Abstract

The present thesis deals with the phenomenon of madness in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age. The author describes the function of madness in the context of each historical period by way of examining the historical development of the social status of the mentally ill. Various aspects of insanity as well as distinct characteristics and qualities of lunatics persons, such as gender, assets, or the actual level of mental disorder, are taken into consideration in order to demonstrate the consequently differing approaches of the sane to the insane and vice versa. The result of the historical process of the formation of the society's stance towards the lunatics and insanity in general is then transferred to the present where the discussed processes are demonstrated on real examples. Insanity is viewed through the prism of social constructivism. In line with the view that insanity, as a social construction, is a product of discourse, one of the present work deals with the dispute on the right of defining insanity whose result influenced the inception of psychiatry as a discipline as well as the current attitude of the society with respect to insanity.