

Abstracts

Maria Heidegger / Oliver Seifert

'Now, the purpose of a lunatic asylum is healing...'. On the place of 'lunatic asylums' in the psychiatric landscape of nineteenth and early twentieth century Tirol

This contribution deals with the historical positioning of institutional care in the psychiatric landscape of nineteenth and early twentieth century Tirol. The authors investigate which alternative means of detention and healing were rejected by 'modern' institutional psychiatry as a means of legitimizing its own place on the medical scene. A deliberate break with the past was staged, in order to transmit the idea that a 'modern' way of dealing with 'lunatics' was a progressive step towards a more humane world. Comparison was also made with new foundations abroad and in other parts of Austria-Hungary, which served a similar purpose in positioning emerging bourgeois society's treatment of psychically deviant people. The main part of this article is devoted to an analysis of the norms and statutes of the psychiatric establishment in Hall in Tirol (i.T.), in particular the criteria for detaining and releasing patients, because this provides an especially good basis for determining the ideal-typical positioning of such institutions. The directors of the Hall institution justified contradictions between theory and practice on the grounds that its position was being newly defined. Throughout the period under investigation, the management sought without success to expand the institution into a nursing and care home. The authors conclude by asking if and how the normative criteria functioned in practice within the institution and they do so by taking a micro-historical look at the early years of the institution's history.

Gian Piero Sciocchetti

On the road to Hall. Recuperation of the mentally ill in Italian-Tirol between 1804 and 1882¹

The identification of a place where to erect the first lunatic asylum in Tirol was not a fortunate choice, above all in the light of two government measures. The first of these, dated 5 June, 1835, forbade the admission to asylums in Lombardy-Venetia of non-paying mentally ill people from Trentino (Italian-Tirol), while the second, decreed on 8 June, 1838, laid out the precise arrange-

¹ The dates in the title refer respectively to the year in which the first 'simple-minded' Trentines were admitted to the lunatic asylum on the island of San Servolo in Venice and the inauguration of the asylum in Pergine.

ments as to how and when the transport of these patients to the institution at Hall i.T. (founded in 1830) should be carried out. To reach this destination, the mentally ill coming from eastern Tirol, the Dolomite valleys, the Ampezzano region, Livinallongo, and the Trentine valleys had to travel along extensive and often barely passable tracks, because not all the valleys were connected directly to the main travel artery, the Adige / Etsch valley and many stretches were thus not adapted to transit by carriage. Arriving at the provincial asylum during the bad-weather season was also a problem for residents of Vorarlberg and the Upper Drau / Drava valley, who were obliged to journey via the Venosta and Puster valleys respectively. Indeed, before 1867, when the Brenner railway entered into service, Hall i.T. was only easily accessible from localities along the Inn and Sill valleys. For all these reasons, as well as economic considerations, which were particularly hard felt by the many small villages in the region, the majority of patients were left abandoned in the asylum or were accommodated by their own family, who would not hesitate to make recourse to coercive measures. As an alternative, and for as long as it remained possible, the Trentine population preferred to make use of the asylums in the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia.

Felice Ficco

Private centres for the custody of the 'simple-minded' in nineteenth-century Trentino: the "madhouse" of Basso Sarca

The aid given to the mentally ill in Trentino appeared to be in a critical condition in the mid-nineteenth century: the asylum at Hall i.T., opened in 1830, was not able to satisfy even the minimum requirements created by the demand that had developed in the province of Tyrol, while local institutions did not dispose of adequate infrastructure and resources to keep up. Given that the majority of sufferers were either left to their own devices or stayed with their families, alternative solutions arose in response to this situation. Among these parallel forms of assistance for the ill was their consignment to private care. Traces relating to this kind of help in southern Trentino can be found through documentary papers from the area of Arco, where private activities were in evidence during the second half of the nineteenth century, prior to the opening of the new asylum at Pergine in 1882. In return for payment of a fee, private individuals agreed to take in and look after the mentally ill in their own homes. They were prepared to put up with the inevitable conflicts with the local population, which sometimes displayed annoyance at the cumbersome guests; likewise, communal authorities were not always disposed to manage in silence a situation that bordered on the limits of legality and that was tolerated rather than approved by the higher political and administrative authorities.

Elisabeth Dietrich-Daum / Elena Taddei

Cure – segregate – administer. Assistance for and management of ‘lunatics’ in a Tyrolean village: the example of general practitioner Franz von Ottenthal (1818–1899) from Sand in Taufers / Campo Tures

The paper deals with the situation of medical and social ‘care’ for the ‘insane’ in the second half of the nineteenth century. The survey is based on a series of case histories, known as the ‘*Historiae Morborum*’, produced by the South Tyrolean general practitioner Franz von Ottenthal. In more than 50 years of practice, von Ottenthal delivered expert opinions in guardianship proceedings and regarding his patients’ admission to the ‘state mental asylum’ at Hall i.T. Furthermore, he also treated several mentally ill patients in his practice. The fact that the local population valued the doctor not only as a medical expert but also as a psychologist or ‘confidant’ can be considered as one of this article’s main findings. The notion that it was mainly priests who fulfilled this function in the nineteenth century clearly has to be qualified. The sources consulted also invalidate Michel Foucault’s thesis of the ‘Great Confinement’, because the limited number of places in the mental asylum meant that a widespread hospitalisation was neither possible, nor favoured by the authorities.

Carlos Watzka / Angela Griefßenböck

Institutional psychiatry in Austria around 1900: a structural comparison between Tyrolean and Styrian provincial lunatic asylums

The article provides a comparative overview of the development of the provincial lunatic asylums at Hall and Pergine in Tirol, and Feldhof bei Graz in Styria during the years 1882 to 1913. It begins with a brief presentation of the various building programmes that expanded these institutions in the face of ongoing over-crowding problems. Political issues are then outlined, such as the guidelines issued by provincial officials, the interaction between the latter and the directors of the institutions, and linked to this, the social function of the psychiatric institutions. In addition, the authors look at financial statements, structures of expenditure, the means of distinguishing within the institutions between different ‘classes of provision’, and the composition, duties and working conditions of institutional personnel. Finally, the article considers the living conditions of patients and their social origins, as well as the direct ‘results’ of the institutions’ activities – recuperation, release from care and also cases of death.

Michaela Ralser

The clinic in the foreground: the example of the Psychiatric-Neurological Clinic at Innsbruck University around 1900

For a long time, the 'asylum' was considered to be the most powerful and comprehensive of all psychiatric institutions. In the last few years, medical and social history have also looked at a series of other relevant establishments in the field, and the history of psychiatry is now analysed in terms of a complex ensemble of overlapping knowledges and practices, which form part of different and constantly changing systems. The psychiatric clinic constitutes one such establishment that has recently come under scrutiny by historians. Clinics of this kind were established on a widespread basis only in the last third of the nineteenth century, as part of academic psychiatry. The article discusses the preconditions for the psychiatric hospital, describes its historical form using the example of the psychiatric-neurological clinic in Innsbruck during its founding years, and elucidates a number of points regarding its specific place in the psychiatric landscape(s) around 1900. In this respect, the clinic's care function appears to carry less weight than its strategic position within the framework of producing, administering and disseminating psychiatric knowledge.

Lorenzo Toresini

From the Mariotti Law to Basaglia. The evolution of Italian psychiatric care and the overcoming of the asylum experience in the decade 1968–1978

On the 13 May 1978, the Italian parliament passed a radical reform of psychiatric care, which simply expressed the utopian pursuit of equal dignity for all individuals. In 1961, Franco Basaglia began service as director of the asylum in Gorizia and refused to sign the 'containment book'. From this first liberating gesture there derived the subsequent reform in Italy, and perhaps the world too. The closure of asylums and the realization of alternative care locations was a process that took its cue from that act. In the final analysis, the course of de-institutionalising these asylums and mental suffering in general is a case of individualizing treatments and therapeutic relationships.