture or body motion. It should be like sunlight itself: full of brilliance and heat, yet infinitely refined and gentle and quiet."

Mariana de Martines nodded affirmatively. She knew quite a lot about the revolution that was taking place in keyboard instruments. In his famous account of his musical travels through Europe, Dr. Burney

calls her, somewhat fatuously, the "St Caecilia of the harpsichord". She added:

" It's commonly believed that one is unable to produce such effects on the harpsichord; but any accomplished harpsichordist knows that this isn't entirely true. Contrasts can be obtained, but not so easily or dramatically. Just wait: Cristofiori's brilliant innovations on the hammer mechanism are only the beginning!

"Marie-Therese? Do you remember anything from the premiere performance of my G-major harpsichord concerto which I gave a few years ago? There are many passages in it which demand effects of light and shade that few keyboardists can create, even on the piano. It's all in the attack, as Marie-Therese suggests.

"The real problem with the harpsichord is that there's no way to sustain the note. The right name for the *piano* should have been the *sustenuto*! "

Rather than responding directly, Marie-Therese turned to the keyboard again and played through the first 20 bars of the piano solo from the de Martines concerto from memory! She'd heard it only once, 2 years ago.

“Bravo, Marie! Bravo!” Martines cried, as loud, vigorous applause came from everywhere. Franz Mesmer leaned back in his chair, a finger to his lips:

“I dare say”, he mumbled, largely to himself, “Memory is every bit as fascinating as imagination. Could animal magnetism be used to bring back memories?” His large, speculative eyes swam in his face and his brow contracted as if suffering from a sudden, if brief, headache:

“ What a thought…”

Marie-Therese resumed her analysis of the Haydn Adagio:

“ This opening motif is like the announcement of a summer sunrise. It gains momentum up to the majestic explosion of bar 8, then fades very subtly and mysteriously , almost as an afterthought , into the nightfall ; just like that twilight we’ve all seen that continues to fill me with wonder and amazement.

“After seeming to return to the key of E, the descent to the key of B, is quaint and precipitous, achieved by a little step-ladder motif that carries one into the pre-dawn of the opening. the return to E major is-notice! - accomplished via a single note, a lone A , moving almost apologetically to G# :

Stadler asked: "Couldn't one also interpret that as an ordinary cadence on the dominant rather than a full scale modulation?"

Vogler laughed: "That's the joy of music. One effect has a thousand interpretations!"

Friberth explained: "It's all a matter of context, as is everything in music. The little details leading up to the cadence on B give one the sense that all the furniture , in some sense, has been moved from the 'house of E' to the 'house of B'!" He examined the score once more . Then he stood up to confer with the Abbe Vogler. After some discussion he returned to Marie-Therese and the others:

" Did you notice? From the first bar he's *already* modulating , in a manner of speaking, from the tonal orbit of E major into that of B major. After the second bar in fact, one is somewhat at a loss to state whether the piece is really in E or in B!" He indicated to Marie-Therese that he wanted to demonstrate something at the piano. She moved aside as he rolled up his sleeves and sat down at the keyboard:

"Listen to the sound of the B, the note just below middle C. It persists through all the changes in the first two bars, like a pedal point. One can almost imagine a tinkling bell, coming from some distant place, in the early dawn." He played:

" Directly or indirectly, the B persists all through the first half of the exposition. Yet we don't actually arrive at the key of B until the very last bar in this passage, bar 11. It's as if, from the beginning, we've set out on a road to a foreign destination. The sound of middle B is registering in our minds without our being aware of it. We only realized that we've arrived after the new room has been entered, the door closed behind us and the key turned in the lock."

"Perhaps music is the language of the Unconscious…" Stadler mused, writing something down.

Dr. Mesmer hazarded a suggestion: "Would you say, then, Marie, that it's as if the listener were experiencing the flux and reflux of the magnetic fluid, with a blockage in the middle that is eventually

dissolved, leading to a mood of tranquil resolution?"

"O yes, certainly, doctor", Marie-Therese giggled, " the music is thick with obscurity! From the opening two bars, Haydn introduces a number of perplexing harmonic events that aren't 'explained' in some sense until the middle E-minor section that's coming up.

"Yet that is the genius of Haydn. That's why, although the public for music has its favorites , we musicians recognize Haydn for what he is, Austria's greatest living composer, perhaps the greatest in the world. He invented virtually every formal idea employed by modern composers, including your friend, Mozart. This Adagio is written in Haydn's slow movement format, the very traditional A-B-A form, treated in a unique fashion.

" In the first section, the A-section, one can generally expect some daring harmonic clashes. One considers them confusing at first; yet, once the entire piece has been played one realizes their functional significance. Indeed, it has been argued that, in some of Haydn's compositions , one doesn't fully understand the logic behind his harmonies until all four movements have been played! In this Adagio the language is simplified in the middle section in such a way that the

role of certain ideas in the introduction become evident to the ear."

"Just to trained musicians, of course. " Joseph von Paradis suggested:

"Oh no, father, to everybody! The trained musicians can give you explanations of all the things he's doing, with their names. But anyone who is able to appreciate good music feels the resolution of the 'problems' posed by each new idea as the piece progresses. It's been called the *style galant*."

"The expression is due to Quantz, I believe, around 1752. " the learned Stadler informed them. She went on:

"Following the middle section - in a slow movement this is just an interlude, while in the rapid Sonata Allegro it can be an extended improvisation on several themes stated in the Exposition - the recapitulation of the A-section is embellished by ornaments and figurations. As we hear it once again we think, 'So- that's what that was all about!' And we feel the sensations of having lived through a true adventure, full of charm and meaning. "

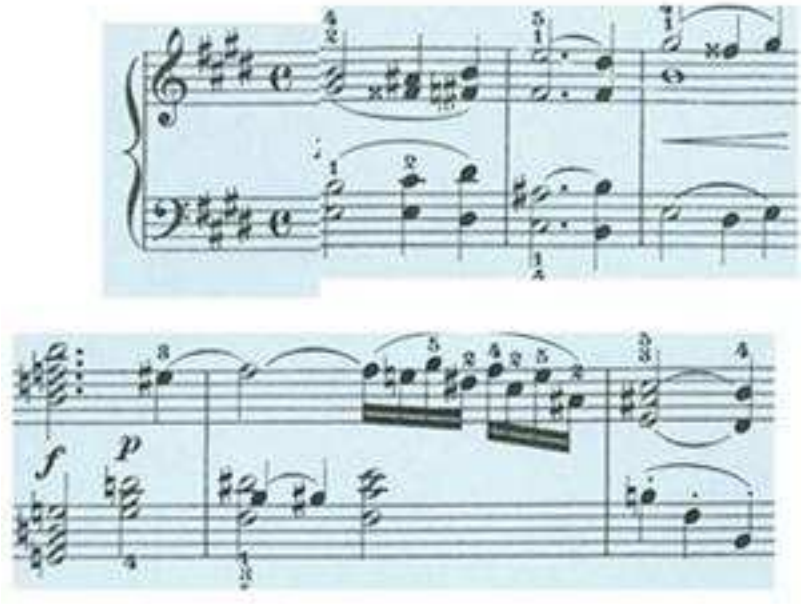
The Abbé Vogler explained: " You won't find this way of thinking about music in the Baroque era. In a baroque composition the A-section

returns as an exact repetition of the exposition at the beginning. There's no clarification, no real development in the sense that we understand it today. This is indeed the *style galant* , or *style elegant* – excuse me, my French is lousy - and Herr Haydn deserves the credit for it. He combined a number of ideas from everywhere to create a universal style.

"For a long time, much of the music that was being written was all chaos and confusion. My word, you should listen sometime to the odd concoctions dreamt up by Willy Friedemann, J.S. Bach's son in Berlin!"

" Well, daughter", Joseph von Paradis said, rather stiffly and slightly embarassed, " I'm afraid I can't understand most of what you're telling us; perhaps it would help if my daughter could give us an illustration."

" Of course! It's in the passage from bars 5 to 9. The effect is very clever, exciting, and most *obscure* ! I think, Doctor, that you are about to hear the blockage of the magnetic fluid!" She played:



She stopped and turned to face her audience, convinced that they must all be as astonished as they ought to be:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you: what is that G dominant seventh chord at the beginning of bar 8 doing, in an exposition which moves like a sunrise from E to B?"

A rhetorical question if there ever was one. Waiting for an answer and not getting one, she struck the chord again:

" Eh! What's that thing doing there? The G^7 is the 'signature' of the key

of C-major. It indicates C as infallibly as the sound of a voice indicates the arrival of a friend. Yet apart from that one chord, there is not a trace of C-major in this entire exposition! It's all E and B, with perhaps some traces of F# thrown in. But one expects that, because the 'submediant', on F#, is often used as a bridge from tonic to dominant.

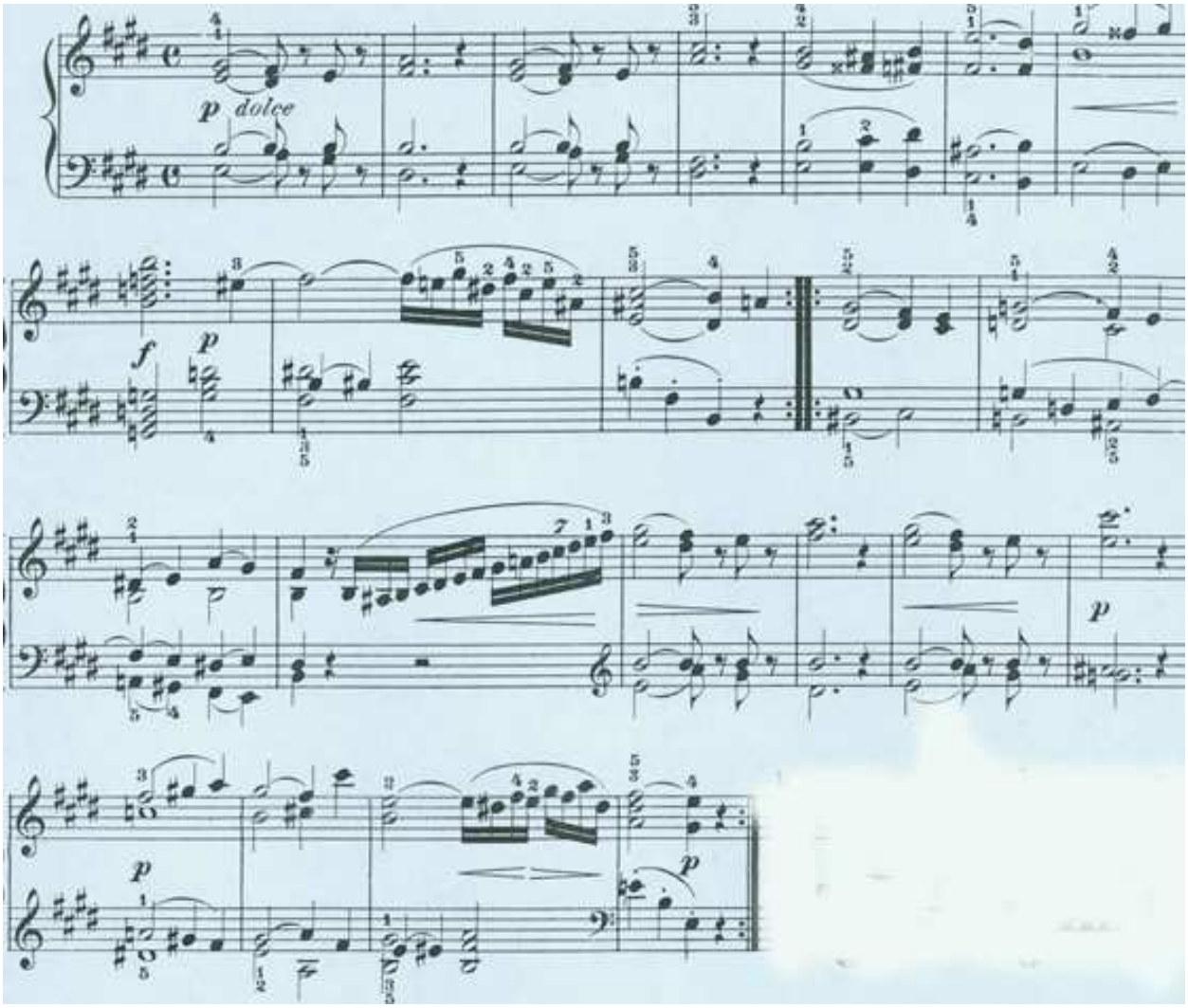
" Of course, one can argue that F# is the major of F#-minor, which is the relative minor of A major, which is the major of A-minor, which is the relative minor of C major. But all that's terribly far- fetched!" And she laughed and played a series of chords at random.

His interest considerably aroused , Friberth once again consulted and studied the score he was holding. A broad smile covered his face:

" Before Haydn introduces that G^7 chord, we are, 'more or less', in E. Right after that chord, by a very clever enharmonic re-writing of the f-natural as e-sharp" – a look of astonishment and a pause – " we move chromatically to $F^{\#7}$, that is, the dominant seventh of B! It's enchanting, and quite as mysterious as sunlight. But why? Throughout this piece, one feels light being covered over by darkness, then re-emerging again into light, though quite a different kind of light, or like the tides, or like Dr. Mesmer's fluid, or like breathing itself. These transformations

almost seem to happen note-by-note in some cases."

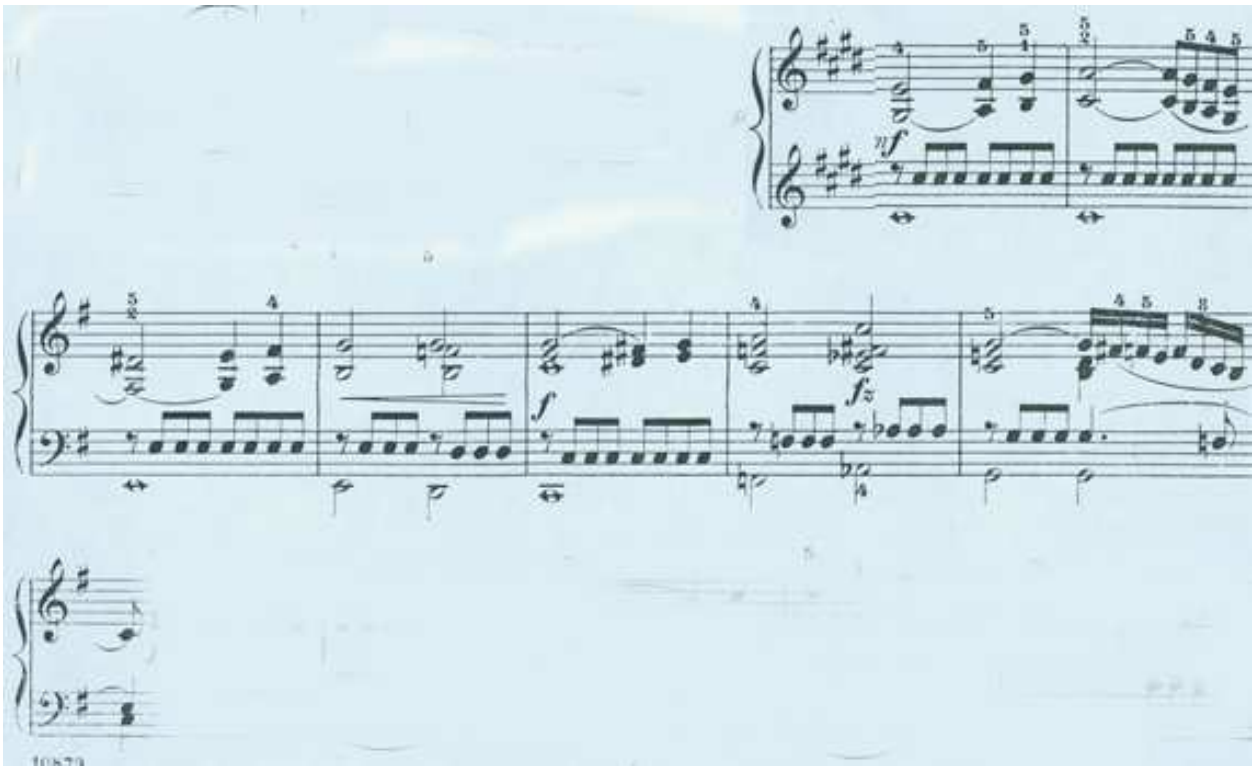
Friberth asked her to replay the complete exposition:



When she had finished, he went on:

"As young Marie-Therese has told us, we don't really understand what Papa Haydn is doing until about 4 bars into the middle section. This is where we find, in some sense, the 'explanation' for the unusual

harmonic activity in the exposition. The harmonic progression from bars 26 to 29 is virtually identical to what one hears between bars 7 and 10. Yet here, the "great 'event" of the abrupt introduction of the dominant seventh on G in bar 9 becomes transformed, as if by magic, into a pair of sonorities. First there is an ordinary G^7, what one calls a 'secondary dominant', moving in a standard fashion to a C-major triad.



"Next: although the G^7 chord is repeated here, the repetition of the *event* associated with this sonority in the A-section, is delayed, then re-occurs two bars later , in bar 28, where it turns out to be a tinkering with the subdominant chord sanctioned by tradition and known as a *'French*

Sixth **:**

"Why the deuce do they call it a *French* Sixth?" Mesmer asked. The Abbe Vogler nodded his head:

" It's a silly terminology, Franz . In some respects what we're dealing with here is a *German* Sixth resolved in an unusual way. The use of these harmonic sixth chords goes back to the Renaissance, but they've become the hallmark of the modern style. "

Mariana commented dryly: "The French think they've invented everything; unless of course it's something one ought to be ashamed of, or nasty like a disease. Then they attribute it to the English."

Stadler confirmed Vogler's analysis: " You see, adding the sixth degree to, say, a G-major chord, G-B-D, that would be E, produces a chord of the sixth. If the E is 'augmented to E$^{\#}$, which is the same as F, the chord can also be interpreted as a dominant seventh on G! So right away you've got a kind of musical joke that can be used to modulate

between keys, just like a pun on a single word can get one off onto a totally different subject!"

Marie-Therese laughed recklessly: "Yes. Like my name: "Paradis"! It can remind someone of "paradise" , yet to someone else it might suggest a collection of "parodies", that is to say, imitations. Just like Vienna: the imitation paradise!" And she banged gleefully on the keyboard, modulating into regions of tonality that would not be heard in compositions until turn-of-the-century Beethoven! Everyone burst out laughing; the salon was in an uproar.

When the noise had died down, Vogler resumed:

"The musical pun is compounded by somehow turning the chord totally upside down, so that this F I've mentioned now becomes the root, that is to say, the sub-dominant of C, and one can actually move from this chord to the next one in such a way that F, rather than G, is the implied root. They sometimes call this a chord with two roots.When you do, you've got the French Sixth. When the chord resolves to the dominant, (if the G^7 had resolved right to B without going through $F^{\#7}$, you've got the German Sixth! It's perfectly clear, isn't it?" And he emitted a hearty laugh.

Frau Mesmer sighed: "You could repeat that explanation to me a hundred time, Father, and I wouldn't understand a word of it!"

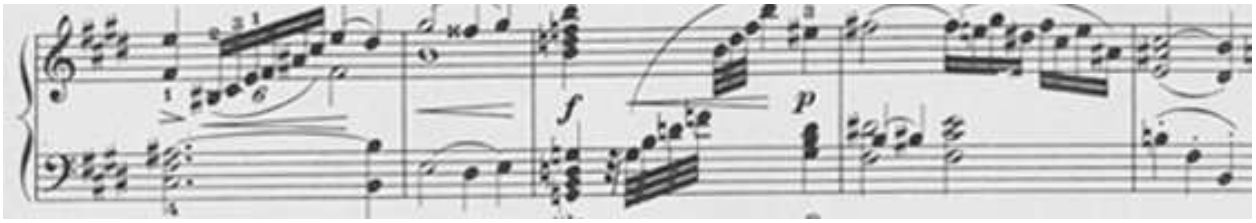
De Martines concurred: "It isn't necessary to understand anything of what Maximillian has said. All that counts when you listen to the music is the final result, which should be , if done properly, perceived only as a novel way of modulating out of one key and into another."

Friberth added: "Believe me, Frau Mesmer, Marie-Therese has gone to the heart of the matter: when the strange G^7 chord appears for the first time in bar 8, even professional music theorists might quarrel over its functional purpose. But when the perfectly normal G^7, followed by the French Sixth a few bars later, appears in the bridge, or middle section, even an amateur understands what's going on."

Marie Therese repeated the passage she'd just played, then remarked:

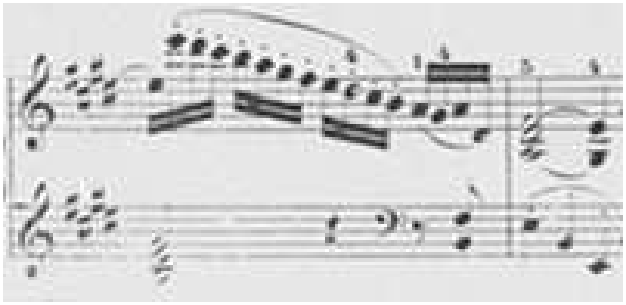
" Technically speaking, the musically trained listener now knows that the odd chord he first heard in bar 8 was supposed to be understood as an augmented sixth chord on G. Then, when the exposition is repeated" - though still virtually blind she counted rapidly on her fingers - "in bars 44 to 45, we've been told how to interpret the novelty, and hear it with much satisfaction.

“ Notice how Haydn arpeggiates the chord to make it more grand and dramatic:



Marie-Therese apologized. She confessed that she could continue one for another two hours analysing this one Haydn piece of a mere 64 bars. She could not refrain from making one more observation before performing the Adagio in its entirety :

“At the very end of the return of the first, just before a brief coda, Haydn pulls off a dramatic tour-de-force. While the left hand rests on an E chord in 6-4 position, the right hand excutes a simple descending E major scale.”

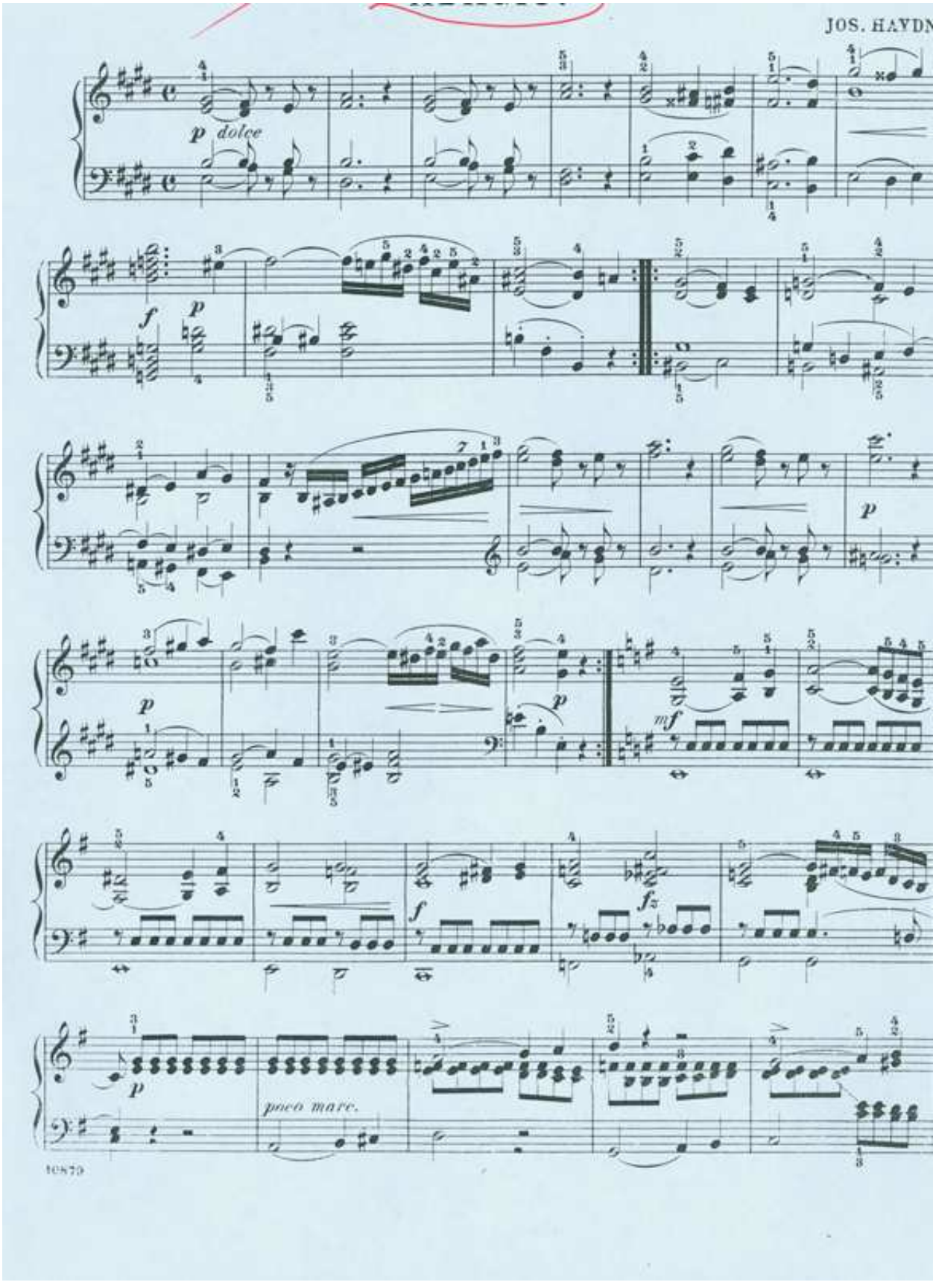


“Each of the notes is written as a *staccato* detached from all the others. By this time, every one of these pitches has been invested with some special function, some purpose or interpretation supplied by the

unfolding of the composition. As the scale descends, one is invited to re-experience the delicate and delicious banquet of ideas which is now recollected in the way each note changes into the one following it .

"The upper E is the "tonic". The motion to D# was the first harmonic idea of the work; the C# has frequently been the highest note in a phrase or sequence of phrases; it has acquired a special piquancy. The B, of course, has been the pedal-tone from beginning to end….. and so forth and so on . What a stroke of genius of this Herr Haydn, as if he were bringing out all the actors, one-by-one, to receive their deserved applause! "

Having said this, without more ado, she sat down again at the Streicher fortepiano and played the entire transcription from beginning to end: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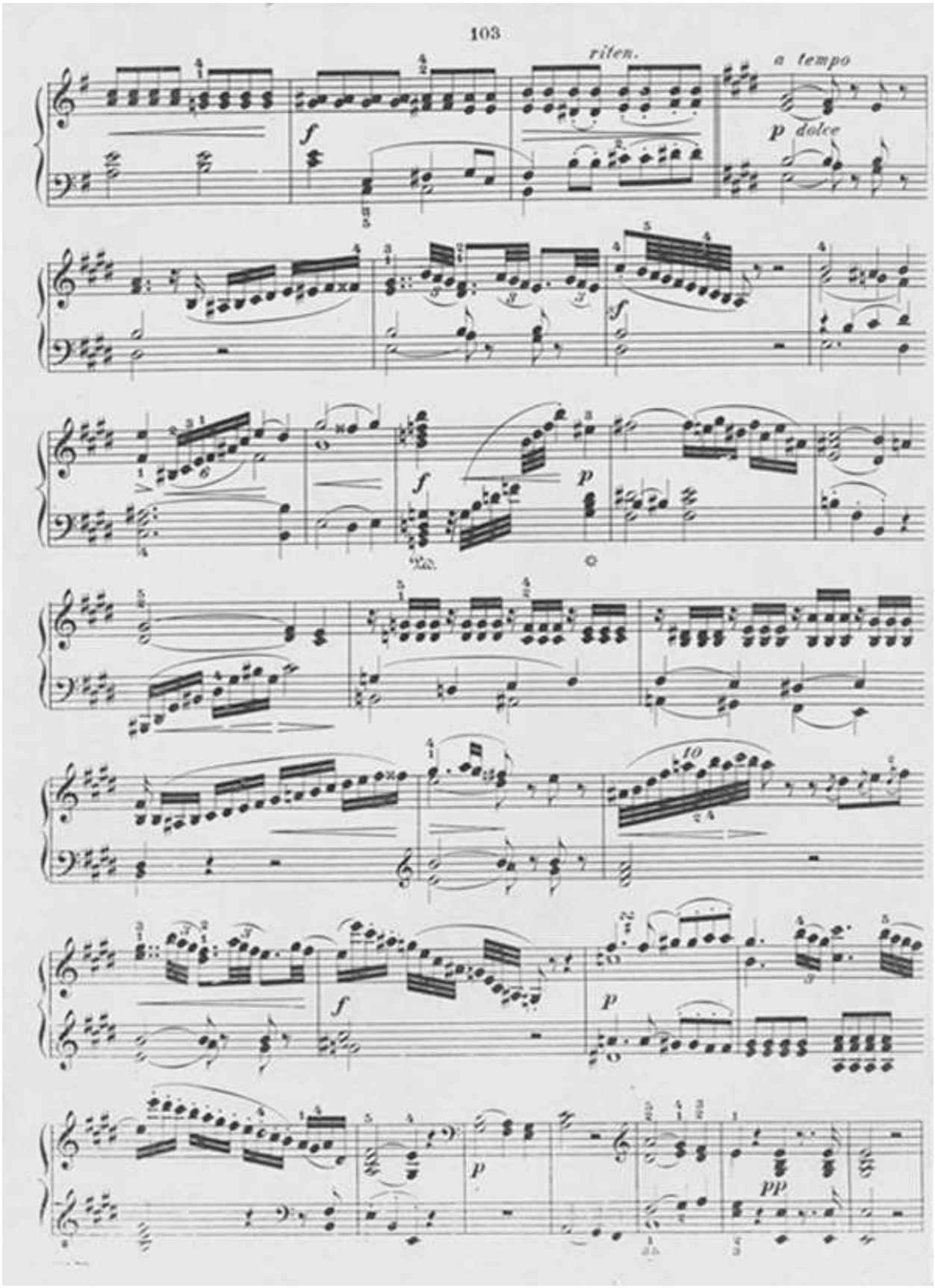
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Chapter 9

The Astronomer Royal

"With force I have crushed the brains of the proud!"

-Pope Paul V

"8.79835±0.00039" - Leo Goldberg

Night, (as the conversation touching on topics in music and other matters began winding down) , unclouded, bereft of moonlight, swept by winds chilly and sharp, rolled over the rooftops and spires of the Imperial city. Soon starbursts appeared spontaneously and beaconed brightly from the heavens.

During her long hours of sitting in the darkened clinic Franz Anton Mesmer, anxious that her education not be neglected, had lectured Marie-Therese on scientific matters, astronomy in particular and the Newtonian revolution in physics. He, along with many 18th century thinkers, believed that the statement of law of universal gravitation and its employment in revealing the structure of the universe, was the greatest accomplishment of any one man in all recorded history.

Over dinner Mesmer had told the assembled guests something about the Astronomer Royal, the Jesuit priest, Maximillian Hell:

Hell had been directly involved in independent research programs connected to the two monumental expeditions for the observation of the transit of Venus across the face of the sun, that of June 3, 1761, and of June 6, 1769. During the former he had remained in Vienna, observing the transit in the company of the Emperor-Regent, Joseph II himself,

whose curiosity for all things scientific had been a blessing for the Viennese scientific establishment.

" That the same might be said about his mother!" Mesmer sighed. To which Vogler concurred:

"We are lucky, at least, not to live in barbarous Russia."

In 1768, in advance of the expedition of 1769, Hell had travelled to a lonely observation post on the island of Vardø , just above the northeastern intersection of Norway and Finland. He remained in Scandinavia for 2 years. His meticulous observations had earned him the admiration of the French Royal Academy, sponsors and coordinators of the vast international enterprise. Hell did not escape the spite of his detractors; few did in his era. The noted astronomer LaLande accused him of falsifying his data; a full exoneration had to wait for Simon Newcomb's investigation of the issues in the 1880's.

Coincidentally, Hell had also been the person to suggest to Mesmer in the earlier case of Fraulein Österline, that he experiment with the therapeutic use of magnets. Mesmer felt a debt of gratitude towards Hell which the latter did not appear to reciprocate.

Turning to Marie-Therese, Mesmer said: " My dear, tonight, with your permission, I'm going to show you off to Professor Hell. He'll no longer be able to deny the value of my ideas with you standing right in front of him. I can't imagine him rejecting the consequences of his own research!"

Marie-Therese frowned before addressing the others: "The good Doctor Mesmer can never refrain from using me as a guinea pig."

Vogler chuckled: "What's wrong with that, Marie? He can't treat you worse than Leopold Mozart treats his son!"

Mariana mocked: "Oh, good ahead, Marie! No sacrifice is too great for that sacred cow, science!"

Marie-Therese nodded and smiled: "Of course, doctor; it's all right with me."

The Abbé Stadler sounded a warning note: "Be prepared for a dull evening whenever scientists get together. All shop talk, blah, blah, blah! They'll bore your ears off with their facts and figures!"

"I've got strong ears, Abbé. I can take it."

Maids and servants came out from the kitchen to clear away the dishes. The four musicians took their leave. The von Paradis couple confessed themselves tired after the long journey from their country home and retired to their rooms. Mesmer assisted Marie-Therese up from the piano bench and helped her into her coat. Over her sack dress she draped a pelisse and a fur tippet. A long scarf was wrapped about her neck, and the maid placed a simple mob cap on her plain black hair. Mesmer's valet assisted him into an English single-breasted frock coat, with a standing collar and large flat buttons of silver that were fastened from the top down to the waist. As they left by the side door he squashed a tricorne hat atop his wig. The servant reached for a lantern in which a heavy wax candle was burning. Then the three of them walked up the stone path leading to the observatory.

They entered by the front door. Candles and torches had already been lit in anticipation of their coming, and a fire burned brightly in the Franklin stove (also known as a Pennsylvania Fireplace) imported in 1770 from the firm of Robert Grace, master of the Warwick furnace in Chester County, Pennsylvania. They continued across dark red flagstones covered with mats and carpets, to a set of long tables laden

with charts, instruments and star atlases. Then the servant went back to the door, to sit and await the arrival of Professor Maximilian Hell.

"How brightly the fire burns!" Marie-Therese cried out, shielding her eyes.

" It's because of my remarkable new furnace. ", Mesmer replied, "It was invented by Benjamin Franklin, the same man that designed the glass harmonica."

Marie-Therese was impressed.

"Didn't you once suggest, Doctor, that we might play duets?"

Mesmer coughed: "Well…I've been so busy lately, there's been no time to practice. If I remember correctly, it was you who offered to compose a duo sonata for glass harmonica and piano. "

"I did. Now I remember. I will, once I can see a little better."

Mesmer remarked that there was a glass harmonica in the observatory. He took her arm and walked her over to a far corner of the room, to a location as dry as could be expected under the circumstances. Half a dozen copper wires connected it to an array of twisted metal pieces, dangling from a shelf like keys.

"Whatever is this for?" Marie-Therese asked in astonishment and wonder: "Do you want me to play it?"

"On no, Marie; it's not to be played upon. It's central to a scientific experiment I've been engaged in these past two years."

"And what is that, pray." Mesmer's face lit up with a broad smile, compounded 90% of self-satisfaction:

"All of my life I've been fascinated by the Music of the Spheres. It's my hope that this glass harmonica will pick up and amplify the resonances coming from distant planets. Notice these.", Mesmer picked

up Marie-Therese right hand and brushed it over the metal pieces, "In addition to the very faint sounds that one sometimes hears coming out of the harmonica, I'm waiting for these objects to glow, something like the keys in Franklin's lightning experiment."

Marie-Therese turned her young adolescent face towards him, suffused with admiration : "Have you told Mr. Franklin about this?"

"In fact I have. After he arrived in Paris at the beginning of this year, I wrote him a letter praising the glass harmonica. He replied; I can show you the letter. It's in English: Dr. Ingenhouze relaxed his inflexible enmity towards me long enough to kindly supply a translation of it.

"Franklin, my dear, has a gigantic imagination. His ambition is to detect the music of the sphere through sending a glass harmonica into space."

"Into *space*? Oh my!"

"Yes. He envisages a collosal instrument. Something as long as the whole city of Vienna. He calls it the VLGH."

"V.L.G.H… What does that mean?"

"It's English for Very Long Glass Harmonica…"

Marie-Therese translated, word by word "Sehr Lange …"

"The only problem is that neither he nor I have any idea of how to lift such an object into space, somewhere between the earth and the moon. But Franklin thinks that perhaps the experiments of the Montgolfier brothers with hot air balloons will lead us in that direction."

Mesmer found himself quite carried away in extolling the praises of Franklin:

" Franklin! What a man! What an original mind!", he went on, "

What I would not do to persuade him to come to Vienna!"

" Well doctor, someday you too will become famous and you'll have a chance to meet him."

“Anything is possible, child.”[xlix]

The room was cluttered though not disordered, conveying an atmospheree of intellectual restlessness. Star atlases and charts lay open on the center table. Next to a blackboard covered with chalk calculations stood a wooden globe, suspended on an iron armature that branched out into a pair of griffon's legs terminating in claws touching the stone floor. Three walls of the octoganal room's eight were covered from floor to ceiling with glass panels. These could be opened either as entire units, or by their individual panes. A book case climbing the height of the wall on their left was filled with a single item: the many volumes of Flamsteed's star catalogue of 1725. Maximilian Hell had been instrumental in finding an edition for his friend, as well as in the purchase of the Short telescope with its 30-inch aperture installed at the furthest window to the right.

“Sit over here, my dear.”

Marie-Therese was seated near the stove. This gave her a clear view of the heavens through the tall windows. Mesmer asked his servant to walk about the room and extinguish all the candles and torches.

" My child, it will require a few minutes for your eyes to become adjusted to the dark. Then I want you to tell me what you see."

It was a miscalculation: among the problems associated with her developing visual faculties were those created by persistent after-images, because of which she lived in a perpetual fog of confusion. The few

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[xlix] **Under circumstances that were unpropitious, to say the least**

minutes of which he spoke amounted to around a quarter of an hour. As they waited, Mesmer continued the rambling narrative through the history of astronomy he'd begun back at the clinic. After recapitulating all that the Greeks had done, he went on to the great advances since the Renaissance. Then he began to speak about very recent ideas that were gaining currency in cosmology:

" There is a certain philosophy instructor living in Königsberg ; that's in Prussia to the north. His name is Immanuel Kant. In 1755, that is to say about 20 years ago, he wrote up his ideas about cosmology in a book. This in itself was rather unusual, as I've since learned that Kant believes that cosmology is not a fit subject for philosophers. His theories have also been propounded by Buffon, the great French naturalist.

"His thesis is clever. Kant asks us to imagine a vast nebular cloud (which could well be the stuff of the magnetic flux) that, eons in the past, condensed into our solar system. When he wrote this it was generally believed that this contained all the stars. Now we have some doubts, because more recently William Herschel in England, a good musician by the way.."

Marie-Therese cried out as a heady mix of strong emotions, fear, astonishment and delight broke through her pitifully ravaged features:

" I hope, Doctor, that there is not a great fire somewhere!"

" What makes you say that, child?"

" Because the entire sky has suddenly filled with sparks and smoke!"

" Tell me what you see". As she spoke, Mesmer rapidly transcribed her words into his journal in a convenient shorthand:

" The sparks are very bright - very bright - like diamonds on a

necklace, or ..like the sparkling jewels you've been using to test my pain threshold to light. They grow, first large, then small... then large again ... but they don't really move...."

" What do you mean, Marie, by 'don't really move' ?"

" I don't know, doctor. Whenever I see things in motion, either because I am walking or they are moving around me, my mind becomes filled with turmoil and confusion. I feel very lost, nauseous, even physically sick. Then also…there are the headaches, the pains, like needles, in my eye sockets…"

" And now?"

" The effects are not like that; no, not at all. All I feel is peace, a great flooding wave, an inundation of peace! Serenity, tranquillity, final rest, such as I thought never to know again to the end of my days.

"I imagine myself at a concert, as one might hear at St. Stephen's cathedral – a solemn mass, a union of cosmic lullaby and celestial song – yet one that comes pouring down from the heavens on every side. Such security, such peace, such happiness! I don't know why they have this effect on me, doctor. What are these sparks?"

" Those are the stars, my dear." Marie-Therese gasped; her hands covered her mouth.

" The stars? So, that's what they look like! Dear doctor, I have a confession to make to you: until this moment nothing whatever of all the things you've been telling me made the least bit of sense! All this talk about Kant and Galileo and Ptolemy, just so many meaningless names! Now, I'm afraid, you're going to have to start all over again."

And she began crying. In a few minutes she lifted up her head again: "It's all right. I'm fine. Really…"

" Tell me again, Marie-Therese, what you feel when you look at them. "

"As I've told you doctor, a boundless, an infinite peace. It's not at all like sunlight, which causes me such pain. I could gaze at these stars forever and never tire. I very much prefer the night-time to the daylight. How happy I would be, if I could live somewhere that forever combines the day's warmth with the night's peace!"

" I'll bring you back here as often as you like."

" Please do. Doctor, this is amazing! I'm almost able to tell one star from another. Do any of them have names?"

Mesmer poured her out a glass of cider and took one for himself. Striding to the windows, he picked up a long wooden pointer and directed its shining metal tip to various objects in the sky:

" It's important that you should know this star. Navigators use it to guide them across the oceans. It's called the North Star or Pole Star and is often placed at the center of our maps of the heavens. At this time of the year you'll find it high in the northeast."

Marie-Therese gazed without comprehension:

" How can I recognize it apart from the others?"

" It certainly won't be easy for you at this stage. You'll have to learn to recognize the constellations, and that will certainly take a long time."

" I don't care , doctor. I must come back here every single night until I learn the names of all the stars in the heavens!"

Mesmer laughed, scratched his wig as if the request perplexed him:" That won't be easy, Marie. There are literally thousands of them, you see." He went on,

" Further down you ought to be able to see a bright orange dot -

that's Arcturus, another star important to navigators."

Marie-Therese started up in fear. Her hands rose to her temples:

" I don't remember what orange looks like!"

" Think of the fruit you ate this morning. It's called an orange and has the same color."

Marie-Therese clutched her head in her hands and tried to recall:

"No.. that was blue! Maybe black. And I thought it was the size of my head until I began putting pieces of it into my mouth!.... It's no use, doctor. My memory for colors is still too weak. You must bring me an orange for comparison."

Mesmer moved the pointer over the arc of the sky to a spot in the northwest. Marie-Therese's head and body swivelled in synchronization, like an automaton's :

"That's Cassiopeia: a familiar constellation. It's there almost every night. There's Draco....Cepheus ...over there to the south sits Orion, another familiar constellation..."

" So now I'm learning astronomy! Doctor, I enjoy this more than piano playing. Has there ever been a blind astronomer?"

" It is said that Galileo's eyesight failed him at the end of his life. But You're *not* going to *remain* blind, child! Your passion for the stars is shared by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. His father told me that when Mozart was a little boy, he covered the walls of his room with astronomical calculations and pictures of the Zodiac."

The conversation was interrupted by a sharp knock at the door.

"That should be him now". Mesmer's servant stood up and re-ignited the candles. Then, picking up the lantern he went to the door to admit the celebrated astronomer.

Herr Doktor Professor Father Maximillian Hell, S.J.[l], the Astronomer Royal for the (self-designated), eastern rendition of the Holy Roman Empire, and director of the Vienna Observatory[li] , came tripping- or was it stumbling – with urgency through the doorway, as if a gnome hidden in the hedges had reached out and stroked him. He pulled off his mittens to eagerly shake Franz Anton Mesmer's hand; then he hurried over to a little bench by the fireplace. The therapeutic rekindling of the blood through a slow re-heating was (possibly) helped through a burlesque accompaniment of vibrant foot-stompings, gesticulations, coughs, and, all told, a great deal of what must be deemed superfluous activity. Most of the more bizarre gesticulations of this solo dance had been acquired during those two years in the Far North and the months of isolation at the station on Vardø .

All three of his public roles, as Jesuit, scientist and legendary eccentric, were evidenced by his manner of dress: priestly in its pretentious simplicity, functional in the best scientific tradition, and as random as you like. He first removed the fur cap he'd acquired in Lapland, with long floppy ears and a deerskin string that tied below the chin hat. Engaging the servant's assistance, he sat down on a bench and struggled with him to pull off his tall peasant's boots. These were placed by the stove; he then turned to address Franz Anton Mesmer:

" So Franz! How's the flux? Still waving your magnets over the heads of lost souls? Though I shouldn't call them *your* magnets. They're *my* magnets and good riddance. You can have them!" Mesmer smiled and said nothing. Hell handed his cloak to the servant, while Mesmer helped

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[l] initials which, since 1773, could no longer be used on official occasions
[li] which, though warning against the unsuitableness of the location, he had allowed to be constructed.

to relieve him of his frock-coat. His shirt was loose-fitting and fell over his breeches; these were a few sizes too large and secured with a bit of rope. Clearly this was a man with no interest, understanding of, nor money available for the high fashion that was the delight and curse of the social class of Mesmer and his young patient.

" All right, Franz:", Hell inquired with a raucous, disparaging laugh, " Where's your latest novelty? You told me you wanted me to meet her."

Mesmer took Marie-Therese by the hand and walked her over to him; he'd warned her to expect a rather gruff individual, nor to mind his salty wit, which was not always becoming to a priest.

As is often the case with the blind, she could sense the actual character of the person before her quite apart from his manner. She approached him eagerly:

" How do you do, Father Hell? I'm your lost soul."

Hell stood up and walked about her in a wide circle, observing her with curiosity and unfeigned surprise.

" Praises be to heaven! This is the famous Marie-Therese von Paradis! She's grown up I see. I hardly recognize her! Only a few years ago she was in the clutches of that ignorant imbecile, Anton van Stoerck. And now! just look at her! She's beautiful - she's healthy - and she can see! . Though she still has problems, obviously. As for me, I'm going blind with all those years of staring through telescopes. When did all this come about?"

Mesmer's dry cough was about as close to modesty as he was ever likely to get. He put down the star catalogue he'd been perusing and explained:

" Go ahead, Max. Take a look. As I've tried to tell you, she's the confirmation of all our speculations, the beneficiary of a prolonged magnetic therapy. She's living evidence that our ideas work."

" Pig's shit, Franz! That's damnable pride! Damnable, and I know a few things about damnation! Your ludicrous *opera buffa* didn't have a thing to do with it . She's just gotten better on her own, that's all. What arrogance! You might just as well tell me she's been eating the fibers from the noose taken from around the neck of a hanged criminal, or drinking frog's blood - good old-fashioned 13th century therapies - no worse than yours, I suspect."

Mesmer sat down as if he'd been given a slap in the face. This obstinate unwillingness to recognize the least merit in his work had been going on for years.

"Max! Will nothing ever convince you that my methods are sound? Herr Hell : when Franzl, my daughter-in-law, was undergoing her cure I demonstrated the existence of the magnetic fluid right before your very eyes! I also showed you how it could be controlled, how it coursed through the body and how it could be expelled. I can give you dozens of witnesses to testify to the miraculous progress of Marie-Therese since she began treatment with me."

" Rubbish! It's always people like you that think we should get our morals from pagan savages; all that rabble who get their ideas from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and rail like stinking skunks against us men of the cloth! Mind you, Franz, I'm the first to admit there aren't many pissing saints among us; but your intellectual pride exceeds the fanaticism of the most ignorant bigot in holy orders!"

Maximilian Hell stood up, greatly agitated, strutting about the

room in large strides as he warmed to his subject:

" The magnetic flux! In the beginning was the magnetic flux! On the 5th day God blurted it out like diarrhoea - perhaps God is the magnetic flux! Or perhaps He so loved the world that he sent his only beloved Franz Anton Mesmer so that ye may all know the magnetic flux!" He spat on the floor,

“ Look , my good man: here's Christ. He has a dilemma. He’s worried: the gullible multitudes need a miracle, fast! So he thinks, "It’s time I raised somebody from the dead. Like my dearly departed friend, Lazarus! ". So! He writes to Galvani, or Franklin, or Volta , orders himself a monster-sized magnet, twists it in the form of a heathen fertility goddess , and strokes the man's putrefying cadavre until he comes back to life! "

He sat down again, delivering a volley of forced laughter, beaming with malicious righteousness, " Your magnetic treatments Franz, aren't worth one healthy gob of my Jesuitical spit! "

As if to illustrate his point, Hell aimed a rich sample of same into the blazing fire of the Franklin stove.

Though blushing with embarrassment, Marie-Therese was not upset. Despite his manner, she’d sized him up as a jolly, comic individual. She was also rather inclined to approve of anyone who dared check her doctor's disproportionate ego. Still she felt obligated to defend him.

" Oh but you know, Father .. . the wise doctor Mesmer did indeed restore my vision to me. I can assure you of that."

Hell sat down again, his agitation dissipating. From the upper left pocket of his shirt he procured a pipe and a pouch of tobacco. Lighting it

from the stove with a twist of paper, he settled back, his indignation mitigated by a genuine perplexity and confusion. Marie-Therese got up and wandered about the room while Hell and Mesmer discussed astronomical matters. Clearly Hell's mind was still pre-occupied with matters connected with the magnetic therapy. When he once again broached the subject his voice was quiet and subdued:

" Franz, these claims of yours are just not possible. They offend both morality and reason. No mortal dare arrogate to himself healing powers that belong to God alone. That's heresy!"

Hell puffed on his pipe, sending off a thick cloud of reeking smoke that dissipated quickly in the cold, moist air:

" I know, I know …. you think I'm droning on about religion again. In point of fact I'm speaking to you as from one scientist to another. There is a special prayer which I recite every morning at Lauds in which I thank God that I was born after the Age of Superstition. You, too, Franz, ought to be grateful…" he shook his pipe stem at him as if lecturing a wayward student, dropping his voice to a whisper: "Less than 50 years ago you would have been burned at the stake for your outrageous claims!" He leaned against the table in a meditative pose: "You'd better watch out from your colleague, Anton van Haen; another one of those ignorant butchers. He still believes in witches and wizards…." After a pause he continued:

"There's no easier way to fall into heresy than attributing your personal beliefs to science. Look at Galileo, a much greater man than either you or me. But! that loathsome intellectual pride! Of course the Church was wrong about the Copernican system, and he was right. I could hardly claim otherwise and consider myself an astronomer. Not

everyone agreed with the verdict on him; some of the Jesuit astronomers were as shocked as the rest of the scientific community. And frightened,too ; they knew that they could well be next.

“ But Galileo was rightly warned by Pope Paul V and justly punished by Urban VIII for his outrageous conceit!"

Hell stood up and delivered what was evidently for him one of his favorite aphorisms:

"'*With force have I crushed the brains of the proud!* '

“ This ringing statement was uttered by Cardinal Bellarmino, Pope Paul V of blessed memory, when he delivered the heresiarch Giordano Bruno to the stake! We live in a gentler age, Franz, but beware lest you set yourself up against the Almighty! Observe that I fell into the same error and led you along the path of darkness. Forgive me."

Hell’s uplifted face wore the expression it habitually conveyed in the presence of his Father Confessor!

Mesmer gaped in astonishment, which quickly gave way to amusement. He assumed a tone of mocking indulgence:

"Well, Max, so you're luckier than Galileo and me. Why don't you tell us how you were save from the snares of the Devil?" Ignoring, or more likely uncognizant of the sarcasm in his words, Hell continued:

" It was the Transit of Venus enterprise that humbled me, Franz. It taught me the difference between the kind of science that God wishes us to pursue, so that we may rejoice in the glory of His creation, and the kinds of science which, like alchemy, or 'Animal Magnetism', or even my own early magnetic experiments which, like the flesh of the apple from the Tree of Knowledge, He forbids beyond all appeal.

“Marie-Therese might like to learn something about the greatest

scientific adventure of this century, the expeditions undertaken in 1761 and 1769 to observe the transit of Venus across the face of the sun." He looked around for her, but she was off in another part of the observatory, cautiously feeling the telescopes. He returned to Mesmer:

" The details are very technical, though I could easily explain them to you in a leisurely hour or so. These observations give us a figure, within a narrow range, for the sun's angular parallax. That's very useful, for not only can one calculate the distance of the Earth from the Sun, one can then use this distance as a kind of basic measuring rod for mapping out the shape of the entire Solar System.

"I'm virtually alone in the scientific world for maintaining that the correct amount is 8.70 seconds. I've even been accused of plagiarism! Worse than that, a certain Lalande, in Paris, has been going around saying that I cooked up all my data in Vienna without ever spending a day in the Far North! It's the times, Franz, it's the times! According to the Empress I don't even exist! That's right, I vanished from the surface of the earth when the Jesuit Orders were dissolved in 1773!" Hell directed another gob of tobacco saturated spit into the fireplace. Then he stood up, raised his gaunt, hairy arms to the sky, and roared:

"If I don't exist, how can I commit plagiarism?"

He sat down again, commenting sadly, "My position at the University of Vienna is secure, but many of my brethren are suffering grieviously." He rubbed his eyes as if close to tears: "How can our rulers call themselves enlightened when they spit in the faces of the teachers of God's Word?" He paused for a moment before resuming the account of his work in Vardø:

" 8.69 seconds , 8.70 seconds … It's merely a bit of data. I wish it

had been plagiarism! No man save perhaps Kepler ever worked so hard in grinding out numbers, day after day. Stationed up there for so long, I used to watch the mice leaving their trails of excrement across the floor. This led me to reflect on how several dozens of Europe's greatest scientific minds were busily engaged in shoveling up a single piece of ratshit, just a single one of those droppings."

They both laughed, relieving the tension somewhat.

" I can assure you of one thing, Franz: Nature is a miser! We scientists - I'm not saying you're not one of us, Franz. I don't agree with those colleagues why try to brand you as a charlatan - we're like suckling babes at the teats of a withered sow. A century of toil may wrest one drop of milk from her! That humbles the proud, Franz! I could spin an endless tale of all the fortunes consumed, the extremities of hardship, the loss of life that has gone into the silly little number - 8.70 arcseconds! Had you been part of that venture, Franz, you too would bow your head before the awesome majesty of God's creation!

"But Franz! You somehow imagine that by waving a wand and playing around with a few bits of bent metal, you can imitate Christ's miracles! That's the kind of accusation the Protestants hurl at our heads. To be honest, Franz, we're rank amateurs in mumbo-jumbo compared to you.

"You're hardly alone, Franz. My fellow astronomers, most of them, stumble along in the same blind error. Your problem is that you don't understand the role of science - as a human activity - in God's plan. The truth of the matter is that God doesn't need to have Man understand his creation. Why should He? He is only concerned that we learn to follow the Way to Salvation, which is why He sent His Son.", he wrung hands

in supplication," His only begotten Son! How dare we ask more of Him; is not that sacrifice enough?" He paused, lowered his head, then continued:" The one reason we are brought into this world, Franz, is to *humble* us, to break out spirit, to belittle our petty intellects!

" But God instills the thirst of curiosity in us. He gives all of us an innate aptitude for science, the better to lead us to the Light! Therefore He, in His infinite wisdom, has allowed some of us to turn the pursuit of science itself into the road to salvation."

A strong wind rattled the windowpanes and the servant stood up to close them. There would be rainfall by the time Hell took his leave. Mesmer could not restrain a smile:

" Those are curious ideas , Max. My work isn't easy; I've had many setbacks. In actuality my work is quite strenuous; ask Marie-Therese if I'm not telling the truth. People have gotten the wrong impression, that I'm a charlatan, that I'm out to dazzle the public with tricks.

"But the validity of a discovery bears no relationship to the amount of work invested in making it. The story is that Isaac Newton developed the essentials of universal gravitation in a single summer, 1666, while war and plague were ravaging England. Galileo merely had to glance through his telescope to see the moons of Jupiter! The results are always there, for those who have eyes to see them. "

Enraged , Hell banged the table with the flat of his hand and turned on him a look of fury:

" That's the most abominable blasphemy! The results! Who cares about the results? The results don't matter at all! Why should God care if we've correctly calculate the sun's parallax angle? To do science just to gratify idle speculation? Without labor? It's ...well, it's like claiming that

women shouldn't have to suffer in childbirth, which is supported by the highest scriptural authority in the Bible!..."

Embarrassed and in some confusion, Mesmer looked down at the floor and around the room:

" I can't respond to arguments like that, Max. I don't know what the Bible says about good medical practice. I'm a doctor, not a theologian."

Hell's eyes beamed. He lay a friendly, if chastening, hand on Mesmer's shoulder:

" My opinion exactly, Franz. Christ indeed has nothing to do with your works. He was the Great Healer, and yet you admit that you know nothing of Him. And in spite of that you dare set up a twisted piece of magnetized metal in the place of the Holy Ghost! Even as René Descartes imagined he could 'explain' the divine mystery of the Eucharist with the 'atoms' of Lucretius! Why, what need have we of religion, I ask you? Every ailment can be cured with wands, and magnets, and fixed stares!"

Hell stood up and did a sprightly dance about the observatory, waving his hands as if a quivering magnet were supported by them:

" Try my magnetic cure! Forget about Original Sin, or Grace, or Salvation, or the sacrifice of Our Lord on Holy Calvary, or the blessed miracle of the Immaculate Conception!" He sat down again, coughing, exhausted, and laughing in a forced manner.

Mesmer regarded him with some exasperation:

" Max, I don't know if you realize it, but just a minute ago you were scolding me for being a fly-by-night dilettante, satisfied with easy explanations. All of a sudden you want me to swallow dozens of hypotheses based on arbitrary authority and contrary to all the evidences of the senses...."

Hell relit his pipe and sighed. His gaze went sympathetically around the room, as if in pity for his friend. His voice fell to a low rasp:

" ....If I can only get you to understand, Franz, that God intends Man to *suffer* ! I know you don't believe in the doctrines of the Church. Speaking frankly, I don't believe half of them myself. But I do believe, and am sworn to uphold, to the death if necessary, the dogma of salvation through Christ's sacrifice! And I must condemn your childish notions of "cure" through – what? – wands, magnets, hand passes – why, that's not even witchcraft! "

Hell's gaze fell on Marie-Therese. She continued to roam about the observatory, touching and inspecting all of its curious objects, workspaces and instruments. The two men conversed in low whispers so that she could not hear what they were saying:

" Look at that young lady over there.", Hell raised a hand to forestall commentary, " Let's grant that your labors may in fact have had some small part in bringing back her vision. Has it never occured to you, Franz, that all of your vain art is being performed in dire peril of her eternal soul?"

Mesmer's face dropped. For the first time that evening his manner turned nasty:

" What is that supposed to mean?"

Hell gazed at him with a look of something like triumph. From the deep trenched furrows on his face there emerged a smile warm with understanding , mixing sadness, and deep patience (or was it forgiveness?). Evidently he was about to reveal what had been on his mind from the beginning:

" I never equivocate, Franz... Look at it from the viewpoint of the

Church... A middle aged man, estranged from his wife, who is known to be spending many hours at a time in a dark room …. alone with a talented young lady.... ?"

" It is better to not even begin to answer such slanders."

" Yes, of course. Mind you, Franz, I don't say that I believe such things. But there has been talk."

" I refer you then to Herr von Paradis, who has been with us at numerous sessions, and who has written up an account of her progress for the German newspapers."

This statement elicited an outburst from Hell, the intensity of which must have caught him himself by surprise:

" What does newspaper rubbish have to do with *lust* ? Or *virginal seduction*? Or *fornication*?!! "

Hell was shouting, his eyes twisting out of their sockets like loose buttons on threads. Mesmer warned him to control his tone and language in the vicinity of the young lady in question. Hell apologized and again lowered his voice:

" I do not say that you are guilty of any of these things. Personally I do not believe so. But to me, it is sin enough that you have cast upon her soul the sinister and perfidious snares of seduction, that you sully her mind with unclean thoughts and desires, that in exchange for the adoration of an unspoiled maiden's heart you offer up to her the absurd and impossible hope of a cure for blindness!"

Mesmer stood up abruptly : "It's time for you to leave."

" Gladly, Franz. Not for one minute more would I stay in the citadel of sin." Hell rose, still talking, while re-arranging his clothes preparatory to departure :

” I ought to let you know, Franz, that I've come here to warn you as a friend. There is indeed much talk: in the churches, at the medical faculty, at court. I advise you, even though I know that you will ignore me, to release this young woman from the grasp of the Arch-Fiend, and return her to the bosom of her loving family."

Mesmer and his servant helped Hell to get back into his frock coat and button it up. The cape was thrown over his shoulders and adjusted. Then he made his way to the front door. He and Mesmer shook hands at the door as he stepped out into the rain.

After he was gone Mesmer went back to get Marie-Therese. She’d fallen asleep by the telescope. By every appearance, whatever images, blind or sighted, were displayed in her dreams, they were happy ones. Mesmer shook her gently by the shoulders:

" What’s happening ?" she asked, not fully awake. She rubbed her eyes, stood up and looked about the room:

" Nothing very much." Mesmer chuckled, " It doesn't take much to get these wolves out of their sheep’s clothing."

He helped her with her coat, closed up the observatory and walked her back to the clinic.The rain had turned into a downpour and they had to hurry along. In the antechamber on the ground floor they found the maids; they’d been sitting there for some time, awaiting her return. They accompanied her to her bedroom. Everything was laid out in preparation for her return and they helped her into bed.

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Chapter 10

The Fantastic Garden of Dr. Mesmer

By mid-March of 1777 considerable progress had been made in the cure of the blindness of Marie-Therese von Paradis; although it was unlikely that she would ever be able to see completely, in what is considered the normal manner. After a long struggle, despite reverses and periods of depression, she could now recognize and identify a great many of the familiar objects in her domestic environment. For the most part, this was still restricted to the darkened rooms of the clinic. Franz Anton Mesmer now deemed that it was the right time to introduce a schedule of conducted strolls around the gardens of his estate into her daily routine.

Landscape of terraces, statuary, follies , pools , fountains, shrines, installations and flower beds, Mesmer's garden was exotic beyond the limits of human imagination, the envy and admiration of *le tout monde* of fashionable Vienna. In this, my 'unauthorized' account, its' scope will be permitted greater amplitude through the influence of 3 exogenous powers.

The first is the power of Animal Magnetism. If it is expected of us that we should credit the fabulous claims advanced for the gardens of Findhorn, why not ascribe similar things (*in a work of fiction*) to those of the magician Mesmer? His psychic forces, strengthened and concentrated by continual exercise can, to command, cause flowers and trees from everywhere in the world to bloom at any time of the year.

Thus we behold the giant sycamore by the entrance to the Landstrasse estate, blossoming in less than a year's time, though this "tree of modesty and patience" may normally need as many as 20 years to do so. So mighty, so universally dispersed is the tidal pull of the magnetic flux that saturates this fruitful jungle!

One discovers that numerous trees, bushes and flowers from all parts of the world have been successfully transplanted here. At the edge of the famed park in the Prater, in a lower corner of the grounds, stands a 6-trunked Indian banyan tree. Four of its trunks stand within the garden, while the dangling roots of the other two have, as if laying a claim to all Vienna, reached over the fence to anchor in the soil of the Prater itself. Cobras nestle in the hollows of the banyan's twisted branches; guardian against potential intrusions from the revelers in the park, a gem-studded tiger prowls around its base day and night. In the upper reaches of the tree are nests for vultures , macaws, seagulls and parrots. All of these creatures have been rendered docile through the enchantments of its master.

On misty days (and then only in conjunction with Sirius, Neptune and the asteroid belt) one may be able to make out the outlines of a Hindu fakir, seated lotuswise beneath the banyan and perpetually meditating. It is from this holy saint that Mesmer derives all his wisdom, though none of the history books will tell you as much. Is it, perhaps, a conspiracy of metaphysical silence?

The second miraculous influence shaping these gardens is the *Zeitgeist* , particularly strong in this corner of Vienna in the late Eighteenth century. The Turkish presence in Central Europe, now inexorably on the way out, can be seen in the minarets, Persian arbors

and gardens, tilework, Oriental fruits such as pomegranates , flowers like the tulip, and in the magnificent trellises that cover the containing walls and border the sides of the pathways.

A Renaissance pavilion surrounds a miniature fountain, replica of many in Versailles; its' waters shoot up to a dizzying heights, to fall over a group of sculpted figures depicting the moment of triumph of Prometheus' wresting of fire from the gods. From there its' waters drop into a large marble basin: the "soup tureen", Marie-Therese will call it. In the small copses, flower gardens and shrines that dot the hillsides, one may see the effects of the growing popularity throughout Europe of the English country garden.

The third transnatural influence on the contents of Mesmer's garden is, of course, the imagination of the author. Because it is imperative for those (among whom he includes himself) who have any respect for history that he return in the final chapter to the sober transmission of the historical record, he now willingly succumbs to the (irresponsibly self-indulgent?) urge to pull out all the stops.

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On the morning of a certain damp, fragrant , beautiful, blue-skyed and sparkling day in the early spring of the year 1777 , in the late autumn of the Enlightenment, (whose sun, fermenting the vineyards of France , defenestrating governments in America, awakening the native talents of inventors in the British Isles and a reforming zeal in the hearts of all the despots of Eastern Europe, was also spilling its majestic rays over the lower reaches of the Danube), a 37 year old mage, wizard, shaman, doctor, scientist, millionaire, dilletante and charlatan by the

name of Franz Anton Mesmer, stepped out from a side door of his glamorous mansion at 22 Landstrasse and, in the company of his most celebrated patient, the musical prodigy Marie-Therese von Paradis , entered into the spectacular bewilderment of his Magnetic Gardens.

Infestations of lucerne grass, gadding vines and sweet clover tussled bitterly in fierce energy in the lawns bordering the lane. Soon after the onset of their stroll, they found themselves walking within an alleyway lined by stately eucalyptus trees until, as if by magic, they found themselves within a small herb garden flourishing underneath the protection of a stout blossoming cherry tree . Wrapping itself thickly about the tree's trunk was a blanket of ivy. Calmly and very quietly, Marie-Therese gazed upon the scene with a high intensity of curiosity.

"So *this* is a tree? How amazing! But tell me, doctor: didn't you notice those tall beings striding by, giving off an aroma of some fine scented medicine or soap ?"

"Those were eucalyptus trees, my dear. They have a very strong affinity to the magnetic force; I don't think you'll find them anywhere else in Vienna, save perhaps in the Botanical Gardens or maybe the Schönbrunn Palace Zoo . But they're much happier here."

" They are living creatures , aren't they? Like ourselves?"

" Well, yes, of course ; although they tend to be homebodies and don't travel very much. They find their roots at a young age. "

He started to laugh at his own joke, but Marie-Therese , who thought she was being made fun of, became indignant.

" Why doctor, that's certainly not true! I found it impossible to keep up with them, they travelled so swiftly."

Mesmer jotted something down in his notebook.

“ Whatever gave you that idea, my dear?”

“ Didn’t you notice? They walked past us with giant steps, like Puss-in-Boots! Or , like high- born personnages on some important mission! Obviously they who couldn't be bothered to greet us in the normal fashion!"

She looked around , " They must have all moved on by now, because I don’t think I see them anymore.”

Mesmer smiled, and wrote: “ The persistence of after-images leaves her with the impression that the copies of any frequently recurring object, like trees in a row or the slats of a picket fence, are moving along with her.”

“ Well, little Marie" he said, putting away his notebook, "let’s postpone that question until later, shall we? You will grant me, at least, that this tree in front of you is stationary? It’s a cherry tree, the symbol of education .”

Marie-Therese smiled with delight, inquisitively feeeling her way about the trunk. She tore off a cluster of ivy leaves and thrust them out to him:

“ And what are these, doctor? One might take them for pieces of old leather from worn shoes. It’s odd, I think, that cherry leaves should grow on vines around the trunk. But", she laughed, "what do I know of trees? "

“ That's not part of the tree, Marie. The plant you've got in your hands is called ivy. It’s a decorative vine that grows over walls, trees, rocks, and towers. It holds fast to its appointed substrate and is known as the plant of friendship. That accords well with my views, which hold that education should be rooted in firm bonds of friendship, a very

special kind of trust, between students and teachers. It's rarely that way, unfortunately."

" And so, doctor, in this magical garden of yours, you have friendship holding fast to education. An idea out of the books of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, no doubt ?"

" Not exactly, my dear. I find Rousseau amusing, even intelligent, but frankly a bit of a crank. He never actually educated anyone with his methods. It's not like what I do in *my* work, where I've got to cure real ailments! Heaven help us that anyone should attempt to base a working government on his ideas!"

She became melancholy:

"How is it possible that a student should not love his teachers? I love all of my teachers: Friberth and Salieri, Righini and Vogler, and most of all Carl Kozeluch, my piano teacher! When I am with them I completely forget my handicap."

" You are most fortunate, child. Your pension from the court gives you the best instruction anyone can have; and you and they are united by a common love of music. Yet that is not the general way of the world, I'm afraid. I quarreled with almost all of my teachers at Ingoldstadt University. "

Marie-Therese chuckled, and thought to herself,(though she was too polite to say so) : " Beloved doctor, you quarrel with everyone, everywhere!"

Beds of thyme, mint, vervain, balm and aloes had been planted around the foot of the tree. She sat down in the middle of the herb garden and reached out in all directions, tearing off pieces of plants feeling and rubbing them , gazing upon all that lay within her grasp.

Mesmer left her alone to her investigations and went back to the house, promising to return shortly.

She pressed each plant in turn to her cheeks, ran her tongue over them to judge their shape and texture, bit off pieces of them and chewed them. The effect of the thyme was so strong that she nearly passed out. The aloes puckered her lips, and she spit them out with disgust.

Mesmer returned, bringing with him a picnic lunch in a basket. He suggested that they wait until they had reached the top of the hill before opening it. He lifted her up and they set off again.

A 7-foot high , elaborate trellis bordered the left side of their path. Thick with vines, lilacs and wisteria, the slats of the intricate trelliswork also supported hosts of terra - cotta and bronze figures. These were the Bacchantes, dancing, lusty , goaded to frenzy by the hypnotizing gestures of a mighty Dionysos. The god himself was represented naked at the head of the procession in the form of a baroque marble statue. Upon his flowing locks were placed braided crowns of laurel and grape-leaves, while with the long fennel thrysus he cast his powers of enchantment into the midsts of the hysterical throngs.

Marie-Therese experienced head-on the shock of confrontation with this surge of collective agony that mounted and rolled along her pathway like an engulfing thunderstorm. It seemed to her as if all of these twisted figurines writhing in the throes of ecstasy and torment were running alongside her. The effect terrified her ; she ran faster, stumbling and getting up, but to no avail. She collapsed on the side of the road , shrieking hysterically, at the very place in the decorated trellis where the sculptor had portrayed the dismemberment

of Pentheus, the disbelieving tyrant, at the hands of four women, among them his own crazed mother.

Mesmer came running up to her. He picked her up and apologized for the distress she had been caused. He suggested that perhaps the bandage could be temporarily wound around her eyes, already greatly fatigued by over-exposure. By his calculations she had already been exposed to more sunlight in that one morning than over the previous month; he promised to remove it at the top of the hill.He was certain she would enjoy the sight of the Danube from that height.

Climbing out onto the summit of the hill, they found themselves outside a circle of hazel trees. Entering it they discovered that it functioned as the enclosure of a shrine to Apollo, god of knowledge, healing, music, and the sun. The construction of this installation was unusual: a dozen rudely cut boulders in the form of slabs and plinths stood in a semi-circle, like the structures at Stonehenge. At the geometric center of this arc a great sundial had been placed, set onto a low marble column wrought with sculpted figures depicting various scenes in Apollo's mythical career.

In thus arranging these metaphorical installations for the Dionysan and Apollonian philosophies, Mesmer had left no doubt as to where his sympathies lay. He removed the bandage around Marie-Therese's eyes and seated her on a formation of stepped rocks. The lunch basket was opened and the banquet spread out on the grass. Then he said to her :

" Little Marie, the Greek god Apollo embodies all that is noblest and best in human nature: wisdom, healing, compassion, art; above all, self-discipline and restraint. There are many people who would find it

very strange that such praise should be coming from me. They include a good part of professional Vienna, I dare say, and much of the rabble. To them the very name, Mesmer, conjures up an image of claims to supernatural powers, like some possessed wizard; or, as Professor Hell would have us believe, some monster of depravity! They see me, a modern-day Dionysos, inciting mobs of the sick and the deranged to ravings , debaucheries, orgies! Hah!"

Marie-Therese sat in the grass, sorting the leaves and flowers she had collected during their rambles. Her soft voice was like the crystalline peal of a small bell :

" What hideous interpretations people make!", she exclaimed, "Doctor, can you explain that?"

Franz Anton Mesmer placed one foot on the side of a boulder, assuming the stance of a visionary who discerns some revelation very far away in the depths of the clouds. He sighed, (with a degree of pretention that was perhaps ludicrous, yet carried a certain charm) as if from boundless pity for mankind. When he spoke, it was in the lecturing manner that came naturally to him:

" Ignorance, child! Ignorance - and envy! Those who fail in their endeavors will seek any strategm to bring about the ruin of someone who, through no particular virtue of his own, happens to have hit upon the right way to the truth. The spleen of mine enemies has swollen fat to bursting with my successes!

" And , also, there is the additional factor of diseased imagination. My clinical work has taught me, my dear, that much insight may be gained into the workings of another person's mind through an

examination of the fantasies that spontaneously arise when confronted with something foreign to its' experience.

"Certain minds leap instantly to the basest motives; others imagine sinister dangers or the presence of ridiculous storybook villains . Others see drunkards, or fools, madmen , assassins.

"Confronted with someone like myself the public imagination waxes delirious through lurid images of diabolism, casters of spells, paralyzers of the will. They imagine me, like the Parisian Cagliostro, surrounding himself with familiars and slaves to do my every bidding.

" Yet, the truth of the matter is that I am a true worshipper at Apollo's shrine, a dedicated worker in the service of medical science: The healthy mind and body, nothing developed to excess, harmonious, rejoicing in the pure art of living. That has ever been my creed, my dear, and I am one with the age in this respect , with Voltaire, Locke, Diderot , Leibniz …..

"All that I'm really trying to say - and my critics often lose sight of this by debating the reality of the magnetic fluid (which is only a hypothesis to explain the phenomena I've discovered) is that mental conditions, just like matter and light, may be studied by the scientific method. [lii] Those persons who imagine that I wish a return to the Middle Ages know nothing whatsoever of what I am trying to do."

When they had finished lunch, Mesmer took her by the hand and together they walked to the edge of the hill. With her free hand she clung to a picket fence. From where they were standing they could take in a broad view of the shimmering Danube coursing in the valley below,

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[lii] Such ideas were current in the 18th century. Alas, that such little progress should have been made in 250 years!

like a sarabande, stately and sad, yet serene in its beauty and flowing majesty. Marie-Therese stared at it for several moments, fascinated. Then, somewhat timidly , she asked:

" Do you think that she would mind?"

Mesmer stared at her, flabbergasted:

" Who, my dear? Mind what? "

She pointed in the direction of the river: "Someone's been here before, and she lost the ribbon she ties around her waist. Maybe she doesn't want it anymore, and we can give it to Maman to sew something pretty for me."

" Ribbon, child? Why, what ribbon are you talking about?"

And she pointed once again in the direction of the river.

Stunned, Mesmer removed his notebook from his waistcoat, and wrote : " Seeing the Danube from a distance she imagines it to be a white ribbon."

The path down the hill lay alongside the fence separating his property from the famed Prater park, the gift of Joseph II of a royal hunting preserve to the people of Vienna. As they walked along Mesmer explained to her the limitations of binocular vision, and how it was that even normally sighted people were obliged to make continual re-adjustments of their estimates of the size and distance of things by comparing them with more familiar objects in the surrounding environment.

From this height the roads of the Prater were visible between the trees like lines on a map. She remarked that the chestnut trees bordering its avenues were so close that she was certain she could reach out and

stroke their leaves. Mesmer invited her to do so. She did; her hands grasped at nothing. Astonished she exclaimed:

" Why, there's just nothing there! I must be witnessing an illusion; what do they call it, a mirage?"

"Well, yes and no. Everything in this garden is in some sense a mirage, being the product of several imaginations acting simultaneously. However the trees you see over there in the Prater are really there: all the authors of books and novels about us , Wycoff, Walmsley, Zweig, Buranelli, Dougherty, Goldsmith, Lisker, are going to mention your mistaken impression of them."

"Well, you know, doctor: I really am anxious to visit the Prater! I was talking to Michael O'Kelly a few months ago. He's an opera singer from England who comes here frequently to perform. He just raved on and on about the Prater! He says it's better than anything they have in England, better than Hyde Park! He told me all about the fine chestnut trees, the avenues, the drives, the throngs of carriages; and wild deer, cabarets, dancing, music...What a jolly place it must be!"

Mesmer let her gaze at it for some time, allowing its' figures and features to come into focus: "I 'll suggest to your father and mother that we take you there. We should also return frequently to this hill. This view will be very helpful in developing your sense of proportion."

The color went out of Marie-Therese face : "Not past those horrible dancers?!"

Mesmer laughed:

"We'll come by another road."

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It took them half an hour to reach the foot of the hill. They now entered onto a stretch of desolate marshland. Hot gases , emitting blasts of steam and noxious odors, percolated upwards through the cracks of tiled mud-flats. Here and there cactuses , tall and short, tore at the sky with savages spines, while the fields were foul-smelling with nettles and mandrakes and carnivorous plants belching from their huge gullets. Gaunt, lightning-blasted oaks encircled by strangling vines and weighted down with parasitic lichens and mosses exposed their bare, rickety arms to opaqued skies.

Marie-Therese shuddered: " Whatever is this dreadful place?" she cried!

" A kind of desert, child. A dismal isolated moraine in the extravagant conception of my magnetic gardens. Its' rather forbidding, I agree, although I planned it that way. It's my opinion that every garden ought to have at least one such area."

"Whatever for?"

" Because, my dear, the structure of human consciousness itself requires that we pass through despair to arrive at hope. At certain moments there can be a purpose in taking refuge in such a wasteland: when, for example, we're convinced the world has abandoned us, or see no issue from our difficulties. Don't worry; we'll soon pass through it. Look over there to your right."

He pointed out a monumental installation of statuary, natural rock, stylized pavillions and ornamental funerary urns. The group of sculpted figures depicted, with all of its raw savagery, the legend of the demiurge, Cronus, devouring his children, Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades and

Poseidon,head-first, at the moment of their emergence from the womb of Rhea. Directly in back of him stood a statue of Zeus, the only one of his children to escape, preparing to bind him in chains.

Marie-Therese saw only a random assemblage of shapes. As Mesmer recounted the legend to her, her face became filled with inexpressible anguish:

" Is there any meaning in such a revolting legend?" she asked.

Mesmer commented, somewhat sadly:

" The myth of Cronus speaks of repression and freedom: essential aspect of the human dilemma. Cronus represents Time: he overthrows his father, Uranus, Heaven itself, and is defeated in his turn by Zeus. In the mythology of the Greeks, Zeus is timeless, a supreme, unconquerable god. This also impresses me as false, which is why I prefer certain parts of the German version of the old pagan faith. In the legend of the Ragnarøk, even Odin 's kingdom, Valhalla, is reduced to ashes. One of these days somebody ought to make an opera of that story; it's great material.

" History supplies us with frequent instances in which the older generation, through jealousy, or fear of being cast out, or just from visceral need, attempts to devour its own children. It does this in various ways, loading them down with gratuitous guilt and shame, sabotaging their ambitions, lying to them, deceiving them with false hopes.

"This creates many personal catastrophes, as in the paupers and outcasts that one sees roaming about in the streets. Many of them were ruined by their families, who could not bear the thought that they might be successful in life.

Yet ever and again there arises a Zeus, to best their reactionary strategms and redeem his generation."

Before he'd finished Marie-Therese had fallen lifeless to the ground. She lay there, drained and woebegone as a stack of autumn leaves soaked by rain . Bitter anguish contracted her brow; quietly she wept , helplessly, without restaint. Her eyes were shut tight and her arms flailed about at they did at the onset of one of her hysterical seizures; these had all disappeared over the two weeks of hypnotherapy.

Mesmer raised her to a sitting position and restored the bandage around her eyes. Then he worked with her for upwards of half an hour, using the customary passes and massages of the hypnotic therapy. Once she'd recovered her equilibrium he apologized for the negative effect that the artworks in his garden seemed to be having on her. Images from Greek drama and legend were to be found at all places in the garden. He had considered the possibility that this tradition, fundamental to European civilization, might constitute too heavy an ordeal for a sensitive young woman with a serious psychomatic condition. If he wished, he said, they could return immediately to the house.

She would not hear of it. She insisted on being treated as a grown woman; the operas she attended and the songs she performed often included things far worse than what she had seen. It was only 3 o'clock: they did not need to be back at the house for another two hour s; she felt that the benefit she had already received from it far outweighed any adverse reactions that might arise.

They hurried away quickly from the region of the marshes, not stopping until they came to a creek spanned by a little bridge rising over onto an island.

Marie-Therese had recovered her good spirits and was eager to see more.

" So doctor?" she asked, " Where are we now? What new surprises do you have in store for me?"

Mesmer , flustered, cast about in some confusion, his gaze darting among the trees:

"For the life of me, I don't know, child. This island was not of my own doing: it emerged spontaneously on the day after the garden was completed. It's a manifestation of pure magic, magnetism, divine whimsy, whatever else you want to call it!

The first time that I set out to explore it I came across an artist, or sculptor, a very eccentric character. He was working hard, extremely hard, at whatever he was doing, which I thought totally disoriented, completely senseless - both the things he was making and the way he was going about it.

"He claims to be from the 20th century.He comes and goes in a mysterious fashion. In the years since I first met him he's filled the island with mountains of his foolish art. He insists that he's following certain French theories of art which he claims will be as fashionable then as they are now. He was very patient with me and tried to explain himself. Unfortunately he was sucked back to his century before he could finish. I think I've succeeded in figuring out what most of it means."

Walking some distance, they stopped before an odd construction. This was a tall vertical circular frame set against a painted backdrop of

the solar system and the fixed stars. Before this stood a rather intricate clockwork mechanism, something like an orrery or home planetarium. [liii]

The hands of this machine tapered into long, lean surgical scalpels. As these hands turned, they hacked off slices of primate genitals, both gonads and ovaries. Dripping with blood and gore, these pieces of organic matter dropped into rusty watering cans, which, forever overflowing at their tops, spilled their contents into a creek. Hundreds of small wriggling eels and watersnakes leapt from the waters, in giddy gyrations, to lap at the drops of blood, while the pieces of meat disappeared down the stream to be devoured by schools of tropical carnivorous fish. Mesmer glanced at it with a wry grimace. He didn't bother to explain it, but merely said: "Clockwork and quackery."

They penetrated deeper into the island. Presently they beheld another installation, even stranger than the first: a tall silo in the midst of a clearing in the trees. It was about 10 feel tall. Near the conical roof was an opening and, affixed to this, a long metal ramp that jutted downwards at an incline of about 60º to a level about 5 feet off the ground. At the lower lip of the ramp stood a pair of statues: the blind Oedipus, his head thrown back, drinking from a bowl of water being poured out to him by his daughter Antigone. In his left hand was extended a sword, braced against unseen enemies.

From the opening in the silo and down the ramp there rolled a continuous stream of rotting eggs. These fell off the far end of the ramp and spattered on the upturned face of Oedipus, which was therefore

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[liii] **These were fashionable in the 18th century; there is a famous one by Rittenhouse at the University of Pennsylvania.**

covered with a permanent ooze of yolk, dropping from it onto his body and into the creek.

From time to time a few golf balls would come rolling along with the eggs. These would bounce off his scalp and onto that of Antigone. When this happened, a cuckoo bird emerged from her mouth, emitted a typical cuckoo call, and was swallowed up again.

As Mesmer explained all this to Marie-Therese, she stared at him, dumbfounded.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

" You've got me on that one, my dear.", he confessed, "According to this artist from the 20th century, it's a representation of some theory of the mind that will claim to both explain and replace mine. The inventor is another one of us Viennese lunatics. Honestly, I must say, that I can't look at it without laughing. Let's go on."

Finally they came to the further edge of the island. A third installation stood in their path between them and the bridge. Its central block was formed from a 20th century Steinway grand piano. Its legs rested in a swamp, while its body was covered with spirogyra and other seaweeds. The lid was raised to a vertical position. Upon its stringboard rested the smoking and mangled hulk of a wrecked motorcycle. The battered transistor radio in the hulk was still working, emiting a tinny version of *"It's been a hard day's night"* . The piano keys, depressed without any human agency, were banging out meaningless arpeggios in the style of Yanni. A TV set hanging from the lid showed the image of Michael Jackson singing his most popular songs , while at the same time a dozen electric guitars played riffs of Heavy Metal.

Marie-Therese held her hands to her ears: "We must be in Hell!" ,

she cried.

“ I quite agree with you, child. Evidently we’re being shown a picture of what the world is going to look and sound like in a few centuries from now. Carcasses of strange juggernaut machines everywhere, with stupid goons leering from moving posters, and a dozen varieties of idiotic music simultaneously blasting into one’s ears.

"I’ve discovered that the whole thing works by electric and magnetic force fields. In fact.." He pointed to a knob on the piano, then placed her right hand upon it. She turned the knob to the left; both the music and the TV images went dead.

“ What a great relief!” she cried, “ The disgusting noises won't be so terrible if one can control them! "

“ Yes, my dear. But look at it another way: these sounds are an indication of how horrible the world of the future will be! Can you imagine that human beings will choose, of their own free will, to be bombarded by such hideous noise? We should be happy, I think , to be alive in our own time.”

They crossed over the bridge and, after a walk of a few yards, found themselves once again within a temple complex. Reeds ,waterlilies, and lotus plants covered the face and shores of a tiny lake. On both sides of their path lay flower beds of tulips, roses, and rhododendrons. Walking through an alleyway of laurels and acacias, they came to a shrine devoted to Orpheus and Eurydice , god and goddess of music, theatre, poetry.

Surrounding the sculptural display stood a semi-circle of pillars, crowned with acanthus capitals. Eurydice was portrayed following the sound of Orpheus’ lyre out of the blackness of Hades, her arms before

her as in a trance; while the body of Orpheus was turned, capturing the moment when he gazes at her and loses her forever.

Here they stopped to rest for a few moments. Marie-Therese arranged the bouquets of flowers, grasses, plants and bits of tree bark that she would be examining in her spare time at the clinic. Mesmer placed them carefully into the empty picnic basket. The day was already reconciled by now to its inexorable decline. They had to return to the estate to prepare for dinner. Hand in hand they quickly walked the remaining distance to the principal mansion of the Mesmers' estate.

Chapter 11

*I. The Doctors' Dilemma*e

"..the hermeneutics of the pathological fact..." **Michel Foucault**

The final installment of Hysteria and Enlightenment returns to the historical record. The author attempts to invent *within* the facts, as best he can, despite his limited understanding of German and an over-extended schedule that makes it unlikely that he will, any time soon, be paying a visit to Vienna to consult primary sources.

Mid- April, 1777. Four months have passed since Franz Anton Mesmer memorably quelled a hysterical crisis experienced by Marie-Therese while attending a concert. It was then, or soon afterwards, that her parents, the couple of Herr Joseph von Paradis and Frau Colnbach, were persuaded to leave Marie-Therese in his care.

If we are to believe the glowing accounts written by Herr von Paradis himself for German newspapers, her progress had been astounding. Crowds had been coming daily to the Landstrasse estate to see for themselves, (if not merely to gawk and stare), the miracle of her restoration of vision, to laugh sympathetically when she confused an

apple with a human head or marvel when she followed someone across the lawn.

But why should anyone trust the naïve opinions of the ignorant rabble, when the wise doctors of the medical faculty of the University of Vienna were, almost without exception, leagued against him, the Franz Anton Mesmer from Swabia, this notorious charlatan, this self-proclaimed medicine man, the enemy of all enlightened thought who dared proclaim that the mind might hold sway over the man-machine trumpeted by authorities from Descartes to Jean de la Mettrie, for whom

It was the custom in that period for doctors to have little good to say about one another. The credibility of medicine was weak, and would remain so for almost a century. The difference between today's medical professionals and those of the past is that, before 1870, doctors presumed authority when there was often little basis for it; whereas a sizable number of today's doctors abuse the authority given them by the fact that that today's medicine can now lay claim to some real credibility.

For this particular case there were complicating factors. It would have been unrealistic for Mesmer to expect any strong endorsement coming from Dr. Anton von Störck, court physician to Maria Theresa. It

is to his credit that he did commend Mesmer's initial successes. One recalls that he is the doctor who'd concluded, after 10 years of the capricious application of torture devices, including plaster casts around the head and hundreds of electroshocks in the eyeballs, that the blindness of Marie-Therese von Paradis was incurable.

Nor could he expect much support from the Dutch-English Dr. Jan Ingenhousz, highly esteemed by court and populace as The Great Inoculator. Of which more in a moment. Ingenhouz had been denigrating Mesmer relentlessly ever since the magnetic treatments of Fraulein Österline in 1773. Resistance towards all innovations other than his own (he figures in the discovery of photo-synthesis) appears to have been integral to his professional self-image. For example, his virulent campaign against Jenner's' vaccination continued until the day of his death.

Another enemy was Dr. Anton de Haen. Alone among his colleagues in the medical school of Vienna , he continued ,well into the last quarter of the 18th century, to defend his belief in witchcraft. He may simply have thought that Mesmer was a witch.

The most serious professional criticism came from Dr. Joseph

Barth, official ophthalmologist to the Imperial court. Barth knew more about eye diseases than anyone else in Vienna. He responded to an open invitation to visit Mesmer's clinic and examine Marie-Therese. After his second visit he roundly declared Mesmer to be an imposter. Marie-Therese, he stated, was only pretending to be able to see, since she confused the colors of objects, and frequently misnamed them.

Simply from the face of it, it's apparent that Barth is only convicting himself of bad faith. To misname objects one has to see them; to get the colors wrong one must have sensations of color. He'd performed hundreds of cataract operations and knew at first hand how arduous a task it was for those who have suddenly recovered their sight to organize the random impressions of sensory data into distinct recognizable entities. The fact that Marie-Therese was able to identify objects at all should have convinced him that there was had been a real change in her condition.

One can already speak of a conspiracy organized among these doctors to discredit, actually to disgrace, Mesmer at the Austrian court. They devised a strategy based on the manipulation of the two persons with the strongest influence over the situation: Herr Joseph von Paradis

and the empress, Maria-Theresa. Joseph II, co-regent since 1765, was in France. The empress could be managed from a number of directions. Herr von Paradis, Court Councilor and president of the Chamber of Commerce, would prove to be even more malleable.

Traditional accounts of this story now relate that the doctors hostile to Mesmer exploited the anxieties of Herr von Paradis until they succeeded in transforming his former enthusiasm for Mesmer into an implacable hostility. I suspect that these accounts oversimplify the issues so as to create a convenient scenario of recognizable heroes and villains.

II. Medical Politics

"The crisis broke while I was abroad. Word has reached me that something new and evil is at work here.…."

Euripedes, The Bacchae

On the most basic level one is dealing with one out of the numerous manifestations of the deep traumas inflicted on the European consciousness by the violence of the birth of the modern world in the last third of the eighteen century : the multiple revolutions in agriculture, industry, medicine, transport, technology, politics, ideology, religion, ... Many of these scars remain open and unhealed to this day,

pulsing with the undiluted pain of their primal onslaught: civil wars in Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia, the demolition of the Soviet Empire, the continuing turmoil in the Third World vestiges of the old colonial empires.

Including in the long list of disasters provoked by the emergent technologies were those that devolved around the theory and practice of medicine. Before the period which now concerns us it could scarcely be called a science, and it would be another 80 years before the medical doctor could be assured of that public confidence which, (albeit with many misgivings), he is accorded in our own day.

With respect to the local Viennese situation, to uncover the source of the nastiness of the doctors , indeed of the enthusiasms and hostilities of all parties concerned, one needs to look at the bitter relations between the medical faculty of Vienna U. and the Austrian court, dating back to 1767 and even earlier .

In 1745 Maria Theresa brought Gerard van Swieten from Holland to Vienna to head up the newly created medical faculty. A pupil of the celebrated Boorhaeve at Leyden, he was a Catholic in unhappy circumstances among his own countrymen. Van Swieten built up the

medical faculty, making it one of the most important medical schools in Western Europe. For almost a century it was the principal drawing card for Vienna, for students desirous of a scientific career.

The medical school scintillated as the brightest gem in the intellectual crown of the Habsburg domains up into the 1870's when Vienna entered into its one truly period of greatness in European intellectual history.

Ironically, one of the few major scientific discoveries coming from Vienna in the age of Mozart and Haydn, was that of Franz Anton Mesmer himself , a man of but a single idea, but that an important one. Between Kepler and von Helmont in the early 17th century, and Georg Mendel and Semmelweis in the second half of the 19th, there are few scientific developments of note coming out of Vienna. However in 1778, when Mesmer was forced into exile and moved to Paris, he joined the company of Lagrange, Legendre, Laplace, d'Alembert, Cassini, Lavoisier, Jussieu, Buffon, Bailly, Bertholet, Franklin, ...

Overall in relation to its size and resources the contribution of the Austrian Empire to the scientific and technological revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries was quite negligible. This is not necessarily a

bad thing: Austro-Hungary was temporarily spared the raw environmental destruction that overtook England in only a few decades.

III. Smallpox as Catastrophe Surface

" ... as on a darkling plain, swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight , Where ignorant armies clash by night." ...
- Matthew Arnold , Dover Beach

Until the terrible smallpox epidemic of 1767, Van Swieten's authority at the Theresian court was considerable. He and his son, Gottfried, were also prominent education and reform of the legal code. While smallpox was carrying off several close relations of Maria Theresa (and she herself nearly died from it) Gerard Van Swieten made the blunder of disparaging the effectiveness of inoculation, a precursor of vaccination, invented by the still superior medical tradition of the Arab world. He'd carried his prudence to excess: at the height of the epidemic van Swieten used his considerable authority to prohibit the inoculation of any member of the royal household.

After her recovery Maria-Theresa ignored his prohibitions and bestowed her favors on Dr. Jan Ingenhousz, the royal inoculator from the court of George III of England. Three years had passed since the 7 Years War, and the British and the Austrians were friends again. Business as usual: the aristocracy played at war and peace, while it was merely the people who suffered.

The moment he arrived in Vienna, Ingenhousz set to work inoculating 65 members of the royal household. All of them survived the procedure; this was in itself remarkable, as the death toll from the inoculation itself was over 3%. To celebrate this triumph of the new medicine a feast and festival were held at Schönbrunn Palace on October 5th, 1768.

Historical idiosyncrasy is much in evidence here: in the next decade, George III 's greatest military defeat would be partly attributable to his own distrust of inoculation. It reminds us again of the magnitude of the factor of the smallpox epidemic in shaping of this chapter of European history. Let's review a few chapters from the American war of independence:

(1) The collapse of Benedict Arnold's assault on Quebec on December 31, 1775, was due not to the "red-coats" but to:

(i) his utter contempt for the sufferings of his own men (the infamous "forced march" through Maine) and

(ii) the "red-dots". It was smallpox that broke the Continental Army as it lay outside the walls of Quebec.

(2) Profiting from the latter lesson, George Washington ordered the inoculation of the entire Continental Army - a bold and somewhat ruthless step, involving at it did unknown but very high mortality rates and long periods of enforced quarantine. His decision was a major factor in winning the revolution. I can cite no better reference than the amazing memoir, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82*, by Elizabeth Anne Fenn.

Van Swieten's rejection of what is now recognized as the cornerstone discovery of modern medicine would continue to cloud his standing at the Austrian court. Miracle worker Jan Ingenhousz was in; Van Swieten and his associates were clearly out. A strong political axis now cut directly through the court, the medical school, and the musical world of the capital, which is to say, all aspects Viennese intellectual life. The line of demarcation was smallpox.

Included in the Van Swieten circle were the Mozarts and the Mesmers. Recall the reactions of the Theresian enclave to the arrival of the young Mozart from lmütz in 1768, his face bristling with a fresh carpet of red pimples. Joseph von Paradis and Salieri were in the Ingenhousz camp. Salieri was a teacher of Marie-Therese von Paradis ,

and there exists extant a file of correspondence between him and her father . To the intelligent yet sentimental empress Maria-Theresa, the issues were quite clear: Gerard Van Swieten and his son Gottfried, formerly heralded as the torch-bearers of modern science and enlightenment, had killed off most of her immediate family. Jan Ingenhousz had saved the remainder. And the vain and jealous Ingenhousz hated Mesmer with a mortal passion.

Senior Executive Officer, Regierungsrath Herr Joseph von Paradis could not have worked in the inner circles of the court for all his professional life without being a participant in its political imbroglios. His personal admiration for the empress is evident from the fact that he named his daughter after her. The cordiality appears to have been mutual: the pension of 200 gulden per year granted him for the musical education of Marie-Therese came directly from the special-purpose private purse used by the empress for the ostentatious display of aristocratic largesse, one of the many splinters in the heel of son and co-regent , Joseph II.

IV. The Pension

"The best laid schemes of mice and men, Gang aft a-gley"

....Burns, To A Mouse

Mesmer's enemies were quick to capitalize on the sensitive issue of the uncertain future of the pension. An opportunity lay ready at hand: indeed, from the very first manifestations of a crude faculty of vision, Marie-Therese 's piano playing had begun to suffer. By mid-April it was tragically deteriorated.

This decline unfolded itself gradually: hesitation in the attack, a lack of confidence, of sensitivity in her touch; a note missed here and there, passages scrambled ; a growing dysfunction between the hand and the eye that everybody thought she could readily cure with practice and patience. Each tiny defect, insignificant in itself, provided a seed from which, over the weeks and month, entangled difficulties grew, until all the relevant muscles of arms and hands were paralyzed by interlocking focal dystonias. By mid-April Marie-Therese could do nothing at the keyboard.

A focal dystonia is a task-specific neurological handicap. They have recently been the object of much study and investigation in the

young field of *performing arts medicine*, for the simple reason that they are a plague on the musical profession. A typical example is afforded by the all too common experience of a performer accomplished in one instrument, say the violin, who wishes to apply his training to a related instrument such as the viola or cello. The technical requirements of the new instrument are so similar to those of their original training, that it appears at first that mastery should come very quickly. Yet therein lies the trap.

Advanced technique is not a matter of playing individual notes, or even passages, but rather the coordination, together or in sequence, of complex patterns of neuro-muscular coordination, essentially algorithms, which have been programmed into the nervous system.

A new set of coordinated responses will interfere with the earlier training in such a way that the hands, fingers, and eyes are bedeviled by a host of contradictory directives. To the astonishment of the performer, who has been playing music all his life and may even be deemed a virtuoso, his hands will suddenly and without warning freeze. These unanticipated paralyses may extend their domain of influence until the performer finds himself unable to play either the old or the new

instrument!

Similar phenomena may occur even when a performer tries to change from one style to another on the same instrument, say from classical guitar to flamenco. Learning disabilities of this sort ought not to be confused with the "pro-active" or "retro-active" inhibitions of behavioral psychology. They relate to muscular training and have a neurological basis.

Unexpected focal dystonias have terminated musical careers. They carry an air of finality about them, a sense that they may be incurable. Patience and hard work are needed to overcome them. One should also consider the possibility that Marie-Therese had transferred her psychosomatic condition from sight to her hearing and muscular co-ordination. This would merely represent a further complication. However, since the 18th century the breakdown of motor co-ordination has been observed in all situations of the recovery of sight after a long period of blindness.

In the late 18th century, there was total ignorance in European medical science about the ever-widening marshlands into which the "experiment of Marie-Therese von Paradis" was sinking both patient and

therapist. Neurology was an infant science; there was nothing in textbooks or the medical curricula about the re - training of cured victims of blindness. In fact, there no guarantee whatsoever that Marie-Therese's muscular co-ordination would ever again be restored, that she would be able to walk, dress or even feed herself unaided, or that she would ever "see" more than a sea of confused, weakly differentiated blobs of shadow and light.

Had the medical profession of that time, including both friends, associates and even the enemies of Franz Anton Mesmer, been able to consult the literature that has accumulated up to our own day, they could have worked out a gradual regime of therapy and readjustment for Marie-Therese. It is difficult to imagine that it could be done in less than 5 years, probably as much as 10. Certain aspects would require a lifetime of training and adjustment. The recognition of shapes, objects and distances would need to be carefully integrated to proceed, step by step, with her muscular re-training and musical education. Today, at least, it is obvious that one lone hypnotist, however gifted, could not be adequate to the task; doctors, ophthalmologists, physiotherapists, music teachers and therapists, a veritable battalion of specialists in other words, would

have to be to organized, bringing the weight their knowledge, skill and, one should hope, their intelligence, to bear on this fascinating medical challenge.

Politics solves by brute force what reason can not hope to accomplish. Nothing approaching a medical venture of this complexity and sensitivity could have been imagined in the Vienna of the 1770's: the world is not made of Mozarts! Isolated within a hostile medical establishment Franz Anton Mesmer felt himself under enormous pressure to prove, in a relatively short time, and that completely, that his methods could cure hysterical blindness. Gradualism was not an option.

For his detractors, the numerous unforeseen consequences of his "reckless experimentation" were interpreted as proofs of the intrinsic unsoundness of his ideas and methods. It being granted that Marie-Therese could - in a manner of speaking - "see": was there not a strong likelihood that Mesmer's irresponsible or even sacrilegious intervention into the natural order might result in the production of nothing more than a monstrous circus freak? Was it not more likely that a mentally unstable young woman, after sating the bottomless public appetite for novelties and miracles, was destined, for the rest of her life, to remain in

a condition of pitiable helplessness, neither blind nor seeing, bereft even of those musical talents that had heretofore promised her a splendid career?

Such dire prognostications, real or fanciful, were forcefully conveyed to Herr Joseph von Paradis and his wife by the group of doctors determined to ruin Mesmer. They reinforced in them the fear that with the loss of Marie-Therese's two principal economic assets, her musical talent and her blindness, the empress Maria-Theresa was sure to discontinue the royal pension.

Writers and historians commenting on the effect of this propaganda campaign are of two minds: there are some who maintain that Herr Joseph von Paradis was nothing more than a particularly odious petty monster, who for the sake of a miserable 200 gulden a year would rather his daughter remain blind for life. The other viewpoint, disdaining to stoop so ludicrously to cheap melodrama, argues that such venal projections had no effect at all on the von Paradis couple.

The truth of the matter is probably best approached by placing the fear of the loss of the pension in the context of the avalanche of worries and fears that had suddenly descended upon them. If there had been

little or no deterioration in the piano playing of Marie-Therese, she was already advanced to the stage as a professional performer when she could dispense with the royal pension. Her first recorded appearance on a concert stage was in 1770, age 10, in the Augustinian Church, with her godmother the empress in the audience. She sang the soprano part of the Pergolesi "Stabat Mater" , accompanying herself on the organ.

This precious vignette is of the highest eloquence. One senses how much the promise that this charming young prodigy would be able to see again, must have agitated the musical world of the times, the most extraordinary in history. Over the coming decades, quite a lot of money was made by between father and daughter. There is no evidence that the von Paradis family ever suffered hardship. On the contrary: both were generous contributors to subscription concerts and benefits for needy Viennese musicians right into the 19th century. If, however, her incapacity at the keyboard should prove permanent, *and* in addition the cure of her blindness only temporary or hopelessly botched, then there *did* indeed arise very serious problems in forecasting and planning her future.

Speaking with the advantage of over two centuries of hindsight, the logical next step was to stop the hypnotherapy for awhile and concentrate on the restoration of motor activity. Perhaps it was also the right moment, and with the greatest diplomacy, to arrange an audience with the empress, at which she could witness at first hand the progress that Marie-Therese had made in sight and vision. If handled properly, the pension, rather than being discontinued, could have shifted its purpose, from musical training to vision re-training, with a gradual restoration of her piano technique. It is just this, however, which the doctors at the Medical Faculty of the University of Vienna wished to avoid: a rise in the political currency of a pupil of Van Swieten, and a diminution of the prestige of Jan Ingenhousz.

Chapter 12
Finale, and Coda

V. Joseph II, Psychiatrist At Large

" My job makes me a royalist."
... Joseph II, responding to criticism by Voltaire

But for the next four months ,Joseph II would be in France , eagerly running around Paris setting up appointments to meet as many of its famous scientists, politicians and philosophers as he could.True to his Viennese roots , he also found time to act as a marriage counselor to sister Marie Antoinette and her husband, Louis XVI.

It appears that Louis was unable to produce orgasms, at least at the right moments: when they were most likely to lead to the prized offspring of the Bourbon dynasty. He felt comfortable confiding this embarrassing secret to Joseph II, whose advice was stern. In the words of the Holy Roman Emperor:

"Imagine! In his marriage bed - this is the secret - he has strong , perfectly satisfactory erections. He introduces the member, stays there for perhaps two minutes without moving, withdraws without discharging but still erect, and bids good night. It's incredible, because in addition he sometimes has night-time

emissions, but in his bed, never when on the job, and he's happy, saying simply that he only does it out of duty and gets no pleasure from it. Ah! If I could have been present once, I should have arranged it properly. He needs to be whipped, to make him discharge in a passion, like donkeys. Further, my sister is pretty placid, they're two incompetents together"

The royal couple may have followed his recipe. Marie-Antoinette gave birth to a son within the year, and both she and her husband sent letters thanking him. Evidently the psychiatric genius of Old Vienna extended even to the members of its aristocracy!

VI . The Greek Tragedy

"Alas! How terrible it is to know, Where no good comes of knowing!"

Sophocles ; Oedipus Rex

"Of mortal anguish a tempestuous sea"

... Aeschylus; Prometheus Bound

We now must come to the tragic events of the morning of April 29th, 1777. Earlier in the week there had been some friction between Dr. Mesmer and Herr von Paradis . von Paradis had shown up unexpectedly

at his clinic to demand the immediate return of his daughter. Mesmer had raised no objections, but evidently Marie-Therese herself refused to leave. Having survived the miseries of the first months and overcome a series of depressive crises, she wanted to persist in the therapy until it could be of some benefit to her. It is not difficult to read between the lines of the official account: she must also have been afraid of her parents. Mesmer and von Paradis exchanged angry words; then von Paradis abruptly left the clinic , swearing that he would be back with the law on his side.

On the morning of April 29th Mesmer was sitting at a table in the parlour of his house finishing up a small breakfast in the company of a certain baron Pelligrini, one of the chiefs of staff of the Austrian army . Some clinical assistants were also in the room. Outside, doormen , porters and gardeners were milling around the entrance to the mansion; a butler was stationed within the vestibule. It does not appear that Mesmer's wife was present.

In an adjoining room, behind a Japanese partition, stood Marie-Therese. She was being groomed by 2 maid servants for her usual morning stroll about the garden - not the 'fantastic garden' of the

previous episode, but evidently a charming private garden that was much admired at the time by Viennese society. Mozart will visit it in 1781. In a letter to his father he remarks with some sadness, that it had gone to seed.

The butler came into the parlour to announce the arrival of Marie-Therese's mother , Frau von Colnbach-Paradis. Upon hearing this, Marie-Therese cried that she did not want to see her, and begged Mesmer to hide her in the next room. Frau von Paradis was admitted. She was a stout and muscular woman, used to having her own way. Her state was agitated state but she endeavored to remain calm.

She stated that she'd come to apologize for her husband's rude behavior during the previous day. Mesmer told her not to trouble herself over it and invited her to breakfast. She declined, saying that she could not stay for very long. She then expressed a desire to see and talk with her daughter. Mesmer tried to put her off by saying that she was having breakfast in a different part of the estate; he may have been waiting for a more convenient time and place to bring them together. Upon hearing this ,Frau von Paradis totally lost her composure. Unleashing a volley of insults and accusations she threw herself at him.

A sound could now be heard coming from the other room: the uncontrollable, anguished weeping of Marie-Therese. Her mother raced across the parlour into the next room and discovered her daughter hiding behind the partition. She seized her by the arm and yanked her back into the parlour. It isrecorded that she yelled something like:

"So! You, too, are in the conspiracy against us!"

Then she picked up her sick daughter, still in the critical phase of her cure for psychosomatic blindness, and threw her headfirst against one of the walls of the room. The concussion knocked her unconscious. Marie-Therese collapsed to the floor, frothing at the mouth, blood pouring from her nose.

The general Pelligrini and a maid ran over to protect her. Screaming and shrieking Frau von Paradis turned on Mesmer himself , clawing and beating him with nails and fists. A servant pulled her away , pushed her down onto the floor and restrained her .

Suddenly the sounds and shouts of a violent quarrel were heard. It was Herr Joseph von Paradis, pushing his way past footmen, porters and gardeners, drawn sword in hand. He had been there all along, pacing impatiently before the front of the house, waiting for his wife to

emerge dragging along their daughter. Upon hearing her screams he'd unsheathed his sword and raced up the steps. The commotion rose in volume as he, followed by the servants, went up the spiral staircase of the entranceway to the mansion.

Livid with rage he burst into the living- room; his sword poised like a dagger, he ran at the person of Mesmer. Between the people in the room and those rushing after him from outdoors, he was restrained long enough for the household staff to wrest the sword out of his hand. Joseph von Paradis did an about-face; still shouting threats, he stormed out of the house.

In the meantime Frau von Paradis had fainted. As Mesmer attended to her, staff assistants and maid servants carried Marie-Therese to her bedroom. After her mother left that afternoon Mesmer went to examine her. She was in a delirium, at the onset of a severe hysterical crisis, and, once again, totally blind. She would remain so for the rest of her life. From Mesmer's own account:

" Meanwhile, the wife of Herr Paradis had swooned away. I gave her the necessary attention and she left some hours afterwards; but the unhappy daughter was suffering from fits, vomiting and rages. The slightest noise, such as the sound of bells, further aggravated her distemper. She had even relapsed into her previous

blindness through the violence of the blow on the head given her by her mother, and I had some fear for the state of her brain."

" O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!

Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,

Dungeon or beggary, or decrepit age!

Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,

And all her various objects of delight

Anulled, which might in part my grief have eased,

Inferior to the vilest now become

Of man and worm; the vilest here excel me,

They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, exposed

To daily fraud, contempt, abuse and wrong,

Within doors, or without, still as a fool,

In power of others, never in my own;

Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half"

.....Milton; Samson Agonistes

VII. A Modern Diagnosis

Reading of these terrible events, one is tempted to a number of conclusions:

(a) That grand melodramas such as the above were daily occurrences in the von Paradis household;

(b) That they were the root cause of the hysteria of Marie-Therese

(c) That her parents, both of weak and violent dispositions, could not bear the moral burden of the presence of a child restored to emotional health.

(d) That since family life was built around the psycho-physical dependency of their only child, her improving health threatened the stability of the home, as they conceived it.

(e) That they therefore deliberately, if unconsciously, and quite apart from whatever rationalizations they might have entertained, sabotaged her cure.

(f) That such an outcome was perhaps inevitable, it not being possible in the long run to cure just one member of a co-habiting family ,without giving equal attention to all the others.

VIII. Further Squalls and Sequels

"We be by laws eternal what we be" ..... Euripedes, The Euminedes

Herr von Paradis visited the Vienna U. medical school the next day to petition its doctors to force Mesmer to release his daughter to his charge. Yet he also wrote a letter that afternoon to Mesmer apologizing for his behavior and promising not to interfere further. It has been suggested that the doctors had counseled von Paradis to fake an apology to prepare the ground for the speedy return of Marie-Therese.

My feeling is that Herr von Paradis, a psychologically disturbed individual, very responsible and correct, yet overwhelmed by circumstances, was entirely sincere in both of these actions. This was a man who could, on one day, write a glowing account of Mesmer's treatment of his daughter for the newspapers, yet could also, just a few weeks later, attack him with his sword; a man who, after investing a fortune in a controversial cure for his daughter's condition, could also, when in a state of anger. ignore the sight of her sprawled on the floor with a possible concussion.

The Paradis couple were not alone in their confusion, in this crucial period at the end of the 18th century, the watershed of the

modern world, when the devastating power of the Industrial Revolution was poised to erupt upon the nations of Europe and the New World. The tragedies of the von Paradis family can be assimilated into the global accumulation of future shocks that shook Europe in the the 1770's, and which were destined to become increasingly frequent and severe : in Austria alone one counts 3 major wars in 30 years, all lost, wars that remade the map of the globe, (including the war that should really be considered World War I, the 7 Years War (1757-1764)) ; a revolution in the New World precipitating the overthrow of a 900 -year feudal order, with its incipient repercussions in France ; a peasant revolt in Bohemia in 1775, precipitated by the intended *abolition* of serfdom,; partition of Poland in 1772 , the historically unparalleled destruction of a millenial European kingdom, the very nation that in 1638 had rescued Austria from the Turks at the gates of Vienna ; the destruction of clerical power and privilege, begun by Maria Theresa and completed by Joseph in the next decade;

And in the domain of culture and fashion: the supplanting, in less than a decade, of the harpsichord by the piano necessitated more re-education for Herr von Paradis' difficult daughter. The publication and

distribution of the earliest fashion catalogues from France , the product of improved methods of printing and the revolution in textile manufactures meant that both wife and daughter would demand the latest fashions in style and dress. World and local populations would rise to unprecedented levels. New faiths, ideologies cults and creeds were emerging, the Masons, the Deists, the numerous Protestant schisms and sects, Mesmer's own Societies of Harmony …

We deplore today the fast pace of change, the increasing stress, the near impossibility of keeping step with technological innovation. Yet we are at least used to the phenomenon, though we don't like it and can't always deal with it effectively . Before 1770, people didn't know what stress meant, in our sense of the term; the shock of its first appearance in human history must have induced states akin to insanity in all of the nations affected by it. And indeed, the 19th century, known as the "golden age of hysteria", was about to begin.

For the von Paradis family the clash of medical philosophies and scientific ideologies embodied in the jealous professional war between Ingenhousz the Inoculator and Mesmer the Hypnotist, struck the final blow to precipitate the breakdown of the decorum which had

effectively concealed the crude violence of their domestic life from the gaze of genteel Vienna.

Anton Störck , now chairman of the medical school, wrote a letter to Mesmer demanding the immediate return of Marie-Therese to her family.

For all of his shortcomings Störck was not, like Ingenhousz, Mesmer's enemy . Reactionary he indeed was, and rather stupid as we have seen, but he does not seem to have borne a personal grudge against Mesmer. He had been one of Mesmer's teachers at the medical school of Vienna U., and the best man at his wedding. Nor did he seem to really mind that Mesmer had succeeded where he had failed. His initial reaction to Marie-Therese's progress had been positive, if lukewarm.

Thus, although as chairman of the medical school it was his duty to write such a letter he added a postscript, amounting to a sizable loophole, leaving it to Mesmer's discretion to keep Marie-Therese at the clinic if he thought that moving her might endanger her life.

Mesmer replied that she must not be moved in her present state; he requested that an observer from the faculty come to visit him to verify as much. A doctor was sent: he found Marie-Therese to be in an

incredible state, bed-ridden, vomiting, with periodic bouts of delirium, accesses of hysteria and prolonged fits of weeping. Her blindness was as total as it had been in January. The only improvement over her former condition was the reduction of her eyeballs to normal size. This gave her face a normal appearance. The raven-locked Medusa of the past could at last appear to have rejoined the human race.

It is very likely that, after the reception of this report, the Paradis couple were severely chastened by the medical faculty. Jan Ingenhousz at least, was a good doctor. Mesmer commanded that her parents stay away from the clinic until Marie-Therese had recovered her mental equilibrium. One more they apologized and agreed to comply.

In fact they stayed away for over a month. They negotiating through the medical faculty to take Marie-Therese home on June 8th for a weekend visit. Needless to say she was never returned to Mesmer's care.

Mesmer makes the claim that in those 5 weeks he was able to restore her sight back to where it had been before the events of April 29th. If she went blind again, he states, it was because of the madness of her family life. I find this very doubtful, and there is no evidence to

support it beyond Mesmer's own assertions. Such a miraculous recovery would certainly have reached the ears of the court and the medical faculty, which would have then been obliged to conduct a reasonably honest investigation.

Marius von Senden, in his classic treatise on the problems of recovered sight[liv] states as if it were a known fact, that Marie-Therese went blind again because of the collapse of the cribriform (porous) lenses. If this is so, then her psychosomatic blindness degenerated to a purely somatic and incurable form, and the final outcome was not the fault of anyone.

There is also another possibility, which is that in those remaining 40 days , Mesmer was able to re-establish contact with her subconscious penumbral vision. One of the lectures of Pierre Janet on hysteria, (*Lecture IX, pg. 195, see bibiliography* **) deals with the unique character of the psychosomatic symptoms relating to vision. He presents the evidence, in the form of carefully plotted graphs in polar coordinates (pgs. 202, 203, op. cit.) for a field of subconscious visual awareness beyond the narrow or even totally extinguished range of hysterically**

[liv] **Space and Sight; consult earlier bibliographies**

impaired vision. He states that he was able to convince Charcot of this fact, who found it quite remarkable. Quote:

"We have two visions, the central vision, which is accurate and attentive, and the peripheric vision, which is vacant, and of secondary importance. You see that the hysterical keeps only the first consciously, the second persisting quite unconsciously.....A young boy had violent crises of terror caused by a fire, and it was enough to show him a small flame for the fit to begin again. Now his visual field was reduced to 5 cms. and he seemed to see absolutely nothing outside of it. I showed that I could provoke his fit by merely making him fix his eyes on the central point of the perimeter and then approaching a lighted match to the eightieth degree...".

It may be that in establishing contact with this subconscious capacity for vision, Marie-Therese was able to respond to Mesmer's visual cues stimulated by, say, the waving of a wand, or through directing her attention upon specific objects. As for a "total restoration of vision" , it would have been asking too much even of the Great Hypnotist to pull off such a miracle.

IX Canon & Fugue, poco mosso

Marie-Therese readjusted with little difficulty to the familiar state of blind dependence; simpler to cope with, and not without its advantages. Her virtuosity at the keyboard returned. In 1784 , in the company of her mother and her tutor, Johann Riedinger, she began a grand tour of the capitals of Western Europe, lasting two years. The warmest acclaim came from Paris, where she gave 14 concerts. At some of these performances she was presented to the public by Antonio Salieri. Salieri, who dedicated an organ concerto to her, also maintained a correspondence with her father during her Parisian sojourn. This gives additional support to the hypothesis of an Ingenhousz-Salieri-Paradis political faction in opposition to the Mozart-Mesmer-Van Swieten camp.

Yet she and Mozart appear also to have been friends. He wrote a piano concerto for her specifically for this tour (#18 in B^{b} Köchel 456) to supplement the concertos by her teacher Kozeluch that supplied the bulk of her concerto repertoire [lv].

[lv] **The musicologist Ullrich (listed in a previous bibliography) argues that Mozart's concerto, with its tender slow movement (** *according to the musicologist Alfred Einstein, the "essence of the feminine"***) was not ready in time for her to have performed it in either Paris or London.**

She returned to Vienna via Berlin and Prague in 1786. She was in her mid-twenties. The archives of Viennese concert programs of the 18th century show that she was a consistently active figure on the concert stage of Europe's great capital of music until the age of 48. The summit of her fame was achieved in 1794, when a benefit concert for the war orphans and widows of this half century of warfare was held on January 21in the *Kleiner Redoutensaal* . The principal work on the program was her cantata*: Deutsches Monument Ludwigs des Unglucklichen* ,featured together with a new Haydn symphony and a Mozart aria sung by Aloysia Lange, Mozart's sister-in-law. After 1808, she devoted herself to teaching. She died in 1824.

The notoriety attached to the "case of Marie-Therese" compelled Mesmer to leave Vienna. He went to Paris, where his unorthodox theories and practices created so much public excitement that "Mesmerism" took on the coloration of a veritable political movement. Numerous books and articles have been written about this and I refer interested persons to them. Though his scientific theories were condemned by the royal commissions of 1784, he continued to practice successfully, and to proselytize his ideas in a network of Societies of

Harmony up until 1789. The "Mesmer Controversy" was eclipsed by the French Revolution; for the next 5 years he became a wanderer and a refugee.

In 1792 he returned to Vienna. His wife was dead and their estate in ruins, and it is doubtful that he would have stayed there very long . In any case the choice of alternatives was denied him , as he was expelled for Jacobin sympathies by the antediluvian government of Francis II .

Franz Anton Mesmer then retired to Frauenfeld , a small village on the Swiss-Swabian border, surrounded by his relations and the world of his childhood. Though he continued to write and publish books about Animal Magnetism, he remained in an obstinately cultivated obscurity, known only as a local faith healer, not sensibly different from similar practitioners in the neighboring countryside. In his final years he moved to the adjoining village of Meersburg to stay with relatives. He died in 1816.

IX. Which: Doctor or Witch Doctor?

"Und aussen, horch! Gin's trap, trap, trap,

Als wie von Rosseshufen

Und klirend stieg ein Reiter ab

An des Gelander Stufen..."

Gottfried Burger, "Lenore";
set to music by MT Paradis, 1789

The problem with writing about a subject like Franz Anton Mesmer, is that it is impossible to do so without taking sides. Two centuries after his condemnation by the French Academy in 1784 we are still unable to decide quite where to put him or his discoveries. Shall we consider him a "real" scientist, like Max Planck or Georg Mendel, proud possessor of a novel and important discovery misunderstood in his own time? Or should he instead be classified with the faith healers and gurus of cults , present and past , with Madame Blavatsky, Ron Hubbard, Rajneesh, Jerry Farwell and others? Or with those society doctors, so numerous today as ever, enriching themselves by preying on the sick souls of the powerful and wealthy?

None of these stereotypes are really appropriate. It is simply impossible to imagine that Franz Anton went into the study of his mansion one afternoon to emerge later that night with a magnificent and cynical scheme to hoodwink society. Relative to Cagliostro, whose star ascended and was eclipsed in roughly the same period, he is the

polar opposite. Mesmer believed in the scientific revolution; he was steeped in the science of his day; he believed that he was proceeding scientifically, that he was merely another contributor to the great international enterprise of scientific discovery.

For over two centuries he has been faulted for ascribing more importance to his theory of the magnetic fluid than to his impressive clinical record. It is easy to see why he did so. In the course of his therapeutic activity he actually saw the converging lines of force , and physically experienced, in the tensions of his own muscles, the savage powers of the fields he spoke of. Their impact to him was as immediate to him as the tug of gravity, the torque of mighty winds, the pressure of intense sunlight upon the optic nerves. It was essential to the success of his therapies, that his own organism should be so receptive to this tidal force in order for him to be able to manipulate it effectively in the minds and bodies of his patients.

The Freudians use the word transference; psychiatrists in general talk about abreaction, or catharsis; mystics, saints and traditional religious faith healers speak of the power of God or Christ; other traditions speak of shakti, macumba, manes; modern hypnotists speak

of trance. All these terms, though offering little in the way of 'scientific' explanation, are equally effective in conveying the experience of the therapist and his patient in the presence of the concentrated force field of elemental psychic energy.

With his excellent scientific education, it was only to be expected that he would substitute a fashionable and successful scientific theory, Newtonian gravitation, for the description of a phenomenon that such faith healers as Gassner and John Wesley had called the Divine Light. In this respect he was no different from his immediate predecessors.

Yet in one important respect he improved upon them. Since the powers under his command were assumed to be natural, they could be observed and recorded. The growing field of medical statistics, initiated by Pascal and Huygens in the 17th century, could be brought to bear on more carefully compiled files of case histories. Therapies and their follow-ups could be analysed, compared and disputed. Previous to this one dared attempt no such thing with the "power of God"!

It is because of this that Mesmer is considered today to have founded the field of psycho-therapy, although the phenomena he described had been known for millennia.

The modern consensus appears to be that, although he may be considered both scientist and charlatan, he was not terribly good at either profession. His scientific theories were debunked with admirable thoroughness by Franklin, d'Alembert, Bailly, Lavoisier, Buffon, Guillotin and others in 1784 (with an important dissenting opinion by Jussieu) . His career as a charlatan in Paris and Spa came to an end with the outbreak of the French revolution.

Yet there is one title that historians will never be able to deprive him of: a gifted *doctor* , of prodigious talent and inexhaustible dedication one of the finest *practitioners* (in the best sense of the word) in our entire European tradition.

X. Full Cadence

What moral, if any, is there to be drawn from this absorbing, inherently tragic tale, woven from fact far more compelling than any fiction? Moral? I know of none. Perhaps some obscure laws of compensation; some deep insights, possibly, into the artistic

personality, the nature of science, and of medicine; the pitiful frailty of the human condition; yet, at the same time its indestructible dignity, integrity and power. Perhaps this is no more than a bittersweet legend; some saga of love and struggle, of failure, confusion, idealism, hope ..... one of those precious gems, glowing ever more brightly with each retelling, embedded in the brickwork and masonry of that ungainly yet monumental cathedral, now so much under attack , which we may still, with appropriate modesty, call the civilization of the West?

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