

INJURED PARTIES

Snuffed Out

by Theodore Dalrymple

April 05, 2015

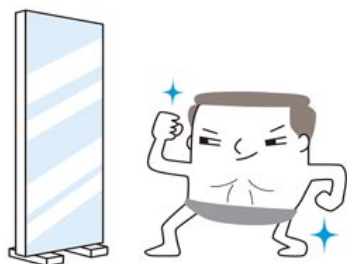


photo credit: Shutterstock

The least one can say of the psychiatric treatment given to Andreas Lubitz, the pilot who killed 149 people as well as himself in crashing the Germanwings aircraft into the Alps, is that it was not very successful. Indeed, its outcome was about as

disastrous as any in the history of medicine, but that may not be entirely its fault: perhaps the whole idea of such treatment was misconceived in the first place.

It seems to me likely (though I could not swear to it in a court of law) that Lubitz's problem was one of character rather than of illness, and therefore unsusceptible to so-called treatment. Indeed, the very notion of such treatment might have been an obstacle to his self-amelioration, in so far as it would have given him the impression that he was ill and it was therefore up to others to cure him. When they failed to do so, which was inevitable, he felt absolved of responsibility for his own state.

He was by all accounts a narcissistic type; and, as with many another, his enthusiasm for fitness wasn't for fitness *for* any end other than a purely self-regarding one. Perhaps one should not read too much into isolated photographs, but nevertheless the picture of him out running, pouting as if engaged on something serious and staring ahead with earphones in his ears to exclude the outer world from obtruding on him in his self-absorbed bubble, suggested a man more than usually self-centred.

Unconfirmed reports, which I think are likely one day to be confirmed, also suggest that he was determined to make more of a mark in the world than his native talents would permit, reducing him to the necessity of doing something terrible to catch the attention of the world that he so craved, and no doubt felt that he deserved. For narcissists, anonymity is the worst of fates.

"For narcissists, anonymity is the worst of fates."

Moreover, he is reported to have had a severe *chagrin d'amour* – or rather, I suspect, a *crise de jalousie* – not long before he crashed the aircraft. He was also said to have been a man of swiftly-changing mood, as the jealous often are: one minute domineering to

the point of violence, the next apologetic and dove-like in their promises of reform. Such jealous men do not love the object of their supposed affections, but rather themselves: they need a lover as a prop to their own conception of themselves. When, therefore, a lover threatens to leave them, or actually does so, usually as a consequence of their own erratic behaviour, they are plunged into a crisis of outraged anger. In the best of circumstances, that anger declines and disappears once they find another lover-victim: but before this happens they often become violent. In crashing his plane and killing so many, Lubitz may well have been taking his revenge upon the woman who so wounded his vanity: 'See what you made me do! I told you I would do something terrible. You'll have those people on your conscience for the rest of your life.' According to my hypothesis, Lubitz was not so much depressed as angry with his lover, the world and fate.

Of course, I might have to abandon my suspicions in the light of further evidence: that, for example, he did not have a *chagrin d'amour*, and that he displayed none of the character traits I have attributed to him. Perhaps his action was caused by a *bona fide* illness and not by his character; but that would not alter the question I want to ask, and that has long puzzled me: how does one come by a bad character? For the bad character I have attributed to him is one of which I saw many examples in my work.

Some, no doubt, are born bad, either by heredity or congenital circumstances (not quite the same thing, of course). Such persons might be few, but they seem to exist: those who, from the age at which they are able to exert choice, choose the horrible, the vicious, the cruel, the forbidden, the disgusting as a matter of course. If this is so, if their attraction to the morally reprehensible is quasi-biological or neurological in origin, can any moral blame attach to their acts? The acts themselves may be bad, but can the doer of them be so?

Then there is the effect upon character of upbringing, social circumstances and the general cultural environment. In no case is there a one-to-one correspondence between any of these supposed factors and character: the

worst upbringing for example, does not in every case give rise to the worst characters, nor does the best upbringing necessarily give rise to the best characters. Nevertheless, there is a statistical tendency strong enough to suggest an influence: in which case some might argue that the culpability of those of bad characters who have been exposed to deleterious influences beyond their control is lessened. Taken to extremes, of course, this argument leads to the denial of all individual responsibility.

As for cultural influences, I cannot help but think that our culture is propitious to the promotion of narcissism of the type that I suspect that Lubitz suffered from – or made others suffer from. Such narcissism is not new, for where human frailty is concerned there is nothing new under the sun: it is the frequency of the respective

frailty rather than its novelty that is at issue.

It is said, however, that by the age of forty every man has the face that he deserves. The same might be said of a man's character, only earlier in his life. It is part of the mystery and glory (perhaps also of the misery) of human existence, that our character is in part self-created: not entirely, but not negligibly, either. We are dealt a hand of cards, no doubt, but we do not have to play them in a pre-determined order. No determinist, however firm his philosophical belief, can live as if determinism were true: therefore he can never believe what he believes, or tells himself that he believes.

Psychiatry will never make the likes of Andreas Lubitz whole (if he was as I surmise he was), and of this, in a way, I am glad: for it means that the powers of psychiatry will remain limited. We shall never be putty in technicians' hands. That is not the same as saying that he should have been allowed to fly aircraft. A little more stigma and prejudice would have saved the 149 lives he so egotistically snuffed out.

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**Pearlback** · 13 days ago

...#1, yeah, but the rush just isn't the same any more. Anyway, genuine illness vs. poor character isn't really the whole question. The guy sounds like he was always some kind of as*hole, but how much did the "cure" of drugs have to do with this? Big Pharma doesn't want to go there, and the guy who tends to side with power doesn't seem to want to, either.

9 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›

**InsideOut** → Pearlback · 13 days ago

Actually I would like to ask the Dr directly about this, if I get your drift. All or nearly all of the school shooters and mass murderers are on Big Pharma drugs or they have been and withdrew against Dr's orders. How much might withdrawing exacerbate their problems?

My daughter's friend was a pretty normal if indulged teen until he was put on drugs. His father was a Dr and his mother a "therapist." I think they were just comfortable with it because they put so many others on them. At any rate he was pretty drugged up he said if he couldn't think straight he would rather be dead, and killed himself.

It is tragic how many kids are out on these dripugs and even more tragic how many commit murder or suicide on them. The warning labels always say that they cause suicidal thoughts, so it's not as if there is any denying. And yet there is no culpability or even discussion of these facts.

What say you Dr D?

18 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›

**Pearlback** → InsideOut · 13 days ago

Well, the fact that many of these types of drugs can cause suicidal tendencies is basically non-controversial, right? So, yeah--the issue is mass censorship.

8 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›

**InsideOut** → Pearlback · 13 days ago

Agreed. It seems people should be monitored much more closely because of it. Not practical I realize.

6 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›

**Pearlback** → InsideOut · 13 days ago

Or... not put on these drugs in the first place,

maybe, especially if they drive planes for a living.

11 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



le Père Mersenne → Pearl Buck · 13 days ago

The last time I was involved in the U.S. Mil's recruiting process, candidates who were on any sort of psychotropic drug were denied outright. That was awhile ago, however. Things may have changed for the worse in the interim.

Now, if we could only get this rule instated for the rest of the gubbermint...

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



ericjg623 → le Père Mersenne · 13 days ago

Yeah, well, they also used to ask, flat out, right on the recruiting form "Are you a homosexual?" There was a box for "Yes" and "No" and if you checked "Yes", the application process ended right there.

6 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



le Père Mersenne → ericjg623 · 13 days ago

Oh, no! Think how many PFC Bradley, er Chelsea Mannings we missed out on!

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Sean Detente → ericjg623 · 12 days ago

Allen Dulles' book "Craft of Intelligence" he stated rather outright homosexuals should be screened out as much as possible. Given troons like Bradley Manning seem to have treacherous proclivities, I think Dulles was on to something.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



BobJ → Sean Detente · 12 days ago

But it's OK to recruit troons who enjoy shooting innocent people and their children down in the streets with their helicopter gunship and laugh about it?

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Trutherator → BobJ · 12 days ago

Well, from recent current events, it would not be suprising to find out that there is a great confluence between the two. Bully #1 is the head of the WH's anti-bullying operation, for example.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Ronald Roman → BobJ · 9 days ago

Sure, that is what the military does. Kills the enemy. Well, not anymore. Now, they reconstruct nations, fight Ebola...and such.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Trutherator → Sean Detente · 12 days ago

But from the characters in the JFK saga, the exclusion was phony or was skirted by recruiters.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



wolf7 → ericjg623 · 10 days ago

Ah, for the good old days !

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Absolom Humblebug → le Père Mersenne · 12 days ago

How long ago was that? Because these days, users of SSRIs aren't even necessarily denied a

users of SSRIs aren't even necessarily denied a TS clearance.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



le Père Mersenne → Absolom Humblebug · 12 days ago

Early '90s. The rules for new recruits maybe different than the rules for those who have made it through basic, been exposed to combat, and then have been treated for PTSD, etc.

Quick search found this story from 1996:

<http://articles.sun-sentinel.c...>

and this from 2013:

<http://climbingthecindercone.c...>

I don't believe Ritalin is a SSRI, but I can imagine that the rules are similar.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Caprizchka → Pearluck · 13 days ago

However even Cognitive Behavioral Therapy without drugs is problematic in my view. Somehow I don't believe that outside assistance in character development can come in a box but rather requires love, and probably by aged two. After aged two, I'm not sure if there is anything that can be done.

11 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Pearluck → Caprizchka · 13 days ago

Yeah, and when you look at the way many unwed welfare mothers neglect and abuse their babies, it should come as no surprise that certain demographics have astronomic crime rates. I have to say, it is kind of an argument for victimhood, though, don't you think? If certain types of essential brain development don't occur because of neglect... ah, never mind.

My main point is this--yeah, therapy is probably largely a waste of time and money, too, but the real outrage is that we seem to be taking relatively benignly troubled people and turning them into something dangerous (to us) with these chemicals.

11 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



le Père Mersenne → Caprizchka · 13 days ago

I have seen it written that feral or abused children who are not exposed to language by age 4 never learn to speak.

Noam Chomsky first came to prominence for a book stating the theory "that the principles underlying the structure of language are biologically determined in the human mind and hence genetically transmitted... In this he opposes the radical behaviourist psychology of B.F. Skinner..."

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Zarathustraman → le Père Mersenne · 13 days ago

You've probably heard of the "orphan study" but in case you haven't, here's a link:

<http://www.truthmagazine.com/a...>

I just find that kind of stuff interesting.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



le Père Mersenne → Zarathustraman · 13 days ago

I hadn't seen that. Thanks.

Many of the stories regarding feral children seem to be bogus.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S...>

The subject is interesting in a horrifying sort of way.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



PJ London → Caprizchka · 12 days ago

What has CBT to do with character development?

Two points, SSRI's have as side effects both Suicidal tendencies and uncontrollable anger effects. The problem is that the drugs help (maybe) 500 out of every thousand. Has no effect on another 495 per thousand. Increases the suicidal thoughts of 4 per thousand and creates 1 person with uncontrollable aggression. With 30 million people taking SSRI's in America alone, the outcome is a disaster.

CBT is about thinking and teaching the individual to analyse how his emotions and responses work. In this way the individual can accept or change his responses to stimuli. The character remains the same, only the chosen behaviour may differ. It helps create a thinking, rational person rather than a reactive one. A sociopath becomes a rational sociopath, although the therapist may go nutty.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Noraad → Pearlback · 13 days ago

Sandy Hook Teen.

There are so many out there. and always have been.

It seems we only hear of the ones who kill more the one.

The MSM must have the Drama!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



InsideOut → Pearlback · 12 days ago

I'll vore for that.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



CD File → Pearlback · 13 days ago

More than two thirds of people taking antidepressants 'may NOT actually have depression': Doctors discover many do not meet the official criteria

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/hea...>

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



John O'Neill → InsideOut · 13 days ago

It certainly does not help that big Pharm controls the American media/political complex. That Is why they immediately go to scapegoating the NRA after a mass shooting; it gives Big Pharm and its medical storm troopers cover.











9 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Oldand Grumpy → John O'Neill · 13 days ago

"Point those guns the other way !"

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›

-  **tdrag** → John O'Neill · 13 days ago
So now they will go after "Big Airline". After this little episode, I doubt if Lufthansa will be around much longer
5 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **Caprizchka** → tdrag · 13 days ago
Perhaps that's the whole point.
2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **Anton Chigurh** → tdrag · 13 days ago
Nah, nothing will happen to Big Airline, except one thing which I guarantee: your tickets will become more expensive, like they do every year and every decade. This is to cover costs of future lawsuits, legal divisions, etc.
6 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **tdrag** → Anton Chigurh · 13 days ago
That's OK. I only fly about once every 10 or 15 years whether I need to or not.
1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **Anton Chigurh** → tdrag · 12 days ago
I have too much family in Europe, I wish I had that luxury.
1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **Race_Dissident** → Anton Chigurh · 13 days ago
If they become much more expensive, they will price themselves out of business. It seems airfare has gone up faster than the price of cigarettes and college.
1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **Rurik** → Race_Dissident · 13 days ago
That's okay by me. I have a personal allergy to blue latex gloves and the people who wear them. If I ain't driving, I ain't arriving.
2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **Anton Chigurh** → Rurik · 12 days ago
But don't you ever want to spend some time in Europe, enjoy the great art and architecture of our culture, drive the Autobahn, take a train through the Alps, ride a bicycle in Provence, take a boat to the Isle of Skye, party with beautiful Catalan chicks in Barcelona?
3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **Rurik** → Anton Chigurh · 12 days ago
Been there. Just out of high school I spent the summer camping around Western Europe. Was back in London in 2000. Been into Russia eleven times since 1994 - Moscow, St. Petersburg, Stalingrad, and Kursk. Enough time in the first two cities to consider myself at home. My last time was in 2007. There are a number of areas in both Russia and Western Europe I would like to visit, but the hassles of airline travel have become a burden. - And me a guy who once would have given anything to be a pilot! Its not the flying I hate, its the airports, or most of them.
2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **Anton Chigurh** → Rurik · 12 days ago
I know it's the airports, I hate them as well but

there's too many places in the world I want to see or go back to. (Russia is in my top 3 next trips)

I guess I don't really have a choice because I have immediate family in Europe I need to go see once or twice a year.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Rurik → Anton Chigurh · 12 days ago

If you do opt for Russia, be sue to contact me privately and I'm sure I could arrange contacts for you

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Anton Chigurh → Rurik · 12 days ago

I thank you. But this makes me think, hypothetically, how would one contact someone privately if all we know are each other's Disqus names? I didn't think there was any private message service...

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Rurik → Anton Chigurh · 12 days ago

Check my user profile.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Anton Chigurh → Rurik · 12 days ago

Got it. спасибо!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



JoePesci → Rurik · 6 days ago

Wouldn't have had much fun in Stalingrad.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Race_Dissident → Anton Chigurh · 12 days ago

Indeed. Were airfare not so ridiculous I would already have spent beaucoup time in Switzerland, Portugal and Latvia, among others.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Anton Chigurh → Race_Dissident · 12 days ago

Latvia and Estonia look more and more like future white havens all the time.

If I was 20 years younger I would seriously consider moving there for good. But of course 20 years ago I didn't know shit from shinola.

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Nick Fisher → Anton Chigurh · 9 days ago

I think you may have missed the latest news.

Putin is determined to foment unrest in the Baltic states just as he has in Ukraine.

In 10 years time they will be anything but havens...

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



cedarbend → Race_Dissident · 11 days ago

Heading to Switzerland in mid-June...we're hope for sane, undrugged, non-narcissistic pilots.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Anton Chigurh → Race_Dissident · 12 days ago

Ironie you say that because the kultury of the people flying has gone straight down. These

days any disgusting trailer- and ghetto-trash slob can be seen lurking the concourse at any given airport.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Race_Dissident → Anton Chigurh · 12 days ago

The culture is decaying everywhere. Not surprising that air travelers have decayed along with it.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Rurik → John O'Neill · 13 days ago

Back during the 1950s and before "Ethical Drug" companies were banned from advertising. The only products advertised were OTC concoctions recognized as quack potions, like "Carter's Little Liver Pills". Drug makers were happy with the arrangement as it saved them the bother and cost of advertising. Medications were prescribed by physicians according to their patients' needs, and everyone was happier. Then some time during the early 1970s somebody got the idea this was an infringement of speech, or trade, or something. And Pharma all had to start advertising their products to customers who could not buy them, save by doctor's Rx. Notice how every drug commercial urges the public to "go and pester your doctor for our junk." And of course they had to train the public to hypochondria and a desire for medication as the cure for hangnails and bad attitude. Nobody benefits, neither Pharma, nor the medical professions, nor the patients; only the lawyers and the advertising pimps.

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Boris_baiter → Rurik · 12 days ago

I have to disagree Rurik, big pharma has profited handsomely... look at the history of profits in the industry.

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