

# Madrian Literature Circle

## Intellect Against Intellectualism

Sketches towards a manifesto for Madrian education

Sometimes one is asked if Madrian thought is anti-intellectual, or even anti-rational. Well, we are anti-rationalist, which is not the same thing as being anti-rational, and we are against intellectualism, but strongly in favour of intellect.

These last two are not in the least similar - indeed, they are opposites. Anyone who has moved in the 'intellectual' circles of the universities and elsewhere will know that certain truisms are universally accepted as a starting-point of all thought: a quasi-materialist construction of the world (even in those who profess a religion; a progressivist-evolutionist construction of history; an implicit and unquestioning rejection of certain areas of human experience as 'mumbo-jumbo'. In short, a narrow and self-complacent world-view which rests on a group of assumptions which have never been tested or discussed, or even thought about critically.\*

It is not our purpose here to criticise these assumptions in detail, but only to point out that intellect is the direct opposite of intellectualism.

Intellectualism - being an 'intellectual' - entails working within the framework of an accepted world-scenario, not going beyond certain 'respectable' assumptions. A lot of intellectual one-upmanship centres around being au fait with the most fashionable new thing to think.

But intellect is a razor-sharp sword which slices through received ideas and fashionable assumptions. Intellectualism can display considerable agility on the surface of things, but must never question its basic assumptions. But intellect always penetrates to the heart and core of the matter; always begins from first principles and tests the ground on which it is standing. Intellect is radical - it starts from the roots of things. Intellectualism (though the word is bandied about with ludicrous frequency by intellectuals) can never be radical.

So does the Madrian attempt to work without assumptions? Not at all; that is precisely what the intellectual does. The intellectual is never aware that her assumptions are assumptions. That is why they have such an iron grip over her. The Madrian accepts the simple psychological truth that the human mind is unable to proceed without some working hypothesis. If we do not construct our own assumptions we will passively and unconsciously accept those which happen to be around us. We can suspend judgement, but we cannot suspend the grounds upon which we would make a judgement if we chose to. Anyone who thinks she can do that is merely suspending her intellect.

The choice is not between having assumptions and not having assumptions. The choice is between on the one hand having our own freely chosen assumptions which we are able to criticise and modify and even reject if necessary, and on the other absorbing our assumptions through the pores, as it were, from the surrounding cultural atmosphere and being unable to question them because we are not even aware of their existence. We either assume our assumptions or are assumed by them.

### qualism

The essence of intellect<sup>is</sup> implicit in its name: that it makes an 'ism' - a creed - of intellect or rational consciousness instead of regarding it as one faculty among others. At the root of this creed lies an emotional necessity bred by one of the primary assumptions of the intellectual milieu: the assumption of a mindless or meaningless or Godless universe. Given that the universe has no meaning, the only thing we can trust, the only thing that is not utterly alien and void, is the human mind - and only the conscious part of that. To trust any message from without, or even from within, is to give way to the amoral and meaningless chaos of the mindless universe.

Thus a fully rational world must be constructed wherein we deny all that cannot be contained within the quantitative formulations of rational calculation. We cannot admit that the assumptions of rationalism are assumptions, because the primary assumptions of rationalism cannot, of course, be established by reason (we cannot use reason to prove that reason is right). Therefore these assumptions must be established as tenets - as dogmas which do not need proof. Reason itself must have come about as the result of something which preceded reason (either Deity or the accident of evolution). But evolution is a part of the mindless universe - there is no reason to suppose that its products will give us anything which can be called "truth". A hundred contradictions lie at the roots of rationalism which a truly radical investigation of any subject will begin to uncover. That is why rationalistic humanism can never be radical. The consequences to emotional security would be too disastrous. The intellectual is as one who climbs a ladder and dare not look down - for the feet of the ladder are not resting on the ground.

Celia Green in The Human Evasion has shown how the various branches of academic study are devices not for discovering reality but for avoiding it. Similarly, their characteristic technique of splitting up study into smaller and smaller specialisms is a device for concentrating attention on minute sections of the surface rather than on the Whole, and also for implying that nobody is really competent to say anything about the Whole.

For the Madrian, to look at the universe is not a Blick ins Chaos ("Fear not the unknown" says the Goddess, "for I am the Unknown"). She believes in the ultimate meaning of the universe, though it is a meaning far beyond the grasp of dialectical reason. She also knows that the roots of her primary assumptions lie "before and beyond" the rational process. Therefore she has no fear of the radical examination of any subject.

The Madrian sees rational meaning as but the tip of the iceberg of all actual and potential forms of meaningfulness. She does not need to reduce all things to quantitative description; neither does she perpetuate the artificial distinction between the 'objective' and the 'subjective'. Moral and spiritual phenomena are just as objective as material and physical ones. All events are the material outworking of a subtle complex of spiritual and moral causes.

The masculine principle in education tends toward the fragmentary study of 'things out there'. The feminine principle is organic. To study any thing is to study a microcosm, and therefore a reflection of some aspect of the Whole and of oneself. As masculinism increases as the cultural and spiritual dominating principle, the prerogative of discovering things about the Whole becomes

limited to a progressively smaller elite, and finally disappears entirely. As feminism increases, it devolves to each individual, since we seek not only definitive rational formulations, but personal and subjective revelations.

We believe that these principles contain in embryo the whole theoretical basis of Madrian education. But it will be asked how they are to be applied, and whether, if they should be applied, they would not turn study into a mere subjective reverie. Again we must direct attention to the difference between the masculine and feminine principles. The masculist method is to wrestle in an almost physical way with externalities; the feminist method lies in subtle but radical modulations of the informing principle, the noumenon which must in turn affect the whole. To use the metaphor of a circle; the masculist method operates on the circumference where many miles represent but a few degrees, while the feminist method works at the centre where the slightest shift may represent a great arc at the circumference.

The practical application of these principles will depend upon the circumstances with which we are presented. The ideal unit of Madrian education is the school community. The organic concept is central to Madrian thought about community and the individual. In the extreme of masculist materialism to which profane society is now approaching, the individual is regarded as a socio-economic unit with no real individuality. She cannot be regarded apart from the community, but at the same time, being a fragmentary unit whose existence ends (both spatially and temporally) with her physical body\*\* she can have no real spiritual cohesion with the community, but is only bound to it by physical and emotional necessity. Madrianism, on the other hand, sees the individual as microcosmos: the immortal expression of an unique mode or facet of Deity, imperfect, yet potentially sublime. The primary educative purpose of the community is: to assist the moiraic\*\*\* development of the soul towards perfection. In order to perform this function, the outlook of the community must be Theacentric rather than anthropocentric, for only in a truly organic community can each member be equally complete in herself and a part of the whole rather than an enforced unit. In the ideal organic community the moira of each will harmonize with the moira of the whole. The only way in which a community can become a spiritual organism is by attuning itself with the Source and Fountainhead of all spiritual life. The community which is turned towards the Goddess will achieve human development as a natural consequence. The community which neglects spiritual development in favour of purely humanistic aims will achieve neither.

But we are not speaking merely of "spiritual development" in the narrow sense in which the term is usually used, for all genuine personal development is spiritual development (conversely, it is the absence of spiritual nourishment in the modern world which accounts for the widespread lack of real personal development). The Madrian concept of education is rather wider than the more conventional concept. As masculism, and with it the need for an exclusively rational construction of the universe, has increased, the process of educating the individual has been seen increasingly in terms of equipping her to appreciate and participate in this construction. Education has concentrated on the mental and academic functions, dropping the non-academic individual as quickly as possible and finding her an embarrassment in the interim. Attempts to deal with this have only increased the problem, since the basic assumptions remain unchanged, with a slight shift of emphasis from rationalism to utilit-

arianism ("fitting the individual for society"). The Madrian philosophy recognises that academic development is not the métier of every individual, and sees that not as a shortcoming, but as an indication that the person is in a mode or phase of moiraic development which does not entail a very great participation of the faculty of intellect. Education should in some cases, therefore, concentrate on creative development of a non-academic kind, and should always contain an element of it.

This does not, however, indicate a neglect of academic standards, or of reason and logic. The profane intellectual community, for all its implicit ideological rationalism, is not notable for its crisp and clean use of reason. On the contrary, there is a tendency greater than at most historical periods towards vagueness of concept and slipshod intellectual operation. This is precisely because of the ideology of rationalism. Conscious reason and material causality are stretched far beyond their legitimate province in order to explain (or explain away) the whole material and spiritual phenomenon of the manifest universe. Both logically and psychologically this is damaging to the legitimate operation of reason. Logically, because extending beyond its province, rational-material causality is made to perform conjuring tricks in order to seem to encompass that which it cannot encompass - and having once been used in such contrived and fantastical ways, it becomes impossible to restrict it to that strictness and economy upon which its genuine effectiveness rests. Psychologically, because the human mind necessarily thinks in mythic terms whether it will or no; if reason is to be the sole medium of truth, then rationalistic mythologies must be created. Mythology and reason are both media of truth, but unless each is recognised and respected on its several level of interpretation, then each must do violence to the other. Rational "explanation" is a destroyer of myth, and equally mythologisation is a destroyer of reason. Yet mythologisation there will be, if other myths are to be denied (or explained). Thus the intellectual, denied all teleology, will make a vague quasi-teleology of evolution; sometimes explicitly, using nonsensical phrases like "cultural evolution" or "social evolution"; sometimes denying it in explicit terms, but allowing it to ferment among the half-stated assumptions which provide the backdrop to all her thought - thus she uses terms such as retrogressive, reactionary, progressive, forward-looking as statements of value. We shall not here multiply examples of the mythologisation of rational-material concepts.

No longer forced to bear unnatural burdens, and cleansed of the adulteration of false usage, reason can take its rightful place among the human faculties and become the sharp and accurate instrument that it should be. The Madrian who has aptitude for the use of intellect will be trained to use it with a cleanliness and precision which is becoming all but impossible elsewhere. For the present generation of new Madrians who wish to place their mental faculties at the service of our Lady, the first educational task will be to sharpen the sword of intellect, long blunted by ill-use, and to learn to wield it with skill and confidence.

But thought must also be creative. Intellect is an instrument for testing, for dividing, for paring away. Nothing is more debilitating to academic thought than the need to pretend that all its conclusions are derived from observation and reason. All worthwhile thought is an act of spontaneous creation. Observation provides some of the raw material, reason is one of the tools, but the act

of creation transcends both of these. Every act of thought is a self-expression of the soul. To act in ignorance of this fact leads to two opposite and complementary errors: the suppression of creativity in the name of 'objective thought' (a contradiction in terms, since thought by its very nature is subjective; could real 'objectivity' exist, it would be the property of a mindless automaton); and the casting aside of all the disciplines of thought or creation in the name of 'free expression', a term equally meaningless, for all articulate thought is an act of self-expression, and no expression can be free, for the very difficulty of expressing the essentially inward and inarticulate matter of the soul's experience is the greatest of all constraints. All the disciplines of thought and creation are but devices for the overcoming of this constraint.

Creativity of thought cannot, of course, be 'taught', but teaching in the conventional sense should not be the major part of education. The disciplines of thought can and should be taught; facts and precepts should be taught and the teaching process, as an inculcator of mental discipline, can be beneficial. The negative function of teaching (in its narrower sense) is the overcoming of the inertia natural to each of us; its positive function is the provision of material. But the full function of education is the provision of impetus and the incubation of the positive development of the soul through the moira-pattern of her present incarnation. This will be achieved partly through all the functions of teaching in the broadest sense, and partly through the spiritual orientation of the whole community.

## Section II: Some Practical Propositions

A Madrian school should be a unified whole, containing no sharp division between those who 'teach' and those who 'are taught'. Education is a way of self-development via the pursuit of wisdom (which may include, but is by no means coterminous with, knowledge). Every member of the community should be engaged in the process of education. The chain of authority should extend downwards as far as possible with the greatest practicable degree of self-government at every level; and there should be no radical change in this structure as one moves from the most senior students to the most junior staff. It has been suggested that the words 'students' and 'staff' be replaced by 'seminary' and 'academy' respectively. More tentatively, it has been suggested: 1) that seminary should include some junior staff members 2) that the line of demarcation should be variable according to individual cases 3) that there should be some intermediary category including some staff and some students 4) that academy should include some senior students.

It is unnatural for any community to continue its activities without variance through winter and summer. The cycle of the seasons is a hierophany, a showing-forth of the Divine Mysteries in every level of nature, from the ebb and flow of vegetative life to the undefinable intricacies of movement in the subtlest strata of unconscious intelligence. The attempt to make the human mind independent of this cycle typifies the hubris of masculist culture. But the mind is never separated from the cycle, only estranged from it. The Madrian community should bring its work into harmony with the pulse of the macrocosm. At the most elementary levels of the educative process, as many areas of study as possible should vary in aspect and approach according to the seasonal changes of nature, the divine Mysteries and festivals of each period of the year, and, a little

later, the elements and principles which each season brings to the fore. Some work or activity should be organised for each festival. At higher levels of study, the connections can be more tenuous, but a consideration of the intellectual principles corresponding to each season and element should be encouraged to have its effect upon academic work. In doing this, we swim, as it were, with the tides and currents of nature, rather than swimming indifferently against or across them. The power of the mind is thus enhanced both in force and (since we are attuning ourselves to the true interior of things, rather than clumsily attempting to manipulate the exterior by the intellectual equivalent of brute strength) in subtlety. This will be reinforced by the seasonal decorations, activities, etc. of the community. It is also suggested that account be taken of the lunar cycle.

From the lowest levels to the highest, the mind should be encouraged to dwell upon the great questions of the universe, of time and eternity. No child is too young for this. It is natural that the growing mind should turn upon these things and it comes naturally to most children. We have also found that intelligent discussions upon radical metaphysical questions are at present rather more common in schools than in universities. Such discussion is progressively discouraged by the prevailing ideology, and even labelled 'adolescent'. Many immediate reasons can be given for this: the lack of the necessary world-philosophical framework within which such speculation could take place; a despair of ever collating all the quantitative data and harmonising all the specialisms - the only approach that late-masculist academicism could consider - such speculation would have to be the work of a hundred committees and certainly not the quest of an individual mind. But the underlying logical reason (we will leave aside the psychological and spiritual reasons) is the masculist conception of knowledge. We recall the criterion that a PhD thesis must be "a significant and substantial contribution to knowledge" and cannot but be amused that the highest minds of the profane world have this absurd quantitative conception of knowledge on the model of a stamp collection or a box of money. Quite simply, the intellectual shies from these eternal questions because she does not believe that a definitive answer can ever be found. But no answer, however true, could be definitive, nor could it be understood by a mind not closely attuned to the question and the particular way of approaching it. The purpose of discussions of these questions is to heighten awareness of the questions and to produce not definitive answers, but rays of light which illumine from without the inward meaning which they represent. To one steeped in the intellectual construction of the world, it is sometimes hard to explain that myths show forth reality but do not depict it; but it is nearly always impossible to explain that our intellectual concepts are but analogies and not descriptions of reality, and that two opposing conceptual structures might allegorize the same reality. And yet the only real philosophical justification claimed by profane 'science' is that it works, it produces results; and surely it is obvious enough that if western Europe had had a different cultural history, all the empirical realities enshrined in the 'scientific' construction of reality might have been enshrined in some different and incompatible (but equally 'scientific') construction of reality, and would have worked equally well.

Since academic work is a form of creative expression, it should be regarded as being akin to art; and a piece of academic work no less than a poem or a sculpture or a picture can be made as a festival offering or a devotional artefact. We wish also to create a community capable of appreciating this form of

art. But in order that it may be appreciated, it is necessary that a clear and elegant style of language be cultivated in place of the wordy and clichéd speech or obscure jargonese prevalent in profane intellectual circles. Academic discourse is not a species of poetry; nevertheless the concept expressed and the words used to express it can never be entirely separated. On the level of simple logic, it is notorious that unclear language can blur and cover up for unclear and faulty thought, while a lucid style of expression literally forces the mind to come to terms with a subject and make clean and definite connections between concepts. But also, language should be used to convey the weight and nuance of concepts, and all the qualitative aspects which the materialist quantitative approach tries to ignore. The belief that concept is all important and the means to its expression merely incidental has left many students without the verbal equipment either to express or to analyse complex concepts, or even to tidy up their own thought (there is also an opposite and complementary movement, cognate with the 'free expression' error, which in poetry and a form of quasi-existential thought strives to use language in a purely qualitative manner. This, instead of producing slogans, clichés and jargon, produces a purely emotional and exclamatory language without form or structures. Normal intellectual discourse is a fairly even mixture of the two styles). Madrian education must develop the ability to build verbal structures capable of sustaining clear and complex thought.

Where possible, the academy of a Madrian school should be based upon a religious community of one of the Madrian Orders. But the Madrian educational community should not be restricted to physical groups living and working together, but should encompass all Madrians pursuing the academic path of self-development. It is here that our recommendations can take most immediate effect. We suggest the formation of a 'scattered' academy, whose most fundamental tasks will be to teach and practise the principles of Madrian criticism in various fields. The criticisms made as part of the work of the academy can be fed back into the academy to provide material, thus building up a corpus of Madrian criticism in various areas of study. The purpose of this academy will be twofold: 1) the creation and training of a pioneer group of Madrian theorists; 2) The laying of the foundations for a restructuring of philosophy, theology, world-history etc. in the light of the underlying philosophies of the feminine principle and the Madrian faith. The task of those teaching will be to suggest critical projects and to guide the development of a Madrian-feminist critical approach. As soon as a degree of proficiency is attained, students should also be assigned to helping others who are less experienced. Groups should be convened where possible, but if necessary the process can take place entirely by correspondence.

As the masculine principle expands into its final cultural phase, becoming larger and more widespread, but rapidly approaching the point of utter spiritual diffusion, the new feminist academies will form the nucleus of the movement which shall replace it; as hard and small and concentrated as it is vast and diffuse, as seemingly insignificant as it is all-pervasive, and more unlike it than anything that has been seen upon the earth through five millennia.

## Notes

\* An amusing example of this was provided by Marina Warner in an abstract of her book on Mary written for one of the glossy Sunday newspaper supplements. She made no arguments whatever against pseudomariolatry in the Christian-catholic church, but only gave a list of some of the more un-Lutheran practices, as if she could rely on her audience to have the same reactions as the No Popery men of the Gordon riots, or the Orange Order. At first this seemed strange coming from an ex Christian-catholic, but then one realised that her attitudes were at one with most modern intellectual Christian-catholics. Protestantism is the injection of of urban rationalism into the organic and sacramental nature of genuine popular religion (an injection so alien to the real nature of religion that the logical and inevitable end of Protestantism is self-destruction). The modern intellectual Christian-catholic must accept a de facto Protestantism as the only way of reconciling religion with late-masculist intellectualism.

Interestingly, she ended the article by invoking Marx. Like most Marxist sympathisers, she displays an aristocratic contempt for the genuine traditions of the people wherever they have not succumbed to the conditioning of the bourgeois mass-media.

\*\* This conception of the individual as a closed-off unit is a necessary psychological expression belonging to the current spiritual phase of profane culture. That is why evidence of extrasensory phenomena, though not in itself damaging to the logic of even the strictest materialism, is ignored.

\*\*\* Personal moira is defined as the whole moral and spiritual state of the individual, which finds expression in her outward circumstances, in her mental and physical attributes, and in the interplay of these with her subjective state of consciousness. It is similar, though not identical, to the Buddhist concept of Karma. It may be seen as a principle of cause and effect, or as a stratum of the unconscious which is continuous through incarnation and disincarnation, though it is something greater than either.