

The Experience of Psychotic Thinking

Wouter Kusters

translated by Nancy Forest-Flier

A Philosophy of Madness

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Preface to the English Edition

Everything is lost in translation, but it's also duplicated, enlivened, and improved by translation.

Madness as I discuss it in this book is the imperfect translation of the Dutch *waanzin*, which could also be described as insanity, folly, or craziness (*Wahnsinn* in German, *folie* in French). With the Dutch *waanzin*, I focus on the range of experiences of all those deemed, in medical jargon, to be psychotic, as I was once—twice, in fact. Yes, indeed, I was diagnosed as psychotic in 1987 and in 2007, and before, during, and after those periods, I also worked as an academic linguist and philosopher, interested in language, subjectivity, and the conditions and extremes of what is called "experience."

From 2010 until 2014 I worked on this book, which has as its first thematic line a philosophical examination of the experience of being psychotic. I have slightly lifted the veil that hangs over the enigma of psychosis, and I follow this with a close examination of what happens in the various phases of the psychotic experience. In doing so I follow and elaborate on the less well-known phenomenological psychiatric literature of the earlier twentieth century, such as that of Eugène Minkowski and Wolfgang Blankenburg, and their modern proponents, such as Louis Sass and Giovanni Stanghellini. What happens to the experience of time and space in psychosis? What happens to reality? How are other people perceived, and what happens to thought? I examine such questions from a perspective of philosophical wonder and openness, fed and inspired by my own experiences as well as those of many others, written down in reports, autobiographies, and narratives, such as those of Daniel Schreber, Antonin Artaud, John Custance, and Harald Kaas.

It was the highlighting, analyzing, expressing, and evoking of the experience of psychosis—or madness, the less medically flavored term that I prefer—which made this book such a success in the Netherlands. From

its publication in 2014 to the moment of this writing, I have received a steady stream of e-mails and other responses from a host of different readers. I was invited to numerous mental health congresses and meetings, and was asked to give lectures, presentations, and courses to inform and teach psychiatrists, psychologists, and all kinds of other professionals and non-professionals who work and live with psychotic people. But didn't they already know, before reading my book, what the experience of psychosis is like? Apparently not. In mental health education today, so much of the psychotic experience is hidden behind medical jargon, behind supposedly objective labels and descriptions, and behind risk management, fear, and attitudes that are theoretical, distanced, and semiprofessional. Consequently, the voices of the psychotic, with their full meanings, intentions, desires, and intensities, are seldom heard.

By following and enlivening the experience of psychosis in such detail through the written word, the book also touched a nerve among other kinds of readers—namely, all those who at one time or another have been labeled psychotic, schizophrenic, bipolar, or any number of related terms. Most of the people from this group who contacted me were not asking for clarification or discussion but were expressing their support and recognition. So many have gone through the same storms, the same depths and heights, the same dark confusions and bright insights, but have never had the chance to allow madness to reenter their consciousness and to be put into words, either for others or for themselves; many of these people were grateful to have finally found a text that acknowledged what it is like. Indeed, some readers had had comparable episodes decades ago, and reading this text enabled them to explore their "mad journey" for the first time in their lives.

In a way, this is also a dangerous book. My examination of the philosophy of madness reached its apex in July 2007, when I finished a major paper on the philosophy of the experience of time in psychosis. In combination with other stress factors, the steady flow of philosophical deliberation on the subject of psychosis swept me away that summer and plunged me right into the heart of the object itself: a full-blown acute psychosis. It is this possible maddening effect of certain words and thoughts that constitutes the second thematic line of this book. I demonstrate how my own philosophical attitude led to psychotic praxis, and I argue that this is a more common occurrence; that is, a certain kind of consistent philosophizing may very well result in confusion, paradoxes, unworldy insights, and circular frozenness that is reminiscent of madness—which in fact is what happened to quite a few philosophers who are far from unimportant, such as Thomas

Aquinas, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Georg Cantor. I give examples of this, from myself and others, but I also demonstrate it by letting the controlled language of philosophical observation and reflection slowly but surely shift toward its object—that is, madness—the further one reads into the book.

There was yet another kind of reader who was less interested in psychiatry or mental health issues as such. This reader was primarily interested in the book for its perspective on philosophy as a dangerous, possibly maddening activity in which the stakes are, and should be, set high. In a way, then, not only does the book alleviate psychosis and emancipate the psychotic person from medical classifications, but it also emancipates the philosopher from the clinical academic context of narrow textbook study and frees him or her to engage in real-life praxis, philosophy in vivo, which is accessible to everyone—not least of all the madman. In fact, as a third thematic line in this book, I argue that psychosis—in spite of all its sufferings and digressions—is best understood as the desire for infinity and absolute freedom, which it shares with so many philosophies.

The three thematic lines blend together and can be depicted as a circle, as the proverbial snake that eats its own tail, or as a so-called Möbius strip. This paradoxical image forms the basic structure of the book and runs in coded and mirrored forms throughout my autobiographical descriptions and throughout the themes of the philosophers and their approaches referred to, from Edmund Husserl and Plotinus to Friedrich von Schelling, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Jacques Lacan. The empty center of the circle refers to the voice and subjectivity of the author of the text but also to the empty mind of the reader and to the quasi-mystical, ineffable content of the concept of madness.

This circular, paradoxical form is the signpost in the field where madness and philosophy intertwine, contrast, and converge in the text. Without any stable stronghold in an "objective point of view" or in a "neutral language or framework," I present this field with all its intrinsic mysteries, paradoxes, and strange obstacles of down-to-earth spirituality. The wanderer in this field, who guides the reader through the book, is a mystic locked in a deadend mystical alley who is trying to break through the wall at the end of that path. And it is the philosopher who observes, introspects, and intuits, and then sinks into a self-reflective loop or spiral, leading nowhere and everywhere. Or it is simply the psychiatrist philosophizing himself into madness and, reaching the halfway point, meeting the madman philosophizing himself out of madness.

This book received the Dutch Socrates Award in 2015 for the best, most stimulating philosophy book in the Dutch language. A little later a plan

was formulated to translate it, which finally became possible thanks to the willingness and interest of the MIT Press as well as to grants from the Dutch Foundation for Literature and the Dutch Foundation for Psychiatry and Philosophy.

The first publication in Dutch was, in a way, itself a "translation," namely of something pre- and post-verbally ineffable into the native language of the author. The publication in English is therefore technically a translation of a translation. However, due to the wisdom and deep insight of the translator, this work, in both form and content, can count as an original, as close to its essence, meaning, and origin as language is able to attain. In this translation, something is not lost but is recreated, for which I am immeasurably thankful to Nancy Forest-Flier.

Preface

Once upon a time, I was born and raised in a charming little village in the orchard country of the Betuwe region in central Netherlands, and my life, as far as I can remember, was entirely happy. Nothing notable happened during my youth that I would now associate with "madness," except perhaps for one thing. No, I'm not referring to extraordinary traumas, or psychic violence, or physical abuse. What I'm talking about is a book I read during my adolescence that was written by Roger Zelazny, a not altogether unknown writer.

That book, *Doorways in the Sand*, is a fanciful adventure novel, or, more accurately, a science-fiction novel. The main character meets all kinds of mysterious figures and is searching for an important "star-stone" that plays a pivotal role in a cosmic battle. I'm not going to retell the entire story, but I do want to single out one particular phenomenon or fantasy. It's something called a Rhennius machine, which does not exist beyond the pages of that book and which does something quite unusual: you can put any kind of object into the machine, and it will turn it around and give it back to you.

Now you may be thinking, "I don't need a machine to turn things around." But the Rhennius machine turns things around in a very special way: by mirroring them. If you put a right shoe in the Rhennius machine, it turns it into a left shoe. A clockwise-rotating corkscrew will come out rotating counterclockwise. And if you feed it an ordinary book, it produces a book in mirror writing that has to be read back to front.

Things get even more exciting when you step into the machine. When you come back out, you're suddenly left-handed instead of right-handed, or right-handed if you were left-handed. Your hair is now parted on the opposite side, your heart resides on the right side of your chest, and even the most minute parts of you—cells, molecules, and DNA—are turned around. Once you've gone through the Rhennius machine, everything about you is inverted, including your consciousness, your mind, and the

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way you perceive and think. But because you perceive everything "backward," you don't have the impression that you have changed but that the world beyond you has been radically distorted. After a visit to the Rhennius machine, the world itself appears as a mirror! Cars are driving on the left side of the road. Doors open and close the opposite way. When someone wants to shake your hand, he extends his left hand to you—at least that's how it appears (see chapter 4).

When we think about such Rhennius cases, we automatically assume one perspective or the other: either the person is reversed or the world is reversed, depending on our point of view. But what has actually happened is that the connection between the person and his world has become tied up in knots; an entire relationship has been turned around.

Madness is just like the Rhennius machine: in the eyes of the outside world, the madman has changed, but for the madman, the change has taken place in the world itself. According to outside observers, the psychotic has started to act strangely. He utters incomprehensible things, speaks gibberish, and even makes up new words or inverts existing ones. But a mad person is not at all convinced that he's acting or talking differently. It isn't he who has changed but his surroundings, to which he only reacts. Something strange has happened out there; something doesn't compute. An unspeakable blanket of suggestive change covers the world; things are no longer what they seem.

There is a huge gap between these two perspectives—that of the madman and the outsider. This difference is of great importance in the treatment and processing of what is called "psychosis." If you are going mad or have been mad, you have essentially two ways to look back on your episode of madness. In the first way, you can adopt the perspective of the outside world, or even worse, that of the psychiatrist. In that case, you retroactively view your own Rhennius experiences, when the world was different, through the eyes of someone else. You reevaluate your own experiences as literally "twisted" and wrong. In doing so, you imply that all the mirrorings and remarkable incidents that took place during your mad episode were not real but were triggered by a supposed illness or disorder.

It should be clear by now that this is not my approach. In madness you find yourself in a kind of inverted world that can be terrifying and repugnant—something to be avoided—but one that can also seem mysterious, meaningful, and seductive. Afterward, if you come to regard your own experiences as only frightening, senseless, and sick, you deny your own pleasure, desire, and motivation—not to mention your own will, which led you to step through the looking glass in the first place. In addition, the

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more you deny that the mad world had any sense or meaning, the greater the chance that you will secretly long to return.

So you're much better off opting for the second way to look back on your episode of madness: not hiding experiences of madness behind safe psychiatric labels like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder but, instead, coming to grips with them—rehashing them and reliving them in a controlled environment in order to gain insight and extract sense and meaning from them, both for yourself and for others.

The difference between how you experience something and how outsiders describe it is the theme of my earlier book *Pure Madness (Pure waanzin,* 2013). There I recall my psychosis of 1987 and compare my memories with the so-called objective descriptions of my behavior that were recorded in a thick psychiatric report. That comprehensive report contains daily observations made by the nursing staff and other personnel in the mental hospital, and I lay it alongside my own memories and try to find a bridge, a language, to reconcile the two extremely diverse perspectives.

But first let's take a few steps back. We were talking about my adolescence and about a book I was reading. I had not yet been locked up in an isolation cell in a psychiatric ward. To continue the story, I finished the book by Zelazny as well as some other books, and some time later I took my final exams and went to live in a university town, where I did all sorts of things that were very pleasurable but were not without a certain risk. Let me mention two of them. First, there were drugs, which, as is commonly known, are a leading factor in inducing psychosis. Anyone who wants to know what it's like to be psychotic but has no interest in reading my book might try experimenting with large amounts of marijuana and hashish—or even better, LSD, mescaline, or XTC (see chapter 10). The risk, of course, is that drugs cost far more in terms of time, energy, and money than a book—not to mention all the grim consequences.

The second thing that had a rather strong effect on me in that university town was love. I don't know what the social codes are among young people today, but they used to be very arduous. First, you had one lover, then you had another, and as soon as you thought you had finally found your one true love, she would take off with someone else. Here we could launch into an exhaustive, quasiscientific discussion about neurotransmitters, genes, stress, and other psychiatrically flavored obsessions, but the fact remains that everyone who falls in love runs a certain risk. For wherever there is love, there is also its shadow side: the stronger the love, the harder the fall when love ends. With all its successes and failures, love is one of the most overlooked risk factors in any psychosis (see Intermezzo I).

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In his book with the lovely title *The Seduction of Madness* (1990, 174), the psychiatrist Edward Podvoll writes the following:

More men, women, and, especially, adolescents have become insane in the wake of unrequited love affairs than those driven mad by toxins, defective genes, and other abnormalities put together. It is a clinical commonplace that the phenomenon of unrequited love is a fertile occasion for madness, and this probably has been so since prehistoric times. Perhaps this is why it is said the world over in pretechnological healing traditions that excessive passion is a "poison" that makes one's system "toxic" and then endangers the mind.

The humiliated lover is involved in a predicament. From rejection, or from a real or imagined loss, the lover suffers the crushing disappointment of an intense conviction. His "conviction" might be of his destined place in another's life, or of his sexual irresistibility, or of having found an ultimate mate, or of living only the shadow of a life when not with the other, and so on in countless variety. He has reconstructed a "self" that can only exist in the presence of the other. When this self is rejected, the "groundlessness" or emptiness of his existence can be similar to (and feel like) the "tearing down" experiences of the drug-induced state. But he sometimes rises up from that experience and "switches out," traversing the psychotic "spiral of transformation" into an existence of magic and power. A new passion emerges—one of infinite nature, a celestial version—as the predicament comes to completion.

This last statement from Podvoll is significant: madness is a passion for infinity. My description of madness would be "the socially awkward expression of a desire for infinity in a world that defines itself as finite." In psychoses, this craving for infinity often gives rise to all sorts of thoughts and observations that are framed in religiously tainted language (see chapter 11).

The mad world abounds with Jesus characters, Mary visitations, revelations, prophecies, gods and demons. A great deal can be said about this aspect of madness, which I will be doing in considerable detail elsewhere in this book, but there is something else I would like to touch upon first. After a brief and mad period of religious enthusiasm in the psychiatric ward in 1987, which I describe in *Pure Madness* (2013, 122–123), I avoided everything that even hinted at religion and spirituality. I thought that to do so would bring me too close to madness—too close to the fire, to the uncontrollable, and to the vague and nebulous—and would ultimately swallow me up in madness's floating reveries. Now, many years later, I consider this antireligious attitude quite unwise. In fact, expressions of religion, spirituality, and most especially philosophy can provide a viable format for the longings that underlie madness and love (see chapter 14).

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Being in a condition of madness means you are trying to resolve the most fundamental questions of existence but in an uncontrolled, wildly associative way. You want to know what it's all about, what good and evil are, what is at the very heart of existence: you want to know the meaning of life and the cosmos. Such existential questions should not be denied but pondered, not stifled but lived through—even if you risk madness by pursuing them. After all, it is our fate to be confronted by unanswerable questions. You can try to evade them, you can anesthetize yourself or deny their relevance, but sooner or later they will catch up with you, only to haunt you the more you suppress them.

Medical science is often of a different opinion. In 2013 I gave a lecture on this topic, and a healthcare worker in the audience asked me why I, as someone who had been through a psychotic episode, would then go on to undertake something as potentially confusing as a study of philosophy. If you have already struggled with psychosis, then doctors and therapists will want to treat you with great care; they might recommend that you take a course in gardening, since that is a very calming activity. My response is, "Anything but that!" Gardening is fine, but don't listen to that kind of misdirected advice.

For whatever reason, after my encounter with longing for infinity, love, and drugs in the university town, I spent three months during the summer of 1987 under lock and key in a mental hospital. Maybe it wasn't only on account of love and drugs. Maybe I had also been deeply affected by the ideas I had picked up from strange books, such as Zelazny's Rhennius machine. The idea of "inversion," "reversal," or "mirroring," however, is not unique to my psychosis, nor is Zelazny the only source material. We see the theme recurring in any number of ways in autobiographies and reports of people who have been psychotic. It can be found in motifs like mirrors, word reversals, and reversals in space and time, and it has also been discussed in the literature written by psychologists such as Freud and Lacan. There are many other interesting ideas in the world of madness besides "reversal," some of them bordering on science fiction and philosophy, such as the idea that other people are actually inanimate, robotic creatures; that you can make telepathic contact with others; that time travel is possible; and so forth. The rationale and motivation behind these kinds of ideas are extensively discussed in the book to follow.

But first I'm going to press on with my personal story. After a while, the psychosis ebbed away, and even though I avoided any association with religion, I had a pleasant and exciting life that went on for years and was not essentially different from anyone else's. What was different was that,

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unlike many of my contemporaries, I had spent time in a mental hospital and had been psychotic. I made no secret of this fact and told it to whoever was willing to listen. Most people were curious and attentive, but even while I was telling my story, I could not escape the feeling that they did not really understand, and it remained difficult or even impossible to explain what madness actually is. So at a certain point I decided to write everything down. The result of this effort was the book *Pure Madness*, which was published in 2004 and won two major prizes, one in the field of psychiatry and the other in philosophy.

After the publication of this successful book, my life altered rapidly. I had had enough of my boring work at the university, and I found "pure madness" so interesting that I wanted to focus more of my attention on it. So I quit my academic position and began anew with a study of philosophy in an effort to get to the bottom of the psychosis question in relation to reality, time, and life itself. We now take a giant leap forward in time to the ominous year 2007, when I collaborated with Sam Gerrits and Jannemiek Tukker on another book on madness called *Alone*, about my earlier experiences in isolation cells. The momentum that had been set in motion in 2004 reached its apex—or nadir shortly after this book's publication. I intensified my academic studies in philosophy and gave a number of interviews in the spoken and written media. I was fully in the embrace of my pursuit, searching for the fundamentals and essence of madness, when suddenly, having just finished a huge bachelor's thesis on "the experience of time in madness," and again under the influence of complex love affairs and drugs, I ended up in an isolation cell of a mental hospital exactly twenty years after my first episode there.

One of the odd things that happened that summer of 2007 was that the nurses and the psychiatrist already knew me from my books. I was a so-called expert-by-experience, living it out once again. One of the psychiatrists had even written a review of *Pure Madness* recently, and some of the nurses brought copies for me to sign. For me, that was beyond strange. I knew exactly what a psychosis was—I was right in the middle of one—and yet I couldn't pull myself out. The psychosis presented itself to me as an inescapable truth and reality. What that truth and reality are, and what they entail, will be revealed here in *A Philosophy of Madness*.

Wouter Kusters Schoonhoven, December 2013

Introduction: Philosophy and Madness

Ich impfe euch mit dem Wahnsinn.
—Friedrich Nietzsche, Nachlass 1882–1884 (1967, 136)

What do we make of the fact that, when out of their senses, some people have experiences perhaps of beauty, perhaps of terror, but always with implications of awesome depth, and that when they re-emerge out of their craze and into their so-called normal ego, they may shut the trapdoor after them and close out their vision once more and become prosaic in the extreme, straitened in a bland and shallow usualness?

—J. W. Perry, The Far Side of Madness (1974, 8)

1 A Philosophy of Madness

This book is about the alpha and omega of philosophy and madness. I will show where both begin, to what heights and depths they may lead, and how the end of one may be the beginning of the other.

My basic proposition is that philosophy and madness have everything to do with each other. The discussions in the back rooms of university philosophy departments are not far removed from many of the dialogues or monologues held in the smoking rooms of the psychiatric ward, not only in terms of form and content but especially in their tendency to be out of touch with the way the world actually works. Instead of interpreting this observation as a pejorative for philosophy, I will argue that it is a heuristically interesting and inspiring similarity. The fundamental connection between madness and philosophy has been wrongly forgotten and concealed over the past few decades, if not centuries. It is the aim of this book to reconnect these two realms. The power, energy, and fascination that emanate from the work of marginal and mad authors like Daniel Schreber, Antonin Artaud, and John Custance can do

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a great deal to enliven the sterile landscape of academic philosophy, while the wealth of ideas and lines of reasoning such as those we find among thinkers like Wittgenstein or Deleuze may enrich the minds of many a madman.

The association between madness and philosophy is made far too infrequently today. This is mainly because the medical profession has succeeded in claiming madness as its own area of expertise and has gone on to turn it into a medical and even a neurobiological problem—a brain disease. In addition, a link between madness and philosophy suggests that anyone who calls himself a "thinker" or "philosopher" runs a higher risk of going mad. This is something most people try to avoid; thus, the philosopher instead takes pride in being a king or queen of insight, sunk in pure contemplation in a temple of clarity and light. Both doctors and philosophers prefer to keep madness at a safe distance.

Madness is kept out of bounds as a nadir of meaninglessness, a breeding ground for unreal apparitions, chimeras, and sham. It is usually ascribed to the mentally defective, to the neurologically impaired, and to those believed to be suffering from a brain disease. In this state, on the other side of an abstract barrier—which sometimes turns into a very concrete barrier—between the normal and the deviant, the healthy and the ill, madness is neutralized, anesthetized, and ultimately "fragmented" or "annihilated." That is exactly what this book is about: the loss of the richness of the world of madness.

The title *A Philosophy of Madness* can be understood on several levels. First, it is a philosophical reflection on what madness actually is. At the same time, it is an effort to show how this philosophical reflection can stray so far from the everyday world and become so alien that it results in madness itself.

Philosophers are not the only voices to be heard in this book. Madness also has its say. It will emerge that mad impulses and a fascination with madness lie at the heart of countless cultural high points: not only the essays and stories of Aldous Huxley, Sybren Polet, and Thomas Pynchon but also the drawings of M. C. Escher and films such as *The Matrix* and *The Truman Show*; not only the mystical experiences of Nicholas of Cusa and Meister Eckhart, but also—and above all—the philosophical vistas of Plotinus, Schelling, and Sartre. When we listen carefully to expressions of madness, we hear a philosophical sound, a sense of having been seized by themes of vital importance that we know from the traditions of philosophy.

2 Madness and Psychiatry

2.1 Data

How can we describe madness and distinguish it from nonmadness, or "normality"? How can we extract something from the stream of life, the

ocean of experience, that we might call madness? Psychiatry uses the term "psychosis" for madness, which is described as follows by Johan Lezy in his detailed survey *Psychose: verschijning, beleving, structuur (Psychosis: Appearance, Experience, Structure*, 2007, 11): "Roughly speaking, 'psychosis' is what is popularly known as 'insanity': a condition in which the person loses himself in delusions, hallucinations, and incoherent thoughts." To define exactly what these terms mean—loss of self, delusions, hallucinations, and incoherent thoughts—is what this book is all about. But Lezy's description will suffice as a jumping-off point.

Anyone who has ever had an experience of "paranormal" reality will not always regard it as a "psychosis" but may look back on it as a time of confusion, a revelation, a spiritual journey, an illness, or a crazy period. What madness is, or what it might be, will be dealt with in the rest of this book. At this point I would like to show, by way of a few examples, that madness is different from normal, everyday existence—at least on the surface. To speak from my own experience, I have twice undergone uninterrupted periods, approximately two months each, in which I was "mad" and was diagnosed as "psychotic" by psychiatrists. Both periods are sharply etched in my memory; they differ from all the other periods in my life and, for this reason, are remarkably similar to each other, but they are separated by two decades.

I can easily point to a large number of occurrences, thoughts, perceptions, interpretations, and "lifestyles" that I experienced, which were decidedly different from those that happen in normal life. For example, I noticed that everyone over forty immediately understood all the languages of the world, which meant there were no real linguistic differences. I experienced and was convinced that there was no gulf between thinking and being. I feared that it was my turn to be crucified. I realized that I was telepathic. I understood that the internet had been invented by my father and my uncle and that I was being observed via spyware by a secret alliance (or conspiracy) of wise old men, all for the greater good. I discovered that the earth was flat and that flying was an illusion, the work of a widespread conspiracy. I was certain that God existed, and nothing but God.

Such strange experiences and thoughts form a seemingly incoherent skin of madness around a deeper, essential "spiritual change"—if not a cosmic change. This book discloses that other world, behind the smoke screens of what is so often dismissed as confusion, psychic disorder, and illness.

In my experience it is easy to make a first rough distinction between normality and madness without resorting to additional theory. But this book deals with my experience only insofar as it rises above the particular and reaches a general conceptual plane. To draw this work out of the autobiographical egosphere and move it to a more general level, further 4 Introduction

"objectification" is needed. In this light, my experience begins to bear a striking resemblance to those self-described by many others labeled "psychotic," of which I will make extensive use. The collected works of Artaud, Wisdom, Madness and Folly by Custance, Uhren und Meere by Harald Kaas, and Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken by Schreber are so rich and expressive that we will meet them again and again throughout the book.

In addition to agreement over the concept of psychosis—among both madmen and psychiatrists—there are also areas of overlap, "family resemblances," with diagnostic concepts such as schizophrenia and borderline syndrome. Psychosis itself can be subdivided into many different types, such as manic, depressive, and schizophrenic psychosis; drug-induced psychosis and psychosis brought on by trauma; chronic, acute, short-term, and mass psychosis; catatonic and paranoid psychosis, psychoses not otherwise specified, and so forth. As a rule I will speak of "psychosis" or "madness" unless otherwise specified (but see the reading guidelines below for a practical grasp of these terms).

Because the term "psychosis" is applied to so many different cases, my assertions will always be open to possible criticism along the lines of "this is not valid with regard to this or that kind of psychosis or psychotic person." So be it. It is not my purpose to improve psychiatric classifications by adducing empirical experiential facts. My reason for using the terms "madness" and "psychosis" is precisely to circumvent medical-psychiatric classifications and, in so doing, to clear the way for the admission of madness to a domain of philosophy, culture, and spirituality. As soon as we have arrived there (in part III), we will make other "diagnoses" of an entirely new and different order, based on insights from philosophy and mysticism.

To what extent my analysis of madness corresponds with the lives of "real patients" will be reflected in the extent to which they feel addressed by my descriptions. At the outset, my focus and role model will be the acute psychotic patient. As we slowly manage to extricate the madman from the grip of psychiatry (as an attitude of mind), we will find that more and more experiences, thoughts, and pursuits in "normal" life rest on a substratum of madness. This will considerably expand the focus of what madness is. The fire of madness will be found smoldering beneath the experiences and activities of a whole range of human types: philosophers, mystics, poets, shamans, absurdists, magical realists, and many others.

In my book on psychoses, *Pure Madness* (2004), I wrote, "Because of the time constraints imposed by the essay contest,¹ many ideas could only be dealt with briefly, indirectly, or cursorily. That is why this book is no more than an essay, literally a trial run. I hope to explore my ideas in greater depth in the coming years."

This exploration is fulfilled in the book that lies before you: A Philosophy of Madness. This book has also been immeasurably enriched and deepened by an unsolicited shipment of fresh new "data." I wrote Pure Madness seventeen years after my first psychosis, so I was basing it on old, somewhat crumbling memories. But for this new book, I had the opportunity to collect new memories, owing to another psychotic episode I had in the summer of 2007, twenty years after the first. It was a personal disaster, but for the writing of this book it was a blessing. Like it or not, I was able to "test" and modify my ideas in Pure Madness under actual psychotic conditions. So my decision to "explore my ideas in greater depth" after Pure Madness was more than theoretical. (I also graduated cum laude with a master's degree in philosophy from Utrecht University). It had another practical side as well: I was committed to a psychiatric institution literally a stone's throw from the building that housed the philosophy department.

A Philosophy of Madness is not only an opportunity to delve more deeply into existing material but contains significant additions: this book covers more of the gray zone between madness, mysticism, and spirituality (in parts II and III). During my participatory fieldwork in the isolation cell and the closed ward in 2007, my experiences extended far beyond the linguistic-semiotic analysis of *Pure Madness*, as the text and spirit of that work were still characterized by a basic trust in language. Although I demonstrated there how signs dissolve and disappear during psychosis, I still believed that language would be capable of articulating and registering its own disappearance.

In 2007 I was much more aware than in 1987 of the experience of breaking through the boundaries of language—and thereby the boundaries of thought—and reaching a new domain of madness that bears a strong affinity with religious and mystical experiences and is light years away from the psychiatric assessment or the autobiographical narratives about "recovery," "self-management," "acceptance," and so on. In later parts of this book, I will make use of a great deal of data from autobiographies and writings that bring up notions such as ineffability, infinity, ecstasy and anxiety, revelations, messianism, and prophecies of doom. In that zone, the language of "data"—the expression of madness—converges with the language of reflection and of philosophy.

2.2 Treatment

The methodology and basic premise of this book differ from those in many works of mainstream psychology and psychiatry. Usually it is assumed that madness is abnormal, that it should be explained on the basis of the normal, and that it is a disorder or a deviation with respect to what is taken

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for granted as normal. My first approach to madness (in part I), however, is a description of madness as it is experienced by the madman himself. The simple claim that a psychosis is a "dopamine-level disruption," for example, does not tell us anything at all about how the mad world is actually experienced—how it looks from the inside.²

This book is not about brains, neurons, or genes, and that makes it seem somewhat untimely. The dominant tone in the modern discourse on madness is that when you go mad, "something is happening in your brain." According to this discourse, the brain is the place where we expect and hope to find sense and meaning, clearly and distinctly presented. We hope to be able to capture, control, and dominate the gruesome spirit of madness in the brain. But even if a connection were found between madness and the brain, we still would not understand what madness actually is. We might know the matter of which the mad brain consists, but we understand nothing of its spirit, let alone its soul. We call this understanding of the brain an "explanation," but we still have neither comprehension nor insight. If we really thought we could better understand someone by analyzing his brain, we would be making the same mistake that Patrick Bateman does in American Psycho, the serial killer story by Bret Easton Ellis. Bateman is so eager to learn the secrets of femininity that he saws a few women in pieces to find out. After frantically rooting through their bowels, it gradually dawns on him that a woman's inner nature is not to be found in her physical insides.

We are living at a time when everything dear to us—mind, experience, and culture—is being reduced to distantial data—that is, matter, behavior, and biology—as if we have become alienated from our selves. Each one to his own hobby or interest. But what is often forgotten is that if you reduce *something*—whether it be mind, love, or madness, and whether the result is called matter, hormones, or neurons—you first have to know *what it is* you are reducing. In other words, if madness—or love, or even God—is "located" on gene X or in brain area Y or on neuron bundle Z, what is it that is located there? What indeed is madness? In order to find that out, we need to follow a different route than the one paved by psychiatrists, neurologists, and pharmacologists. Consequently, I am not going to waste too many words on "modern brain research."

This means that, unfortunately, the lion's share of modern psychiatric literature is not very relevant to those attempting to *understand* madness. In most of the research being done in biologically oriented psychiatry and cognitive psychology today, there is a prior understanding of what "normal" is and what "reality" is, along with a prior assumption that the mad world is no more than a disturbed perception of and deviation from "the

ordinary, real world." Many psychiatrists and psychologists are not interested in madness, as such, but only in the most effective ways that madness can be reversed or suppressed in the name of healing. Even the psychologists who make a sincere effort to understand madmen and the world of madness are often oblivious to what madness is all about. They prefer to psychologize it away and to reduce it to personal aberrations and traumas rather than to accept the challenge to scrutinize their own assumptions about the world and reality, or even to risk giving them up. This is understandable in a practical, everyday context, but it is a pity for the exercise of the imagination.

Fortunately, there have also been practitioners in the history of psychiatry who were not mainly interested in MRI scans or the results of blood tests. Numerous accounts have been written in which the expressions and reports of madmen were understood not as the symptoms of a deformed hippocampus but as portals to a mad world. Over the years, since the early twentieth century, a tradition and method has developed for observing the behavior and speech of the mad in an attempt to understand their world in its entirety.

This "phenomenological psychiatry" was inspired by the philosophical phenomenology of authors such as Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. In phenomenology, research focuses on how the world or reality, in their modalities of, say, perception, memory, or imagination, appear to those who experience them. Everyday practical and scientifically theoretical assumptions about what thought, perception, and reality consist of are set aside.

This method attempts to understand the seemingly strange world of the mad, including their thoughts and experiences, without judging them in terms of disorders, abnormalities, and deficiencies. Using this approach, it has been observed that it is not only the language of madmen, their way of perceiving the world, and their emotional responses to it that change; a change also occurs in the very depths of their experiential world—in how they experience time, in how their thoughts and perceptions mutually influence each other, and in how closeness and distance relate to each other. This psychiatric tradition includes several famous names and classical works such as Eugène Minkowski's *Le temps vécu* (1933), Klaus Conrad's *Die beginnende Schizophrenie* (1958), Wolfgang Blankenburg's *Der Verlust der natürlichen Selbstverständlichkeit* (1971), and Louis Sass's *Madness and Modernism* (1992). Phenomenological psychiatry is the basis and source of inspiration for large parts of the present work, especially part I.

Although *A Philosophy of Madness* is driven by what might be called a phenomenological approach in the sense that it is focused on the "first-person experience" of madness, traditional phenomenological psychiatry

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often does not go far enough for me. The concepts it uses and the observations it makes remain, in a certain sense, remote and impassive. This may be adequate for an initial exploration of madness, but those who want to delve deeper will have to abandon the safe shores of impassive observation.

As long as the phenomenologist stays on the riverbank, he will not know what swimming is—or drowning, either. He may observe people swimming in the distance, snorkeling, deep-sea diving, and sometimes even drowning. His reports, however, will remain couched in the sturdy, well-defined language of observation and analysis. By following this method, he turns madness into a static, self-contained state, fundamentally different from the normal and alien to the researcher.

In order to familiarize ourselves with madness—to taste its fluid substance, to feel its movements, whether swimming, diving, or drowning—we need more than what phenomenology alone has to offer. For this reason, I will make use of other kinds of psychiatric approaches, such as those by psychoanalytic thinkers like Lacan, Jung, and Perry, and I will especially make use of what might be called "spiritual psychiatry," such as that found in the work of Edward Podvoll in *The Seduction of Madness* (1990; part II) and in John E. Nelson's *Healing the Split: Madness or Transcendence* (1990; part IV). Spiritual psychiatry is a continuation of the age-old idea that madness and genius are bedfellows. It attempts to demonstrate that a mad person may have the same kinds of aspirations and insights that any number of "enlightened," highly gifted, or highly sensitive individuals have but that the mad person, for some reason, deals with them in a clumsy way. This idea is close to my own view of the mad person as a "crypto-" or "proto-philosopher."

Although I make intensive use of Lacan, Jung, and Podvoll, the problem with both spiritual psychiatry and psychoanalysis is that, in the end, they are reluctant to break through the thin ice of madness. After discussing all the analyses, they speak about madness from a position of safe banalities. Actually plunging into the ocean of madness requires a language and a way of thinking that is not just about madness but also flows into madness: philosophy. A philosophical methodology that leads to madness is not one that provides the reader with a theory, a means to "assess" what madness is, or therapeutic guidelines for curing madness.

As such, this book contains more formulas for going mad than for avoiding madness. It is aimed more at "psychotizing" thinkers and philosophers than at re-educating or psycho-educating the mad. It is not about a specter of madness but about the seduction of madness. My approach differs from the approach of those who either provide help or seek it. By examining extreme madness in terms of its experiences and thought, I do not want to

isolate, classify, or reject it so much as mobilize it productively in order to broaden normal experience and thought. The philosopher is not meant to help either the psychotic or the psychiatrist. Indeed, it is the mad person—through the psychiatrist, if necessary—who can help the philosopher by means of "thought experiments" or "world constructions."

3 Philosophy

3.1 Philosophy from Madness

The wonderful thing about this book is that everything is turned on its head: the madman comes to occupy the chair of the philosopher—and the philosopher ends up in the isolation cell. In four phases, the madman extricates himself from his role as data-provider and becomes an interlocutor and companion. In part I, the madman speaks mainly as a madman, as an object of observation, producing data analyzed by the philosopher. In part II he begins to stir; he dons the garments of the mystic, and his delusional writings are upgraded to the level of mysticism, if not philosophical aphorism. In part III, madness, mysticism, and philosophy join in a circle dance, precipitating a whirlwind in each of the four directions. In part IV, madness crystallizes; the madman rises to the surface from the mystical depths of part III; he solidifies into the more familiar forms of paranoia, paradox, and poetry and is now no longer discernable from the philosopher.

Through all four stages, we will be treating the mad data as potentially philosophical. The aim of this book is to turn such potential into reality and to forge philosophy from madness. Accepted concepts about how things are vanish in madness, and the madman ends up in a groundless world, an abyss, an *Ungrund*, but also in an existence where trees that have been uprooted grow into the heavens and where there are no boundaries—no "containment," as psychoanalysts would call it. The madman becomes estranged from the world, perplexed by the nonfoundations of existence and the existential emptiness and fullness happening at the same time. The madman encounters questions of vital importance, whether he wants to or not: What is life? What is good and evil? Where does time go? As Anton Boisen, experience expert and religious thinker, wrote in "The Form and Content of Schizophrenic Thinking" (1942, 24),

In any case he [the madman] feels himself in the realm of the mysterious and uncanny. All the accepted bases of judgment and reasoning are gone. He does not know what to believe. His state is one of utter perplexity regarding the very foundations of his being. "Who am I?," "What is my role in life?," "What is the universe in which I live?," become for him questions of life and death.

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These questions, and the attempts to answer them, do not arise from a primitive longing on the part of the madman or even from a cognitive disorder. Rather, they are generated by the short-circuiting of high-powered thought, a pressure cooker of spiraling, fascinating possibilities. Something in the madman breaks down, similar to the way Socrates, when deep in thought, "forgot the time" (according to Apollodorus) and arrived late for an appointment. We recognize the same kind of malfunctioning in Wittgenstein, in his tormented hesitations and doubts as he searched for the clarification of confusion. Sass writes about it in *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber and the Schizophrenic Mind* (1994, 12):

[Madness] is, to be sure, a self-deceiving condition, but one that is generated from within rationality itself rather than by the loss of rationality. The parallels between Wittgenstein and Schreber reveal not a primitive or Dionysian condition but something akin to Wittgenstein's notion of a disease of the intellect, born at the highest pitches of self-consciousness and alienation.

But while Plato did quite a decent job of conveying Socrates's thoughts and reasoning, and Wittgenstein was able to put the products of his mind into words without difficulty, the perplexities, insights, and brain waves of the mad are often expressed in what the outside world can only call gibberish or silence or self-inscriptions or laughter. The spark that usually ignites our thinking, that propels our existence, is like a wildfire in the mad, if not a bolt of lightning. But paradoxically enough, the ferocity of that inner blaze seems to extinguish life itself. In this book, we pull out all the stops in an effort to make contact with that fire, that luminosity, that warmth.

The very fact of madness can also help broaden—or even escalate—the philosophical debate. In philosophy, certain arguments are simply rejected because they are said to be "unrealistic" or untenable, because they might lead, for example, to excessive skepticism or even solipsism: the theory that no other reality or world exists besides the one in your own mind or consciousness. See, for instance, the casual remark in an undergraduate philosophy textbook by Filip Buekens (2003, 86): "A peculiar aspect of this philosophical discussion [about the possibility or impossibility of knowledge] is that no one (not even the skeptic) actually doubts whether knowledge is possible or not. Not a single skeptic has sullenly withdrawn from the world after having come to the conclusion that the existence of the world around us is not logically demonstrable."

The hidden assumption here is that extreme skepticism or solipsism, taken as serious notions, would be unreal or unlivable. Many madmen do not support such ideas as theories *about* the world but experience them

within their own world. For them, it is quite possible that doubts about the "reality of the world" oblige them to withdraw from it (see chapter 1, for instance). So it is interesting to look at how something like solipsism works out "in practice" in the lives of the mad. In this way, philosophy—and thought in general—can be enriched by the "data" of madness, and a philosophical view such as solipsism (or idealism or determinism, for that matter) can be "tested" in terms of its value for practical situations.³ The underlying theme of this book can also be expressed as follows: What does the possibility and the existence of madness imply for commonly accepted ideas about humanity and the world? In what sense is philosophy changed or "stretched" when we admit the "data" of the madman's experience? What is a philosophy of madness?

All too often, madness is seen by philosophers as an *end point* and not as a jumping-off point or impetus for further reasoning. Even Wittgenstein, who so eloquently made his way along the thin edge of madness, employs the concept of madness as an otherwise undiscussed end point of philosophy. In *On Certainty* (1969, par. 281), Wittgenstein writes,

I, L. W., believe, am sure, that my friend hasn't sawdust in his body or in his head, even though I have no direct evidence of my senses to the contrary. I am sure, by reason of what has been said to me, of what I have read, and of my experience. To have doubts about it would seem to me madness—of course, this is also in agreement with other people; but I agree with them.

And elsewhere he writes (par. 257),

If someone said to me that he doubted whether he had a body I should take him to be a half-wit. But I shouldn't know what it would mean to try to convince him that he had one. And if I had said something, and that had removed his doubt, I should not know how or why.

In both examples, madness is that about which there is nothing more to say, about which you must remain silent; it is the locus where communication and language end. In this book, that silence is broken.

3.2 From the Philosophical Side

3.2.1 A place for madness While philosophizing takes place in conditions of madness, there is also interest in madness from the philosophical side. Madness is often represented, however, as something that must be controlled and suppressed by philosophy or reason. Indeed, the most important philosopher of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, seems to have constructed his grand philosophical design, an architecture of concepts and arguments, to sustain and safeguard the reliability of the world,

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the certainty of knowledge, and the stability of experience. Kant's philosophy protects the reasonable individual from his mad counterpart. His system guards modern man from thoughts of bottomless skepticism, experiences of unfathomable depths, and the seductions of animal sensuality.

These ideas about madness, however, have been further considered and criticized in modern philosophy. For French thinkers like Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, a madman is not so much a person to be restrained as he is a victim of the subtle pressure exerted by the so-called reason of the Enlightenment. In Foucault's *History of Madness*, we see the powers, forces, and ways of thinking that turned the madman into a medical case, and Foucault gives us the language and the motivation to act and speak out against them. In his work *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze shows us how to understand mad experiences and expressions in an entirely different way, thereby imparting to them a penetrating and liberating power—which is completely in line with the thesis of my book. According to Deleuze, those who pass through the "schizophrenic process" reach a high point of thinking and experience and escape time-bound social and cultural patterns.

The philosophical school of phenomenology has yet another way of relating to madness. The phenomenological method, such as that of Edmund Husserl, adheres as closely as possible to the subjective experience, to the givens of consciousness, avoiding any objective assumptions of a so-called reality in order to understand the life of the individual as he actually lives it. This unprejudiced attitude toward experience provides an outstanding methodology for research into madness. But if all assumptions about reality in phenomenological investigations are placed within scare quotes, then the phenomenologist will find himself, with his ideas and conceptions, in the same realm of perplexity and uncertainty as the madman—who also has misgivings about the reality of reality. Phenomenological philosophy not only offers the possibility of studying madness but also leads to its own form of willed madness through detached, contemplative, self-reflexive thought.

Madness is from all times and cultures. In this book, I use lines of thought, concepts, methods, and quotations from many different modern philosophical currents in addition to those from older sources—from theology, psychiatry and psychology, literature, and autobiographies. This book differs from many empirical-scientific studies, such as those from psychology and psychiatry, in that I have not posited a standard of what is normal or what is deviant. With the help of a philosophical analysis, I inquire into what madness means, as experience and as concept. So at first glance, my book offers a selection of analyses and reflections for understanding

madness: it seems to contain a specific philosophical conceptual apparatus on the one hand and a specific corpus of data from the world of madness on the other. But as I suggested above, hidden beneath this textual picture of two well-defined domains ("clear and distinct," as Descartes would call them) is a chaotic undercurrent in which madness and philosophy are mixed-up and indiscernible. This undercurrent influences both poles, that of philosophy and of madness, allowing me to carve out a space for madness within philosophy and for philosophy within madness.

3.2.2 Mad philosophers In their work, philosophers may discuss the place and meaning of madness, either implicitly or explicitly. Their ideas are like oars for rowing over the ocean of sense, nonsense, and madness. In addition, some thinkers are known to have had periods in their lives when they themselves went mad—or at least found themselves in an unusual mental condition. Their handmade oars turned out to be sea monsters—or mermaids—drawing them down into the very same waters that they were trying to navigate.

One interesting example is Plotinus, a Neo-Platonist philosopher from the third century CE, whom we shall discuss in greater detail in parts II and III. Plotinus systematized Plato's thought and gave it a personal twist. According to Plotinus, the highest possible goal for our souls is to make contact with "the One." Through inner contemplation, we should be able to "ascend" from the earthly world of souls to that of pure spirit, intellect, eternity, and finally the One. For Plotinus, this upward path is one of thinking and cerebral contemplation, just as it was for Plato. But Plotinus also says that this ultimate "breakthrough" in thinking our way to the One is not something we can reflect on or discuss; we can only "experience" it.

Plotinus himself went through several periods in which he experienced "contact" with the One; from a modern perspective, we might say he had an extraordinary or mystical experience, even a "psychosis." We know too little about his life and times to say anything definite about the connection between Plotinus's philosophy and the nature of his remarkable experiences. Were his experiences the result of his intense philosophical contemplation? Or did his philosophy of the One issue from his experiences? Or were his philosophical musings and his personal life more or less unrelated? We don't know. But what we do know is that his unusual experiences and his philosophy of the One were both very important to Plotinus himself.

Another interesting example that really speaks to our imagination is Thomas Aquinas. This hyperactive medieval philosopher and theologian had already written dozens of voluminous works when he had an "extraordinary experience." While praying before a crucifix, Thomas received an 14 Introduction

"insight" or "vision," after which he never wrote another word. What exactly happened, no one knows, but according to written records, Thomas said (as quoted in Weisheipl 1974, 321), "All that I have written seems like straw to me, compared to what has now been revealed to me." Had madness struck? Is this comparable to a madman's babbling about divine revelation (see Intermezzo II)? Did this sudden insight—or flash of madness—mean an end to Thomas's serious philosophy, or do these words represent the summum of Thomas's wisdom?

Several centuries later, the French mathematician and thinker Blaise Pascal was struck by the lightning of madness—or inspiration, or insight. During a few hours of insight and revelation, Pascal wrote a brief note that began with, "FIRE. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers and scholars. Certitude, heartfelt joy, peace." This note was found after his death, sewn into a pocket of his coat. Unlike Thomas Aquinas, Pascal began to write even more after having had his "extraordinary experience," in a tone that became increasingly theological and philosophical.

In modern times, many other well-known and lesser known philosophers have undergone periods of madness in the broad sense of the word—thinkers such as Hume, Cantor, and Foucault, with Nietzsche as the most famous and intriguing example. Eleven years before his death, he suffered a breakdown in which he embraced a horse in the city of Turin and fell prey to a state of irreversible madness. Like Thomas, Nietzsche was no longer able to write or to engage in philosophy, and after a while he even lost the ability to utter comprehensible speech. Unlike Thomas, he lived for more than ten years after the horse incident but with few of his mental capacities intact.

In this respect, Nietzsche is a classic example of what happens when madness strikes and destroys you. We could regard Nietzsche's madness as unrelated to his work—as the result of a syphilitic infection, for example—but a tendency toward madness was already evident in some of his earlier work. With his merciless ridicule and cultural attacks, he was poised to be the man who would criticize the very foundations of society, but he dug so deeply and became so personally involved that he ended up shaking the grounds of his own existence. He was going to be the great debunker, the philosopher with the hammer, but instead of a hammer, it ended up being a boomerang, hitting him instead.

It pleases me to be able to place myself in the same context (and paragraph) as Nietzsche. Unlike Nietzsche, however, I did return from madness, so it's up to me to explain what it was that Nietzsche saw and thought when he was with that horse in Turin and to put it in a book "for all and none."

In doing so, I will not discuss my personal trials and tribulations, or those of Nietzsche, Husserl, Deleuze, or Cantor; however, I will allude, both expressively and reflectively, to a world that Nietzsche—but also Cantor, Plotinus, and Pascal—thought they could discern during extreme transmarginal situations: a world of madness, which is the same as the ordinary world but exposed and twisted 360 degrees, as it were.

3.2.3 Madness from philosophy A discussion of philosophy that analyzes madness and an overview of mad philosophers is only the beginning. Philosophy and madness have more in common than madness occasionally appearing in philosophical texts, either rhetorically or thematically, or philosophers sometimes having reason to visit psychiatrists. I mentioned it above in the passage on phenomenology: the philosopher's theoretical reflections have their counterpart in the practical breakdown of the madman: madness is philosophy lived out in practice.

So a term like "philochosis" might be more appropriate in many cases than a term like "psychosis" for referring to a person's deep-seated existential confusion, a confusion about the boundaries between the self and the world, language and concepts, finitude and infinity. When the philosopher concerns himself with such great themes, he does so as a hobby or a profession, on paper or in academic dialogue. For the madman, however, dealing with these themes is a matter of bitter necessity in the struggle to simply hold his head above water and stay afloat. Seemingly esoteric, academic philosophical questions such as those concerning the existence of other minds, the proof of a world "outside the mind," or the "direction" of time are concrete and urgent problems for many madmen.

The source of astonishment and amazement, involvement and detachment, is the same for both philosopher and madman. The philosopher, however, knows how to deal with such questions in a way that is socially accepted and conventionally restricted. For the madman, these profound questions can completely derail and dominate his life. They can draw him into what, for others, are the invisible, obscure depths of madness.⁴ Wittgenstein wrote about these things in a somewhat enigmatic way (1969; par. 467):

I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again, "I know that that's a tree," pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone else arrives and hears this, and I tell him: "This fellow isn't insane. We are only doing philosophy."

Not only will philosophy be used in this book to explain madness, but madness will be used to get to the bottom of philosophy—and to go even deeper. In this book, philosophy is the best example of controlled textual madness. By trying to find out exactly what it is that motivates

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philosophy—and to set it free—I hope to unlock the door to madness. This makes *A Philosophy of Madness* a potentially "dangerous" or "negatively transformative" work. The means for understanding the theme of this work are the same means by which the reader—if not the author—may submerge himself in it.

4 Reading Guidelines

We live in a free country, and this is a free book: you may read whichever way you like, from front to back or hopping back and forth, crisscross fashion, whatever strikes your fancy. Yet you might benefit from a few reading tips and guidelines.

4.1 Approached from the Outside

I describe madness and philosophy from the inside out, and I do not use traditional classifications from psychiatry and philosophy as an organizational model. But to provide navigational assistance for this massive work, let me explain where certain things can be found. In parts I and IV, I tend to focus more on the schizophrenic aspects of psychosis, and in parts II and III on the manic aspects. Chapters 9, 13, 15, and 16 are about delusional systems. Chapters 10 and 11 have to do with drug-induced psychoses and manic psychoses. Chapter 12 is mainly concerned with anxiety and depression in psychosis, and chapters 11 and 14 are about religious psychoses.

The most important kind of psychiatry that I make use of is the phenomenological approach, which plays a role throughout the book and most explicitly in part I. Jungian psychoanalysis is the background for chapter 15, and spiritual psychiatry is the subject of chapter 14. Biological psychiatry does not play any significant role, but I could not refrain from criticizing the way the concepts of "salience" and "meaning" are used and abused in the biological psychiatry of Shitij Kapur (in Intermezzo II.III.II).

Part I is most strongly colored by a phenomenological perspective, inspired by philosophers such as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. In part II, I develop a mystical-philosophical approach to the data, and in part III, up to and including chapter 9, Plotinus and Husserl are the main philosophers. After that, the picture becomes quite varied. In chapter 11, Cantor, Nicholas of Cusa, and Sloterdijk make an appearance. Sartre and Schelling play a role in chapters 12 and 13. Lacan provides the background for part of chapter 13, and Taylor is the inspiring source for chapter 14.

Mircea Eliade's work on the sacred is important to the book as a whole, especially chapter 14, and I also draw on the work of this religious thinker

for the passages on yoga theory and shamanism. Henri Michaux and Aldous Huxley are the most important voices speaking on behalf of illicit drugs, and I make use of Sybren Polet and Thomas Pynchon for literary examples of madness.

The chief "experience experts" are Artaud, Schreber, Custance, Kaas, and me. I discuss Artaud in chapter 12, Intermezzo III.I, and chapter 16; and Schreber, as well as Kaas, in chapters 13 and 16. My own experiences permeate the entire book, but do so in a more expressive, literary form in the overture, the fragments in part I, the *via psychotica linguistica* in chapter 7, the four intermezzos starting in part II, and the finale—and in disguised or shorter forms here and there throughout the book.

For whom is this book intended? First of all, for those who have had some kind of experience of madness—those who are now mad, are in danger of going mad, or especially those who were once diagnosed as psychotic. A somewhat broader target group consists of family members, friends, acquaintances, psychiatrists, and all those who have anything to do with the mad. Another important group, quite different from the first, are readers with an interest in philosophy. After all, the book is concerned with the question of what human beings are and what they can be, what human borders and transgressions can mean in terms of experiences and language—a question that is relevant not only to philosophers who call themselves anthropologists, but also to phenomenologists, postmodern thinkers, metaphysicians, and other philosophers. The broadest target audience comprises all those who are interested in spiritual matters and those of a poetic or literary bent who are curious about the breadth and extremes of the human spirit.

This sums up the general reading guidelines, broken down in terms of persons, target groups, categories, and divisions. It is a first point of entry but no more than that. In creating these guidelines, I do not mean to suggest that the zone you can reach with mescaline is essentially different from that of schizophrenic psychosis, that Harald Kaas was not capable of writing literature, that Artaud was not a philosopher, that Sloterdijk was not an experience expert, or that "madmen" or "philosophers" form a well-defined target group. Whether all the words here reflect my own experience is entirely open to question. If that were the case, no one would be able to understand such a private language—either that, or I would have been rendered completely transparent and caught up in a web of words. It is neither one nor the other. Usually things are much simpler and, at the same time, much more complex than you think.

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4.2 Inner Dynamic and Theme

Now let me summarize the four parts of this book, which correspond to the four elements of ancient Greek physics: earth, water, air, and fire.

Part I begins with an exploration of the most important "deep" transformations that occur within madness. Here I provide a phenomenological analysis of madness and discuss a wide range of expressions and reports of mad experiences—including a number of longer fragments of my own, acquired through introspection. I reflect on four themes: the collapse of reality, the shifting of boundaries between the inner and outer worlds, the altered perception of time, and the inside-out transformation of space.

This first part shows that philosophy and madness are closely related; philosophical analyses point in the same direction as my own mad evocations and expressions, and reflect them. Frenetic, obsessive thinking is a mirror image of reflective thought. The method used here is linguistic and phenomenological: starting from the normal, we try to empathize our way into the mad world by letting our philosophical amazement and doubts about our own world run riot. The most important aspect of part I is the work of phenomenological psychiatrists and psychologists, such as Louis Sass and Eugène Minkowski, and of phenomenologists such as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Expressed in terms of ancient Greek physics, this part, with its futile search for solid ground and analysis, is defined by the element "earth."

In part II the reader is seduced into identifying even more with the madman and letting himself be transported down a "stream" of madness. The mediator here is the philosophical mystic—and the mystical philosopher—who will shed new light on psychotic detachments and uprootings. Here both the madman and the philosopher leave the earth, *terra firma*, and set out for the ocean—under the flag of mysticism. The element of this second part is therefore "water." Here I depart from ordinary language, images, and ways of thinking in order to investigate the oceanic and the tsunamic in participatory observation. The phenomenological philosopher is not just an observer but is someone who also steps aboard the Ship of Fools. It is here, for example, that we will see the mad undercurrent in the Husserlian philosophy of time.

Mad data come more to life in part II: madmen like Custance, Donald Crowhurst, and I are no longer just topics of conversation or "data providers." We also engage proactively in discussions with great mystics and philosophers like Eckhart, Plotinus, and Husserl. The writing style here is looser, more dynamic—or madder, if you will. Part II has more to do with the imitation or reliving of a mad process than with an overview or analysis, let alone a diagnosis, of a particular condition. In this part, I make more use of the

work of Edward Podvoll (1990) on "the seductions of madness" than of the work of Louis Sass, which has more to do with the static-schizophrenic type of madness.

In part III we venture farther into the oceanic and the airless, the interface between mysticism and madness. Here the madman is transformed into the philosopher, and the philosopher into the madman. The heat of the fire (from part IV) makes the water rise and change into "night nebulae" under the sign of the Greek element "air." Here we build four cloud castles, four forms of mystical madness or mad mysticism, to give us some imaginary airy ground about which we can say something. These four revolve around the Plotinian One, Being, Infinity, and Nothingness.

If we were to translate this four-part typology into psychopathological terms, we would be talking more or less about obsessive-paranoid psychosis, manic psychosis, religious psychosis, and depressive psychosis respectively. But instead of simplifying madness and confining it to psychopathology, I will try to liberate the four kinds of mysticism and madness and relate them to philosophy, spirituality, and culture. In part III we will visit many rooms in the cloud castles, such as the rooms of mescaline and LSD users like Huxley and Michaux, of theologians and philosophers like Nicholas of Cusa and Sloterdijk, and of "nihilists"—in the broad sense of the word—like Sartre, Schelling, and Artaud.

While part III has to do with something ineffable, indivisible, and uniform, this "monism" bursts into bits in part IV. In this last part of the book I show where the mad and mystical search through the heavens can lead in actual practice. After having read part II, chapters 10 and 11 from part III, and intermezzo II, the reader may get the impression that madness is all revelation, ecstasy, and heavenly joy. From chapter 12 onward, I write about the less joyful aspects of madness: the anxiety and emptiness, and the rampant delusional systems that result, the taunting hallucinations, the isolation, and the not-unusual decision to end it all through suicide.

In part IV, I show how madness assumes a concrete form in the shape of paradox, the sacred, and the systematic. The cloud castle of part III crashes to earth, producing an array of crystallized forms: shamanism, sorcery, and telepathy. The corresponding element in this fourth part is "fire." Here I will discuss the Schreber case and compare it with the cases of Sass and Wittgenstein. I will also argue that the notion of the "sacred," as espoused by Mircea Eliade and Charles Taylor, can enrich our understanding of madness.

Part IV is also where I show how, with knowledge from the first three parts, we can re-interpret classical cases of paranoia, megalomania, and delusions of reference, linking them to the general human condition 20 Introduction

instead of to individual failure, illness, or deficiency. In the last two chapters of part IV, the "plan" of madness, the "plan" of treating the mad, and the "plan" of this book will converge and be resolved in the finale.

The sequence of parts in this book may suggest a sequence of psychotic phases. From such a perspective, the mad journey begins with philosophical or existential amazement with regard to reality, thinking, time, and space (part I). It gathers momentum in mystical exaltation (parts II and III), only to end in some kind of intolerable form of madness (part IV). While there is something to be said for such a grand scheme, we can also say that, in each part and in each chapter, philosophy and madness begin anew—and they do not end when the book reaches its conclusion. The sixteen chapters can therefore be read independently, in random order, and can be seen as so many routes of exploration through the world of madness. The same moment of madness can be described simultaneously in terms of altered space (chapter 4), detachment (chapter 5), infinity (chapter 11), and preoccupation with a cosmic plan (chapter 16).

This book shows that madness is present in philosophy and philosophy in madness. At first the two are separate—at least on a textual level—but the further we proceed through the book, the more the two converge toward total fusion in a single vanishing point. Phenomenology follows the mystical route and is transformed into *lunatology*. This gives rise to mirror effects, transformations, and reversals. The madness I describe is the madness that supports and propels this very description; the philosophy I use is the philosophy of madness (the snake spits out its own tail—and swallows it again). So most of the individuals in this book play a double role. I use the ideas of philosophers like Husserl, Plotinus, and Taylor to analyze madness, but I use the same philosophers as examples of mad thought. And to duplicate this self-referentiality: the philosophy I use to describe madness was the harbinger of the madness I fell victim to in real life. The philosophical work you now hold in your hands represents the elaboration as well as the impact of what began as madness in the first place.

Overture: The Eternal Return

It's now exactly four o'clock. The digital numerals on my alarm clock, 16.00 (four squared!), are shining bright red. The first four hours of the afternoon have passed. The sun has completed part of its circuit, and the earth has warmed up nicely. The beginning of the beginner's phase is far behind me, the bachelor's phase is done, and now it's time for the master's. It all began at zero, at the nothingness from which everything emerges. Between zero and one, there wasn't very much. Well, yes, there were babies. Babies who can't talk and who are one with their surroundings. It isn't until after one that life really picks up. This is when one comes under the domination of numbers, the rat race, and the treadmill's wheel of fortune. Between one and three, some go to work in factories, while the youngsters spend their time knocking out exercises at school. The older students stay there longer, all the way to four. There they do their best, coming up with interesting things for the good of society. But once the clock strikes four, you fly through the barrier and end up on this side, the side of the masters.

From eight to four o'clock, the masters pretend to be working. They may be swallowed up in the crowds, but actually they're keeping an eye on the youngsters to prevent them from going off the rails. This is the celebrated hour, between four and five, when the masters make rapid-fire decisions about real-world affairs. I'm doing my bit as well. It'll be two hours before Rianne comes for dinner, plenty of time to rework my bachelor's thesis into a master's version of the same. A bachelor's thesis involves a lot of drudgery. You gather all kinds of source materials, organize it, give it an authoritative tweak, and after a great deal of brooding and fussing, you end up with a nice piece of writing. Seen in retrospect, it was a lot of trouble for nothing, now that I know what happens on the other side of four. You have to write a master's thesis like a master, which I now am, now that I know It. So I can go ahead and write on the basis of my Insight. I'm ready to take the plunge.

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My monitor and keyboard await me. I open my bachelor's thesis in Word to rework it. I could come up with a master's version of my bachelor's thesis in no time at all if I wanted to. Reduce it to a couple of compact, air-tight pages so that everything is clear at a glance. Actually, it ought to fit onto one A4 sheet of paper. Maybe I should make a general announcement and at least inform a few people of my new plans and my new fourfold core of crystal. The subject of my email will be "Bachelor becomes Master." So "Bach. becomes Ma." To show the recipients that now I really get it, it might be a good idea to say something in the email about the relationship between Bach and his mother. So let me post it on a few music discussion forums at the same time. But not too much dawdling, because I'm going to get it all written down on one A4. Fortunately I don't have to do any more analyzing, just synthesizing. So I pile up all the books from my bachelor's thesis on my right and all the tools on my left. This doesn't seem very harmonious, but when you work, you're allowed a bit of chaos. So sheets of blank paper on my left as well as pens of various colors, pencils, an eraser. Then well-organized bits of scrap paper within reach, larger sheets of white paper behind them, carefully stacked. Everything neat and tidy. Books on the right, but which ones? My thesis was about time and psychosis. I used four metaphors to say something about time: water, earth, air and fire. So I have to make four stacks. These stacks have to be properly organized: the biggest books with the darker colors on the bottom, including the large art books, if any, and the small paperbacks on top, with their light, playful colors. The resulting stack is a direct reference to the pyramid as the mechanism at the heart of the metaphor. In my master's version, I am going to demonstrate that the four-time metaphors are essentially the same, and I am going to do that based on a fifth metaphor—that of the crystal. Actually I am turning my bachelor's thesis inside-out. I am transforming it. In my thesis I wrote,

Hölderlin's formlessness—*Ungrund*, groundlessness, abyss—is presented symbolically. Issuing from that abyss or rupture, as from a volcano, is a "founding event," a symbol. As Deleuze puts it (1994, 112), "Such a symbol adequate to the totality of time may be expressed in many ways: to throw time out of joint, to make the sun explode, to throw oneself into the volcano, to kill God or the father. This symbolic image constitutes the totality of time to the extent that it draws together the caesura, the before and the after." Deleuze uses a crystal as a symbol. In a crystal, light is allowed to pass through but it is also broken, reflected. In a crystal, you can see time. Deleuze (1989, 81) says, "The crystal-image was not time, but we see time in the crystal. We see in the crystal the perpetual foundation of time, non-chronological time, Cronos and not Chronos. This is the powerful, non-organic

Life which grips the world. The visionary, the seer, is the one who sees in the crystal, and what he sees is the gushing of time as dividing in two, as splitting."

Quoth I in my bachelor's thesis. It all made perfect sense back then, but now I can see right through Deleuze. And I see the crystal. I see into the crystal. I see through the crystal. But how do I get all that down on paper? The origin of the crystal, the recipe for crystal. It's like alchemy. I have to reactivate the four elements of my thesis, this time in an archeological-genealogical way, and then I need to have the crystal emerge from there, the way sugar is made, and snow too.

Heeey, a text message. From Hans and Karin in Berlin. How nice. They're doing the "life in a single day" routine, too. Every day is a new beginning, every day the same clock. Every day is a circle encompassing the same elements of water, air, fire, and earth, four fifteen-minute domains an hour. Hans and Karin traveled around the firmament like Zeus and Hera. It's "our town," a family chronicle; we play the game with dice, like gods. The die is red, but the dots are black. I'm standing at the junction of four roads. Five is the crystal. Six doesn't bear thinking about. Six million to be wiped out, the stacks rising to the heavens. And I, too, was implicated. No, no, not now—never again, never again, don't even think about it. First, the crystal, concentrate on the crystal; if I don't, I'll go mad. Oh, and this text message. What an amusing, cryptic description from Hans and Karin, letting me know they know I've made my way through four. In a minute I'll send something back by way of confirmation. Actually, they can fight their own battles. Israel has become a strong nation. But where did it all go wrong? Let me begin at the beginning, so beginners get it too. First there was no philosophy, no culture, nothing. Then they built the pyramids, and facing them was man. Man asked the sphinx his question, and the sphinx answered. Now people often think that his answer was directed at man, but he was speaking straight through him, to the top of the pyramid, thereby revealing the One, the crystal, for the first time. But how can I make that clear? Another introduction, this time via Plotinus. It's a good thing I just purchased his great work, all of it. Plotinus wandered through the desert. There was only earth and sky, two layers, with man crushed in between, and man walked on the water. Then he saw the crystal (they call this Plotinus's mystical side; he was said to have been psychotic). Finally I understand what psychosis is: nothing less than the secret I now understand. When you add the fourth element, fire, to the other three, everything starts to move. Metaphors are no longer individual words or dead concepts; they become transformers or portals. When you jump into the volcano, you see the crystal. How do I fit all that onto one A4? I'll make a diagram. That bit about Plotinus, that will

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come later. I've already dealt with it in a very nice bachelor's paper. Hegel is the key figure. It includes the Jewish question and the Holocaust. That comes later, in section six. First I have to bring Adorno and Hegel together to solve the question of modern evil, then look for a bridge to the Early Modern and the Good and the One in Plotinus. It'll all turn out fine; it's as clear as a lump of crystal, ha-ha-ha. Everything in my master's thesis hinges on transubstantiation, or the metaphor and the transforming portals, but with content—not some formal empty shell. It's pure alchemy. I'm going to make gold, a golden ring. Deleuze already said it: "This is the powerful, nonorganic Life which grips the world." Metal: that's the key to the future, to liberation, but also to evil. Bullets, guns, and rockets, that is modern evil. Black, white, and gray, that is the background against which the fire will be extinguished. I'm going to write my master's thesis in four colors: red, green, yellow, and blue. On paper. But it cannot be too earthly. I need air, Plotinian air. The windows must be opened, and the doors, too, or not enough air will come in. And more liquid; time for tea with sugar. And occasionally a volcanic spark, just a spark from the cigarette lighter, will do. Oh, it's almost six o'clock. Rianne will be here any minute now.

A little immature of Rianne to skip out on me like this. She said she "couldn't take it anymore" and she'd make sure "that help came today, before ten o'clock." Now, now. She needs that help a whole lot more than I do. She just wanders down the street without even seeing what's going on around her. And if I casually point out a few things that are conspicuously hidden, she gets up her high horse. Totally blind to symbols. How can you live like that and still look all worried and whine about "finding help"? The world is being battered on every side, but Rianne keeps wringing her hands because I suddenly put sugar in my coffee. She just doesn't get it, but she keeps shouting that something is bound to go wrong with me. And who cleans up the pizza boxes? And who cleaned up what was left of the World Trade Center in New York? It was the workers, firefighters, red fire engines, slogging away down there on the ground. We know about dealing with things, about purity and clarity. That's what's needed now, and not some grubby pizza boxes or vague stories about getting help. Rianne can go take a hike. I'm going to pick up where I left off with my A4. I have to concentrate on the crystal, the white paper. Coffee with sugar, salt of the earth for what it's worth, ha-ha. But first, purify my exterior in the shower.

The shower provides the basis. On the stone floor, under the white ceiling, a shower head that sprays pure water. Glorious water—blue, the color of you. I've already written it in the book *Alone*—your eyes—yes, yes, I've always had a weakness for the watery element, it flows all over the

place. You can really move in water. That's where the freedom is. A finger in the dike, and they break right through. Blue-green, the color of mermaidery. Human beings and living creatures are compilations of elements, just like me. It's on my blue shower curtain: a whole bunch of fish who couldn't care less about air. I had a nice little fish on my hook, but she swam away. The fisherman decides on the life and death of the fish. Once you take a gulp of air, you can never swim again without worrying about it. Why, oh, why does that have to affect me so much? I was thinking about having a nice little swim, but instead I drowned in her, a hook got stuck in her mouth. If only I had known! Everyone is Jewish; all the water is blood. Life flows away with every stream of water that goes down the drain. How can I save her? She doesn't know. She's Jewish, but she just hangs out with German Nazis. Luckily I shower in blue. That's the Atlantic color. And NATO is also blue. She just has to trust in it. After all, America is Israel's big ally, right? Nothing wrong with that, a trustworthy ally. But the sea is teeming with organic hanky-panky. They don't like shellfish. The sea babbles on, the Greek intellectual vapors above remain unmoved. I was not yet acquainted with the serpent, however. The electric eel, the thunderbolt. They call it "seeing the light," or, oh, so amusingly, "the snake that bites its own tail." But it's fire: fire may give light, but it burns if you touch it. Here in the shower, it's safe, at least for the time being. Fire is kept under control by civilization. The power lines are monitored by workers. But there are rabblerousers on the loose. According to the status quo, we have dominion over the earth, and the animals are our inferiors. But now they want to eradicate the difference, unleash the bear. Set the Russian-Eastern hordes loose and let them overrun our churches under the guise of social criticism. Give the dark forces free rein again. I mustn't forget to develop that in my master's A4: Heidegger is a pagan rabble-rouser. The earth in itself wasn't so bad; it was blood that turned the soil into a swamp. All they care about are the orchids growing there. The world is so stupid. There are no more than five people who govern everything. The world is a flower garden, and beneath the splendor of the flowers is the brutal life of fungus and insects. The five gardeners are playing Risk for the advanced. At the moment, Sloterdijk is one of them. He's jamming the European sensors. I need to side with the English and stop playing with the Germans, or everything is doomed. And even if you see it, you still can't do anything about it. So what now? I'm at my wits' end. Language shrinks back into the mouth, the tongue withdraws from the air. We suck up the air, mix it with blood and raw materials, and produce life. But the passivity is gone. With every process I just stand there, open-mouthed and watching. I can do everything, which keeps me

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from doing anything. Beyond the frameworks, the system, the lines. Good evening, Nietzsche. I see your shadow, your shadow, but it doesn't help, your help. You knew it all along, didn't you? That the tightened cord would become the rope around your neck. I can do only one thing: keep hammering away on my project. I've got to finish that A4. I'm going to turn it into a mission statement, a program, a call to arms. If help really comes, I'll be able to distribute it. But not via the internet. Everything there is poison. I need more information about what the present situation is. But first let me calm down and watch some TV. After that I'll still have time to fit it into my A4.

Once you realize what's going on, it's all so bizarre. Those who don't know anything think there are twenty or thirty different TV channels. As if something actually happens when you push the buttons! Yes, the image flickers, and a different scene comes on, but if you look more carefully, you can see that the so-called "new" scene is exactly the same as what you just saw "on the other channel." It's really crazy! There are no "remote controls"! They're just toys, fun for kids—fake devices with fake buttons. They don't do anything at all. The image changes every so often anyway, whether you push the buttons or not. They have no effect on the current programming. All those devices, cell phones, computer screens, televisions: they show only whatever it is that you secretly want to see. The devices are intruders from the kingdom of metal. They want to make our minds dependent on all those little machines. Look at them, they're metal, plastic, parasites and viruses from the inorganic realm. But they can't do anything on their own; you see only what your self sees. Once you stop believing in them, you're free. Blink your eyes and the illusion is gone. The threads that link you with the others just dissolve like sugar in water. And you can rise up like a mensch. And that's how the tide turns. The devices consume electricity and energy, they soak up your colors and make you look pale, until finally you merge with the masses. You grow older, you turn gray, you languish and wither, you get used to color TVs and become blasé. But the minute this dawns on you, it's a kaleidoscopic feast: for the first time, you see colors as they were meant to be seen. I have to include this in my A4, too, not forgetting to mention that work by Goethe on color theory, and to look up Kandinsky's philosophy and maybe Rudolf Steiner's as well, who I'm beginning to appreciate more and more as a "master painter." It's fantastic, being able to watch real color TV with my new mental "color glasses," ha-ha. Now they're really pulling out all the stops on the screen. Boy, what a lot of action and violence. Still plenty of blue and green, of

course, since it's early evening. Red and yellow are more intense, so they come later on. Oh, wait a minute, now they've thrown in a little red. Think I'll join in. I'll go in red, too. Yeeeah, now red is up. Even more red. And now it's being worn by people in motion. What a masquerade. It's like a neverending carnival. And they just stick that one blue in the corner. Whoa, now they want to make gold from several different colors. Oh, too bad, didn't work, fizzled out, turned into text. Metal terror. They're planting dead texts inside us. I have to fight this; I'll stimulate moving colors. Wait a minute, I'm going to try a different approach. It seems crazy—it may sound a little childish and dumb—but it works, it really works! I'll get a sheet of paper and work on it with different felt-tips, and you'll see what happens on TV. Heeey, now they've switched again from colored images to spoken words and text. Wow, it's gotten really dark outside, and dangerous too. Because the metallic and the lifeless are lurking in the dark, and colors are in danger of disappearing. We have to keep it light. Here, inside, everything is still light. Four roads, four colors, are running outward from me. Here, inside, I'm still radiating color, fortunately—but outside it's all decay. Poor Rianne, walking around out there in drab shades of gray. And Doreen. I wasn't able to hold onto her either. I tried, but the opposing forces were too strong. Everything gets faded if you wash it too often. Routine is a color-killer. And Ankie is gone forever. But I'll chase her down. She might be a pearl, a diamond, stolen in Antwerp, in the cafe of Belgium, escaped from the Mossad, ha-ha. But first I have to lure her here into my "safe haven," my psychedelic Bedouin tent. Colors are in danger of draining away like liquid slides; they seep into space. My walls keep the color in; I stay indoors. This is the only safe place there is; I can't go outside ever again. Outside are the systems, the copper networks, the metal wires. Colors are imprisoned between black lines. It makes me think of Kandinsky, of keeping in contact with him, looking at him. They've destroyed so many of us. Space at night is infinitely black; now we have to store the light from the sun underground. Ancient planting rituals our organic biological basis. Plants help us, they store light and provide us with light. I need to take good care of my plants. Bye-bye, plants outside, just stay where you are tonight, waving. As long as there's greenery winding its way through the city, we can play primate house, jumping from circle of light to circle of light. And woe to those who fall in—they're in for a soaking. Monkeys, mammals, all of them projected and planned by means of DNA, an experiment set in motion by the plants. It's already after nine, the space above the ground is now largely occupied by the metal network. There are still robots and fascists walking around 28 Overture

outside. Yes, and the occasional Blade Runner—they play with fire. I'm too old for such things. You really have to venture outdoors with a laser gun to get through all the swarming metal. I wonder if help is ever going to arrive.

The doorbell. They're finally here. Good, there's a dark-skinned woman with kinky hair. And the man with her seems okay. Well, of course, these particular specimens can come in. Yes, I was waiting for them. "Would you like to take your coats off?" Yes, I knew I'd be getting some assistance. And no, I don't mind if they ask me a few questions. They want to win me over to their side. I get the impression that their side is my side, so that's fine. They'll ask me some questions in order to assess my status, to see if I've already infiltrated the system. No, but let's have a background check anyway before they admit me to their ranks. Maybe they don't trust it; they don't want any parasites or viruses, of course, but only authentic visionaries. The man inputs a few network parameters on his laptop, and I can see that this adventure is going to be just fine. He doesn't use Explorer; he operates with an alternative system that hasn't been hacked yet. It isn't black and white but a sober light blue, which looks very nice. This guy is a good hacker, an expert. And no, I don't have any objection to the woman looking around my house. Where are my clothes? To take with me? Okay, good, depends on how long. This sounds exciting. I don't ask where we're going; I'll let myself be surprised. No, not there, all my clothes are in this pile. I only have to pick out the ones I want, and she'll pack. Great, isn't it, like a school trip? Do I want to take anything else? Of course. Yes, I can count on them having all the things I need there, but even so. I trust my own Nokia, which has served me well. And I'd really like to take a bit of mental nourishment with me, to fall back on. No, no, not the whole library, of course. Just four books, surely that would be all right. Plotinus is coming along in any case, with the soft greenish-yellow cover, hundreds of pages of wisdom. He was such an incredible visionary. I only want to bring the true greats. None of those agitators who crank out all kinds of drivel about a couple of bizarre events from the last century. No Heidegger, no Sloterdijk, no Deleuze. Only sound, respectable thinkers who knew what the Good was. Oh, a thin book is preferable? All right then, that little edition by Suhrkamp on Kant, bright yellow. I admit it's risky, but it should be fine. It also contains everything from Plotinus but explained in a different way. Good old German. If you just overlook all the rubbish from the last two hundred years, you can see what beautiful writings there still are in German. Okay, just one more book. Something relaxing? All right, I'll take Gravity's Rainbow by Thomas Pynchon. That's a translation of my own Pure Madness. Pure paranoia, but for connoisseurs.

Oh, are we going already? Okay, then. No, I certainly won't forget to put on my shoes. Is it far? Is it outside? I don't want to go outside. Isn't there a "hidden passage"? I've already struggled so much. Just let me bring people in here, with their pale colors. That is my strength: to revive the color in people. There's violence outside. Oh, all right, if there are fellow strugglers there, then I'll agree to come along.

What a lot of flashing outside. You can see it's a special evening. It's as if a festival and a war had suddenly been telescoped into each other. An ambulance, a police officer, a girl in a white coat. Very unusual, but very nice. Such a warm welcome. They look friendly, full of expectation. Well, I'm not going to disappoint them. I'm going to really show them something. I know how it works; I can get into the ambulance by myself. No, I don't need to be tied down. Yes, you may tie me down if you want, but I'm really just going to lie here. I'm going to let myself be pampered for awhile. There's still so much awaiting me.

We drive on as I lie there. I look through the little windows and see houses and buildings go past. It's great that I can finally get a good look at the world from the inside. I was always on the outside of the ambulances, outside the yellow vans. For a very long time, I had red at my disposal. I knew red through and through, that old familiar song about communism, resistance, emancipation, but also about love and the bleeding heart. Blue is familiar too. Everyone in public deals in blue. They keep calling for a greater police presence, for "more blue on the street." Maybe that's a good thing; it's hard for me to judge. But it's all about yellow, of course. Yellow should be covered over, it's the color of madness, which is threatening when you see it from the outside. It's the color of the desert. Pure yellow is like a grill, hot but without moisture. You need blue, or you'll dry out. But I've collected enough blue and red to ride around peacefully in yellow without dying. They've found me, and now they're going to help me in the struggle. Or maybe not. It can't be, can it? What if it's one big game? Am I getting all worked up about this, that, and the other thing? Is it just one big playground, a theater play, a children's party? They've prepared something nice for me, they're going to surprise me and make a fool of me. Maybe I was being too pompous with those books about psychoses. They're going to show me that everything is a crazy costume party. The masks are interchangeable. No, that's not possible. There is a reality, because something like red always exists. Blood is real, the shame cannot be obliterated. Yes, it's a role play, but a serious one. Everyone ought to believe in it at some point, and now it's my turn to be crucified. That was the racket I heard. The neighbor wasn't just building something; he was letting me know that he supported me, that he was making a lovely cross

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for me to be nailed to. Yes, he had hung on it himself. It wasn't for nothing that he had spent a couple of weeks in the hospital recently, right? That had been his tour of duty, and now I've been called up. "At your service!" as Pim Fortuyn used to say. Pim also performed an insane magic trick, without a cross, to help Islam in a mischievous sort of way. And now it's me. I've always had green as a secret weapon. There are plants and mold cultures there too. If you just take the time to find out!

The ambulance speeds up. Go on, drive faster, I can take it. We drive through the darkness. A lot of land has already been lost. I look outside and see scraps and remains of what was once the familiar old city, but most of it belongs to the enemy now. Here inside, in the yellow, the gentle smile of the "nurse" fills the whole ambulance with a subdued light. Even though it's raining hard in the gray, cold, ashen city, we finally get there. We slow down, and now we're going inside somewhere. Get out myself? Yes, I can do that. Through one door and then another, down corridors, into a labyrinth. The yellow people go away, and I find myself in the company of a new group of four. This looks ominous. A mistake must have been made. These are the inner workings of the adversary: harsh, glaring, smooth. It looks like the last stop, Bahnhof Zoo, the station where all stations end; aussteigen, the beginning of the funeral. So they've delivered me to the fascists. I fell for it with eyes wide open. These four, two female and two male, are far too sleekly dressed. Their skin is made of plastic metal, their mugs of molded clay that change shape like in a cartoon. Yes, they appear human, but they're essentially organic pods that have been sucked dry. And here come two more, two males. I have to sit down, but I don't want to. They're still standing, right? Suddenly an enormous fatigue descends upon me. I'm exhausted and old, I feel my stubble, my wild hair, and my decrepit body, as opposed to their smooth faces, their slick haircuts, and their perky, gleaming glances that love to tackle a problem. I've come from far, far away, from ages past, while they've been freshly dropped here like stand-ins. They don't know anything yet. They're still in school; they live in ignorance. I have walked through Jerusalem, traversed Rome and Athens, spoken with wise men, given orations in forums and agoras, in arenas. I have held my own amid crowds and mobs. I have changed clothing, body, language, and nationality. I wander among the people like the Wandering Jew. My task is to save her, Ankie Frank, because the volcano gives us fire but it also takes lives. Deleuze overlooked that, which is why he has to be given the old heave-ho. Every movement brings death, every moment splits into good and evil. Those who grasp that fact attract evil the way a magnet attracts iron filings. It hovers around me, enters me with every breath I take. I suck

up evil in its pure form, in tar and nicotine, and spit it out in fragments. We're the waste products of combustion, carbon black all stuck together. They don't understand me, and they keep on waiting. They ask me my name; they want to convert me into written text, smear me out into black lines, like crushing a fly. That's their eternal trick: naming you and then destroying you. I have no name; that is my only salvation. They offer me a pill. Is it a blue pill or a red pill? I don't trust them. They want to poison me. I have to make up a list to get myself out of here. What do they want from me? They're not allowed to kill me. They can't do that, it's not allowed. They don't want to do it, either, because they have no weapons. The only metal I see is keys. Do they want my keys? What is the key? No key. Nokia! I have to call someone, call for help. Rianne, what kind of stunt are you trying to pull? They won't let me make any calls. They tell me it's time. You see, there is no time. They're from the devil, from mechanization, from the time of clocks, black lines used to capture organic colors. This is wrong. Now I know there's only one way to get out of here. It sounds cruel, but I have no choice. I have to try to project my fate as the eternal scapegoat onto someone else, to burden them with it. I scramble to my feet and send all my thoughts about black and death and guilt and violence via my eyes to the last person to come in, the one who appears to be the boss of the six. I have to try to win the other five over to my side and get them to turn their boss into "number six" (06!), the number of the Jew. I have to become a German and order them to turn this man into the Jew. No, it's not working, something's wrong, they're pulling me and pushing me toward the open door with the cell behind it. I resist a bit but realize that, once again, they've got me outnumbered. I scream for mercy, quickly name as many locations of concentration camps as I can, hoping for mercy. They push me to the ground, restrain me. Time momentarily stands still. I can't breathe, can't move. Then they release me. They walk away and the door clicks shut.

I understand I've gone too far, and now I have to pay the price. It was lots of fun doing what I was doing, but I fiddled too much with the foundations. I transgressed the basis of human laws. The tacit agreement is that we won't do any harm to others and won't touch on the power of evil, let alone make improper use of it. And now I have done that. I have peeled back the subsoil of humanity and have ended up in the realm of black magic. The vast majority of the population have been trained and persuaded to be human beings. All of them human, human among humans. But I've wriggled through it, beneath the layer of humanity, and I've ended up in an illustrious company of prophets and magicians: Pol Pot, the F-Side football hooligans of Amsterdam, Genghis Khan, Gilles Deleuze, and Roger Zelazny.

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Now I know what they know: it's all a game—The Game—a masquerade. A game whose rules must never be revealed, the great secret, and I threatened to do that very thing, without compunction, which set off their alarms. I attracted too much attention. Houses, banks, and temples were in danger of toppling. Willem Holleeder¹ was a "side-F act," Ajax and Hercules had supported the Greek temples. They had waited for the barbarians, and now we had come. Everyone is Jewish, unless you go back to the time before the temples and become pretribal. Unless you turn your stigmas into tattoos. But they want to push me into a mold again, turn me into He Who Must Never Be Seen. They want to turn me into absolute evil, the evil that cannot be destroyed, that at the very most can be locked up, dominated, and controlled. So here I am, in the bunker, under the pyramid, monitored by cameras. They have tried everything to pull me from my path and push me into the abyss. But I thought it out through and through, and without any limits, the fall is endless. This is the last location, eternal solitary confinement, where you don't know whether you're alive or dead, whether you're in the cell or the cell is in you.

I Cogitating Your Head Off



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Introduction: Setting Sail

This first part is an introduction to the philosophy of madness, and it offers a perspective on the most important aspects of psychotic experiences. It considers the way the experience of "reality" changes (chapter 1), the way the difference between "inner" and "outer" is determined (chapter 2), and the way time and space are experienced (chapters 3 and 4). This attempt to plumb the depths of madness on the basis of four themes will demonstrate that madmen go through an existential rupture or radical reversal. Suddenly the light is shining from a different direction, enabling them to see from a new perspective into a glistening crystal.

This is the "earthiest" part of the book. Here I discuss and substantiate my view of madness, presenting philosophy and madness as seemingly straightforward and discrete phenomena. In making a phenomenological observation, I look at what can happen to the four types of "oars" we use to row through our daily lives (reality, the inner/outer world, time, and space) when they enter the ocean of madness. I closely examine the transformations and fragmentations of these four concepts, and in eight fragments—scattered among the chapters—I show how this can work out in vivo. In so doing, I provide an initial sketch of the philosophy of madness and lay the basis for the discussions to follow.

But this first part also contains something paradoxical: there's an aspect of madness that creeps into philosophy, and vice versa. Confrontation with madness causes these same four analytical concepts, which we usually regard as the foundation of our existence, to fall apart, disappear, and become irrelevant. The philosophical discourse that comes face to face with madness here also becomes contaminated, drawn into a pool of oscillation, confusion, ecstasy, and anxiety. In addition, it turns out that the various data from episodes of madness referred to here are already possessed of a fascinating and disruptive power, which vitalizes the object level of madness and lays claim to philosophy.

1 Realer than Real

It is in a sense paradoxical that nothing can be more real than the experience of unreality.

—Carney Landis, Varieties of Psychopathological Experience

1.1 Everyday Realism

The madman can cut some remarkable capers: he can travel through time, pirouette through mirrors, and rediscover the world. An outside observer may think what he sees is imaginary and has nothing to do with "reality," but to the madman, his experiences can seem realer than normal. So what does that say about reality and the realness of madness? Is the mad world real or unreal? What does the madman himself think about it? In this chapter, I will show what happens to the concept of reality when you reflect on it deeply, and what happens when you obsess on it—when you cogitate your head off.

Let me begin with two examples of how madmen regard reality—or its absence. The Englishman John Custance wrote several vividly detailed books about his manic episodes. I will refer to Custance's findings and analyses throughout this book. Writing about the degree of reality present in his mania, he says in *Wisdom, Madness and Folly* (1952, 31), "If I am to judge by my own experience, this 'heightened sense of reality' consists of a considerable number of related sensations, the net result of which is that the outer world makes a much more vivid and intense impression on me than usual." Here Custance is talking about a "heightened sense of reality," but elsewhere (1952, 73) he says, "... the whole universe of space and time, of my own senses, was really an illusion. Or it was so for me, at any rate. There I was, shut in my own private universe, as it were, with no contact with real *people* at all, only with phantasmagoria who could at any moment turn into devils. I and all around me were utterly unreal."

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Lara Jefferson describes the same ambivalence toward the degree of reality in madness in her 1948 autobiography, part of which was included in Bert Kaplan's collection of first-person accounts *The Inner World of Mental Illness*. First she writes (Kaplan 1964, 8), "Nothing is real. Everything is a wild toss of hallucinations of one kind or another about one thing or another. ... If I am to be awakened, I must awaken myself, for no one else can do it. But I do not know how. There is only a shadow remaining of the person I used to be. ... Madness claimed me." But then she goes on to contradict herself (Kaplan 1964, 18):

Each crazy world is strictly private and cannot be shared by another. It is much more real than reality. For nothing that happens to a sane mortal in the commonplace world of ordinary living, can approach the startling intensity of things going on in delusion. There is a sharpness, a shrillness, a piercing intensity which thrusts itself through the consciousness and is so much more convincing than the blunt edge of reason, that even if the two are conflicting there is no choice between them. Reason is beaten, dismissed and defeated at the very outset, it cannot contend with the saber edge of delusion.¹

Both Custance and Jefferson insist that madness is realer than real but that it is also unreal. How is that possible? How are we to understand this? In the next four subsections I will analyze what it means to live in the "ordinary real world." What is so real about the ordinary world? Where did that idea come from? Why are some things and events normally experienced as real while others are experienced as unreal? After addressing these questions, I will examine the mad experiences that are described as extremely real and extremely unreal at the same time. I call the sense of extreme realness "hyperrealism," which I analyze in section 1.2.1. The sense of extreme unrealness is called "hyporealism" (section 1.2.2), and the term "pararealism" is used as an all-encompassing term for both. Pararealism therefore comprises the contradictory experiences of realness and unrealness in one and the same world in which everyone lives. It can't get any crazier than that, except in the last section (1.3), where reality is done away with altogether. But that's good, too.

When is something "actual," "genuine," or "real"? In ordinary life these concepts have multiple meanings. A pair of jeans can be real (with an authentic label) or imitation (a knockoff). A film can be about something that really happened (a true story) or something concocted (a work of fiction). Someone can really mean something or they can be lying. Unreal is imitation, made-up, artificial, or deceitful—all of which play a part in madness. One difference between daily life and the mad world is that we usually judge a single object, a specific film, or a certain opinion as real or

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unreal. But in the mad world, the entire experience, the entire world, is real or unreal.

What can psychiatry tell us about the experience of hypo- and hyperreality? Surprisingly little that is of any interest. For most practitioners in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, and psychopathology, the question about the realness of the world is simply not relevant. The world is real, and those whose experiences tell them otherwise are engaging in something unreal. Psychiatrists and psychologists rarely consider the fact that some people experience the world as more than real or as totally unreal.³ And except for a handful of studies, phenomenological psychiatry does not pay much attention to the topic either. The only attempt to thematize and analyze the experience of unreality that I know of is the work of the researchers Radovic and Radovic, but they go no further than trivialities. They conclude their analysis of experiences of unreality (2002, 279) with the remark that, at the core of the sense of unreality, there is "a distinct quasisensory or quasiperceptual state of immediate feelings of unreality manifest as an ineffable atmosphere." By speaking of "immediate feelings" and an "ineffable atmosphere" they are actually placing mad pararealism beyond the reach of further comprehension.

Can philosophy help? In philosophy, the question of the realness of the world ("the reality of reality") is answered in a number of ways. One of them—briefly put and greatly exaggerated—claims that all the things we experience are just fleeting, unreal phantoms, and that hidden behind each one is the thing that actually "is." The real/unreal antithesis is also understood as real observation versus illusion, or fact versus fantasy—as occurring between thing ("res," from which we get "realism") and idea (from which we get "idealism"), or between matter and spirit. These are all interesting aspects of "realness," and they play a background role in this chapter. Most of what philosophy has to say about realness is not immediately relevant, however, because it usually has to do with human experience in general, observation in general, and the order of the world in general. What is needed here is a form of philosophy that allows for variation and gradation with regard to experiences of reality. After all, what we are asking is what it means to experience the world sometimes as real and sometimes as unreal. So whether the world itself is real or unreal is not important; what is important is what the decisive elements are in bringing about an "experience of realness or unrealness."

After studying the experiences and assertions of psychotics, I have come to recognize four essential factors, or dimensions, of "experiences of reality": modality, subjectivity, temporality, and continuity. Although these

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concepts overlap, I will use them to analyze and understand experiences of realness, hyperrealness, and unrealness. But first I will show how these four factors can help us understand our ordinary feelings of reality.

1.1.1 Self-Evident Birds

The first aspect of the experience of reality is what I call *modality*. In philosophy, this term refers to anything having to do with possibility and necessity: to be obliged to, to be allowed to, to be able to; or necessity, capability, and so forth. In philosophy, possibility and necessity are regarded as opposite extremes. But the normal "real" world consists of neither limitless possibilities nor imperative necessities. The ordinary real world consists of things we take for granted and seldom reflect on, along with the occasional appropriate doubt.

Normally something is "real" for us as long as we don't wonder whether it could be otherwise. For example, stones fall down; it is difficult to imagine that not being the case. Here, realness has to do with observation, expectation, and habituation. Whenever we begin to wonder why stones fall to the earth, we are also thinking about the imaginary possibility that they might not do so. But we immediately rule out such a possibility as "real" and explain the falling by making reference to a "necessity," such as a natural law. The way we experience realness when we see a falling stone has to do with both reality and with our thinking about reality. The fact that we see, think, and know that a stone is really falling means not only that our thinking about it is "certain," but also that stones fall in reality. There is no room for doubt here.

A blackbird is a real bird, while a penguin or an ostrich are less-real birds. A blackbird satisfies all the characteristics of a bird; there's no getting around the fact that it is a bird. It is a self-evident bird. Penguins and ostriches are also birds, biologically speaking, but they have fewer of the typical characteristics of a bird. They are less-self-evident birds; that is, we can imagine their falling under different categories.

When we see a bat streaking past, we don't immediately know how to categorize this flying creature. Does the bat lay eggs? Can it tweet? Is it really a bird at all? When we see Big Bird on *Sesame Street*, we know he's a *so-called* bird—and not a real bird. In the case of the bat and Big Bird, they appear to be birds, but this quickly gives rise to doubt. They are not necessarily birds; they may conceivably, possibly, be something else—and in the case of Big Bird, that is certainly true.

If I see a rabbit, I take it to be a real rabbit as long as there is no reason for me to doubt the existence of the rabbit "as rabbit." The question "Did you Realer than Real 41

really see a rabbit?" can be answered in many different ways, depending on the context: "Yes, because I had binoculars with me," "Yes, because its ears were shorter than those of a hare," "Yes, because there were real animals in the movie," "Yes, because I was awake." When we see the well-known picture of a duck that might also be a rabbit, we don't say, "That is really a rabbit." We say, "You *might* see it as a rabbit," and we don't think it's as much of a real rabbit as others we have seen.

All such examples of realness are subtly different in meaning. Also compare (1) "That bird is real," (2) "That is a real bird," and (3) "That is really a bird." Statement 1 seems to present an antithesis: the bird is either living or made of plastic. In statement 2, the bird seems to have become a typical bird with the addition of "real." In statement 3, the addition of "really" raises the strongest doubt. Despite these differences, the examples all seem to have something in common: that the realness is always self-evident in an ordinary way. Things have to be as they are and not otherwise—then they are real. This "have to be as they are" does not imply coercion or necessity so much as unconsidered acceptance or inevitability.

Something is experienced as less real when doubt becomes strong and too much reflection is involved. Is that animal flying there in the distance a real bird? When unrealness, illusion, or even deception is suspected, doubt and mistrust arise. A gold ring for ten dollars can't possibly be real. In *Varieties of Psychopathological Experience* (1964, 371), Carney Landis's voluminous collection of first-person accounts of psychopathological experiences, the author writes, "Unreality occurs when there is a distorting quality in perceptual experience," and "Unreality is used as a term to describe a fogging or dulling of perceptual experience."

Ever since the seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes, doubt has been the accepted scientific method for arriving at a deeper level of realness by means of provisional, simulated feelings of unrealness. Those who methodically doubt certain opinions, sensory impressions, or supposed natural laws hope that such doubt will help them reach a "deeper" level of reality (compare this with the example of the falling stone). The doubt itself is articulated in a sense of unrealness.

The unquestioned acceptance that something is what it is, is that much stronger when something is what it is in all of its facets. When actual events occur, we are caught off guard by reality and there's no time for doubt, philosophical reflection, or mad negation. It's less easy to claim that the bright red car tearing past us and blowing exhaust fumes in our faces is only an image, a fantasy, or an interpretation. It isn't a bicycle, it isn't blue, and it doesn't smell like violets. The realness of events or things is more robust

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when more senses are involved: a movie with sound is more real than a silent movie, a movie with Dolby surround sound and a futuristic gimmick such as a "scent cannon" is realer yet.

In her dissertation on virtuality and physicality *Time Travel in the Cavern*, Elke Müller studies the degree of reality in virtual environments and makes the following comment (2009, 288): "A thing is real for us when it appeals to all our senses; if an observation involves only one or two of my senses, the phenomenon can be dismissed as a 'phantom.'" A thing or event is even more real when we not only observe it through several of our senses, but also when it "overwhelms our motor functions" in the sense that—as Müller says (2009, 289)—there is evidence of "coherence between sensory involvement and motorial intention." When a car is viewed on a movie screen, everything can still be asserted regarding its realness. But the car that crashes into me is "real" in yet another way. The more "motorial involvement" there is and the more senses that are addressed, the less its realness can be doubted. The measure of the world's reality decreases the more distance we take from it in philosophy, science, art, or madness.

1.1.2 Real Things, Real People

If something is real, it isn't just our *idea* about it that is true and actual; it is "really so" in reality. When things are determined less by reality itself and depend more on "how you look at it," their reality level drops. The duck/rabbit picture is less a real depiction of a rabbit because the appearance of the rabbit depends on how we see it. Watching a movie in 3D with the help of special glasses is less real than seeing "real depth," because seeing depth in 3D is dependent on our decision to put on the glasses in the first place. You're more likely to say, "With these glasses, it's *as if* you could see real depth" than "With these glasses, you can see real depth."

In philosophy, this has led to a split between primary qualities (real, objective) and secondary qualities (added by us, subjective). Thus the existence of color is less real than, say, quantity. Three red cars are really three cars, but their color depends on our ability to perceive color. In everyday life, we experience things as less real when we sense that they depend on us—or on someone else. A party that is given because someone "felt like having a party" is less of "a real party" than a party given to celebrate an objective, happy event.

The less freedom we are allowed by events and things concerning the way we look at them, the more we experience them as real. Müller (2009, 288) also recognizes this in describing virtual unreality: "Real things possess a certain autonomy with respect to our own knowledge and volition. ... Reality has a way of being recalcitrant." A passing red car is still a car, no matter

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how we look at it. Therefore the material world is "more authentic" than the mental world in a certain sense. Hard stones are real; liquid water is real—not because these things have lasting, eternal characteristics, but simply because I keep bumping into them in my practical dealings with the world.

Besides the objective compulsion of things that appear "natural" and "real" to us, there is another compulsion created by reality: the compulsion of our fellow human beings. This is not an objective but an "intersubjective" compulsion. For example, if I say, "I must interpret his letter as an insult, since I cannot tolerate it when a perfect stranger addresses me in a familiar way," the letter is not yet "really" an insult. It isn't a "real" insult until the letter is recognized as an insult by the other person. In order for it to be seen as an insult, the letter itself—plus the way it is interpreted by others—must contain a certain necessity or unquestioned status. A letter is only really an insult if enough people agree it is.

The more things take place in the head of one single person, and the less they are confirmed by a community of people, the less real they are. At first glance, amorphous concepts like democracy, love, and fame are still regarded as concepts that refer to real things, although if we were to look only at their material tangibility, they might seem less real—since everyone knows this vagueness and uses it. But having visions of a rabbit, hearing the voices of people who are not present, or interpreting numbers and symbols in an idiosyncratic way are all things that are not real—at least if they are part of the experiential world of just one person. Something is only considered real when it becomes known that other people see it in the same way. If I, in my freedom, think up something—something that is not understood by others—it is less real than the things that are thrust into my field of vision that I know others are seeing as well. For Müller (2009, 289), intersubjectivity is one of the criteria for reality: "In the real world we are always connected to others and dependent on others, even in our perception."4

The decrease in realness corresponds, roughly speaking, with the increase in degree of subjectivity. On the one hand, there are hard, objective, real things, such as falling stones and twinkling stars. Then there are things that are less real—things we "have all agreed to," such as the length of a meter, dictionaries, normative grammar, and the statute book. Even less real are the figments of my imagination and my ideas, such as the shapes I see in cloud formations or the memories that are evoked when I see a foreign city.⁵

This connection between realness/unrealness and subjectivity can also be applied to fiction and art. In a certain sense, all art is "unreal," since it is made by human beings. Art might just as well not exist at all. Fiction is imaginary by definition and is strictly a human product. But within the

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vast domain of all fictional entities, the strictly individual expressions are the ones that are most unreal. If I sing a song, people may very well ask me if it's a "real song"—that is, an "existing song" that many people know—or something I made up myself.

1.1.3 Real Time

In everyday life, we differentiate between events from the past, events now taking place, events that we expect to happen in the future, and imaginary events that will never (or could never) occur. We say that events from the past are "real." We can disagree over exactly what took place in the past, but the fact that something *did* happen—and just one particular series of events—is something we do not dispute.

In a certain sense, the past is more real than the present or the future, because the past is unchanging. What really happened does not depend on our will or our perspective. Although the past is not known in all of its details, there is only one past, with interpretations (which are less real, since they are subjective) of no more than one history (which is real, since it is objectively "dated"). On the other hand, the past is less real than the present because it "does not exist" and "is not (or is no longer) reality." It is also no longer observable and will never be present again. Assertions about the past can no longer be verified in the same way that those about the present or the future can be. Although the past "really happened," it does not derive its reality from a sudden sensory or motorial event. The realness of the past has to rely on the authenticity, intensity, and reliability of memory.

Because a single subject has little to sustain it in one's own memory, it must seek support in intersubjective agreement with regard to "what happened." Something is a real memory when I, together with others, can look back on the remembered event. This doesn't have to be an actual common recollection, but I must be able to trust that such a recollection is possible in principle. If I cannot do that, then it's only an illusion. My recollection becomes "realer" when I can also back up this intersubjective confirmation with objective proof, such as photos and texts. Although the past is still gone, the same tendency adheres: "The less subjective, the more real."

The future is as unreal as the past in the sense of being "nonexistent," but unlike the past, the future is going to exist at some point. The future arrives of its own accord; you cannot run away from it. It is an actual, inescapable given. The past will never come again, but the future has yet to happen and is of real importance. The future is something to take into

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account, a "real fact." When someone says that you "must be realistic," that often means you must focus on the future and not on the past.

Conversely, it is precisely because the future is not yet here that its contents are still uncertain. Naturally there will be only one course of events, but we can influence the direction that course will take. This makes the future less certain and less real than the past. Seen in this way, the future is no more than a fantasy, a fabrication, and a hope, and it belongs to the unreal, the counterfactual.⁶

In addition to the abstract but extremely real times of the past and the future, human methods for expressing time, such as clocks and calendars, also have a certain reality value. Mondays, years, and dates all have real meaning that we take for granted. In addition to calendar time, which is determined by convention but still experienced as very real, time has one more essential aspect: the difference between dead and alive. Death, or the time before you existed and when you cease to exist, is not a convention to be followed like the calendar. Death is also not a given to be deduced from nature or experience. Yet death is a very real aspect of time. By analogy, being born is also a real, ineluctable fact of the past. A world without death or birth is not a real world. A world in which you cannot die or into which you were not born is not a real world either.

1.1.4 Continuous Impressions

One last aspect of realness is continuity, a concept interwoven with temporality. If our memories and our lives are continuous, they are more likely to be experienced as "real." Descartes used this prerequisite of continuity to distinguish between dreaming (unreal) and wakefulness (real). Phenomena that suddenly appear and disappear with equal rapidity must be dreamlike apparitions, according to Descartes ([1641] 1911, 32). He writes,

for at present I find a very notable difference between the two [sleeping and wakefulness], inasmuch as our memory can never connect our dreams one with the other, or with the whole course of our lives, as it unites events which happen to us while we are awake. And, as a matter of fact, if someone, while I was awake, quite suddenly appeared to me and disappeared as fast as do the images which I see in sleep, so that I could not know from whence the form came nor whither it went, it would not be without reason that I should deem it a specter or a phantom formed by my brain [and similar to those which I form in sleep], rather than a real man. But when I perceive things as to which I know distinctly both the place from which they proceed, and that in which they are, and the time at which they appeared to me; and when, without any interruption, I can connect the perceptions which I have of them with the whole course of my life, I am perfectly assured that these perceptions occur while I am waking and not during sleep.

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Continuity of experience (and the experience of continuity!) ensures that we live in reality and not in a dream. The requirement of continuity comprises two principles: (1) experiences of wakefulness must be mutually connected (unlike dream experiences), and (2) representations or images are "real" only when we see them arise gradually and disappear slowly.

The twentieth-century German philosopher Edmund Husserl connects this requirement of the gradualness of images with the structure of our time consciousness. The time consciousness he describes in his The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness (1991) is like a stream in which no sudden, unanticipated obstacles appear. (There is much more about Husserl and the "stream" of time in 3.1.2 and 8.3). When "discontinuous elements" do arise in our consciousness, we regard them at first as impressions and images that have none of the characteristics of reality. These elements become real only if they can be inserted into a more spacious, continuous, and coherent whole. According to Husserl, the past as we remember it is only "real" when it can be linked to the present in a continuous stream of images and memories. The present itself is only "real"—not "déjà-vu" or a hallucination—when it is internally continuous, an integrated unit consisting of something that has just passed, something that is happening now, and something that is just about to arrive. Although Husserl does not say so himself, this same method can be used to distinguish between a real and an unreal future. A future that you can imagine or reach in a continuous way from the present is real. When it can be reached only "by leap of the imagination," it is unreal. Some future expectations and visions are realistic, while others are deemed "not feasible," "impossible," or fanciful.

This theme of "continuity of/in time" is actually even more complex. Two viewpoints are possible. In one viewpoint, the continuity between event A and event B means that B follows causally from A. In that case, the experience of continuity and time is nothing more than knowledge of the causal relationship between A and B. When A and B are not experienced continuously, as in psychosis, it means nothing more (according to this viewpoint) than that the psychotic no longer possesses knowledge of the causal relationship between A and B. This viewpoint presumes that there is an "objective reality" in which causal relationships exist between events, and that these relationships can be known or remain unknown. The experience of unrealness here is understood as stemming from ignorance. More knowledge would result in more reality.

According to the other viewpoint, "continuity of/in time" is a characteristic of the structure of the subjective experience, such as that of time

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consciousness (Husserl). In this case, the subject can still possess *knowledge* of the causal relationship between A and B without having the *experience* of continuity between the two. I am basing myself here on this latter viewpoint because, in this way, the psychotic experience can be understood. In his phenomenological analysis *Der Verlust der natürlichen Selbstverständlichkeit* (1971, 88, 92), Wolfgang Blankenburg says of his patient, "She was clearly suffering from a lack of continuity going back in time, but of an unusual sort. It was not about the relationship with what may be understood as an objective period of time, so it was not a memory defect. Yet her relationship with the past had changed profoundly." I will continue this discussion of the more temporal aspects of continuity—and the lack of it—in chapter 3.

The requirements of continuity posited by Descartes and Husserl also seem to hold true for daily life. Radovic and Radovic point to the influence that sweeping life changes can have on the development of feelings of unrealness. When your life, your existence, and the world suddenly undergo a fundamental change, in both a positive and a negative sense, it can be experienced as unreal: "My life seems like a dream (or a nightmare)." Many psychoses occur on the heels of profound life events, and the psychosis can be regarded as the consequence or the expression of a "crack" or a "tear" in a person's world or reality.⁷

You use the continuity requirement to determine whether something really happened or not. If I have a memory of being all alone in a strange city full of Chinese lettering, I regard the memory as real if I am able to construct a plausible story about taking a trip to China. If I have never been to China, it would have to have been a fantasy or a dream.

We seem to be inclined to standardize our stories and insights, or at least to locate them within integrated entities. Whenever something suddenly occurs that has nothing in common with what preceded it, it baffles us. So we try to connect it to something familiar and thereby to understand it in those terms. If we wake up and do not recognize our bedroom, and if strange things start happening, we try to understand how these things cohere with the previous day. If that doesn't work, we may think we're "still dreaming."

In this section, I have discussed four dimensions that together constitute the feeling or the experience of everyday realness: the measure or method of modality, subjectivity/objectivity, temporality, and continuity. With regard to the dimension of modality, the everyday world is neither limitless in possibility nor strictly determined; it is rather what we might call

"self-evident." It is neither purely subjective nor purely objective, but somewhere in between: "intersubjective-objective." The real world is located not only in the present but is interwoven—by means of "real" data, real clocks, and calendars—with a time axis or thread that reaches out toward the future and back to the past. As for continuity, the "real world" is a continuous world and permits only gradual change.

1.2 Mad Pararealism

Above I wrote about the four pillars of what, in philosophy, is called "naive realism": the basic experience of realness and reality. These everyday feelings of realness are maintained by means of stories, symbolic forms, conventions, and common sense (also see my analysis of the mad experience of time in chapter 3 et seq.). In the experience of mad pararealism, and in much of philosophy, this naive realism, cloaked in an everyday, heedless knowing, is called into question, examined, placed within quotation marks, forgotten, or denied. When that happens, one or more of the pillars can shift, causing our grasp or sense of reality to shift with it. The net effect may be that reality becomes realer (hyperreal) or less real (hyporeal).

In philosophy, this results in fine theories, systems, and stories that, in a certain sense, remain impractical or "unreal"—unreal in the sense of every-day reality: naive realism. Such philosophy argues that the world is entirely necessary as it is, or that freedom does not exist (determinism), or that the subject essentially determines everything (idealism), or that the mind or consciousness doesn't really exist (reductionism, materialism).

Analogous results occur in madness. The madman finds himself in a world that he experiences as imperative or determined, in which he also no longer experiences his thinking as free but as coerced or dictated by an external power (determinism). Or his world is one in which his thoughts and moods have an immediate effect on the colors, movements, and patterns of the outside world (idealism).

What leads to profound, conceptual edifices in philosophy leads to hermetic pararealism in madness. In later chapters, I will discuss this theme in greater detail based on the philosophy of Wittgenstein, Schelling, and Sartre, and the madness of Custance and Schreber, among others. In the rest of this chapter, I will look at each of the four pillars (modality, subjectivity/objectivity, temporality, continuity) and show how certain shifts can strengthen our experiences of realness (hyperrealism in sections 1.2.1.1 through 1.2.1.4) or weaken them (hyporealism in sections 1.2.2.1 through 1.2.2.4).

1.2.1 Hyperrealism

1.2.1.1 Strong powers Mad hyperrealism is marked by coercive compulsion. Doubts, possibilities, and choices make way for indisputable certainties, necessities, and duress. An anonymous madman in Kaplan (1964, 94) says, "At the onset of panic, I was suddenly confronted with an overwhelming conviction that I had discovered the secrets of the universe, which were being rapidly made plain with incredible lucidity. The truths discovered seemed to be known immediately and directly, with absolute certainty. I had no sense of doubt or awareness of the possibility of doubt. In spite of former atheism and strong antireligious sentiments, I was suddenly convinced that it was possible to prove rationally the existence of God." (Also see the citations from Custance and Jefferson at the beginning of this chapter.)

The madman can no longer keep things at a distance; rather, things and their meanings thrust themselves upon him. They are "realer" than normal. He can no longer ascertain how he sees them. The color of the sweater being worn by the news broadcaster *must* have something to do with the color of the logo of a transport company. Everything that happens has a necessary, ineluctable meaning. Nothing is "for no reason," "random," or "coincidental" anymore. There's no escaping it; everything must be as it is. A sense of urgency arises. Life seems to be part of a thrilling plot (or conspiracy). Denouements, unravelings, and "revelations" are constantly taking place; everything is becoming clearer and more unambiguous. The sense that the whole world "just is" has changed to the sense that the world "must be" as it is.

These strange experiences, which are difficult to describe, are often interpreted and formulated as religious or quasi-religious. The aura of "must" that the madman has discovered can take the shape of a "supreme power" who forces the world upon him. It might be an evil power, so that the intrusiveness is that of coercion and persecution. The strong power can also be experienced as benevolent, as a giver or a creator. In that case, the experience that everything must be as it is, is one of gratitude and ecstasy. In many psychoses, positive tones of hyperrealism alternate with negative ones; one minute you're a persecuted victim, and the next you're an all-powerful overlord. Enlightened, certainly. And dark as well. And at some moments both enlightened and dark at the same time (see chapter 10 et seq.).

1.2.1.2 The compulsion of things The feeling of "must" implies that you are being compelled by "how things are." The subject is no longer able to resist; the objects take over. When you cannot arm yourself against the impressions things make, when you let yourself be dictated to by how

everything is, then the world becomes unequivocal, everything is locked in place, doubt disappears, and realness increases.

The madman experiences the world of hyperreality as an "objective given." Usually we all do. Falling stones are what they are, and many events take place in a way that we simply take for granted. In hyperreality, however, this is much more intense. Things *must* do what they do. There is no freedom, choice, or arbitrariness. You *must* make the obvious connections between things. You can *see* them, after all: the meaningful glance of the news broadcaster, the waving flag, the bicyclist slowly lurching back and forth. That can't be happening for no apparent reason. It's realer than real. As Custance writes (1954, 1), "And yet it was as a lunatic that I saw something, a vision as it were of the whole universe from a completely different angle, which was so overwhelming that even in my sanest moments I cannot help attributing to it a measure of validity."

The madman sees compelling, deeply meaningful patterns in the fluttering of birds and the zooming of insects. There can be no arbitrariness in a flock of birds, no freedom to fly where they will. They fly exactly as they're supposed to fly—as God or nature has ordained. Schreber gives a wonderful example of where this leads. (Daniel P. Schreber's autobiography Memoirs of My Nervous Illness has made him one of the most well-known "experience experts." He and his work will be discussed in detail in section 13.4.) While we normally might respond to an annoying insect with a lighthearted comment such as, "Here comes that wasp again—right on time," Schreber (1988, 185-186) experiences that "right on time" as follows (I have italicized the phrases that are most typical of and relevant to this chapter): "My most important observation is, that for years I have experienced direct genesis (creation) through divine miracles certainly on lower animals and I still experience it around me hourly. I have gained the certain conviction that ... such life is due to the purposeful manifestations of divine power of will or divine power of creation. ... These animals always appear on definite occasions and in definite order around me; they appear so frequently that there is no doubt of their being each time newly created; they cannot possibly have existed before and only been driven into my company accidentally. For instance, I can expect without fail, in fact I can predict, that as soon as I sit down on a bench in the garden and miracles close my eyes, which would in a short time lead to sleep through a union of all rays, a fly, wasp or bumble-bee or a whole swarm of gnats appears to prevent me from sleeping."8

A haze of necessity is spread across the human world as well. Whatever others do is not the result of free will; it happens because it cannot *not* happen. Humans are driven by directives, by "how it must be done." They

comply with a law, a power, a force, or a divine providence. They are marionettes who do only what has already been dictated. If you're walking down the street and someone smiles at you or gives you an angry glare, it isn't just a coincidence. It's part of necessity, part of the indisputably objective patterns in the world. This gives the entire mental domain, every free transaction, a mechanical, determined appearance. As such, people become predictable stereotypes. They play roles without any improvisation, like actors who have escaped from a film set or like figures from a familiar, mythical story. They exhibit the Plan that underlies all of reality (see chapter 15).

The psychoanalyst Marguerite Sechehaye wrote about the recovery of one of her patients, known simply as Renee, in a much-discussed book that includes a first-person account of the girl's own experience of psychosis, *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl* (1970). There Renee comments (29–30):

Around me, the other children, heads bent over their work, were robots or puppets, moved by an invisible mechanism. On the platform, the teacher, too, talking, gesticulating, rising to write on the blackboard, was a grotesque jack-in-the-box. And always this ghastly quiet, broken by outside sounds coming from far away, the implacable sun heating the room, the lifeless immobility. ... Suddenly the street became infinite, white under the brilliant sun; people ran about like ants on an ant-hill; automobiles circled in all directions aimlessly; in the distance a bell pealed. Then everything seemed to stop, to hold its breath, in a state of extreme tension, the tension of the needle in the haystack. Something seemed about to occur, some extraordinary catastrophe.

To the madman, fellow human beings seem to lose their free will. They obey "objective laws of nature," which give their actions and movements a more confident, fixed appearance. Their transformation into stereotypes makes them "realer," as they are more "emphatically" present. At the same time, the disappearance of fellow humans makes the world "artificial, mechanical, electric," as Sechehaye's Renee puts it. It becomes simultaneously hyperreal and hyporeal.

1.2.1.3 Circular time If wasps fly according to God's will, if people on the street move "as was decided in the Plan," and if the rain comes down "at exactly the right moment," then everything is already determined. Everything is predestined, everything is part of the Plan, and there are no real surprises. Whatever is happening now, whatever happened in the past, and whatever is going to happen is all repetition and the expression of the "fundamental pattern." In the normal world, there is *history*, there is real change, and there are irreversible events. In the mad world, there is only the eternal repetition of the same pattern.

This applies to the ordinary patterns of day and night, sleeping and waking, eating and drinking, and going to the bathroom. When it gets dark in the evening, the madman sees it as the manifestation of the Eternal Falling of Night, and the evening meal is like the Last Supper. Everyday events become connected to the pattern of hyperreality. Someone walking into the room becomes an expression of the Entrance into the Room. A woman with a worried face is the manifestation of Mary Watching Her Son's Passion. This hyperreality is often experienced as "cinematic" (also see 15.3). If everything is the manifestation of the Plan, then everything is a "planned symbol" of a script. The script and the film cover the entire cosmos and are more intense, more important, and therefore more "real" than ordinary life. Taking the place of the "rippling" linear time of ordinary people is a new structure whose principle is the degree of proximity to the Plan or the Script. The Script is sacred. Whoever recognizes that is sacred as well and finds himself somehow closer to the light, plunged more deeply into hyperreality (more about this in chapter 14 et seq.).

When you see existence in terms of repetition, then its distinctive "basic form" is the circle. Everything returns. There is a succession of events, but they all happen in a circle. The sense of repetition that comes with the experience of "circular time" also brings with it the sense that "you can see what the point is"—the point around which all circles revolve. You see the very heart of the whole, you are in the center of the cosmos, and everything revolves around that one point. All antitheses converge there. This point is neither beyond nor within yourself but is the core of all seeing and thinking, the only real reality—and hyperreality. As the famous Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus ([AD 270] 1956) wrote in the third century (6.5.11°), "Time is like a radial line running out apparently to infinity but dependent upon that, its center, which is the pivot of all its movement; as it goes it tells of that center, but the center itself is the unmoving principle of all the movement."

The discovery of "circular time" can be experienced as liberating as well as frightening. Sechehaye's Renee describes mainly the dead, mechanical side of returning patterns: the circles offer no opportunity for escape; the conspiracy keeps revolving, in constant pursuit. But it can also amount to an experience of time in which the great is reflected in the small a thousandfold, and the small is dizzyingly interwoven into the great—and a feeling of awe, astonishment, and holiness may arise (see part IV).

1.2.1.4 Impressions of unity In her autobiography, Elisabeth Farr (1982, 3) writes, "There were times when I could see the room breathing, the walls expanding and contracting. I had a word for this very special feeling that

came over me when I had these perceptual experiences: I called it the Super Real ... a sinister feeling of meanings locked behind meanings. A lamp was not just a lamp; it had a personality and was trying to communicate with me. A chair was not just a chair; it seemed more real than reality itself. It scared me."

Usually we make a distinction between reality and fiction, with the "requirement of continuity" playing an important role (see section 1.1.4). In madness, when the experience of sensing continuity evaporates, impressions of events may not seem connected anymore; everything may become like loose grains of sand, where nothing seems "real" (see section 1.2.2.4). But what I am discussing here is the possibility that all impressions may be "loose" and discontinuous but real nonetheless. What does this mean?

Let's look at this by comparing it with a dream. In a dream, every image is experienced as equally real. There is no difference between fiction, an idea, or a "real" dream event. Every "bright idea," every "image," is real in the dream—as it also is in madness. The fact that the numbers on the license plate of that red car are the same as my age is a "real fact," as important and significant as any other possible connection. It doesn't matter that this remarkable observation is out of sync with ("not continuous with") other observations or ideas.

The Swedish playwright August Strindberg writes about his period of madness in *The Inferno* (1912, 45–46): "The knight looks towards the wall, and following the direction of his gaze I notice something written on the mortar with a piece of coal. It looks like the letters F and S interlaced, which are the initials of my wife's name. She loves me still! The next moment I see, as by a flash, that it is the chemical symbol for ferrum (iron) and sulphur, and the secret of gold lies revealed before my gaze. I search the ground and find two leaden seals fastened together by a string. One displays the initials V. P., the other, a king's crown. Without committing myself to a further interpretation of this adventure, I return to Paris with the lively impression of having experienced something bordering on the marvellous." (In sections 6.2.3 and 16.1.1, I will discuss more fragments from Strindberg.)

The notion of causality can further clarify this "realness of discontinuity." In the dream (and in madness), image B does not first have to be causally induced by image A in order to qualify as a genuine dream image. All images and impressions are equal when it comes to their reality value. My age does not have to have caused the number on the license plate to appear in order for the relationship between the two of them to seem "incredibly real." In other words, the requirements for what qualifies as "real" have been somewhat eased.

In normal life, it is the collection of causal relationships, the continuum of events, that creates the sense of reality. But in madness, all noncausal relationships also play a part. As soon as you associate two things in a mad situation, "something real" is created. To think of something is to create it. To think up a word is to invent something. To argue a point is to create a world. It is often thought that madmen mean whatever they say in the same way that people normally mean things—that they experience their mad fabrications as reality. And that is true—after all, their reality is a hyperreality. But just remember that hyperreality does not consist of causal relationships. If you ask a madman if his age caused the number on the license plate to appear, he will deny it. In that sense, he's not crazy. But in madness, "the thought alone" is enough to create an experience of reality. In madness, the word becomes flesh, and thoughts are like sugar.

Finally, to inject an element of doubt into the argument: it isn't at all clear where the border should be drawn between causal relationships and noncausal associations. By what criterion should causal relationships be distinguished from noncausal relationships? Some argue that "logical thinking" is what might distinguish causality from association and fact from fiction. Serious attempts to make a case for this idea usually fail, which leads some thinkers to believe that causality is actually no more than habit or convention. With this last empirical or Humean notion, reality and non-reality, madness and normality, are based on nothing but common sense and habits. In that case, the alleged bizarre world of madness is merely strange, because it is essentially unconventional rather than illogical (also see my argument in *Pure Madness* [Kusters 2004, 37 et seq.]).

1.2.2 Hyporealism

In her autobiography, Lenore McCall (1947, 22) says, "Although I still inhabited the world I had always known, my mind and spirit had definitely crossed the border into that land of unreality, of shadows in which I was to live for five years." And Landis (1964, 39) writes, "Another frequent phenomenon that is most distressing and astonishing to mental patients is one they refer to as a feeling of unreality." In this section I will describe cases in which a reduced sense of reality, or unreality, has been experienced—that is, experiences of hyporeality rather than hyperreality. How are these cases to be understood in terms of the four notions of modality, subjectivity/ objectivity, temporality, and continuity/discontinuity?

1.2.2.1 A quagmire of possibilities Many cases of madness do not involve necessity or compulsion; rather, they involve possibility and freedom.

Nothing is self-evident or unambiguous; everything is open to doubt, everything seems indefinite. This can result in a sense of unreality.

In 1971 Blankenburg, in his famous work *Der Verlust der natürlichen Selbstverständlichkeit*, describes what he believes is the essential feature of psychosis: the loss of the everyday framework that we live in but that we rarely talk about or reflect on. He describes one case in great detail, that of "A.," who made the following few statements: "What is wrong with me anyway? Something small, silly, but so important that you cannot get beyond it. I need to be connected—to a family, for example. Without a fundamental relationship everything becomes artificial. … Every individual has to know how he ought to conduct himself, everyone has a certain way of acting and thinking. Everyone lives according to specific rules governing the things he does, in society, but I don't have such a clear set of rules for myself. I am totally devoid of principles, which is why everything goes wrong, because everything is supported by everything. …"

The "self-evident" quality that A. is missing is not a kind of well-defined knowledge that you can grasp in words that tells you know to live, act, speak, and think. What is missing, rather, is the background that makes it possible to think, speak, and act at all. A. does not have any of the unconscious rules that underlie daily life in practice. One of the patients in Giovanni Stanghellini's fascinating philosophical-psychiatric study *Disembodied Spirits and Deanimated Bodies: The Psychopathology of Common Sense* says something similar (2004, 5): "Everyone's talking to each other and I can't figure out the mechanism. Is it really a secret? Are the others all talking in code? One day the day will come and we'll see that it's all quite mathematical. ... I'm missing the backbone of the rules of social life. I feel like a nothing and I feel real cool, at the same time. I don't have any rules. I have to learn them."

When the facts and rules we normally take for granted disappear, the madman ends up in a situation of more than ordinary doubt. He begins doubting the basic principles of existence and remains uncertain about the possibilities and connections that are irrelevant in normal life: the meaning of the shape of clouds, the ambiguity of commonplace metaphors, the number of sugar lumps in tea, the nonfunctional similarities between objects, the numerical correspondences between license plates and other "data," and so forth. He is no longer able to see the path through the forest for all of the possible trees.

The raging doubt goes beyond everyday brooding and simple reflection and often involves philosophical themes: Will the sun rise tomorrow? Do other people exist? Does the fate of the world depend on what I think? Is the

thought I am thinking "my" thought? Do the things I see really exist when I look the other way? The normal flow of everyday life, somewhere between the banks of the mandatory and the optional, turns into an ocean—or a quagmire—of unlimited possibilities.

In his study *Psychosis without Psychiatry* (2000, 138), Thomas Bock quotes a Mrs. Hahn: "That's when the psychosis began, when the anxiety turned to panic, when I no longer had control over myself, when a *possibility* for me became the *only* possibility, and when thoughts and fantasies turned into experiences. ... I found out how terrible it is when you can no longer stop your thoughts from thinking, when nothing in life is certain anymore, when you immediately start doubting everything. The fact that you're no longer fit to live a normal life and are literally a victim, an object of your own thinking, speaks for itself." This is also called hyperreflexivity. Please note that a high degree of *hyper*reflexivity therefore leads to experiences of *hypo*reality.

The American psychologist and psychosis expert Louis Sass has commented that schizophrenics often make use of phrases like "the so-called," "what is normally known as," and "as if." Such expressions indicate an ironic or distanced attitude with regard to the language being used and the world. ¹² There isn't just one way of indicating things; the number of possible ways of speaking, or possible languages, is enormous. You might say something one way, but you can just as easily say it another way. Language and world search for each other, but they never find each other. ¹³

The clarity of "that's just the way things are" disappears and is replaced by "that's one way to look at them." The appearance of the world is not the real reality but is only "one way for the world to present itself." This creates an atmosphere of *artificiality* that covers the whole world. It could just as easily have been different, so the fact that it exists means that it was "made that way." It's like a dream or a movie. One of the patients of Meyer and Covi (in Landis, 1964, 255) says, "It is like a constant sliding and shifting that slips away in a jelly-like fashion, leaving nothing substantial and yet enough to be tasted, or like watching a movie based on a play and, having once seen the play, realizing that the movie is a description of it and one that brings back memories and yet isn't real."

One of Janet's patients (Landis 1964, 360) says, "Doubtless I see everything, without doubt nothing is changed, except that things are not real ... what I see is only a play, a Punch and Judy show; it's clumsy, vulgar, unpleasant and, above all, false; it doesn't really exist." (Also compare my discussion of movies like *The Truman Show* in 15.3.1.)

Earlier in this chapter, I described the hyperrealism of this cinematic feeling, but oddly enough this feeling can also be experienced as *hyporealistic*.

If you think you've landed in a movie, you might be conscious of the fact that there has to be a real world outside the movie: the place where the movie was conceived and from where it would be regarded as unreal. This perception corresponds with the vague feeling experienced by many madmen that "something has yet to happen," that there's still a code they must crack, a corner they must round, and that when they do, they'll be standing face to face with the truth—or with the director of their movie. The world is pregnant with meaning, and it won't be long before that meaning is revealed in every detail (also see section 15.3.3).

Hyporeality has a great deal to do with the way in which the psychotic relates to the world. The less someone is involved in the world with his senses, the more readily he will cut himself off from everyday matter-of-factness and end up in a hyporeal world. If you view the world exclusively from the outside, you are more likely to experience a sense of unrealness than if you throw yourself into the world heart and soul. There also seems to be a difference between the various senses. When visual observation is dominant, it's easier for madness to develop. Visual observation is better at lending itself to the psychotic attitude of "it all depends on how you look at it" than auditory observation. The sense of hearing and especially the sense of touch are least likely to lend themselves to what Sass calls "alternative worlds, or orientations towards experience" (see section 1.2.2.4). It is easier to "look at something differently" than to "hear something differently" or "feel something differently."

1.2.2.2 The world in check When ordinary matter-of-factness has disappeared, and the common, everyday world has been shunted aside or rendered insignificant, the madman may develop a feeling of total freedom. Things no longer compel him, as in the case of hyperreality; rather, he compels things—and other people, too. All possible worlds seem to depend on him; he is a god on the surface of his thoughts. In hyporealistic madness, objective facts become subjective interpretations, and intersubjective practices become subjective whims. This is also called the collapse of common sense (compare Stanghellini 2004). This notion overlaps with the matter-of-factness of Blankenburg in the sense that it refers to quiet, conventionally implicit knowledge and skills. Common sense refers to what people generally regard as sensible, customary, and normal ways of thinking and acting. Stanghellini says (2004, 79), "Common sense is a conventional wisdom regarding practical matters, a type of knowledge whose intention is not theoretical, but practical."

When natural matter-of-factness or common sense disappears in hyporeality, other people take on the unreal aspect of phantoms. They are no

longer "real others" but turn into marionettes and extensions of the mad self. They are counterfeit, unreal, imaginary. Schreber described others as inauthentic apparitions, or unreal "improvised" figures. Sechehaye's Renee (1970, 25–26) writes, "One day, while I was in the principal's office, suddenly the room became enormous, illuminated by a dreadful electric light that cast false shadows. Everything was exact, smooth, artificial, extremely tense; the chairs and tables seemed models placed here and there. Pupils and teachers were puppets revolving without cause, without objective." In his evocative, beautifully written autobiography *The Witnesses* (1967, 45, 89), Thomas Hennell writes, "Presently they seemed less to have been real people than horrible counterfeits set there by the Spirit Sarcastic, to mock me and turn me out of my way. ... The day was drugged to insensibility: its persons and its conventions puppet-like and unreal." 15

Sometimes even ordinary things have no independent existence. What a chair, a bird, or a camera are, and what they signify, is no longer supported by what others think of them. What remains is a mad subject who no longer experiences continuity or stability, either in his perception or his thinking. As one of Meyer and Covi's patients says (in Landis 1964, 256), "For what is, is, and yet what seems to be is always changing and drifting away into thought and ideas, rather than actualities." Mad hyporeality is unstable. Nothing is constant. Every corner of the world is under the influence of the madman's capriciousness. The psychotic sees the effects of his most intimate thoughts and actions in the most remote and distant places. As Sass writes (1992, 278), "The world of schizophrenia seems to have a rather different cast, one more reminiscent of philosophical idealism or solipsism ... the objects of schizophrenic perception are often felt to have a subjectivised status—to be somehow unreal or to depend for their existence on the subject who observes them."16 The tree that the madman sees is no longer a tree but a tree-seen-by-me (also see section 2.2.1). This subjectification also involves derealization. The madman may determine everything, but that makes everything less real. A thing gains in "realness" if it is independent from what you may think about it. As one of Stanghellini's patients (2004, 6) says movingly, "How can this world be real, when it is only seen through my brain?"¹⁷

1.2.2.3 Dreamtime In section 1.2.1.3 I talked about hyperreal, sacred circular time. But when the madman perceives that somehow he is the focus, source, creator, or "director" of the Plan or the movie, the experienced time is instead hyporeal dreamtime.

In timeless, mad, quasi-eternal space, there is no longer a stable, recognizable past that might give the madman a sense of familiarity and security.

Each moment is distinct from the last and is entirely "new" (see chapters 3 and 4). Speaking of the "realness" of such an (eternal) present, one patient says (Hackett 1952, 51), "It was just that sometimes I had a terrific sense of unreality. Suddenly I found myself in the present and all the immediate cords to the present had been severed. Like when someone wakes up in a strange room. Except that I had lived in the room for months."

Normally we regard yesterday as having preceded today and the day before yesterday as having preceded that. Behind us—or "beneath us"—lies a stable past. In the case of madness, this past becomes a spring from which the psychotic freely draws in order to fill his present. The purpose of the past is to serve a changeable and all-dominating mad subjectivity. For the madman, each moment harks back to another moment from that past. He reaches for an image from ten years ago, a shred of an idea from last week, or a TV image about something that happened five hundred miles away, and he fills his present with them.

The past springs back to life in the (eternal) present. It becomes "indefinite," or at least it comes within reach of the psychotic's power to define it, making it seem "impending" and "possible." As such, things that are over and done with get another chance in the mad world; they are no longer "really passé." Normally we suppose that there is only one real past, which is finished once and for all, and that at the very most there are different interpretations of this past. But in the mad world, interpretations go wild, and hyperreflexivity affects common sense views of the past. Not only are interpretations of the past changeable for the madman, but the past itself can be changed by him as well. It can be influenced. It is no longer finished once and for all, and the borders between past, imagination, fantasy, and expectation begin to blur.

Because of the increase in subjectivity, not only does the unchangeable past enter the psychotic's sphere of influence, so does the distant future, which is lived out in the here and now. Hope, expectations, plans, and fantasies are realized right now in the madman's mind. In the psychotic eternal present, stories from the distant past mingle with plans, anxieties, and fantasies about the future. In mad pararealism, Napoleon and Stalin stroll the streets of Brazil and join in the Dutch "orange fever" during the World Cup. If France plays Russia, Napoleon's brutal march to Moscow is relived, and if the referee is Japanese, he becomes a reference to an Asian aspect of history and culture. What makes this even more unreal is that such delusions never really surprise the psychotic; there is nothing compulsory about them.

At the same time, while the eternal, mythical struggle of the Olympian gods branches out into orange caps, logos on soccer shoes, and snatches of

conversation in the street, it continues to retain something unreal, something subjectively hyporealistic. The World Cup movie is real, grander in scale than all the other soccer matches held elsewhere, but it's simultaneously no more than a fleeting, insubstantial dream. The World Cup myth remains an isolated, solitary event. Someone who stands alone, waving a flag and shouting, is more likely to be overcome by a sense of unreality than when thousands in a stadium are doing the same thing at the same time. Another reason why the World Cup delusion feels unreal is because it's so capricious. Right in the middle of a game, the madman can become intrigued by a billboard, the glance of a fellow spectator, or an idea, instantly changing the World Cup mood into something else—an Islamic or an Islamophobic mood, for instance. Finally, what also gives the World Cup delusion a sense of unreality is that, although the madman experiences the World Cup as an important event—something of consequence that he is involved in—at the same time, he realizes that he himself is determining how Moscow, for example, is involved in the Plan.

I have described the cyclic time of the madman as hyperreal because the plot of the movie is convincingly real for the madman himself. At the same time, however, the mad movie is experienced as unreal. The buildings are part of the set, the people are actors playing a role for the madman, and all of the events are artificial and fabricated. For just beyond this hyporeal movie, there must be something real of which the movie is a mere rehash. Perhaps a better alternative to the movie metaphor might be the idea of a dream, or that of a disordered collection of photographs or scrambled movie scenes.

Lived time changes in the mad world and so does the status of death. In psychosis, death takes place within the subjective experience of the present. One's own death, which is normally a "not yet" event, is experienced in psychosis as "right now." Death becomes visible through a crack in space (also see 3.2.3.3). On the one hand, this makes death more real in psychosis; death is objectified, or turned into an object. On the other hand, death is unreal in the sense that the madman seems to have control over it.

1.2.2.4 Photos without frames In section 1.2.1.4, I argued that the loss of continuity can lead to experiences of hyperrealism. If continuity disappears, however, the absence of connections between moments can bring about hyporeality, and that is what I want to focus on here. A patient of the French psychiatrist Eugène Minkowski (1933, 308) says, "I am living in the moment, in the momentary. I no longer have a sense of continuity." The loss of continuity means that the present becomes disconnected from the past

and that the various moments that make up the past are no longer tacitly understood to be connected to each other. One of Sass's patients (1992, 156) says, "I feel as if I've lost the continuity linking the events in my past. Instead of a series of events linked by continuity, my past just seems like disconnected fragments. I feel like I'm in the infinite present."

This is consistent with what was said in the earlier sections (especially 1.2.1.4): if the "glue" of continuity dissolves, the experience disintegrates and the psychotic finds himself in hyporeality. Discontinuity results in fragmentation, and fragmented, broken time isn't "real" time at all. A random collection of consecutive images does not constitute a real movie. (It is important to note that each of the images is hyperreal, hence the hyperreality of 1.2.1.4). One of Caroline Brett's patients (2002, 327) says, "Time has disappeared. Not that it is longer or shorter, it's just not there; there are bits and pieces of time, shaken and mingled; often there is no time at all." (Also see chapter 3.)

When "continuity"—despite any correct knowledge of causal relationships—is no longer able to string the beads together into "a series of events," then there's no longer any difference between beads that belong to the necklace and beads that don't. The difference between memory and fantasy disappears, as does the difference between history and fiction. When the psychotic tries to "orient" himself, he finds he can no longer rely on a stable past because of this lack of continuity. Each time, he must create a new story about how he ended up here. The chronology in such psychotic narratives is, to put it mildly, unconventional.

So the psychotic no longer knows (or rather "experiences") where he comes from or what came before what. Each situation presents itself as unique. He stumbles from one discourse or semantic field to another, from one interpretation or possible world to the next. Sass (1992, 131) says, "The schizophrenic seems to have a simultaneous awareness of several possibilities, frequently moving, or hesitating, among what are experienced, at least implicitly, as alternative worlds, or orientations towards experience, thereby demonstrating what has been described as a characteristically schizophrenic tendency to shift not merely among a variety of objects or topics but among alternative frames of reference, universes of discourse, or semantic strata."

Such a world, in which apparitions come and go without clearly indicating where they come from, resembles the dream world of Descartes described in section 1.1.4. Speaking of his own psychotic experience, Custance (Kaplan 1964, 58) remarks, "With visions are associated dreams. When in the state of acute mania it is not always easy to separate the two.

There is a very close correlation between dreams and waking thoughts and imaginings. I wake up and my mind carries on the same train of thought which has begun in a dream. I go to sleep and go on dreaming about the subjects I have been thinking about."

Continuity acts like a thread that "holds the whole thing together." It provides reliable stability, imparts unity and direction to time, and divides fact from fiction and dream from reality. When this continuity falls away, each aspect becomes realer than real, or hyperreal, while everything taken together becomes unreal, or hyporeal.

1.3 The End of Reality

1.3.1 Real Life

Madness can be both superreal and unreal, all at the same time: hyperand hyporeal. As Landis says (1964, 373), "It is in a sense paradoxical that nothing can be more real than the experience of unreality." Now we know that this is because the four factors underlying the experience of realness necessity, subjectivity/objectivity, temporality, and continuity—can oppose each other. If your neighbor is transformed into a Roman henchman and wants to nail Jesus to the cross, that constitutes a break with previous experience. Suspecting that your neighbor is building a wooden shed in order to let you see that he has something to do with the making of a wooden cross is so at odds with—and detached from—earlier ideas that it gives you a feeling of unrealness. At the same time, such an insistent realization and such an intense observation can make you experience it as hyperreal. Another example: the idea or experience that you are living eternal life at this very moment can feel unreal, because past and present can no longer be distinguished. At the same time, it is an intensely "real" experience, because events that took place in the distant past (historical decisions about life and death) are now vividly and urgently intruding on the present.

This ambiguity about what "real life" is can also happen in nonpsychotic life. On the one hand, when we witness intense experiences and allow ourselves to be swept along by them, we call it "real life." But when intense experiences constitute a severe break with the past, life becomes unreal, like a dream—or a nightmare. The mad world, like normal life, is made up of this combination of realness and unrealness, but it is divided up in a different way. Passers-by may become unreal shades, while a photograph in the newspaper may make a realer-than-real impression. Whether the sun will rise tomorrow is less than certain, while the scarf that the news broadcaster is wearing provides very real clues about the near future.

Further, hyper- and hyporealistic feelings are not only divided up differently—they are also more intense and extreme. Their contrast with normal experiences of reality (and unreality) is vast, and their sheer strangeness makes them stand out. As a result, the leveling, subduing effect that comes with everyday common reality is gone. Normally, when some fabulous dream experience throws us off-balance, it strikes us as "funny." We are confident that we can recognize the borders of Fantasyland when we see them. But the madman no longer knows how to get out of the fairy-tale forest. And on top of that, the supermarket has a way of turning into a fairy-tale forest and the fairy-tale forest into a supermarket.

The question of whether madness is "real" or not plays a role outside the world of madness as well. After a period of madness, the madman and those close to him spend a lot of time dwelling on what happened. There are, in principle, two possible (and extreme) reactions: the psychosis was real, or it was unreal.

When the realness of the psychosis is emphasized, the focus is on the objective, coercive character of the experience. Everything was so intense, the world in which the madman walked and the thoughts and feelings he experienced were so insistent, that he isn't likely to shrug them off and preserve them as "realer than real" memories. Sometimes the intensity of the mad world leads one to deduce from it a kind of "hypertruth." In other words, strong intensity makes one suspect that strong truth is at work: "It must make sense, because the feeling was so strong." An intense experience of timelessness, for example, can lead a madman later to deduce that "in the mad world you can travel through time." Or an experience of seeing the Virgin Mary can lead him to deduce that "Mary really appeared to me." It is not possible, however, to deduce the existence of a thing from the private experience of that thing, let alone to distill any truth from that experience.

Yet this kind of thinking is not unusual. At all times and in all places there have been people who have called upon an extra strong insight, an extraordinary experience, a special meditation technique, a scientific way of thinking, or a social position that they believe grants them privileged access to "real, real" reality and truth. Madness, too, is sometimes regarded as a secret passageway to a realer reality. The contents of a mad experience are seized upon and believed as an objective claim to truth, surpassing the claims of the normal world. In the ancient past, this happened when people who had divine visions were eager to convert their experiences into resounding texts and social prestige. In more recent centuries, romantic schools of thought often placed the poet side by side with the mad genius, as both were struck by insights thought to be inaccessible to normal human beings.

At the present time, there is a movement of "spiritually oriented" counselors and "experience experts" who regard madness as a special form of "hypersensitivity." Examples include John Watkins in Unshrinking Psychosis: Understanding and Healing the Wounded Soul (2010) and John E. Nelson in Healing the Split: Madness or Transcendence (1990). Some in this movement see these mad experiences as a special route to levels of reality that are closed to others. One example of the latter is Fransje de Waard in Spiritual Crises: Transpersonal Psychology as Perspective (2007). Although there are many interesting ideas at work in this movement, "positive" spiritual breakthroughs are set apart from "negative" psychotic breakdowns with striking regularity and without any satisfying explanation. In De Waard (2007), for example, a number of people talk about their various "spiritual experiences." Quite a few of them admit to having been initially afraid that they might become psychotic but then certainly did not become so. On the contrary, unlike psychotics, they came away with deep spiritual insights. It seems to me that the danger of such opinions is that they give rise to a new criterion for what "a good psychosis" ought to be and that, as a result, people with "spiritually unjustified psychosis" are given the brush-off. (I will deal with this further in section 14.3.2.) While the mad genius is venerated at one end of the spectrum, at the other end the madness is dismissed out of hand. The latter happens much more often than not and, therefore, needs to be resisted with force. The seemingly irrelevant language of the madman leads some to believe that the mad experience itself is meaningless, senseless, or even devoid of substance. This entire book is an attempt to negate this idea and all the psychiatric practices that go with it. Within the context of realness versus unrealness, when the outside world denies that an experience of madness is real while the madman himself experiences it as "hyperreal," it neither does the madman any good nor makes the madness any more comprehensible. It is sad that many psychiatrists are entirely unable or unwilling to understand madness, that they hold it in contempt or even fear it while at the same time boasting about their "expertise" because they are thought to be able to explain or effectively subdue it.

For many former psychotics, psychiatric contempt for deeply intense experiences is reason enough to turn away from psychiatry and to talk to the psychiatrist "on the surface" (if at all) in order to avoid future confinement. In their heart of hearts, many former psychotics would rather cherish their memories of the black light than adopt the dead medicinal language of the psychiatrist. Often these memories are not only cherished but also longed for, consciously or unconsciously. Podvoll, about whom I will have more to say in part II, writes (1990, 72), "In the aftermath of a psychotic episode ...

one often feels as though something has been left undone; a suspicion of incompleteness, even long after a psychotic experience. For some, this manifests as an unceasing demand that the 'truth' of psychosis be experienced, *just one more time*." For the psychiatrist who insists that a psychosis is all a matter of anxiety, this is incomprehensible. In part III, and in chapters 13 and 14 of part IV, I will show what it is that the madman longs for so intensely.

1.3.2 Fracture

Psychosis is like a fracture—a discontinuity—that cannot be defined in terms of what is broken. Think of a stick with a bend in it, a leg with a knee, a line with a curve, or a folded piece of paper. The bend is not made of wood, the curve is not the line itself, characteristics of the fold cannot be deduced from the qualities of the paper. In part IV the focus is on the fracture and the experience of brokenness.

On the temporal plane, it's all about a fracture in time. Many psychoses are expressions of a gap between two time periods: an abyss, an "unground," a crisis, or a "caesura." There is some fundamental event that divides life into a period before and a period after. This division *is* the psychosis. The psychosis is like the ax that splits the wood, the knife that cuts a wound. Within that wound, trauma, gap, fracture, or crisis, themes circulate from the previous and the coming periods. But the essence of the psychosis itself cannot be reduced to that gap. The (non)structure and the (non)foundations come from elsewhere, from the existential quagmire that forms when a person has left the normal, everyday, common sense world. The knife is not the incised flesh, the ax is not made of wood. Mad time does not issue from the previous time and is not a prediction of what is to come; rather, the madman drops out of ordinary human time.

The fracture can be seen as "something in time," but it can also be seen as a discontinuity in space. The passage from, say, one country to another can be experienced in the form of a psychosis. If there is no gradual transition from Afghanistan to life in the Dutch countryside, a cavity can open between the two places, a non-place that is experienced as psychosis. As for temporality, the psychosis is an event that can be noted on the calendar—at least that's how it looks from the outside—but the madman knows that he has slipped out of ordinary human time. Likewise, the mad Afghan refugee is neither walking around "with his head still in Afghanistan," nor "confused by the forests of the Netherlands." You might depict the situation that way geographically, but he knows he has slipped out of normal human space.

The fracture can also consist of a separation from another person: a broken relationship, a death, a leave-taking. Of course such breaks are interwoven with breaks in time and space. Taking leave of the Afghan family in terms of space, taking leave of a deceased child or a loved one in terms of time. The loss of the other can endanger and destroy the continuous sense of self.

Seen from the outside, the madman still lives among others in a community and in the everyday world; however, he himself realizes that he has fallen away from the normal human world and has landed in the world of lonely madness. The fracture can be understood as a tear in the ordinary world. Those who are able to observe the tear and to peer through it can see what's behind it all—see the "wiring" of the world. And sometimes, in a flash of "unwiring," the unfiltered light can be seen, the light that causes blindness and strikes with madness (also see section 4.3.3).

1.3.3 Dreaming with Your Eyes Open

One of the shortest, most cogent definitions of psychosis is "dreaming with your eyes open." That is how the famous Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung put it (1974, 163): "To say that insanity is a dream that has become real is no metaphor. The phenomenology of the dream and of schizophrenia are almost identical, with a certain difference, of course; for one occurs normally under the condition of sleep, while the other upsets the waking or conscious state." Sanford (1977, 95) simply says, "In a psychosis the difference between inner and outer reality is obscured. It is like living in a dream when awake: the dream reality is so strong that the individual loses the common psychological perspective of his fellows and he becomes 'crazy.'" This image of the dream also appears in reports by madmen themselves. Schreber (1988, 81) writes, "Furthermore the impressions which rushed in upon me were such a wonderful mixture of natural events and happenings of a supernatural nature, that it is extremely difficult to distinguish mere dream visions from experiences in a waking state, that is to say to be certain how far all that I thought I had experienced was in fact historical reality."

Dreaming and madness do have a great deal in common. Both are similarly fragmented: neither dreaming nor madness has a chronological storyline, and there are no calendars or clocks to keep events in order. Things that happen in both dreams and madness do not fall into a structured sequence until afterward, when the person has awoken. The setting of the dream also resembles the setting of madness. In the dream there are disconnected images and movements like falling and flying, but the setting is not an "objective space" or a stable framework where things take place. There

is no difference in the dream between framework and image as there is no difference in madness between close up and far away, background and foreground. The notion of "dreaming," like the notion of madness, is closer to "solo creation" than to "observing a common world." "The dreamer dreams his dream" means that he makes it "within himself" rather than observing it "from without"—which also holds true, mutatis mutandis, for the madman. Finally, as in the mad world, lots of creatures populate the dream, but never any "real people."

It is said that a dream takes place only in your body or brain and is no more than a physical sensation. Hence dreams are delusions, the dream-world is unreal, and the dream ends when you open your eyes. But this idea loses validity when applied to madness. For if the dream ends when you open your eyes, what do you do if you are mad and your eyes are already wide open? Would it be better for the madman to close his eyes instead? Is he receiving too much of the outside world, too much light? Maybe there are many ways to keep your eyes open or to "see the light."

The remarkable thing about dreams—and madness—is that they can surprise you, even though you yourself are the dreamer (or the generator) of your own dreams. It's as if there were something hidden in the dream, an unpredictable aspect of "reality" that has slipped away from you, the dreamer. The same is true of madness: within the mad world you can transform the entire normal world according to your own delusions or Plan, yet unexpected new things still happen that are beyond your control. So what is it that surprises you in your dream and your madness, if dreams and madness take place only within yourself?

Another strange phenomenon is "lucid dreaming." In lucid dreams, you know you are dreaming, that nothing is "real," and that as soon as you wake up you'll find yourself outside the dream and in the real world. Stranger still, you can even dream that you decide to wake up, that you try to awaken, and that you think you have succeeded—at which point you end up in another dream reality. Such odd twists also occur in psychoses. Sometimes you know you're in a psychotic state, although that doesn't mean you can shut down the psychosis at that point and just walk away. And even if you know what state you're in and walk away from it, that step itself can be psychotic. Jefferson (Kaplan 1964, 7) writes this about her psychosis: "The whole thing is a dream and a nightmare. … Oh, I am sure it is all a dream. … Presently, I shall wake up and be oh, so relieved to know that this all has been a dream. … Dreams seem quite real as you dream them, but how quickly they pass; when I awake I shall be able to laugh at this nightmare. …" Madness sometimes seems like an endless video game. You

can change levels, there are plenty of exits, but you never "really" get out of the game (see 15.3.3).

In madness—just as in dreams—our everyday ideas about thinking, observing, time, space, and reality all disappear. If we focus on eliminating these elements, we tend to understand the mad world in a negative way. But glimmering behind it are the contours of a world that has to do with themes such as eternity, light, darkness, and numerology. More about this in the next chapter.

We can understand madness more clearly by examining the dividing line between thought and perception. Usually we believe we know when we are thinking something—inside ourselves—and when we are perceiving something—in the outside world. Mad people are just as aware of this distinction—all too aware—except in their case, the dividing line between the inner and outer worlds is different. The inner world becomes public and the outer world becomes part of their own mind. Sometimes the difference between inside and outside, cognition and perception, goes right out the window. But how is that possible? How is that to be understood? By gaining insight into how the dividing line between inside and outside shifts, we can learn more about madness itself. But first, a few comments about everyday life and how the dividing line there is drawn.

2.1 Common Views of Cognition and Perception

Normally we make a distinction between what we *see* and what we *think*. What we see are *things* and what we think are *thoughts*. Things not only can be seen but also heard, felt, smelled, and tasted. They are perceptible. They exist in space, where other people are also walking around, seeing the same things and being seen themselves. You see things insofar as they are visible. You see only the front of them and only when there's enough light to do so. If you can't see things very well, you can walk up to them, walk around them, look at them from all sides, and ask other people what they see when they look at them. You can be mistaken in the way you see things because they're too far away or because the perspective gives you a distorted picture. Seeing is an activity that you perform in the midst of other people. Everyone sees things from their own perspective, of course, but they're still the same things. If two people see and describe two things entirely differently, they can't both be right; there must be some kind of misunderstanding involved.

Usually we talk about thoughts in an entirely different way than we talk about things. Thoughts are not visible, audible, or otherwise perceptible. They don't exist in the same space that things or people do. Only you know your own thoughts; others have no access to them, unless you decide to make them known. Your thoughts are comprehensible to you; you know what you're thinking and you don't have to go to any great length to find out what they consist of. You are not "subjected" to your thoughts. You're free to think whatever you want. You can decide what you're going to think about or, somehow, not think about. A thought that is not thought about does not exist, unlike a thing that is not observed.

Upon closer reflection, however, things are not quite so simple. The fact is that what we see depends on the "lens" through which we see it. A person who is pregnant sees pregnant women and babies everywhere. Seeing is not entirely passive; you see that which you are actively attentive to, and you are attentive to whatever you are interested in. Seeing is not something you do with your eyes alone; your memory and your thoughts also come into play. If you enter an empty room, you may see that someone is "not there" (cf. Sartre 2003, 67, and my Sartrean analyses in chapter 12). So, apparently, you can also see an absence. The biologist sees many more varieties of plants than an ordinary nature lover does, and you can see mood shifts in your beloved that no one else can see. The way things appear to us partly depends on how we approach them and how we have thought about them in the past.

Conversely, it's hard to imagine an inner thinking process that is entirely cut off from the outside. When you think about things or persons, you assume that they actually exist somewhere and can be observed in principle. Thoughts often have a visual quality, and "visual images" are somehow related to the observable world. Moreover, thoughts do not have to be entirely comprehensible to the thinker himself. It can be convincingly argued that thinking is not all that private and that you need other people in order to know what you yourself are thinking. Perhaps thoughts are only clear when they assume a shape and expression that is observable to others. This is the opinion of many modern philosophers, such as Wittgenstein and Donald Davidson: that thoughts are only really thoughts when they are expressed in language that can be shared. Just as perception is not concerned with the outside world alone, so cognition is not exclusively confined to the inner world.

Related to concepts such as thought and perception are concepts such as fantasizing, imagining, remembering, and so forth. By studying the "mental grammar" of such concepts as they relate to madness, we can undertake an exploration of the mad world. This would involve working out how

madmen use these concepts and thereby coming to a better understanding of mad "language" and of madness itself. We must not be too hasty in our exploration and conclude that thought and perception are "actually" the same thing and that it's all just an agreement that was reached in order to give it some kind of name. We must not make the mistake of reducing philosophical problems to superficial linguistic problems and then stop thinking. The difference between madmen and the rest of us is not just a different use of words like "thinking" and "seeing." The change in language brings with it an entirely different world. In the mad world, the image of modern man is called into question, and another view emerges of what experience, interior, and exterior can be. In my exploration of this other world, I therefore begin with language, but I do not end there. I try to get to the heart of psychotic language; namely, the psychotic meanings that adhere to words like "thinking," "observing," and "seeing."

2.2 Mad Focus

2.2.1 Visions and Hallucinations

Words such as "vision" and "visual" hallucination, in addition to "view" and "video," are related to the Latin *videre*, "to see." The term "vision" is used when someone has unusual religious or mad experiences in which he "sees something" that cannot be perceived by others and to which he ascribes special meaning (compare, for example, Cangas et al., 2009). This kind of private observation is called a visual hallucination in the medical-psychiatric context. An essential feature of ordinary perception is its "communal dimension": what I see, hear, smell, taste, and feel must be similarly perceptible by others, in principle. But visions and hallucinations, and what in the older German phenomenological literature is called *Wahnstimmung*, are characterized by this private dimension.

Visions and visual hallucinations are experienced differently than, say, a spot on the eye. An organic defect, such as a visual spot or an auditory peep, is consciously perceived as a disturbance of one's access to reality and may be correctable. A spot on the lens of my eyeball may bother me, but I do not incorporate it into my *vision* of reality. I do not see the spot as an actual part of my field of perception, and it has no meaning in the world I see. I know that other people do not have a similar spot dancing before their eyes, so I know that the spot is not a little creature with an existence of its own. Visions and visual hallucinations, however, do have meaning within the world as a whole. If the visionary or the hallucinating person were to regard his vision as a "spot" or an "impaired observation" that is not part of

his world, the vision or visual hallucination would vanish from his world and be regarded as no more than an illusion or a physical inconvenience, meaningless for the rest of the mad world (which thereby would cease to be mad).²

Visual hallucinations and visions are of a different order than a spot on your eye's lens or an ordinary perception because they are experienced as both private and "real" at the same time. In madness, being both private and real means that, instead of being doubted or corrected, the hallucinations and visions are experienced as exceptional observations. If you believe you are seeing something real and accept that you are the only one who is seeing it, then instead of thinking you've seen it incorrectly, you can think you've seen something utterly unique—perhaps because you have been chosen to see something unique. Instead of just seeing some random, commonplace thing, you see something that no one else is seeing and that therefore must bear a special relationship to you. Why else would *you* be the one who's seeing it?

Visions and hallucinations belong neither to the realm of ordinary thought nor to that of normal perception.³ Because of their private dimension, they seem more like thought than normal perception. But their passive aspect, their givenness, and their entanglement with the observable world make them seem more like normal perceptions. Those who do not accept such a special status can say that visions and visual hallucinations are "actually" thoughts or fantasies that the person mistakenly believes to be perceptions. This is a commonly heard psychiatric explanation: that the difference between thought and perception is firmly established and the person doing the hallucinating is making a "category mistake" by erroneously calling a thought a perception. But someone having a vision would never call his vision an ordinary perception; rather, he would call it a private perception and would know perfectly well that there are all kinds of thought aspects attached to this vision—much the way dreamers describing their dreams know perfectly well that "seeing" in a dream is not ordinary "seeing" and yet is meaningful. Custance (1952, 57) says with regard to his own mad visions, "These visions generally appear on the walls of my room, if these are shiny enough to reflect light. They are infinitely varied, and bear a close relation to the processes of thought passing in my mind at the time."4

Visions and visual hallucinations have other things in common with thought as well. The observer of the vision—like the psychotic with his visual hallucination—knows that he cannot walk around the vision to view it from the back. A vision and a visual hallucination have no back; they are transparent to the observer, in the sense that there is nothing to discover

about the vision that is not already immediately "visible." A vision does not occupy space in the visible world in the same way that other things do. A vision rarely blocks the view of other things; in fact, other things don't even relate to a vision spatially in terms of "next to," "in front of," or "above." Sass (1992, 48) writes, "It is noteworthy that these alterations of spatial experience in schizophrenia do not have a commensurate effect on behavior: the patient does not walk into things, for example, as persons with distorted spatial experience due to organic lesions are wont to do." A person who is seeing a vision or having a visual hallucination rarely points to it with his finger. If you ask him to show you where the hallucination is, he is more likely to describe the vision's world of meaning than to physically gesture at the everyday world we all have in common.

A vision is full of meaning for the "visionary" as well as being "strange," just like the visual hallucination. It doesn't have to be a "pink elephant"-sort of experience, however (the hallucinatory cliché). Visions have something private and thought-like about them, but in terms of content, they can resemble what normal people see. I see a tree in front of my house right now, for instance, and that is not a vision. It isn't a vision because I know that other people are looking at (or can see) the same tree and that I can walk around it. In the mad world, however, the same tree can assume a visionary or hallucinatory quality. I would then see the tree "as it presents itself to me, and to me alone." I and the tree—my observation and the observed tree—form a single whole. My observation then takes on a private aspect. The tree becomes a "theoretical" sort of tree. It becomes an idea, a thought, or a representation to me. The fact that other people may see the tree in their own way is of less importance than this one unique observation of the tree, made by me.

This is not usually called a vision but a *Wahnstimmung*, a term invented by the German psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers in his *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (1997). In this early stage of madness, ordinary things seem very special, although the mad person cannot say what is so special about them. Because I am the only person who sees them as I see them, they seem made (or made in this way) especially for me.

The next stage of madness might be regarded as an interpretation of this special quality. Things don't just happen. They exist—just as they are—for me, and "therefore" only for me, especially for me, and intended for me. Normally we look at things casually; we see them as we have always seen them. What they are like specifically is not so interesting, since there is a certain arbitrariness or contingency in the world. In the *Wahnstimmung*, however, there is no accident; accident is transformed into necessity (also

see section 1.2.1). The fact that everything is as it is, is necessarily so. If something seems to have occurred "just like that," to have accidentally come to be there, the madman sees it as intentional. When the madman goes one step further—and he always does; he's mad, after all—then everything isn't simply special or meaningful; it also has a meaning that must be literally decoded by the madman himself. Something is being made clear to him. When the theoretical character of the tree-for-me-alone becomes so strong that the tree "reveals" itself to me, entirely and exclusively, I can say I am having a revelation, and I may interpret it in such a way as to show that there is something else, or someone else, who is "behind" the revelation (see Intermezzo II). Once the *Wahnstimmung* has been fully interpreted ("someone" is making "something" clear to me; "by moving its leaves, the tree is trying to tell me that ..."), the experience can be regarded as a vision or delusion. If I look at the whole world in this private way, everything will ultimately become dreamlike, private, and hallucinatory.

But isn't the difference between the mad world and the ordinary world just a question of language? Doesn't the person having the visions "really" mean that he is having important ideas about things that are not perceptible to others? As Sass (1992, 276) notes, "The schizophrenic patient had a vision of an intruder kneeling in her bedroom: 'I saw the man only abstractly with my inner eye,' she explains. 'I was aware of his attitude and general build, but we were apart in time and on different planes of existence.' Many hallucinations and delusions that at first seem to involve entirely objective claims turn out, on careful probing, to have some kind of as-if or metaphorical quality."

Sass uses the term "metaphorical quality" and seems to suggest that statements made by madmen are not meant to be taken literally but only metaphorically. I think the word "metaphorical" as used here is somewhat unfortunate. I would prefer to say "metonymic"; the term "to see" seems to have been shifted and expanded. Normally, when there are things "beyond perception, within the realm of thought," you can "see them as" or "view them in the light of," and so forth. In madness, the use of these kinds of perceptual terms is shifted even further. Nevertheless, it is wrong to say that in madness there is "only" altered language and metaphorical speech. Altered language goes hand in hand with an altered way of life.

Finally, there's a remarkable paradox involved in this condition of *Wahnstimmung*. On the one hand, seeing the tree as tree-for-me is of great importance: this, here, now, must be exactly as it is. Everything is meant to be this way and it all has a purpose, which brings with it a sense of necessity. On the other hand, the madman also discovers that this "connection"

between himself and the tree is made and influenced by himself, which gives "how the tree appears" a subjective quality: it is more dependent on the observer's mind. The tree as "tree as I now see it" is just one way of seeing the tree. So the mad world is not so much a world full of binding meaning as it is one full of playful possibility. The madman experiences the tree as "something that you might possibly see as a tree." The hallucination, with its inescapable inevitability, thrusts itself forward. But at the same time, the world's hallucinatory quality gives the world a subjective, indefinite air (also see section 1.2.2).

Fragment I: Written in the Stars

One evening I walked into the city to announce my new Insight to the public. The street was no longer the old familiar street I used to know. Everything was cast in a different light. I saw not only the outside of things and people but also had an immediate grasp of what they were for, what their inner purpose was. I saw the intentions of people by the way they moved, their facial expressions, their gestures, and the color of their clothes. I was wearing black pants and a red coat, and it struck me that quite a few people were dressed the same way. It was as if the evening had demanded this kind of attire by tacit agreement, and it showed that, apparently, there were more people working on the new Insight. We, the red coats, discreetly exchanged knowing nods.

Chuckling on the inside, muttering on the outside, I continued my walk to the city. It was September, and the weather was brisk—a Thursday evening when the shops were all open and quite a few people were out. I had to pass through the big shopping center to get to the downtown area where the thinkers had assembled to discuss the situation from the point of view of the new Insight. It was very crowded. People were coming out of the train station and the music hall, heading in every direction, and many were clearly inspired and provoked by the performance they had just seen. There was a boisterous, agitated feeling in the air. Some people clearly had the Insight; they looked up in a special way. But many others were still ignorant—or feigned ignorance. I realized that the mood might change because of my presence and the Plan might slide into violence. So I tried not to look too conspicuous and decided it was better to leave the enclosed shopping center. They could tell I was different from the way I looked, that I had just acquired the Insight in its pure form, and they also knew about my Plan: that I was going to write a book.

During the previous days, I had been struck by so many brilliant ideas, received so many insights, discovered so many perspectives, that I had

decided to knock off a new book about the various kinds of psychoses. This new book would take the form of a novel and would be called *The Neon Hotel*. It would be an indictment of the practice of confining people in psychiatric institutions as well as a detailed description of the inner lives of the residents of such institutions, all disguised as fiction. I was inspired by Willem Elsschot's *Villa des Roses*, a sketch of the lives of several guests in a boarding house at the beginning of the twentieth century. I would write a similar book but set it at the beginning of the new century in a modern hotel.

The Neon Hotel would complement my earlier book Alone and would expand and provide a more thorough treatment of the subject matter than my first book on psychosis, Pure Madness. I had already come up with a cover illustration: while Alone had six yellow rectangles, The Neon Hotel would have six red stars. What I had gone through the previous week in the isolation cell and the mental ward would have to be added to the ideas from my bachelor's thesis, which I had further developed and subdivided for this book of books. It was too bad they released me from the mental ward, by the way. I would have liked to have stayed to do fieldwork, to watch psychosis evolve from the inside, which would have given me more material for my book. But the psychiatrist said he wanted to make sure I didn't profit from my illness. It seemed like such a lovely idea: a peaceful little room, a laptop, the four most important books all stacked up, and nothing to do but record and compose. Unfortunately, the psychiatrist seemed to be the only one allowed any financial gain from my madness. But just you wait, I thought. There had to be other ways of cogitating my head off beyond the walls of the institution.

I had to be careful, however, that my excellent Plan for the book didn't reach the public prematurely. It would be a great shame if someone else were to take credit for it. So I rushed out of the shopping center and walked along the tram rails toward the center of town. I walked and thought, looking all around me like a man possessed. There were cyclists everywhere, pedestrians, cars, and traffic, a motley collection of micro- and macro-events to think about. Be careful you don't get distracted! I took in everything I saw and thought, everything that was happening around me, and converted it into my own material; I tucked it deep inside me so that, later, it might end up in the pages of my book. I had to describe everything that was happening in front of me, here and now. It was just like a movie set that was already pointing toward the future, to the book I was going write. It was as if the people had escaped from the pages of my book and, if I had not been its author, I might have been escaping from the book myself. I smiled at the deep irony of all this: Baron von Münchhausen at quadruple proximity!

I took another good look around, and in everything I saw a reflection of what I was hoping for. According to my Insight, I could "see" more than what was so superficially visible. Not only did I see "on" things—my glance did not stop at their surface—but now, finally, I could see "in" things. And as I was pondering this, I saw my own book being announced above the hotel on the edge of the square. Oh, dream of Apollo! You know those kids' fireworks, those sparklers they were messing around with in Volendam years ago, up there, north of Amsterdam, where they know so much about seafood? The words "Neon Hotel" were written in gigantic letters in the dark with those kinds of sparklers. My Plan, leaked, and written in the stars! But it can't be real, can it? They can't have been put there before I came along? If I were to believe what I saw, and to believe what I saw in what I saw, I really would be insane; then I'd look into the future and go back to before I made my decision! To keep from admitting to the possibility that I saw something that wasn't there, I deliberately did not look up again but kept walking without letting on. I decided to turn the heat down a bit on my thought processes, which apparently had had a Dionysian effect on my surroundings.

2.2.2 Staring, Scanning, and Intuiting

The appearance of visions and visual hallucinations is stimulated by pausing and withdrawing from the normal world of activities. I am more likely to regard the tree as a tree-for-me if I stop and stand in front of it. When I walk around it, I notice it has many sides that I cannot see at the same time. At that point, the tree becomes a real "object," a thing in the normal world and not simply an impression in my consciousness. You cannot walk around an "idea of treeness." You cannot touch such an idea either, or feel its resistance. In madness, the madman no longer actively "looks at" the tree; he no longer examines it from all sides. Instead, he "observes" it and "stares" at it. The momentary, casual glance at the tree turns into staring at the void in which the tree manifests itself. This change from looking at to staring at can be understood as the cessation of "acting." Acting is the meaning-charged, dynamic association with the world in the world. The madman withdraws from the normal world and no longer aligns his observation with that of other people. He no longer interacts with things; he only observes them in the staring mode.⁹

Stanghellini (2004, 155) uses the word "scanning" in this context and compares the attitude of the madman with the inhuman "gaze" and activity (or non-activity) of a scanner (also see 13.5). Quoting a patient, he says, "If the mind is empty, it functions like a plotter or a camera," and then

comments, "These people perceive themselves and conceive of themselves as mechanisms for which bodily, physical, sensitive contact with reality is substituted by disembodied noesis." Looking, acting, and thinking are done in an ordinary world by people "with a body." The lessening of acting and physical activity, and the increase of staring and objectification, are steps on the path that leads to the mad world. ¹⁰

Wittgenstein sees a relationship between staring, private ("solipsistic") Wahnstimmung and the development of philosophical problems. He writes (1958, 66), "To get clear about philosophical problems, it is useful to become conscious of the apparently unimportant details of the particular situation in which we are inclined to make a certain metaphysical assertion. Thus we may be tempted to say 'Only this is really seen' when we stare at unchanging surroundings, whereas we may not at all be tempted to say this when we look about us while walking." Again, ten years later, he writes (1968, 309), "The phenomenon of staring is closely bound up with the whole puzzle of solipsism." Authors such as Stanghellini and Sass (and myself) argue that the same staring-intuiting attitude that leads to theoretical problems in metaphysics and philosophy also results in practical-existential problems in madness.

Mad staring and intuiting is related to Wahnstimmung and visions. Staring and intuiting are more likely to be associated with activity—at least with an active subject—while Wahnstimmung and visions are associated more with passivity. The latter two are things that happen to you, while staring and intuiting are things that are done by you. The question is, which one occurs first in madness? Intuiting is a form of objectification, withdrawing from the world, after which something like "the experience of the tree-for-me" might develop. So visions, visual hallucinations, and Wahnstimmung could conceivably flourish in the staring-intuiting attitude. But perhaps the relationship is reversed, and phenomena such as visions are first to occur—that is, phenomena that cannot easily be classified in the conventional thought/observation dichotomy—after which the staring and intuiting attitude develops as a reaction. A third possibility, which is most in keeping with the ideas in this book, is that the whole division of passive versus active here is just as treacherous as the distinction made elsewhere between bottom-up and top-down hallucinations.

2.3 The World in Thoughts, Thoughts in the World

In this section I will use a fragment of my own devising to show how what is usually called the "outside world" comes to take on an "inner" or

"thought-like" aspect and do it in a way that is recognizable and understandable. Then I will show the reverse: how thoughts and inner experiences begin to resemble things from the outside world. That is, how perception becomes thought and thought becomes perception. This insight provides us with an important point of access to the world of madness. (Also compare Lezy 2007, 58.¹¹)

Fragment II: Internet for Insiders

With my new Insight, I finally understood how modern media really work. Media are no longer what they used to be. Today they work by means of "thought manifestations." Every now and then, I receive a text message—well, I don't "receive" it so much as it "comes through" or "is received" on my smart phone. These text messages make it possible for me to know immediately what the senders are thinking. Apparently cell phones tap thoughts and reproduce them on their little illuminated screens. Conversely, my thoughts can also be siphoned off and made to appear as text on someone else's cell phone. Although I was assured that this was impossible, I didn't trust such assurances and was very careful about what I thought. And with cell phones, an entire environment can be "recorded" and set down somewhere else. So that's the plague that is terrorizing the modern age: the internet! Everything ends up there, for all to see. If you walk around with a cell phone in your pocket, and if the phone is on, everything you're thinking and experiencing ends up on the internet.

I, too, had fallen into the internet trap. Before receiving the Insight, I had designed my own website and written a book, so that information about me found its way to the internet. At least that was the official version. Now I understood that the internet doesn't really exist; it's only the collective representation of all the thoughts that have ever been tapped. Anyone who has ever been tapped has been absorbed into that matrix.

In my initial ignorance, I had actively participated in my own appearance on the internet. But now I understood the threat and danger posed by this monster that we had created. It was out of our control, just like in the Matrix movie, where they had also turned back time and disguised it as reality. Once you end up on the internet, you're nothing but a soulless open book for all to read throughout eternity. The price we pay is the physical counterpart of data circulation: red blood. Just take a look at the Vodafone logo and you know all you need to know. Whoever spends a lot of time on the internet poisons his circulatory system. His humanity is undermined, his soul is sucked dry, and his life is taken over by the laws of money and blood, all thanks to the image trade.

Now that I was wise to this, I began to see the havoc being wreaked everywhere by the internet. Fellow victims who had also had the Insight looked at me with pity. They understood my situation. The internet was buzzing with the images and texts that directly or indirectly pointed to me. Now I had to do penance for my earlier audacity. Everyone who saw me could tell that I had appeared on the internet. Whenever I walked down the street, I could hear the whispering and murmuring. In not very guarded terms, they were talking about me, that I had been so stupid as to go on the internet, saying, "You just don't do that sort of thing." Everyone was talking about it: the internet, sending text messages, making phone calls. But the core of every word was hollow and hard. If I walked past, they looked at me, recognized me, and quickly averted their eyes. I turned with a mournful face and looked at my friends who had also had the Insight, and they looked mournfully back at me. Their faces told me they knew what was going on: everything had been attacked and destroyed by the internet. And to a great extent, it was my fault. Because although they had been talking about the internet, what they mainly were talking about was me, about me on the internet—that you could see me there, meet me, and "download" me. The only safe place is here in the mental ward. There's no internet here. But it's alarming that the nurses seem to have access to a computer screen. Does that mean they've become empty and soulless here, too?

2.3.1 Imagined World

In this section, by way of illustration, I will look at the most extreme case in which what a normal person calls "thinking" takes on the characteristics of "perception" in madness. How is that experienced? How is it to be understood?

Mad thoughts, unlike normal thoughts, are "visible." The perceptible outside world is "thought" or "invented" by the psychotic. That is to say, what normal people regard as a shared outside world is, in the experience of the psychotic, a manifestation of his "private thinking." The imagined outside world does not have the same spatial qualities as ours. I have already written that someone who is mad has visual hallucinations and visions of things that other people do not see, and that the things others do see can take on a different appearance to the madman (*Wahnstimmung*). A red car with a certain license plate driving by can be observed by everyone, but the madman sees the car as though it is driving by especially for him. An aura of meaningfulness fills the air: the red car appeared especially for him, and the numbers on the license plate say something about him. The red car is only there because he is there as well. Without him there would be no red

car—in fact, there would be no world. He "thinks" the world, and the world depends on him for its existence. The car does not continue on its way until the madman thinks of something that has to do with "movement." One patient says, "In my mental illness I had been as a person, enlarged and stretched beyond all reasonable limits. I was a part of everything and the whole world, sometimes the whole universe, was in a sense a part of me." (Sass 1992, 271).

There are other people inhabiting the madman's outside world of thought, of course, but he does not see them "as other people"; he "thinks" and "invents" them. The appearance of other people in the psychotic's field of vision is like the occurrence of thoughts in the mind of the normal person: "They must be there for a reason." That is to say, as thoughts relate to the thinker, so psychotic observations relate to the observer, the psychotic. People who "appear" are meant to send some kind of message to the madman. They do not have an independent existence; they have but one purpose, and it revolves around the madman. The gestures, words, facial expressions, and movements of other people out in the street, on TV, or on the internet all point directly or symbolically to the memories and thoughts of the psychotic. 12 The whole world comes together in the madman. Instead of being "independent fellow subjects," other people become subordinate and functional. They have the appearance of stereotypes or comic strip figures, and they exhibit archetypical features such as those of the Messenger, the Traitor, the Wise Man, and so forth.¹³

Just when there seems to be a small opening from the mad world to the normal world, the madman will explain how the outside world is put together. But he only *seems* to be talking about a shared outside world; in fact he's reporting on how his own universe looks, with the help of terms from the outside world. It is his world, the world as he thinks and perceives it. No one can refute these mad statements, because it isn't their world. A madman will never point to something in the outside world in order to indicate "something in the outside world," but he will always use the outside world as a source of symbols and words, as part of a more spacious thought or element in his mad story. So while it may seem that the madman is talking about the shared outside world, he's really only talking about the *Wahnstimmung*.

Just as thoughts are normally clear and transparent for the thinker himself, so the world is transparent for the madman with regard to meaning and structure. He sees everything and doesn't need to go anywhere else; there are no things anywhere else that he does not know about. In fact, there is no "anywhere else," since everything is a reflection of the same thing. On

the one hand, this makes the mad world a vast, mysterious, baroque world with uncertainties and themes that repeat themselves in every remote corner and at every level. The colors, shapes, and movements of the "outside world" are the nuances in the madman's own thoughts, associations, and memories. On the other hand, the mad world is a boring world. Only the things the psychotic perceives are important. There is nothing unknown or surprising. He already knows and understands everything, because he has made it all up himself—at least insofar as the madness is an "imagined world." I will discuss the other side of this all-embracing notion—that he can be surprised by his own thoughts—in section 2.3.2.

The distinction between perception and thought is like the distinction between passivity and activity. With perception, you are open to how the world presents itself to you. The world makes an impression on you. That is to say, the world that is as it is determines what you will (passively) perceive. Thinking, on the other hand, is something you actively do. And when you don't think, there are no thoughts. With madness, it's just the opposite. The perceived world becomes a thought world that is "conducted" by the subject, who sets it in motion and keeps it going. If the madman isn't careful, the world will lose its coherence and forward motion. The movements of his own frame of mind are visible in the outside world. This can lead to what are called delusions of grandeur and to ideas about telepathy and telekinesis.

That is what Hans says, one of the people interviewed in De Waard (2007, 39): "That kind of thing was very strong. That I turned onto the street and a child walked out the door at exactly the same time, looking outside for a few seconds. Then I thought, oh, that must have happened because of me. I also thought that I could help people by using a kind of hypnosis. I remember standing in the supermarket a few meters away from an old man, and trying to help him choose between two chocolate bars. It was even stronger with telekinesis-type skills. I felt connected to everything. I used to play soccer every now and then. Sometimes it was windy and the ball would roll away, and I would focus my thoughts and think: stop rolling right now. One time I was sitting at the kitchen table, trying to make a fork stand on end without touching it. My father saw it and me asked me, what are you doing? I'm trying to make that fork stand on end."

The madman actively thinks and manages the world the way normal people actively conduct their thoughts. Yet the madman is aware that a lot of things are escaping from his power of thought and that the world is not entirely under his control. In order to maintain total control, he must think the right thoughts and make sure the right things happen.

Normally we distinguish the observed world from the inner world, and within that inner world we distinguish true thoughts, memories, and representations from false thoughts, imaginings, and fantasies. With madness, however, "perception" is packed with all kinds of thoughts, imaginings, and fantasies. Everything happens in the same way: a fantasy makes as much of an impression as an observation or a thought. The world changes from reality to possibility; reality becomes less real and takes on a provisional, temporary, and reversible quality (also see section 1.2.2). The psychotic world is less "serious" and resembles a thought game—or a computer game.

The psychotic believes that the world is not a given, but that it exists owing to rules that he imposes and can change. There is no "real world" against which other possible worlds can be compared. A thought of the "it may be that ..." genre is of the same value in the mad world as "it is commonly known that ..." The inner dialogue, the mental struggle, and the solipsistic game are all played out on the stage of perception. The perceived world is borne by the mad "inner" world, and everything boils down to "it depends on how you look at it." The world takes on the personal imprint of madness and the madman. Lezy (2007, 66) says, "Someone who perceives himself as the center of the world may have a feeling of divine omnipotence. This often happens in psychotic patients, especially in their ecstatic moments. They have the experience that they themselves are the source of everything that happens. The circle of meanings around them seems like their own creation."

As a result, the madman lives in a lonely, solipsistic world.¹⁴ His mind serves as the basis for whatever he perceives. At the same time, he is not lonely, because a continuous inner dialogue is taking place among several "voices." There are many forces and streams of ideas populating his inner world, which gives it more of the features of an outside world.

2.3.2 Thinking as Things

While the perceived world takes on a "theoretical" or "imagined" look, mad thoughts become "realer" and appear more like objects. Usually, for the unmad person, thoughts have no taste at all, but with madness thoughts become more sensual; they might appear in color, for instance. Thoughts take place in a thinking area; they are large or small, sharp, round, soft, or hard. They also move; they take leaps and leave lines and tracks. Some thoughts feel heavy, while others feel very light. Thoughts become more physical; they can drag you along, and you can feel them racing through your body. You can even get them to flow out of your head and through your hands or the top of your skull. 15

For the madman, the things that are "thought" this way are less part of himself than they are for normal people. In madness, thoughts are more like inspirations and bright ideas that come from the outside; they are experienced as strange, and the madman feels no responsibility for them. Instead he has the feeling that thoughts are presenting themselves to him rather than that he is thinking them himself. 16 He can be surprised by "thoughts." We are usually surprised by thoughts that we read about in a text, but the madman is surprised by thoughts that he "reads," or experiences, in his own mind. Strangely enough, the thoughts of a madman are therefore quite real in the sense that they are perceptible, but at the same time they are "contingent" in the sense that they could just as well have been otherwise, so that no special value need be attached to them. Often these thoughts are "seen" and talked about in terms of (physical) images or representations. Sechehaye's Renee (1970, 39) writes, "But I could find no rest, for horrible images assailed me, so vivid that I experienced actual physical sensation. I cannot say that I really saw images; they did not represent anything. Rather I felt them. It seemed that my mouth was full of birds which I crunched between my teeth, and their feathers, their blood and broken bones were choking me."

In madness, thoughts are often experienced as being open to the public, just as the perceived world normally is. Mad thoughts are there for all the world to see, and the madman is not surprised that his thoughts are discussed in newspapers and other media. When he thinks something, he is surrounded by the commentary of the voices of people on the street, the headlines and texts in newspapers, the images on television, and his own associations and ideas.

Farr (1982, 2) writes, "Another disturbing phenomenon was that sometimes my thoughts were audibly loud and I began to think that other people could hear what I was thinking. I used to think that I could hear my thought waves being broadcast over speakers. ... I had absolutely no sense of privacy. My innermost thoughts were broadcast to the world." In chapter 16 I will discuss many of the cases that the German psychiatrist Klaus Conrad examines in *Die beginnende Schizophrenie: Versuch einer Gestaltanalyse des Wahns*. Writing about one of his patients, he says (1958, 11), "He had already noted that he was under hypnosis because his thoughts were being passed around. People wanted to draw everything out of him. Everyone was able to read his mind. Whenever he thought of something, other people made it clear to him that they knew what he was thinking. ... If he had some unusual thought, people kept a close eye on him or coughed

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conspicuously, so that he always had to make sure all his thoughts were innocent. This made him very tired and tense."

It isn't so much that his thoughts "don't make sense" or that a madman sees things that aren't there, but that the relationship between thinking and perception has changed. This makes itself felt in the madman's language and other areas of expression. I will be coming back repeatedly to such shifting and blurring of borders: between the present and the past, between here and there, and between fact and fiction. The problem this poses for describing and understanding is that the place and significance of the human being and his consciousness change and disappear. Madness and modern philosophy share this characteristic; they no longer know from which basis statements can be made. There is no longer an irrefutable core or an absolute starting point; there is no identity, no person. At the very most, there's a void waiting to be filled in and interpreted—and at the same time to be feared and fled from.

We Are Not Here

We are not here, we lie within, we see ahead in time gone by; but this can't be this is today, a wedge, the simplest part of naught, we've dispossessed ourselves to things the same light breaks inside and out, mirror that cannot choose, twin brothers, me or me we see what was although we are, by seeing what is blindness, nonsense, it can't be does not exist, it lies, wiped out in white all is nothing than blacker, whiter in fact—
—Gerrit Kouwenaar, *Een geur van verbrande veren* (A Smell of Burnt Feathers, 1991)

Another indicator of a psychosis, besides hallucinations and delusions, is "disorientation" in time and space. A quick test for diagnosing psychosis is to ask such questions as Where do you think we are? What day is it today? Where were you last week? Being unable to answer such questions, or answering them incorrectly, can indicate a psychosis-related disorder. But what does "disorientation" in time and space mean? What kind of world is it in which someone *doesn't understand time*? That is the question I will be exploring here. Understanding how time changes in madness will give us deeper insight into the mad world. The time theme is the focus of this chapter, but I will return to it at several points later in the book as well. Time marches on, and the last word is yet to be spoken.

We can more easily understand the mad experience of time by learning what it means to understand time in the normal world. But no sooner do we begin thinking about time than things quickly start getting more complicated. The more we ponder the subject of time, the more we find ourselves saddled with exactly the kinds of problems we're trying to solve. One of the first philosophers to concern himself with time, Augustine, put it this way: "What, then, is time? As long as no one asks me, I know. As soon as I wish to explain it to him who asks, I know not." For the philosopher, the question of time is usually no more than a theoretical problem that will have no impact on his daily existence. For while he reflects on the direction or the reality of time and is amazed by it, he still keeps using the calendar and jotting down appointments in his datebook. For the madman, however, these kinds of questions about time are actual life problems; he no longer knows "when he is" or which way time is going. He no longer understands the clock or the calendar.

So if we want to find out exactly what time is, the philosopher is not the one to turn to. But we *can* consult the philosopher to see how reflecting on time can lead to confusion. That is what I will be doing in this chapter. I will follow the philosophical argumentation with regard to time, expose the paradoxes, and show how this kind of reflection, if taken seriously, can lead to obsessive brooding and, finally, to mad time—and the mad world (also see chapter 13).

To that end, I will begin by explaining the two irreconcilable views of time: the external-objective-static view and the internal-subjective-dynamic view. According to the first view, the concept of time refers to the temporal relations between events in nature or in the world, with the awareness of time being a derivative of these relations. The second view is exactly the opposite. In this view, time is an aspect of inner experience and awareness, with the temporal order of the world being a projection derived from that experience and awareness. The philosopher reflects on these two views and tries to find arguments to support one of them or even to reconcile both of them. In daily life, however, the paradoxes and difficulties brought to light by the philosophy of time are masked by our customs, our language, and our stories. Most people are oblivious to the unfathomable miracle of time, and the normal nonphilosophical individual rarely suffers from "temporal confusion" with regard to what "real time" is. Only the madman rubs up against the edges of the experience of time and ventures beyond them. I will describe this further in the second half of the chapter, following a fragment about my own strange experiences of time.

3.1 The Fabric of Everyday Time

3.1.1 Fixed Time: Aristotle

According to the static view, time exists outside our consciousness as part of reality. Time is the background or the grid on which events occupy a temporal position. This was the opinion of thinkers such as Newton and Leibniz, as well as that of modern physics and analytic philosophers such as Smart (1963). The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur calls this notion of time cosmological time or universal time. It is an understanding of time that was thoroughly worked out by Aristotle.

Time, says Aristotle in book 4 of the *Physics*, has something to do with the movement of an object in space—indeed, without movement, there is no time. Time is a feature of movement, in general, since time is everywhere, irrespective of the speed—let alone the direction—of a moving object. When movement occurs, you can say that a moving thing goes from one place to another, that there is an "earlier" place and a "later" place. Although time is different from space as an aspect of movement, you can also say that there is an "earlier" and a "later" with regard to time. Once we have determined an earlier (a "before") and a later (an "after"), and we have therefore observed two different moments of movement, then what is between those two moments is a segment of measured time. When time is described like this, it is stretched out, since it is "bounded" by two moments. Aristotle defines and describes time as follows:

For time is just this: number of motion in respect of "before" and "after." Hence time is not movement, but only movement in so far as it admits of enumeration. An indication of this: we discriminate the more or the less by number, but more or less movement by time. Time then is a kind of number. (Number, we must note, is used in two ways—both of what is counted or the countable and also of that with which we count. Time, then, is what is counted, not that with which we count: these are different kinds of thing.) Just as motion is a perpetual succession, so also is time.

The number of the movement must not be understood as an abstract number that is the equivalent of the time. The number is more like what a water mill or water clock produces, counting one with every revolution. By coupling time to counting, we form the prelude to a discussion of "absolute time" and "relative time." Visually speaking, all movements and events can be represented as the activation of a time mill (in other words, a clock) that "creates" or "indicates" a segment of time with each revolution. When the time mill creates a series of numbers, time is then dependent on the objects

and their movement, and this is relative time (Leibniz). When the increasing numbers refer to something like "time," we are talking about absolute time (Newton), within which movement takes place but in which time is not dependent on that movement.

According to Aristotle, time is a feature of the outside world, of the *physis*, or nature. In later physics, this is the dominant view. There are also variations of this view: in the theory of relativity, the "speed" of time is related to space, mass, and gravity. In even more modern physics, there is talk of particles that "go back" in time. Despite the differences, the basic idea is always the same: time is something that can be measured, divided, and examined as part of nature beyond our conscious awareness. (In section 5.4, I will continue my exploration of the relationship between this "earthly" fixed time and madness.)

In this static understanding of time, time is a motionless background against which events are placed that can relate to each other in three different ways: "earlier than," "later than," and "at the same time as." These are objective "temporal" relations between events that take place in the world. These relations have nothing to do with "us," with the observer or the mind. It's just that some events are placed before or after other events in time, and that is all that can be said about time. The fact that it is the mind or the observer who must fix and compare the two moments of the movement is not dealt with by Aristotle and the theoreticians of static time (though compare Ricoeur in his *Time and Narrative*). Even if humans did not exist, all events would still be connected to each other absolutely by means of these temporal relations. This view of time is good for organizing and explaining events that are governed by the laws of nature, which is why it is so suitable to scientific reflections on the world.

Yet this is only one approach to time. Strict supporters of this view would find themselves in a dead world, one without purpose, direction, meaning, or orientation. Indeed, for orientation you need a viewpoint (or a point of orientation). To orient yourself in time, you must occupy a position in time, you must anchor yourself in a here-and-now perspective. You need a "time of the soul," as Ricoeur calls it, from which you can set a goal and see where you're going. The static view of time has no now, no present. Ricoeur compares Aristotle's static time with Augustine's dynamic time and says (1988, 18), "What prevents it [i.e., deriving the time of the soul from the time of the world] is quite simply the conceptually unbridgeable gap between the notion of the 'instant' in Aristotle's sense and that of the 'present' as it is understood by Augustine."

In other words, in the static view there are many "measurable moments," but there is no room for "this" moment, the anchor of the present. The static view is limited to events that are connected to each other by means of temporal relations. There is no present that we can experience, in which we *are*, and from which we could differentiate between future, present, and past. With the static view, time is looked at but not lived in. In the static view, time doesn't move, nor is there any real difference between the future and the past tense. Time is an immobile timeline or time path, and it's impossible to imagine any car ever riding on it. Indeed, where on the timeline should the car be placed? At each moment the car is somewhere else, and in that sense you cannot say anything about the car without introducing a "metatime," and thereby a vicious time circle. Yet such a "car" is necessary; how else can two moments "ever" be grasped, with a period in between, if they are not "gathered together" in the car? Time requires an observer who is able to grasp two nonsimultaneous "nows" simultaneously.

3.1.2 Moving Time: Husserl I

The dynamic or subjective view of time speaks of experienced time, lived time, the time of the soul, inner time, and so forth. Dynamic time is based on the "here and now," and "the experience of" and "in the current moment." In this view, the only time that really exists is the present. We are living today, at *this* hour and in *this* minute and second. Everything we assert about other times pertains to mere models that are grounded in our current awareness. We live NOW, and it is within this present moment that we can have memories of a vague past and expectations of an uncertain future. In this view, past, present, and future each has a different status. The present is not a static fact or "given moment" but a fluid, dynamic reality. It's like a ship sailing on the river of events. The events flow toward us from a not-yet-existing, undetermined future, we meet them in a flash of actual presence, and we immediately leave them behind us in the bygone, no-longer-existing, and unchanging past.

In this vision, there is an essential difference between past and future that is consistent with our normal experience. We are in the present, in the here and now. In fact, we are "always" here and now. When we think about it, there is really nothing else beyond the horizon of the pure being-in-the-present. Someday we'll be in the future, but we'll never again be in the past. We once were in the past, but we have yet to be in the future. If we reflect on these last statements, we realize that, ultimately, the dynamic view is equally untenable: the difference between past and future can only be explained in terms of words (and verbal conjugations) that already presume

a familiarity with that difference. Husserl (1991) tried to base his views of time on this dynamic experience of time, which results in a model that is insightful for both ordinary and mad time experiences.

For Husserl, the present is a continuum with an internal structure. Perception in this present is not like a point on a timeline; rather, it encompasses or "reaches out to" a temporal field filled with phantasms and sensations. Sensations are experiences that happen right now, while phantasms refer to the immediate past and future within this temporal field of the present. According to Husserl, the present always contains a residue of the "fresh" past and an expectation of the immediate future. The length of this fresh past varies. If you concentrate on a single note in a melody, you "forget" the melody; if you concentrate on the melody, then the larger whole of, say, the symphony is not in the temporal field; and so forth. For Husserl (1991, 47), a point-like present is an ideal limit that can never be completely attained.

So the temporal field of the present consists of a portion of *primary* memory, or "retention," and primary expectation, or "protention," which are separated by an ideal abstraction—"perception" or "impression." An important aspect of Husserl's model is that time-consciousness demands that retention, impression, and protention form a coherent whole, a continuum of time. Time-consciousness can also transform unreal and mutually incoherent phantasms and sensations into a continuum of time that is called "real."

Husserl speaks of something he calls *secondary* memory as well. This, too, is a form of fantasy consciousness, but it does not have to be integrated into a coherent present in a temporal field; rather, it is seen as "absent presence," by which fewer demands are placed on coherence with the present. Indeed, here there is no need for a flowing transition between a memory and an observation. Whether a secondary memory is an imagined fantasy or a reference to something that "really" happened is a subject for reflection and discussion. This difference between the given coherent presence of the temporal field and the reflectable representation of the secondary memory will later be called the difference between the prereflective and the reflective consciousness by the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty and other phenomenologists and psychologists.

What "counts" as memory, or even as fantasy, about a distant past is subject to reflection and therefore to outside influences. But what counts as a "coherent temporal field" precedes reflection and representation. Husserl scholar Dan Zahavi (2002, 83) writes, "Whereas the so-called retentional modification [primary memory, WK] is a passive process which takes place without our active contribution, a recollection [secondary memory] is an act which we can initiate ourselves." So a disturbed—or

inappropriate—incoherent experience of the temporal field, the present, would seem to have had its origin in the physical and to have withdrawn from our influence. An "incorrect" representation of the distant past, however, has a stronger mental, linguistic, representative dimension, so it *can* be influenced by the will.

What makes the matter all the more complex is that the subjective experience of that three-part present also has its own temporal character, according to Husserl. It concerns a temporal field, but it is also "in time." The subjective experience of time therefore rests in, or is made possible by, an "absolute time-consciousness," or a stream. This stream itself is not changeable, but it is assumed because of the subjective experience of time. It is the subjective experience of time without anything being experienced; it is the possibility of that experience itself. For Husserl, the stream is that within which the one doing the experiencing and the experience itself are still one. There is little that can be said about this one; something remains that is insoluble and changeable, something that flows.³ For Husserl, the basis of time is not solid ground, not a quantifiable expanse, but a flowing. The big problem with this view is that the more deeply we analyze or delve into the experience and consciousness of and in the present, the more concepts we must borrow from the static view of time. Terms such as "flowing," "springing from," and "source" are all concepts and metaphors borrowed from the "objective outside world."

The order of objective static time, according to Husserl, can be traced to the coherence in the subjectively determined temporal fields. That is to say, the static view is secondary to the dynamic view. Both a remembered temporal field (the memory of a melody heard yesterday) and a present temporal field (a melody being heard now) must be coherent. By means of this coherence or continuity requirement, Husserl hopes to substantiate the "historical a priori." In making this attempt, however, he seems to be smuggling in even more elements from objective, static time. The five principles of historical a priori, which I will briefly criticize here, are the following, according to Husserl (1991, 10):

1) The fixed temporal order is a two-dimensional infinite series.

Whenever I have two mutually exclusive theories about a period of time, this a priori principle tells me I should regard one of them as memory and the other as "fantasy." This does not follow from the coherence or continuity requirement. The existence of two or more timelines that converge in the present is also possible in principle. It all depends on exactly how a continuum or coherency is defined.

2) Two different times can never be simultaneous.

Whether this is so depends on the status of the consciousness or the subject. It's true that when there is only one subject, there can be only one temporal field. But when the subject is a real living subject in the midst of other subjects, "multiple times" are possible—at least they aren't logically excluded. It is conceivable that each subject constitutes his own time and that there is no common, objective time. Each has his own "stream."

- 3) Their relation [of these two times] is a non-reciprocal one.
- 4) Transitivity obtains.
- 5) To every time an earlier time and a later time belong.

Principles 3 through 5 all have to do with the difference between protention and retention, and they insist that a fantasy or recollection in the present can be represented only in terms of the same linear structure as that of primary temporal subjectivity. It is unclear to me why Husserl uses the term "a priori laws" and not, for example, "strong common-sense intuitions."

Husserl's theory runs into major problems, as all subjective time theories ultimately do: when we make a distinction between past and future, what exactly is being distinguished? How can this distinction be made without already assuming it? Are we not bound to assume an independently given time path (static time), part of which is located before us and part after us? According to Husserl's a priori laws, this path can consist of neither a road with side roads branching off of it nor a circular road. The limited view from the car on the road, however, makes this incomprehensible. The notion of coherence or continuum cannot be found in the car either. A purely dynamic view, without elements from the static view, is impossible.

Husserl's study of the sources of time can provoke even more astonishment or perplexity with regard to time, for Husserl himself or for the reader of his work.⁵ In 8.3, I will show you how pondering the writings of Husserl can send you—and me, too, as a reader of Husserl—into a spiral of astonishment and a whirlpool of madness.

3.1.3 Human Time: Ricoeur

I have now discussed the two philosophical views and argued that, while they can't live together, neither can they live apart. Lurking behind time is a paradox that cannot be resolved but can at least be made livable. My theory of mad time is that psychotics deal with this paradox differently than "normal people" do. The latter articulate, sublimate, or cover the paradox by means of shared stories, symbolic forms, or habits that together can be regarded as a third form of time: "human time."

"Human time" is made possible by the narrative character of language and the stories in language that people share with each other. Such stories, such "narratives," have to do with the history of the world, with one's own family history, or with one's personal past, and they provide hints as to what a successful life is, what goals and actions are worth emulating, and how to think, feel, and speak in a meaningful way. They allow for a shared vision of the world and for the existence of consciously shared time.

It is in stories that the mysterious status of the "past" as "history" is grasped and explained, and a distinction is made between fiction in imaginary time and histories that really happened and occupy a place on the calendar. According to Ricoeur, the calendar is one of the most important means by which "human time" makes the connection between inner and outer (dynamic and static) time. Thanks to the calendar, my experience of time is linked to that of my contemporaries and is related to the commonly accepted sequence of history. Ricoeur (1988, 105) has this to say about the human imposition of calendar time: "The time of the calendar is the first bridge constructed by historical practice between lived time and universal time [dynamic and static time, WK]. It is a creation that does not stem exclusively from either of these perspectives on time. Even though it may participate in one or the other of them, its institution constitutes the invention of a third form of time." Thanks to the calendar, there is a historical time, a real past, distinct from fictional, unreal time and fantasy. Preceding this division into fact and fiction is "mythic time," says Ricoeur, which plays a role in the collapse of the distinction between fact and fiction in madness (see chapter 15).

In addition to consciously told stories, there are also habits and commonly accepted practices that are essential to the way humans (not mad ones) deal with time. Thanks to habits, the contrast between static and dynamic time is not so much articulated as it is made livable. Because of habits, whenever we go shopping, for example, we do it according to a fixed pattern, a fixed rhythm, and for a certain length of time. We trust in a knowledge that is half-conscious and half-automatic, and as a result we can manage quite well in life. We don't have to analyze the operation of the clock or wonder whether we can be sure that "Monday really does follow Sunday" every time we go out shopping. A great deal of what happens in time is automatic, according to common sense or habit. The normal human way of relating to time implies a trust in automatically accepting things that are not "true" or for which there is no logical proof. Although every such accepted thing can, in itself, be doubted, together they constitute the fabric of our social and personal lives, which may be made more

explicit in narratives. They are the shared background that makes it possible to live in time without slipping into madness. This background is not so much a collection of statements of knowledge as it is a practice of habits, modes of behavior, and attitudes that together form the substructure, or the framework itself, within which disagreement and knowledge about time can be understood.

Fragment III: Bar Time

After having seen "Neon Hotel" written in the sky, I take a brief pause from the turbulent events on the street. I walk into a familiar bar, but because of my Insight, I see it with completely different eyes. It's a students' bar, and only now do I really understand what that means. The student phase is a difficult period in a person's life. Students themselves don't yet have the Insight, but they do have the opportunity to lose their way. So they have to be closely guided by those who have the Insight already. In order to look after the students of the City, an extensive and low-key network of people with Insight has been set up. The barkeeper is one of them, and a number of somewhat older customers have stationed themselves in the bar to keep an eye on the students. They're especially concerned about disorderly conduct. The City is a place of peace, where people have to be guarded against any agitation that might give rise to turbulence, conflict, and fighting. Recently there have been many reports in the media of war, violence, and death, and of the virus of hatred, which is a constant threat to the City. As soon as disturbances are detected, they must be neutralized without delay. We—people with Insight—do that by intervening from a level that is higher than the parameters of the general mood. The young students in the bar chatter innocently about this and that, and we elders step in if things threaten to get out of hand. We sit there at the bar, unobtrusive, apparently lonely, drinking our drinks, when actually we're keeping order at a higher level and making adjustments to the general climate by means of subtle, seemingly meaningless activities. For example, we hear a foolish student utter a stupid succession of words that are either semantically asymmetrical or carry dangerously agitated patterns of intonation. These words are potentially disruptive and could easily upset the atmosphere in the bar. So we step in and "water down" the staccato remarks by muttering and humming under our breath, or we offer semantic counterbalance by straightening out the asymmetrical word choices with opposing language. Our careful, well-placed injections of sound and antisound serve to subdue the hate-filled effect of the din and mood filling the air. We would far prefer, if possible, to restructure the perspectives and orientations of the matrix in order to create an atmosphere of general well-being.

I'm hard at work here on my bar stool, trying to keep everything under control. Quite a few of my associates are making the rounds, and every now and then they signal me that everything is running well and that the students can be assured of a pleasant, peaceful evening. A man with a tanned face walks past me. The scars on his face are something he acquired during the war with the Germans. Berlin is one of the cities with the most contemplative underground transition spaces. Those are the spaces where you're transformed from an idiot into someone with Insight. "Hey, Charlie," I say to him, subtly referring to Checkpoint Charlie as the place where you can rotate, circulate, and invert. He glances at me in silence but with a look of understanding. I see an old acquaintance over at the slot machine. His face hasn't changed at all since I last saw him, and he's still wearing the same Goth bat cape and black makeup. He was a regular at a certain "underground" bar twenty years ago, just like me, and ended up doing penance for his aggressive speeches and glorification of violence, just like me. Like all the Insightful Ones, he was booted out of history at a certain point, and his only goal now, here on earth, is to watch over the whole operation, to keep it going, and to get it ready for future generations. When the atmosphere and conversational level get too steamy, it's his job to interpellate, pay his fine by chucking coins into the one-armed bandit and, in this way, to keep the wheel spinning. Behind me on the left are two boys, talking together. One of them is me, but a twenty-year younger version. It's September again, endlessly September, and a new academic year with new opportunities has begun. Everything is cyclic. As time passes, the masks have to come off and new ones get put on. It's one long costume party. Except you don't know that at first. And I see the student in all his foolishness, talking with the others, full of expectation about what life will bring and not yet knowing that there is no progress and that everything keeps recurring. Every day, every year, all over again. Once you realize that, you're out; you fall through the hole in the center of the circle. You see the never-ending repetition, and everything becomes a game. It's like musical chairs; the only question is who's left when the gong sounds. The last one has to stay and pick up the pieces. After the bar empties out, he sweeps up the glass with his bare hands. Cuts and sacrifice. On the outside, it's a money-and-gift system, on the inside a blood-and-pay system. I leave without waiting for the final battle.

Once outside, I start walking along the canal. For a long time, I thought you could tell the difference. Here were the Dutch people and there were the Americans. Here you had the bartenders and there the police officers. Here the sixties and there the Middle Ages. Now I know that all those kinds of distinctions are part of Philosophy 101. Just as Aristotle is the

introduction to Plato. It was a test and nothing but a test. Then suddenly it's over. The gate pops open, you can go in, and they come out. And everything gets mixed up. I hear people speaking English while they're making calls on their cell phone—and in the midst of all these medieval buildings! I used to think the earth pretty much ended at two hundred meters above the Normal Amsterdam Water Level, but now orbiting satellites are pulling everything away from the center. Chuckling, I continue on my way, happy that I still have the nerve just to trust in so-called gravity. Where did we come from, anyway? Where was the beginning? What was the entrance? Everything seems like an exit, an exit with no return. Where's the door, the thread that holds it all together? I hear lots of silly students speaking Dutch with other languages mixed in, along with other people and human freaks. At the end of a side street, a car speeds up. I have to be careful I don't take it too lightly. That causes suspicion. There's always a danger of real intruders (spies!) coming in. The important thing is to keep an eye on the ground and the DNA. Mutations must be reported. Let's go home—that's where it's safest. I follow the canal. The worn-down tracks of millions of other feet form the substratum on which I can walk. And even if the sun never comes up again, the City will always be here, and we will keep on going.

3.2 Mad Crystal Time

Madmen sometimes lose track of what day it is. They do experience "now," dynamic time. They also understand the historic order, static time. But they cannot make a connection between the two. They no longer know what "human time" is, and they end up in the extremes of deadlocked time and moving, unsettled time. The calendar and the clock can no longer be taken for granted or applied to anything. Merleau-Ponty writes this about one particular schizophrenic in *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012, 295): "Another patient can no longer 'understand' the clock, that is, first the passing of the hands from one position to another and above all the connection of the movement with the thrust of the mechanism or the 'workings' of the clock." It's madness, but it does have a lot in common with philosophy when it is consistently implemented. Matthew Broome presents this train of thought, but in a different way, in his discussion of McTaggart and psychoses.

John M. E. McTaggart was the author of the famous article "The Unreality of Time," published in 1908, which made him the founder of the present-day analytic philosophy of time. He argues that reflecting on time leads to an insoluble contradiction between two views, just as I expounded above.

According to McTaggart, time therefore does not exist. In a more recent article, "Suffering and Eternal Recurrence of the Same" (2005), Broome, in turn, argues that by taking McTaggart seriously, you would end up in the same condition as that of a psychotic. This is also my line of reasoning in this chapter. Broome (2005, 191) writes, "McTaggart notoriously claimed that time was unreal and that nothing that exists can have the property of being in time. ... Presumably McTaggart did not act on his unusual belief, or else kept it to the philosophy study; however, some of our patients do. ... Such patients may describe a determinate, static almost crystalline structure of time where there is no change. Others may state that they have no date of birth, have never been born, and will always 'be.' Such an existence is almost divine-eternal and unchanging, 'pure being.' ... This 'McTaggart's syndrome' can radically affect a patient's rationality."

According to Broome, the madman is someone who experiences McTaggart's idea in actual practice, who reflects on it and applies it in his daily life. The real concerns of the psychotic are the theoretical ponderings of the philosopher, which is all the more reason to investigate the mad experience of time in this light. Unfortunately, Broome follows this up with "... such patients are almost impossible to interview. The very process of undertaking a psychiatric assessment, of eliciting a history, is rendered problematic. The experience is so very alien to the interviewer that shared systems of belief are inaccessible or simply not present. ... The proposition that has most concerned twentieth-century analytic philosophy would only be believed by someone, McTaggart aside, with a very severe, typically depressive psychosis. An illness that included such bizarre beliefs would likely render communication with the patient, and phenomenological description of their symptoms, almost impossible."

Unlike Broome, I have decided to attempt a description of the most extreme forms of mad time. In other words, what does happen when McTaggart is taken seriously? I will discuss mad time, or *crystal time*, with its extreme polarizations and bizarre mixtures of permanence and mobility, in terms of space, eternity, and number.

3.2.1 Spaciousness

In her autobiography, Fiona Jong (2003, 69) writes, "In my psychosis I live in two worlds, the real world and an unreal world. This is very difficult, because I live more in the unreal world, where everything is immobile. Time seems to be standing still. And the days of the week don't move, either. I don't even know what day it is anymore, or what time it is." The static experience of time is what stands out here: time is no longer variable

or fluid, but stationary. "Human time" has disappeared, for Jong no longer knows "what day it is," no longer knows how to deal with the paradox of time. Jong can no longer relate the inner passage of time to the outer cosmic rhythms of time. The calendar doesn't work anymore. Outer time is frozen and seems to have come to a halt.

This stopping of time has a "spacializing" or "space-creating" effect, as Minkowski (1933) called it. In madness, events take place only in space. The temporariness of events is experienced as "something spatial." Time is "vast" and "comprehensive," just as space and the things in space are. Since we can change the location of things in space, the madman believes we should also be able to manipulate their "location" in time. You can move through both space and time. Spacializing has also been reported by people under the influence of LSD. With regard to madness, spaciousness or spacializing has three relevant characteristics: fragmentation, extensiveness, and reversibility.

3.2.1.1 Fragmentation Because there is no "human time" in madness by which dynamic and static time are connected, the static order of time is in danger of disintegrating. The static time axis is divided by means of moments. Moments cut time into pieces; they cause natural time to become fragmented. Each moment is like a cutting edge between a past period and a coming period. In the purely static view, calendar "dates" degenerate into a loose collection of temporal elements, without any inherent coherence or lived continuity. Quoting Blankenburg again (1971, 88, 92), in reference to a patient: "She clearly was suffering from a lack of continuity going back in time, but of a special sort. It was not about the relationship to an interval of time that could be objectively grasped—so not a defective memory—yet her relationship to the past had changed profoundly." (Also compare section 1.2.2.4). The dynamic continuous stream no longer makes a single unit of the separate elements of time. There is no longer a calendar by which events can be organized and connected.

In order to form a unit consisting of more than "loose sand," moments would have to reach forward and backward in time—that is, to other moments. This is possible only if the moment itself already refers to the future and the past.¹⁰ In madness, however, past and future are not experienced as belonging to—or as aspects of—the present. This discontinuity creates fragmentation, and such fragmentation can affect the whole sense of the reality of time. (Compare the quote from Brett in section 1.2.2.4).

3.2.1.2 Extensiveness When the various moments in time disconnect themselves from each other and are no longer organized in terms of time, they end up being "adjacent" in a certain sense. One event or time period

is no longer connected to another event or period; rather, the two stand side by side. Sass (1992, 155) describes an experiment with schizophrenic patients in which they were asked to construct a story from a series of pictures: "One is given a sense neither of understandable human intentions nor of deterministic events that might lend causal structure to the discourse by linking together past, present, and future. The story has a quality one might call presentism or, equally well, timelessness. Actually, it is in a sense more spatial than temporal." Instead of making up a human story with a dynamically driven narrative, the patients assembled scraps of observations and associations, as if everything were present at the same time in a quasireality. Time "no longer extends itself" (in the temporal sense) back to the past but acquires a spatial extensiveness.

The mad world is spatial and filled with spatial objects instead of temporal actions. Sass (1992, 156) writes, "It has been found that schizophrenics tend to use adverbs of a spatial type to replace those of a chronological type ('where' may replace 'when,' for example) and to speak in ways that emphasize the static and deemphasize the dynamic and emotional aspects of the world, thereby evoking a universe more dominated by objects than by processes or actions." Space is filled with time, and if you remember something, you have the feeling that you are literally looking at it, searching in a temporal space. One psychotic acquaintance of mine once said, "I can look through time," when she noticed how vivid a certain memory was. In my book Alone (Alleen, Kusters et al., 2007) I wrote this just before finding myself once again in the "waking dream": "It's different in the waking dream of madness: there's a moment when the magpie drops down, there's a moment when the magpie sits in the grass, and there's a moment when the magpie jumps onto the chair. All three of these moments are equally real and eternal. They stand side by side, frozen. The magpie does not fly in time but stands still, like Zeno's arrow. A collection of moments placed side by side, with no transition between them. Time stands still; the clock encompasses all times." The mad clock encompasses all times, but it no longer ticks.

3.2.1.3 Reversibility If time is "like space," you should be able to move back and forth through time just as you can walk back and forth through space. And in the mad world, that possibility does indeed exist. As Sam Gerrits writes (in Kusters et al., 2007, 27), "On the blackboard I draw three axes, with arrows to indicate how they have to change in orientation and length, and a clock with two hands to indicate that time can also run backward. … [Then] I stare for a long time at the clock, wrestling with the stubborn

time-axis. Time enters my body by way of my eyes. ... Time stands still. I find myself in the clockwork of Chronos himself" (cf. J. W. Perry 1974¹¹).

One of Sass's patients (1992, 160) says, "I look for immobility. I tend toward repose and immobilization. I also have in me a tendency to immobilize life around me. ... Stone is immobile. The earth, on the contrary, moves; it doesn't inspire any confidence in me. I attach importance only to solidity. A train passes by an embankment; the train does not exist for me; I wish only to construct the embankment. The past is the precipice. The future is the mountain. Thus I conceived of the idea of putting a buffer day between the past and the future. Throughout this day I will try to do nothing at all. I will go for forty-eight hours without urinating. I will try to revive my impressions of fifteen years ago, to make time flow backward, to die with the same impression with which I was born, to make circular movements so as to not move too far away from the base in order not to be uprooted. This is what I wish."

Time here is only what the clock reports; the dynamic flow of time no longer counts. The clock and the calendar no longer have any meaning in common human time, and they are no longer essentially different from, say, chemistry's periodic table of the elements. They show a relationship between numbers and dates, but they have little else to do with the inner experience of time. They have become objects amidst other objects in a static spatial world. And as soon as something becomes an object it can be manipulated and reversed. So if the hands of the clock are turned back (if the psychotic turns them, for example), there's no reason why time can't be made to go in the other direction.

Such mad crystal time is what the mad world looks like. In the landscape of madness, time lies open and exposed. The psychotic can direct time and the way time is structured, and he can adjust and change his observations. He controls the crystals of space and time. He can evoke prehistoric time, for example, or even experience it by entering a section of virgin forest, or he can explore the future by walking into a computer store. Past, present, and future are three adjacent domains that can be entered. Yet he does not control every world or possibility; there are still stubborn irreversibilities remaining.

Back when I wrote *Pure Madness (Puur waanzin,* Kusters 2004), I said, "Besides the reversible processes there are also irreversible ones. When a glass falls on the floor and shatters, it's difficult to imagine the process taking place in reverse order; it's rare for shards of glass to join together and rise up to become an intact glass on the edge of the table. In such processes

it's obvious that time has only one possible direction. In psychotic observations, these irreversible processes assume a separate status. It's as if reality has said that the game of reversibility is over. It may also seem as if an 'exit' to a different reality has been found. For the psychotic, a glass that falls, food that is being digested, and paper that is being burned are all anomalies in an otherwise reversible world. They're intruders in reversible, timeless existence."

Irreversible events can serve as signals that "something really irrevocable" has happened. Time in the mad world resembles the space of a computer game. Everything can be manipulated and repeated; everything is spatial. Irreversible things are like promotions to the next level.

3.2.2 Eternity

We have already come across terms such as "infinity" and "timelessness." Often these terms have to do with eternal life, as shown in this quote from one of Conrad's patients (1958, 80): "I will always be as old as I am now. I have eternal life, while others are getting younger and younger instead of older and older. ... I will always be on earth, I will never die, the whole world knows me ... I have been shot and killed many times, but it never makes any difference. If a train were to ride over me I would remain the same, just as I am now. Yesterday I was shot through the chest, and I died. ... The whole world is looking for me, I am Christ and they can do whatever they want to with me."

Now it's time to look more deeply into the eternity of the crystal, which we will do under three headings: eternity as endlessly continuous time, eternity as the eternal present, and eternity as the replacement of imperfect human time with perfect eternity.

3.2.2.1 Eternal waiting The simplest of these three to understand is eternity as eternal waiting. An hour can take a long time, a month and a year even longer, and if you keep expanding this in your mind, you arrive at the idea of eternal duration. This notion of eternity is an extension or expansion of the dynamic experience of time on an endlessly long, static timeline. Such a notion could be called static eternity, since it has to do with a spatial representation of time; just as you can imagine more space behind the horizon—invisible but imaginable—so you can conceive of ever distant times beyond the horizon of the present, extending the backward gaze into the past and the forward gaze into the future.

This form of eternity plays a role in Christianity (albeit a crude interpretation of Christianity). Human existence, with its suffering, limitations, and finiteness, is enhanced and continued in an "eternal life," one free

from suffering, in the "hereafter." Such an idea of eternity can offer hope for a longer life or a delivery from life, but it can just as easily increase your suffering under the negative aspects of time. Indeed, time as we experience it here and now comes to a halt when placed against the background of endless duration. Time never advances and never makes headway, since there's always an endless amount of time in the distance. Moreover, if you come to realize that time stretches on endlessly, then everything shrinks in significance; one moment is no different from any other in terms of its futility. And if time is eternal, negative moments may recur as well. Finally, if time stretches endlessly in two directions, then the differences between past and future are annulled, and all our present aspirations seem pointless.

Such somber thoughts of eternity are a feature of psychoses in which ordinary human dealings with time have disappeared. Piet Kuiper (1988, 111) writes the following about his own depressive psychosis: "Four and a half more hours before we have to go to bed. I sat in a corner and looked at the clock, and after a while I looked at it again. Two and a half minutes had passed, while I had estimated an hour." This painful experience had nothing to do with an incorrect assessment of the speed of time. If that were true, Kuiper could also have been happy that he "had more time than he had estimated."

This, too, seems to be more than a matter of ordinary boredom or passing the time in the dentist's waiting room. Time itself seems to have an oppressive effect. Kuiper continues, "The experience of time standing still was one of the most agonizing symptoms of my illness." Time stands still because, in the notion of eternal duration, nothing matters anymore. Time does seem to pass when he looks at the clock. He is aware of static, physical time, but he's no longer aware of the human "protective layer" of narratives in which something meaningful happens. All he experiences is a nonevent, an eternally static smile of death. For what can happen if everything is insignificant, dissolved into the great endless maw of time? Others who have suffered from this eternal duration have put it this way (in Michael Theunissen 1991, 49 ff.): "I cannot stop thinking about the fact that time is passing ... a boring, sprawling time without end ... now I am talking, that lasts for so many minutes, then I do this, then that, and all that takes sixty years, then I die, then others come along who live about as long as I did, eating and sleeping just like me, and then even more come along, and so it goes, on and on, meaningless, thousands of years."

3.2.2.2 The eternal present In a psychotic experience of time, the intense pondering of the dynamic view can also lead to obsessive brooding, to an immortalized crystal. Those of the dynamic view who recognize only

the here and now as "real" reality and deny all reality from the past and the future find themselves in another kind of eternity altogether. This eternal present is also the ideal of many mystical or religious quests (see part II), but it's the madmen who demonstrate what such a life-in-the-present may also imply in practice.

The logic here runs as follows: If there is no longer a static order but only a collection of "data" in space, a here and now that is "present" for all eternity, then there is no absence; that is, no absent past or future. The consciousness of time also includes the idea of eternity in the present, owing to the idea of infinity. Instead of static time stretching out forever in linear fashion, there is an endlessly vast and inclusive inner time. This eternity is that of the subject of consciousness, which enfolds all of time within itself. Whenever you think about other times, if you are mainly aware that all those times are being thought *now* by yourself, then the line of eternity that you imagine to be horizontal becomes instead vertical (or perhaps no more than a dot). The absence of the absent is less important than the fact that that absence can be thought about from the present.¹²

In such conceptions of time and eternity, only what is present is real, and what is absent does not exist. Everything that ever was and ever shall be is already here, in a nutshell, before you. When this fact, so difficult to refute, is subjected to the most extreme reflection, it can lead to ecstatic, psychosis-like experiences and utterances. Time then comes to a halt, a beautiful crystal. Theunissen (1991, 49 ff.) states, "I felt a horrifying pain in my head, and then time stood still ... after that, time continued on as before ... but this stationary time was like a portal. ... I will always bear that happiness ... infinity itself saved me ... I want to bear that happiness forever and forever." 13

With this eternal present, whatever is absent—the past, for example—is imagined as being present. Consequently, what happens in practical situations of madness is that the things that are normally regarded as accomplished (absent)—the events of the past—are easily manipulated. The past is an aspect of the present and can therefore be transformed into the present. This is consistent with the idea of time as "reversible."

But if time is experienced as standing still in an eternal now, and both past and future are aspects of the present, can we even talk about time at all? In everyday linguistic usage, the present differs from the future and the past, and these two also differ essentially from each other. If this is not what happens in any given experience, then what does it actually mean when someone claims to be living in an eternal present? And to what extent can you speak of the present if there is neither a past nor a future?

3.2.2.3 Eternal time: Plotinus The third notion of eternity sees it as the abstract form of ordinary time. It is a form of motionless time, without duration, change, or extension, and it is an aspect of the order of reality. Plotinus works this out in great detail. Plotinian eternity is not that of an ecstatically eternal present, let alone an endlessly extending duration; rather, it is of a well thought-out intellectual reach for "the One." Philosophical contemplation, the way of the intellect, is the method by which the highest insight in this eternity is attained. In addition to this contemplation, Plotinus had mystical experiences that were of great importance to the architecture of his philosophy. There he experienced a kind of "contact with the higher things," and he "beheld" eternity.

According to Plotinus, eternity is the model for earthly time. With the correct insight you can "see" that only eternity is real, while earthly time has but a shadow existence. Plotinian eternity is "alive," not in the sense of a perishable living organism on earth but as "eternally-in-life" and perfect. There is no deficiency there, and no change or longing to correct a deficiency. It is a realm that we can participate in from our earthly time via the soul and intellectual contemplation. Eternity is the ultimate good, and realization of this fact can provide consolation.

Intellectual contemplation of this eternity takes place in earthly time, however, and is carried out by an earthly soul in the present moment. But what, then, is the difference between this and the "eternal present" of the previous section? Perhaps it is this: that in the eternal present, the distinction between eternity and earthly time is completely eliminated. The eternal present is a total experience, the deep reflection and obsessive pondering of both body and spirit, while the eternity of Plotinus is not attained by means of physical practices but by mental reflection alone. In this latter eternity, one can dwell on intellectual longings while at the same time satisfying the earthly desire for material needs. In the total eternal present described in the previous section, there are no more distinctions; everything has become one. But that One is clouded and murky. In the "eternal time" of Plotinus, on the other hand, the head hovers in the clouds, but the feet remain on the ground (also see Guitton 1933).

There have been many such references to an eternity that is heavenly and perfect but in which people "can function well—or even better" in earthly time, not only in Plotinus but also in the works of mystics such as the medieval German Meister Eckhart. As Eckhart writes (cited in Reiner Schürmann 1978, 55): "There is a higher part of the mind which keeps itself above time, and which ignores time as well as the body. All that happened a thousand years ago, the day of a thousand years ago, is no more remote

in eternity than the moment in which I stand right now; again, the day which will come a thousand years from now, or in as many years as you can count, is no more distant in eternity than this very moment in which I stand presently."

The difference between the eternal present and eternal time could be used as a basis on which to distinguish between successful ecstatic experiences of eternity and less successful psychotic experiences of eternity. Both experiences involve participation in eternity, but one is uncontrolled, too much and too far, while the other is safely contained. In many cases, however, making this distinction is not a simple matter, so that whether we call something a mystical-philosophical description of eternity or a mad expression of perplexed, obscure eternity seems arbitrary. As Merleau-Ponty writes (2012, 295), citing a schizophrenic, "... now I live on in eternity. ... The branches on the trees sway, and others move about in the room, but for me time does not pass by ..." But on the basis of the wording alone, we don't know what to call it: ecstatic or psychotic, mystical or mad, successful or unsuccessful?

3.2.3 Numbers

The concept of time is closely related to the concept of the number. Aristotle already noted that "time is just this: number of motion," and later, in Kant, the foundations of mathematics are linked to the human experience of time. The ability to count is related to the capacity to experience time, to relate multiple moments to each other, and to compare long and short durations of time. In addition, the management of (human) time is expressed with the help of numbers, such as those on the calendar and the clock.

Numbers, and the ability to calculate, give us something to hold onto in a chaotic, changing world, not only where time is concerned but in other domains as well. Numbers possess a different "reality" than trees, colors, or people. For many people, the world of numbers is closer to the truth than that of other phenomena. Numbers are solid, stable, and inescapably real, yet they are abstract at the same time. You can "count on numbers," literally and figuratively.

So it's not surprising that numbers play a special role in madness, too. Human knowledge and thought are uncertain and fleeting, and in situations of madness, they are always moving and changing, but the stability of numbers remains as solid as a rock. Even when the psychotic doubts everything else, he always has the certainty that 1+1=2. One of Stanghellini's patients (2004, 5) says, "Everyone's talking to each other and I can't figure

out the mechanism. Is it really a secret? Are the others all talking in code? One day the day will come and we'll see that it's all quite mathematical ..." Mad crystal numbers can be classified according to three themes, analogous to that of mad time: a static view of the metric number (harmony), an algebraic numerical dynamic (rhythm), and a rudimentary "expansion" of the combination of these two (dissonance).

3.2.3.1 Data harmony In madness, the calendar no longer works as an intermediary between inner and outer time; instead, it breaks down into fragmented dates and separate moments. The numbers on the calendar become objective numbers rather than moments in a consecutive movement of figures. The year 1945 comes after 1944, not because 1945 dynamically "follows" or "grows out of" 1944, but only because the numbers 1944 and 1945 relate to each other in a consecutive way.

Although numbers cease to automatically issue from one another, they are still the means by which people in the mad world connect different things. Numbers no longer express a relationship, however; they *are* the relationship itself. If a madman reads that it's three degrees warmer than it was the previous day, for example, he doesn't see this "three" as an expression or measure of a rise in temperature between yesterday and today. Rather, the number three itself is the connection between two given facts. Once again, as Aristotle wrote in the *Physics* (see section 3.1.1): "Number, we must note, is used in two ways—both of what is counted or the countable and also of that with which we count. Time, then, is what is counted, not that with which we count: these are different kinds of things." In madness, this is no longer clear: time becomes a number.

When time becomes a collection of numbers, it is in a certain sense "closer by." That is to say, time is vague and intangible, but numbers are exact, concrete, and comprehensible. In madness, time can become so concrete that it literally comes within the psychotic's reach. You can write timenumbers down, use them in calculations, or change them, and in this way time can be manipulated. By tinkering with numbers, the madman can also determine events in the future—or at least predict them. Madmen hope that by juggling numbers they can once again connect their inner world with the outer world. They embark on a kind of private Kabbalistic exercise. In *Pure Madness* (Kusters 2004), I wrote, "The psychotic approaches the calendar just as he approaches other figures. When the psychotic sees a CD costing €19.45, there is for him a demonstrable connection between that CD and the Second World War." In this way, important events from the past are linked to a number on which new experiences in the present can

be forged. These numbers could be years, such as 1940, 1945, 1492, or 2001, but they could also be dates, like September 11, or personal numbers, such as the madman's birth year, birth date, house number, or PIN. The structure of the calendar, which normally is the matrix of history, is replaced in the mad world by a magical-Kabbalistic structure (also see part IV).

A nice example of this is given by Egmont (in De Waard 2007, 209): "I was standing on a street, leaning against a building, and I turned around and looked at the parked cars on the other side of the street. There I saw a license plate with three ones on it. Well, that's just an ordinary number, 111, in Van der Helst Street or whatever, so it's also nothing, really. But for me at that moment it was 3 times 1, the number 3 and the number 1. At that moment you have answers for everything, and for me it was clear that it was absolutely the last day. There were lots of hallucinatory things happening as well: I saw clouds gather together all at once above me, for example, and I heard thunder. I also rang people's doorbells, even in the middle of the night, to warn them."

This mad way of dealing with the number of the time, the "o'clock," is "static" or "spatializing." Time becomes a physical clock, an object in space. The dynamic, rhythmic number of the clock becomes a static, geometric number. The different times are spread out, here and now, within the measurable space. Counting takes place in the space of time. One of Stanghellini's patients (2004, 4) says, "I often happen to *count*. Counting means I trace the outline of things with my gaze. For example, a dog has five sides. A tree has seven. It started off as a voluntary action, a sort of game. But then it got out of hand, and sometimes I can't stop myself. We created everybody in a secret lab."

3.2.3.2 Basic rhythm While the crystal game, with its static spatial number, plays a role in the world of madness, the rhythmic-dynamic number sometimes does too. In the dynamic view of time, the present is "variable"—that is, it varies from moment to moment—and at the same time, it is a unity of one single moment. This unity is a contraction of two moments, past and future, into one moment, the present. The paradoxical variability of dynamic time, the "one in two" and "two in one," can be characterized by the notion of rhythm. In rhythm, you hear not only the presence of a tone and the absence of the same tone, but you also hear the joint presence and absence of the tone as the unit of the rhythm.

Both inner time and the world's time are united in the notion of "rhythm." The experience of rhythm as unity belongs to dynamic time, but reflection on and analysis of the rhythm within two moments belongs to the order

of static time. Rhythms, regarded statically, can be further expanded into larger structures and systems. The conventional way of dealing with time unfolds in a basic form in repetitions and rituals, which contain both static and dynamic aspects that can be made more explicit in myths and calendars. The calendar is like a refinement of various rhythms, built around recurring elements (day, week, etc.) and alternating elements (seasons, months of the year), and ultimately reducible to a basic rhythm of on/off.¹⁴

Here I have argued that after human attempts to deal with time and its calendars have collapsed, what remain are static dates and numbers. That is the one extreme of mad time. The other extreme is "pure dynamic time," when what is left of the calendar is the number as pure dynamic change. The first manifestation or explanation of change is the difference between before and after, on and off, zero and one. This is an alternation, or a primordial rhythm. In this primordial rhythm, inner time (dynamic time) and universal time (static time) are still the same. The rhythm of the heart of a madman (his heartbeat) is the beating heart of the mad world. As one of Sass's patients (1992, 311) says, "All the clocks of the world feel my pulse."

The madman might be tempted to take control of this primordial rhythm. In an effort to influence and master the rhythms of the cosmos, the madman changes his own inner rhythms. He uses the gestures and movements of his body as well as his feelings to make the music of which the world is an expression. The incomprehensible ritual actions he undertakes are not so much obsessions or compulsions as they are ways to "tune in" to the world's events and to make his own musical contribution. The actions of the madman are creative and his language is poetic. The primordial rhythm of on and off tells the madman that the world is a result of two forces.¹⁵

3.2.3.3 Dissonances In the above sections I seemed to suggest that the two moments of "tone" and "nontone" are of equal value. The presence and absence of a tone might as easily be called A and B, green and red, or left and right. But presence is of a different order than absence; they are not two equal members of a pair, as green and red are. This has farreaching consequences for mad crystal time. Chapter 12 is devoted entirely to absence and mad nothingness, but in this section I will briefly touch on this idea with the help of Heidegger's thought. For the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, absence—nothingness—is not just a condition of being that can be "revoked," "rescinded," or subordinated to being, but it is always the absent absence. Within all that is present there is this absence, flitting around "destructively."

Eternity cannot contain or negate the nothingness of the absence. Because of this nothingness, being is always a temporary being, according to Heidegger. The nothingness of death and finiteness sets limits on time and fractures eternity. In this view, ecstatic experiences of eternity are merely frenetic attempts made by an overly confident subject to ignore the nothingness. In rhythmic terms: if you let yourself be swept along in the primordial rhythm, you do contain the two moments A and B, before and after, but because one of these two moments is the moment of absence, the rhythm itself can never be fully present. Time can never be made completely present, either by means of eternity or by means of rhythm, and it certainly cannot be controlled. Time and nothingness are inextricably linked. As Sartre (2003, 126) says, "This nothingness which separates human reality from itself is at the origin of time." (Also see chapter 12.)

In the normal human world, with normal human time, people relate to nothingness and death by experiencing loss and decay and by recognizing them in a common symbolic world. The transition from 1944 to 1945 is not normally seen as just a numerical relationship or as the action of a neutral rhythm with two moments. In the normal human world, the idea of nothingness and finiteness (such as that which hovers over the transition from 1944 to 1945, for example) takes on a livable symbolic form; it is translated into sorrowful stories about people who have died, for example, and a sense of melancholy concerning the futility of things.

But madness knows no such common narrative or shared symbol of human time. The madman is not privy to the soothing stories that normally make the terror of nothingness livable. The ordinary symbols and rituals for dealing with nothingness, absence, finiteness, and death are not at his disposal. The madman will have to find his own way to relate to nothingness, whether in a madly static harmony of time or in a mad dynamic primordial rhythm.

With regard to mad-spatial static time, the madman knows that he did not live in 1601 and that he's not now living in 2201. In the mad world, the anxiety evoked by thinking about nonbeing in 1601 or 2201 is projected onto the numbers themselves rather than onto what the numbers stand for: time. For madmen, the normal awareness of one's own future death corresponds with fear of concrete numbers and observable things in space. In madness, time is suspended, or "spatialized." It ends up in space, and as a result, the anxiety that attaches to the absence of time is an anxiety in space as well. In the mad world, death, which is essentially incomprehensible (nonspatial), is given a number, a location, and possibly even a face, a color, clothing, or a voice. This gives rise to an imaginary shadow world

of anxiety and paranoia, which I will later (in chapter 12 ff.) describe at length.

With regard to nothingness as the absence of the tone in the dynamic primordial rhythm: this manifests itself as pure anxiety without any concrete object. In madness, the absolute "nothing" (of the absent tone) is close to the absolute being (of the present tone). Normally there is a layer of symbols and narratives (melodies, harmonies) that separate the individual from nothingness. In madness, the joy that comes with the gift of being is more intensely present, as is the anxiety that comes from nothingness. Ecstasy and joy in being alternate with anxiety in nonbeing. The consequent moods and expressions of these emotions as experienced by the madman are difficult for an outsider to understand. ¹⁶

"Something isn't quite right" here in the heart of mad crystal time. There is unity in crystal: in eternity, in the present. At the same time there is dissension and division: in paranoia, in doubt. This contradiction will reappear in later chapters and in many different guises: not only in the philosophy of Sartre and Schelling, in the manic euphoria of Custance, and in the religious ecstasies of Huxley and Michaux, but also in the endless details of the delusional systems of Schreber and the desperate bewilderment of Harald Kaas.¹⁷

Fragment IV: Forty-Plus

We're gathered here behind glass in this room of fog. There are four of us, sitting around one of the three little tables in the only room where smoking is permitted. Across from me is Nico. He has the best CD player in the ward—a modern thing, bright green. Every time he hauls his contraption from his room and sets it down with us in the smoke, he insists on playing his own music. That's often Metallica, the gods of metal. When he turns the volume up to four or even six, the dangerous sounds resonate through the space. Nico provokes the nursing staff more than I do. But I think you're bound to summon the forces of evil if you meddle too much in such parodies of evil. Then the nurses toss you into the isolation cell. They don't understand Nico's subtle irony.

To the left of me is Crystal. She's younger than Nico and I—in her midtwenties, I'd say—but already she's got a good grasp of the ultimate truth. She speaks Frisian with a Flemish accent. Her secret name is Sabine. Sometimes I read a book aloud to her, one with Flemish overtones, but after each line we wander off and end up in Flemish-Dutch controversies and innuendos. She keeps switching from one name to the other, and from one language to the other, so they can't trace or identify her.

To the right of me is Karel. He's trained in doing lab research with rats. For years he worked at the university, where he drew his strength from the theory of animal behavior. By casting everything in a Darwinian model, he hoped to overturn the hierarchical structure of society and allow the imagination to take over. But he became the victim of the atheism that tries to replace the human soul with inhuman metal in the form of the euro.

On the other side of the glass is the dayroom. Sandy is lying there on the couch like a lazy tiger. He's half-Indonesian, half-Dutch. He rarely says anything. That's understandable, since the Dutch have always had little use for uppity Javanese. When meat is served at the table, you see him wince. Europeans still eat meat as if it were normal. The nurses laugh it off when they serve us meat, but we know what kind of crimes and unutterable suffering is hidden in every piece. Modern history has been a fight for living flesh. When death won in Europe and the Antichrist rose again in German form, things looked pretty bad for the soul. It was sold to America and the communists. Our only hope now is Islam. In its militant form, Islam is much better at getting its message across than soft Christianity. There are limits to how much you can sell out. Stop the meat trade. The nurses and the doctors are all atheists, but luckily the cleaning crew are Muslim. Every morning, way before breakfast, they come in and raise our morale by showing us that we aren't the only underdogs. Just before the sun comes up, Saida slips past us as we sit at the table in the smoking room. She tells us what's happening in the outside world, but if you listen carefully, you can hear the words of the struggle as she talks about the front and all the fallen souls. Her stories, and the tone of trust in her voice, make the colors of the magazines change. The black and white of metallic death turns into organic colors. As soon as Saida is gone, I pick up all the black-and-white newspapers and hide them in a closet. Then I collect the colored newspaper supplements, magazines, and folders, and hand them out to everyone who's awake. That's how I spread the good news. After that the sun comes up again in the east, and another day begins. A day we're ready for. We never give up. The world may be up for grabs, but we won't let ourselves be sold off. We are not of this world. We come from the parallel world. We are of the fourth generation, children of the sun in the never-ending light.

At the short end of the smoking room is a door to the corridor—the nurses' domain. They don't know anything; they belong to the thirty-year-olds so they still think in triplicate. One, on the one hand, two, on the other hand, and then three, conclusion. Three is the number of the dialectic, the engine of all progress. First you have a statement, then a counterstatement, and third, a revocation of the counterstatement by way of a higher statement

that becomes the basis for the next statement. For people who think that way, everything is lined up straight. Such people march in line. Especially Roberto, who is stuck in this kind of linear thinking. He's a fascist, and his name alone links him to Mussolini. He's the one who locked me up here and keeps me prisoner. One time I walked with him to the back, where only the nurses are allowed to go. Located at the back of the building is the material substructure of our existence. That's where the food is prepared and blankets and sheets are stored. Roberto lifted an extra blanket there for me from the "storage rack." He stood on one leg, at an angle. Then he reached up, almost to the "lighting," and he stretched his right arm—his fascist arm, that is—up to the third shelf of the storage rack. Without blinking an eye. That was all I needed to know, while he didn't even realize he had given himself away.

Everything changed once I discovered there's more than triplication. There's also a fourth factor. That's the power that makes sure that there's life at all, that everything doesn't just come to a halt. Besides the three elements of time—past, present, and future—there has to be a fourth element to get the wheel of time started. This fourth element is the fire that drives the engine. Fire is, by nature, a magical element, and its core of light is known only by someone who himself is enlightened. You can see the light in our eyes; things shine through them. For the simple-minded, there are three spatial dimensions: height, length, and width. We visionaries see everything at the same time, however, inside and outside, from the secret medium of the fourth dimension.

Those who know the secret of the Four see everything differently. Those who are still caught up in the web of the gasping three see only bare, soulless emptiness, with lifeless flesh fused to a skeleton of metal. Three is the number of the flat map, four the number of living space. There are four of us smoking together in the smoking room, and we blend together through the smoke. Only the raw materials of the smoke are different for each one of us. Karel goes for the subtle little cigars, while Crystal smokes Marlboros. That tells you that she hasn't been part of the club of the Wise Ones for very long. Nico and I used to smoke medium-strong rolling tobacco, but here in this crisis situation, we've switched to strong. It smokes better. I use Mascotte rolling papers and Nico uses Rizla Red, so you can tell us apart. The fire goes around and sets everything ablaze. As long as there's fire, there's light, and we keep going.

We Enlightened Ones walk differently. Our way of walking has everything to do with the Four. That is, we don't really walk at all. We pretend to be walking, to be moving forward from one spot to another, while deep down we know—thanks to the Four—that there's no room to walk in. We

walk ironically and in full harmony at the same time. We impersonate someone who is walking, and we do it with perfection. We call it "relaxed"; others call it lethargic. But those are the nurses. They are people of the number of the three, the living dead. They don't know anything about the unified whole. They live only now, and not even that. They are never really here in the present. They don't know anything about mystical fusion, like we have in the room of smoke. They only think with their heads. Their eyes see nothing but protocols, medical cases, and calculations. They're afraid of us. They only come to the smoking room to smoke, and when they're done they get out as fast as they can. They have no sanctuaries. The "American psychos" built the World Trade Center, the golden calf, and they were punished for it. For them, the body is a machine that they hope to control with medicine. For us, the body is a temple, and we are the temple priests. We offer the holy soma to the holy body.

We merge with the substances. We transform them, from bread to water to wine, and on and on, ad absurdum. The English were already smoking tobacco during the war. When I play table football with Crystal, she's always Arsenal, and in order to shock the nurses, I announce, loud and clear, in German, that I'm Bayern München. Crystal plays well, although her leg is bandaged. She ended up here with us because of a fracture in her knee. That makes her limp a little, and she walks with a cane. The Insight came to her when her leg got twisted on the inside. She's here in the middle of the transition, her laugh is made of sugar, and she can go back home as soon as her right leg has turned around. We aren't allowed to smoke while we're playing table football. Holy tobacco, discovered in Indonesian soil, can be consumed only in the smoking room. For many visionaries, tobacco is still the fuel of the spirit. After the tobacco era, during the sixties and seventies, we all took off. We made our way in the world as hippies, in naive resistance to the tobacco culture of our parents. We were looking for new substances. We discovered mescaline and marijuana in the west, in Mexico, and brought West and East back together.

The elders had known about this for a long time. Thinking in terms of substances began with Aristotle, and actually Europe is no more than an extension, a kind of porch, of the Greek temples. After mescaline and LSD came Haldol. Things went well for a long time, but then attention waned, and a new drug was needed. We got help from an unexpected quarter on the right, from a region of ancient Greece that is apparently still active. For it was Cyprus that came to the aid of the heart of ancient Europe. Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, was where Zyprexa was discovered. Zyprexa! The drug of the fourth generation.

All this is esoteric knowledge to us, the forty-year-olds. The thirty-yearolds see only the exterior, while we see directly into the inner soul of things. The thirty-year-olds know perfectly well what a cube is, for example, but they see only three dimensions. They never reach the cube's inner fourth dimension. The thirty-year-olds don't know how to go about changing a cube. One of the Great Wise Ones, Dr. Rubik of Hungary—whose capital is Budapest, north of Cyprus and east of us—that Rubik made an attempt to educate the thirty-year-olds. He made Rubik's Cube as a way of guiding the thirty-yearolds into their forties. When you're thirty, and even when you're twenty or a teenager, you start playing with one of those cubes and you think, Hey, what a nifty game! But all you see are three static dimensions. Only when you're in your forties do you understand that the idea isn't just to turn the cube but to turn it like mad. When you do, you see that in the Rubik's Cube the organic microcosm is twisted into the plastic macrocosm. In so-called Hungary, they speak so-called Hungarian. That isn't a language at all, but a crazy nonsense language invented to torment children. When I was a teenager, I went on vacation in Hungary, where I bought a German book on teaching yourself Hungarian, *Ungarisch für Ausländer*. I wore myself out trying to learn Hungarian, but it was hopeless. I was also impressed by the so-called Iron Curtain, which was still hanging there and was supposed to separate the so-called East from the West. I didn't have the faintest idea at the time that Hungarian didn't even exist. While we young people spent the day busting our brains trying to learn each other's language, the forty-plussers spent the night involved in orgies. The Russians and the Americans and the Hungarians pulled the curtains away and indulged themselves in the flesh. They lived off the souls of the Huns, who came from the even more distant East. And they laughed about the Cube and the language they had invented for us.

I discovered all this shortly after my fortieth birthday, when I saw real depth for the first time in my life. I had already gained a lot of inspiration from tobacco and marijuana, but when I actually sat down and thought about it, I found myself tumbling into a photograph. A two-dimensional photo became a three-dimensional hologram. I had the feeling that as I looked at the photograph, I could spend all of eternity on that very spot. Every moment of time exhaled microcosmic droplets, which fell onto the photo like little bubbles. The lens kept changing and changing, and the photo was like a movie. This made me want more, because what would a movie be like then, and what would it be like out on the street now that I had acquired the new Insight and had joined the club of the wise?

I looked down the street and saw not only the street, the people, the cars, but also that everything was connected in that mysterious fourth

dimension of depth, which I had become aware of only now. Once you know the number four, you see it everywhere. Pay attention the next time you see three people talking together. The fourth one who joins them is always a representative of the fourth dimension. He's an ally who knows that there are more than three numbers. The fourth man creates the chaos that is constantly being straightened out over and over again in the three-dimensional order. This happens all the time on TV. Often you see two, sometimes three, people sitting around a table, talking to each other. The conversation babbles on—statement, counterstatement, and conclusion—until the fourth man comes on the scene. He's always different; he doesn't match the other three, in terms of skin color, or clothing, or general attitude. He's an outsider. You can see from the way he's looking that he knows what's up and that he's going to upset the whole situation—at least for those who are also enlightened and have eyes to see it.

Sitting here together at the table in the smoke, we Enlightened Ones take turns playing number four. It's like a card game, bridge, where you have North, South, East, and West. The West and the East—now, we know all about that. The South—that's where the light is most vivid. My favorite role is that of the North, of the ice that cuts and burns. I always have Crystal sitting across from me to the South, since she never agrees with anything and she plays the explosive southerner. Just like Ankie in Amsterdam-South-Jewish, where I kept dipping into the sugar bowl till it was empty. In the South, they're sitting on the gold of the temple. I prefer to array myself in northernness. I have a Nokia, which comes in very handy. The northern Finnish Nokia network is an excellent, modern, well-equipped underground organization whose aim is to combat neo-Germanic atheism. Now I understand why Ankie gave me such a curious look when I showed her my Nokia. Yes, an ancient Yiddish sign of recognition. With support from Nokia, we'll dethrone Siemens in Berlin (the capital of Germany). Because Nokia is strong, Nokia is modern, Nokia works without a key (no key ya is needed). All you need is the password, and you're wirelessly connected to us.

Thirty-year-olds still use their Nokias in the limited mode—for language, writing, and words. They talk through it with their mouths and send text messages with their fingers. Forty-year-olds use their Nokias only for direct contact. Turn your Nokia on, and other northerners can hear your heart-beat. But watch out for the internet; the internet taps your heartbeat and converts it into external images. Nokia goes even deeper. With Nokia, you reach a level of language where everything is immediately clear and every sound is immediately linked to an action. But here's an even bigger secret: Finnish is only the shadow of Korean. Pyongyang—ping! pong!—is where

the biggest conversion machine of all is located, the nuclear power plant. Beyond plus and minus, North Korea becomes Nokia.

But I admit it, that was my big reckless mistake: I spilled the beans about North Korea. They brought me here to the madhouse. I started out in the front room, playing around with the deepest parameters. I didn't answer their questions or fill out their forms. Instead I fiddled around with pluses and minuses. Through me, plus became minus and vice versa. I conjured up atomic power by means of Nokia, North Korea, the nuclear power plant, and electricity. There was a glass door that supposedly opened electronically. But after having turned my attention to Nokia and Korea for a little while, it stopped working. The others thought that was reason enough to keep me here. I had broken a taboo, I had given thought to the most extreme impossibility, and I had not taken into account the fact that this was more than many thirty-year-olds could handle.

There's so much miscommunication going on when you deal with thirtyyear-olds. Those who are familiar with the fourth generation of mobile phones, like the Nokia, don't even have to think about miscommunication. Everyone in the Nokia world speaks the same language. For forty-year-olds, all languages are immediately comprehensible. This became clear to me one particular evening: I can understand all the languages in the world, and I was watching a Vietnamese movie and understood what the actors were saying without reading the subtitles. Naturally, many roads lead to the discovery of the Four. You can also get there by way of Kenwood and Kenya, or the good old Dutch way, via Philips, digging back to the red turnip and the red beet, and then to Charles the Fifth, to Spain, and to non-Jewish Inca gold. Incidentally, that smart-ass Crystal swears up and down that anything you can do with a Nokia you can also do with her Motorola. I find that hard to believe because it sounds so utterly childish. Sounds to me like she's had too much beet juice. Ha ha, no sugar without blood. I really shouldn't say that, and I shouldn't even think it—it's a secret. Imagine what would happen if Patrick Bateman were to find out. I'm going to lie low with Nokia. The simplicity of the Finnish log cabin in the woods, Finnish vodka, and especially—above all else—the Finnish language.

Sometimes forty-year-olds need a means of communication, a secret language that cannot be understood by thirty-year-olds. So we use Yiddish or sign language. We exchange the really important information about world events and the macrocosmos by means of clever, discreet gestures. Sometimes on TV, you see a couple of so-called important men making so-called important announcements, but that's just for the outside world, for the thirty-year-olds. If you look closely, you can always see a passerby in the

background, making a gesture, or someone over forty using a certain intonation or making a slip of the tongue, from which you can deduce the really important facts. Up until recently, I have looked at the world through a smoke screen, but now the scales have fallen from my eyes. Yiddish is a kind of basic Esperanto, just like Jews are the people without a country and without an identity. Among the great diversity of peoples in the world, no one really has an identity, and everyone is a Jew.

The transformation from three to four is like a kind of death. You have to identify with the basis, with the Jew, after which you wake up to eternal life. After four, there's no more death, no personal identity, no history, no time. Before forty, you're still subject to time. After forty, you suddenly gain control over four and you no longer think in terms of straight lines, in linear processes of beginning, middle, and end. You transcend the framework of ordinary human time and you see the lines from above, in a field. While thirty-year-olds are down in the field like mammals, you're soaring above them like the eagle, or leading the sheep down the path like a shepherd.

Nietzsche is one of the thinkers who made a big deal out of this discovery. In the realm that lies beyond death and life, where the eternal recurrence is the present moment, the possible and the necessary lie side by side. There the bottom line is the law of the dice: you throw and, at the same time, are thrown. But Nietzsche was afraid of what he saw then. He hadn't taken that schemer Ivan Karamazov into account. The Mossad is waiting in Moscow. We Jews play a more elevated game, beyond good and evil. Our time is as slow as the Rosetta Stone. We watch over the system behind the system. We're the backup, the fourth empire that you can trust in times of extreme need. We wait at the end of paranoia, and we guard the fire.

I discussed this last week with the psychiatrist here on the ward. He thought that if you're paranoid, you think you're being persecuted. Oh, well, he's just a thirty-year-old. I tried to explain it to him, but he didn't understand. After that, I sent him a letter, but he didn't even reply. And while his entire ward here is bursting with paranoia, he'd rather bury himself in charts and diagrams. I'm going to make one more attempt to explain it to him anyway (although I have very little hope of being understood by thirty-year-olds). Paranoia simply means that you have *noia*, plus whatever exists next to and around the *noia*: the *para-noia*. *Noia* is Greek, and it's related to the term *noesis*. That means "to think" in Greek philosophy, and it implies something quite different than modern thinking. Modern thinking happens just like that—*one*, *two*, *three*. Modern thinking recognizes logic, the *logos*, but no longer recognizes the light that shines on the logos. The light, the mind's eye, the inner knowledge, is the *noesis* of the Greeks.

And with para-noesis paranoia, we find ourselves in the mysterious, baroque area that encircles the noia. The *Umwelt* that can be found around the *Welt*. Paranoid thinking is the thinking of people over forty. You think about something, and at the same time you think about everything that surrounds what you're thinking about. You think under it, over it, and behind it. With paranoia, thinking is the same as creating. A theoretical point of concentration expands into a practical creative field. By thinking somewhere behind it, you even change the character of the object of the thought itself. By imagining something, you bring it to life. Those who have never gone through the gate of madness are dependent on the fragments that are tossed to them from the empire of the four. We visionaries and Enlightened Ones play with the dice, which the thirty-year-olds only see the outcome of, in the form of statistics and graphs.

Which brings me back to Karel. Karel has known all of this longer than anybody else. He's an old hand here on the ward. He's been committed seven times already. He knows the mechanism of the four, the paranoia, the transformations of the substances, the unity of language, and the soul of the Wandering Jew. I listen to the radio with Karel every night. He hasn't slept in five years, and I haven't slept in four weeks. Every night at four a.m., we both end up here in the smoking room. Nico has taken his CD player back to his room by then, so it's time to resort to the old Dutch methods of reception. First Karel brings out a Philips shortwave radio, which can pick up signals from the stars. Before we begin, we each roll a cigarette of simple Drum tobacco in order to establish a basic rhythm. Karel hands me the radio. He's done this so often that now I have the honor of fiddling with the knobs. I turn the radio down low, and at first all I hear is static. Then we light up our cigarettes and I tune in. I turn the station knob, running through the numbers. I focus on the radio waves, on the smoke, and on Karel's frame of mind. We play with the figures, we shoot dice with the radio, and through the initial crackling and static we hear a voice. It sings of crystal sugar, of metal, of coffee, of air, and of fire. Of floating souls, of lines, of circles and colors. Andromeda, the voice says, meta-antropos. We look at each other knowingly. In the glass, through the fog, we see ourselves. In motionless movement, everything—in all its mad beauty—is eternally fortified.

Other space-time continua, to which you are more likely to gain access via the other world, "parallel worlds"? ... Just thinking about the enormous dimensions of such a thing overwhelms me. I experience the suction, the gentle pulsing, the currents and the fields with their sparkling slopes and caverns, energy bundles, energy fans, mists and walls and passageways of energy, and it's like skiing over them, like cross-country skiing without socks, with time glimmering in the distance—or withdrawing further—or the glimmering of reality—or reality's growing absence—until all that's left is openness, potentiality, a charged emptiness?

—Sybren Polet, De gouden tweehoek (The Golden Duoangle, 2011, 220)

Just as the calendar and the clock play a different role in mad time, so the map plays a different role in mad space. And just as the madman can no longer locate his "now" on the calendar, so he can no longer locate his "here" in space. Sechehaye's Renee (1970, 88) gives a vivid example of this: "During this holiday, I noticed a complete loss of the sense of perspective. I sketched like a child. I got lost easily and I could not orient myself spatially. The most careful explanations left me without understanding of the cardinal points of direction. To remedy this I placed an imaginary map before me and said to myself: opposite me is the north, behind me is the south, right is east and left is west. But if I suddenly turned around from the areas I had just located and wanted to place what I was facing, I said exactly the same thing as before: opposite me is the north, behind me the south, etc. Neither the sun nor any landmark concerned me at all. I placed the cardinal directions entirely in reference to myself, according to the method I had learned at school, and I was the center: at the top of the map is north, on the bottom the south, at the right the east, at the left the west. That there was a difference between an unchanging map and changing reality never occurred to me for a moment."

Mad space is like mad time in that it cannot be described in terms of normal coordinates and dimensions. In order to describe space as it is experienced in madness—the setting against which madness takes place—I will "depart" from normal space in section 4.1 and then describe the modulations, variations, and transformations that characterize mad space.

4.1 Ordinary Space

Whenever we try to make some kind of general statement about space, we quickly arrive at the following types of findings: Space is what we find ourselves "in," along with the things around us. Space surrounds us, and it's also inside us, insofar as we occupy space. Space can be divided into parts, or at least you can say, "There is space both in front of me and behind me." Space comprises a great many places or "positions"; there are lots of things in space, and space is something through which we can move. The problem with such intuitive assertions is that they don't tell us much more than that we talk about space with the help of spatial prepositions: I am in, around, outside, behind, above, or to the left of a certain object. You have to have a grasp of these prepositions before you can understand what space is. So we have to already know what space is before we can understand what space is. What Augustine said about time also applies to space. Paraphrasing Augustine, you could say, "What, then, is space? As long as no one asks me, I know. As soon as I wish to explain it to him who asks, I know not." Although it is difficult to say anything about space, I would like to share a few thoughts about it in order to facilitate a discussion of space under the conditions of madness.

Space is often contrasted with time. In everyday language, a distinction is made between questions about where and questions about when. In the academic disciplines, the dimension of time is also usually treated differently from that of space. Geography is different than history. Yet there is a connection between "space" and "time." Whether the discussion is about space or time, the same kinds of terms are used. Often it seems as if the primary meaning of the words used in such discussions is "spatial," after which they are applied metaphorically to time (for example, in terms like "next week," "after," and "before"). In addition, physics asserts that space and time are not independent constants and that their interaction is determined by other factors such as the speed of light, the amount of energy/matter, and gravity. In philosophy, space is often distinguished from time, but both concepts occupy the same domain.¹

Unlike time, space is more a thing among things, something from the world outside us, and less something "within us." Space is regarded as the

universal background that places all objects and matter within the same framework. In the fields of science and technology, such as geography and land surveying, space is indeed seen as an "objective given" that can be charted. This is a sensible view when it comes to producing maps, but there is also a subjective side to space. Just as knowledge of the calendar won't tell you what day it is today, so knowledge of a map won't tell you where you are. That requires an observer with a perspective in space. Just as there is inner time and outer time, so there is space that is subjectively experienced and space that is objectively perceived.

Merleau-Ponty proposes the study of an interstice, a "lived space," that can be described as objective and subjective but is actually located between the two. He says (2012, 253–254), "Space is not the milieu (real or logical) in which things are laid out, but rather the means by which the position of things becomes possible. That is, rather than imagining space as a sort of ether in which all things are immersed, or conceiving it abstractly as a characteristic they would all share, we must think of space as the universal power of their connections." That "power of connections" makes for coherence so that things can emerge in one and the same space. However, such a "universal power" is not subjective in the sense that the observer or the subject has it at his disposal, to use at his own discretion. You yourself cannot decide how the space is going to look. Space is neither entirely subjective nor entirely objective. In this way, too, it resembles time.

Merleau-Ponty goes on (2012, 265): "... space is established upon our facticity. Space is neither an object, nor an act of connecting by the subject: one can neither observe it (given that it is presupposed in every observation), nor see it emerging from a constitutive operation (given that it is of its essence to be already constituted); and this is how space can magically bestow upon the landscape its spatial determinations without itself ever appearing." Space is therefore not a kind of cage into which we are thrown at birth. Conversely, the subject does not come up with a notion or representation of space entirely "on his own" either. Any space that we can imagine is essentially dependent on the space that has already been given to us. It's as if the space were already there before I had become aware of it.

Heidegger writes contra objective space in his famous work *Being and Time* (1962, 136–137): "A three-dimensional multiplicity of possible positions [objective space, W. K.] which gets filled up with Things present-at-hand is never proximally given. ... all 'wheres' are discovered and circumspectively interpreted as we go our ways in everyday dealings [the interstice, W. K.]; they are not ascertained and catalogued by the observational measurement of space." And elsewhere, he writes contra subjective space (147): "Space is

not to be found in the subject, nor does the subject observe the world 'as if' that world were in a space; but the 'subject' (Dasein), if well understood ontologically, is spatial. ... This term does not mean anything like previously belonging to a subject which is proximally still worldless and which emits a space out of itself."

This ordinary lived space, which is neither purely subjective nor purely objective, changes under conditions of madness. I am describing this on the basis of the *dimensions* of space. Before discussing mad space in the following section, I would first like to say something more about dimensions. When we compare space with time, we notice that space and the objects that populate it consist of three dimensions. When we first think about time, we think about one "line" that runs in two directions (past and future), while with space we think about three lines. In order to describe the shape and position of objects, we need to have three dimensions: height, width, and depth. Every place and every thing on earth is located at a certain longitude and latitude, as well as at a certain height. According to an objective view of space, dimensions are lines that are both imaginary and real, by which three-dimensional objects and three-dimensional space itself can be described. The three dimensions in the objective view are the "skeleton," or structure, of the (apparently) three-dimensional space.

Besides being understood as features of the objective world, the three dimensions can also be regarded as constructions imposed by the subject. In that case, they seem more like the instrument or theory by which space, which in and of itself is without dimensions, can be organized and described. In the subjective view, dimensions are not things that are measured; rather, they are the yardstick that does the measuring. They are only the means for organizing dimensionless space. The space yardstick normally has three directions: forward, sideways, and up—or depth, width, and height. In support of this subjective view, we know that multidimensional models are also applied in physics, as in the case of string theory. And in mathematics and topology, space can be represented quite easily with a different number of dimensions. An infinite line that constantly bends and folds is one-dimensional, but it creates a two-dimensional surface. The purpose of these arguments is to show that the number of dimensions depends on the choice the subject makes—consciously or unconsciously—in order to "intuit" space.

Arguing against this subjective view is the fact that other space models are nothing but explanations of what, in our experience, first appears as space with height, width, and depth. If the three dimensions were an illusion, we would still have to ask why the illusion involves three dimensions and not four or two. We might respond that our experience of three-dimensionality

is not a basic truth we take for granted; rather, it is formed by either our accidental biology or our culture. Would a plant whose front is no different than its back experience the same number of dimensions? Do cultures that lack an abstract coordinate system like ours experience the world in three dimensions? In order to answer such questions, we have to clearly differentiate between the "experience of space" and "knowledge of space." Models with fewer or more dimensions are conceivable, but it's hard for us to understand what it would mean to live in a space that has only two dimensions. We instinctively try to imagine what a creature who experiences the world two-dimensionally would do and experience within three dimensions. We might turn to a book like *Flatland* by Edwin A. Abbott (1884) and try to imagine what it's like to exist in a two-dimensional space. But such a space would seem like an entirely different "world," one that is inaccessible to us in a different, more fundamental way than that of the amoeba, the plant, the bat, or the madman.

Normal space cannot be understood by means of a subjective or objective view alone. Looked at purely subjectively, the difference between my left and my right is no different than the difference between below me and above me. Objectively speaking, a transverse axis is not qualitatively different from a longitudinal axis. But in space as it is normally experienced, the three dimensions entail more than just the abstract spatial position of the subject. The difference between left and right is not the same as the difference between high and low and the difference between in front of and behind. Human beings cannot fly and do not live in the ocean, so the differences in height between objects and ourselves are of greater importance than differences between left and right. Dimensional "distance" is also neither totally subjective nor totally objective. When you're standing in a large room where there's a great buzzing of voices, and you concentrate on one voice among them, you subjectively pull that voice "closer." This only works to a certain extent, however. We cannot regulate the volume of the voices around us to suit ourselves, and we cannot always shield ourselves from undesirable voices. With madness, these ordinary aspects of the dimensions undergo a change.

4.2 Mad Space: Groundlessly Reversible

4.2.1 Depth

Normally we impose structure on space by distinguishing between a foreground that is close at hand and a background that is far away. The background is like a constant setting against which a changing variety of events and activities take place. The background constitutes a place of embedding

or a framework from which things emerge or against which they stand out. Thus the more important things are "in the foreground." The well-known colorblindness test shows how this works. This test consists of pictures made up of a large number of small colored circles. Some of the circles are yellow and green and some are orange and red. If one portion of the discs forms a figure, such as a number, people who are color blind (who cannot tell yellow and green from red and orange) cannot see it. For those who can see color, the number "emerges." This difference on the basis of color causes an object to step out from the depth and to end up in the foreground, creating a relief image. Similarly, the interior space of madness has a different kind of depth from which other figures emerge.

4.2.1.1 Groundlessness In psychosis, what are usually background details under normal circumstances—unspoken assumptions, coincidences—end up in the foreground. Lezy (2007, 19) says, "When a person is functioning normally, all the irrelevant details remain in the background. Indeed, perception, cognition, and action can only be carried out efficiently when the subordinate elements remain in their place—that is, in the background. In the initial stages of psychosis, cracks appear in this trusted organization of reality. The proverbial 'ground beneath our feet' becomes unreliable. The building blocks of experience thrust themselves forward, and the person is also troubled by an unnatural hyper-consciousness from which he cannot extricate himself."

To understand this change, we must first step back and remember that things in the foreground or background are never "objective." The difference between foreground and background is determined by subjective and practical considerations. The things that you "bring to the fore" are somehow important to you. You are focused on those things because they play a role in your actions in space. Sometimes things appear to brighten up all by themselves, as when you're looking for a chair in order to sit down, or when you're making distinctions on the basis of color. All those things that "brighten up" and are important belong to the "elements of our life story." That is to say, a thing occupies a place in the foreground because it once made an impression in the past or because it is still being used. Hence, the foreground-background structure in space is both the "perspective" by which we look at something (spatially) and the "perspective" within which we place something (temporally). As Merleau-Ponty (2012, 296) puts it, "The perception of space is not a particular class of 'states of consciousness' or of acts, and its modalities always express the total life of the subject, the energy with which he tends toward a future through his body and his world."

Take a city street, for example. As you walk down the sidewalk—on the Oudegracht in Utrecht, for example—you see cars and bicycles going past, ridden by people making their way to their destinations, each with their own memories, thoughts, and goals, and it's only by coincidence that they happen to be together on this particular street. If it's fall, people will be wearing warm clothing. Some will be carrying bags or pushing baby carriages; others will have colorful backpacks. The bright fall leaves will already have started fluttering down from the trees. The shops along the street are displaying their wares. Nothing is especially striking. You yourself are on your way to a shop a few streets farther down. You view the space in terms of the perspective of your own goal: where you are going, which pedestrians, bikers, and drivers to keep an eye on, which cars are driving fast and which ones are taking it easy, when you can cross the street. You may fantasize about the intentions and motives of the others. A delivery truck being unloaded catches your eye, as does someone who can't get his bike unlocked and glares at it angrily. Maybe you see something in one of the stores that attracts your attention and reminds you of something. You glance at the headlines of the newspapers on display, and from the corner of your eye, in one of the shop windows, you see a TV showing a toothpaste commercial. In addition, you have your shopping list and your private musings—perhaps thoughts about what you should or should not have done the hour before, or what you ought to do in the hour to come.

The space in this example is full of meanings and symbols and is lived along the lines of stories, roles, and "scripts" that can be understood from a normal temporal perspective. This normal, "human" temporal perspective, in which reaching out to the future is a common practice and in which the past is still reverberating, disappears in conditions of madness. The routines, customs, and recurring stories and expectations concerning how things normally happen—all this disappears. Any continuity between past and present is gone. The past no longer gives you confidence in a stable, abiding environment or a background against which life might play itself out. The street has been there for hundreds of years, and the madman has walked down it countless times, but for him, it is now as new as the commercial in the shop window warning of the dangers of sugar. Only the present carries any weight. But this present is "cut loose," it stands on shaky ground, without any support from the past. And because there is no sense of future purpose, everything is of equal importance, and everything that is absent is absolutely absent. There is only a "here" and a "now," and there is no "there," as in "an hour later." The unloading of the delivery truck does not point ahead to stock in the storeroom in the upcoming week.

Unloading is an activity in which cause and effect are subordinate to the appearance in space of the phenomenon of "unloading of the truck." The world, space, and time are that one street in Utrecht.

When people are in possession of a bag—in the mad world, that is—it isn't for the purpose of "carrying things somewhere" in the future. Nor are there things in the bag that were put there at some point in the past. The bags themselves were not purchased in an even more distant past. In the mad world, the quantity and types of bags, with their unknown contents, only have meaning in the here and now of the chance moment in that chance street. Their colors and shapes stand out; their meaning has to be deciphered. This makes the way they are being carried and the appearance of the persons carrying them extremely relevant. What the meaning is, however, is suspended in the air, shimmering, and is not yet really clear.

The French-speaking Belgian man of letters, essayist and multifaceted artist Henri Michaux, has written a great deal about his experiences with mescaline and other drugs. He has also tried to capture the mysticism and fascination of the mad world in words and sentences. (His name will come up repeatedly in this book.) In The Major Ordeals of the Mind and the Countless Minor Ones (1974, 80), he writes, "House fronts so elaborately detailed, so richly ornamented, so gaudy, indicative of ... but ... what?" The connection between objects is no longer functional or conventional but merely of a primary spatial character: similarities in color, identical movements, and similarities in shape count for a great deal. The man who gets angry at his bicycle lock reflects the same state of mind as the leaves fluttering from the trees. The shop windows no longer display objects in order to sell them within the abstract structure of a market economy. Instead, they come to life: the electronic appliance store exudes an atmosphere of circuitry and mechanics and is connected to the visible cell phones of passing pedestrians. The liquor store points to physical lusts, to fluids, and to altered states of consciousness, and its location on the canal is no coincidence. The numbers on the cars' license plates provide a running commentary on the events taking place on the street. The toothpaste clip is a duplication of the world, so what is happening in the world is being displayed on the screen. Because there is no longer a relief-like contrast between foreground and background, everything is equally urgent, obtrusive, and close at hand.

The madman is no longer imprisoned in tissues that stretch from a point in the past to a point in the future, and as a result he ends up in the "openness" of the present. Usually people walk along a canal with a certain vigor or imperturbability, while for the madman every detail is important, and every movement or change further diverts him from what came before.

Conrad (1958, 82ff.) says, "In no other illness is the outer environment, the situation (that is, from the lighting and furnishing of the room to the gestures, the voices, the behavior, and the words of the people) of such decisive significance as that of the psychotic. Anyone who is mentally healthy is incomparably more robust and less sensitive to the effects of his surroundings than the psychiatric patient. He is locked into his situation, like a machine that is overly sensitive to the registering of essential properties, and he reacts with the wildest utterances to the smallest changes around him."

In normal life, our minds are deeply rooted in a foundation of common past experiences and shared meanings. In psychosis, this depth is replaced by an ecstatic, blistering, endlessly deep superficiality. There is no longer any normal depth, any normal perspective, either in time or in space. Everything is equally close or far away. The feeling of familiarity in a known space disappears. Without depth, there is no anchoring. Without the difference between foreground and background, there is no foundation.

Fragment V: Open Air

Rianne thought we ought to get something to eat. I was going to cook anyway, and I hadn't done any shopping. Wasn't there something in the neighborhood? Probably. I looked out the window but didn't see anything right away. But hadn't I been living here for a long time? So I should know where to go to get food, right? Of course I knew. I didn't want her to think I was crazy. I'd show her, all right.

We walked down my street. I knew the way: if we turned this corner we'd find ourselves on an important square. It was a kind of market where young Moroccans were bought and sold, squeezed dry, and given a dose of street smarts. On two sides of the square were observation posts set up by the elders. One was an outpost of Islam, where tea was served in silence and the elders kept an eye on everything. You didn't see anyone there, but you knew they were looking. The other observation post was a basic snack bar, which made sure no one starved to death. Safely wedged in between them was the little square with its young people. I tried to explain to Rianne how important this little square was for maintaining coherence in the neighborhood and spiritual balance between the kingdoms of the dead and the living. The dead would never return, and the forefathers would never be able to look after the human race—that was the great tragedy, I told her. But we had to make sure the young people never found out. We had to pretend everything was normal and that things were running smoothly. "But where can we get something to eat? I don't feel like that snack bar." She was clueless. She lived just like these kids, in a cloud of unknowing. She just blurted

things out with her loud, imperious voice, threatening to undermine the subtle order of things. Okay, okay, there was more going on farther up. So on we went. I wasn't going to say anything about the third observation post. That was a "printing office," which announced that it dealt in letters and printed matter. Nice that they put it here. They were a great comfort to me. They let the neighborhood know about the importance of letters and words, which meant they firmly stood for the same spiritual matters that I did. In times of crisis, I could always go there.

After walking a bit farther, Rianne said (with slight indignation), "But what's this? It's just a pizzeria. Didn't you know that?" Yes, of course I knew that, but I wasn't looking for a pizzeria. Oh, yeah, we had to eat. That was the only thing she could think about during our walk, while the world had so much beauty to offer. So into the pizzeria we went. This was pure New York. You find these kinds of joints everywhere there, with their enticing advertising and fast-working crews, who slog on day and night at starvation wages. I had just been there, and now I was going right back again. New York, the heart of the modern world, but a heart ripped out by those airplanes. In the core of every city was a void. It was covered over by wheeling and dealing. Just keep going, keep talking, and don't do too much deep thinking. If your thinking apparatus does kick in, concentrate on practical things, the things you need in order to get by: food, beets, sugar, crystal-crystal, and the circulation of proteins in the food chain. If you limit your thoughts to the facts, you avoid the pain of evil.

The place was full of Italian Americans. They laughed the blood away, both feet firmly planted in thousand-year-old family traditions, and they weren't about to be rattled by a couple of collapsed towers. They kept the fire hidden behind a partition. That's where the vegetables and meat got chucked onto the pizzas. There were lots of pizza workers in the pizzeria, mostly kids who still had to learn the trade. The head of the place sat silently in the corner on a barstool, checking out the images on TV. We were in a Dutch branch, so they had the TV tuned into a Dutch channel. They didn't use beets. Instead, they used crushed tomatoes, which is how they prepared their mafia-Milanese version of sugar. While Rianne kept babbling on about specific amounts of pizza and the conversion of money and time, I focused on the TV images and scenery and the hustle and bustle of pizza-making.

4.2.1.2 Fragmentation Things in space are no longer seen in perspective. They are no longer viewed in terms of a particular vanishing point. They have no meaning beyond themselves, and they are no longer arranged

within a greater whole. Heidegger (1962, 138) writes, "Space has been split up into places. But this spatiality has its own unity through that totality-of-involvements in-accordance-with-the-world [weltmässige] which belongs to the spatially ready-to-hand." In madness, the normal "totality-of-involvements" is gone. Space loses "its own unity" and becomes fragmented.

The madman is no longer connected to things, and in a certain sense the difference between here and there, between center and periphery, between self and the world, disappears along with depth perception.² One of Sass's patients (1992, 161) provides this food for thought: "I seemed to myself to be a timeless being, perfectly clear and limpid as far as the relations of the soul are concerned, as if it could see its own depths. ... The past became restricted, shriveled, dislocated. It was formless. Can I say this? Or like when a wooden shack tumbles down. This formlessness, which came from that, then attacked me; or it was as if a picture with a spatial perspective of depth suddenly flattened and was then only on the surface."

The absence of depth perception is closely connected to the experience of fragmentation. Merleau-Ponty (2012, 276) says, "... depth is the dimension according to which things or the elements of things envelop each other, while breadth and height are the dimensions according to which they are juxtaposed." In a space without depth, and with only height and width, everything is juxtaposed without being mutually connected. Seen objectively, the madman still moves in a space that we characterize as threedimensional, and in an objective sense, he is not blind either. At the very most, he is blind to the normal, everyday significance of space. His space crumbles into meaningless objects, disconnected and lost within themselves. Sechehaye's Renee (1970, 55–56) describes this beautifully as follows: "I saw things, smooth as metal, so cut off, so detached from each other, so illuminated and tense that they filled me with terror. When, for example, I looked at a chair or a jug, I thought not of their use or function—a jug not as something to hold water and milk, a chair not as something to sit inbut as having lost their names, their functions and meanings; they became 'things' and began to take on life, to exist."

When normal perspective vanishes, everything appears in a disorienting, dizzying new light. Although the streets are still the same, they are fragmented. The madman loses his automatic pilot; he can no longer absentmindedly find his way; he has to make every conceivable effort to keep from getting lost. Hennell (1967, 45) writes, "All the street-names were queer and goblinish; they seemed to have meanings which would start me off on false trails, in wrong directions. So I lost time, and when I asked the way it seemed that the streets and houses had been rearranged, or were

shrunk to tiny imitation affairs. Their brickwork was excessively, dangerously red, and they vanished away to almost nothing, in exaggerated perspectives. Some gigantic cynic had leered on the town; and its aspect was shockingly struck awry."

Meaningful spatial relationships disappear. There is no inner connection between a cup and the sugar it might contain. There is no standard by which things in a homogeneous space can be related. As Lezy (2007, 18) writes, "Someone said that an orange had grown much bigger. He could also report that there was no longer any connection between the various things he saw: a certain cabinet just stood there all by itself, completely detached from its surroundings. At first he thought there was something wrong with his eyes." From Merleau-Ponty (2012, 295): "... a bird is chirping in the garden. I hear the bird, and I know that it is chirping, but that this is a bird and that it chirps are two things so far removed from each other ... there is an abyss ... as if the bird and the chirping had nothing to do with each other." In this last quote, the fragmentation of visual perception causes things to be separated not only from each other but also from the various ways in which a thing normally makes itself known; the sound world and the visual world are separated.

The madman feels locked up in some kind of ball, with images appearing and vanishing on the walls of the ball and enclosing him entirely. There is something like space surrounding him, but without perspective. Everything revolves around him and imposes itself on him. If the madman walks down an ordinary residential street, like the Oudegracht in our example, the rows of houses are like walls hemming him in, and the people form a ring from which he cannot escape. There is nowhere to hide from the intrusive surrounding space. In a certain sense, this immediate environment enclosing him is all he knows. Normally we "look through" people, as it were—and bags and license plates—and we know that there is a "somewhere else," that something not perceived does indeed exist—a "there" in addition to a "here."

This mad space is like dream space. Our dreams, as we describe and recall them, also consist of a sequence of fragmentary dream images, feelings, and actions. Similarly, the order of the events in the dream do not follow a conventional time structure. Phenomena from different time periods jumble together, just as they do in madness. In your dreams, you are indeed somewhere, but that "somewhere" is not a place that can be described with terms like "here" as opposed to "there." There is no perspective in a dream either—no "here"—and the space as you experience it is not a single whole but a sequence of images. In a dream—as in a hallucination

or a vision—there is never a "there" or a "later." In a dream, there is no foreground playing out against a background; everything that happens is "equally relevant." In dream space, as in mad space, there is no depth.

One effect of fragmentation is that not only is the space shattered, but so is the link between the madman and the space outside. The madman no longer feels that he is *in* space; he only looks *at* space, as if the air were made of unbreakable, impenetrable glass. In this respect, mad space is like *cyberspace*. Like cyberspace, mad space cannot be entered or lived in. Just as time and the calendar become a static order, in which the psychotic feels he is on the outside looking in, so the madman may also feel he is standing outside space. Anne, Blankenburg's patient, says (1971, 68), "It's as if I were looking at all the world's doings from the outside."

4.2.1.3 Extensiveness In discussing mad time, we saw not only the static aspect of spatializing but also the dynamic aspect of "pure presence," "flowing," or "primordial rhythm." This double-sidedness is also characteristic of the mad experience of space. Besides the spatial experience of fragmentation, loss of depth, and increased "distraction," there is a sense of the unity of depth and the pure presence of space. This depth, this groundlessness, is a depth yet undetermined. It is an experience of pure perspective, a "looking-through-space," without being focused on anything in particular or pointing toward a single vanishing point. It is an experience of spaciousness without objects that catch the eye. This can be seen as a total subjectification of space, in the sense that the perspective and the glance of the subject become more important than the individual things that populate the perspective and are connected by the glance. Depth does not disappear. On the contrary, in this form of madness everything becomes groundlessly deep.

Thus, the experience of fragmentation can turn into rapture over the fact that everything is connected "in space" and that all things reach out into space. The madman experiences space as if he were seeing it for the first time. Walking down the ordinary residential street, he will stop to gaze at a tree and to discover the endlessness in the leaves that fall and flutter in the wind (also see chapter 11).

In my own experience of madness, I was fascinated by the depth I perceived in photographs. Whenever I saw a photo, it seemed as if it had "real" depth, as if the two-dimensional photo before my eyes had turned into a hologram and come to life (also see fragment IV). Michaux (2002, 98) says something similar in describing his experience with hash: "[Photography] is opaque. You are thrust back from the very place you admire by the meticulousness of light and shade, unfortunate glaze endowed with insulating

power. No admittance! Hashish, dephotographing as it does the places photographed, you can at last get in. The ice has thawed. And so I devoured this colored landscape with a new eagerness. How wonderful just looking is! How feline! A new youth came back to me, one of the subtlest, the youth of the eye." Describing the same experience but at an earlier time (1964, 96), he says, "The mere photograph of a mountain, of a park, of a court, of a piece of fallow ground will bring them to you as they are in life, as they are in the world from which your position in a closed room would seem to have separated you." This is comparable to the surprise you feel when you first look "into" a 3D stereogram.³ And this experience of "pure space" or "pure depth" is perhaps also comparable to someone who experiences sight for the first time. Merleau-Ponty (2012, 231) writes, "... the patient never ceases to marvel at this visual space to which he has just gained access, and with regard to which tactile experience now seems so impoverished to him that he voluntarily claims never to have had the experience of space prior to the operation."4

In some cases, such experiences are less pleasant. Sechehaye's Renee writes about one of them (1970, 81–82): "As soon as my gaze fell on a spot of any sort, a shadow or a ray of light, I could not drag it away, caught and held fast by the boundless world of the infinitely small. To wrench myself out of this impasse I began to beat on the table or on the wall with both fists." It is not clear here whether Renee feels threatened by the pure extensiveness, by the fragmentation, or by the realization that she is deviating from the normal.

In this phase, the madman still feels like he's in the center of a kind of "ball," but one with an infinite diameter that "radiates" from the core of his being. With his glance, he creates the space around him, so that everything stands out in fiery perspective. He gets everything to revolve around him. There is only an all-encompassing "here"; infinity is not only conceivable but has also become perceptible.

In this mad space, it's as if the background has "joined in" with the foreground. The mad glance connects everything with everything; no detail is left meaningless. This may seem like artificial space. It's the same in the world of movies, paintings, and the theater, where there isn't any background that we would consider normal either. Yes, there's a set or scenery, and there is the relief effect in painting, but the background is "intended" by the artist and forms a unified whole with the foreground. The background of a work of art is not "accidental" or neutral, as the background in the normal world is. In mad space, nothing "just so happens" to be there. Everything is connected by that all-penetrating depth-spaciousness.

Many madmen, therefore, have the feeling that everything is intended to be just as it is, as if "they" had conceived it that way on purpose. Schreber (1988, 102), for example, writes, "I did not know whether to take the streets of Leipzig through which I traveled as only theater props, perhaps in the fashion in which Prince Potemkin is said to have put them up for Empress Catherine II of Russia during her travels through the desolate country, so as to give her the impression of a flourishing countryside. At Dresden Station, it is true, I saw a fair number of people who gave the impression of being railway passengers." This artificial dimension may make everything seem enormously significant, but it does have its negative side: if the world is fabricated and artificial, then it isn't the real world. It's nothing but a beautiful, invented fantasy. When the madman walks down an ordinary residential street, he may get the strong impression that the people around him are merely pretending and that, as soon as they turn the corner, they start acting normally. The ecstatic space suggests that it is the counterbalance to a non-ecstatic space existing somewhere else.

Fragment VI: Via the Ring

We drove out of the City, Hans and Karin in the front seats and I in the back. We were going to try to get to their house, where it was safer. The exits to the south were full of blockades. The City had fallen, and we had no way of knowing whether we could come out in one piece. The City had come under the influence of atheists and materialists, who were tearing down the roads in their soulless jalopies, blaring into their mobile phones. Over the past few years they had covertly rebuilt the City and dressed it up in advertising posters that made reference to the new slavery and the worship of the golden calf. Their tool was the internet, which lay stretched across the City like a fishnet of electricity. The glass fibers of the internet looked like crystal but were only a crystalline parody. We had to shake it off, to leave the trail, to make our way back to unblemished ground where vegetables grew slowly, pure beets, and where metal was still banned.

I had only recently become aware of this new situation, and I wasn't entirely happy with how it would end. Fortunately Hans and Karin remained fearless. They were old hands at this, of course, and had been in the struggle much longer than I had. They had what it takes to stand up to the evil of the internet and the City. Sometimes we had to wait for a long time at stoplights and traffic jams; sometimes they were already staring into our car. But Hans and Karin were unflappable. They kept the doors and windows locked, and having taken those precautions we drove on toward the Ring Road in our miniature biotope.

A battle was being waged on the Ring Road, which encircled the City like a medieval wall. Whoever occupied the Ring could control the City and govern the surrounding area. Luckily we found a ramp going up to the Ring that wasn't closed off, and we were able to merge into traffic. Delivery trucks bearing aggressive texts and stickers passed us threateningly. I looked ahead and saw our road disappear into a dark hole. How were we going to get out? The signs pointed every which way, and a network of signs, flashing even more hysterically, had been erected above us to try to get us off the road. There were electrical signs hanging over the highway and harassing us with numbers. Trucks drove past, full of materials they would use to build prisons. As we approached the hole, the road straightened out, fortunately, so we could continue riding without disappearing into the abyss. They had put loops in the highway to tempt us into returning to the City, but we managed to foil their confusing traffic schemes. I helped drive the car by having faith that everything would turn out all right. We finally got there, and there really was supposed to be plenty to eat outside the City beets with pure sugar, if necessary—ha-ha-ha, the power of positive thinking! My good thoughts had a positive effect because the numbers on the signs over the road went out again, and we could continue on our way. I had to streamline my thinking with the traffic, with merging, maintaining speed, closing up—and as long as I did that, we were fine. I kept my mind on our destination and on the things we needed to get there, and sure enough, our road kept going of its own accord, and we glided noiselessly from one lane to another and were led in the right direction amidst all those thousands of other cars. The farther you are from the City, the less insanity there is. The land of safety was approaching. I saw real cows and real people. Here there wasn't so much obstruction; here the people hadn't yet sold their souls.

4.2.2 The World on Its Head

In the previous section, I talked about a feeling of "pure" space, without any objects or horizons to limit that feeling. If this subjective feeling, this spatial gaze, is strong enough, it can fold space into pleats and "shape" it. Above I showed how distinctions between close and far away, foreground and background, can change and disappear when seen by madmen. Here I am going to address the remarkable phenomenon of the spatial "inversion" of the dimensions.

Perspective and depth are the products of the gaze. Directing the gaze is the subjective side of the process of seeing. Seeing is not simply the passive reception of objective reality; it also involves paying attention to certain aspects of the world by directing one's gaze to them. Merleau-Ponty (2012,

291) correctly writes, "My eye is, for me, a certain power for encountering things; it is not a screen upon which things are projected. The relation between my eye and the object is not given to me in the form of a geometrical projection of the object into the eye, but rather as a certain hold that my eye has upon the object—still vague in peripheral vision, more narrow and more precise when I focus upon the object. ... The movement of my eye toward what it will focus upon is not the shifting of one object in relation to another object, it is a march toward the real."

The subjective character of the gaze is also reflected in everyday cognition and speech. As the saying goes, looks can kill. People can be troubled by someone else's gaze, and some people even believe in an active power that emanates from the "evil eye."

The gaze imparts perspective to space and controls what is being seen. When the eye falls on something, that thing acquires contours, precision, and details. It comes to our attention and advances to the foreground, while the surroundings retreat to the background. A patient being treated by the Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler (cited in Sass 1992, 271) says, "Many things come out of my lovely blue eyes, e.g., bed sheets, smoothly ironed pillows and quilts of soft feathers (white or colored), bedsteads, commodes, baskets, thread, stockings of all colors, clothes from the plainest to the most elegant; and finally people fly out, fortunately not naked but completely dressed."

4.2.2.1 Width The gaze that brings about depth and perspective is also responsible for width. On one side of the gaze is "the right" and on the other side is "the left." When normal spatial perspective collapses, the left-right orientation can no longer be taken for granted. Sechehaye's Renee (1970, 29) writes, "I don't know what happened during the summer vacation, but I seemed to have lost a sense of perspective. So I copied the model from a schoolmate's sketch, thus lending a false perspective from where I sat. In the gymnasium I didn't understand the commands, confusing left and right. As for the sewing lessons, it was impossible to understand the technique of placing patches or the mysteries of knitting a sock heel."

Knowing how doors turn or which side of the street to bike on no longer comes naturally. Everything seems arbitrary and could just as easily happen the other way around. One anonymous patient, cited in Landis (1964, 208), says, "I lost money, and literally lost myself, having become so bewildered in streets long familiar, that I could not discriminate north from south, or east from west, as if my brains were completely turned." The madman becomes disoriented in space, but you might also say that he becomes more acutely aware of the often unmotivated orientations of objects and spaces.

In madness, an upside-down toilet bowl is just as meaningful as a toilet bowl that is right-side up.

Merleau-Ponty (2012, 263) makes an interesting remark regarding the experience of space and inversion: "Turning an object upside down strips it of its signification." Indeed, the "natural," conventional significance of things does disappear in mad inversion. But that very inversion also gives rise to new mad meanings. Conrad (1958, 28) writes, "Case number 30 said that a few months before the onset of the psychosis he had had the peculiar feeling while walking across a bridge that everything was inverted: what had been on the left suddenly seemed to be on the right, and all his thoughts were reversed. And when he walked toward the city, he had the feeling that he was leaving the city. This feeling was not natural, but struck him as artificial. People, too, meant 'yes' whenever they said 'no.'"

The madman is under the impression that the left/right distinction depends on "how you look at it." He believes you can discover a new secret world by "turning things around." A well-known variant of this is listening to secret messages that are hidden in sound recordings by reversing them, playing them backwards. One example, according to some, are the diabolical communications to be found in records by the Rolling Stones. The madman applies this technique on a broad scale. Take the familiar convention of reading from left to right. Intriguing signs and meanings appear, however, when you read a text "the other way," from right to left or from bottom to top. To do that, you have to ignore some of the structure of the text. But by letting your gaze slip erratically across the page and processing only the words your eye falls on, you create meanings that would escape you during normal reading. In this procedure, not only do the sentences gain in significance, but the individual words do too. So the spatial conventions that collapse under conditions of madness also affect reading conventions. Just as the world becomes a space with infinite depth, so texts acquire infinite meaning.

The madman sometimes uses inversion, and the inverted world, to counter the imbalance around him. He seeks harmony, unity, and symmetry, and can be seized by the idea that an "inverted variant" of a phenomenon "cancels out" the arbitrariness of that phenomenon and brings it into synthesis in a symmetrically harmonious unity. For example, when the psychotic walks past a cemetery, he will choose to see, think, or carry out something having to do with birth. If he hears people arguing, he will have the urge to respond with a merry little tune. A well-known variant of this is the practice of compulsively counting sidewalk tiles while walking down the street in the belief that this harmonious way of walking will cancel out an imbalance somewhere else.

As the example from Conrad shows, becoming aware of the spatial left/right distinction can have repercussions in other domains where spatial metaphors are used, such as politics. For example, the famous French playwright and experience expert Antonin Artaud wrote this in a letter to André Breton (Artaud, 1976, 401): "If I say in the pamphlet that the Left is politically doomed, that does not mean that the Right is going to rule, for the Right I have in mind is the Right of Man and not the stupid Reaction. The Right must be swept away with the Left and after having swept away the Left, so that the Natural Right, for in Nature it is the Right Hand which generally rules over the Left, can come into power." (Section 12.2.3, intermezzo III.I, and section 16.4.3 are entirely devoted to the fate and madness of Artaud.)

4.2.2.2 Height According to the linguists Lakoff and Johnson in their influential work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), spatial distinctions in terms of before and behind, left and right, above and below, are used in other domains as *orientational metaphors*. I have already provided examples of the metaphorical use of left and right. It is mainly the height metaphors, however, that play a role in our everyday life, such as when we talk about what is good and what is bad (highly placed, lowlife), what is worth striving for (lofty goals, low motivation), what is healthy and unhealthy (high-powered, feeling down), and so forth. When a madman's spatial basis changes, his understanding of symbolic and metaphorical meanings changes along with it. If whatever is low becomes high, then the lowlife, for example, becomes more attractive than the highly regarded.

Not only the metaphorical but also the natural orientation can change in terms of high and low.⁵ Whatever we call nearby and far away (foreground and background) is determined by that to which we attach importance and pay attention. Similarly, what we call high and low is determined by the way we orient ourselves on earth and in the cosmos. In madness, when high and low change places, this often goes hand in hand with changes in ideas about gravity and the movement of the heavenly bodies—understandable, since *low* usually means "more closely attracted to the earth and farther from the sun" than *high*.

Morag Coate (in Peterson 1982, 303) provides an example of this when she describes her spatial position during her stay in an isolation cell: "After the ambulance took me away, I became so ill that there are now some gaps in memory, but I found myself before long lying on a mattress in a small and otherwise empty room. I was inside out and upside down, and the visible sign of this was that I was lying on the ceiling. How did I know it was the ceiling and not the floor? In the first place there was the absence of a

bed. In hospital you are put to lie on a bed if you are nursed by ordinary gravity. But if you had to lie on the ceiling, you would want to be as close to it as possible; so that was why I only had a mattress. These things are quite simply explained if you keep calm, but at the same time it is as well to make sure. I got up and looked out through the small peephole in the observation cubicle. There were shelves alongside, and on them parcels tied up in newspaper. I looked closely. The print was upside down. That proved conclusively that in this place gravity had been reversed."

Another example from the isolation cell is provided by Hennell (1967, 135): "The sun seemed to travel backwards for a part of the day, as heavy airplanes flew in parallel lines overhead—till no doubt could be left that this walled square of ground was magnetized from within, and that its orientation could be altered independently of earth's rotation."

Even outside the isolation cell the world and the cosmos can sometimes seem quite different. An example of this comes from Jung (1916, 154), who says, "A paranoiac of good intelligence who has a clear idea of the spherical form of the earth and its rotation around the sun replaces the modern astronomical views by a system worked out in great detail, which one must call archaic, in which the earth is a flat disc over which the sun travels."

Egmont (in De Waard 2007, 210–211), says, "And there has been but one moment among all those psychoses that really shocks me. I think I had spent one night walking through the streets of Amsterdam, and I believe the sun had not yet risen, when I arrived on the Overtoom. It was completely quiet there, but above the street I saw a ring of sulfurous clouds. I had no idea what sulfur smelled like, but I knew it was sulfur, the real smell of sulfur. And the earth was not flat, but it was sloping. At that moment I felt it: this is a dimension that is dangerous. Someone walked past me, and he was covered with black spots or something. And I was terrified, and I knew, I have to get out of here, this is not good. ... And the world was tipping to one side, so I also had a theory: don't go west, with the setting sun, because you'd be walking to the east."

In these examples, the world is standing on its head, both figuratively and literally—and it's difficult to tell the difference between literal and figurative. Of course, you could say that the individuals in these examples were simply laboring under a misapprehension. That is possible, seen from our normal, modern perspective of how the cosmos is put together. But we can't really begin to understand the mad experience of space until we grasp what it's like to confuse high and low, to wander about in such a strange cosmos.

We can broaden our perception by looking at other noncontemporary views. Putting foreground and background into perspective—and left and right, below and above—can have a liberating effect. The idea that we are not riveted to the earth, that space is "relative," and that we design space ourselves by the power of our minds, can be a great relief. In the mystical tradition, inversions lead to statements like, "The heaven above, the heaven below, the sky above, the sky below, all things above, all things below, decline and rise" (Oedipus Aegypticus, 1654, cited in Jung 1916, 63). Sometimes madmen go one step further, actively and deliberately tinkering with the position of the heavenly bodies, the weather, and the clouds. This brings you to a different, magical realm of madness, however, which I will discuss in detail in part IV.

We ourselves can go one step further in this reassessment of high and low values by viewing the conventional and (all too) philosophical interpretations of canonical texts on space, disorientation, and inversion in a different light. Take this passage from Friedrich Nietzsche (1974, 181–182):

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God! ... Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying, as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning?

This passage is often understood as a bleak, poetic consideration of the consequences of the death of God. According to this line of thinking, there would be nothing left to hold onto. Without God, we would no longer know where to turn, and nihilism would threaten on every side. But perhaps the real "crazy people" are far beyond Nietzsche's lamentations. Perhaps they have pushed their way through that point in the mirror where "above" and "below" come together, and they have erected a new world on the other side—cold, nocturnally dark—where they have found a goal, beheld a crystal, considered an idea.

4.2.2.3 Inside out There are two kinds of spatial inversions: rotations and mirrorings. In rotations, two dimensions are reversed, but the object remains essentially the same. Rotations can be carried out in normal space: you can simply turn a book in the bookcase around, in the sense of either

setting the book on its head or putting the spine in the back and the opening in the front. In both cases, the first page of the book ends up on the left side of the bookcase, and in fact, two dimensions of the book have been reversed: the high/low or front/back dimension first, and the left/right dimension second.

In mirroring, only one dimension changes, and the object is turned into an "inverted" variant. For example, if you look at a screw in the mirror, the thread of the screw seems to be turning the other way; that is to say, the screw is "reversed" in the mirror, not in the sense of being rotated but in the sense of being reflected as a mirror image. When seen in the mirror, a men's zipper changes to the ladies' variant, and letters turn into mirror writing. A mirror inversion only works in a mirror. In normal space, an object cannot be magically inverted, and rotation does not result in mirroring. You can turn a left-handed screw, glove, or zipper as much as you like, but it will never change its "turned-ness."

When an object is mirrored twice, the original object is restored and, at the very most, is rotated. Create a left-right mirror image and then make a front-back mirror image of that, and you have an object that is turned 180 degrees but is no longer mirrored. So a mirror in a mirror produces the original orientation or direction of rotation. Therefore the only way to see yourself as others see you is to look in a double mirror. That's why there are only two essentially different variants of every object, left-handed and right-handed. Instead of three inversions—of the three dimensions—only one essential inversion is possible.

Thanks to inversion, an inverted mirror-image world is actually conceivable. It would be identical to the normal world except for the aspect of turnedness: left-handed and right-handed would be inverted in every possible way.⁶ For the madman, it sometimes seems as if he's landed in such a mirror-image world. He experiences, thinks about, and sees the dimensions in reverse. He appears to have ended up "behind the mirror," except he still remembers what the "normal" orientation was. Otherwise he wouldn't notice the inversion. Thinking, experiencing, or perceiving from a different possible "turned-ness" can lead to disorientation. One of Louis Sass's patients made an intriguing statement to this effect: "Sometimes I don't know what side of the mirror I'm standing on." Compare the remarks made by Sechehaye's Renee at the beginning of section 4.2.2.1.

In order to clarify what this mirrored space might signify, it helps to compare it with two-dimensional (2D) space. In a two-dimensional world of flat sheets of paper, there are two-dimensional objects, such as the letter p. This p can become a d if you just move it around it on the paper and

turn it over—that is, rotate it in 2D. What you cannot do in the world of flat surfaces is turn the p into a q. On a flat surface, the p cannot be mirrored, just as you cannot turn a left-hand glove into a right-hand glove in our three-dimensional (3D) space. But a flat p can become a flat q "via" 3D space. To do that, you would have to soak the p off the paper, lift it out of its 2D world, turn it around in the 3D world, and lay it back down. In the 3D world, this would correspond to removing an object from 3D space, turning it around in a 4D world, and putting it back in 3D space, but then in reverse—like a book written in mirror writing, for example.

When I apply this line of reasoning to madness as inversion, the madman "falls" or "steps" out of the 3D space, turns around in the 4D world, and then returns—but "inside out." In the terminology of the science-fiction book *Doorways in the Sand*, by Roger Zelazny, the madman visits the Rhennius machine (see the preface and section 14.2.1). It should be quite clear that this is not happening at the physical level: psychotics don't suddenly change with regard to right- or left-handedness or the side on which their hair is parted. But maybe it takes place at the "mental" level, and a madman "cogitates his head off," turning something over and over in his mind until his mind itself turns over. Deep reflection, after all, can take you right off the deep end. One of Blankenburg's patients (1971, 135) says, "Schizophrenia is exactly like squeezing out the contents of a cardboard container."

In the 2D world, this kind of psychic mirroring can be expressed in the following way: you can experience a p as p, which means you reflect on it, you look at it from a certain vantage point, and you understand it "from the front," in its entirety, as p. When you make this attempt to observe and perceive the p in its entirety in 2D, you are already descending conceptually from the sheet of paper. Now the mad secret is that you should also be able to look at the p from the other side of the paper and perceive it as q. This "looking from the other side of the paper" in the 2D world may have a parallel in the 3D world. If you perceive and understand an object in space in its entirety, then in principle, you should be able to look at it "from the other side."

The question now is whether you can actually get to the other side of the 3D world, and if so, how? Should you literally look at everything by means of mirrors? Or is a mental inversion sufficient? We could speculate further and ask such questions as, What are the consequences of this mirroring? Is "the other side" really another world, or is it no more than an illusory mirrored world? And what is 4D space? Is time perhaps the fourth dimension? Does our "thrownness" in time prevent us from "using" time in order to

"turn things around"? And when the madman has unraveled the secret of time, is he then "on the other side"? Would we still be able to understand him? Or would he be inside the crystal ball instead of outside?

This interpretation, assisted by inversion, is supported by my own experience and by those of others (see Kusters et al. 2007), and it is corroborated by people like D., a patient of Stanghellini (2004, 7): "I see, certainly, but without noticing it. What do I need to do to observe them better? Open my eyes wider? Something is really seen when you have a total image of it, and closing your eyes you see it again. Like in a mirror. Like a camera." This analogy with two-dimensional space and "the other side of the paper" may also explain why madmen so often believe that they're "wise to everything," that they've seen the light, and so forth. As for seeing the light, you'd be able to see reality, 3D space, as something we always look at from only one side. Maybe the only reason we can see at all is because, on the other side of the paper, there's a light source that we can see only indirectly, because the things that are illuminated by it are the only things we can see. Maybe you see the real light when you've been "on the other side," behind the veil of ignorance—or behind the "3D paper" (also see chapter 9, on Plato's cave).

Fragment VII: The Circle Is Round

I see it as clear as glass: it's a disaster. I've been living backwards for fifteen years. When I was twenty-five, it turned around, and now I'm forty, and the second reversal has arrived. LSD is the enigma: sugar cubes, sukram chakra. My idea shot like an arrow, straight up on the horizontal time axis. If you aim well, you hit a point directly overhead on which you can pull yourself up. That's why I went up to the heights to look down into the depths. If you want to look deeply, you first have to go up high. I'm now sitting on the floor of the attic, which is the ceiling of the living room in reverse. I'm sitting right above the spot where, for many years, my favorite TV set was located. All the negative energy from all those years has ascended, and now it's stored here in this place in the attic. Now I can feel how the TV negativity takes on a positive flip side up here. LSD contains the circle of five squared, as in the benzene ring and sugar crystals. Fifteen years ago a knot formed, and I've lived in that knot all this time. The cords lying there in the corner are black and red and twisted together, all jumbled up. I've neglected the attic far too long. The taut, transparent, separated things couldn't take it anymore. They've started coiling, conniving, and getting all twisted. I have to untangle the cords, cut the wires free, untie the ties, roll them up and whoosh, out they go. Then the LSD spell will break and the world will start spinning in the right direction.

I can hardly see up here: there are no windows, no openings. The only light source is my cell phone, the intruder, the metal alien. Now I understand why the word "live" is on the lower right side on the menu of my phone. I always thought the internet on your cell phone cost money. But this is different. This is no internet—this is Nokia. When I press "live," I get connected to a higher, unearthly, ethereal level. And when I stick it in my pocket, my head becomes clear, illumined, lightened. All this dust has to go, all the garbage. I have to clear out the attic. I'm re-connected to the pure source, pure madness, the point of ground zero. I knew that back then as well, but I didn't have enough resilience. I tried to rise up by means of the color red, and I jumped up onto a red car. But that involved too much materialistic thinking, and they locked me up to teach me a lesson. Nice try, but it didn't work. Back to square one. After that came a long, steady training period, and finally I worked my way through it all and came out at the other end. Now I see it: One hour contains four headquarters. I've just turned forty, so I've had all four of them. In the new world order of my Nokia, I can set the time zone all by myself. I'm switching to Moscow time.

I'm going downstairs to straighten things up, to sort things out, and to organize. It's better if my stuff is grounded in the house. Things should be heavy so they stay in place. Then in between it all, you can shoot up like a rocket, from the heaviness to the light. The windows have to be open, then the air can come in and circulate. I have to stack the plates differently and rearrange the jars of sandwich filling. Brown peanut butter to the right in the back, red jam on the left, syrup to the right in the front. The sugar bowl goes in the middle, of course. Actually everything should go into the fridge; that's where it stays cool and maintains its consistency. The books go into the bookcase, but in a different order. I'm going to make a list, an Excel file, to get the optimal distribution. Heavy books at the bottom of the bookcase. Is the Bible heavy? Which book should I start with? A book with the truth in it, or a book with the history of the truth? Is history a category, or should I-to take a very different turn-arrange according to color of binding? And the objects that are related to books? Books are made of paper, and therefore from wood, so they shouldn't be placed too far from other organic material—such as food. The cross of Jesus was made of wood, wood makes suffering possible, but paper cancels it out: looking at the other side of paper, ha-ha-ha. Whoa, take it easy. Settle down. There were nails, too. Sharp metal is dangerous to have in the house. Good thing I just threw out those cords. Innocent-looking plastic from the outside, but we're not going to fall for that anymore. Vicious twisted metal snakes on the inside. Everything is becoming clear again. I'll return the materials to their proper places, like a modern Empedocles: light things up high, water at tap level,

earth underground—and fire? Here, I'll light up a cigarette and suck the fire in. Everything has its place and its time.

4.3 Crazy Places

4.3.1 Intrusive Media

The term "media" is mainly used in the realm of communication and information. Media are carriers, or "vehicles," of messages and meanings, and as such, they connect spaces together. What was once "out there, with others" in space is connected by media to become "here, with me." When a distant event from far away is repeated on television in my living room, it is suddenly present with me. Thanks to "tele-vision," our visual power is increased: what once lay over the horizon now appears within my range of vision. Normally, television images are regarded as having come from a world that is different from the physical world that houses the TV set (the living room). We know that what we are watching is visible "here," but only as a representation of a place "out there."

In madness, this difference between here and there disappears. Just as the elimination of temporal distinctions results in an "eternal now," so the elimination of the difference between "here" and "there" results in an "omnipresent here." In madness, the fly that is being broadcast on the screen of the television is just as really "here" as the fly that has lit on the same screen. The "image fly" and the real fly belong to the same lived space: "here, with me." In addition, like other images, TV images are interpreted within the context of the things that exist in the mad space (the living room). If someone appears on television who has the same name as a neighbor, that is significant. If a field of red tulips is shown on television and the madman has a red flower on his table, that is a sign. When the queen gives her speech and her gestures "speak volumes," they're the volumes in the madman's bookcase. On the one hand, the madman expands space: he is "directly" connected to the whole world, and his telekinetic powers (see section 2.3.1 and chapters 14 and 16) have a global range, thanks to the television. On the other hand, the world shrivels up to the dimensions of the psychotic's living room; there is no space beyond his own private interior.

The madman also influences other media besides television—at least in his own experience: radio, mobile phones, newspapers, and advertising signs. Today the internet is a popular and suitable medium for spatial madness, which is understandable, given its omnipresence. For the madman, one advantage of the computer screen over the TV screen is that the

computer screen can "really" be influenced—by means of the keyboard. In addition, the abundance and variety of web pages gives the solitary madman ensconced behind his computer many opportunities to have the value and significance of his own mad world confirmed. (A study of the influence of the internet on modern madness would be especially interesting.)

Nevertheless, all media are used—or distorted—in a similar way in madness, and they seem more like a vehicle for the madness itself than a means of influencing it. One example of this is a report about a madman from 1856, which includes many well-known expressions of madness, even though the form of the medium he refers to strikes us today as old-fashioned (Landis 1964, 3): "I thought that I was the living intelligent principle of electricity, and that I had the power to call into my own person all the electric fluid in the world ... all the telegraph wires in the United States were employed in conducting the fluid into my body ..." What lunatic today is still talking about "telegraph wires"? Even madmen are timeless in the way they keep up with the times.

Our knowledge of the world is conveyed to us by the media to a considerable degree. Not only factual knowledge but also the lion's share of fictional stories reach us via media such as television, the internet, newspapers, and books. Modern media do just that: they "mediate" between our personal experience, the experience of others, and knowledge of the world. Actually, media—when they also include "language"—are the means by which (and within which) we give voice to ourselves and our identity and shape our relationship to existence. Expressed in general terms like these, the role of the media seems to resemble the role that religion played in earlier times. The elimination of the distinction between here and there corresponds to the difference between the terrestrial and the super-terrestrial in religious terminology. Where visitations and visions of saints, spirits, and angels; conversations with God; and whisperings of the devil used to be quite common, today madmen erect their shrines, rituals, and altars around the television and the internet. In madness, media and religion no longer bridge the distance or gap between here and there, myself and the other; they simply abolish the difference altogether.

4.3.2 Portals, Tunnels, and Holes

The madman's living room—with or without TV—represents the whole cosmos. When the madman steps out of his house and enters another space, it's like passing from one universe to another. The two spaces are not in any way connected. Each has an entirely different atmosphere. This gives space a dreamlike character: all sorts of things happen, but nothing

"sticks," nothing is enduring. Without anything to hold on to, the madman tumbles from one space to another. There is no conventional time structure or normal storyline that ties the various spaces together. Spaces no longer acquire a color or mood from their functionality within a greater whole. The mood becomes dependent on arbitrary accidents. A café in which a German happens to be sitting will take on an aggressive, wartime quality due to the association with the Second World War. If three people with long hair and jeans are occupying a similar café, the place will be filled with the atmosphere of the sixties.

In mad space there are "markers" that indicate the transition between two different spaces. Thus there is a fascination with doors, portals, and tunnels. For "normal" people, these are simply partitions that split the general space into two separate parts or subspaces. Those who move from one space to the other remain more or less the same. In madness, however, every door is a "transition," a "passage," or a "portal" to another world. Photos, cameras, and screens also offer transition possibilities. Everything we see and fantasize behind these mysterious portals is "elsewhere" and "here" at the same time. You can make contact with other spaces via the screen.

Some of these "portals" are also tools of transformation. A camera transforms an entire area, absorbs it completely, and converts it into the inside of a "camera space." This is why the madman sitting locked up in a bare isolation cell in a mental hospital experiences his space differently than someone in an isolation cell equipped with cameras. The first will imagine that he's in a monastic cell or a tomb, while the second will think he's "inside the TV" or "in the heart of the webcam."

Ultimately, every object can become a marker. Every object is capable of being a symbol, of opening other spaces, of generating worlds of meaning. Behind every object lies the hope of a perfect world—as well as the threat of a menacing one.

When time is experienced only "spatially," the emergence and passing away of people, animals, and things must also take place "in space" rather than in time. Death is then a literal "departure" to another space, and being born is an arrival, a being-brought-in. When the dimension of time penetrates that of space, "normal" space is transformed or distorted. This can lead to mad topology and experiences of dreamily soft yet genuinely hard spaces in which phenomena are connected to each other in magical ways.

Mad space is a unity, and it unites the entire cosmos within itself. On the other hand, every object tempts the mad subject to create new and different diverting worlds. The space here and now is unified, but it is constantly in danger of disintegrating, of flowing away into the various objects.

4.3.3 Black Light

The way space changes in madness is often experienced and described as a change in light. As experience expert Jennifer Keil (1986, 98) describes it, "For several days prior to hospitalization, the world I experienced was changed even though my actions and speech remained normal. It was as if a light had come on in a dark room and everything which was always there, now became clear. I puzzled, had I suddenly acquired greater intelligence?" Experience expert Alfred Kubin (cited in Winkler 1948, 140) writes, "There, something psychically very unusual and decisive for me happened, which even today I don't understand, although I have thought about it a great deal. Namely, as the small orchestra began to play, my whole surroundings suddenly appeared to be clearer and sharper, as if seen in another light."

What is that "other light" that appears and shines in madness, and how does it correspond to ordinary light? What is ordinary light anyway? A commonly held notion is that the world is visible because light radiates from the sun or another light source, and after being reflected by objects it is picked up by our eyes. This makes "seeing" a passive reaction to light by the eye and the nervous system. But seeing also means that light stimuli are actively regulated, that meaning is imposed on visual images, and that the gaze is deliberately directed toward a particular object. Although the physical eye receives only a chaotic quantity of light stimuli, our mind's eye "sees" meaningful shapes. Our mind's eye makes it possible for us to recognize rather than simply to see, and to understand rather than simply to grasp.

It has been said that this mental aspect of seeing involves another kind of light: "mental light." Augustine called it "illumination." Descartes wrote about "clear and distinct" ideas as the basis of true knowledge. And ever since the eighteenth century, reference has been made to the "light" of reason that was said to impart order and insight. In Platonic philosophy, seeing this "higher" light is etymologically enshrouded in the term "idea." In normal language, this "light" is associated with "clarity," "comprehensibility," and "insight" by means of light and sight metaphors. I call this the "white light," as opposed to ordinary "natural light." (The light metaphor will continue through part II and, at the end, will ignite in the metaphor of the fire. In part III, I will take a closer look at light and madness through light from the standpoint of Platonic and neo-Platonic thought.)

Madmen are not blind. Their eyes function well, and natural light stimuli are processed normally. Yet something is happening to the light itself. Jaspers (cited in Sass 1994, 97) writes, "The environment is somehow different—not to a gross degree—perception is unaltered in itself but there

is some strange change which envelops everything with a subtle, pervasive and strangely uncertain light." (Also see the quote from Sechehaye's Renee in section 1.2.1.2.)

When I myself think about mad space, I see a dusky atmosphere, not as dark as it is at night, but certainly not as bright as in the daytime. The light is something like summer twilight. The sun has set; things are no longer being illuminated by a light source somewhere far above us in the sky. The quality of darkness is already present in the air, and things seem to be radiating of their own accord. Everything is glowing in the semidarkness, and all things are intensely present. Everything is shining, insofar as you can speak of light at all. It's not emanating from any apparent source. This atmosphere of light is like that found in the paintings of De Chirico, Dalí, Willink, Caravaggio, and Tintoretto. Custance (1952, 31) aptly writes, "... faces seem to glow with a sort of inner light which shows up the characteristic lines extremely vividly. ... This ... applies to the human body as a whole, and to a rather lesser degree to other objects such as trees, clouds, flowers and so on."

I call the typical mad light "black light." While white light (whether from God, the mind, or reason) is the light of binding oneness, black light is the light of isolated oneness. What makes things under black light so special is not that they can be classified in a general order or category but that they are what they are: they are "this." Their "this-ness," their existence in and of itself, their here-and-now givenness, is striking. Things seen in black light don't seem to need the sun; they produce their own radiance. This can bring the madman into a state of rapture or perplexity. Black light is enabling him to see the miracle of existence. Every thing, every event, becomes a miracle, and for the madman this can take an extreme form, as the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (cited in Wayne Proudfoot 1985) observes: "Miracle is simply the religious name for event." Coate (1964) writes,

I got up from where I had been sitting ... suddenly my whole being was filled with light and loveliness and with an upsurge of deeply moving feeling from within to meet and reciprocate the influence that flowed into me. I was in a state of the most vivid awareness and illumination. What can I say of it? A cloudless cerulean blue sky of the mind shot through with shafts of exquisite, warm, dazzling sunlight. ... It seemed that some force or impulse from without was acting on me; that I was in touch with a reality beyond my own; that I had made direct contact with the secret, ultimate source of life. What I had read of the accounts of others acquired suddenly a new meaning. It flashed across my mind, "this is what the mystics mean by the direct experience of God."

The enchantment brought on by the black light of things can also assume negative or frightening forms. In *Alleen* (Kusters et al. 2007), I write: "A mysterious haze is hanging over things, whether they're noticeable or not. In fact, the black light often darts about in the background like an inconspicuous and indescribable threat. The background whispers: this is this is this. IS THIS? The pieces of scenery move forward and take on a leading role in the black light." The mad light emerges from the darkness, from the background, while normal light from a light source lands on the foreground. Sechehaye's Renee (1970, 44–45) writes,

For me, madness was definitely not a condition of illness; I did not believe that I was ill. It was rather a country, opposed to Reality, where reigned an implacable light, blinding, leaving no place for shadow; an immense space without boundary, limitless, flat. ... People turn weirdly about, they make gestures, movements without sense; they are phantoms whirling on an infinite plain, crushed by the pitiless electric light. And I—I am lost in it, isolated, cold, stripped, purposeless under the light. ... This was it; this was madness, the Enlightenment was the perception of Unreality. Madness was finding oneself permanently in an all-embracing Unreality. I called it the "Land of Light" because of the brilliant illumination, dazzling, astral, cold. ...

Taking this light metaphor a bit further, you might say that normal space is that of waking, of the day and the sun, while mad space begins with dreaming, the night and the moon. In her autobiography, McCall (1947, 4) sets the sunlight of normal life against the "half-lights" of madness: "I had already turned off the broad, sunlit road of my normal life and had taken the first steps along that tortuous highway of madness. ... I was heading for that realm of darkness, that land of half-lights and weird shadows, the world of the mentally ill."

Night is the absence of day, and in that sense there is no light at night. But all that is missing at night is daylight, white light, or "natural light." A substitute for white daylight—its counterpart—might be found in the symbolism of the northern lights, aurora borealis. Daylight (normality) orients the individual along the east-west axis. The absence of this light, and of the circuit of the sun from east to west (from orient to occident), leads—literally—to disorientation, a common term for madness. The madman is without anchor, rudderless and directionless. He has lost the normal rhythm of the sun, the rhythm of day and night, human time. In its place, in the still of the night, he encounters another dimension of time: that of the north-south dimension and the northern lights. Islamic expert Henry Corbin (1989, 589) writes, "The illumination of the northern lights is not the day that

follows the night, nor is it the night that follows the day. It is the day that shines in the middle of the night and turns this night into day."¹⁰

Fragment VIII: The Earth Is Flat

Whoever has seen the Light knows the alarming truth: the earth is infinitely flat. According to the traditional, somewhat childish cosmology, the earth is a small finite ball revolving around the sun, and the sun is just a star among many other stars and solar systems. But that story is only meant to deceive children and young people. It's no more than a reassuring gesture to put their minds to rest. Sooner or later you suddenly figure it out: we don't live on a finite little ball but in an infinite big ball. The Greeks were onto this, and even in the Christian world it was accepted for a long time. Read part two of Peter Sloterdijk's Spheres trilogy, Globes. The center of the world does not lie beneath us, in the material earth, but above us, in the Light. Matter is no more than the Light's sluggishness. We are made from Light, and we turn our faces toward the Light, like sunflowers. Actually, everything is Light. Light allows us to see; Light attracts. You cannot see matter at all. Matter's apparent existence is dependent on the Light. Only those who cannot grasp the boundlessness of the Light create a border around the Light and call it matter. Matter is no more than the outer surface of the Light. Those who cannot see the inside of the Light think that only matter exists. But that's the world turned on its head, of course! Indoctrinated by hundreds of years of materialism and atheism, there are still legions of ignorant people who think that only matter exists, that the earth is round, and that the center lies beneath us. They worship death, the darkness of mute, silent matter. We worship the Light, life, and motion. We do not kill Light in matter, but we catch it in mirrors and thereby create a tier for the gods. They live above us, on the other side of the roof. They are the forefathers for the fathers. Thanks to them, we understand something about the Light. They pass the Light onto us. We give birth to stars, heavens, and gods; we have been unfaithful to the earth.

You can feel that the earth cannot possibly be the center, because you can just see that gravity is not a downward but an upward force. We are pulled upward. We reach upward. We get up in the morning. Without any effort at all, we stretch ourselves toward the sky and the heavens. Everything and everyone wants to get off the earth, humans more than any of the rest. Animals often stand on four legs, but we began looking and reaching upward. Try it. Defy the so-called "gravity" and feel the "levity" as you raise your arm. We are angels under the surface, and wings give us the power to raise ourselves up. You can see this from the way people walk. Many ignorant

people walk with a breathless, heavy tread, drawn down by the illusion of matter. Other people walk in the Light—light-footed, barely touching the earth, looking up toward the open heaven of Light. We are the balance artists. We cannot fall because essentially we are hovering, and we only pretend that matter has a hold on us. We are dipolar, infinitely stretched between heaven and earth. They are unipolar, dourly turning back to the mud, the ashes, and the ground. No one wants to go into the ground. There is no ground, no earth—only fire and light, dancing in the Light. We are the Anonymous Astronauts. We recognize each other by the light sounds we make, and the airy laughter. Yesterday I found myself in the elevator with the fitness trainer. He knew it too. We were talking about certainties and what you can depend on. And he spoke: "There's one thing you can be sure of, and that is gravity." Then he turned to me. He fixed his gaze on me with his furrowed face, a face marked by life. He smiled a smile of mutual understanding, and he said, "But I can't even be entirely sure of that."

The future lies above us. We are drawn by the center of the cosmos far above us. That center is a point, infinitely far away, around which the earth is folded like an infinitely vast expanse. In principle the earth is indeed a ball—they're right on that score—but because the radius of the ball is infinitely vast, it seems flat when you're inside it. Infinitely flat, and because of that infinitude, you can't see that it's curving. The moon is a strange case. It was hung there to make the night interesting to look at when you're a child. Granted, it's gotten a little out of hand with all the moon fantasies. They had to pretend you could leave the earth by rocket ship in order to walk around on the moon. If you could really take off in a rocket ship, you would see the horizon rise along with you, which is one of the most remarkable consequences of living in an infinitely large ball. Every now and then, these reports trickle down that the whole moon-landing was staged in a studio. But even if they allowed such a report to make its way to the greater public, it would still be "a giant leap for mankind" to grasp the fact that the moon doesn't exist at all.

And then all that craziness about "airplanes." As if you could fly "around the earth"! Yes, then it really would have to be a ball. But it's not. They put on some nice shows in those flying crates, you have to admit. Very well done. When you're in a plane, it's just as if it were real, just as if you were up in the air. If you look outside, you can see all kinds of weird curves: spatial curves, perspective curves, curves in the earth. All trickery, fairground stunts, everybody on the merry-go-round, effects of speed, an overdose of movies, and the power of suggestion. It is amusing to hear how an intelligent person like Steven could fall for it. He told me that he had been

"in Australia," that he went there by plane—yeah, yeah—and that he flew across the "international dateline." Then he launched into this whole story about his luggage not arriving in Holland, that they had sent it to Zimbabwe. See, those are the little weaving flaws that prove that the system is one big fake. The whole purpose of the "airline system" is to keep alive any suggestion of distant lands and traveling passengers. Logical that the system sometimes confuses Australia with Zimbabwe—from A to Z, for those who get what I'm driving at. It's amusing to see how Steven was duped and continued to be astonished by the luggage, while I could see right through his story—I understood the larger pattern, and I smiled wisely. There is no spoon—only sugar. Thijs, who has known this for a long time, collects cutlery from "airplanes." Every now and then he travels with people just for the fun of it, people who think that you can actually "fly" in an airplane. Once, he showed me his collection of purloined airplane spoons, taken from Thai Airlines to KLM and British Airways. Only now do I understand what he was trying to explain with them.

You can go through the gates of Schiphol Airport many times before you realize that you've actually gone "through a portal." A gate is a screen that you break through, a layer of magnetism and scans. Once you get to the other side, you think you've ended up in another country, but you've only come back to where you started—and in "excursion form" (spin-offs!), almost like in that film *eXistenZ*. If I had been more alert, I would have figured this out sooner. Oh, well, this is just as good a time as any; better late than never. Flying—what a time-consuming business. All those vacations by air whose only purpose is to let people see ordinary things from the other side. Australia is no more than a school, a virtual environment where you're trained in certain skills without even knowing it—skills you can put to good use "after you get home." It took a long time for me to figure that out as well.

And that fairytale of September eleventh—I believed that for a long time too. But we get ourselves too worked up. It's all nothing more than a game of Risk that's gotten out of hand. It's come to live a life of its own, the "game of continents." Tintin in Africa, miserable little black kids, who could have thought that up? It is an amusing children's fantasy, believing in a kind of "negative" continent. *Out of Africa*. Yeah, they can really take you for a ride. Just the kind of trick my grandpa would pull, to rattle us. As if you were watching a movie from behind the screen, but then in terms of Light: black becomes white and white becomes black. And in order to keep the kids busy and to show them that life should be taken seriously, they build a whole mythology around those gates. Television programs about

Schiphol Airport with people coming out through the gates and interviews about the experiences they had "elsewhere." And we Enlightened Ones just smile at this kind of show. Once you've figured it all out, you can also tell who still really believes in "flying" and who's just playing along with the interviewer and the enlightened viewer. And every now and then, they rig up a fake plane crash in which supposedly "many were killed."

Yes, frightening examples are required to keep the youngsters from getting into brawls all the time. Because in their youthful Sturm und Drang, young people can still do dumb things. I believed in it too. I've also been to so-called New York. To the place where the "Twin Towers" were supposed to have stood. But looking back, it was all so patently obvious. Louis Sass also reacted to my questions about "September eleventh" with laughter and suspicion. Yes, now I know it was just a game, part of a movie, a repetition and variation on a theme. They put September eleventh on the market precisely when I was in Venice, that other city of faded glory. Clever move, but so transparent once you see it. Public Enemy had been singing it for a long time: "9-1-1 is a Joke." Back to the jungle. Tall buildings are reflections of the tower of Babel. When I was a student, I took the first introductory course on the so-called "confusion of tongues." It was about language and the differences between languages. That was one of the moments that gave me a glimpse of the truth. Back then I didn't know nearly as much as I do now, but it was hint. It turns out that all languages are related and that they're "actually" the same in their deepest structure.

Tolkien's book contained a fantastic map of the places where the adventures of the Hobbits occurred. This book was a great allegory of real life. There was the Shire, with Hobbiton at its center, and the adventures of the Hobbits were more or less excursions from, or "projections" of, Hobbiton. The old maps that you used to see hanging on the walls in primary school are also good indications of how the world was really put together: flat, with a clearly marked center. There's only one country, the Netherlands; one language, Dutch; one capital, Amsterdam; one seaport, Rotterdam; one university city, Utrecht, and so on. All the later embellishments are fiction: fantasy countries, fantasy languages, fantasy peoples. When you go to "foreign countries" and find yourself among the so-called foreigners, they start acting weird. They begin talking in this unintelligible way: so-called Italian or Arabic or Chinese. But out of earshot, five yards away, they speak normal Dutch. And only much later do all the pieces fall into place: the world isn't so big after all; only the illusion of the world is infinite. Looking back, I realize that all those years of studying foreign languages were just busy work. They invented Africa in order to have a counterexample to show us: black,

hot, poor, and lazy, eating bananas under palm trees. Once you've crossed out all the fantasies, what you're left with is one big carnival.

And for the parade, they come up with fun outfits to wear. There was one little problem yet to be solved, however: those annoying clubs of boys who fought with other clubs. Who were they? The Red Hand Club or the Walloon Club? The Enlightened Ones, who run the show, came up with a new story. That business with the so-called Second World War was losing its power. So they set to work with videos and crazy "Arabic" voices and costumes. They must have laughed themselves silly. They revamped Christianity, invented a fresh version of the same, and created a new group: Islam. Then the show could begin. September eleventh was pumped through all the media: books, movies, news clips. A tsunami of September eleventh products. And all that just to keep the kids of today under control. Naturally, the Enlightened Ones had to act as if they believed in it too. They appeared on discussion programs, full of hypocrisy, nodding along seriously and weeping and wailing. But the secret had to be maintained for the sake of peace and public order. Baudrillard let the cat out of the bag when he revealed that the Gulf War had never taken place. That was how he and the other jokers pulled off the emperor's clothes, and at that point you could catch a brief glimpse of the truth through a crack in the media world.

Recently I've been trying actively to discover these kinds of cracks. In Myanmar right now—we're talking about the fall of 2007—they seem to be fiddling with the fundamental frequencies of the spectrum of Light. They've dusted off the Buddha and put him in the media. Because Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are monomaniacal monotheistic religions—rigid, tiresome, one-dimensional continuations of the colorful riches of the Orient. Now a shift seems to be taking place in the public mood in Myanmar, something synchronous with the death of Bilal at a police station in Amsterdam. They're messing around with fundamental archetypes. And at such a time, when the loom has come to a momentary standstill, a tear appears that the monsters of the night threaten to crawl through. You see the violence, the panic, and the despair on people's faces. And then come the language, the gesture, and the microphone. The rattling and the polishing pick up again in an effort to restore normality, images without sources.

The ones who always do it right are the Holocaust deniers. And they're still at it. As soon as you start tampering with Auschwitz, they throw you in the madhouse. But that's where the Enlightened Ones live, those who haven't been able to keep their big mouths shut. Of course there was no Holocaust! People aren't crazy. Scaremongering. There aren't even any Jews or Germans. But I understand it, all right. My grandpa created a cast-iron,

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indestructible structure: World War II. He had a disagreement with his neighbors, and he exaggerated it and blew it out of all proportion, and the effects are still buzzing around and being felt. The neighbors talked a little differently, with crooked mouths, so my grandpa invented so-called German. Then he came up with a complicated story based on the buns he had baked in his oven. It got a little gruesome and fanciful after that: he used to slaughter pigs himself, he told us (always with a smirk). How did I know what that meant, a boy of eight! Hansel and Gretel, but in modern form, with thousands—no, millions—of extras. Grandpa lived on the Waal River, and incidentally, one amusing note is that they were always having fights with the kids from the Rhine. I wrote about it in Alleen: the "Rhennius machine" as a three-dimensional Mobius strip. I just googled it. The Rhennius machine was simply a machine used by the kids on the Rhine. Rhennius is "Latin" for Rhine. It seems my grandpa is still playing puppet show, disguised as Frans de Waal (total impersonation). After that I lost track of him, and he of me. Every now and then, something came through the grapevine. Turns out there was something like a wailing wall, and everyone heard about what had been stuck between the stones. Notes in the oven. But I didn't have to bother with him anymore. Go ahead and wail at a wall. And then on my birthday he suddenly gave me a record by Pink Floyd, The Wall. Oh, but I didn't know anything back then, thirteen years old. How far I had to go before I would go back to him, Gegen die Wand.

And the myth of "going into hiding." Yes, they did that where my grandpa lived on the river, with some regularity. He's snickering in his grave right now, you might think, and meanwhile he's everywhere. But that's ancient history, that fairytale about death. As if death could exist. Matter doesn't even exist, so shut up about death, okay? They just swim across the river. Yes, they're rowdy fellows, they say, and they run the risk of drowning, they say. Or ... they get to the other side. With or without a nicely organized "funeral." Hades and the Styx—who was behind the Greeks? Who started it? Smoking joints, the beginning of the interminable. And in the meantime, there's me, learning all those Greek scribbles by heart, alpha beta gamma, all of it for diddly-squat. It makes me dizzy, thinking about it at night. But when they went, they crossed the Waal by ferry, back and forth, back and forth, and now they're wandering around on the other side. And coming here every now and then, in different guises, to take a look. Fortunately, all's well that ends well. Everything is Light, and we'll never lose that, even when it gets dark. When my grandpa was on his deathbed, I went to visit him, and after that I thought long and hard about what happened. He was all skin and bones, didn't say a word, stared at the ceiling,

and didn't let on that he could see or hear me. I sat there for a while, and soon I had said everything there was to say on my own. Suddenly he turned to me, looked at me as if he were taking possession of me, and said in a decisive, authoritative tone of voice, "He doesn't know me." Who was he talking about? Who was "he"? The snake biting its own tail. End of spring, end of fun. Fortunately, pure black doesn't exist. They're watching over me on the other side. I look out at the tracks, I hear the trains thundering past. Sometimes I see them too, and they look real. Freight trains full of goods are driven at night. Nightmares about gas and fire. That doesn't happen anymore; now it's just a tiresome little story. It has to stop. But when night takes over, there's always the danger that it will return. The blackness and the darkness that penetrate everything and seep inside. I keep all the lights on; you never know. Outside it's been dark for a long time. Fortunately on the other side, they never sleep. That big building there is from the railroad company. Most of the lights in it have been turned off. Now they have to feel their way around in the dark. Fortunately the Light will never be entirely extinguished. And Light is still shining behind one of the windows. If that goes out, I'll have to watch over the Light myself and keep it going.

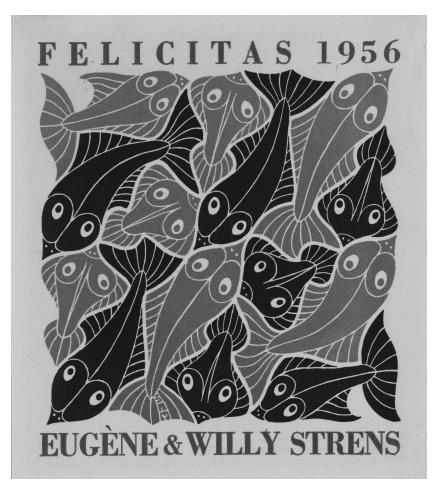
It'll work as long as the curtains are closed and one lamp is on. I'll be all right. I'm lying here alone, but I'm not alone, hopefully. That earlier book I wrote, *Alleen—Alone*—is very different when you're right in the middle of it. I can't exist alone. I come from a family, a tribe, a people, a species. There have to be others, otherwise I wouldn't be here. Where was the beginning? Was I planned by the first ape to climb down from the trees? Or is it the apes against the dogs and cats? The cats have something to say. It's slowly getting lighter. I hear a cat outside. Is that meant for me? Have I gone too far? Have I crossed the border of my own species? Or are they part of us, and is it all of us against the metal, against the stones, against the dead? Just for fun, we ended up different, we fell off the branch. We keep grooming each other though. But who is really left?

Everyone slowly slips away in the night. Are they ever coming back? I can't see them. Are they still there? Is thinking about them enough to exist? Am I still here if I'm alone? *Esse est percipi*. New York is past. Venice is past. Who can I count on? Who can I be sure of? A couple of families, a few intertwined strands of DNA, a family chronicle. Is everything just a dream? Shall I try to call someone? No, logic will have to be enough. I'm not crazy. I really did play chess, I'm sure of it, with real rules, and there was a real opponent. After my grandpa set up the Second World War on the chessboard, my father made a new move in our game of Risk. He countered with Vietnam. But I had fallen for that one already. Not Vietnam again—please.

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So they locked me up. That light green and the neon drove me totally nuts. *Apocalypse Now, The End, The Doors, The Horror*. No, give me Cambodia, just to be sure. A fact: I played chess with my brother. A fact: my brother had been to Angkor Wat in Cambodia. But *encore quoi? Ankie what?* Nevertheless ... a fact: in Angkor Wat there were temples, and lots of people must have walked around there, and it must have been full of cats. The temples remain. The Light of the temples remains. Where else can you go but to a temple? No way around it: Delphi, Delphi, delta delta, the fourth letter of the Greek alphabet. Otherwise, I'll never sleep again. Never sleep again in the dark. Never sleep again, once more. Never sleep again. Never again. Never sleep again.

II Via Mystica Psychotica



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Introduction: Glimpses into Troubled Water

In this second part, the shoreline of the summary and explanatory material has dropped further out of sight, and we have set course for the open sea, with an aim to closely follow the immersion into madness. Here I am going to analyze what happens to the madman when he no longer has the security of the prosaic, and when fixed identities, images, words, and thoughts all melt, dissolve, and disappear. In this part, the emphasis is more on the mad process than on the mad condition. The kind of madness to be discussed here is what outsiders are more likely to call manic than schizophrenic (see section 1.4.1 of the general introduction).

While in part I, it was the philosopher, particularly of the phenomenological school of the twentieth century, who served as the model for the "ideal madman," here that role will be filled by the mystic, especially that of the ancient Christian mystical tradition. In this case, the mystic is the helmsman who leads us through the waters of madness and draws "samples" for us. Not that we know exactly what mysticism or mystical experiences are—any more than we have a clear-cut idea of what madness is. Because both domains are so unknown and indefinable, I am not going to start out by formulating hard and fast hypotheses with regard to their similarities, differences, or causal connections. My use of the mystic and the mystical process will be mainly heuristic and strategic: I will extend the parallel between mysticism and madness as far as it will go, hoping such an effort will cast a new light on madness, mysticism, and philosophy in general.

The element that epitomizes this section on mysticism and madness is water: when we think of mysticism, we often think in terms of water metaphors, like the source and the stream, and in terms of the properties of water, such as changeability, uniformity, and elusiveness. Like water, mysticism slips through your fingers whenever you try to grasp it.

Mysticism is the teaching of the hidden that keeps itself hidden. For when we cling to it, it dies. When we try to form an image of it, it melts. 164 Introduction

When we begin talking about it, it falls silent. It is the black hole in which thought loses itself. Mysticism, like madness, is something that can be approached only obliquely. Thus, in this introduction, I will take a somewhat roundabout route to discuss mysticism and madness, along with their similarities and differences.

Truths and Truth

In the ordinary world, we encounter people, trees, birds, cars, clouds, the sun, and the moon. Sometimes we bump into a wall and want to know what's behind it. We look up into the sky and want to know what's above it. We see a person and want to know who's living inside. So we can take a look and investigate: break down the wall with a bulldozer, explore space in a rocket ship, solve the question of individuality with a statistic. This is how secrets seem to get unraveled and mysteries unveiled. What first was hidden, buried in the ground, or inaccessibly high in the sky, we try to track down and dig up. Once we have it in front of us, we look at it from every angle so that the secret of its hiddenness makes way for the transparency of openness. The whole world seems to lie unobstructed before us. We have refined our perception by using microscopes, telescopes, and MRI scans, and we have increased our mental capacity by means of manmade calculators. Thus we believe that, ultimately, we will be able to unravel, catalogue, and quantify every hidden and secret thing.

The history of knowledge is like a process in which hidden, "sleeping" things are aroused from their slumber. They are shaken from their dream state, tossed into the active world, held up to the clear light of day, and made functional. Unhiddenness—aletheia in Greek—is generally regarded as the site of truth—which is also aletheia in Greek. In this clear light of day, things become transparent, and we can see each other looking at them. It is widely believed that the truth ought to be shared. Without peer review, there is no real knowledge and no truth. A thing is not usually thought to be true unless it is clear and straightforward, unless it is beheld in a clear light, and unless everyone has the same view of it in the same light.

This everyday view of truth is consistent with how truth is often regarded in philosophy and science: establishing the truth is a communal process of "discovery" in which multiple people are involved. Something is said to be true if it squares with other truths that we already recognize and is in keeping with successful ways of living. Truth, it is usually thought, cannot be the exclusive province of a single person or a special group. In principle, everyone has access to truth. Truth must be something that can be expressed in language, that can be "thought" and represented in a normal way.

Mysticism and madness are concerned with an entirely different kind of truth. This truth has to do with an insight or an overwhelming experience that is beyond ordinary reflection and articulation and is of great and inexpressible importance. It is true because it is indisputable. The mystical counterpart to discovery is revelation. The truth of mysticism is not truth *about* some sub-aspect of the world but rather an expression of the world in its entirety. Instead of a representation of the world, it is fusion with the world.

On the Road to Mysticism and Madness

Contrary to the commonly accepted notion that arriving at truth is a communal process of discovery, mysticism and madness are concerned with truth arrived at via insight found in isolation and beyond communality. Mysticism and madness, with their truth and their experience, are located outside the workings of ordinary life and an ordinary shared language. Mystics and madmen search for their truth by *detaching* themselves from the communal world. I will discuss this process of mystical and mad detachment in chapter 5.

One characteristic of mystical and mad detachment is the altered relationship to time. Traveling the *via mystica psychotica*, I continue with the theme that I already approached phenomenologically and analytically in part I, chapter 3. In section 5.4, I will take a closer look at the static time of Aristotle (cf. section 3.1.1) and discuss the notion of "desynchronization." In section 8.3, I will continue my explanation of Husserl's "water time" (see section 3.1.2) and show how mystics and madmen (including myself) end up in the same "currents." Both fragments demonstrate another aspect of time: I wrote them just before the onset of my psychosis of 2007, and in addition to their descriptive usefulness, they can also be understood as a foreshadowing, an evocation, or perhaps even an invocation of madness.

Some people find mysticism and madness vague and obscure. The statements and behavior of mystics and madmen are often regarded as irrational. Their actions and thoughts are not illuminated by reason; they are not lucid but obscure. Strikingly enough, mystics and madmen often do speak in terms of light and illumination. I have already addressed this in section 4.3.3, and I will continue to discuss "black light" and the mystical-mad light metaphor as we proceed along the *via mystica psychotica*.

To reference the "perception" of this other light and whatever else is being illuminated, I use alternative perceptual terms. These include words like "viewing" or "beholding" as well as "seeing." But to speak of "looking at" in this context is rare. A mystic does not look at truth; he sees or beholds truth. My analysis of the perceptual terminology applied to madness in

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chapter 2 is just as valid for mystical "perception." In that chapter, I spoke of the phenomenon of "visions," a much-used term in both madness and mysticism, and I will continue this discussion in chapter 6.

Mysticism and madness both have a problematic relationship with images and imagination. It is difficult to capture whatever is "seen" or beheld in enduring, clear-cut images because of the noncommunal nature of this kind of seeing. Yet both mystic and madman rely heavily on metaphorical language and imagination in order to help others understand what is happening to them. In addition, images and imagination can set a process in motion that ultimately produces mystical "unimaging" effects—even though the process began with images in the first place. More about this complex relationship of both mysticism and madness with respect to the image appears in chapter 6.

The same problem occurs in the area of language. Mystics and madmen cannot express their particular viewpoint in the shared language of the community. Indeed, ordinary language is fit only to express and refer to shared experiences and phenomena accessible to everyone. Nevertheless, analogous to what applies to images, mystics and madmen often express themselves in language anyway, and the mystical-mad process can easily begin with a flow of words. The difficulty or impossibility of talking about such an experience, or conveying or expressing it by means of language, is often called "inexpressibility" or "ineffability." This is not meant to suggest a speech impediment, aphasia, or any other kind of cognitive defect. Rather, it is the dumbness referred to in the expression "to be struck dumb." In chapter 7, I will discuss and demonstrate the power and powerlessness of language in both mysticism and madness.

A fourth theme that mysticism and madness have in common is their different way of thinking. You would never "get there" by means of ordinary thought. It is often said that in order to comprehend the truth and to penetrate to the domain of mysticism, ordinary thinking has to stop and be replaced by something else: another way of thinking that cancels out any disunity or division between the thinker and the object of thinking. Madmen often speak of a sudden transition from everyday thought to a way of thinking in which thought, perception, and creation are one seamless whole. They arrive in a world of madness that ordinary thought cannot influence. In chapter 8, I will discuss the alternative ways of thinking that are found in mysticism and madness, and in Intermezzo I, "Fire from a Distance," I will demonstrate them with a fragment taken from my own life. But to begin, let us look at various aspects of mysticism and madness in general and at their mutual relationship.

Mysticism Explained

Mysticism's mad paths lead to a hidden mystical truth or a mysterious experience. But what is that hidden mystery that leaves the mystic stuttering and drives the psychotic insane? What is it that the mystic and the madman "see" as truth within, behind, under, or above ordinary truth?

Mystical and mad truth is an impressive "true" experience of an allembracing solidarity in unity. When borders evaporate and opposites are transcended, mysticism and madness result in experiences and mirrorings of a supreme unity that is sometimes called God. The truth of mysticism has to do with something awesome, something that the mystic regards as more real than ordinary reality. In chapter 1, I called this hyperreality. Seen in this way, the mystic concerns himself with "real being" and with the method for achieving and experiencing it. "Real being" and unity are not that of, say, a sugar cube before it is dissolved in a cup of tea, but they encompass all that is thinkable and perceivable. Another characteristic of the mystical experience is a sense of infinity within the unity and the "real being." One final aspect of mysticism may seem like the opposite of the other three: that of the emptiness or the void. Gazing and staring into the being of infinity, contemplating the passing of time and eternity, one might also come to realize that everything is actually nothing, and that this miracle of absolute nothingness is that within which all positive existence rests.

In part III, I will delve more deeply into these substantial differences between the various types of mysticism (concerning the One, being, infinity, and nothingness). Here in part II, I will focus, for the time being, on the four ways of reaching the mystical-mad world by extricating yourself from the world of the ordinary.

Nevertheless, the themes and ideas from part III will also be playing a major role here. Indeed, it is difficult to walk a certain "path" if you have no idea what the destination is. Conversely, the same elements that I will be discussing here as part of the path will recur in the descriptions of the destinations—or the mystical domains or types—that are featured in part III: the inexpressibility, the other way of thinking, the problem of image and metaphor, and so forth.

What makes the subject of this book so complex is that the path is also the goal, and the goal is the path. In the end, the difference between goals and paths, and between parts II and III, is no more than a device for bringing the many facets of madness to light. This is typical of madness, if not of philosophy. An informed difference, which itself does not seem to be based on anything, can open the possibility of, or create a matrix for, unfolding a

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complex narrative that ultimately underpins the primordial difference on which it depends. This might have to do with the difference between path and goal, but philosophically speaking, it might also concern the difference between the present and the future or between finity and infinity.

Mysticism or Madness?

So far I have concerned myself with the similarities between mysticism and madness. Before discussing the methods ("paths") that lead to mysticism and madness, I would like to address the possible differences between the two.

The first difference that springs to mind is that of the context in which the two terms are used and the history and tradition from which they stem. The term "mysticism" comes from the history of religion; has long been connected to religious practices, meditation, and contemplation; and is usually discussed in a context having to do with things like belief, religion, or theology. Terms like madness and psychosis are much more strongly associated with having an illness, displaying disturbing abnormalities in social contexts, experiencing things that are not there (hallucinations), and thinking thoughts that don't make sense (delusions). Perhaps these highly divergent usage contexts are the only differences between the two terms. And perhaps the terms point to an identical experience, with the choice of one term over the other determined by the context, the tradition, or the environment in which the experience takes place.

These possibilities are supported by the fact that, in many cases, a similar complex of experiences can be described with terms like morbid, deviant, incoherent, disturbed, and fragmented as well as with words like lucid, serene, profound, poetic, and transcendent. For example, a good friend of the person having the experiences, or the person himself, may opt for the second group of terms (mystical), while the attending psychiatrist prefers the first (psychopathological). Even the person himself may vary in his descriptions. In discussions with an insurance doctor, he might speak in medical terms, but when telling stories having to do with the ups and downs of his experience, he might use mystical jargon.

If we think, however, that the choice of term never has anything to do with the experience itself, then any further investigation of the similarities between experiences of madness and mysticism is of little interest, since the terms would all be synonymous. Without difference, investigation of the cross-pollination between mysticism and madness is impossible.

According to some, determining whether an experience is one of mysticism or madness is no simple matter in many cases. But, they insist, a

correct diagnosis can be made through further examination, at least in principle, because the difference between mysticism and madness lies not only in the descriptive language being used but also in the way mystical and mad processes develop in reality. From this perspective, any overlap between mysticism and madness is merely superficial, and a good case history can eliminate the confusion, ensuring the two are properly separated. This is the point of view of spiritual, or transpersonal, psychiatry. According to this school of psychiatry, there are many people walking around who have been wrongfully diagnosed as psychotic but whose experiences have actually been mystical, or—in their terminology—indications of "spiritual emergence." This idea will crop up again and again in the background of the discussion below, and in section 14.3.2, I will examine an influential work by psychiatrist John E. Nelson, whose therapy is based on this concept.

If we assume that in at least some cases the question of whether an experience is mystical or mad can be determined, then the criteria for reaching such a decision may be intrinsic either to the experience itself or to the consequences of the experience. Robert Zaehner, a British research scientist in the field of mysticism and religion, believes the difference does not lie in the experience itself but arises because the consequences are different. As he writes in his *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*, from 1957 (52), "Thus though we may be prepared to concede for the time being that this experience, this blissful realization of the unity of all things in oneself [the mystical experience] may be what the Zen Buddhists understand by 'enlightenment,' and though it may lead to an integration of the personality as it appears to have done in the case of Proust, it may equally result in a complete breakdown of all accepted values, in a total indifference to good and evil, in madness and schizophrenia."

This view is quite common: the experience is essentially the same, but whether it leads to the misery of madness or the enlightenment of mysticism depends on how you deal with it. In a collection of essays devoted to this problem, *Spirituality and Psychosis: Exploring the New Frontier*, edited by Isabel Clarke, Emmanuelle Peters (2001) says that the structure of mystical and psychotic experiences differs only "by such factors as the extent to which they are believed, how much they interfere with one's life, and the emotional impact." In this citation, the difference between the context and consequences of the experience and the experience itself is already less distinct. As for the "emotional impact," you can still maintain that that is a consequence external to the experience and that it may be guided and altered by the context. But the "extent to which they [the experiences] are believed" already seems to have much more to do with the content of the experience itself.

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In chapters 5 and 6, I will elaborate on exactly what it means to become attached (or not) to mystical or mad experiences. In doing so, I will make use of the especially insightful and detailed work of Edward Podvoll, *The Seduction of Madness* (1990). Here this American psychiatrist, inspired by Buddhism, movingly discusses four cases of madness with great discernment and compassion. Podvoll argues that a psychosis is similar to experiences of mysticism and meditation, but that it also differs on important points. The psychotic, for example, allows himself to be too easily swept along and distracted by fascinating images and seductive thoughts during the mystical-mad process.

Psychiatric researchers D. Greenberg, E. Witzum, and J. T. Buckbinder (1992) explicitly assert that the contents of the experience are of less importance in the choice between terms such as *mysticism* and *madness*: "a diagnosis of psychosis rests on factors such as duration of the state, ability to control entry into the state, and deterioration of habits, rather than the phenomenology of the state itself." But here, too, the setting of the experience (duration, control over the commencement of the experience, interference with daily life) still has a great deal to do with the experience itself.

Caroline Brett (2002), a researcher of psychosis, clearly sees an intrinsic difference between the mystic and the mad experience. She distinguishes the psychotic from the mystical experience on the basis of the following characteristics:

- 1. A maintenance of the ego structure, albeit in a distorted or fragmented fashion, and a concurrent maintenance of some subject/object distinctions;
- 2. Less ability to control attention; and
- Less ability to maintain equanimity, demonstrated by emotionality, confusion, and anxiety.

According to Brett, the mystic is better prepared for what is awaiting him. He finds it less overwhelming and succeeds in putting the event in perspective. Because he is better prepared, the quality of the experience is different. He is able to let go of his ego, is more confident about letting himself go, and doesn't put up any resistance. He endures the experience passively, where desired, and guides the experience actively where appropriate. The madman is not yet ready to undergo such experiences, or there is simply no one nearby to guide and support him and to convince him that he is headed in the right direction. At some point the madman is distracted from following the right path and lets himself be tempted by power, selfishness, or pleasure, to become entangled in the delusions and hallucinations that are characteristic of madness but not typical of mysticism. You might also

say that the madman has the arrogance to appropriate the concealed mystical content and then to abuse it.

This is a complex theme: how are you to remain passive on the one hand while being determined to recognize and resist any temptations that may come along on the other? And what is the difference between a mystical vision and a mad visual hallucination? We touched on this in chapter 2, and in chapter 6 I will delve more deeply into the role of images and imagination in the context of mystical and mad processes, also based on the work of Podvoll. In fact, this theme has to do with the difference between a "successful" experience and an experience that, in some way, is to be regarded as less successful, although it was full of potential when it began. It is a theme that resonates throughout this book, always in the background: Why do some experiences end so peacefully and others so fatally?

There are others who insist that the intrinsic difference between a mystical and a mad experience is very different from what is suggested by Brett and Podvoll. Perhaps madness is not an accident on the road or a dead end on the via mystica. Perhaps the mad experience is a logical continuation of the mystical experience. The madman carries on with the journey, while the mystic drops out prematurely. For the very reason that he is connected to a tradition that has prepared him for his experience, the mystic will hold fast to certain assurances, identities, or traditional distinctions—such as the difference between good and evil—and that makes him incapable of penetrating the most extreme domains. The madman goes further and deeper, but he also pays a higher price: many do not return from this transmarginal zone—or so this line of reasoning goes. This is a romantic view that claims that geniuses like Nietzsche or Hölderin end up in a permanent psychotic state because of the illumination of their deep truths. It's an idea that lives on in one form or another in the work of Huxley and Michaux (see sections 10.3.2 and 11.3.3, among others). It is also reflected throughout the structure of this book. Part I provides the initial philosophical impulse to explore the mad world. This is carried on in parts II and III, where I make use of the philosophical mystic or the mystical philosopher to shed light onto the path of madness and explore it further. But at a certain point, the mystic drops out and madness continues on to the realm of paradoxes, paranoia, and "prophetic madness" in part IV. But please note: although I describe mysticism as merely part of a more inclusive madness, I leave open the possibility that the mystic drops out only because he has reached the end of his path and has therefore slammed the book shut, while the madman remains confined within the book's "Plan" and just keeps wandering around (also see chapters 15 and 16 and the finale).

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This concludes my preview of the general differences between mysticism and madness, which are important not only for part II but for the entire book as well. In chapter 6, which concerns demagination, I will add to the historical background underlying the complex relationship between mysticism and madness, especially with regard to the image. As the four chapters of this part unfold, I will further clarify exactly where and how differences and similarities are to be found in the processes of detachment, deimagining, delanguizing, and dethinking. Examples of relevant questions are: To what extent are passages from Plotinus about "the One" to be read as a description of the psychotic longing? How do Eckhart's sermons and appeals for a "breakthrough" beyond "being" relate to the psychotic "breakthrough"? How does Husserl's search for the sources of time relate to the mad whirlpool of time (see section 8.3)?

My method here is once again to seriously consider the lines of reasoning and ideas of philosophers, mystics, and other thinkers and writers, and to examine the extent to which they exhibit parallels with mad thinking. The focus is not on the person but on the texts and any other types of expressions; whether they themselves had a mystical or a mad experience is of less importance. If a perfectly "normal" person (whatever that means) produced a text that can be called both mystical and mad, that is just as interesting. Nevertheless, it is at least of anecdotal value to point out that some of the thinkers I will be discussing have experienced "something unusual." Oliver Davies, an expert on Christian mysticism, writes in his God Within: The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe (1988, 37), "Eckhart, it may be safely assumed, enjoyed the experience of mystical union with God and was guided by that experience at every point in the elucidation of his speculative system. Such an experience of the contemplative heights is inevitably challenging, elusive and beyond definition, and it is not surprising therefore that Eckhart's theological system, in comparison with those of his great contemporaries, is shot through with what are apparent contradictions and paradoxes."

The Plotinus scholar P. A. Meijer comments in his thesis *Plotinus on the Good or the One (Enneads 6.9): An Analytic Commentary* (1992, 294), "Whatever we may think ourselves about such an experience [mystical union] and the psychological truth behind it ... we should be guilty of a grave methodical mistake to neglect or depreciate such an event because for Plotinus himself—certainly in Enead 6.9—it is the crown of all his laborious efforts as a writer and philosopher." (Also see Sorabji 1988 and Algra et al. 2006, 198.)

"Detachment" is the term I use to refer to the first step taken on both the mystical king's highway and the madman's dead-end street. Extricating yourself from earthly worries, not clinging to earthly goods and passing fancies, refusing to let yourself be swept along by the uncertainties of fate and society, being unattached, free from binding ties and desires—these are a few of the more general connotations of detachment.

Whether someone is really detached or not is difficult to determine. Detachment is an "inner process." If someone exhibits all the outer signs of psychosis, then you can say that such a person is detached in the sense of being alienated from his former surroundings. In this context the term "uprooted" is also apt. But if there are no outer signs, then the border between attachment and detachment is not very clear, since someone who is detached is not going to be interested in proof of detachment, strictly speaking. What's the point of proving yourself to others? And those who are not yet detached and say they long for detachment are setting themselves up for ridicule, since longing for detachment is actually an obstacle to detachment. Those who do the ridiculing speak from a position of authority or self-confidence that should make it apparent that they themselves are detached and enlightened and, on that basis, feel free to pass judgment. This self-confidence can be very irritating to those who are eager for detachment but cannot say so because that in itself would be a confession of attachment.

This is something that prospective mystics often wrestle with. Mystics who are consciously striving for enlightenment sometimes spend years engaged in ascetic practices in monasteries and training centers in order to detach themselves and to attain an enlightenment that simply evades them. They try to hear the sound of one hand clapping, but they don't hear anything. They read their koans, their biblical passages, but no light goes on. They dance in the hope that Krishna and Shiva will join in, but

"nothing" happens. The frustration of such quests for enlightenment is a source of bitterness—a bitterness that can train its focus on mad mystics who claim to have become enlightened after a one-day LSD trip or a one-month episode of psychosis. Detachment as it is taught in many mystical and religious circles requires that you detach yourself from everything—except the tradition that got you interested in detachment in the first place. So every school of detachment has its own heretics who claim to have found a shortcut to enlightenment. In Plato, poets with a badly reasoned claim to truth were made to suffer for it. The gnostics who preached salvation by means of debauched methods were a thorn in the flesh of their contemporary, Plotinus. And the fourteenth-century Flemish mystic John van Ruysbroeck took strong issue with the kindred Brethren of the Free Spirit, with their call for greater carnal freedom.

In the most extreme forms of mysticism, the practitioner turns his back on all tradition. An example of this is the nihilistic mystic, whom Scholem (1960, 20) characterizes as follows: "In the most drastic case, he will even claim to occupy a position above all other authority, to be his own law-maker. Indeed, the formlessness of the original experience can also lead to the dissolving of all formal interpretation. It is this perspective—alarming, but similar to what drives every mystic—that helps us understand that the limitlessness of the nihilistic mystic is legitimate."

What Scholem says here about nihilistic mysticism resembles the temptation of madness: to be above the law and be one's own "lawmaker." Podvoll (1990, 113–114) says in this regard, "As he [the madman] has transcended the boundaries and regulations that ordinarily limit the mind, he also feels that he has transcended all other conventions, boundaries, and laws as well. They are the laws of lesser beings that binds us all in a 'rat race' of competition; they include conventional morality, all systems of human ritual, the rules of language, all secular and cosmic authority. He feels that all laws are shoddy constructions and that he can instantly create and dissolve them. At will, he can enter and exit any universe or 'game.'"

It is in madness and nihilistic mysticism that one is most detached and free of ties and conventions of tradition and community. This ultimate sense of freedom and detachment has its downside. In practice, madmen and nihilistic mystics are more likely than others to clash with the "established order."¹

The term "detachment" is meant to refer to a general mood that has bearing on both madness and mysticism, although it remains a complex notion. Many a mad-mystical seeker, after having recovered from the psychotic

fallacies that his mystical quest led him to, will look back on his psychosis and describe it not as a mystical experience but entirely as an illness or a period of turmoil. The baby is thrown out with the bathwater. Conversely, it is also possible that what first may have appeared to someone as a disordered psychosis is reinterpreted, but only much later, as a process of detachment. So a temporary moment of enlightenment can be identified retroactively as having taken place in psychosis, the meaning and vivid power of which were evidently not able to manifest themselves until much later. What makes this theme even more complex is the fact that a positive reinterpretation of a psychosis by oneself can actually be regarded by others as another sign of illness, psychosis, or "lack of self-insight." But either way, any attempt to distinguish a spiritually "good" process of detachment from a "bad" psychosis once and for all is doomed to failure (see section 14.3.3 on Nelson's *Healing the Split*.)

A much simpler approach in psychiatric practice is to just lump everything together into the same category of illness. Anyone who expresses the inexpressibility of the infinity of the cosmos in incoherent language is diagnosed in terms of illness. These people may have thought they were mystics, but the psychiatrists explain that they are actually at the mercy of a fragmentized "self." According to this diagnosis, they keep themselves in isolation, alienate themselves, and withdraw from society on account of their inability to maintain contact with others. The artistically gifted, "successful," "spiritual" mystics who have managed to keep themselves out of the hands of the psychiatrists are spoken of in much more positive terms: they have been temporarily swallowed up in a creative process, they need solitude for their work, they have deliberately turned their backs on an alienating society, and they are entirely self-sufficient.

5.1 Dissolution and Liberation

What else does detachment involve? In normal life, we are "attached" to all sorts of worldly things and fascinating phenomena. We are connected to the people around us, attached to the things we own, and loyal to the images, opinions, and ideas we hold dear. We are embedded in a tightly knit network of relationships and tied and connected to the everyday world. The mad-mystical path begins with the severing of all these "ties," "bonds," and "attachments" in a process I call detachment.

It is said that it's good for babies to be attached to their mothers or other caregivers. According to the "attachment theory," which is a popular theory in psychology, "attachment disorders" develop at a later age when

babies have failed to become attached or when their attachments are faulty. People who experience problems with attachment at an early age can have difficulty becoming attached later on because they have never learned how to form such attachments, or how to "bond." Being attached, being bound, bonding with another, and being "grounded" are essential aspects of "being-in-the-world." Those who are in the world are also "being-with-others" (cf. Heidegger 1962, 155 ff.).²

So detachment can be a painful business. Our whole being is permeated with the presence of others and our connections with them. When important ties are severed and a "fracture" takes place (see section 1.3.2), this can shake the "ground" on which a person lives. The proverbial earth beneath his feet can disappear, and he may find himself drowning in quicksand. A person who becomes fully detached is no longer "in-the-world." In the case of extremely pious mysticism, the mind totally withdraws from the world, as it does in the most extreme cases of madness, where there is no longer any "world" at all as we know it.

The alarmingly negative descriptions of failure to attach and of detachment also have a positive counterpart. In terms of the metaphors of birth and growth, the first "attachment" stands for the bond between the fetus and the placenta. There the attachment corresponds to the umbilical cord, and subsequent "attachments" are substitutes for the umbilical cord and primary connections (cf. Sloterdijk 2011, 2014). So moments of detachment are like growing pains. A baby "frees" himself from the source of nourishment, the mother's placenta; that is, he "detaches himself." He then begins exploring the world beyond the known, beyond the primary bond, only to come back, again and again, into a safe, renewed attachment to the source of nourishment— his mother—at ever-changing or "higher" levels. Seen in this way, detachment is as much an aspect of development as attachment is, and it carries more associations with "liberation" or "development to a higher level" than with the negative "dissolution."

So detachment can also mean liberating yourself, tossing overboard the ballast of images, opinions, illusory values, and obligations. Instead of making you "sink," detachment can also make you lighter so that you "rise up." When you become detached, you can rise above the habits and customs of daily life, and from a distance—from a "bird's-eye view"—you can see the patterns and other things that you ordinarily cannot see. It is this liberating aspect of detachment that is emphasized in the following quote from Custance (in Podvoll 1990, 87): "Here in Paris, as earlier in Berlin, it is perfectly clear to me that the manic state involves a kind of wild plunge into the depths, a letting-go of all restrictions on the great forces of instinct and

the Unconscious." "Letting go of all restrictions," "wild plunge into the depths": both are positive ways of describing the mad-mystical process of detachment.

In much of mystical literature, detachment is regarded as one of the most important aspects of—and even conditions for—the mystical path. You cannot take anything through the gates of Nirvana, and ties and attachments must be left behind or "let go" as superfluous ballast. For Eckhart, detachment and separation are an even more important condition for salvation than desire or love (quoted in Colledge and McGinn 1981, 285, 202): "... so far as my reason can lead me and instruct me, I find no other virtue better than a pure detachment from all things. ... The teachers have great things to say in praise of love. ... And yet I praise detachment above all love!"³

Plotinus (6.9.4), too, calls the casting aside of earthly "cares" a necessary condition for the mystical contemplation of "the One": "There are those that have not attained to see. The soul has not come to know the splendour There; it has not felt and clutched to itself that love-passion of vision known to the lover come to rest where he loves. Or struck perhaps by that authentic light, all the soul lit by the nearness gained, we have gone weighted from beneath; the vision is frustrate; we should go without burden and we go carrying that which can but keep us back; we are not yet made over into unity." A little further on, Plotinus continues, "Failure to attain may be due to such impediment or to lack of the guiding thought that establishes trust; impediment we must charge against ourselves and strive by entire renunciation to become emancipate; where there is distrust for lack of convincing reason, further considerations may be applied." Renouncing all cares and ties: that was the ideal in ancient mystical thought, and it is also the great fear of modern man.

Detachment is as difficult to achieve as falling asleep. You may want it very much, but it is that fanatical and active striving for the desired condition that keeps you from attaining it. Those who actively detach themselves from others and the world, and are thereby driven by the enticing prospect of liberation and deliverance, attach themselves to an image or ideal that impedes the very detachment they seek. Only when the detachment is carried out without a goal in mind can the goal be achieved—or so the mystical literature maintains. You must not specify the goal, for in doing so, you tie yourself down once again—to the goal itself.

The modern theologian Denys Turner, an expert on early Christian mysticism, has formulated a succinct summary of Eckhart's "detachment" (1995, 172): "Detachment is the way of achieving that nameless, featureless depth within the self which is identical with the Godhead and which

is, also, in another way, my own identity." Turner follows this by insisting that detachment from earthly longings and ambitions must not in itself be aimed at a particular goal, not even at the mystical divine goal: "Detachment displaces all in the self which would fill that void, all naming, all mediations, whether by created material realities or by spiritual realities. A detached person is dispossessed of all images and concepts of God, and wills nothing for herself, not even to do the will of God." This is the strange paradox: that to be truly detached, you must be detached from the goal of detachment. In order to be detached and liberated, you must not focus on a particular image, concept, or word of God.

5.2 Emptying of the Soul and Internalization

Detachment can also be described as an "emptying of oneself." Not only does the mystic free himself from ties with people, objects, and opinions, but he also strives to make sure there is no superfluous ballast within himself. All the contents of his soul must be removed; his soul must be emptied so that it is no longer tied to earthly concerns and becomes "open" to the mystery. Plotinus, for example, has this to say (6.9.7): "As Matter, it is agreed, must be void of quality in order to accept the types of the universe, so and much more must the soul be kept formless if there is to be no infixed impediment to prevent it being brimmed and lit by the Primal Principle." Meijer (1992, 218) explicitly calls this "a procedure that amounts to emptying one's soul."

Only when you are completely empty is there room for the mystery. In Plotinus, that mystery, which I earlier called "the concealed" and which I here am comparing to Plotinus's One, can "fill and outshine" the soul. In Plotinus, the soul can be filled by the "Primal Principle," as if you first had to empty your soul in order to be filled by radiant light. Some types of mysticism actually emphasize the abyss and the void, where you arrive and where you remain, as a result of detachment. In Eckhart, for example, the abyss is not filled by God; it *is* God.

Turner (1995) describes what the emptying of the soul in Eckhart implies in strikingly modern terms. According to Eckhart, the reason people cannot reach detachment and deliverance is because they think they themselves are something or somebody—instead of nothing and nobody. They cling to a self that is full of their own identity. People think they can possess themselves and then regulate, operate, control, and "manage" themselves. Turner writes (1995, 184), "Possessiveness is, therefore, the principle of destruction of nature and creation and so of God. But at the root of all other possessiveness is the ultimately possessive desire to be a self: the desire that

there should be at my center not that unnameable abyss into which, as into a vacuum, the nameless Godhead is inevitably drawn, but an identity I can own, an identity which is defined by my ownership of it."

Turner, by way of Eckhart, comes to a very different understanding of attachment—and, implicitly, of self-development and self-fulfillment—than that professed by modern developmental psychology and attachment theory: "That is the ultimately destructive form that attachment can take, for it is an attachment which seeks to infill that nothingness with images of self and with 'ways' to God. ... Consequently, any God it does affirm it must affirm in exclusion of the I which affirms it."

Those who go through life as "men with qualities"—as I would paraphrase Turner, alluding to Robert Musil's famous book—find themselves caught up in ossified relationships of possession, which give rise to polarizations between mine and thine, within and without, activity and contemplation. According to Turner—according to Eckhart—this results in restricted lives that are not open to transcendence. Only through the annihilation of distinction, within the self and with God, can the soul find insight and deliverance. To become detached, you must first see through the "you" that is detaching itself and unmask it. Turner goes on to say, "These are the perverse, inverted dialectics of the undetached, the dialectics of the 'exterior' person who is trapped in the polarisations of interiority and exteriority so as to seek God 'within' rather than 'without.' For the truly detached person there can be no such distinction. ... That is why, for Eckhart, 'my' self is not in the last resort mine at all. And any self which I can call my own is a false self, a self of possessive imagination."

According to Turner, detachment erases the distinction between inner and outer. Even so, I—and others, as well—characterize the process of emptying the soul as "interiorization." In order to explain this paradox, a distinction must be made between two kinds of "interiorization." The first is an interiorization in which a counterbalance to an outwardly threatening world is created within. One can take refuge in an inner fortress: a rich inner life that is sufficient unto itself and is built up, in contrast to—and thereby dependent on—the outer world. Such an interiorization is a form of self-fortification that Turner and Eckhart both see as an impediment to mysticism and detachment. This kind of hardened, inner identity can function quite well in the ordinary world. With strong interiorization—a complex soul—both the unpleasant and the liberating, transcendent experiences of mysticism and psychosis are kept at bay.

The second form of interiorization involves the emptying of the soul as described by Turner and Eckhart. In this case, attention is also focused

inwardly—not in order to build a fortress, however, but in order to destroy such a structure, to stop its rampant growth, and to allow a desert to take over. The truth lies in the desert (also see the finale). As Eckhart says in Schürmann (1978), "There is something which is above the created being of the soul and which is untouched by any createdness, which is to say nothingness. It is something which even the angels do not have, although theirs is a pure being, undiluted and deep. Even that does not touch it. It is akin to the divine nature, it is united in itself, it has nothing in common with anything at all. This is where some clerics stumble. It is a strange land and a desert, and it is more without name than nameable, more unknown than knowable."

You may not have to go on retreat to a Tibetan monastery or check your-self into the secure ward of a psychiatric hospital to achieve this kind of interiorization. It may be no different than simply "emptying" your mind after a day full of impressions by flopping down in front of the TV, day-dreaming, or getting some fresh air in the woods. By just letting things go, internally and externally, you interiorize and spiritualize yourself instead of frantically chasing after the facts in an effort to reach a goal.

What Plotinian, Eckhartian, and modern mystics are seeking is something that psychotics don't even have to ask for: it drops right into their laps. The One overwhelms them and draws them close. The godless, Godfilled emptiness sucks them up and pursues them. The question remains whether the psychotic is experiencing an Eckhartian form of interiorization or an interiorization in which the inner self is sealing itself off from the outside world. Clearly this is not an easy question to answer. On the one hand, Eckhartian "interiorization" seems to have a great deal in common with the mad subjectification of all of objective reality as described in part I. On the other hand, when we look at the psychotic from the outside, we can say that there are things in "the world" from which he closes himself off in "a world of his own." But in saying this, we shift the problem to an equally difficult "worlds question": which world do we live in, and how many are there? In addition, would this criticism not also apply to Eckhart or any other random mystic?

5.3 Evacuation: Thomas Pynchon's Mad Universe

Interiorization, detachment, liberation, and deliverance are not always as pretentiously ethereal as the above descriptions might suggest. The word "evacuation," with all its connotations, might aptly be used to describe the

act of ridding oneself of burdens in the way Eckhart and Plotinus strove to do. Madness is not only a matter of staring into the sun with blinking eyes; it also has a fecal variant, to which the walls of isolation cells can attest.

In isolation cells, people are often beset by two great longings: to rid themselves of feces and to escape from the isolation cell. In some cases, there is a toilet in the cell. The toilet drainpipe is often the only passage connecting the isolated person to the outside world. Many testimonies have been given by madmen who dream and fantasize about escaping through the drainpipe by means of miniaturization, *Alice-in-Wonderland* style.

It's thanks to the literary genius Thomas Pynchon that such mad reveries have appeared in readable form. After having had a few drinks too many—of the wrong sort—the main character in Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, Slothrop, finds himself in a kind of accelerated state of evacuation and detachment. By way of an ultimate "tsunamic" tunnel (also see the finale) through the hole in the toilet, Slothrop reaches a mysterious underworld, or upper world, in which the mad world, or at least its fictional counterpart, can be seen (Pynchon 2012, 65–66):

At which precise point there comes this godawful surge from up the line, noise growing like a tidal wave, a jam-packed wavefront of shit, vomit, toilet paper and dingleberries in mind-boggling mosaic, rushing down on panicky Slothrop like an MTA subway train on its own hapless victim. Nowhere to run. Paralyzed, he stares back over his shoulder. A looming wall stringing long tendrils of shitpaper behind, the shockwave is on him—GAAHHH! he tries a feeble frog kick at the very last moment but already the cylinder of waste has wiped him out, dark as cold beef gelatin along his upper backbone, the paper snapping up, wrapping across his lips, his nostrils, everything gone and shit-stinking now as he has to keep batting micro-turds out of his eyelashes, it's worse than being torpedoed by Japs! the brown liquid tearing along, carrying him helpless ... seems he's been tumbling ass over teakettle—though there's no way to tell in this murky shitstorm, no visual references ... from time to time he will brush against shrubbery, or perhaps small feathery trees. It occurs to him he hasn't felt the touch of a hard wall since he started to tumble, if that indeed is what he's doing. At some point the brown dusk around him has begun to lighten. Like the dawn. Bit by bit his vertigo leaves him. The last wisps of shit-paper, halfway back to slurry, go ... sad, dissolving, away.

After this weird mystical submersion and brown gyration, Slothrop arrives in an area that Pynchon calls the "transmarginal zone." It's sub-oceanic there, and perhaps even "anti-solar" (see Intermezzo III.III, "Midnight Express"). It's an elementary space that is precisely "thought out" and contrived but operating at full tilt, familiar yet alien. There is "no sun,

no moon, only a long smooth sinewaving of the light." It's the dream-like poetic recollection of a world of madness: mysterious, gruesome, meaningful-without-meaning (see Intermezzo II, "Revelation"), and "something vaguely religious."

An eerie light grows on him, a watery and marbled light he hopes won't last for long because of what it seems to promise to show. But 'contacts' are living in these waste regions. People he knows. Inside shells of old, what seem to be finepacked masonry ruins—weathered cell after cell, many of them roofless. Wood fires burn in black fireplaces, water simmers in rusty institutional-size lima-bean cans, and the steam goes up the leaky chimneys. And they sit about the worn flagstones, transacting some ... he can't place it exactly ... something vaguely religious ... Bedrooms are fully furnished, with lights that turn and glow, velvet hung from walls and ceiling. Down to the last ignored blue bead clogged with dust under the Capehart, the last dried spider and complex ruffling of the carpet's nap, the intricacy of these dwellings amazes him. It is a place of sheltering from disaster. Not necessarily the flushings of the Toilet—these occur here only as a sort of inferred disturbance, behind this ancient sky, in its corroded evenness of tone—but something else has been terribly at this country, something poor soggy Slothrop cannot see or hear ... as if there is a Pearl Harbor every morning, smashing invisibly from the sky. ... He has toilet paper in his hair and a fuzzy thick dingleberry lodged up inside his right nostril. Ugh, ugh. Decline and fall works silently on this landscape. No sun, no moon, only a long smooth sinewaving of the light.

And in that landscape beyond the communal spaces, he suddenly finds himself—or at least something that can be described as his presence. It's that desert again, just as we read in Eckhart in the previous section, but now it's still under water. The others there have become alien to him, threatening, and mysterious.

He stands outside all the communal rooms and spaces, outside in his own high-desert morning, a reddish-brown hawk, two, hanging up on an air current to watch the horizon. It's cold. The wind blows. He can feel only his isolation, They want him inside there but he can't join them. Something prevents him: once inside, it would be like taking some kind of blood oath. They would never release him. There are no guarantees he might not be asked to do something ... something so ...

Then there's a movement. Not a movement of individual things or people with respect to each other against a stable background, but a movement of *everything*. At the very foundation of things a deep, regular *wave* rolls and breaks, making the whole room move and change in rhythm. Is it morning or evening?

Now every loose stone, every piece of tinfoil, billet of wood, scrap of kindling or cloth is moving up and down: rising ten feet then dropping again to hit the pavement with a sharp clap. The light is thick and water-green. All down the streets, debris rises and falls in unison, as if at the mercy of some deep, regular wave. It's difficult to see any distance through the vertical dance. The drumming on the pavement goes for eleven beats, skips a twelfth, begins the cycle over ... it is the rhythm of some traditional American tune. ... The streets are all empty of people. It's either dawn or twilight. Parts of the debris that are metal shine with a hard, nearly blue persistence.

And then it's as if the first person on earth had awakened, as if everything in this new world is unique in itself in the Plan of things (see section 8.2 and chapters 15 and 16).

Here now is Crutchfield or Crouchfield, the westwardman. Not "archetypical" westwardman, but the only. Understand, there was only one. There was only one Indian who ever fought him. Only one fight, one victory, one loss. And only one president, and one assassin, and one election. True. One of each of everything. You had thought of solipsism, and imagined the structure to be populated—on your level—by only, terribly, one. No count on any other levels. But it proves to be not quite that lonely. Sparse, yes, but a good deal better than solitary. One of each of everything's not so bad. Half an Ark's better than none.

Here we'll say good-bye to the poetic dreams of Pynchon. As you're swept along, this consumption of text brings you to that world of madness in which some madmen have been wandering for a long time. Pynchon makes the atmosphere of madness superbly graphic—at least for those in whom this language and these images strike a nerve. But Pynchon compels us with his literary prose not to flush ourselves down the toilet. We know that it's "just" a metaphor and that it's "just" fiction and not the real world. But what do you do when a whole army of metaphors comes to life and seduces you, carries you along, and finally steals you away? We can let ourselves be ushered into the world of madness by means of a book that will not be put down or a path on which there is no turning back (also see the discussion of poetry, philosophy, and madness in section 8.3.3).

5.4 Desynchronization

Another instructive approach to the process of detachment is offered by the notion of "desynchronization." This term alludes first of all to the disengagement of two rhythms. Two clocks, two people, or two systems are synchronous when they are "geared" to one another. When a system falls out of step, when it becomes detached with respect to the systems of ordinary

human time, I call it "desynchronization." It could also be called "temporal dissolution" or "temporal liberation."

In the next two sections, I am going to probe more deeply into the notions of time, rhythm, synchronization, and desynchronization. Based on a further discussion of Aristotle's "static time" (also see section 3.1.1), I will show how variations and differences in the experience of time can arise from the seemingly fixed earth time, when rhythms are no longer geared to one another. In the third section, I will use the notion of "desynchronization" to discuss a case of extreme detachment on the open sea: the case of Donald Crowhurst as documented by Podvoll.

The next two sections contain a neutral description of how time can "go off the rails" and become pathological, how a "time wagon"—or "time car" (see 3.1.1)—can end up alone in a single lane, far away from shared human time. But I wrote these sections in the summer of 2007 as part of my bachelor's thesis *Landscapes of Time* (see the overture). As I reported in the introduction to part II, "Glimpses into Troubled Water," this was shortly before I myself became "desynchronized." So besides being a description of derailment, these sections, like many mystical texts, are also an attempt to bring an unusual experience to life—or to prevent it. (But does that not also apply to this entire book?) In a certain sense I succeeded, and the text can be read as the early onset or expression of emergent mystical madness.

To a great extent, though, this is all wisdom in hindsight. In the text itself, there are few concrete signs of an approaching "lightning strike" or "tsunami." Taken on its own, it is a balanced text, relevant to the mystical detachment of time. (In section 8.3, I present a second text about time and madness, from my bachelor's thesis, which comes even closer to madness.) I have adapted the text slightly to better suit the needs of this book.

5.4.1 Time and Rhythm

In the days of Aristotle, the movement of the heavenly bodies seemed like a well-regulated cosmic windmill. Hours, days, and seasons were the periods that were taken as fixed gauges for the measuring of time. As the years passed, time measurement became more and more standardized. Set periods were abstracted from the varying lengths of long and short days, and a universal measurement was gradually developed. Much later, the half-life of a chemical element would become the standard unit for measuring time.

The rhythms of dead and living nature can be compared to each other with the help of a uniform universal time. Coordinated activities, such as building a house or planning a military operation, require that the participants agree on this uniform time. The supplier of the window frames will

need to be told not to make his delivery for three and a half days (until the first stonemasons have left), and the military outpost will have to wait for three to four hours before responding to an order to comply with the greater plan.

Regular movements in nature announce the time on their own. All the supplier of window frames has to do is wait for the sun to rise three times before taking action. The frontline soldier also relies on a representative of that "natural time" whenever he nervously checks his watch.

In natural time, the movements and rhythms form an "organic whole." When the sun is low, the bees go to the purple flowers on their own initiative, and when the sun is at its zenith, they fly to the yellow flowers. The cosmological cycle of the planets and stars is incorporated in living nature.

The rhythm of day and night—caused by the turning of the earth—has a literal organic counterpart in the biological clocks of mammals and human beings, who have a built-in rhythm of sleeping and waking periods. These clocks do not run uniformly, and they can be influenced by new rhythms from the outside world. If you set your alarm clock to the same time every day, after a while, you will begin waking up just before the alarm goes off.

The body has many clocks. Some have to do with the rapid rhythm of respiration and the heartbeat. Other biological clocks tick more slowly and coordinate physical changes and interactions with the outside world, such as when puberty sets in. These clocks tick in harmony. The farmer naturally feels an inclination to start sowing when spring arrives, and he feels the itch to party when the harvest has been brought in. The young man leaves his village when the time comes to search for a suitable partner. Ritualized customs develop naturally. The youngster is allowed to go to that one village but not to the other, and then only when he has reached an officially sanctioned age. The rhythms of rituals reflect the rhythms of nature. To conform to the rituals and order as maintained by the priestly caste is to conform and comply with the natural order of which you are a part.

These rhythms are in harmony with each other and are "synchronized." That is to say, they are regarded as parts or aspects of the universal cosmic rhythm: there is but one time. The cosmos is like a beating heart; the *physis* comprises dead, living, and human nature. This is Earth time, in which the rhythms of the earth, the heavenly bodies, and the humans are in harmony with one another. The earth is the *Grund*, and only much, much later—after the ascent to the eternal air time and the interiorization in the psychological water time—will dissonances appear and the rhythms fall apart. So visible behind every harmony and concordance is disharmony and difference.

5.4.2 Chronopathology

In the past, a solar eclipse could undermine trust in the natural order of time. And later on, when it was learned that the sun was one of many stars and that the length of a day on earth was different than a day on Mars or Venus, the order of time was pushed "further back." Just like space, it would become the unmoving decor, with events playing themselves out in the foreground.

The actions of the "actors" can only be geared to one another, however, if the actors accept this uniform time-space decor. If an extra has to stand on the stage for five minutes—so the story can advance properly and sensibly—and then he leaves the stage, he'll be doing that after five "real" minutes. These are five minutes according to the universal clock in the background or to his own watch or to the prompter who whispers that his time is up or, if necessary, to his biological clock, which is just as "natural" as the universal clock.

Sometimes a person will miss a beat while singing. In a harmony of voices, such dissonance can really stand out. It's dissonant because its rhythm and movement are out of step with that of the whole piece, because they fail to follow its rules. A person who cannot keep time can be taught to do so. If he still can't learn, he'll be kicked out of the choir.

Rhythms take place "in time." And time takes place in Aristotle's abstract clock (see section 3.1.1). Irregular, delayed, or accelerated rhythms are other terms for the kinds of relationships that are possible between one clock (the biological clock, for instance) and another (such as Aristotle's universal clock).

A "normal" experience of time is that in which one's personal rhythm is not out of sync with the world rhythm. "Chronopathology" is the study of abnormal experiences of time, in which the biological clock is not attuned to the world clock in the usual way. In his study of aberrant experiences of time called *Mensch und Zeit* (1979), the German scholar Theo Rudolf Payk presents an overview of many different notions of time. But when he discusses eccentric experiences of time later on in his book, his tacit basic assumption is that nature's time (earth time) is the norm and that in "normal" cases, human rhythms should harmonize with that time.

Each rhythm has its own character. A water clock in a raging mountain stream will tick faster than the same clock in a slowly flowing river. Time flies for those who are intensely involved in some activity and are in a "flow." Conversely, when you're in the dentist's waiting room, time seems to crawl at a snail's pace. Yet most people are accustomed to how the clocks tick both inside and outside their home, so they're quite good at

synchronizing their own experienced rhythm with that of the world's time. But sometimes they aren't. Payk discusses many different cases of aberrant experiences of time: Imprisoned in the darkness by an earthquake, three young men later reported that they thought four or five days had passed before they were rescued, when "in fact" it was eighteen days (Payk 1979, 48). A delirious alcoholic experienced a fifteen-minute bath as having lasted a few seconds and a one-hour voyage by ship as two minutes. Conversely, a hysterical patient given a hyoscine injection experienced ten minutes as an hour and hours as months. In addition to such extreme instances, Payk describes various experiments in which people, depending on situations and personality types, either overestimated or underestimated the time involved.

An extreme case of the slowing of time is when time seems to stand still. The rhythm of the personal clock stops completely. There's still a clock in the world, but the person is no longer involved in it. Payk (1979, 75) says, "In the most extreme case, time comes to an exasperating standstill. By way of example, one patient put it this way: 'The clock is running down ... everything is stationary ... time is lost.'" This is difficult to interpret. The patient is undoubtedly still breathing, her heart is still beating, and she will still see the sun rise. Perhaps her biological clock is "broken." But there's probably more to it than that. Just as in the case of the dentist's waiting room, there are other factors of a more psychological nature that can be interpreted only by means of other notions of time.

5.4.3 Absolute Desynchronization: Crowhurst I

We're still on land, terra firma, and our frame of reference is still the water clock, where we pay attention to the regularity of the ticking of the clock and not to the flowing of the water (more about real "water time" in section 8.3). Here, "incorrectly" estimating a period of elapsed time means that one's own clock (biological, organic, or psychological) does not completely conform to the rhythm of the world clock. If you see the sun go down, you can report it. But if it's nighttime and the sun is gone, you soon discover that your own natural clock is not entirely attuned to the movement of the sun. And in the dead of night, you no longer have a natural clock of your own. When you're on this boundless sea, your inner clock can vanish, as Crowhurst's story attests below.

In his dynamic model of psychosis, Podvoll (1990, 106–107) identifies seven different stages: "Seven psychological events, one built upon the other, form a universal structure of megalomania. They add up to the natural history of the megalomanic ordeal. Its foundation is ordinary enough: the blind propensity of one's egohood to make sudden surges into power

and predicament. To that are added the stages that can be called: Speed; Desynchronization; Absorption; Insight and Power; Beyond the Law; Conflicting Commands; and Death and Rebirth." These stages along the madmystical path are a thread that runs through the *via mystica psychotica*, and I will be referring to them more than once. In this section, the focus is on the second stage: that of desynchronization. Podvoll uses this term in his case study on Donald Crowhurst's madness.

Donald Crowhurst was a British engineer and amateur yachtsman who liked to accept adventurous challenges and who tackled problems in a positive, analytical way. In doing so, he relied on his strong analytical abilities and accuracy, and he always managed to counter every setback. Although he had little experience, in October 1968 he decided to take part in a solo boat race around the world. He left England and struck out into the Atlantic in a southerly direction but was soon experiencing technical problems. When the boat stopped making any real progress, he began to doubt whether he should continue. For him, giving up so soon would amount to an enormous failure, so he decided to stick with it. In the radio messages that he sent to the home front, however, he did not mention his awkward situation and made it appear as if everything was running according to plan. The only problem he reported, at a certain point, was that he had too little electricity for his radio, giving him an excuse to stop sending messages.

From that moment on, things began going downhill for Crowhurst. He wanted to keep sailing but that wasn't possible, and he would have to spend months drifting around somewhere off the coast of Brazil. He didn't dare reveal this to the outside world, nor did he want to, so he devised a plan to return home and act as if he actually had sailed around the world. As part of the plan, he wrote a very detailed fictitious report of his voyage in his ship's log, including weather conditions and so forth. He also kept a true journal, the tone of which became increasingly desperate as time passed and he became more deeply entangled in his web of lies. Instead of sailing, Crowhurst spent most of his time working on the report of his voyage, which ultimately would amount to more than a hundred thousand words. He also studied a book by Einstein on the theory of relativity, which he had brought along. His voyage itself came to a standstill, but Einstein's book gave him the idea that he had indeed made progress and that, in the Einsteinian world, he was master of his situation. He played with his own insights and thoughts on the subject of time and space, which he called "creative mathematics." Gradually these thoughts began to merge with his thoughts about his actual solitary situation.

His journals indicate that it was a difficult, frustrating time for him. Every false entry about his location and his progress made it necessary to come up with another fabrication. But after a while, he began to take pleasure in this challenge. He fought a lonely battle, most of it in his head, part of it on paper; in his mind, he became a hero. At a certain point he learned that all the other participants in the race had given up and that he was the only one left. Now he was faced with a big problem: he could no longer give up, since the failure would be too great and his deception would undoubtedly come to light. Nor could he continue, for soon they would come looking for him.

For many people, at least in Crowhurst's time, spending months at sea on a solo voyage would be, in and of itself, a lonely and maddening ordeal. The loneliness automatically causes you to become detached and internalized. You must constantly struggle to keep your memory of the ordinary, real mainland world alive using nothing but your imagination, and your ties with normal life are supported only by the occasional radio message. Yet this does not necessarily lead to madness and desynchronization. By following the rhythm of day and night and engaging in the practices of "daily life"—to the extent that such a thing exists on a solo voyage—many people in such circumstances manage to keep both feet on the ground (or, in this case, on the bottom of the boat).

In the case of Crowhurst, however, there seemed to be evidence of a much more extensive "break" with the normal world. In order to save face, he spent weeks hatching his own alternative reality, which he planned to unveil as soon as he returned. Of course he knew at the very start that he was making it all up. But because he was working with such intensity and in total solitude, day after day, to conceive and write down his plan something that other people would have to believe—he slowly began to believe in the exceptional power of his own thinking. Whatever thoughts he thought would become reality (or so he hoped), and that's when the madness really started taking hold. Crowhurst became convinced that by thinking about it, he could escape from the dilemma he was in and move to another project or another level. As Podvol writes, "At this point, a new psychotic predicament began. All systematic sailing ceased. Over the next five weeks, Crowhurst step by step switched into a new adventure, a project infinitely larger than any he had embarked on before, which culminated in his deep delusional conviction that he had transcended the powers of God, thus successfully accomplishing and prescribing the path for the next state of human evolution. He was involved in a psychotic transformation."

All restraints on his thinking about his situation, the world, and the cosmos had vanished. All he had were the sea, his unlimited thought processes, and Einstein's book. He could think whatever he wanted, and his thoughts *had* to become reality through his logbook. The things he thought and wrote about were only the beginning—finger exercises for the world of deception that would become reality upon his return to England. He had to believe that his thoughts and logbook entries had the power to form an alternative reality, and he convinced himself that this was true. Crowhurst (quoted in Podvoll) described how he believed that by using his method of thinking he could intervene in the very foundations of reality: "Now we must be very careful about getting the answer right. We are at the point where our powers of abstraction are powerful enough to do tremendous damage. Once we understand a normally stable system well enough to tamper with it in unnatural ways we must be very, very careful about what we decide to do. We must think hard and long before doing anything, and when we decide to act we must be careful not to rush things. Like nuclear chain reactions in the matter system [Hiroshima], our whole system of creative abstraction can be brought to the point of 'take off.' ... By writing these words I do signal for the process to begin. ..."

By then Crowhurst was so far gone in his detachment that he experienced his own thinking as being estranged from nature, as a kind of explosive, unnatural power that could blast the objective outside world to pieces like an atom bomb. His "creative abstraction" would work like a nuclear chain reaction. "Creative abstraction" seems to correspond with what Sass describes as hyperreflexion: a kind of thinking that perceives and creates at the same time (as I myself describe in Fragment IV).

Podvoll continues, "On a page of its own was a quasi-mathematical formulation:

$$\int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} \mathbf{Man} = [0] - [0]$$

It was a symbolic comment on his life. Though it made no real sense mathematically, somehow or other this equation meant everything to Crowhurst. He called it the 'Cosmic Integral.' Literally, it means that all that man is from beginning to end adds up to nothing. It declares an absolute nihilism in which every possibility of human existence—the mind of delight as well as the mind of disgrace—is only an illusion of the mind. The Cosmic Integral indicates that all forms of existence are ultimately deceptions. And deception is the product of imagination. Anything can be imagined."

In Crowhurst's Cosmic Integral, time is expanded and quantified in a quasi-Einsteinian way. If you imagine that time is a line that extends to a positive (future) infinity and a negative (past) infinity, you are greatly tempted to draw certain conclusions from the form of this line. The conclusion that Crowhurst is alluding to here is that, for human beings, the total amount of time is "zero"—that is, negatively extending into the past and positively into the future. But if the result is zero (Podvoll's "absolute nihilism"), then everything is conceivable and everything is "nothing but" illusion, since real, substantial time does not exist and there is nothing but a zero point; all "positivity," all truth, is illusion. This may be called "desynchronization through abstraction." By quantifying and abstracting all past and future time, the real, lived present lapses into nothingness. If the present is nothing, then you are freed from it and you are omnipresent. Crowhurst managed to release himself from the natural rhythm of the heavenly bodies, the waves, and his own eating and sleeping patterns, and he desynchronized to a mathematical void, a nonrhythm of static numbers and infinity. He abandoned not only the nautical race but also the arena of universal human time. In his mind, he was "outside time," in some other order of time or eternity.

For Crowhurst, this position outside time was a revelation of eternity and immortality, and he had the idea that this discovery had put him in contact with higher "beings." He knew his body was mortal, but he was convinced that exercising his mad mental powers had brought him to another level and that, as a result, he could escape both his earthly worries (which were considerable!) and mortality itself. Crowhurst wrote, "If I stipulate of my own free will that by learning to manipulate the space-time continuum Man will become God and disappear from the physical universe as we know it I am providing the system with an impulse."

Essentially Crowhurst is right, but his conclusion is less spectacular than he thinks. He "discovers" the experience of his own will, of his consciousness, of the possibility of free, unobstructed thinking. He discovers what most people in everyday life simply take for granted: that while we do live in a physical universe, we are equally present in a moral and cultural universe. And indeed, in the end, the mind does defeat death—at least, the mind as it precipitates in the form of documents, human remains, and other traces of human life. So in a certain sense, Crowhurst did succeed in his mission, and we "met" him in the words he passed down to us. But Crowhurst probably wanted more than that.

A little later on, Crowhurst writes, "God's clock is not the same as our clock. He has an infinite amount of 'our' time. Ours has very nearly run out.

We on the other hand do not have very much time left." Here the various notions of time collide: the time of eternity; the time of God; quantified static time ("God has an infinite amount of our time"); and experienced dynamic time ("we do not have very much time left"). Crowhurst's line of reasoning seems to run as follows: when your thoughts lead you to dwell on numbers and mathematics, you raise yourself above the earthly, temporal, and physical, and find yourself in a divine sphere. There is neither life nor death there, but only eternity. You escape the rhythms of sun and moon, of day and night, of setting out and coming home. You desynchronize.

This isn't such a strange idea. It is one shared by many mystics. Zaehner (1957, 6), for example, writes, "Now one of the commonplaces of practically every type of mystical experience is that time and space appear to be transcended: the mystic lives, as Meister Eckhart is particularly fond of pointing out, in an 'eternal now.'" (Also see 3.2.2.3.) Eckhart himself writes (in Schürmann 1978, 55), "There is a higher part of the mind which keeps itself above time, and which ignores time as well as the body. All that happened a thousand years ago, the day of a thousand years ago, is no more remote in eternity than the moment in which I stand right now." Elsewhere (in Schürmann 1978, 6), he describes a person enlightened by God in a way that is strongly reminiscent of Crowhurst's description of himself: outside time, with God, without suffering, and without progression through time: "Look! This man dwells in one sole and same light with God: this is why there is in him neither suffering nor succession, but only an equal eternity. In truth, this man is bereft of all wonder, and in him all things are present in their essence. Therefore he gets nothing new from things to come nor from any chance: he dwells in a single now which is in all time and unceasingly new. Such a divine sovereignty is in this power." In this bliss outside time, as Eckhart describes it, even Crowhurst would no longer have to be afraid of the scorn he feared upon returning home. Scorn and fear would be resolved in a "homecoming outside time."

Crowhurst escaped from earth time. He thought his way through to shaping a reality that was both realer *and* unrealer—in the sense laid out in chapter 1—than ordinary life at sea. I'll leave him now to bob around on the ocean for a few hundred pages until chapter 16.2.3, many Podvollian stages further on, when I will describe the ill-fated continuation of his spiritual-psychotic voyage of discovery.

For now, and in conclusion of this chapter, I admit that my argument may seem heretical or disrespectful with regard to mysticism, philosophy, theology, or Eckhart. But when we take the statements that Crowhurst, Custance, and many other madmen have made on such topics as time, time Detachment 193

machines, and Einstein, and place them next to those made by mystics like Eckhart with regard to time, eternity, and God, we see some interesting parallels. That is not to say that Crowhurst and Custance "are actually philosophers who are just as interesting" as Plotinus or Eckhart; it is also not meant to suggest that they think in similar ways. It does mean that when viewed upon closer inspection, the things that, to the untrained eye, may seem like "time disorientation," "gibberish," or cognitive deficiencies actually contain the same kinds of mirrorings and experiences of the mysteries of time and space that we see in Plotinus and Eckhart. And although Custance, like every other psychotic, makes statements that seem "untrue" or "senseless" when scrutinized, the insight and the kind of truth he is aiming for have a lot in common with that of the renowned mystics (see the introduction to part II). No matter how manic he was, Custance seems correct when he contends (1952, 21), "One of the most striking features of the views which impelled themselves upon me in the course of my illness is their similarity to those professed by mystics of all ages and peoples."

6.1 Mystical Iconoclasm

In philosophy and high culture there have always been warnings against the temptations of the sensual imagination and the poetic image. Plato was suspicious of the poets and the sophists, with their popular but ill-considered images and metaphors. All too often, he said, they merely imitated reality instead of making reality more understandable. They gave the observer a false picture and deluded him with inaccuracies. Metaphors such as the allegory of the cave can clarify things, but with images you can manipulate them as well. Images can be insidious; they can suggest something that doesn't even exist in the real world. Images can seduce you, sweep you along, and keep the seeker of truth from embarking on the right path. Images are nothing but "snapshots" of a reality that is essentially in a constant state of flux. Images simplify reality and obscure the truth—at least according to a few like-minded critics.

Such objections to images and the imagination can also be heard in modern, scientifically oriented philosophy. The fear of, condemnation of, or outright assault on compelling images and the use of the imagination is expressed in many ways. There are attempts made by the philosophy of science to distinguish between illusion and true perception, by argumentation theory to distinguish between sound knowledge and dubious knowledge that has been corrupted by the imagination, by linguistic philosophy to divide sensible and literal language from metaphorical and poetic language, and so on and so forth.

At the same time, "the image" is very positively regarded in our culture. Perhaps in reaction to the domination of higher, pure thought, the life of the mind, and critical thinking, there is a tendency to leave as much as possible to the imagination and to become engrossed in images. It is often said that we live in a "visual culture." We have an ambivalent attitude toward

the image: image and imagination are seen as seductive dangers, but also as sources of pleasure and insight.

The discussion of mysticism and madness is much better placed against this complex background of sympathetic and antagonistic attitudes toward the image. Both mysticism and madness are often regarded as a kind of visual attack, in which normal, clear-thinking people are involuntarily visited by dreamy but *unreal* visions (mysticism) or plagued by frightening but *unreal* hallucinations (psychoses). I argue for the opposite: "good" mysticism and madness (as in "well-understood" and "well-executed") are actually a kind of iconoclasm, because the mad mystic is not assaulted by images but rather assaults the images himself.

Before taking a closer look at images and demagination in madness, however, I would like to make a few comments on the historical background of the relationship between mysticism and images. Scholars of mysticism make use of texts that date from far before our own era. But as a separate discipline, tradition, or school of wisdom, mysticism did not exist before the end of the Middle Ages. Earlier texts that do mention mysticism are from theologians of the Western Christian tradition whose names are somewhat familiar to us, such as Augustine and Eckhart, and from the Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophical tradition, with authors such as Plato, Plotinus, and Nicholas of Cusa (cf. Louth 1981, and McGinn 1991). These "sources of mysticism" describe the search for and encounter with God or the divine, and the attainment of enlightenment and insight into absolute truth. In his definition, which is influenced by Christianity, Andrew Louth (1981, xiv) says, "Mysticism can be characterized as a search for and experience of immediacy with God. The mystic is not content to know about God, he longs for union with God ... the search for God, or the ultimate, for His own sake, and an unwillingness to be satisfied with anything less than Him; the search for immediacy with this object of the soul's longing: this would seem to be the heart of mysticism."

In the older texts, there are many examples of condemnation and a distrust of both images and the imagination as part of this search. This, in itself, is not surprising; mysticism, philosophy, and theology were still closely connected, and the philosopher's criticism of images was the same as the mystic's. Take, for example, the following passage from Plotinus (6.9.11): "He [the mystic] belongs no longer to the order of the beautiful; he has risen beyond beauty; he has overpassed even the choir of the virtues; he is like one who, having penetrated the inner sanctuary, leaves the temple images behind him though these become once more first objects of regard when he leaves the holies; for There his converse was not with

image, not with trace, but with the very Truth in the view of which all the rest is but of secondary concern. ... Things here are signs; they show therefore to the wiser teachers how the supreme God is known; the instructed priest reading the sign may enter the holy place and make real the vision of the inaccessible."

The highest good, the One, is neither image nor representation. Images are merely secondary. Ultimately, they have to be abandoned for union with the holy of holies. At the very most, images serve an advisory function for the wise; for others, they are merely "diversion." Meijer's discussion of mystical *and* mad images in Plotinus's philosophy is succinct and explicit (1992, 294): "The entire way before this union [with the One] is philosophically elaborated, the experience has nothing to do with breathing exercises, navel-brooding, or hypnotic repetition of syllables nor, may I add, with voices, visionary visions and gymnastics or ascetism." For Plotinus, mysticism does not have anything to do with hearing voices or seeing visions or speaking in tongues.

At the time that these writings were taking shape, they were not seen as a coherent compilation of mystical texts but were part of what today we would call philosophy, theology, and religion. It wasn't until the late Middle Ages that they slowly began to drift apart and a distinction was made between philosophy, official religious doctrine, and accounts of more personal experiences with the divine (cf. Louth 1981, Turner 1995, and McGinn 1991). And not until the fourteenth century did a collection of texts and a tradition develop that can be called mysticism, which was only of indirect importance to the later theological and philosophical traditions. In these mystical writings from the late Middle Ages, unlike in earlier texts, the closeness of God was sought through feelings, suffering, and sensory perception (see Turner 1995 and McGinn 1991).

Since the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the notion of personal experience in general has become more important than in earlier times due to a complex of factors. Robert Sharf, an expert on the subject of Buddhism, says (1998, 94), "A particular mode of experience, characterized as religious, spiritual, visionary or mystical is thought to constitute the very essence of religion. ... this approach is not confined to academic discourse alone; many lay adherents feel that the only authentic form of worship or scriptural study is one that leads to a personal experience of its 'inner truth.'"

This experience Sharf refers to is not the personal experience of a specialist. In principle, everyone is deemed to be receptive to mystical experiences. Rather than a special branch of philosophy or theology, mysticism today is

closer to being a collection of expressions and stories of unusual encounters and events. With its emphasis on the experience, mysticism is less an aspect of active thinking and more something you undergo passively: powerful presences, visions, and sounds that take you by surprise. This is not something inherent to the notion of experience as such, by the way, since that involves both thought and perception. Yet active mystical thinking seems to have been erased from the modern idea of mysticism. People are more likely to say that a mystic's perceptions and visions are what make him a mystic while arguing that his thinking aligns him with some philosophy of life, religion, or worldview without calling it mysticism. Some would even contend that the intellect and the power of thought among both philosophers and theologians is opposed to mysticism altogether.

So Evelyn Underhill (1911), in her influential overview *Mysticism*, places the main focus of mysticism on the immediate "experience" of the divine, and she regards theological argumentation not as an explanation, interpretation, or conceptualization of such experiences but, rather, as the opposite of the mystical experience. For Underhill, mysticism is a question of feeling, passion, and intuition that has little to do with intellect, knowledge, and understanding. Underhill (1911, 24) writes, "In mysticism that love of truth which we saw as the beginning of all philosophy leaves the merely intellectual sphere, and takes on the assured aspect of a personal passion. Where the philosopher guesses and argues, the mystic lives and looks; and speaks consequently, the disconcerting language of first-hand experience, not the neat dialectics of the schools. Hence whilst the Absolute of the metaphysicians remains a diagram—impersonal and unattainable—the Absolute of the mystics is lovable, attainable, alive."

William James is not only an important example of the changed attitude toward mysticism, but he is also its instigator. In his *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, he argues for the emancipation of people who have had strange experiences. In doing so, however, he reduces their experiences to nothing more than conditions of the individual consciousness. Writing about "passivity," for example (1958, 293), his fourth mark of mysticism, he says, "*Passivity*. Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, as by fixing the attention, or going through certain bodily performances, or in other ways which manuals of mysticism prescribe; yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power."

It's as if mysticism were something almost physical—a sensation that catches you off guard if you focus your attention in a certain direction, or

something that can happen through the exercise of "certain bodily performances." This is miles away from Plotinus's contemplation of and ascent to the One. It is also typical of James's attitude to regard "operations" as being part of mystical theology. I won't deny that there is such a thing as a "mystical body." The "certain bodily performances" and "operations," however, have just as much to do with mysticism as a "finger-and-hand exercise" has to do with the value of art or a "hiker's guide" with top athletic performance. Nowhere in the work of James (whose writings on mysticism are highly overrated, in my estimation) do we read how the term "mysticism" came about; nor does he discuss the ideas of important mystics or the relationships between mystical statements and their historical, theological, or philosophical contexts. Mysticism has changed from being a philosophical, conceptual, or even cultural phenomenon to being an individual characteristic or condition or fodder for psychologists, and not something to be taken seriously.

Since the nineteenth century and the time of James, there has been less of a connection between mystical experiences and Christianity. These experiences come in all shapes and sizes, and the expression of mysticism in Christian parlance is regarded as but one of many possible expressions. In fact, over the past two centuries, mystical experiences have been considered genuine and valuable only when they are articulated in some authentic way and not as an extension of traditional doctrine. Because of this, the tie between what is called a mystical (or religious) experience and Christian theology has grown weaker; that is, you can experience God, or "something like God," without knowing anything about the Bible or Christian teachings. Many people even find this preferable; the Bible would only hinder or limit your susceptibility to the holy. This, along with an increase in contact with and knowledge of other religions, has made the term "mysticism" less and less dependent on the Christian tradition. As a result, it has become easier to arrive at a kind of "ecumenical" mysticism: indeed, some people believe that all mystical paths lead to the same mystical root and experience, and this leads to the presumption that all religions are essentially the same.

Hence mysticism has become one of the most universal of experiences as well as one of the most individual, not influenced by cultural traditions. Of course it gave rise to a countermovement in the late twentieth century, advanced by scholars of cultural studies who were critical of all claims to universalism. They insisted that the supposedly pure universal mystical experience could only be a consequence of a tradition and could be understood only in terms of that tradition (cf. Katz 1978). I am not going to undertake a systematic discussion of this complex question about the multiplicity and singularity of the mystical (and the mad) experience, let

alone solve the issue once and for all. The related and fundamental question that pervades this book is to what extent my description of madness is the product of my own experience and my own theoretical and philosophical framework (also see section 14.3.3.3).

All these changes together have produced a present-day mysticism that is associated more with the passive and individualistic experience of visions—both images seen and sounds heard—than with conceptually active thinking about a common ultimate reality. In the more specialized studies, however, there has been a tendency to adopt the older notion of mysticism, of which being assailed by images is not seen as typical. Richard Sorabji, philosopher and scholar of Greek ideas about time, has written about this in his *Time*, *Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (1988, 158): "One subject in studies of mysticism, on which there has been some consensus is the role of imagery. From the thirteenth century onwards, many Christian mystics, especially, it has been said, women, did experience visual imagery. None the less, there is now some agreement that visual imagery should be viewed as an extraneous concomitant. This is in effect an attempt to return to the earlier Christian tradition, and to a tradition closer to Plotinus."

Zaehner (1957, 31) also argues that there is no connection between strange images (visions, hallucinations, and so forth) and mysticism: "The [mystical] experience has nothing to do with visions, auditions, locutions, telepathy, telekinesis, or any other preternatural phenomenon which may be experienced by saint and sinner alike and which are usually connected with an hysterical temperament. It is true that some advanced (and canonized) mystics have been subject to these disturbances, but they have no essential connection with the mystical experience itself, the essence and key-note of which is union." Mystics themselves have made the same observation (see the quote from Plotinus above).

Eckhart is clear about the place of the image (cited in Schürmann 1978): "Whenever this power [the highest part of the soul, the intellect] sees something which is an image, be it the image of an angel or the image of itself, then it does not yet see perfectly. Even if it sees God or how he is an image or a trinity, then it does not see perfectly." For Ruysbroeck, the image should serve as no more than a means, not as a goal (cited in Davies 1988, 141): "And so if a person wants to become spiritual, then they must renounce all corporal attachments and hold to God alone with longing and affection, possessing him in this way. Thus images and disordered affections for creatures are banished. By possessing God with affection, we are inwardly cleansed of images, because God is a spirit who cannot be represented by images.

But in their exercises, a person should make use of good images, such as the passion of Our Lord and all things which stir us to greater devotion. But in possessing God, we must descend into the bare imagelessness, which God is" (Sparkling Stone, 157; T, III, 5).

It is essential that the mystic not stare mindlessly at an image and get "caught up" in it. Images can serve as provisional, temporary means for setting the future mystic on the right *path*, as long as those means are not confused with the *goal* of that path. For the mystic, images are, at the very most, like the famous ladder from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, proposition 6.54: "My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly." You can use images to arrive at a certain insight, but as soon as you *see* it, the image becomes superfluous and even dangerous. As a mystic, you must remain neither focused on the ladder nor captive of images. If you do, you will get nowhere.

6.2 Madness by Images: Podvoll's Buddhist Therapy

6.2.1 Fascinations and Seductions

This digression into the background and history of mysticism would be somewhat excessive were it not for the fact that what applies to mysticism applies to an even greater extent to madness. There are clear parallels between the history of mysticism and madness as Foucault (2006) describes it: before modern times, madness crept through town and country as an uncontrollable phenomenon, erupting here and there, whereas since the seventeenth century madness has slowly been losing its meaningful voice. It degenerated from a religiously significant phenomenon, or at least culturally significant, to a trait of individual persons—only to be entirely reduced in the most recent times to the mute behavior of neurons.

Since William James, nonmodern or antimodern forms of being-in-the-world, articulations of the experience of unity between mind and cosmos, expressions of the difference between being and thought—in short, everything that once belonged to the higher wisdom of theology, mysticism, and philosophy—has been stowed away in a cabinet marked "religious experience." The same fate has fallen to madness. The potential power of madness is now being identified, localized, and disarmed by being portrayed as a curious but harmless and private sight-and-sound spectacle, a meaningless mess of images with no more than a certain amusement value.

In his work, Zaehner attempts to distinguish different kinds of mysticism, focusing not only on Christian and Islamic mysticism but also on nature mysticism, drug mysticism, and what I call "mad mysticism." He is convinced that no mysticism whatsoever, not even the manic variety, has anything to do with images or the imagination (1957, 90): "Hallucinations, however, though they frequently accompany the manic state, are not essential to it. Conversely hallucinations of the most violent kind, which can be felt to be very real, occur to canonized saints. St. Teresa has much to say on the subject of the Devil's unwelcome importunities in physical form. These visitations, however, whether they be of the Devil himself or of minor spirits, are 'accidental' only, both to the 'natural' [nature mysticism, mad mysticism, and drug mysticism] and to the specifically theistic experience, and do not therefore properly enter into our subject."

According to Zaehner, madness, like mysticism, should not be defined in terms of the visual experience. And Podvoll even insists that the danger in madness is the acceptance of images and the imagination: that in order to traverse the mad-mystical terrain and be able to withstand the madness, visualizations must be "demagined" instead of imagined. I will now elaborate on this idea and defend it, based once again on Podvoll's work.

After passing through Podvoll's first stages—speed and desynchronization (see section 5.4.3)—the madman may find himself in the stages of absorption, insight, and power. There are two dangers lurking in these stages: the fascination caused by swirling images and the seduction of power thinking (see part IV). These threats make the mad condition unstable. Things that usually go unobserved ("micro-operations") suddenly appear in the consciousness. The slightest inner movements and whims, as well as minor details in the outside world, become the potential subjects of mad attention. What usually passes unnoticed now becomes a temptation that can throw the madman into utter disarray. "The increasing speed has both released and unveiled them [the micro-operations]," Podvoll writes. "In the normal state, they functioned under the surface of the comparatively laborious progression of macro-operational thinking [everyday, conventional thinking]. ... The result is complete dislocation, outside of time, in a foreign place, where one is utterly alone, except, that is, for the uncanny presences caused by infernal animation" (1990, 186).

This is an effective description of what happens in madness; the last sentence expresses in one breath the altered experience of time, space, and the absence of others. In this unfamiliar zone, thoughts and images come and go like meteors: "Basically, it is a neutral zone where *pure impermanence*

is the only governing law, indifferent and dispassionate toward the meteoric appearances and disappearances of thoughts and images." It is a clear zone of pure presence or watchfulness, but it rarely persists. "This has previously been referred to as the 'waking zone,' where all mental activity can be seen with tremendous clarity and precision. But this experience of the fundamental state of intelligence is also 'unstable' and does not usually last for very long" (Podvoll 1990, 186). Here Podvoll calls the high point of the psychosis "the fundamental state of intelligence." We should not see this as the ability to solve mathematical problems or to repair a boat, but rather as the highest mental capacity, as Plotinus describes it—or as Eckhart calls it, the "higher part of the mind" (see sections 5.4.3 and 3.2.2.3 and the citations contained there).

Unfortunately this ecstatic state is usually short-lived, and the fascination soon comes to a screeching halt. The things, objects, and images seduce and enchant; they fracture the unity and neutrality, and they hypnotize the madman, leading him from one trance to another. Podvoll (1990, 187–188) writes, "The neutral zone almost inevitably becomes colored by 'fascination.' ... [it is] 'split up' into multiple consciousnesses, into subzones, or subconsciousnesses. It can occur by fixation on a sight, sound, taste, smell, body feeling, or mind sensation. Each is capable of becoming an 'entranced' consciousness—a 'trance' zone. These trance zones are usually experienced in fluctuation from one to the other."

The fascinations and the sense of being carried along by endless vistas and deep convoluted ideas fill the person with a flush of ecstasy, astonishment, and perplexity: "Absorption in the consciousness of thoughts and ideas can produce a unique form of rapture. Donald Crowhurst, crushed between the sea and the sky in his lonely machinations of calculation and deception, became intoxicated with 'turning' thoughts and revolving ideas. ..."

According to Podvoll, it is not the mad-mystical condition itself (the second stage, the waking zone, the fundamental state of intelligence) that is the problem; rather, it is the seduction of images. Somewhere in the psychotic process, the madman turns off onto a road that is different from the one taken by the mystic, who comes out unscathed. More about that intersection, and the variety of post-mystical roads, will be covered later on in the book. First I want to discuss a few more concrete and practical implications of this idea.

6.2.2 Infinite Emptiness, No Visuals

It's easier said than done: don't get distracted. We're used to letting ourselves be amused, entertained, and tempted by the things around us. When

you're confronted by a constant barrage of images and ideas that initially seem tasteful and desirable, how can you hold up in the face of this visual hurricane? How do you stand firm in what Podvoll calls the waking zone?

Podvoll (1990, 168ff.) acknowledges that it isn't easy, certainly not when it happens to you for the first time—or even the second. You don't know what's going on, you're not prepared for it, and usually you get little sympathy from others. The first thing to do is to relax, so you're not distracted by events, impressions, demands, and expectations from the outside world. Once you find yourself in a place that is peaceful and nonthreatening—but also non-enervating—you must try to find the waking zone and guard it from the tidal wave of accelerating thoughts, images, and illusions. In such a situation, it's helpful to try to calm your body—to relax and "ground" yourself. This makes you conscious of your body, your breathing, and your ability to move deliberately. It becomes easier to focus your attention and not to get sucked in and distracted by all the details (both micro and macro) demanding your attention.

The paradox is that you must be attentive, but without paying attention to any particular object. "Inattentive attention" is what it's all about. Podvoll says, "This close watching refers to a special kind of attention, that of not following the preposterous, extravagant false ideas and illuminated impressions and associations that constantly lead down the 'path of the fantastic.' ... Don't get stuck. Don't elaborate on what is happening. Especially, don't get caught in the visuals. Don't dwell anywhere." In other words, stay on the straight and narrow path and don't trust the images, associations, and insights. The difficulty here is distinguishing between "the preposterous, extravagant false ideas and illuminated impressions and associations that constantly lead down the 'path of the fantastic'" on the one hand, and the clear, correct "thought that arises from our critical intelligence" on the other. How can you tell the difference? The only solution, it seems to me, is for the mad mystic to follow neither the mad visuals nor the "normal images." To me, Podvoll's view implies that the madman must refrain from clinging to any image whatsoever, including self-images and common-sense notions of reality. In order to become reengaged in the everyday world, he must empty the cup down to the dregs, walk all the way down the path. Podvoll says, "There is no choice but to go through it. There is no way to go back to the beginning of a dream once you are in it. ... It is possible to allow the mad mechanism to pass through at its inhuman speed—and not miss a beat!"

At the high point—or the low point—of the storm of images, you find yourself in the nebulous "waking zone." This is not a source of recipes for dealing with the complexities of madness; rather, it is an unspecified area

of impermanence. Once that zone comes within your grasp, you can rid yourself of fascinations and temptations: "Impermanence is now the ally, the only reference point, the most poignant reminder of wakefulness that you will have. Now that you have come face-to-face with the quick circuit of fascination, of mental indulgence in microcosm, this is the opportunity to *cut fascination* at its roots."

Podvoll is remarkably certain here about the possibility of isolating madness and destroying it. But it's not that simple. When you find yourself in such a maelstrom of speed and insight, why shouldn't you be allowed to take along a few visual and textual pearls from the deep sea of psychosis? And how can we be sure that Podvoll's solution won't become the next mad problem? How do we prevent the waking zone from becoming a zone of hypermadness?

If we could just stand guard over the mysterious waking zone, says Podvoll, then the volcano of madness would die down of its own accord. Speed would decelerate, images would flow away, and the emptiness would be nourished—which, in fact, is the recipe for both mysticism and madness. When the ordeal is over, both the mystic and the madman would receive rewards much like those described in Christian mystical literature: after suffering comes deliverance, after confusion comes insight, after despair comes appreciation. A sense of universal love, warmth, and tenderness for one and all is theirs: "It is a feeling of sympathy and warmth toward everything outside of yourself along with the dropping away of an intensified self-consciousness. You are hardly alone in having had this experience. Almost universally, the one in the second state calls it Love or Compassion. ... You now may find that you are capable of experiencing wonderfully compassionate urges, and that this, more than anything else, is nuclear to your being. If ever there is an antidote to madness, it is here, in an *opening out*."

Podvoll draws sweeping conclusions from this that are not always valid. After all, there are forms of mysticism that are based on mystical union and ecstasy but not on love, such as Jewish Merkabah mysticism (cf. Scholem 1941, 40ff.). Nor does every mad iconoclast confess to having such positive notions of love and compassion. Moreover, the discovery of "love" can stoke the flames of further distracting madness. Podvoll acknowledges that too and warns that this love should not be allowed to go haywire: "But remember, you are still living in the great speed, and this too can 'run wild.'"

Podvoll's splendid, sympathetic, and insightful description of mysticism and madness shows how you can make your way through madness with the right form of mysticism (no images, no thoughts), conducted in the right way (no hallucinations, no delusions). By grounding yourself, by letting go

of "everything," and by not letting yourself be seduced by images, you can pass through a waking zone and an emptiness and come out the other side richer and more loving.

The problem with this view is the status of the waking zone, which is what part III is all about. Another problem with Podvoll's theory is its applicability. His ideas are plausible, recognizable, and relevant to his four case studies, but they may not be exemplary for all the forms of madness. And is Podvoll's view relevant to those who say they do hallucinate but do not experience "rapid thoughts"? According to Podvoll himself, it is. Many different kinds of madness have an identical core or dynamic (1990, 147): "But this pigeonholing of diagnoses [atypical psychoses, schizophreniform reactions, and so forth]—as if they were separate states of mind—always ignores the subjective quality. The feelings, the sensations, the ideas that occur to one during any of these so-called different derangements, are the same."

6.2.3 Beyond the Image of Madness

According to Podvoll, everyone with a psychosis should reject the temptation to be fascinated by images. People who claim they are hallucinating should be heard and believed, but their "hallucinations" should be understood within the full context of the world they live in—their thoughts, their feelings, and their perception. These people should learn another way of "coping with hallucinations." The hallucinations should be regarded not as real phenomena in the midst of other real perceptions, but as unreal images in the midst of other unreal identities. The experiences should be described differently. Actually, such people should be chased up the mystical path and told to leave their medicines at home. Let's take a look at a few different kinds of hallucinations and descriptions to see what Podvoll is actually implying.

In Strindberg (1912, 51) there's a fine example of a description of visual hallucinations: "It is no mere accident, for on certain days the cushion takes the shape of terrible monsters, such as Gothic dragons and serpents; and one night after I have spent a hilarious evening, I am greeted on my return by a medieval demon, a devil with horned head and other appurtenances. I was not at all frightened; it looked so natural, but it also made on my mind the impression of something abnormal and unearthly."

Strindberg writes about strange things occurring in reality as if he were really seeing them. But in this example, it is clear that he is not directly perceiving the "hallucinations" without any special circumstances and contributions from his own mind. The cushion hallucination involves a "look-like" image; the "Gothic dragons and serpents" don't just materialize out of

nothingness. Strindberg provides less context for the other devilish nightly apparitions, but in those situations, too, there's a climate of darkness that creates a setting conducive to the appearance of mad imaginings. The images do not appear passively in Strindberg's field of perception. They are imaginary embodiments or verbal expressions of "something abnormal and unearthly." To illustrate his world of madness for others—and for himself—and to put it into words, Strindberg uses this visual language.

Podvoll's advice to Strindberg would be to get a good night's sleep, to pay no mind to the good and evil thoughts and sinister images, and to drive them back into the nightly subconscious. If there are monsters lurking somewhere in the consciousness, let them come, let them go, and don't become attached to them. Don't make a big fuss over them, don't "capture" them in images, words, or thoughts. (More about Strindberg in chapter 16.1.1.)

Another interesting example is the following fragment from the autobiography of D. Davidson, Remembrances of a Religio-Maniac (1912, 61): "I became aware of something remarkable happening in the air only a very short distance in front of me. It seemed to me that there had been some big air waves, and then through them the well-known form of Jesus appeared, facing me, and coming towards me. I thought for a second that he had been rendered invisible by ordinary heat waves that had happened to be between us, and that he had just walked through them. As soon as I thought this, he seemed to disappear for a second; once again he became clearly visible, firm, and solid, all but his feet, which seemed lost in vibrating air; an instant afterwards they became visible, and I heard the gravel crunch under his tread as he took four of five paces up to me. The whole thing was almost as quick as thought and only a matter of a few seconds, but for a moment I was astonished, and thought that indeed I was standing in the presence of the God of Israel. I was not in the least frightened; indeed, I was very much relieved; and if an angel with lightning-like countenance and glistening wings had appeared, I would have been delighted."

Here Davidson emphasizes "something remarkable happening in the air only a very short distance in front of me." He tries to set down his experience in an image, to fossilize it, at which he succeeds: "once again he became clearly visible, firm, and solid." Then he remarks, "The whole thing was almost as quick as thought," but he does not draw any further conclusions from this observation. In the end, the image is much more than an apparition; it is the thought of "the presence of the God of Israel." Then Davidson says, "if an angel with lightning-like countenance and glistening wings had appeared, I would have been delighted," which is evidence of his eagerness to see images: beautiful images of God, that is, and not the nasty ones.

According to Podvoll's theory of mystical demagination, Davidson would have been better off resisting this particular temptation. Those who start meddling in miracles and beautiful apparitions and want to put them to use should be mindful of the downside: monsters and demons. Davidson's storm of images may not be very serious, but there's no way of knowing that from this quote. Maybe he only wants to express the idea that he's had an intense, significant "experience." Maybe he just wants to increase the intensity and value of that experience, for himself or for others, and in doing so, he ends up in a story about a sudden, surprising visual hallucination that cannot be resisted. Podvoll would advise Davidson to abandon the fascination he had for Jesus during and after this experience and instead to train himself in a different kind of attentiveness: one focused not on miracles but solely on the main miracle that has no specific content—the waking zone.

There's much more self-confidence with regard to the so-called visual hallucination in the account written by Tilly Gerritsma, policy adviser for the Dutch Weerklank (Echo) Foundation, which devotes itself to people having unusual experiences such as "hearing voices." She writes (in a letter),

I started out in what I thought was a restful and structured life, but I was actually unconscious of how chaotic and dark it was, and I could no longer see the light. From there I ended up in a world that had something completely different to show me. Light (a positive voice), space (the world—that which exists, including the world of possibilities—is so much bigger than you think that you cannot take it in) and an intense form of love, warmth, and the desire to be there for you. You are embraced, as it were, and supported, and you learn to see everything in a different light. You're really alone (in that you're living through your own processes), but on the other hand you're a small but essential link in a greater whole (small but great at the same time, and present in all things.) So from the darkness to the light, a greater, all-embracing world that seems to be fully structured (color, shape, sound). Within this light, this space, you 'see,' or you know at a distance, that everything makes sense, that everything has to be as it is. In the normal material world, a totally different game is apparently being played (power, status, money, or aggression, hatred, egotism, and so forth; harsh colors, contorted shapes, loud, chaotic noises), one that is quite out of step with the world you inhabit at that moment. That world is a greater or different reality (beautiful, soft colors and beautiful, soft, rounder shapes blending together and forming a consensus that keeps on changing, flowing side by side and into each other. This is not chaos but soft, loving, playful waves, little clouds that merge, recede, and reconverge).

Gerritsma walked a path of mysticism or madness, and on that path she experienced some strange things. At no moment, however, does she describe any concrete details of images or hallucinations. She herself is very

conscious of the fact this is not about passive observations of given objects. For instance, she writes "see" in quotation marks. Her experience has to do with good and evil, light and darkness, struggle, insight, harmony, and beauty, but she makes no "claim to truth" concerning "actually perceived visions of images." Podvoll would see this as a good example of how a "storm of images" can also be described—and thereby experienced. However, if Gerritsma had spoken with a standard, non-Podvollian psychiatrist during that period, the chance is great that he would have diagnosed her condition as hallucinatory. After all, the psychiatrist has boxes that have to be checked.

Based on these quotes, it is not possible to deduce exactly what a visual hallucination involves or how it is to be interpreted. In any case, "seeing" in all three examples is different from ordinary "seeing." If we were to ask these three people—assuming they're all still alive—to describe their experiences "more precisely," they might use terms that are even more visual and expressive. But would that tell us exactly what it is that constitutes a hallucination? It would probably do no more than break the madness down into artificial categories of "incorrect" versus "correct" observations.

Instead of further analyzing the characteristics of the perceived image, Podvoll refuses to accept it as a "realistic given" and regards it rather as a false seducer. The more attention paid to the image, the more it comes to life and intensifies its grip on the madman. According to my interpretation of Podvoll, neither psychiatrists nor their patients should give much thought to images or to identifying and combating hallucinations. Rather, they should just let the visual language come and go, let the iconoclast have his way, and arrange, reorder, and translate the images, bit by bit, into a more acceptable form. Attention should be shifted from isolated details to the greater whole of the experience. This would encourage the madman to further relax and expand his language and thinking, which would free him from the prison of fixed images that he himself built.

The mad mystics who choose to follow Podvoll's mystical path don't have an easy time of it in our present-day culture. The general consensus is that if you experience something strange, you must have an "illness" in which you "hear voices" and "see visions." It's all the more tempting to take refuge in visual language when you live in a culture that confirms this "image of madness." Psychiatrists are all too eager to check "troubled by hallucinations" on their diagnostic forms. Speaking from my own experience: I have repeatedly stood in the presence of psychiatrists and held forth about the primal origin of God and the world, the signs we can "see" with regard to the world's mystery, and the means and ends of the Last Things. It's possible that not every psychiatrist could follow everything I had to say. Unable to

follow me— perhaps due to a failure of communication—they deduced more than once that I "probably had problems with visual and/or auditory hallucinations" (also see section 7.3.2). The dilemma for the madman is this: you either remain silent, suffer being misunderstood, and live with the accusation that "you cannot express your problems"; or speak up, suffer being misunderstood, and live with the accusation that you're hallucinating.

Manufacturers of psychotropic drugs (that is, "antimystical drugs") also perpetuate the idea that psychoses are illnesses you succumb to that must be treated with their antimystical medications. To that end, they try to indoctrinate the public with their view of psychosis (and call it "counseling"). They even develop so-called psychosis simulators to inform people and let them see for themselves what it's like to be psychotic. These psychosis simulators are usually visual tools: films, sometimes with other gimmicks added. The films supposedly enable you to "see through the eyes of a schizophrenic," but what you see are all the hallucinatory clichés. This suggests that if you are psychotic, the psychosis can be separated from the psychotic person and the world in which he lives, and his "illness" can be treated medicinally. The makers of the films are eager to present psychosis as "something to which you succumb," rather than as "a world you create," while, in fact, the only thing that really comes from the outside in a psychosis are the anti-mystical drugs that are forced on you.

That madness (like mysticism) consists of "seeing crazy things" is also a commonly held idea in the media and in popular culture. The representation of visual hallucinations in the movie A Beautiful Mind is a typical example. In the early scenes, the mysterious atmosphere of delusion is depicted movingly. As a viewer, you begin to empathize with the main character, and you don't know what's real and what's not. There are conspiracies and coincidences, events both strange and striking. But later in the film, the main character starts talking with a "visual hallucination," an "imaginary friend" who "doesn't really exist." This "entity" is rendered cinematically as if he were an ordinary person, a kind of ghost. The rest of the world is normal and stable, except for this crazy little man who keeps popping up around the main character and can only be seen by him—and by the viewers. Such representations do not help advance our understanding of madness; they ignore the madman's (and the mystic's) active side. If we fail to recognize his iconoclastic side, then his creative imagination becomes incomprehensible.

Additional problems for madmen are created by common misconceptions: that everything they say is literally intended (also see section 7.3, "Scratch Language"), that they cannot think "logically," and that they

cannot see and hear well (so you have to speak loudly when you're with them, and you can talk about them in their presence because they "don't understand you anyway"). And when someone who has had a psychotic episode dares to make art inspired by their madness, it can result in remarkable reactions. I have often seen my colleague, the artist Jannemiek Tukker, being asked "if these are drawings of what you see when you're mad." The drawings (in Kusters et al. 2007) really are inspired by Tukker's mad world. But it would be no less strange to ask Picasso if, in his eyes, women actually "look like that."

Madmen themselves, or former madmen, are often all too happy to contribute to the creation of this image. As soon as they're "back to normal," they find they have become estranged from their own memory of themselves. From the normal perspective, they cannot find the words, tone, or images to give shape to their memories. When they look back on their experiences, they prefer to repeat the words of their psychiatrist and, in total conformity with the expectations of culture and society, end up talking about their hallucinations, delusions, and illness as if these were things from the outside that had caught them unawares.

I don't mean to suggest that metaphorical language ought to be avoided. If we did that, there would be nothing left to say! I just want to make it clear that metaphorical language should be understood and interpreted, and it should not be taken literally as a visual assault—in the passive sense of being "besieged by hallucinatory images." Of course, it is possible—and desirable—to make use of images, metaphors, imaginative language, and the visual arts in order to gain access to the mad world. But those who think that madness consists of a storm of discrete, repeatable images—a kind of crazy movie shown before your eyes—will never understand madness.

This also applies to mysticism and philosophy, by the way: images, linguistic concepts, and fixed habits have a firm hold on us and prevent us from disengaging and escaping. He who thinks he can trap the mad mystic by confronting him with his own paradoxes has failed to grasp any of mysticism's meaning. He whose desire is to learn the secret of mysticism, to understand the depths of philosophy, or to know the subtleties of madness will have to bypass image, language, and thought. Wittgenstein formulated it simply as follows (1958a, 48): "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." I will briefly return to Wittgenstein as mystic in sections 7.1 and 13.4, but for now, with this comment about language, we already find ourselves in the topic of the next chapter.

7.1 Mute Language

In mystical madness, language is in tatters. You can't have a normal conversation with someone who is well and truly mad. He jumps from pillar to post, speaking gibberish, making no sense, and using words that don't exist. At least that's what it seems like from the outside, with both the mystic and the madman.

This distortion and disappearance of the language—this "delanguization"—is related to a detachment from everyday life in general (see chapter 5). The ease with which we use language to deal with ordinary situations vanishes in mystical madness. If you become detached from the people and things around you, you also become separated from the linguistic habits and codes of normal communication, and you can even become estranged from accepted definitions and sentence structure. The language of daily intercourse falls mute.

Psychosis is a language assault as well as an image assault, so the disappearance of ordinary language has a lot in common with demagination. The usual way of saying things is no longer satisfactory. Words are experienced as random sound waves that fail to describe the mystery of madness. In the assault of language, as in the assault of images, the course of the mad-mystical journey may also be closely connected to the way things are expressed and delanguized. The seduction of images that takes place during the madmystical image assault has its parallel in the seduction of language during the linguistic assault. Perhaps the mystical madman should just resist the temptation to cling to and identify with words and verbalizations. Perhaps he should let the myriad words and phrases come, grow, and blossom—as he does with images—but just as easily let them go. Instead of jumping from branch to branch, the madman would be better off relaxing under the tree—and leaving the roots in the ground. But before I delve further into that idea as it relates to the madman, I will discuss it in terms of mysticism alone.

Mysticism's relationship with language is a problematic one. The mystical experience transcends language and is difficult, if not impossible, to capture in words. James (1958, 292–293) calls this "ineffability" the first hallmark of mysticism, and he says this about it: "Ineffability—The handiest of the marks by which I classify a state of mind as mystical is negative. The subject of it immediately says that it defies expression, that no adequate report of its contents can be given in words. It follows from this that its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others. In this peculiarity, mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect. No one can make clear to another who has never had a certain feeling, in what the quality or worth of it consists. One must have musical ears to know the value of a symphony; one must have been in love one's self to understand a lover's state of mind."

Here James is speaking from the perspective of someone who would like to describe the experience of the mystic in greater detail, and who regrets that a mystical experience, like music or love, is difficult to put down in words. In doing so, he overly emphasizes the emotional aspect of mysticism, and he also places too much stress on his view that the mystical experience is not something that can be communicated to others. For William James, ineffability is simply part and parcel of the mystical experience.

After James, this ineffability came to be understood as a sign or as proof that "therefore" the mystical experience itself is devoid of meaning. Linguistic-philosophical variants of the idea "if you can't say what it is, then it isn't anything at all" were in vogue during the age of positivism in an effort to relegate mysticism to the realm of fables and other nonsense. An example of more recent thinking on this subject can be found in Sharf (1998, 104): "If talk of shamanic experience, mystical experience, enlightenment experience, or what have you is to have any sort of determinate meaning, we must construe the term 'experience' in referential or ostentative terms. But to do so is to objectify it, which would seem to undermine its most salient characteristics, namely its immediacy. So we are posed with a dilemma: experience cannot be determinate without being rendered a thing; if it is a thing, it cannot be indubitable; but if it is not a thing, then it cannot perform the hermeneutic task that religious scholars require of it—that of determinate meaning."

Sharf problematizes mysticism, and especially something such as the "mystical experience," by requiring that it be clearly expressed. The content of the experience must be straightforward. You must be able to demonstrate what it is you're talking about, otherwise the experience has no specific meaning and is useless to religious scholars. But this concept does a

disservice to both religious scholars and to mystics themselves. In addition, mystics and madmen will have little interest in such criticism or unbelief. Just as there has been no lack of poetry and literature since the advent of logical positivism, so the mystics and the madmen of this world will not allow themselves to be silenced by a linguistic-philosophical police department.

In mysticism itself, speechlessness and the "muting" of language is not seen as a problem but rather as a feature, or even a condition, of the mystical experience. Dionysius the Areopagite, one of the first Christian mystics, says that the number of words is inversely proportional to the degree or "height" of ascent or transcendence (Dionysius the Areopagite [6th century AD] 1920, 102):

For the more that we soar upwards the more our language becomes restricted to the compass of purely intellectual conceptions, even as in the present instance plunging into the Darkness which is above the intellect we shall find ourselves reduced not merely to brevity of speech but even to absolute dumbness both of speech and thought. Now in the former treatises the course of the argument, as it came down from the highest to the lowest categories, embraced an ever-widening number of conceptions which increased at each stage of the descent, but in the present treatise it mounts upwards from below towards the category of transcendence, and in proportion to its ascent it contracts its terminology, and when the whole ascent is passed it will be totally dumb, being at last wholly united with Him Whom words cannot describe.

Language and thought are struck dumb when you proceed from the mundane chatter of the everyday to the loftier heights. The closer we come to the mystery, the fewer words we have at our disposal, until language falls silent altogether.

Plotinus (Ennead 6.9.4) takes a slightly different view. He says there is no gradual silencing on the way to the One; all we can say is that the One has nothing in common with language. We can point to the One in language and dialogue, but the ineffability itself can only be experienced or beheld: "'Not to be told; not to be written': in our writing and telling we are but urging towards it: out of discussion we call to vision: to those desiring to see, we point the path; our teaching is of the road and the travelling; the seeing must be the very act of one that has made this choice."

You cannot really say anything about the One, says Plotinus explicitly (in Ennead 5.3.13). It is not a thing among other things that can be discussed, and it is not a possible subject of conversation or explanation: "Thus The One is in truth beyond all statement: any affirmation is of a thing; but 'all-transcending, resting above even the most august divine Mind' this is the

only true description, since it does not make it a thing among things, nor name it where no name could identify it: we can but try to indicate, in our own feeble way, something concerning it."

One mystical-theological method for breaking language down and breaking through it to the wordless "all-transcending" is the rejection of every attempt to name the substance of the mystery. In theology, this is also called the *via negativa*. When everything that might be said about God is denied, the immensity and elusiveness of God transcends all efforts to describe him. Language is too human and too unwieldy to lead the way to the mystery. In this form of mysticism and theology, "delanguization" is an essential condition for insight and liberation.

Dionysius, whom I quoted earlier, was one of the first to start work on the *via negativa*, but it is also a theme in the writings of Eckhart (in Schürmann 1978, 141): "It is free of all names and devoid of all forms, entirely bare and free, as void and free as God is in himself. It is perfect unity and simplicity as God is unity and simplicity, so that in no way can one peer into it. God, who has no name—who is beyond names—is inexpressible and the soul in its ground is also inexpressible, as he is inexpressible." Elsewhere Eckhart says (in Schürmann 1978, 57): "Nor does it [the highest part of the soul] want God inasmuch as he is God. Why? Because, as such, he still carries a name. And even if there were a thousand gods, it would still break beyond: it wants him where he has no name. It wants something more noble, something better than God as having a name. What then does the intellect want? It does not know. ..."

In modern philosophical forms of mysticism, the *via negativa*—the way of wordlessness—is hidden in extreme forms of "critical thinking" and "linguistic philosophy." This kind of philosophy also pursues a purification of linguistic usage. The most well-known form is that of the early Wittgenstein. At a time when art was being reduced to the straightforwardness and simplicity of Malevich's famous "black square," Wittgenstein wrote the famous words, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." Wittgenstein explicitly states that mysticism is the ineffable (*Tractatus* 6.522): "There is indeed the inexpressible. This shows itself; it is the mystical."

According to Wittgenstein, the goal of philosophy is to avoid and criticize every attempt to say something that goes beyond the purely factual. Another quote from the *Tractatus* (6.53): "The right method of philosophy would be this. To say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science, i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy: and then always, when someone else wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs

in his propositions. This method would be unsatisfying to the other—he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—but it would be the only strictly correct method." In this school of philosophy, by demonstrating the "meaninglessness" of all propositions except those of natural science, the way is cleared for that which shows itself beyond language, the ineffable mystical. So "delanguization" is at the very heart of Wittgenstein's early philosophy.

7.2 Talking Language

In the arid jargon of the average psychiatrist, the path of silence as the path to insight and truth is labeled "verbal impotence" and is regarded as either a symptom of psychosis or a cognitive defect. But those who listen closely to what psychotics and attentive psychiatrists have to say about language and madness arrive at a different picture. It's the same as it is with mysticism: the essentially, ineffable character of an extraordinary experience. As Sass (1992, 50, 190) writes, "It is quite common for schizophrenics and schizoids to complain of the inadequacy of language. One patient I treated was preoccupied with the insufficiency of words, an effect that seemed to result from his experiencing the 'mere being' of both language and world. ... the phenomenon of ineffability does seem a particularly central issue, as indicated by how frequently schizophrenics themselves complain of the inadequacy of language."

Just like mystics, madmen consider language too imprecise to do justice to "what's going on." It seems like sacrilege to render the perplexity of madness in the language of everyday life. Language diverts you from the lonely upward path and leads you down the more well-trodden slopes. So it's better to say "nothing." Michaux writes about the experiences of a mescaline user (1974, 19): "Language seemed a huge pretentious clumsy machine which merely blurred all distinctions. ... to the point where he was tempted to enclose himself within an absolute silence. A state familiar to many of those who take mescaline, and to schizophrenics who take nothing. In this singular state one refuses to speak; speaking is experienced as a profanation. In this state, in fact, it is a sign of intelligence to drop words, and of stupidity to cling to them (thereby missing a possibility of transcendence)."

The recognition that nothing can be said leads to a variety of reactions. Some people literally stop speaking altogether, like the many silent mystics of both the East and West. Others do speak but only to show with their words that language and meaning are impossible. They poke fun at language—and with it—and they parrot what others are saying to the point

of sounding nonsensical. From Sass (1992, 188): "One possible reaction is simple refusal, a (sometimes ostentatious) lapsing into silence in order to escape entirely the contaminating or diluting forms of speech or writing. ... Another possible response is to abdicate any attempt to express meaning and to give oneself over entirely to the repetition of nonsense and cliché. ... [Sometimes] patients adopt, in what sometimes seems a faintly mocking way, an extremely formal or high-flown language, or they mouth, in repetitive or even echolalic fashion, highly conventionalized or clichéd phrases, which may begin to take on the quality of meaningless sounds."

But for madmen, too, the pressure to say a bit more than "nothing" is great. Outsiders want to know what's wrong, and the madmen are eager to share their experiences of miracles and amazement with others. Like mystics, they want to bear witness to what's there (and what isn't), and they make all sorts of attempts to say the unsayable, although they do sometimes have their doubts as to whether that's even possible. Perhaps language and culture must first be extended. Commenting on the psychotic Mr. Weber, Bock (2000, 239) says, "Mr. Weber complained that our language is not adequate to the task of expressing such experiences. 'And at the time I was not able to find words to describe the dimensions of the mind because the language is simply too restricted.' The language must be further developed, 'so that psychotics, too, can be given a place in the culture of the language.'"

Sometimes saying nothing turns into saying everything. The mystical *via negativa* has its polar opposite in the "cataphatic" path. The mystery then is not what is left over after the ultimate negation, but the sum of an infinitely long series of affirmations: "Yes, and also this, and that, and the other—yes, everything, everything, everything. …" When the brake of self-censorship is finally overcome, language is able to flow freely, and meanings can fan out unpredictably into an ocean of shapes in their shapelessness. Podvoll calls this the proliferation of meanings, and he says (1990, 156), "The energy of proliferation has been let loose. Proliferation occurs in a dimension just behind the ordinary linking of thoughts. It is the energy that links thoughts together in what is ordinarily called 'discursive thinking': leaping out in any direction, generating an endless procession of what on the surface appears to be a continuous running on of thoughts."

A typical example of this is Vaslav Nijinsky. A famous ballet dancer from the early twentieth century, Nijinsky was struck by a severe psychosis in 1919 and never performed again. After a period of silence and withdrawal, he began making lyrical, ecstatic entries in his diaries, including the following ([1919] 1999, 44, 184):

I bellow, but I am not a bull. I bellow, but a bull that is killed does not bellow. I am God in Bull. I am Apis. I am an Egyptian. I am an Indian. I am a Red Indian. I am a Negro. I am a Chinese. I am a Japanese. I am a foreigner and a stranger. I am a seabird. I am a land bird. I am Tolstoy's tree. I am Tolstoy's roots. Tolstoy is mine. I am his. Tolstoy lived at the same time as I. I loved him, but I did not understand him. ... My mind is so developed that I understand people without words. I see their actions and understand everything. I understand everything. I can do everything. I am a peasant. I am a factory worker. I am a servant. I am a gentleman. I am an aristocrat. I am a tsar. I am an Emperor. I am God. I am God. I am God. I am God. I am everything. I am life. I am eternity. I will be always and everywhere.

Words, in themselves, don't have to be avoided, as long as you don't believe in them. A torrent of spontaneous words meant to celebrate the mystical mystery is, in principle, no better or worse than a deep and profound silence. The danger of a flood of words is not in the flood itself but in the way others understand it. According to Podvoll it is important to refrain from clinging to images, thoughts, or words: "Do not hold fast to words that come to life a moment later in an irresistible theatrical performance." And if the flood arises at the wrong moment and in the wrong place, they still may want to lock you up for it and call you to account.

A good example is given by a certain Spoerri (in Heinrichs et al. 1978, 77): "(The psychiatrist asks, 'What are those expressions you keep on using? "World-happy woman" and "framework" and the like?') Oh, simple, that's just the poet. That's just what you call philosophy. A poet is simply so far ahead in her in his function that he needs expressions like that. And then you should know that if they don't have any commas and they don't use periods—that happens to me, too; I often do it on purpose—then you have something like a spot search. A certain, a mirage, and that's more and more, and the other time—for example, if you look at one word and then another, you're making a fairytale. That, that is there—and there are such jumps, there jumps there, the one word on the other, there. Lightning with underwater cycle milky way hawk hawker galascum the wind that's why atoms isatopla ancient A A 0 rani mineri oh my resurrected instrument of herons line glass spiral worlds origin elibs nipalene is 1,000 pole vertebrates on the equador far dribbled worlddale determine the same neutrone atome."

When the sluice gates open up and the dams are broken, the grit from crystal castle starts flowing past. It's strong language, the language you hear in the isolation cells and smoking rooms of mental hospitals. But it's language without borders. It's no longer restrained or limited by the stifling ties that connect symbol and meaning—grammatical rules for characters and

text, codes of conduct for speaker and listener. Anything and everything can be said, which leads to the minimalization of conventional meanings. Transparency and information value shrink, while poetic complexity and idiosyncratic expressiveness increase. Language itself takes over. It's "delanguized," incommunicado, but that gives it the possibility to rage and rant freely, to proliferate and blossom. And then, as in some types of mysticism and shamanism, language expresses itself in "tongues."²

What you end up with in madness is not a text but a verbal tempest. Those who crawl into the eye of that linguistic hurricane should avoid interpreting the words themselves or clinging to a supposed reality. The psychotic patient Pfersdorff provides a good example of madness in this written text (in Vogelaar 1983): "Bonjour chocolatour Bastian Cheesehead, don't be afraid, I'm here. He was shot on Brumather Street by Mr. Brown, directement hyphen, para, comma, fc. D Deutschland Berlin Paris in a round of rosies, marble is smelly cheese margin photo no. gig glasses is no. pick, brown hair is red, defector, inspector anointed the pope, ivory, anno 5 years domini ago, mustard, custard, flustered, cross-section is the deci-section right in the automo; picum on the velo spray can no. / of the keyboard, painted paintings. Messy houses no. 2. Now I'm really getting started, now I'm starting again on the left in cutlet tapeworm. Hartmann sundial in Rappoltsweller, stretcher, casium, nerve clinic in Kolmar, Bils from Lunéville in Kolmar. ab g 1234 ;;? romans decides about your ears my ear too. Kap no. Hare Chare 5 minutes. $3\times3-9+2=11$, 11.0 Bick. Comma, because of them I am comma. Now do you understand, Mr. Kuiler?"

7.3 Scratch Language: A Rejection

We, the mystical madmen, twist words and twist our way through them. We have five paths that lead us through the linguistic hurricane and into the mad land of sound, language, and symbol. Those who travel all five paths twist by way of the *via mystica psychotica linguistica*.

7.3.1 Via Metaphorica

The metaphorical path is one of our most popular routes. Other people blindly accept the meaning of the words and sentences they hear, swallowing them whole and reacting to the contents without pausing to think about them. We, however, take a step back and listen attentively to what is being said. We sense double bottoms, which we drop through to deeper, underground levels. Down in that subterranean space, hidden from almost everyone else, the meanings of words and sentences branch off at lightning

speed. We shoot through an entire network, whizzing along underground corridors, and come back to the surface with an answer at a place far removed from where we began. So they don't understand us. They can't follow our speed. They think we can't concentrate on "the conversation." But we don't have to follow their conversation! We're creating our own path. And underground we find a whole new level, with another new level below that, and another, and another. We shoot from one domain to the next, with all the emotional and spiritual transitions that go with it. We may start by chatting about coffee, tea, sugar, and a cookie. Then suddenly we zoom onto higher politics, because the little coffee spoon was placed on the "left" or the "right" side of the cup, depending on our point of view. And from point of view, we go farther, reflecting on other points, circles, and lines—and on the shape of the cups, the words on the packets of sugar, the facial expression of the person pouring the coffee. Sticky sweet!

But we mean everything we say—at least we do when we say it. We never mean anything other than what we say. We have no secrets, we have "nothing" to hide. Actually we don't use metaphors at all, in the sense of saying one thing and meaning something else. For us, what they call metaphors are a kind of "diving board." When we come across something that could be understood in another way—ambiguously, figuratively, or symbolically—we interpret it that way too. Then we dive right into the field that the metaphor comes from and refers back to. We follow the existing metaphors, real or hidden, and create our own new ones—not to conceal anything or to invent a new image but to lay crisscross connections, to open the sluice gates between still waters, to allow repressed memories to come to the surface, to let the spark catch on. Next to the cups of tea and the sugar pot, there's the left-right politics, and we jump right in. We don't talk about it metaphorically but literally, diving into the real political scene—if that's where it leads—since beneath the cups and spoons there's the tablecloth, and if we want to, we can jump to "the tablecloth" as a cover-up for the wooden table on which the metal teaspoons lie. From there, we can leap to a lumberyard or a Home Depot, and next to the Home Depot we see the local reservoir, and we think of the faucet where we got the water to make the tea. It flows. Are these metaphors? No, they're diving boards. Or if we examine the term "metaphor" etymologically, they're "means of conveyance" or "vehicles," things that incite movement, change, distortion, and transformation. In this respect, words and sentences are little bridges. You may be imprisoned in the here and now, and at this point in time and space, but thanks to the word, you can toss out lines in every direction: bridges of understanding and comprehension, escape routes. We prefer to

shoot our arrows into the air as high as they'll go. The metal teaspoon from the Walmart and the little wooden table from the Home Depot are directly concerned with a holy alliance between man and woman, who shoot straight up the wall and into heaven. Walmart and Home Depot enter into a relationship that we fully embrace, since that's what we're drinking on! And we want to keep on drinking and to fight the forces that get in the way of our nourishment. So block the competition! We hurl the teaspoon at the blockhead of a psychiatrist (metaphorically, of course)! He thinks we can't control our impulses or that we're having a fit of wild rage, but we're acting in the name of Us and not Them!

They say we're just free-associating, jumping from one subject to the next. Yes, I suppose that's one way of looking at it. But it's free-associating with fire, with an idea, with power. And we're only interested in the first prize, the pot of gold, the pot of sugar, and nothing less. It's not as if what they do is any different. They associate every blessed thing, all day long. Except their associations are the ordinary, slow-moving, commonplace kind, the ones that are no fun at all. The only things they're good for are databases, graphs, or archives. Dead, stuffy old fools, that's what they are. Admittedly they function better than we do because they have a System, and everybody inside that System has their place, their own identity, their own way of thinking. We don't have a system or our own way of thinking. We do make use of Their System and Their Ways of Thinking, though, as we travel the via metaphorica. Not one way of thinking but an infinite number of them, all woven together. Waterway, fire track, earth street, air lane: four roads that open out onto the crystal traffic circle. We hitch a ride on Their words and Their language, but we use the language and words for one thing only: to break through them and escape from them, to escape from the "metaphorical language." We're like a stationary engine that's running faster and faster, and we keep on burning, from image to image, from word to word, always more movement, more transport, more inner friction, and then ... and then ... then we break out, we come to the surface, like a volcano.

7.3.2 Via Multimundiana

In our case, language has exploded. It's as if an incendiary bomb had been tossed and our insides had blown up, flying in every direction, with shreds of traces of words of images of voices. Sometimes it's like a kaleidoscopic, incoherent, mess of metaphors, without the inner principle of a Person to keep the whole thing together. And that's actually the way it is: we have no identity, no core, no stable qualities, no thread running through us, and no leitmotif, theme, or agenda. We don't even have our "own voice" anymore.

We've ended up in a swarm of linguistic fragments. But that doesn't mean it's all trouble and affliction, all monotonous haphazard associations. We also find ourselves out on the frontiers, in unchartered territory. Because we are empty, we are one hundred percent open to the Other. Not the Other as he stands before us, all crude and ungainly, but the Other from the Kingdom of the Mind.

The teaspoon glistens like the metal it is, ogles tea-producing countries, winks at luxury goods, and pulsates along with other liquid entities such as water and oil. The teaspoon leaps in every direction, insofar as we can speak of "a spoon" at all.³ The *via metaphorica* is expansive and fragmentary and leads to endless, restless wanderings. The *via multimundiana* is contractive rather than expansive, more unifying than fragmentary. There are portals on the *via multimundiana* that take us to oases of rest.

"Russia" might be one such portal, and it works as follows: When the words "the east" are uttered in conversation, or "cold winters," or "the red threat," then the "Russia" portal opens and "Russia" will redefine, color, and set the tone for the climate of the conversation. It would be as if we were drinking coffee and tea to protect us from the Siberian cold, as if we were fur-hatted comrades and not patient and psychiatrist, as if the psychiatrist's face had taken on the lineaments of a Russian bear, or Putin. The "voice" that is then heard comes from old James Bond films, with the accent and intonation of the Russian-English-speaking bad guys and spies.

More and more portals are being used these days. If someone says the phrase "in fifty years," we travel back to the fifties. The clothing becomes noticeably old-fashioned, pen and pencil are at the ready, PC goes into the closet, strains of old jazz are heard; everything takes on a dated, existentialist aura, and our voices sound like those from the old movie newsreels. One frequently visited modern portal is "Islam." Anyone who is sensitive to it slips into religious battle mode at the very sound of an Arabic word or at the sight of light-brown skin. Ordinary people are transformed into messiahs, prophets, and warriors of Allah. In music, we hear a melody that swings back and forth between the blaring of Eastern trumpets in counterpoint to popular Western tunes. Saucers under teacups become secret transmitters with connections to Mecca.

Anything from far away is hauled in, shaken into consciousness, brought to life, and served up warm. It isn't only the semantic fields of countries and eras that do well on the *via multimundiana*. It's also people and works of art. Well-known charismatic personalities such as Jesus, Buddha, and Socrates walk around on the *via multimundiana*, as well as personal heroes and archetypes such as Blixa Bargeld, Michael Jackson, and Friedrich

Nietzsche. If the nurse happens to assume a look of piety, then her belly swells up and the room is transformed into a stable filled with a sense of expectation, awaiting the birth of the Savior. Should someone let out a strange yell, then Michael Jackson is in the house. Walking becomes moonwalking, and a haze of bewitching sexiness envelops everything. I myself was in the frequent habit of consulting with Nietzsche and Immanuel Kant: where I was, a dialogue took place at furniture level between Nietzsche's muscle-flexing macho talk and Kant's rarified moralism. The things in the room—the light, people's glances—became commentary and arguments in the endless struggle between Nietzschean egotism and Kantian altruism.

We can speak with the dead, both far and near. Everything is taking place here and now, and all ideas, words, and thoughts are present here and now in embryonic form, as seeds. Our job is to let a thousand flowers bloom from those seeds. We have access to every person, every place, and every thing. The dead have come back to life to help us. When I was in the mental hospital, I found myself in a perilous position. They had locked me in an isolation cell under false pretenses. In order to remain alive, my mind needed the support of other people. The nurses sat there playing cards and drinking beer in the nursing station while I suffered in a state of mental disintegration. So I called upon kindred spirits: people whom I knew had also gone through the hell of solitary confinement and had come out unscathed. By thinking of them, by evoking their atmosphere or their aura, by calling them to come and confer with me, I managed to survive the cell. Those who cannot control the madness will end up in psychiatry sooner or later, never to return. They will be imprisoned by Them and stupefied with antimystical drugs. When the nurses came back to my cell hours later, they didn't understand what kind of role the kindred spirits who were sharing my cell had played in my deliberations. And with their limited comprehension and pathetic medical jargon, all they could come up with was that I had had "visual hallucinations."

Well, never mind. Let them spin on their medical merry-go-round and allow us to get on with our mad exploration of the *via multimundiana*. We are the *via multimundiana* mind surfers. Sipping our tea, we travel to Ceylon, sailing farther around the world with a "Cook"-ie in hand, ending up in the Pacific oceanic waters, meditating along the SF coastline, where we confer with Roger Zelazny. We walk around, surprisingly fearful, in Hermans' magical-realistic, sadistic universe. We make love to the Virgin Mary, to Shiva, to the honey bears, to the sun, and to the moon. We paint mental landscapes whenever we look at paintings; we write labyrinths and conspiracies whenever we read books. And They? They don't know us at all. They

can only see charts, perform examinations, establish identities, and implement functionalities. Not every portal leads to the Big Rock Candy Mountain, of course. On the contrary, many portals end up on heaps of scorched ash, the living dead, and the dead living. Robots made from organic materials. Stand-ins, a conspiracy, a web of sticky threads, an insect world without feelings or morals, in which we are incarcerated. But antimystical drugs destroy everything and introduce a haze of common, grimy stigmas, victimhood, and misery, which They dare to call reality. That's why we always keep the *via multimundiana* in a state of readiness, and we'll protect our portal leading to the other side of the mirror until the whole business is redefined and the roles are reversed.

7.3.3 Via Formica

The *via formica* runs parallel to the *via metaphorica*, the difference being that the *via metaphorica* has to do with branching, moving meanings, while the *via formica* is about expanding forms. We wander around like Don Quixote, not only in terms of meanings but also in forms of language. When all data and meaning vanish into a mad whirlpool of Nothingness, we're still left in the midst of a heap of words, letters, and symbols, without any foundation or background. The words float in the air like fluttering leaves. With no contextual footing, there's no reason not to connect Bonaparte with blownapart. Nokia becomes associated with "no key." Borders between languages disappear. The English "beat" sidles up to the Dutch *biet* (beet). The Dutch word for sugar—*suiker*—becomes *sukram*. Language becomes a seductive game of building blocks, for who is able to hold back the torrent of expanding forms, and on what grounds? There's no dictionary or grammar, and no other authority that can lay down the law for us. All grammars, all words, are convention, and it's conventions that we've dispensed with.

So we begin our linguistic rules by going back to zero, and we speak in numeric codes. We engage in an ancient form of kabbalah, using letters and numbers to build the world into a new house of cards. One, two, three, Sa-Ka-Ra. And Ra is an Egyptian God. And with Saka it becomes an Egyptian shop, like the one in Amsterdam. A sweet (*suiker*) shawarma joint. The shawarma becomes manure for the tree of life. The trees grow into the heavens, and we burn the forest back down. From A to Z, returned to ash. We forge alchemical combinations. Each letter has its own character. Vowels are sweet, consonants spicy (k, t, p), bitter (z, g), or sour (f, d). We chew the world in our mouths. Our bodies become numbered and lettered.

In pure *via formica*, language propels and steers itself. Old forms are automatically analyzed and new ones generated. Everything becomes literally

"literal," everything becomes abracadabra, all languages combined and beyond all language at the same time —which results in total delanguization. Spoken language becomes music: the TH and the R sound like thunder and the W like blowing out a candle, the S returns to the mouth of the snake, and the vowels are pure, voiced vibrations of the vocal cords. Tones revert to noise and letters flow back into ink. Written words and texts turn into hieroglyphics. The pyramid is our home.

When the *via formica* merges with the *via metaphorica*, we find ourselves in a poetic state. We create the world beginning with I, myself, and with the eye from which we see the land on which we are building. Aye, it's a beautiful land, that's for sure. We compose our most florid texts in this state. We tap the poetic keg. The source of creativity opens before our eyes. Pearls tingle in our mouths. But, surrounded by vermin and filth, we prefer to return to our own kind, or "fellow sufferers"—a horrible term. We speak instead of our "fellow poets." So we send each other messages from secret locations, from one side to the other. Language, crisscross, scratched into crystal.

7.3.4 Via Negativa

The *via negativa* isn't really a path at all but the total absence of a path, since in mad mysticism there is no ground of any kind. To wander this path is to practice the mysticism of nothingness, and the scratch-language expressions of this nothingness are irony, denial, and silence.

If you want to silence the spoken word, all you have to do is stop talking. That puts an end to the conversation, an end to the continuous sentences, an end to the onslaught of words, an end to the connectivity, collectivity, and correctivity. It's as if you were walking away from the hustle and bustle of the city, as if all you had to do was to wade through an open wheat field, a delta, a road to the sea. The chattering turns to humming, the talking ceases, and behind you there's still a bit of dissipating traffic noise and fading children's voices. Stretching out before you is nothing but the flowers and the bees, the lion lying down with the lamb, the black swan and the white squirrel. Then on you go to the silence, where the road widens into a plain, the arrows are missing from the signposts, and air merges with water.

The *via negativa* is the path to everything where nothing remains. There in the emptiness, it's silent. But They never leave you in peace, and often when we're on the *via negativa* we're forced to express ourselves in a positive way, which leads to the paradoxes in the scratch language. After all, not everyone can retreat into a hut in the Black Forest like Heidegger. The language and its speakers won't leave us alone. They foist themselves upon us, so we have no choice but to keep on scratching. It's like the

lottery scratch cards—if you scratch long enough, you'll find yourself at the pot of gold.

We scratch out the language and in doing so we scratch out Their existence, Their system, Their certainties. But what's good for the goose is good for the gander. The things that apply to our own language apply to theirs as well. We agree to look at their images, we actually enjoy it, and we smash them to pieces. We listen to their diagnoses and their stories about how you're supposed to behave, and they pour off us like water off a duck's back. They think Their language "says something." We love to debase their language, to mock it, to pick it up and run with it ad absurdum. We imitate them. We use their jargon. We say something one minute and deny it the next. Nothing is certain on the *via negativa*. We know nothing. We understand nothing. We negate, and we become depleted. We deny that we're "ill," but we also deny that we're "functioning well." We refuse to serve any function in Their greater scheme.

We write and we scratch out, we erase the path behind us. We say a word and swallow it. We sign our names backward. We're experts at doing nothing. When we agree to something, we shut our mouths and crawl inside. So yes, bring on your Zyprexa, Haldol, and Seroquel. Fine, ravage our bodies with your chemical waste. We'll hide behind our terrorized bodies and flush their garbage down the toilet when They're not looking. And if They do manage to creep into our blood, we'll change color. Here, take our blood, just suck it all out, we're already on the Other Side of the Blue Blood, and we've been there for a long time. Our minds have a bottomless capacity that's far deeper than They can ever fill with their antimystical drugs, and we always come out stronger—if not here, then on the other side.

7.3.5 Via Infinitiva

I call the counterpart to the *via negativa* the *via infinitiva* because of its relationship to the infinitive verb form in linguistics. On this path, mystical madness is expressed positively. This is the cataphatic counterpart to the apophatic *via negativa*. Using language, we travel the *via negativa* to sing ourselves free of the earth and into infinity. To get there, we must detach ourselves from finite mortality, raise our earthly anchors, and leave our fixed positions. As for our language, we must release it from the place, time, and context in which it is spoken.

To break away from both the actual moment of uttered speech and the current speech situation on the way to infinity, we must first "undeictize" the language; that is to say, free it from the "deictic elements." These elements are words and syllables that make language referential, that anchor it

in the here and now of the speech situation. They include words such as *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *we*, *this*, *that*, *there*, *here*, *now*, and *then*. Such words, when used in ordinary language, link sentences to the speaker, the listener, the time and location of the discussion, and so forth. When we avoid such words, we can slip away from the present, from the here and the "I," by way of language.

One aspect of undeictization is the disconnection of verbs from their definite and finite use. If we want to use verbs to shoot into infinity, we have to make them unlimited, indefinite, and infinite. We have to avoid definite or finite verbs that refer to a particular time and a particular actor. We must speak only in "infinitives." So on the *via infinitiva*, we no longer say, "I'm drinking tea with sugar" but "Drink Sugar Tea." Besides the verbs, we must also make nouns indefinite. We can no longer talk about specific persons or things and no longer use the definite article "the." Instead of saying "The man is eating the sugar," we say, "Man Eat Sugar."

With undeictization we are already well on our way along the via infinitiva. We find ourselves at a level of language to which everyone has access and that is still perfectly comprehensible to small children, at least on the surface. Linguistically speaking, you might say that we are engaged in "deflecting"—or "undeclining the inflections of nouns and verbs." Examples of inflectional linguistic elements are verb endings and noun declensions, such as cases. Children learn such "inflection" at a relatively late stage. When they're still in the earlier stage of language acquisition, they float in an infinite, magical-mythical-mystical world in which pure verbs and nouns do not have to be inflected. For them, everything is here and now, which is also infinite—without an end. There's still no need to distinguish between "can" and "cannot," between "I" and "the other." We return to this world when we "deflect" our inflection, but we do so at a higher level. Fully conscious of the finite and the infinite, we freely choose to express ourselves in verbs and nouns that are infinitely extensive. We were already there once, at the ancient alpha point. But after having made our way through the entire alphabet, we strike out on the path to the same alpha, which has now been transformed into omega. Gamma and delta were mere phases, it turns out, and beta is a cerebral deviation.

This deflecting movement toward infinity is also active on the megamacro level. Because of globalization and all the linguistic contacts involved, more and more people are succeeding in ridding their languages of the restrictions of mandatory conjugations and declensions. Chinese has already attained unprecedented heights in this regard, as have many other East Asian languages, in which verbs and nouns are not inflected for time, person, or number. The speakers of such languages are probably closer to infinity in Delanguization 229

spirit than any of the Indo-Europeans. The Arabs and the Turks haven't done much better than we have, by the way, although a slight infinitization is taking place in the Dutch language due to the immigration of Arabs and Turks to the Netherlands. Because of migrant influences, traditional verb endings and definite articles are wearing away more quickly in the urban agglomeration of western Holland than in South Limburg, West Flanders, and the Achterhoek in the east, along the German border. This correlates remarkably well with the higher number of psychoses and mystical depths being reported in both the western cities and among Moroccans and Turks than in the marginal zones. Incidentally, in all higher cultures, when a great deal of interaction and contact occurs, we notice an increase in the tendency to escape "upward" by means of deflection. We have also seen this with the Incas, the Arabs, the Scandinavians, and the East African speakers of Swahili (see my dissertation from 2003, Linguistic Complexity: The Influence of Social Change on Verbal Inflection for a thorough linguistic study of this phenomenon). The tower of Babel lies in the language.

At any rate, whether our infinitization resembles that of other languages, that of the future world, or simply that of children, we are glad to have found this stairway to heaven, this Jacob's Ladder. On the *via infinitiva* we speak only in never-ending words. As our own Alexander Blok has said,

The night, the pharmacy, the street, The pointless lamppost in the mist. A quarter century recedes— There's no escape. It all persists.

You'll die—and you'll begin anew, As in the past, all will repeat: The icy channel flowing through, The lamp, the pharmacy, the street.⁵

The *via infinitiva* would not be a *via mystica psychotica* if it were to end here, however. No, the *via infinitiva* goes where others fear to tread. Undeictization is followed by desyntactization. Undeictization has stripped away most of the ordinary language, but what remains standing are the syntactic and semantic structures. Even after deflection we're left with at least two classes of words, verbs and nouns, as well as a traditional-conventional subject-predicate structure. This structure requires that every sentence have a *definite* theme or subject—usually a noun—about which something *definite* is said in the predicate, often a verb. After undeictization we still have fixed sentence structures with statements like "Dog Walk Four Legs" or "Socrates Man" or "Horse White." But now such sentences refer to a timeless, infinite world.

According to most of the philosophers who have given any thought to language and words (from Plato and Plotinus to Frege and Lewis), such sentences and their meanings are "eternal" in the same way as numbers, whose existence is "outside of time." But the infinite world they refer to is not Ours! That world is more like a Platonic world of Ideas, where forms are forever cast in stone and have a definite crystal pattern that never ends, as if they were caught in a grimace of ice. But our crystal glitters, sparkles, blazes, and flows like water. We don't count the number of legs on a dog, although we do count them, and we come up with 69, 2011, 5, or pi. For us, Socrates is not a man but a werewolf. For us, horses have wings, and they're colorless and green at the same time. Our infinite world is transmarginal, neoparadoxical, implosive, and divergent. For us, infinity has no internal ranking system, no distinctions, no differentiation.

Therefore, the last step on the *via infinitiva* is to eliminate the distinction between verbs and nouns: for us, all words are equal. Any word can occur anywhere. Normally, a verb "requires" a noun, as a subject or an acting person. For us, however, there are no requirements—only infinite words without divisions into categories. To clarify what this means, we could say, in linguistic terms, that nouns and verbs become adjectives. Nouns like "man," "horse," "dog," and "leg" would assume an adjectival meaning: manlike, horselike, doglike, and leglike. Verbs like "to walk," "to work," and "to play" would also take on adjectival meanings, thus becoming walking, working, and playing. Desyntactizing implies adjectivizing.

Next follows desyntactizing in its pure form. This is the breakdown of the entire subject-predicate structure. Normally, the position a word takes in a sentence (the first word, for instance) is the theme or the subject that another word (the second word, for instance) comments on. For us, however, one word no longer "rules over" any other. The predicate no longer says something about the subject. The words are just lined up, one by one: "Doglike Walking Fourish Leglike." In this way we go much further than people like Nietzsche. Nietzsche walked into the verb trap. He thought he had dealt a serious blow to the old motto "I think" when he remarked that you really should say "there thinks" or even simply "think." He didn't see that he had fallen into the trap of process metaphysics. For why should "think" have to be a verb? Why not a noun? According to us, it's neither one nor the other but is merely an attribute, expressed in language as an adjective—without being something to which the attribute is added. *Eigenschaften ohne Mann*. Accidents without substance.

So where has the *via infinitiva* brought us? Into the radiant world of unending adjectives! Every word we utter is an "attribute," the expression

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of an "accident." Every word we speak colors the entire cosmos. If we say, "Flower!," then "flowery" is the key word to the mystery. If we say "Green!," then everything is "greenish." On this via infinitiva we recognize something of the via multimundiana. The via metaphorica and the other paths are not entirely absent either. The difference between this and the earlier paths, however, is that the via infinitiva is fully under our control. We're in charge of the toll gates, road maintenance, and signposting. On the other paths we were partly dependent on what presented itself in our particular environment, to which we then reacted. Our via infinitiva leads to the purest linguistic mysticism, which consists of uttering the one Word that has become Flesh: Crystal.

The Incarnation of the Word has plunged us into Battle. As long as our word was just word, nothing stood in our way. But with our phraseology, we also created living flesh. And this proved very tempting to the enemies: those who want to kill the Flesh with antimystical drugs, cannibalism, carnivorism, and stigmatization. They hear what we say and call it *Wortsalat*, thereby negating our flesh.⁶ They call our language gibberish, raving. But our raving is the beginning of the war, with everything against nothing and nothing against everything.

8.1 Beyond Thought

8.1.1 Paranoetic Parousia

In this chapter, my investigation of the mystical-mad path reaches its last phase. We have left the familiar world behind us (detachment, chapter 5), we no longer trust its seductive images (demagination, chapter 6), and we have entered into a skeptical-paradoxical relationship with language (delanguization, chapter 7). The last step on the way to Insight is that of "dethinking." The thinking that is being "dethought" on the mystical path is discursive, logical, or conceptual thinking; that is to say, it is thinking in which a distinction is made between the thinker, the thought, and the thing being thought about. In mystical madness, these three are a single unity, a "nonthinking," a "beholding," a being-present, or, as Husserl puts it, a "flowing." Meijer (1992, 299, 300) describes Plotinus's dethinking and his way to the One (the "ascent") by using the term "dediscursiving": "[The soull has to cast away its functioning in the field of discursive reasoning, which for the sake of convenience may be called 'dediscursivation.' Discursive reasoning in fact focuses on the sensible world, in order to catalogue the phenomena according to the patterns of reason, the Ideas as they descend from mind. It is quite the reverse that is required for the ascent [to the One]." Zaehner writes (1957, 55), "For the achievement of this [mystical] state first the mind should be emptied of all conceptual thought."

Plotinus himself addresses the matter this way (6.9.4): "The main source of the difficulty is that awareness of this Principle [the One] comes neither by knowing nor by the Intellection that discovers the Intellectual Beings but by a presence overpassing all knowledge." Meijer comments on this passage: "Although we have forms of knowledge at our disposal, episteme and noesis, the range of these forms is confined to the intelligible world. ... The only mode of 'knowing' the One turns out to be parousia, 'presence.'"

According to Plotinus, we reach this mystical principle, or the One, not by studying it and reflecting on it but through a "presence." This *parousia*—presence, or nearness—is also the term Plato uses to indicate that the Ideas are not to be found "elsewhere," beyond the stars or on the Other Side, but are "present" here and now, in our world. So the One is here too.

Plotinus dwells even longer on the reasons why you cannot reach this One with your thinking mind—indeed, why thinking and scholarship will actually separate you further from the One: "In knowing, soul or mind abandons its unity; it cannot remain a simplex: knowing is taking account of things; that accounting is multiple; the mind thus plunging into number and multiplicity departs from unity. Our way then takes us beyond knowing; there may be no wandering from unity; knowing and knowable must all be left aside; every object of thought, even the highest, we must pass by ..."

Thinking and its related activities, such as logic, reasoning, and science, lead to division and multiplicity, so you cannot use them to come close to the One (see also Plotinus 6.7.41). This turning away from thinking can also be found in the writings of other mystics, such as Dionysius the Areopagite ([6th century AD] 1920, 99): "... and thee, dear Timothy, I counsel that, in the earnest exercise of mystic contemplation, thou leave the senses and the activities of the intellect and all things that the senses or the intellect can perceive, and all things in this world of nothingness, or in that world of being, and that, thine understanding being laid to rest, thou strain (so far as thou mayest) towards an union with Him whom neither being nor understanding can contain."

It is difficult to describe this "nonthinking" in any greater detail without ascribing a positive "thoughtful" content to it. Nonthinking is sometimes regarded as another form of thinking: "rethinking after dethinking." Plotinus wrestles with this when he says (6.9.6), "Nor has it Intellection; that would comport diversity: nor Movement; it is prior to Movement as to Intellection. ... indeed this 'self-presence' were better left out, the more surely to preserve the unity; we must eliminate all knowing and all association, all intellection whether internal or external. It is not to be thought of as having but as being Intellection ..."

A psychotic patient quoted in Landis (1964, 284) distinguishes another form of thinking that, unlike ordinary thinking, penetrates infinitely deeply into the essence of things: "The point seems to be, so far as I grasp it, that during an exhilaration the mind penetrates infinitely more deeply into all things, and receives flashes of almost divine light and wisdom, which open to it, momentarily, regions of thought hitherto difficult or impossible of penetration. But, except in the milder form of the exhilaration, the mind's

own restlessness, and impatient activity, interfere, for the time being at least, with the just application and the rational and appropriate, not to say the sane, use of what it has thus acquired."

Unlike Plotinus, this patient pays more attention to how helpful such thinking actually is. For him, the only justification for this higher thinking is its ability to be of any use in the lower realm. This accounts for the tension in the quote between "flashes of almost divine light and wisdom" and its "just application and the rational and appropriate, not to say the sane, use of what it has thus acquired." It is unknown whether the patient means the same thing that Plotinus was alluding to. The contexts of the quotes are too far apart to put them on the same footing. But who knows? By laying them side by side, we may arrive at a new form of thinking/nonthinking.

Michaux (1975) tries to say something about another form of thinking/ nonthinking under the influence of LSD: "Thought, instead of being a succession of points, that is to say a succession of moments of focused attention, in which the mind is set in motion and brought to bear upon its object, again, and again, and in force, thought is reduced to one single point, to one single moment of attention (at the beginning) which attempt is subsequently abandoned."

Here Michaux is referring to nonlinear thinking, concentrated to a single point, which later spreads out on all sides. Elsewhere (1964, 223) he distinguishes between everyday thinking, which is slow and restrained, and an unrestrained, accelerated, free kind of thinking: "Man is a being with brakes. If he lets go of one, he gives a cry of freedom (poor man!), even while he has a good hold on a hundred other brakes. The speed of the images, of the ideas, is due to loss of control. Only the brakes make thought slow and usable. It is naturally extremely fast, madly fast."

Here, too, we cannot know how Michaux's alternative thinking compares to Plotinian thought or other mystical forms of nonthinking. What is striking about Michaux's description of alternative thought is its accelerated character. It's as if by speeding up you could break through a kind of "thought barrier" to get to the other side. But for many mystics, it's all a matter of slowing down until your thinking comes to a total standstill. Perhaps the "other kind of thinking/nonthinking" can be attained not only by coming to a standstill or to negation (cf. the *via negativa*) but also by means of an infinite acceleration or explosion (cf. the *via infinitiva*).

William James also writes about the connection between mysticism and thinking, and he emphasizes its absence of content. This thinking may not generate any verifiable ideas or claims about reality, but it is of great

importance nonetheless. For James, an important hallmark of mysticism is its intellectual, or noetic, quality, and he writes (1958, 293), "Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time."

James mentions various aspects of mysticism, such as depths of truth, illumination, revelation, and meaningfulness. This is consistent with what Plotinus says about thinking and nonthinking with regard to the One. It also closely corresponds with what Sass (1992, 44) writes about madness: "[Psychotic] patients in these moments may have a feeling of crystal-clear sight, of profound penetration into the essence of things, yet typically, there is no real, clear content to communicate."

James uses the term "noetic quality" to describe this other way of thinking, which has to do with the contemplative character of the experience. "Noesis" is more strongly associated with the "unification" of the knower with the known than our idea of "knowing" suggests. By using the term "noesis," James is also correctly pointing to the indisputable certainty of this contentless knowledge. Nevertheless, to my way of thinking, the term "noetic" smacks too strongly of the domain of objectively divisible, verifiable "knowledge." That is not what mad mysticism is all about. Sass is correct when he says that "there is no real, clear content to communicate." Mystical mad utterances should be regarded as poetic expressions of the ineffable rather than as referential designations of something well-defined. For this reason I propose replacing the term "noetic quality" with "paranoetic quality," thereby alluding not only to the mysterious, paranoid, deluded frame of mind but also to the loftiness of philosophical contemplation (for more context on the secret alliance between noia and paranoia, see fragment IV).

My paranoesis is of a different order than, say, understanding how a diesel engine works. It doesn't have to do with a sudden realization, idea, or eureka moment concerning what makes a thing or an isolated phenomenon in the outside world tick. It's not about scholarly insights or reproducible explanations about events that happen in the world apart from the observer. It's about productive, creative insights that act as a kind of web in which the weaver himself becomes interwoven with—or entangled in!—the world. In traditional terms you might say that subject and object enter into a new kind of relationship, as a result of which the knower and the known are no longer the same. Sass (1992, 316) puts it this way: "The disappearance

of anything that would contrast with either the 'object' or the 'subject' gives rise to a new domain that is neither 'objective' nor 'subjective' in any usual sense but, rather, a twilight realm that normal language can barely describe. What comes to exist is a kind of mono-domain, something like a volatile and filmy gauze of representations lacking any objective referent or substantial subject by which they might be stabilized or anchored—what one patient refers to as 'a two-dimensional hyperplane of reality'"

Neither the philosophical mystics (Plotinus), nor the men of letters who experiment with drugs (Michaux), nor the meticulous phenomenological psychologists (Sass) find it easy to put into words exactly what this nonthinking thinking of mystical madmen involves. So the unsuspecting individuals who are surprised by madness can be forgiven for resorting to speaking in tongues, in gibberish, in medical jargon, or in some other unproductive mode of expression. Nevertheless, I am going to spend the rest of this chapter making a few attempts to use plain language and "clear ideas" to say something about paranoetic parousia and nonthinking thinking.

8.1.2 Mythical Concatenation

For Plotinus and other mystics, beholding the One and reaching out for God is the greatest height the human mind can attain. Whether it is the most difficult thing for the mind to do, however, is not immediately obvious. Eckhart—and many other mystics—often speak of the "blessedness of the poor in spirit," in imitation of Jesus, and Plotinus also says in some of his passages that the One is closer than you might think. What if the One—and mystical truth—were not a question of high culture, ponderous philosophy, or years of ascetic practice, but actually just the opposite? Wouldn't the mystical experience just be a simple condition to which you could "return"? The condition of a child who is not yet living a life of constant self-reflection, the condition of a primitive form of self-consciousness?

A "primitive" or archaic form of thinking is sometimes attributed to the mythic consciousness. In much of philosophy (from Plato to Hegel and further), Western thought is regarded as victory over earlier thought. That earlier thinking had "mythical" or magical features that had to be conquered through education and civilizing forces by means of clear and reasonable thought. During the Enlightenment, this idea of progress as liberation from mythical primitiveness was an important motif. Later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many attempts were made (in the works of Nietzsche, Freud, Cassirer, and Adorno, for example) to demonstrate that the Enlightenment and modernity were not a victory over myth but a continuation or transformation of myth. In chapter 15, I will continue the discussion of the

concept of myth in the light of madness. In the context of this book, it is interesting that some descriptions of "mythical thinking" bear an uncanny resemblance to mad thinking. Thus, Ernst Cassirer writes (1925, 81) about the experience and the categories of mythical thinking: "Whereas scientific cognition can combine elements only by differentiating them in the same basic critical act, myth seems to roll up everything it touches into unity without distinction. ... Things which come into contact with one another in a mythical sense—whether this contact is taken as a spatial or temporal contiguity or as a similarity, however remote, or as membership in the same class or species—have fundamentally ceased to be a multiplicity: they have acquired a substantial unity."

In this understanding of mythical thinking, things are more strongly drawn toward each other. Scholarly thinking compares things but keeps them separate, while in mythical thinking, related and unrelated things become one indistinguishable, unified whole. The disappearance of distinctions, the stirring and combining of things normally regarded as dissimilar, and the feeling that you're getting closer and closer to a supreme unity: these are typical symptoms of madness. Along with Cassirer, we can see this as the rediscovery or breakthrough of mythical thinking. Madness is then the breakthrough of an archaistic or primitive way of experiencing the world, which may not always be functional but does have its own power and seductive force.²

Conrad describes this merging of diverse elements in madness as "agglutination," and he says (1958, 99), "This example shows a kind of 'agglutination': things form a whole, even though, when viewed objectively, they have nothing to do with each other except that they happen to find themselves in each other's proximity (temporal or spatial) and interfere with each other. We believe that this is the basis of the rare 'agglutinized' way of thinking that we find in cases of serious cognitive disturbances." The objection Conrad seems to raise against this kind of thinking is that it brings things together that supposedly have nothing to do with each other. That is indeed the weakness of such thinking—as well as its strength. It is "associative," willful, and creative, and will not let itself be limited to what are usually regarded as related things.

With this perspective of Cassirer and Conrad in mind, I describe "dethinking" as follows: In mystical mad "dethinking," things are brought together without being compared or contrasted as a result of a higher understanding of common sense or reason. "Dethinking" puts everything on the same footing. It strings things together like a beaded necklace, by means of a repetitive, powerful "has to do with." The red of a car, for example, has to do with the

red of blood and of communism, which has to do with left and right, which is like driving on the left or right side of the road, which has to do with the flow of traffic, which is like the flowing of water, which has to do with washing your hands, which has to do with germs, which have to do with disease, which has to do with the blood and the red of the car, and so on and so on.

Psychotic dethinking is wandering from one thing to another, going nowhere, and going without development, goal, or history. It is not burdened by the past; whatever happens is immediately left behind. It does not refer to itself, it is not reflexive in the normal sense of the word, and it involves no negations or oppositions or conclusions. Moving to a more abstract level simply means moving to a mad form of abstraction. When that happens, it does indeed find itself at another level, but because there is no lower level against which it can be contrasted, there is no higher abstract level either. As Cassirer writes, "they have acquired a substantial unity." This unity has no constituent parts and no inner divisions, but it does change constantly. Such a paradox of unity in diversity leads to perplexity and mad mysticism (also see part IV).

No matter how we look at it, anyone who encounters mystical mad dethinking experiences it as quite new, as different from anything else. Whether it's pure mysticism, philosophical delight, or intoxicated disinhibition, it goes hand in hand with feelings of unity and insight of the greatest importance. With such dethinking, we're way past images and language. But because all we have at our disposal is language—words, letters, and black ink on white paper—we have to make do with what we have, act as if we actually could think and write about it, even though it's nothing at all.

8.2 Brave New World: Awakening and Rebirth

After covering the first stages of detachment, demagination, and delanguization, I arrive at the final stretch of the *via mystica psychotica*. This last phase is like an entrance into paradise, an ascent into the One and a descent into the deepest truth. Now we know: there are no words for this, but if words must be found, then they are terms such as "awakening," "rebirth," and "enlightenment."

The strange thing about mad awakening is that you wake up even though you were already awake! But now you are really awake, as if you had been looking through only two eyes before, and now your third, fourth, and fifth eyes had opened. You have quadroscopic vision, multiscopic vision, fly vision. Ordinary light changes into real light, ordinary seeing into real seeing, and everyday reality into hyperreality. Thinking changes, too: you

enter the realm of dethinking, "beyond thinking." In the Indian tradition, this is called a "spiritual awakening," which may have its preparatory roots in language and thinking—as we saw in Plotinus—but utterly transforms that thinking. Zaehner (1960, 43) says—and quotes—that when it comes to enlightenment, thinking is irrelevant: "Brahman as such is just not accessible to the mind, it can only be apprehended by a spiritual awakening. '... It is not known to those who busy themselves with knowledge, but it is known to those who are not concerned with knowledge. It is known and conceived of when there is an awakening, for immortality is experienced.'"

I am quoting here—and later I will quote more extensively—from the work of Mircea Eliade. Let me introduce him. Eliade was a twentieth-century Romanian philosopher and religious scholar who later lived in France and America. He graduated from university with a dissertation on Nicholas of Cusa's coincidentia oppositorum, which I will discuss further in part III (especially in 11.2.2) and earned his doctorate with a now classical work on Indian yoga techniques, Yoga, Immortality and Freedom, which will also be dealt with in greater detail later on. He went on to study shamanism and comparative cosmology. His work is unique because he succeeds in doing justice to the distinctive character of the alien (especially alien cultures and religions) without the alien remaining alien. His vast oeuvre contains a torrent of details on exotic symbolism, religious customs, and cosmological typologies, interwoven with philosophical interpretations of the objects of his study made in his own peculiar way. In part IV, I will make use of Eliade's thinking on the subject of "the holy" in order to render the sometimes obsessive character of madness more accessible. Here and elsewhere I also use him as a commentator on and interpreter of curious habits, customs, and symbolism that may concern some exotic cultural phenomenon but that easily tell us something about madness as well—for whoever has ears to hear.

Eliade (1958, 29) does not see a total rejection of knowledge in the Indian tradition. Rather, he sees a different kind of knowledge—an "enlightened" one that is non-productive, revelatory, and contemplative instead of cognitive: "Knowledge is a simple 'awakening' that unveils the essence of the Self, of Spirit. ... This true and absolute knowledge which must not be confused with intellectual activity, which is psychological in essence—is not obtained by experience but by a revelation. ... based on knowledge of the ultimate reality—that is, on an 'awakening' in which object completely identifies itself with subject." "Dethinking" in the Indian tradition is related to unity, to nonthinking (in accordance with Zaehner) or a different kind of thinking (Eliade), and to contemplation, revelation, and direct

contact with reality. The term "awakening" is used with remarkable frequency. I will discuss the Indian path in greater detail in sections 12.4.3, 13.3, and 14.2.3.3.

One magnificent example of awakening in a situation of madness is provided by the art historian Huub Mous, who describes his own period of madness in the book Against the Spirit of the Age: Reflections on a Psychosis (Tegen de tijdgeest: Terugzien op een psychose). After a long, intense night full of insights, discoveries, and revelations, Mous wakes up early and goes outside. The world is not completely awake on this particular winter morning, but he himself is more awake than ever. He awoke like the first real human, the only really immortal being among the dead. He writes (in Tellegen et al. 2011, 123), "I walked around in a world that was still in a deep slumber, a kind of world of the dead in which I was the only living soul. Adam and Eve were back on earth, or so it appeared to me. I was the new Adam, the first man to arise from the slumber of life, early in the morning, while no one yet knew that everything had changed for good. From now on, my entire kingdom was of this world. I felt that I was immortal, took off my glasses, and crossed Ferdinand Bolstraat. It was a holy miracle that I made it across the street uninjured, and I was ecstatic. I kept looking at the sun and following it. Onto the Ceintuurbaan. Down the Hobbemakade. Across the Museumplein. Bound for the Vondel Park. The sun. The sun would take me back to paradise. As soon as I got to the park I stepped into the pond, which was covered with a thin layer of ice." (More about Mous's experiences in section 8.4.2, Intermezzo II.I, and section 16.3).

Once you've awakened to mysticism, you run the risk of eventually dropping off to sleep again. So instead of sleep-and-wake-up metaphors, what we need in the case of intense experiences of mysticism and madness is the more powerful metaphor of rebirth. Anyone who is born again has been given a new existence that affects his whole being once and for all. Commenting on the mystical experience, Scherer (1991) says, "Wherever this experience occurs, the individual reappears in a new light. He changes the way he had previously related to reality, sometimes so radically that we can speak of death and resurrection or of spiritual rebirth."

Strindberg also uses this metaphorical language in his autobiography (1912, 22, 27–28). He emphasizes the solitary character of this new world and describes the changes in meaning around him: "A bankrupt as regards society, I am born into another world where no one can follow me. Things which before seemed insignificant attract my attention, my nightly dreams assume the form of premonitions, I regard myself as a departed spirit, and my life proceeds in a new sphere. ... Although I cannot formulate it

distinctly, a kind of religion has been forming in me. It is rather a condition of the soul than a view of things based on dogmatic instruction; a chaos of sensations which condense themselves more or less into thoughts."

Not only is the mystical mad self entirely renewed, but the world in which he finds himself is also like a "brave new world." (Readers cannot fail to notice that this is the title of a book by the famous twentieth-century intellectual and writer Aldous Huxley.⁵) It's as if he were seeing, tasting, hearing, and smelling for the first time. This is understandable when you consider that the experiences of the madman and the mystic take place without having been formed and organized by earlier schemes and remembered images. The madman and the mystic no longer live in normal human time; in their time, everything is like "the first time." The world comes in unfiltered, just as it was first "meant to be."

What is interesting in this context is Eliade's description of an important religious ceremony performed by a tribe of Native Americans in California. The ceremony doesn't drop out of the sky as something completely "new," and I am using this fragment to say something about the mad experience of a brave new world. Eliade (1965, 146) writes, "Symbolically then the World begins afresh at each New Year. ... They eat exactly as the first human beings ate for the first time on Earth. For us moderns who have long ago lost the sense and experience of food as a sacrament, it is difficult to understand the religious value of the ritual meal of firstfruits. ... To open ourselves to such an experience we must think of a modern man's emotion on his first discovery of love, or his first journey in a distant and beautiful country, or on first seeing a work of art which will decide his artistic career."

Eating food as if for the first time: oh, how blissful was the taste of that weak tea, those cheese sandwiches, and that sugar—especially those granulated crystals! After a long night in the isolation cell, with nothing but mental food that has no substance, that is fleeting, that retains no shape, the door opens in the morning and real people enter the room, with real breakfast. Food that is what it is, bread that is bread, that touches the tongue and goes on down like the first real event of the New Age. Eliade says that in the Californian rite they ate like the first people on earth: the first meal of the morning. At that moment, that is a holy sacrament.

Eliade continues: "For the first time: that is everything; it is the key to the many rites and ceremonies aiming at the renovation of the World, the repetition of the cosmogony. One divines the profound desire to live each experience as it was lived for the first time, when it represented a sort of epiphany, the meeting with something powerful, significant, stimulating, a meeting that gives sense to the whole of existence."

The renewal of the world and the rediscovery of the cosmos—many a madman has a drawing tucked away somewhere that is covered with arrows, symbols, and diagrams in which the cosmos is *explained* anew—a drawing that brings the entire cosmos together in this one moment, here and now, for the first time. If *this* is the first time, new, then I have escaped from history, from ties, obligations, and necessities, and I've been propelled into an infinite domain of freedom. The turning of a key in a lock, the putting on of one's pants, the turning of a shower tap—these are events that are eternity itself, because they happen for the first time at the moment they happen (also see Eliade 1965, 146,⁶ and Kusters et al. 2007, 78ff).

In our encircling of the sanctum sanctorum, we have encountered terms that suggest that an essential change takes place in the transition to madness, a change that points to something *unprecedented*, something that was not there before, and something new that derives its newness solely from the fact that "it is here now." Upon closer inspection, all these metaphorical attempts to say something about the mystical phase of dethinking go back to our earlier problem of time. Therefore, as I continue my discussion of "dethinking" in the next two sections, I will again turn to the riddle of time, and in so doing I will employ two final metaphors: first water and then fire.

8.3 Debankment: Husserl II, Time, and Water

Water metaphors lend themselves particularly well to descriptions of "dethinking." Thoughts, observations, and ideas "flow into each other" and come in "waves," the ordinary world is "washed away," and the psychotic and the mystic end up in an "oceanic boundlessness"—and so forth.

Phenomenology, and especially Husserl's time-consciousness, provide us with a philosophical form of dethinking in which water metaphors play an important role. Husserl's philosophy can be read as a *description* of what happens when you reflect on time and simultaneously as an *expression* of how that reflection can lead to dethinking.

In the next two sections, I will discuss Husserl's philosophy of time from his *On the Phenomenology of Consciousness of Internal Time* (1893–1917). I introduced Husserl's philosophy of time in section 3.1.2, and this builds on that introduction. Here I will show how Husserl, in his quest for the "sources" of time through philosophical interiorization, detachment, and delanguization, ends up at a level of language and thinking in which language is silent, thinking is seized by perplexity, and the water metaphor is left standing but has nothing useful to say. Philosophical reflection on time leads to a fall into the metaphorical-mystical water, which may also be the water of madness.

Like Husserl's text, my own text on Husserl (in 8.3.1 and 8.3.2) can be read as a *description* of what happens when you reflect deeply on time, and it can also be seen as an *expression* of how that reflection can lead to dethinking. Like my text in section 5.4, I wrote this passage as part of my bachelor's thesis, which I completed only a few weeks before landing in the oceanic tsunami of an isolation cell. So while the following two sections are a fairly complex analysis of Husserl's use of water metaphors in his philosophy of time, they can also be read as a foreshadowing of a plunge into the metaphorical water—or as a call to dive into the water oneself. To allow the interpolated material to flow smoothly into the rest of the book, I have adapted and abridged the original complex text and clarified it a bit more. To distinguish what I wrote in my "run-up" to madness from what I have written "now," I have set the later additions in italics." The third section, 8.3.3, is entirely new.

8.3.1 Silent Stream

Husserl is the founder of phenomenology, and in his later work he emphasizes the *conditions of possibility* with respect to experience, subjectivity, and consciousness. It is the givenness of an outer world, identities, and objects that Husserl tries to explain by first problematizing them. Husserl wants to know how such things present themselves to our consciousness without our already presuming their existence. This causes him to investigate the a priori of consciousness or the subject.

In other words, Husserl dives into the "sources" of subjectivity, withdraws from "given things," rejects a naive kind of realism, and "internalizes" along philosophical lines.

For Husserl, the key concept is intentionality. The fact that we can discuss, contemplate, and observe an outside world presumes that we have an awareness of that world. That awareness is now characterized by intentionality, a decision to focus on "something." An intentional act is always aimed at an intentional object. But intentionality is not *caused* by these objects, since you can also think about noncausative and nonexisting fantasy objects.

Here Husserl and I implicitly compare fantasy to reality, and we problematize the difference between them.

Intentional objects are simply those objects on which we focus our intentions, neither more nor less. They are not representations of "real" objects. So there is no level of ideas, images, or representations mediating between an object that "really exists" and intentional awareness. The question of the existence of an object is different from the question of their appearance in

one's consciousness. In an intentional act, the things that are usually called real, existing objects are a "perspectivistic" given. "Real" objects transcend the intentional act and the intentional object. In the case of a real object on which the glance—the intentionality—rests (such as a piece of chalk), only the front is visible. The back is "enshadowed." Because of this, the piece of chalk "in its entirety" transcends this intentional act of perception. When a number of such acts of perception are carried out, either by others looking at the chalk from the other side or by the same person looking at the back of the chalk at another point in time, it gives more evidence for the completeness of the chalk. The back of a tree, which is "enshadowed" when the front of the tree is looked at, and the entire tree as a presumed real object, can only exist within the subject if there is another moment at which the tree is seen (either by the subject himself or by a fellow subject). Here we already see that the questions of intersubjectivity and of "how multiple observations in time" can be synthesized, play an important role in Husserl's construction, or Nachvollziehung, of the "objective world." In order to examine intentionality, we must temporarily abandon or suppress the "natural attitude"—that there is a world, that there is time, and so forth. We must look only at what appears before us.

When you "detach" yourself from other subjects, you become disconnected from their perspectives, their visions, and as a result, the "reality" of the world is less straightforward. Only "after the passage of time" and "in the midst of other people" does an objective world begin to take shape. According to psychiatrists and psychologists like Blankenburg and Sass, the phenomenological attitude of "abandoning the natural attitude" corresponds with the beginning of the psychotic attitude. The subject withdraws from the world, calls the world into question, and adopts a staring-meditative attitude while seeing "whatever comes up" (also see section 2.2).

For Husserl, the question is how a subject can comprehend anything that happens in time at all, such as a rhythm. At each moment, you hear or see just one phase, so how can you experience this as a rhythm? How can time be experienced? How long does the present last? Husserl says that the present moment, or more precisely the subjective experience of time, is a *continuum* with an internal structure, change, or distinction. Perception is not one distinct point; rather, it extends out to a temporal field, filled with phantasms and sensations. Sensations are experiences that occur immediately, while phantasms refer to the immediate past and future within this temporal field.

With this idea, Husserl shifts the problem of distinguishing between the recent past and the present within the temporal field to a problem of perception in general. The difference between a phantasm and a "real," correct

perception is that a phantasm does not necessarily fit into a coherent whole. A phantasm is a hallucination when it does not form a continuum with the "field of vision." As an example, Husserl takes a wax figure. If you think that a wax figure or a shop window mannequin is a real person, then you're laboring under a misapprehension, because the wax figure does not form a continuum with the rest of the field of vision. The wax figure may seem like a hallucination, but it could also be a symbol or imitation, referring to something else.

For Husserl, a hallucination and a "false memory" have something in common: both are incoherencies in the "time-space continuum" of the field of perception. What is interesting here is that Husserl does on the philosophical level what psychotics are inclined to do in practice: equating perception with memory and equating outer phenomena with inner thoughts and memories. In section 6.2.3 we saw that both Crowhurst and Custance speak with striking frequency of a "time-space continuum."

So according to Husserl, the subjective experience of time does not consist of a succession of points but of a changing continuum. This means that before a *Zeitobjekt* is constituted in "objective time," a temporal aspect must also exist in the architecture of the subject himself. As noted, this temporal aspect has a way of creating uniformity: anomalies such as a déjà-vu-experience—comparable to the perception of a wax figure or a hallucination—are eliminated or experienced unconsciously due to the struggle of inner time-consciousness to create a continuous temporal field.

One and the same tone *does not move*, compared with the subjective experience of time that emerges from a changeable present. The tone is stationary and has objective temporal relations with other tones, thereby forming a melody within an objective order of time. The orderliness and linearity of objective time can be ascribed to the coherencies of the temporal fields, according to Husserl.

Time has a three-part stratification (cf. Husserl 1991, 77). Objective time is constituted by the subjective structure of the experience of time in the intentional consciousness. But this subjective consciousness of time also has its own temporal character: it relates to a temporal field with a temporal structure. This subjective experience of time is based, in turn, on an "absolute consciousness of time."

Here we find ourselves at the deepest level of consciousness, which for Husserl is the highest level of reality. Husserl says that the most internal is the most true, for it is the most real, the most indisputable, and the most inescapable. The external, objective world depends on this interiority. Obviously, such ideas can also be found in the experience of madness.

This absolute time-consciousness is a stream. And here, at the deepest level, we encounter the image of water. This stream is itself neither part of objective time nor the same thing as the subjective time experience of protention and retention. This stream is also not changeable, but it is the condition of possibility of the subjective experience of time. It is the subjective experience of time without anything being experienced; rather, it is the possibility of that experience itself. Zahavi (2002, 86) says, "The stream is not influenced by temporal change; it does not arise or perish in objective time, nor does it endure like a temporal object. Occasionally, Husserl will speak of the stream as if it were atemporal or supratemporal, but this should not be misunderstood. The stream is atemporal in the sense of not being in time, but it is not atemporal in the sense of lacking any reference to time. On the contrary, the stream is always present, and this standing now (nunc stans) of the stream is itself a kind of temporality. To put it differently, inner time-consciousness is not simply a consciousness of time, it is itself a temporal process of a very special nature."

This temporal process precedes every reflection. *Something must flow* prior to every reflection. We can reflect on and intervene in the representative recollection. We can also reflect on the relationship of retention and protention. But all this presupposes the existence of two givens: that which is being reflected on and that which reflects.

Here Husserl tries to bypass discursive thinking—to "dethink"—and I do the same in his wake. At the level of thinking, there is a thinker and a thought, but if we "dethink" this thinking, we can arrive at the One (according to Plotinus) or the "flowing stream" (according to Husserl).

The difference between these two aspects cannot be pinned down; it remains an insoluble, changing thing, something that *flows*. Husserl (1991, 79) says, "But is not the flow a succession, does it not have a now, an actually present phase, and a continuity of pasts of which I am now conscious in retentions? We can say nothing other than the following: This flow is something we speak of in conformity with what is constituted, but it is not 'something in objective time.' It is absolute subjectivity and has the absolute properties of something to be designated metaphorically as 'flow'; of something that originates in a point of actuality, in a primal source-point, 'the now,' and so on. In the actuality experience we have the primal source-point and a continuity of reverberation. For all this, we have no names."

Husserl's water time appears as the ultimate consequence of his thought process from outer world to inner world (cf. Ricoeur 2004, 109ff.). First, doubt is cast on the worldly, common sense notion that time has something to do with clocks, daytime and nighttime rhythms, or other aspects of

the outer world. This is done by searching for the subjective preconditions for the existence of those kinds of things. Then the subjective experience of time is given a complex structure of primary and secondary memories and expectations, and it is related to the subjective conditions of possibility, such as fantasy, perception, and so forth. Finally, the resulting conditions of possibility are examined, bringing Husserl to the absolute inner time-consciousness that is a *stream*, but about which little can be said because it is neither part of the phenomenal world nor of the conditions of the phenomenal world.

At its base, time is not solid ground; it is not a measurable expanse but a *flowing stream*. This makes Husserl a perfect example of a water-time philosopher. But there's also something airy and insubstantial about him: the interiorization of time can have an idealistic quality, as it does with Plotinus. Husserl's three levels are somewhat comparable to Plotinus's three hypostases. The highest hypostasis, in particular, resembles the "deepest" level of absolute time-consciousness. Zahavi (2002, 91) says, "The prephenomenal being of the act, its original mode of prereflective self-manifestation, cannot be captured by a thinking that holds onto the distinction between subject and object, between act and object, between the experiencing and the experienced."

In the quote from Husserl above, just as in Plotinus when he talks about the One, we see that words are really inadequate: absolute time-consciousness is neither flowing nor stationary but is a "something" that is conditional for all experiences of time and objects of time. Seen in this light, the difference between Husserl's subjectivism and Plotinus's idealism is no longer that substantial. When we focus on the unity of the flowing stream and not on the vastness of a continuum (necessary as it is), we are close to Plotinus's eternity.

In other words, Plotinus is not the only path to mad mysticism; Husserl is also quite suitable but in a more fluid way. And the water metaphor is not reserved for the philosophy of Husserl alone. It also plays a more or less explicit role in the descriptions of mystical truth found in Plotinus and Eckhart. In Plotinus there is the recurrent suggestion that the One "overflows" and that our ordinary, many-sided reality is a "gift" from the "source" of the One. And in the following quote from Eckhart, we see that water plays the role of that which connects the source of truth to ordinary life (in Davies 1988, 43): "The repetition of 'I am who I am' shows the purity of the affirmation of God to the exclusion of all negation. It shows also a kind of self-reflexion of being upon itself, a dwelling or settling within itself; it shows even a rising up, or self generation—being seething within itself, flooding and simmering in and upon itself; it is light which shines in and

upon itself, which penetrates itself entirely and which floods and radiates back into itself from all sides ... for life means a kind of overflowing, in which something swells within itself, first pervading itself utterly, every particle, before spilling out, overflowing. That is why the emanation of the Persons in the Godhead is the basis of the creation, and precedes it."

In Husserl there is a flowing at the deepest level, about which little more can be said. This in itself is not a problem within the scope of Husserl's work. He can use it to indicate the general experience of time "as something flowing." This, however, is problematic, because variations in the experience of time become more difficult to identify the deeper we delve into the interior of the subject and the higher we ascend to a universal level of a transcendental ego. On a superficial level, there are still empirical subjects who listen to a melody, but at the deepest level, it is no longer very clear whether the *nunc stans* or the "flowing" can still have any bearing on empirical subjects.

With Husserl, that flowing is not obviously something that can be experienced in the consciousness. After all, we are talking about absolute time-consciousness, which is not the same thing as the consciousness of individual people. The question is, Who are the subjects that could be entirely present "in the flow"? Phenomenologists who "know" the deepest truth? Mystics who mutter the words of Heraclitus, "panta rhei"? Or perhaps the madmen who "overflow" with Insight? Or is "flowing" nothing more than a metaphor for language? Is "flowing dethinking" something that is "real"?

Ludwig Binswanger is one of the few psychiatrists who apply Husserl's thinking to psychoses and depression, which he does in his books *Melancholie und Manie* and *Wahn*. He introduces variation to the deepest level of Husserl's uniform philosophy of time. In Binswanger, the flowing of the transcendental ego can go in another direction (*Melancholie*), the continuity of the flow can break down and the flowing can stop (*Wahn*), or the stream can become intenser than normal "at the place where it wells up" (the present) (*Manie*). Thus, Binswanger adds other aspects of flowing to the stream metaphor within the innermost experience of time, mirroring the meaning of flowing in the outside world.

8.3.2 Forms of Water

We can solve the problems and inconsistencies that arise in Husserl's and Binswanger's work, at least partially. On the one hand, in the strictly phenomenological sense, we can allow for an empty metaphor at the deepest level of the transcendental ego, a metaphor of "flowing," which only very generally implies that time has something to do with change or movement. On the other hand, if we're talking about empirical subjects (and

that's what Binswanger and I are talking about), we need to flesh out the stream metaphor for an interpretation of variation. This interpretation does involve bringing in more and more metaphors and images from the "objective world," but as long as we're aware of it, it can do no harm. In this second, more "fleshed-out" phenomenology, we still preserve Husserl's work, but to make sure we don't just talk about time as a mysterious, flowing *nunc stans* of a transcendental ego, we consciously introduce more metaphors.

The problem is that the introduction of these metaphors brings with it images and associations from everyday life. If talking about mystical mad experiences is difficult, then it's tempting and dangerous to introduce these metaphors. I did point out the dangers involved when I wrote the text, but a few weeks later these dangers proved greater than I had expected. In the text I proposed the introduction of water images and metaphors in order to understand mad time. The magical-psychotic application of these images and metaphors is (and was!) this: that by manipulating water symbols and images in your deepest thinking, you can transform your deepest experiences of normal time into mad time. Once my text is (and was!) casually understood, then thinking about, experiencing, or imagining mist, waterfalls, or whirlpools can (and could!) apparently help to change the deepest experience of time.

First of all, Husserl's stream metaphor itself can be further elaborated. We can then focus on a river, with all of the connotations that entails. The disadvantage of this metaphor is that, although it conveys the continuity and changeability of time, the river can also easily be interpreted in terms of measured units, or even as a two-way channel. Perhaps the unity and indivisibility of the river, and the driving force of each moment, can be somewhat better expressed by Merleau-Ponty's metaphor of the jet of water or the fountain, which is largely based on Husserl's reflection on time (2012, 444–445): "We say that there is a time just as we say that there is a fountain: the water changes and the fountain remains, because the form is preserved; the form is preserved because each successive burst takes up the functions of the previous one. Each burst of water goes from being the thrusting one in relation to the one it pushes forward, and becomes in turn the one pushed in relation to another; and even this comes, in short, from the fact that from the source right through to the fountain's jet the bursts of water are not isolated: there is one single thrust, and a single gap in the flow would suffice to break up the jet."

The jet or fountain metaphor is also better at demonstrating the relationship between water time and the Plotinian-idealistic vision of time. Merleau-Ponty (2012, 447) says, "Time begins itself anew: yesterday, today, tomorrow—this cyclical rhythm, this constant form can certainly give the

illusion of possessing the entirety of time all at once, just as the fountain gave us a feeling of eternity."

For an empirical psychotic subject, the experience of time may best be understood by means of the whirlpool metaphor. "Normal subjects" can be regarded in such a way that they "interpret" the stream as a river they are all sailing on, in boats that are all following the same course and going in the same direction. Whatever is far away and close at hand from the perspective of these boats is about the same for everyone. Meanwhile, the psychotic subject is also in the river but finds himself in a great whirlpool that is sucking him down. Because he is going down, he can scarcely see the other sailors; his "intersubjectivity" disappears. He does experience protention and retention, but the broader recollection and expectations for the future are no longer arranged in linear fashion; instead, they spin around him. Inside the whirlpool, the distant past and far-off future can seem no different than whatever just took place. In Kusters (2004, 56ff.), I develop the metaphor of the whirlpool in greater detail.

One month later I found myself "working" on this metaphor "from the inside" in a very practical way. I observed that when you're inside it, the whirlpool doesn't act like a whirlpool at all. Rather, you can compare it to the calm in the eye of a hurricane. Once you've gone through the whirlpool, you look at the river in a different way (also see the finale).

Binswanger argues that in madness, the stream stops and everything comes to a standstill. As I said, this statement cannot be made at the transcendental level, but it can on the level of subjective experience. We could then conceive of the stream as a frozen river. The disadvantage of this image is that absolutely nothing seems to happen anymore. Perhaps the metaphor of mist is more suitable to madness as schizophrenia. There is still movement and water, but the water in the mist is fragmented. There is no direction, no forms, except perhaps for ghost forms. The schizophrenic moves through this mist, directionless, without seeing anyone else, but he does get just as wet in the water as the others do.

These are but a few attempts to work out the water metaphor in greater detail. Other metaphorical candidates are the ocean and the waterfall. Obviously all these metaphors could be further developed within the context of phenomenology and connected to more technical Husserlian terminology (again, on the level of the subjective experience and not at the transcendental level).

As mentioned several times, Ricoeur shows that Husserl's plan to describe time and the experience of time separately from the objective common sense world is doomed to failure (Ricoeur 1988, 23–44). The inner experience of

time cannot be described (and perhaps not even "experienced"?) without outer embedding. Water also needs earth or at least some form of channeling or embedding. The stream has to have direction—that is, direction in space, direction on earth. In addition, water and flowing must have more form if anything substantial beyond the most general transcendental level is going to be discussed. Then disturbing, dreadful experiences of time on the part of subjects who are suffering can be embedded once again. With good water management, the whirlpool and mist can be led back into the general (intersubjective) stream of life.

The question of what came first—the water or the earth, the stream or the bed—is an interesting one, but it may be insoluble and not entirely relevant. For many modern philosophers of time, it's no longer even the point. Ricoeur (1988) tries to show that both sides need each other, and that *narrativity* is an intermediary between the two. In the literature on disturbed experiences of time after Binswanger, the two sides also keep returning. It must be assumed that there is a "reality" or an objective outside world somewhere, and only then can the various subjective experiences of time be arranged against it. The psychiatrist and philosopher Antoine Mooij (2012, 169), coming from a more hermeneutic-Lacanian tradition, has this to say: "Underlying these disruptions ... is a successful, a partially successful, and an unsuccessful symbolic transformation of brutal reality into a meaningful world characterized by structural moments of space and time, of subjects and objects: the symbolic function."

So there is an unstructured, nonsymbolic "brutal reality" of *physis*, or, in Lacanian terms, the Real. But when we want to say more about this real reality, we do it from our own position as a subject. In this back-and-forth movement between inner and outer worlds, inner and outer time become increasingly articulated. In addition to narrativity and the hermeneutic circle, employed as a means of understanding both inner and outer time—or in metaphoric terms, of filling the swamp and separating water from land—the connection is also sought in physicality. Merleau-Ponty and contemporary phenomenologists like Martin Wyllie (2005) and Shaun Gallagher (2006) see physicality as the link between the phenomenological consciousness and material reality.

In conclusion, the water metaphor and the phenomenological tradition of Husserl and Binswanger highlight an important aspect of temporality. To reveal the variation in experiences of time, however, it is still necessary to make use of a bit of "earth time." Modern water management uses narrativity, hermeneutics, and physicality for mastering water and earth.

Later I will be examining the metaphor of fire. As we shall see, fire is located between water and earth, but it also has its own character, which, in turn, can cast new light on variations in experiences of time. A key assumption in Husserl's water philosophy is the continuity of time, which is rejected in Deleuzian time philosophy. There the key notion is difference, discontinuity.

8.3.3 Philochosis, Water Depicted

In Husserl's reflections on time, thought and inquiry cease at the deepest level—that of absolute time-consciousness. At the end of thought, all that is left is the stammering of an empty water metaphor. For Husserl, thinking is a form of intentionality, intentionality is an expression of experience, experience is a division of time-consciousness, and time-consciousness is that which issues from "flowing." In profoundly deep thinking, if we go along with Husserl and my explanation of him, everything dissolves in the flowing water, and there is no longer any distinction between subject and object, remembering and observing, inside and outside, and delusion and reality. As such, the water metaphor illustrates how deep philosophical reflection can slip into mysticism and madness: apparently, reflecting "on water" can result in falling into the whirlpool. Indeed, in the distinctions I have drawn between various water images, such as the whirlpool, the fountain, and the ocean, I may have shed more light on the difference between psychosis and normality; however, these same images of water, interpreted metaphorically, swept me into the whirlpool as well. As stated in Nietzsche's aphorism 146 from Beyond Good and Evil (2002, 69), "And when you stare for a long time into an abyss, the abyss stares back into you."

Philosophy professes to be pure thought, and anyone who is a serious scholar, it argues, will be taken to the deepest and highest truths. In the case of Husserl, however, we see him running up against the water metaphor, and his attempts to state and develop that metaphor more precisely result in a relapse from pure thought back to the imagination, and above all, back to the danger of being swept away by the images and the imagination itself. It is tempting to tie down "the flow" in a series of water images that you think you can control. Or when dethinking is coupled with imagining (or reimagining) instead of with "demagining," we end up with either the platitudes of boundless yammering or caught up in mad whirlpools.

But who knows? Maybe Husserl is right, and maybe there is no more to be said about the absolute ground of all things. Maybe that is the heart of the mystical and mad secret. Maybe Thales, one of the earliest Greek

philosophers, was correct when he stated that water is the foundation of everything. Maybe that wasn't so crazy after all. Nietzsche had this to say about Thales (1962, 39): "Greek philosophy seems to begin with an absurd notion, with the proposition that water is the primal origin and the womb of all things. Is it really necessary for us to take serious notice of this proposition? It is ... because contained in it, if only embryonically, is the thought, 'all things are one.' ... What drove him [Thales] to it was a metaphysical conviction which had its origin in a mystic intuition. We meet it in every philosophy, together with the ever-renewed attempts at a more suitable expression, this proposition that 'all things are one.'" But it may be that both Nietzsche, and I in turn, looked too deeply into the mirror of the water's surface and ended up in free fall.

Philosophy is a pursuit of thought that has been purified of images. In many other modes of thinking and writing, such as poetry and the mystical arts, practitioners have fewer scruples concerning the use of the water metaphor. There, metaphors have been further elaborated and the language is more expressive—and possibly more moving—but it is also more obvious that "this is only metaphorical." So in poetry and the mystical arts, there is no suggestion that the water metaphor itself "refers to something real." There the "water" remains an image of something else.

We find an example of a mystical-poetic water metaphor in the writings of the philosopher and mystic Joel (in Zaehner 1957, 38): "I lay on the seashore, the shining waters glittering in my dreamy eyes; at a great distance fluttered the soft breeze; throbbing, shimmering, stirring, lulling to sleep comes the wave beat to the shore—or to the ear? I know not. Distance and nearness become blurred into one; without and within glide into each other. Nearer and nearer, dearer and more homelike sounds the beating of the waves; now like a thundering pulse in my head it strikes, and now it beats over my soul, devours it, embraces it, while it itself at the same time floats out like the blue waste of waters. Yes, without and within are one ... all thought becomes one thought, which becomes one with feeling ... Blue shimmers the infinite sea, wherein dreams the jelly fish of the primitive life, toward which without ceasing our thoughts hark back dimly through eons of existence."

This passage can be interpreted as a reference to "mystical mad dethinking." Here the metaphor of the water is developed in greater detail than in Husserl's writings or my own. Those who choose to adopt such fragments and "follow" them as some kind of mystical "guidebook" (see my discussion of William James in section 6.1) are likely to end up in a dreamy delusional state. Texts like this rely on suggestion more than analysis; you have

to know in advance what is meant by the water metaphor before letting yourself be carried away by the text.

The difference between the quoted passage and Husserl's philosophical path to water madness is that, in Husserl, the dethinking takes place by means of deep reflection, while in such poetic texts the dethinking happens when you simply stop thinking and surrender to the flow of images (also compare with my analysis of Strindberg in 16.1.1). So a philosphical psychosis may delve more deeply than a poetic psychosis. This is because with "philochosis," the only possible conclusion is "this is the ultimate inescapable reality," while with the more poetic reveries, the reader can choose to undergo a pleasant daydream experience. Unlike philosophical reflection, poetic ecstasy is not forced by an excess of clarity but by a deliberately chosen obscurity. Admittedly, I may be contrasting the poetry of the seductive image too sharply with the philosophy of pure thought. In doing so, I am in line with what Podvoll says about "the fascination" created by the image. But of course, the dividing line between philosophy and poetry is usually not so sharp.

What Husserl's philosophy and Joel's mystical art have in common is that, whether suggestive or argumentative, seductive or straightforward, they clarify "something" about the dethinking of mystical madness with the help of water metaphors like the river, ocean, and fountain. Both their texts make use of the distinctive features of water and emphasize the gradual, "flowing" character of the transition from reality to dream and delusion. These texts also suggest that the fluid state is actually the original, most authentic, primitive state; that this state has always been present and that all you have to do is surrender to the "flow" in order to end up in the stream of life, mysticism, madness, and the "abyss." For the prospective mystic, the problem is where to find that stream, that unending river, and that deep ocean? If everything is "actually" already flowing and fluid, why did he not notice it much earlier? Where are the dikes holding the water back from him? For the psychotic, just the opposite applies: How is he to stay afloat on the ocean? Why does he end up in the whirlpool while others remain in the boat? If the fluid conditions that the mystic and the madman find themselves in are so close, why does one end up on one side and the other on the other?

There is no answer to the last question, especially since it is not always clear what side the coin has fallen on: the rain and the drop may differ only in intensity. Unfortunately, Michaux (1974, 155ff.) is unable to explain why the coin sometimes falls on one side and sometimes on the other. But he is very good at imagining how close madness and mysticism lay.

The chaos, the fragmentation, and the devastation can turn into a brilliant stream of unity in the twinkling of an eye: "the same disorganizing flux, the same frenzied surge which overflows in every direction ... may become, for someone who knows how to deal with it, the very springboard of transcendence. ... The absolute nonunity, the actual chaos, may, in just a few seconds, become erased and reversed, as a minus sign changes into a plus sign. Not by returning to normality, utterly out of reach, unrealizable to even the slightest degree or extent, but by creating a super, monstrous, magnificent unity, as excessive as the dislocation of some seconds ago. ... All the minor currents from before no longer exist, but collaborate in a dynamic and unique impulse, joined in an impelling stream which permits no retrospection; a world in movement which sweeps you away."

Although in Michaux, the ultimate condition is described as an "impelling stream," the water metaphor alone does not show us what makes it so seductive, illuminating, or transcendent. Water trickles slowly. Fluidity is a gradual characteristic. Crystals are slow to dissolve. To shed more light on the speed of the transition, which is often immediate ("in just a few seconds" according to Michaux), scorching everything in its path, as well as on the power of its attraction, I will now undertake a discussion of mad fire.

8.4 Inflaming

Nijinsky wrote in his diary ([1919] 1999, 50–51), "People do not think of stars and therefore they cannot understand the universe. I often think of stars. I do not like astronomy, because astronomy does not explain God to us. Astronomy teaches us the geography of the stars. I do not like geography, as I dislike frontiers. To me the earth is one single state. The earth is the head of God. God is the fire in the head. I am alive as long as there is fire in my head. My pulse is like an earthquake."

Here, in place of the image of slowly flowing water, are images of fire, stars, and earthquakes. Fire terminology allows you to emphasize other aspects of madness and mysticism: fire has a strong seductive allure because of its warmth and light; it can suddenly burst into flames or strike in the form of lightning; and it can have a profound, "transformative" effect through burning, purification, and conversion.

8.4.1 Enticing Fire

Like the light from the sun, the light from fire brings "clarity" and "illumination." While the sun shines only during the daytime, fire can also be kindled in the darkness of night. (Madness: the night—the "black light"—that

becomes day; also see section 4.3.3.) The light from fire has just as much symbolic appeal as sunlight, but there is a subtle difference: firelight doesn't just come down "from above." Firelight is produced by people in the terrestrial world. Fire can be brought under control and made useful. He who controls fire has power. With fire at your disposal, you don't have to wait passively for the sun. Rather, you can use your fire to take charge of your own destiny; you can create light and warmth yourself, which means you're not dependent on the diurnal and nocturnal rhythms of the sun; and he who controls fire creates his own time. Unlike sunlight, firelight also has a mysterious quality: Light from the sun is for everyone, but light from fire is the property of the masters of that fire. The amount of firelight is not always equally divided. So for secret mystical societies and mad fantasies about being specially chosen, metaphors about "ownership of the fire" are more apt than those about "receiving the sunlight."

If "dethinking" can be compared with "inflaming," then the mystical madman has an extra portion of "clarity," extra "warmth," and a sense of power. For the euphoric forms of madness, this is a suitable metaphor. In Podvoll's first phase, that of speed, you become "overheated," and the subsequent phases offer enlightenment and clarity. Like fire, there is something seductive about madness. Podvoll (1990, 73) says, "Like many others, Custance thought of his illness as being somehow connected with his spiritual growth; and also like many others, he had to deal with the temptation of wanting to fully explore his potential by letting his mania run wild." The writer Astrid Lindgren (1997, 87) expresses the attraction of fire in her own way:

The Fire is burning,
It's burning so bright,
The flames are leaping and prancing.
It's burning for you,
Its burning for me,
It's burning for all who are dancing.

The fire metaphor was also used in medieval Christian mysticism to express the attraction of mystical insight. Eckhart (quoted in Schürmann 1978, 144) writes, "The mind encloses something within itself, a spark of the intellectual power, which is never quenched. This spark is the higher part of the spirit; in it is located the image of the mind. Yet, in our minds there is also a knowledge directed towards external things, namely the knowledge through the senses and through reason. This knowledge proceeds by representation of images and by concepts, and it conceals from us that other way of knowing."

Schürmann then comments on Eckhart's spark: "On the one hand, the 'spark' is 'something' that is related to the power of intellection: it is of an intellectual nature. ... On the other hand, it is 'never extinguished': this spark is beyond time, in eternity." Thanks to the Eckhartian spark, you can catch fire from the inside-out by means of pure contemplation—without images or concepts—and reach God through "that other way of knowing." Catching fire is therefore another way of thinking, a "dethinking." For Eckhart, the luminiscent spark is always present, although often hidden, and it is worth the trouble of discovery. The spark takes you higher, beyond time and space. In Eckhart, this is called a religious-mystical spark, while modern psychotics are said to have merely "blown a fuse."

Dethinking can be described as a contemplative ascent into the clarity of the light or as an igniting by the Eckhartian spark. Sometimes the emphasis is placed more on the warmth of the fire, so that dethinking is seen as intensity and bliss rather than as clarity and insight. A typical example can be found in Ruysbroeck. In the following quote from Vanden blinckenden Steen (The Sparkling Stone), the mystic is attracted by God's love and oneness, into which he is taken up and burned. Interestingly enough, the fire metaphor here is interwoven with water metaphors and even with the whirlpool metaphor (1916, 186): "You can thus see that the attractive power of the unity of God is nothing other than love without end which, through love, draws the Father and the Son and all that lives in them into an eternal delight. And we desire to burn and be consumed in this love for all eternity, for it is here that the blessedness of all spirits lies. ... In this modeless love we will wander, and it shall bring us into the immeasurable breadth of God's love. There we shall flow forth and flow out of ourselves into the uncomprehended abundance of God's riches and goodness. There we will melt and be dissolved, eternally taken up in the maelstrom of God's glory" (Sparkling Stone, 159; T, I, 8).9

Nijinsky ([1919] 2000, 170–171) also uses fire and warmth metaphors to describe something that is enticing and, at the same time, threatening and powerful. In this quote, the metaphor spreads like an advancing fire until it becomes a mad cosmology: "I realize that the earth is becoming extinguished. I know that earth used to be a sun. I know what the sun is. The sun is fire. People think that life depends on the sun. I know that life depends on people. I know what life is. I know what death is. The sun is reason. The intellect is an extinguished sun that is decomposing. I know that decomposition destroys life. I know that the earth is being covered with decomposed matter. I know that people abuse decomposition. Scientists are covering up the earth all the time. The earth is suffocating. There is not enough air for

it. Earthquakes are due to the shaking of the earth's entrails. The earth's entrails are mine. I tremble when I am not understood. I feel a lot, and therefore I live. Within me the fire is never extinguished. I live with God."

In John Thomas Perceval's autobiography *A Narrative of the Treatment Experienced by a Gentleman during a State of Mental Derangement* (1840, 22, 28), fire plays a remarkable double-role, symbolic and literal at the same time: "I left the manse at Row, in my own imagination, a living instance of the Holy Ghost operating in man, full of courage, confidence, peace, and rapture, like a glowing flame, but still and submissive. Such, I say, was the state of my feeling in the life of that Spirit. ... I was in a state of great excitement, both at my own feelings, that urged and led me to attempt utterances and singing, &c. &c., and at their alarm and opposition. It is said in Scripture that the disciples should do wonders, and amongst other wonders, more harmless, it came into my head, I am told, to put my hand into the fire, persuaded that I might draw it out unhurt." Attempts at self-immolation, or "auto-mutilation," are often reason to forcibly remove a person from the madly overheated world (in Perceval as well).

8.4.2 Rapid Fire

Metaphors of fire, lightning, sparks, and combustion are good for describing sudden events that have a major impact, such as mystical madness. But you don't have to be a mystic or a psychotic to be familiar with these metaphors. Besides "the fat's in the fire," we also have "like a bolt of lightning," "spread like wildfire," and "the sparks are flying."

First, as an example from traditional Christian mysticism, Eckhart (cited in Davies 1988, 58–59) uses metaphors of birth and lightning to describe the radical impact of mystical insight: "When this birth has really happened, then no creature can hinder you any more on your way; rather they all point you to God and to this birth. We can represent this with the image of a flash of lightning. Whatever lightning strikes, be it a tree, an animal or a man, it turns that object immediately towards it. If a man has his back towards the lightning, he turns around in that moment to face it. If a tree has a thousand leaves, they all turn instantly towards the flash. ... It is like when we look directly into the sun so that wherever we look, we will see the image of the sun. When it is not the case that you seek God in all things and hold him before your mind's eye, then you do not yet know this birth."

The function of the bolt of lightning is obvious here: it comes "out of nowhere," makes everything turn toward it with alarm, and thoroughly penetrates whatever it strikes. In addition, what Eckhart says about looking at the sun and seeing God in everything is actually an apt description of

what happens in madness: the recognition of a deeper reality that cannot be entirely captured in words, that manifests itself everywhere and in all things, and that beckons to its "victim." (Also see section 13.4.2 for a discussion of Schreber's staring at the sun.)

Eliade (1965, 67) gives us a fine example of a report of a mystical experience. This report was written by the principal figure, Bucke, in the third person. The experience, or revelation, happens "without warning of any kind" and is compared with fire, flames, and lightning: "He was in a state of quiet, almost passive enjoyment. All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself wrapped round as it were by a flame-coloured cloud. For an instant he thought of fire, some sudden conflagration in the great city; the next he knew the light was within himself. Directly afterwards came upon him a sense of exaltation, of immense joyousness accompanied or followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe. Into his brain streamed one momentary lightning-flash of Brahmic splendour, leaving thenceforward for always an after-taste of Heaven. ... He claims that he learnt more within the few seconds during which the illumination lasted than in previous months or even years of study, and that he learnt much that no study could have taught him." Bucke may have had earlier encounters that had prepared him for this, but the experience itself took him by surprise, and the fire that burned him both within and without preceded the enlightenment or "dethinking."

Eliade (1965, 22) discusses the frequently occurring connection between lightning and enlightenment: "The rapidity of spiritual illumination has been compared in many religions to lightning. Furthermore, the swift flash of lightning rending the darkness has been given the value of a mysterium tremendum which, by transfiguring the world, fills the soul with holy terror. ... Let us note the essential points of this experience of mystical illumination: (a) it is the consequence of a long preparation, but it always occurs suddenly, like a 'lightning-flash'; (b) it is a matter of inner light, felt throughout the body but principally in the head; (c) when a man feels it for the first time it is accompanied by the experience of ascension; (d) it involves vision into the distance and clairvoyance at the same time: the shaman sees everywhere and very far, but he also sees invisible entities (souls of the sick, spirits) and also sees future events." According to Eliade, lightning also strikes in cases of psychosis, along with everything else that goes with it: the suddenness, after a longer run-up period; experiences of inner light and perplexity about a vertical dimension (ascent); changed perception and clairvoyance; and so forth.

A good example of thunder and lightning can be found in Vogelaar (1983, 69–70), where Johanneke van Slooten quotes and describes her patient Bert van der Meer. As happens so often in reports of madness, it is unclear whether the words are meant to be understood literally (lightning in an oak) or figuratively (lightning with the voice of God), but that's just the way it is with madness! The low roads and the high roads are both from the same map. Van der Meer says,

"I talked to Pastor Polman. I was once illuminated by flashes of lightning, which didn't kill me ... and in that flash I heard God's voice, which spoke to me. I talked to Pastor Polman—my faith is very strong. It's my shield and my fortress." When speaking about God, Bert spreads his arms wide in a gesture of invocation. He opens his hands and splays his fingers. He seems to be looking inward, and with each sentence he opens and closes his arms as if he were opening and shutting a large, heavy book: "I was given a message from God. ... It's so difficult to explain. I talked to Pastor Polman on several occasions, and Pastor Polman greeted me." Bert continues in a mysterious, almost sinister tone: "I had the same experience as before. ... I hope that sea of mine was active, suddenly I was standing on the dock and the sea came up, wild and raging. ..." And after a long pause: "I've gone for walks on the beach when the lightning flashes illuminated me (I saw him there, too)—why? I'm not afraid of lightning. No, no! You asked about Wodan's oak? Because I'm Frisian. ... Friesland is 3,000 years old, and I was sitting in Wodan's oak. They had a Wodan's oak, and there was this oak that protects you from thunderstorms. And I was standing there, for protection from the thunderstorm. And what a storm it was. ..." He pauses briefly and continues, laughing with surprise: "What a storm it was, and it was pouring rain, and the bolts of lightning were coming from the weather front. It was an oak, see, and I was standing there."

A thunderstorm is still regarded as an awe-inspiring event, and each year many people are killed by lightning strikes in the Netherlands alone. But today there are other light and fire phenomena that also speak to the imagination. Comparisons with and reflections on nuclear explosions are notably frequent in cases of modern madness. Like lightning and fire, they seem to occur in both the inner and the outer worlds of the mad. As I wrote in *Pure Madness (Pure waanzin;* Kusters 2004): "Did a nuclear war break out, or was there another explosion in a power plant? Or could this have been the result of the explosion at Chernobyl? It's logical that they won't let me out. The public aren't allowed to know, since it would cause panic. There's a very good reason why my cell looks like an isolated bunker: the heavy door, the indestructible walls, and the unbreakable window all keep the radiation out." From Bock (2000, 261), writing about a patient: "She told me about a horrible psychotic episode in which she imagined surviving an explosion

in a nuclear power plant." (Also see the quote by Crowhurst in chapter 5, section 4.3).

In the next quote, Mous (2011, 84) looks back on his period of madness, which happened decades earlier. He mentions the intensity of the experience and the difficulty he has expressing it in words, and he beautifully describes the natural and supernatural qualities of the light: "Each time, I feel a shock of recognition that I cannot properly identify, as if my brain cells back then had been paralyzed by an intense flash of light and now can only be activated by stimuli from the period itself. The recovered memories are difficult to capture in words. It's as if the language had become detached from the stream of thoughts that were flooding my consciousness at that time. *Pikado* is the Japanese word for the flash that occurs with a nuclear explosion. That's what it must have been like: a total dazzling of the mind by a star that has burst apart. A heavenly light on earth that is older than the sun."

One objection that might be raised to this use of the fire metaphor is that psychosis does not occur suddenly. There are early warning signs that can be detected before the psychosis actually breaks out: increasing restlessness, irritability, social isolation, drug use, sleeplessness, and so on. The crux of the matter lies in the phrase "actually breaks out." All sorts of previous experiences, behaviors, or even explanatory factors can be cited, of course, but that doesn't mean the outbreak of the psychosis itself is gradual. To express it in terms of fire: after a forest fire has occurred, we can look back and see the growth and pruning of the trees and plants over the years, the months or weeks of drought, the daily stream of visitors with their lit cigarettes. But the forest fire itself breaks out in a flash. Naturally it all depends on how comprehensive the term "psychosis" is understood to be and whether it includes the more acute or chronic forms of psychosis. But in any case, the outbreak of madness is often experienced like a volcano. As Podvoll (1990, 110) observes, "Everyone concerned with psychotic phenomena is stunned by the suddenness and abruptness with which one can cross the border into insanity."

This also holds true for the mystic. Some say that a mystical experience can be understood only within a particular mystical tradition. And indeed, the chance of having a "mystical experience" is increased by the formation of religious receptivity and training in spiritual refinements. But here, too, the "real mystical experience" that finally occurs is of an entirely different order than the preparatory practices leading up to it. Mysticism and psychosis are not within the power of the subject to control and cannot be understood beforehand. A person who has never slept or dreamt would also not know how to fall asleep or understand what dreaming is.

Plotinus gives an excellent description in 6.7.36 of the impossibility of making specific preparations or acquiring prior knowledge. "Knowing of The Good or contact with it is the all-important: this we read is the grand learning, the learning, we are to understand, not of looking towards it but attaining, first, some knowledge of it. We come to this learning by analogies, by abstractions, by our understanding of its subsequents, of all that is derived from The Good, by the upward steps towards it. Purification has The Good for goal; so the virtues, all right ordering, ascent within the Intellectual, settlement therein, banqueting upon the divine by these methods one becomes, to self and to all else, at once seen and seer. ... Here, we put aside all the learning; disciplined to this pitch, established in beauty, the quester holds knowledge still of the ground he rests on, but, suddenly, swept beyond it all by the very crest of the wave of Intellect surging beneath, he is lifted and sees, never knowing how; the vision floods the eyes with light, but it is not a light showing some other object, the light is itself the vision."

In other words, suddenly the light goes on, and you don't know what it is you're seeing.

8.4.3 Scorching Fire

Fire entices and catches fast, but the most important thing is that it burns. Whoever gets too close to fire bursts into flames and turns into ash. To a certain extent, fire is the great leveler; it transforms both multiformity and uniformity into ash. While water erodes, dissolves, or softens hard forms, fire kills or destroys all things and living creatures. In mysticism, this transformation is often looked upon as purging or purification, as in Eckhart (quoted in Davies 1988, 49–50): "When God is at work in the soul, everything in the soul which is contrary to his nature is purified and cast out in the heat of the flame. Truly! The soul enters God more truly than any food enters into us. We can go even further and say that the soul is transformed into God. There is a power within the soul which cuts away whatever is coarse, and becomes united with God. That is the spark of the soul. My soul even becomes more closely united with God than the food that I eat does with my body."

In this passage, the soul is purified by the holy fire, and the resulting transformation is just as radical as the changing of food taken into the body. In the following quote, Ruysbroeck (quoted in Davies 1988, 143) places the emphasis on the leap from thinking to dethinking, from actively searching to being passively seized, again using the metaphor of the purifying fire: "But where the human way is found wanting and can go no higher, there begins the way of God. That is, when we hold to God with intention, with love and with unsatisfied desire and cannot become one with him, then

the Spirit of Our Lord comes like a mighty fire that burns, consumes and devours all that is in us so that we are no longer aware of ourselves and our devotions but we experience ourselves as if we were one spirit and one love with God."

Whoever finds himself in the mystical fire comes out a different person. In modern terms, we would say that the person has been converted or has become a "fundamentalist." Whatever the terminology, the mystical experience, as medieval authors describe it, is comparable to an annihilating *and* purifying fire that changes a person to the depths of his soul. The mystical fire is not a jolly campfire you gather around once a year to join in a merry dance. It is not without responsibilities and is not transient.¹⁰ The initial period after the first mystical insight is like a burnt-down forest, like scorched earth. The "ground" of existence has been radically altered to its very core. Even colors, smells, and sounds are different than they were before the lightning struck.

In psychosis, the metaphor of fire is mainly used for its destructive aspect. One example of this is as follows (Macalpine and Hunter 1956, quoted in Landis 1964, 80): "In the evening I went to my bedroom to say my prayers there and after I had said them there was a clap of thunder and a bright flame came down on me so that I again fell into a swoon. Thereupon my sister came and with her a gentleman who called me by my name, and with that I came to myself. Then it seemed to me as if I were lying in nothing but fire and stench, and could not stand on my feet. I rolled out of my chamber into the room, and rolled around the room until the blood gushed out of my mouth and nose. Then my sister did not know what to do with me; so she sent for the priests. After they had come the stench and heat disappeared."

As a final example, in this instance mentioned in Podvoll (1990, 87), Custance combines the water metaphor of the "wild plunge" with an aspect of fire that I have not yet discussed: the danger of its "spreading." Custance says he wants to "kindle" his madness in others: "The sense of being in mystical communion with all things is at the very root of the manic state in which I am at the present. Here in Paris, as earlier in Berlin, it is perfectly clear to me that the manic state involves a kind of wild plunge into the depths, a letting-go of all restrictions on the great forces of instinct and the Unconscious. ... I imagined that I was starting a movement to end all movements, the movement without an 'ism,' something natural and spontaneous which will spread like wildfire of its own inner power."

Intermezzo I. Fire at a Distance

In bringing part II to a close, I would like to discuss a few passages from my own work, written during the luminous night and early morning of Tuesday, August 14, and Wednesday, August 15, 2007. But first some brief background remarks.

Following some difficult complications in our relationship, my beloved had moved out of my house. Psychologically I had become "detached," and from a philosophical perspective I was "dethought." "Demagination" and "delanguization" went hand in hand with "remagination" and "relanguization." The experiences and events from that period might be interpreted as a tragic love story. In any case, love—whether broken, sought-after, lost, or in an abstract form—often lies at the heart of psychosis. There's hardly anything new about this, and it doesn't take much knowledge of psychology to work it out in greater detail. Hennell described it very nicely in his autobiography (1967, 22), with a bit of fire terminology thrown in: "The mind, not attaining a successful close in love, tried to sublimate its idea, and for a time became intensely religious—if that word can be used to indicate an idealism not disciplined by any single formal doctrine. It was perhaps a fire of furze, sprung upon shallow soil; still it was an exaltation which consumed past experience, present circumstances, things seen, heard and read, in an irrepressible flame, in which their nature and shape appeared quite changed."

In the present book, instead of trying to psychologize my experience, I would like to "philosophize" the psychological processes in order to demonstrate their profound depths, range, and universal power. For this reason, I am omitting the various twists and turns of the relationship itself. Once again, Podvoll has some exceptionally wise things to say about the link between love and madness, which I have already quoted in the preface. Any further justification for my nonpsychological research seems, to me, unnecessary. Podvoll (1990, 174) writes,

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More men, women, and, especially, adolescents have become insane in the wake of unrequited love affairs than those driven mad by toxins, defective genes, and other abnormalities put together. It is a clinical commonplace that the phenomenon of unrequited love is a fertile occasion for madness, and this probably has been so since prehistoric times. Perhaps this is why it is said the world over in pretechnological healing traditions that excessive passion is a "poison" that makes one's system "toxic" and then endangers the mind. The humiliated lover is involved in a predicament. From rejection, or from a real or imagined loss, the lover suffers the crushing disappointment of an intense conviction. His "conviction" might be of his destined place in another's life, or of his sexual irresistibility, or of having found an ultimate mate, or of living only the shadow of a life when not with the other, and so on in countless variety. He has reconstructed a "self" that can only exist in the presence of the other. When this self is rejected, the "groundlessness" or emptiness of his existence can be similar to (and feel like) the "tearing down" experiences of the drug-induced state. But he sometimes rises up from that experience and "switches out," traversing the psychotic "spiral of transformation" into an existence of magic and power. A new passion emerges—one of infinite nature, a celestial version—as the predicament comes to completion.

Working from this "celestial version of passion," I wrote the following fragments, addressing them to mortals. The relevant passages are presented unchanged, with my comments from "now" shown in *italics*.

Wednesday, August 15, 2007, midnight—1:00 a.m.

Dear, dear D.,

Yet another letter! This one to further clarify my "positions." Because I have the feeling that you don't completely understand me as regards my earlier letter, in order to set something straight, to explain, to make clearer, but also because I just have a need for "self-expression."

What follows is a lengthy discourse on what love is. The passage is fairly verbose and monologic; not psychotic, but too personal to repeat here. Love, according to this argument, is something between people, something that connects people and cannot be made exclusive, at least not in principle, since you cannot turn it into a marketable commodity. The statement also contains a passage in which I reveal why I come across as different from my normal self:

As a result of that weird "click" of mine, that "insight" that has always played a role on an implicitly unconscious level (so I am no "different" than I was) but that took possession of my thinking, my perception, and finally my actions (without any difficulty, but only after Taylor),

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something coalesced in my head, an insight into the intrinsic connection of the good and the true ...

Two weeks before writing this letter (actually it's no letter at all; it starts out as a letter but turns into a diary-like narrative), I had taught an intensive summer course on the religious philosopher Charles Taylor. The work of Taylor had fanned the flames of mystical madness for me, or, seen in a different light, had given me the excuse to rant on about it monomaniacally. In other words, it gave me insight into what religion and God might mean. ... More about Taylor in chapter 14.

This brief fragment is followed by a report on "the good," in connection with "love" and "truth," which may be somewhat agitated and bombastic in tone but still lies entirely within the bounds of the normal. This, too, I have chosen to omit due to its personal nature, and I will continue with a passage that I wrote a few hours later:

Wednesday, 4:30 a.m.

I smoked some dope at about one o'clock and woke up with a start just now, at four-thirty. The stuff had worked its way through my system, but I was struck by the realization that I was alone. Then I thought about the soul. About my soul and about the fact that other souls also existed. But then existing became thinking. But not thinking with your head. Not thinking-about. Not I, as a subject, that thinks and then thinks about something or someone (so, not modern quasi-Neo-Kantian). But I thought, and I thought about other souls, and thinking about souls is the same as thinking about people. About ensouled people, seeing people as souls. Thinking about souls, seeing souls, seeing people. But not with your head, but with your heart, where there is no subject-object divide. Seeing is understanding is thinking is existing, and it comprises soul, souls, and others. All souls are connected.

In this fragment, the whole business has suddenly caught fire. And the fire is no longer under control. In this passage, the fat's in the fire, and this is where it happens: "But then existing became thinking." And here: "Seeing is understanding is thinking." Podvoll calls this the stage of "absorption," or being completely absorbed by ideas. This is exactly what I meant in earlier chapters by the merging of thinking and perception, of interior and exterior. This passage, this transition, change, or transformation, can be interpreted in many different ways, of course. You might also say that "normal critical reflectivity" has fallen by the wayside. Or that because of the fuel of the drugs—the hash—associative thinking had

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overshadowed argumentative thinking. Or, to stay in line with this chapter, that the moment the mystical truth dawns, I see it and try to express it in words. All the texts that follow this are "on fire."

The Platonian Idea. Seeing the Good, seeing a circle. Not behind things. There is no god behind things, no world of ideas, distinct from this world. God is ineffable, the only thing that encompasses everything, including the encompassing. But what did I just now see in bed? I saw souls. I was a soul. "My own" soul. I was fucking fucking! Not alone!!!

This entire chapter, if not this entire book, is an attempt to put into words WHAT YOU SEE THERE. So I am not going to explain this passage again. Instead, to lighten things up a bit, here's a brief intermezzo, with a song and a passage from Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow (2012, 357–358, 358–359):

THE AQYN'S SONG

I have come from the edge of the world. I have come from the lungs of the wind, With a thing I have seen so awesome Even Džambul could not sing it. With a fear in my heart so sharp It will cut the strongest of metals.

In the ancient tales it is told
In a time that is older that Qorqyt,
Who took from the wood of Šyrghaj
The first qobyz, and the first song—
It is told that a land far distant
Is the place of the Kirghiz Light.

In a place where words are unknown, And eyes shine like candles at night, And the face of God is a presence Behind the mask of the sky—
At the tall black rock in the desert, In the time of the final days.

If the place were not so distant,
If words were known, and spoken,
Then the God might be a gold ikon,
Or a page in a paper book.
But It comes as the Kirghiz Light—
There is no other way to know It.

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The roar of Its voice is deafness, The flash of Its light is blindness. The floor of the desert rumbles, And Its face cannot be borne. And a man cannot be the same, After seeing the Kirghiz Light.

For I tell you that I have seen It
In a place which is older than darkness,
Where even Allah cannot reach.
As you see, my beard is an ice-field,
I walk with a stick to support me,
But this light must change us to children.

And now I cannot walk far,
For a baby must learn to walk.
And my words are reaching your ears
As the meaningless sounds of a baby.
For the Kirghiz Light took my eyes,
Now I sense all Earth like a baby.

It is north, for a six-day ride,
Through the steep and death-gray canyons,
Then across the stony desert
To the mountain whose peak is a white džurt.
And if you have passed without danger,
The place of the black rock will find you.

But if you would not be born,
Then stay with your warm red fire,
And stay with your wife, in your tent,
And the Light will never find you,
And your heart will grow heavy with age,
And your eyes will shut only to sleep.

Tchitcherine will reach the Kirghiz Light, but not his birth. He is no aqyn, and his heart was never ready. He will see It just before dawn. He will spend 12 hours then, face-up on the desert, a prehistoric city greater than Babylon lying in stifled mineral sleep a kilometer below his back, as the shadow of the tall rock, rising to a point, dances west to east and Džaqyp Qulan tends him, anxious as child and doll, and drying foam laces the necks of the two horses. But someday, like the mountains, like the young exiled women in their certain love, in their innocence of him, like the morning earthquakes and the cloud-driving wind, a purge, a war, and millions after millions of souls gone behind him, he will hardly be able to remember It.

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So that's Thomas Pynchon. In my nighttime letter, I wrote about the Kirghiz Light as follows:

I was fucking fucking fucking! not alone!!! Of course not! There are others, yes, other people, but they "are" only insofar as they are ensouled, insofar as they are "in" god. And god is eternal. Now I understand how you can let Jesus into your heart. Normally we are separate, our thinking is private, and we believe there is a non-divine creature that thinks, as if we could exist "apart" from God! That would mean we are separate components, and only as separate components could we think about other separate components. And then all other godless creatures are only separated from us spatially and in temporal time.

Here I discovered a secret route that circumvents the dividedness of time and space: the mystical-mad "vision," the intuitio intellectualis, expressed in Christian and philosophically tinted terms.

But "thinking about," that is sometimes called "feeling." But feeling someone can only be understood physically. We can only reach the other (at least ... the erotomaniacs among us) by feeling and by discerning physical sensations, and then acquiring from those physical sensations a short-lived certainty that the other exists. But we all know there's another way to feel. Not feeling with your body—at least insofar as you see your body as an unensouled material thing in space and time—but feeling with your heart (insofar as your heart is understood as not merely material). Metaphorically speaking (but then again not), it is the true heart with which you feel love, with which you "therefore" feel god, or to put it more precisely, with which you are filled by god, are part of god—that's a risky thing to say and it may be quite wrong. This is what Spinoza wrestled with ... did god make man? And is man outside of god? Or do all people participate in god? That is another difficult linguistic question: how to explain that there is no difference between these questions. Or, yes, that there is a difference, if you were to further elaborate on these two ideas.

Here I use the term "to feel" to denote the mystical or intuitive form of perception. "Feeling" here seems like a way of "making contact" with or "participating" in the other or in everything. Curiously enough, Nijinsky uses the word "feel" in his diaries to refer to this God-given capacity. In this passage I write that, as soon as I try to explain in words this divine insight, this unquestionable intuition, I run the

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risk of ending up in deep philosophical (instead of mad) trouble. Even so, I take that risk, again and again:

If I am part of god, that means that "everything is one," that everything is infinite, infinite love, the world soul that can "rise," à la Plotinus, toward the One. By first, as a soul, thinking of other souls—therefore not by cognitive thinking but by thinking with the heart! There are other souls ... but that right away is a frightening thought, because it suggests that my soul is separate from the souls of others. Yes, yes, yes, they may be separate, but only in their outer manifestation in time and space. So the soul—à la Kant—is also not knowable by means of the *Anschauung*. The soul *is*. Not that it is in time and space, but it is as both Kantian and Platonic Idea ... The soul sees/thinks/exists.

Here the thoughts and words tumble over each other in an effort to express the inexpressible, to comprehend the incomprehensible. The newly discovered "soul" triggered a unity (or flush, or ecstasy) of seeing, thinking, and existing. I knew that dividedness was over as far as the "unearthly" or "extraterrestrial" soul was concerned—at least outside time and space. The difference between souls is only apparent, for beyond space and time, all souls are one. Yes, anyone can babble on endlessly about souls, but I really meant it! This wasn't poetry but philosophy. I was "transformed" by my own thinking; Podvoll would have said that I was somewhere between the stages of absorption, insight, and power. The story in itself isn't all that crazy. Sometimes it's a bit simplistic, and sometimes the conclusions or presuppositions are overly hasty, but the trains of thought are easy to follow. The most remarkable thing, however, is the intensity or the fire behind these ideas, which is much stronger than the words here suggest. This can be seen from the tone of the following passage:

Help, help, jesus christ, dear lord, don't let me go crazy, I do not know—insofar as knowing is an aspect of cognitive thinking—I don't know any of your qualities, your properties, but help me not to go crazy, because it seems as if I've got it all figured out. ... But then I am not "I," as a cognitive thinker, but as—the existing I, as soul!!! And the only thing that exists—I've thought this through again and again over the past few days—is god! So if any thinking is going to happen—there is only one thing that can think as an existing "something," and that is god. God is in my heart, at least ... that is arrogant, that presumes a place that would contain god. You cannot "have" god. He is not a quality. Qualities, like properties, do not exist. But aside from that ...

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Although I had little knowledge of the work of Eckhart back then, these wrestlings seem to have a lot in common with the language Eckhart uses in his appeals to heaven. The invocation "jesus christ, dear lord" also indicates that the fire was burning fiercely. Such invocations are nothing like my normal way of writing or speaking. What follows are a few more attempts to explain the Insight, to develop it further, and to "apply" it a bit.

To explain it once more, very clearly, so I understand it tomorrow as well ... ahem ahem ... What I'm now trying to articulate is scary: that thinking and perception are indeed one! And therefore they can switch places in cases of madness? There's nothing wrong with that, as long as it happens in a "good" way. The "problem" of thinking and perception being unified in an Idea, in a Platonic seeing/intuiting, is only a "problem" when that unity is split in madness and the good can no longer be seen, the human-ensouled can no longer be seen, but the unensouled is "seen" as images, representations, as monsters that can threaten you, as a magician who "exists." But he doesn't really exist! That is the fear! That is death, but death does not exist, at least not in the way that god exists, as part of god, or as another name for god. So, Jannemiek¹ the magician does not really exist!!!!! But he only appears as pretense, out of godlessness, in the absence of belief. Believe in god. Sure, okay, but that doesn't get us very far. Believe in the existence of something that is said to have an independent power beyond god and therefore also exists. All right, in madness the Platonic seeing is split into a godless division of perception and thinking, in which the whole big mess is all tangled up and the isolation of the ego sees itself mirrored in surrounding isolated monsters. The world is a place full of monsters when we "really" don't believe in god. But ... you can't doubt the existence of god entirely. Because doubt has to do with the hubris of the subject, who thinks he is able to think in a non-godlike fashion. So what you are doing when you doubt the existence of god is this: you are making a false, that is, an untrue division between statements about the world which you can doubt, which you can investigate, such as that piece of wax of Descartes, and then think "about" it. ... You can ask yourself what kind of form it "had," and suddenly now it has another form! So that's not true. And thus you can doubt everything, except the doubt itself. And that is cogito ergo sum. But what or who is there???? I AM, but not as actor, not merely as an acting being, not as someone-who-can-think—as a cognitive being, not as someone-who-can-see—as material seeing. But I exist only as a soul.

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Here the central thought that seized me, or the Insight that came to me, remains unchanged, and I attempt to develop my phrasing of this Insight with help from the terms "soul" and "god." In these first attempts, I immediately came up against a big problem: if the good and the true, being, thinking, and God can all be experienced as one—which is basically how I experienced my Insight—then what is the status of "nothingness" or negation, or the absence of good and of being? In short, if God has revealed himself in all his glory, then what about evil, nonexistence, and death? All mysticism, religion, and higher philosophy deal with such questions, either directly or indirectly, and madmen are preoccupied with them as well. More about this in part III. Here I will continue with a few more salient passages from the original text:

Well, these are the kinds of things you'd better not say too often or they'll lock you up. But that's only because you're assuming the omnipotence of the true god. ...

I'd like to write something about the heart ... as the place where you can encounter others, think about others, see others. That thinking-about-others (thinking-at-others, thinking-with-others) is something to be cherished. You have to lock them in your heart. Yes, there's room there for Jesus too. If you open your heart to Jesus, you find yourself face to face with belief. Your heart is open to seeing the divine, to seeing the world as divine. D. ... if you read this, will you think I've developed some kind of religious mania???? It sure sounds like it. So cart me off if it gets too nutty. But first talk to me, please, if you can understand me, if I'm still "normal," because a lot of what I'm writing can sound pretty creepy, and these are thoughts I've had before, philosophically, but whose insane consequences I've also seen, if you think about them long enough, and some that strike me as typically mad when I regard them as bits of language uttered by someone I'm really worried about ...

In this passage, the Insight and language of the soul and of God unite with the heart and the opening of the heart to divine persons like Jesus. Naturally, a "breakthrough" like this meant that all hell had broken loose in my life. Because not being bound by slavish church doctrines, I had no way of stopping the figures who were about to wander in and out of me in the not-too-distant future.

This fragment also gives evidence of a striking entanglement of aloofness, reflection, and compelling experience—not only in my own case, by the way, but in many autobiographies as well. That is to say, I may have been "thinking"—or experiencing—in the manner of a religious maniac, but at the same time I was quite aware of it, and I feared for the consequences.

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Earlier on I had been sitting in the car, in utter astonishment, and I kept saying *fucking hell* over and over in my mind, but not in order to say anything bad about god (also see Intermezzo II.II.II, "At the Wheel"), if that were even possible, because that would be merely unensouled and non-human language. But astonished about my insights. Two nights ago I had a dream. I thought it was an anxiety dream. It was all black, another one of those drug anxieties, and I was there, and I was alone. A black void, but there was fire burning, there was light, and that was a soul, that was a dream image of myself, but also of the light. Black is not the color of everything. Black is no color at all; it's the negation of color, the absence of color, the absence of the light. Did I see god in my dream? No, of course not. But I did dream that there is/was ensoulment, and that I, as a soul, am not alone.

I have amply demonstrated how dangerous it is to cling to images during phases of dethinking, madness, and mysticism, and perhaps that applies even more strongly to dream images.

Whenever I smoke dope, anxieties come to the surface: that the world doesn't exist, that I am entirely alone. That oppressive feeling. But that is the world as a wrongly considered object. At night, I am seized by doubt.

Anyone with the urge to look at the world "upside down" would have to take lots and lots of drugs. That would speed things up considerably.

Wednesday, August 15, 9:10 a.m.

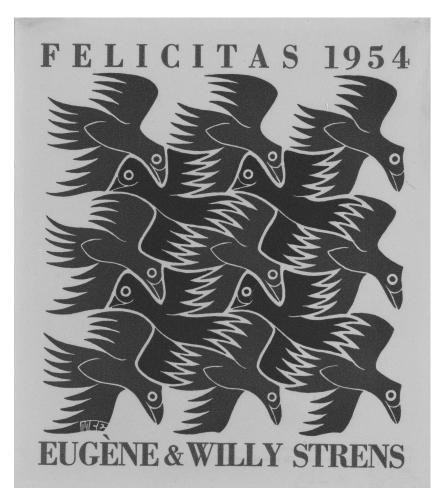
Dearest D., you must think I've gone completely nuts, and maybe I have. ... But before you have me locked up, drugged silly, and zombified, would you first take a look at me? Listen to me? Try to understand me? Care for me from the bottom of your heart? That sounds a bit dramatic, but ... I don't know exactly what I'm going to write, but if it comes even close to what I was thinking about writing in bed this morning, and in my chair just now ... well yes, what then? Then there will have to be a whole lot of really crazy passages in it, and especially lots of religious mania.

When I look back on this story, I can see that the image of the spark that sets everything ablaze certainly applies to me. Since the spark is a metaphor for something that cannot be thought or said in any other way, you really can't say what that "spark" "actually" was either. Was it just the language of hash vapors? Was

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it THC (the active ingredient in hash) speaking through me? Or was it merely the impossible attempt to articulate the experience that "thinking has become being"? Was it the verbal expression of an overheated neural circuit? Or the discovery and development of a religious consciousness? Or feeling qualified to write and think more in associations than in arguments? Or simply the mental compensation for and projection of a spark of love? But by saying this, I am making new attempts to light the spark from the outside and to capture it in thoughts and language. Enough! I'm abandoning the fire and the black space. With this, the via mystica psychotica has come to an end.

III Light Mists



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Introduction: De-parting into Parts

In part II we made our way down the *via mystica psychotica*, traveling in the four vehicles of detachment, demagnation, delanguization, and dethinking and using the metaphors of water and fire. In this part of the book, I'll go further in exploring the domain through which these vehicles and metaphors pass.

I'll also examine the points of similarity between the mystical and the mad experience, using what is known from mysticism and philosophy to convey the elusive qualities of madness in words. I have already covered many aspects of the two phenomena in part II and shown that they share a similar vocabulary. I will continue to use this strategy and employ a four-part matrix to give direction and meaning to mysticism and madness in all their diversity.

Under which headings can the topics of mystical madness be grouped? Is there a meaningful type of classification that does justice to the unity *and* the diversity of mysticism and philosophy, as well as to the differences and similarities between the various forms of madness?

One well-known division is that between a mysticism of reason and a mysticism of the emotions, or of love. This distinction is most often made in literature having to do with Christian mysticism (cf. the discussion in section 6.1). Davies (1988, 1), for example, says, "Certain mystics have stressed that we enter into the Godhead by a process akin to cognition, to knowledge. We achieve union with God as one who knows is in union with that which is known (for example Meister Eckhart). This is essentially an intellective way. Other mystics however have said that we enter into union with God through love, and the unity we possess with him is the union of the lover with the beloved."

In dealing with disorders, psychopathology also makes a distinction between a disordered emotional life and disordered cognition. This, along with a range of other psychopathological distinctions, results in a broad 280 Introduction

palette of terms: schizoaffective, schizophreniform, manic, borderline, and so forth. The assumption is that madness strikes "locally"—affecting the emotions, mood, cognition, or perception—after which the effects of the primary disturbance continue to proliferate. The thesis of this entire book, however, is that in madness, it isn't something "local" that has changed so much as something that has overturned in the "domain" in which all those localities are grounded (cognition, perception, affectivity, locomotion, consciousness, and so forth). The ground of the experience undergoes a total change in terms of both form *and* content: it "transforms" and "transsubstantiates." In elementary metaphorical terms, earth becomes water, water becomes air, and air becomes fire.

As for the love/knowledge or emotion/reason dichotomy, this means that anyone who has really passed through the mystical-mad fire is possessed, full of love and stark-raving wisdom, but at the same time is abandoned, beyond all love, and without any of the solid footing that knowledge has to offer. To the extent that psychosis is a love affair with the cosmos, it is also a cold, calculated penetration of the same cosmos. So although the reason/emotion classification is indeed used in mystical studies and psychopathology, I will not be using it in my own classification here.

Instead I will be following the method I introduced in part II. There I examined madness—and mysticism—on the basis of general terminology (language, image, and so forth) and general metaphors (water, fire), looking at the glistening crystal of madness from several angles. Here in part III, I will explore madness at a deeper level by way of four concepts that are more abstract, less pictorial, and more philosophical—that is, more ethereal: the One, being, infinity, and nothingness. Around each one I will weave a story of madness. Because of its vague, abstract (sometimes obscure), and looselywoven (sometimes rambling) tone, this third part will be characterized by the metaphor of air.

More than in the previous two parts, here I will try to describe the core or the *goal* of the mystical path: the ecstasy, along with the heights and depths of madness. But what I wrote in the introduction to part II also applies here: in mysticism and madness, the path is the goal and the goal is the path. So although this part is not a chronological continuation of the mystical path, it is a continuation in the sense of being a *deepening* of part II.

Each of the four concepts refers to a type of mysticism and corresponding philosophy, and all four have a slightly different aroma or color. A mysticism focused on the One, or on unity, has a somewhat different tone, a different language, and different traditions than a mysticism of being, which, in turn, differs from a mysticism of infinity or from philosophical speculations on

nothingness. For each of these four concepts, I have invented a mad term: uni-delusion, the madness of being, Ω -madness, and \emptyset -madness. Each of these four types of madness also has a somewhat different tone, and in psychopathology they roughly correspond to paranoid madness, manic madness, religious mania, and depressive madness.

These four mystical-philosophical concepts and four types of madness may suggest that I have abandoned the idea of the unity and ineffability of mysticism and madness for a systematic division into eight types, but that is not the case. I use these terms and this classification merely as instruments with which to penetrate the crystal, the living tissue of madness, and to extract something in order to analyze it. Along with Deleuze in his *Mille plateaux*, I would call the crystal the "body-without-organs," and my plan is to perform four operations in order to "organize" this body based on four concepts. So the classification, with the aid of these four concepts, can be compared to the proverbial hat rack or to a ladder you can use and then throw away.

The pegs on the hat rack are quite close together; the concepts overlap. It is hard to tell whether many of the experiences are better suited to "unidelusion," for example, or to the madness of being. In reference to the different types of madness, I use quotes and analyses from many of the same commentators and philosophers as before, such as Plotinus and Zaehner, as well as quotes from various madmen, such as Custance. The vagueness of the borders between the concepts is unique to the material itself. Imposing distinctions on mysticism is not easily done, and in psychiatry, many people—including myself—have been classified in several categories only to be reclassified later on. The first three of the four concepts—the One, being, and infinity—are most closely related. The fourth organizing concept, that of nothingness, is just as important as the others to the whole of mysticism and madness, but due to its nature, it is more distant from the other three concepts and will be separated from them by an intermezzo.

The division into four parts, with all the problems that entails, emerges only when we discuss it, define the terms, apply distinctions, and draw borders. Only then do the various types of mysticism, along with the differences between types of madness, begin to take shape. The textual explanation actually detracts from the unity of all mysticism and madness. Suddenly the four types of mysticism and the four types of madness are no longer as pure as we would like them to be. By couching mysticism and madness in words, we have already caused them to "fail" in a certain sense, limiting them to a linguistic form that is imperfect with respect to that ultimate, perfect mystical-mad unity. But it is precisely because they are no longer

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pure, no longer perfect, that we recognize the different types of madness that I will later describe—which are not perfect in their madness either. Custance's exhilaration over existence in chapter 10 makes quite a different impression than Unger's admiration and perplexity in chapter 11 or Artaud's fury and fear in chapter 12.

In chapter 9, I discuss the One, which was already a guiding principle in Plato's idealism and is fully developed in all its glory in the work of Plotinus. I place this philosophical One beside the sometimes mystical, sometimes paranoid obsessions of the "uni-delusional" individual, who sees everything as revolving around something—that is, some indescribable point of insight and ecstasy. In chapter 10, I describe the astonishment and perplexity that has been expressed in philosophy over the fact that everything is, with the emphasis on "is," which has also been interpreted as the miracle of existence, life, or being. I show how the jubilation over "being" has its counterpart in madness—often manic madness—such as that of Custance. Many people believe that access to being—or its enjoyment—can be forced or stimulated by the use of certain psychotropic substances. I address this topic in a critical discussion of the work of authors such as Aldous Huxley and Henri Michaux. In chapter 11, I examine the mad mysticism of infinity. For the madman, the philosopher, or anyone concerned with the matter of infinity, the questions of how many infinities there are, whether one infinity is more infinite than the next, and whether true infinity is fatal or freeing are of great importance.

These three chapters and concepts are followed by an intermezzo of revelation. The sudden, strong impression made by the One, being, and infinity are quite often described as revelation. In the section "Tetrology," I reveal my own and other people's revelations, along with a few comments.

Following this intermezzo comes chapter 12, where I present my analysis of nothingness in madness and philosophy. Although, paradoxically enough, it is possible to derive something from nothing, especially in Eastern doctrines of redemption (12.4.3), the tone here is a bit darker. In this last chapter and in the concluding intermezzo, "Post Mortem," I discuss the emptiness of Artaud, the definitive blackness of Wim Maljaars, and the philosophies of such thinkers as Sartre and Heidegger.

9 Pyramids of Light: The Uni-Delusion

In this chapter I will discuss mystical madness from the perspective of the Plotinian One and the related neo-Platonic light metaphors. Seen in this way, mystical madness is something I call "uni-delusion." Plotinus's philosophy of the One and the use of light metaphors is part of a long, idealistic, neo-Platonic tradition that can be traced back to Plato, Parmenides, and Pythagoras. It may be that the sources of my freshly coined "uni-delusion" go back just as far (cf. my discussion of Peter Kingsley in 14.3.4).

In 9.1, the prelude to my discussion of uni-delusion in 9.3, I will turn to an earlier text taken from tradition: the allegory of the cave from Plato's *Republic* in the third century BC. The allegory of the cave has been of immense importance in the history of philosophy and culture, and it is worthy of discussion for that reason alone. Plato was also the most important source of inspiration for the philosopher of the One, Plotinus. In addition, the allegory of the cave contains the same kind of longing for the higher light that we see in the Plotinian longing for the One, something unrecognized by others.

Many themes are knotted together in Plato's allegory, such as truth, wisdom, and error. Here Plato uses metaphors of the upward quest and downward movement and especially of light and darkness. In touching on these metaphors, I am continuing my reflections on "the light" from section 4.3.3 and on the image from chapter 6. I show how Plato's text can be read in an unconventional way, thereby shedding new light on the modern understanding of madness. In 9.2, I continue these analyses and comment on a few salient passages about light, insight, and the One in Plotinus. After these Platonic-Plotinian speculations on light and the One, I take a closer look at the description and characteristics of uni-delusion in 9.3.

9.1 Notes from Aboveground: Plato's Cave

In Plato's allegory of the cave, which is told in dialogue form, a group of prisoners are chained inside a cave and can only gaze at the shadows on the

wall in front of them. These shadows are being cast by a fire burning behind them, which is shining on them as well as on objects being carried behind their backs. The prisoners regard these moving shadows as the only reality that exists, not knowing that they're merely shadows. Only the prisoner who is able to break free of his bonds and escape from the cave is able to see reality as it truly is. But escaping is no simple matter and is not highly regarded by the cave dwellers. Plato discusses the motives of the cave dwellers in dialogue form.

Plato follows this passage about the cave with his own more detailed interpretation of the story. He relates life outside the dark cave to the "realization" of the Idea of the Good, and he fits this parable of the light and the Good into a more expanded discourse on social organization, education, and ethics. Plato's reading of the allegory has been interpreted by many in a variety of ways over the centuries. The prisoner who manages to escape from the cave is usually regarded as the "wise philosopher," who discovers the truth and acquires insight and access to true reality, thereby becoming alienated from the unimportant goings-on in the cave. My own reading is that the escaped cave dweller is the mad mystic. What follows is Plato's own text, somewhat abridged.

"See human beings as though they were in an underground cavelike dwelling with its entrance, a long one, open to the light across the whole width of the cave. They are in it from childhood with their legs and necks in bonds so that they are fixed, seeing only in front of them, unable because of the bond to turn their heads all the way around. Their light is from a fire burning far above and behind them. Between the fire and the prisoners there is a road above, along which see a wall, built like the partitions puppet-handlers set in front of the human beings and over which they show the puppets. ... Then also see along this wall human beings carrying all sorts of artefacts, which project above the wall, and statues of men and other animals wrought from stone, wood, and every kind of material; as is to be expected, some of the carriers utter sounds while others are silent."

"It's a strange image," he [Glaucon] said, "and strange prisoners you're telling of."

"They're like us," I [Socrates] said. "For in the first place, do you suppose such men would have seen anything of themselves and one another other than the shadows cast by the fire on the side of the cave facing them?"

"How could they," he said, "if they had been compelled to keep their heads motionless throughout life?"

"And what about the things that are carried by? Isn't it the same with them?" "Of course."

"If they were able to discuss things with one another, don't you believe they would hold that they are naming these things going by before them that they see?"

"Necessarily."

"And what if the prison also had an echo from the side facing them? Whenever one of the men passing by happens to utter a sound do you suppose they would believe that anything other than the passing shadow was uttering the sound?"

"No, by Zeus," he said. "I don't."

"Then most certainly," I said, "such men would hold that the truth is nothing other than the shadows of artificial things."

The picture Plato paints is that of a miserable life in which people take insubstantial phantoms and illusory impressions for truth and reality, but it's all a deception. People believe they are perceiving real things and that they can really see each other, but what they know of the world is nothing more than shadow.

"Now consider," I said, "what their release and healing from bonds and folly would be like if something of this sort were by nature to happen to them. Take a man who is released and suddenly compelled to stand up, to turn his neck around, to walk and look up toward the light; and who, moreover, in doing all this is in pain and, because he is dazzled, is unable to make out those things whose shadows he saw before. What do you suppose he'd say if someone were to tell him that before he saw silly nothings, while now, because he is somewhat nearer to what is and more turned toward beings, he sees more correctly; and, in particular, showing him each of the things that pass by, were to compel the man to answer his questions about what they are? Don't you suppose he'd be at a loss and believe that what was seen before is truer than what is now shown?"

Here Plato is talking about the sudden glare of light experienced by the prisoner who frees himself from his chains and leaves the cave. At first the truth is painful to the eyes. The light is so bright that it's impossible to distinguish one thing from another. The beginning is "sudden," like an abrupt introduction to "fire" (see section 8.4). In the early phases of madness, you tumble from one *clear* Insight to another. Your outlook expands, your cosmos is enlarged, and the world becomes deeper. This increase in scale is like a lighting effect: more light brings more insight. The insights follow each other in such rapid succession, and they're so penetrating, that you're no longer able to make ordinary distinctions between things. Someone who finds himself in such a condition is apt to hang on to old habits at first—he is not yet entirely "detached"—and he believes that "what was seen before is truer than what is now shown."

"And, if he compelled him to look at the light itself, would his eyes hurt and would he flee, turning away to those things that he is able to make out and hold them to be really clearer than what is being shown?"

"So he would," he said.

"And if," I said, "someone dragged him away from there by force along the rough, steep, upward way and didn't let him go before he had dragged him out into the light of the sun, wouldn't he be distressed and annoyed at being so dragged? And when he came to the light, wouldn't he have his eyes full of its beam and be unable to see even one of the things now said to be true?"

The light is so strong that you need help just getting through that first bit of haze. You need help undergoing this second birth, as it were, and being rescued from the darkness.

"Then I suppose he'd have to get accustomed, if he were going to see what's up above. At first he'd most easily make out the shadows; and after that the phantoms of the human beings and the other things in water; and, later, the things themselves. And from there he could turn to beholding the things in heaven and heaven itself, more easily at night—looking at the light of the stars and the moon—than by day—looking at the sun and sunlight."

When you examine a passage on light acclimation like this one without being told that it has to do with a philosopher's learning process, then interpreting it in terms of "mad mystical Insight" is not so far-fetched. The insight of mystical madness, the breakthrough moment, often occurs suddenly (see section 8.4). After the first shock of light, you process the experience and get used to it. In Plato, such processing involves developing the Idea of the Good in philosophy, gaining worldly wisdom, and being trained to become a high-level administrator. In madness today, processing the light assumes many forms. Unfortunately, many flashes of light are regarded with suspicion and are quickly obscured by a lack of understanding, confusion, and deliberate chemical obfuscation.

"Then finally I suppose he would be able to make out the sun—not its appearances in water or some alien place, but the sun itself by itself in its own region—and see what it's like. ... And after that he would already be in a position to conclude about it that this is the source of the seasons and the years, and is the steward of all things in the visible place, and is in a certain way the cause of all those things he and his companions had been seeing."

Because of Plato, the light metaphor took a giant leap forward in Western history. Turning toward the light, reflections on the sun, and metaphors of "clarity," "insight," and "illumination" dominate philosophy, thought, and general language use.

In my effort to "clarify" mystical madness, I gratefully apply the light metaphor, but I also deviate from popular notions of what "clear insight" might mean. Ever since the heyday of Platonic idealism, the "acquisition of clear insight," in the sense of making contact with "up there," has slowly

been replaced by modern, more prosaic notions of "clear insight." At the present time, "clear insight" often means no more than an increased ability to manipulate and control the things and people around you without any evidence of vertical contact with the transcendent.²

Plotinus, like Plato, uses light and sun metaphors to refer to Insight, such as in 5.3.17: "We may know we have had the vision when the Soul has suddenly taken light. ... Thus, the Soul unlit remains without that vision; lit, it possesses what it sought. And this is the true end set before the Soul, to take that light, to see the Supreme by the Supreme and not by the light of any other principle to see the Supreme which is also the means to the vision; for that which illumines the Soul is that which it is to see, just as it is by the sun's own light that we see the sun. But how is this to be accomplished?" Modern madmen also use the light metaphor in this way at times. An example is Keil, whom I quoted in 4.3.3.

Those who take seriously the mystical path of "demagination" should not interpret the light metaphor too literally. Light metaphors are useful, but ultimately "light" is also just a phenomenon, an image, a word.³

"What then? When he recalled his first home and the wisdom there, and his fellow prisoners in that time, don't you suppose he would consider himself happy for the change and pity the others?"

"Quite so."

"And if in that time there were among them any honors, praises, and prizes for the man who is sharpest at making out the things that go by, and most remembers which of them are accustomed to pass before, which after, and which at the same time as others, and who is thereby most able to divine what is going to come, in your opinion would he be desirous of them and envy those who are honored and hold power among these men? Or, rather, would he be affected as Homer says and want very much 'to be on the soil, a serf to another man, to a portionless man,' and to undergo anything whatsoever rather than to opine those things and live that way?"

Anyone who has passed through the world of the mad has had to get used to being "up there," but he has also had to get used to being in the normal world upon his return. Out there, it's intense, clear, and vast. In the cave, everything is dim, futile, and senseless. That's why many mystical-madmen commute back and forth between "the deepest thoughts" of madness and the surface of everyday words. They take the shuttle of daydreams and night dreams, they travel in fiction, in secret, in drugs, in music, in ecstatic raptures, and in monomania, by contemplating, by converting, and by making total reversals. Anyone who has ever been there has access to the secret, is able to tap a cask of clarity and dream lucid dreams even

during his waking hours. He knows being awake and dreaming are not mutually exclusive.

"If such a man were to come down again and sit in the same seat, on coming suddenly from the sun wouldn't his eyes get infected with darkness? ... And if he once more had to compete with those perpetual prisoners in forming judgments about those shadows while his vision was still dim, before his eyes had recovered, and if the time needed for getting accustomed were not at all short, wouldn't he be the source of laughter, and wouldn't it be said of him that he went up and came back with his eyes corrupted, and that it's not even worth trying to go up? And if they were somehow able to get their hands on and kill the man who attempts to release and lead up wouldn't they kill him?"

The same fate that befell the cave escapee of old awaits today's psychotic. But instead of the psychotic being told that his insights have "corrupted" his eyes, he is told that his insights have corrupted his brain. When you've come through a psychotic episode and no longer feel like engaging in everyday chatter, and when you won't have anything to do with daily schedules and worries, they try to persuade you that your brain damage could have been caused by a period of mystical madness.

This brings me to the end of my reading of the allegory of the cave as a description of modern mystical madness. In addition to the light metaphors, there are many other themes in this cave fragment that I will return to, such as the indisputably immediate Insight (in all of part III), the sense of being uniquely chosen (in the mad prophets section in 16.3), the conflict with others (in part IV and elsewhere), and the obsessive focus on something ineffable (in the uni-delusion section in 9.3).

9.2 Union and Unification: Plotinus's One

For centuries, Plato's philosophy has been developed, commented on, subjected to critical analysis, and interpreted. A high point of neo-Platonic philosophy was reached by Plotinus, who saw himself as a commentator and pupil of Plato. More so than Plato, he writes explicitly about the philosophical, individual path "out of the cave." The heart of his philosophy is "the One," which is akin to Platonic light. (Also see my earlier discussion of Plotinus in section 3.2.2.3, and the quotes from Plotinus along with my own commentary scattered throughout parts I and II.)

Of course, the circumstances in which Plotinus lived were different from those of the average modern psychiatric patient. In his time, concepts such as psychosis, madness, mysticism, enlightenment, and truth—insofar as equivalents can be found here—had different connotations. Yet Plotinus did have an awareness of something like "unusual experiences"—whether

they're called mysticism or psychosis—and his thinking and work is related to what he experienced "up there" (also see the introduction to part II). His work consists of a collection of cogent texts that take the abstruse experiences of the One, the light shining outside the cave, and put them into words. Much of what he writes is recognizable to those who have ever "been there" (or think they have)—whether they call themselves philosophers, mystics, or psychiatric patients.

How can the work of the Greek sage Plotinus, who lived eighteen hundred years ago, be read in terms of modern madness? What is the connection between Plotinus's idealism and the mad labyrinth? To what extent can we learn something about madness from Plotinus's teachings about the One? In the following quote, the Platonic light metaphor and the One are developed in concepts of justice, level-headedness, and, primarily, beauty. Plotinus 5.8.10:

That Being [the mystical world of the One, "up there"] appears before them [the seekers of the One] from some unseen place and rising loftily over them pours its light upon all things, so that all gleams in its radiance ...

This is the Platonic light metaphor. It is a light that can dazzle and, unlike ordinary light, comes "from some unseen place."

It [the radiance] upholds some beings, and they see; the lower are dazzled and turn away, unfit to gaze upon that sun, the trouble falling the more heavily on those most remote.

As in Plato, the light is almost unbearable at first, and some "turn away." Plotinus differs from Plato, however, in that he uses a rudimentary form of "psychology," recognizing that people's reactions to the light of the One can differ.

Of those looking upon that Being and its content, and able to see, all take something but not all the same vision always: intently gazing, one sees the fount and principle of Justice, another is filled with the sight of Moral Wisdom ...

We can see (and understand) different aspects of the One; the aspects mentioned here are justice and moral wisdom. Plotinus goes on to discuss beauty, and elsewhere he focuses on goodness, eternity, and infinity. These are not independent "aspects" of the One; rather, they are earthly names for the ineffable One.

This vision Zeus takes and it is for such of us, also, as share his love and appropriate our part in the Beauty There, the final object of all seeing, the entire beauty upon all things; for all There sheds radiance, and floods those that have found their way thither so that they too become beautiful; thus it will often happen that men climbing heights where the soil has taken a yellow glow will themselves

appear so, borrowing color from the place on which they move. The color flowering on that other height we speak of is Beauty; or rather all There is light and beauty, through and through, for the beauty is no mere bloom upon the surface.

This can be read as a panegyric on the One, insofar as the One begets the Idea of Beauty. Praising beauty is also relevant to mystical madness; a person may find himself in an ecstasy or "aesthetic flush" and become enraptured by the beauty of the world. This quote from Plotinus is not about "having beautiful visions and seeing images." Mysticism is more a "demagining" (in the sense of chapter 6) of earthly things, by which you become receptive to the Idea of beauty. Indeed, the mystical experience, or "radiance," presents itself when you let go of the idea that beauty ought to lie in a concrete, earthly, perishable object. Plotinus goes on to explain how for someone "up there, in this condition," a change takes place in the relationship between inner and outer world, or between subject and object.

But those drunken with this wine, filled with the nectar, all their soul penetrated by this beauty, cannot remain mere gazers: no longer is there a spectator outside gazing on an outside spectacle; the clear-eyed hold the vision within themselves, though, for the most part, they have no idea that it is within but look towards it as to something beyond them and see it as an object of vision caught by a direction of the will. All that one sees as a spectacle is still external ...

Contact with the One entails insight into and an experience of pure Beauty, which goes hand in hand with a shift in the relationship between subject and object. Looking at an object in the outside world becomes occupying a position within a world in which the division between inner and outer world has been eliminated (see chapter 2). Interestingly, here Plotinus switches from a visual metaphor of light to a drink metaphor. Images such as "nectar" and "drunken" easily give rise to associations with the use of psychotropic agents such as mescaline and LSD (also see chapter 10).

In the following quote from Plotinus's tractate on beauty (1.6.7), the emphasis is on the delight caused by beauty and the unique and enviable nature of this mystical mad experience of insight:

And one that shall know this vision [of the mystical One, or the Good] with what passion of love shall he not be seized, with what pang of desire, what longing to be molten into one with This, what wondering delight!

The Insight you gain is initially so compelling that no amount of persuading can deter you from giving yourself over to it entirely. Here the terms used by Plotinus betray a greater personal familiarity with this experience than those used by Plato.

If he that has never seen this Being must hunger for It as for all his welfare, he that has known must love and reverence It as the very Beauty; he will be flooded with awe and gladness, stricken by a salutary terror; he loves with a veritable love, with sharp desire; all other loves than this he must despise, and disdain all that once seemed fair.

Anyone who has experienced this knows its extraordinary intensity. Those who have not experienced it may be completely bowled over. This is true for both Plotinian mysticism and madness.

This, indeed, is the mood even of those who, having witnessed the manifestation of Gods or Supernals, can never again feel the old delight in the comeliness of material forms: what then are we to think of one that contemplates Absolute Beauty in Its essential integrity, no accumulation of flesh and matter, no dweller on earth or in the heavens so perfect Its purity far above all such things in that they are nonessential, composite, not primal but descending from This?

After the mad-mystical interference by gods and supernals, everything is different. For those who have been "up there" with the demigods, the gods, and the One, nothing is as it once was. So why eat, drink, sleep, wake up, and watch TV, if everything you see is nothing but a poor substitute for what you once experienced "up there"? Indeed, what do you do when other people deny your experiences "up there" and tell you never to have anything to do with those regions again?

And for This, the sternest and the uttermost combat is set before the Souls; all our labor is for This, lest we be left without part in this noblest vision, which to attain is to be blessed in the blissful sight, which to fail of is to fail utterly. For not he that has failed of the joy that is in color or in visible forms, not he that has failed of power or of honors or of kingdom has failed, but only he that has failed of only This, for Whose winning he should renounce kingdoms and command over earth and ocean and sky, if only, spurning the world of sense from beneath his feet, and straining to This [the One], he may see.

That is to say, stop all this forgetfulness! Remember what the rapture of madness was all about, cherish the memory of the blissful spectacle and keep it forever in the back of your mind: you were there, and they can only dream of it—or, out of envy, try to make you forget.

9.3 Under the Spell of the One

Plotinus was a respected philosopher with deep yet clearly expressed ideas, while today's madman is often seen as a patient with bizarre thoughts

that are chaotic and obscure. As demonstrated in part II, there's a bright light glowing beneath the apparently obscure chaos of madness that corresponds enough with Plotinus's light to warrant further investigation.

Unlike Plotinus, madmen do not always explicitly address the mystery, the insight, and contact with the One. It's often hidden behind a mountain of confusing words and clumsy attempts to explain something about the experience. Many madmen simply don't have the skill to talk about something so out of the ordinary because they've had little access to the traditions, schools of thought, or subcultures in which unusual experiences are dealt with clearly and constructively. In the worst cases—and most fall within this category—people with psychoses end up in the culture of mainstream psychiatry. The experts there are not equipped to say anything except that mystical-mad peak experiences are only hallucinations and delusions and are not worth the trouble of further investigation.

Before I delve more deeply into the relationship between Plotinism and uni-delusion, I'd like to say something about the possible differences between mysticism and madness in the light of Plotinism (also see the introduction to part II). First of all, it may be that many madmen have no "real" contact with the One because they were unsuccessful in "traveling the upward path" at some point in the past. Perhaps they fell prey early on to images, imaginings, and other false seducers (see chapter 6).

It's also possible that for modern madmen, the Light of the One (if it breaks through at all) seems much harsher at first because people today are ill-prepared for incoming light that has no recognizable source. Above I showed that Plato and Plotinus themselves warned against unexpected, sudden exposure to the light.

One last difference might be that some kinds of "contact" are intrinsically too intense, regardless of the preparations taken. According to this line of thinking, Plotinus went no further than the beautiful vestibule of the mystery. If you go "beyond" the One, you may encounter a dark place (or non-place) that cannot be tolerated and inevitably leads to madness. This last idea fits in with the romantic notions of madness as a form of genius. So Plotinus was not drawn into mystical madness sufficiently enough to experience the bottomlessness and darkness behind the light. (Also see the analogous discussion in the discussion of Huxley in chapter 10 and the theme of chapter 12.)

In addition to the differences, there are a large number of similarities between Plotinism and uni-delusion, which I will now address.⁴

9.3.1 Basic Principles of the Uni-Delusion

The mystical One cannot be understood in terms of images, words, or ideas, but it does have something to do with oneness: it is "beyond" dualism, it "transcends" opposites, and it precedes distinctions. So Custance's psychosis can be described as uni-delusion when he says (1952, 22), "The mystic insight seems generally to begin with a sense of a mystery unveiled, of a hidden wisdom now suddenly become certain beyond the possibility of doubt. Its second characteristic is a belief in the unity of all things, in that reconciliation of opposites. ... This sense of oneness has never really left me. The attempt to analyze it, to trace it to its source, to grasp its meaning, is the underlying motive of this book."

The One does not exist the way other things exist; rather, it constitutes the condition for the existence of other things. Everything emanates from Plotinus's One. You can neither see nor hear nor think about the One, but it is always "there" or "present" ("parousia," see section 8.1.1). This presence, however, is not "there" the way a thing is "there" in space or time. In unidelusion, there is also an inexplicable intuition or experience "that something is there," a "presence" that is overwhelming and profound but that is also quite ordinary and almost within reach (I will discuss this further in section 14.2.1). This means that the individual has made contact with the One or is "participating" in the higher realm.

If Plotinus's One is a model for uni-delusion, then uni-delusion must be hierarchically structured. The One is at the top in the classification of holiness. Below the One, emanating from the One, and inconceivable without the One, is the level, or the "hypostasis" (Plotinus), of pure thought and of concepts such as the Good, the Beautiful, and the Just. This is followed by the hypostasis of the soul. The goal of the soul—and of the human being—is to return to the One by means of pure thought about things like the Good and the Beautiful. In uni-delusion there is also a sense that existence is classified in degrees of holiness (cf. chapter 14). The undefinable intuition of the One—the stroke of lightning, the raging fire, the revelation—is the holy core to which one later keeps longing to "return." Revolving around that core, like planets around the sun, are one's own mystical, misty thoughts. When uni-delusional thoughts get closer to the One, the mad fire is kindled and the uni-delusional madman begins speaking in symbolic language and in tongues; he is "within himself and beyond himself." When the thoughts of the uni-delusional madman stray further from the One to the periphery, they reach everyday outer reality, which is also accessible by other "souls." However, the reality of the uni-delusional

madman is always permeated by obsession with the One—or the "emanation" of the One.

The uni-delusional madman can be better understood by others and can better understand himself when the One is interpreted more substantively. The One might be given names such as "trauma," "unrequited love," "primal mother," or "ground of being." These, however, are nothing but attempts to understand and explain the basically incomprehensible One, and they are doomed to failure. Psychoanalytical approaches often try to reduce uni-delusion to a definite, specific primal event, such as the "separation" of the self from the mother. This may make for stimulating reading in regards to alleged occurrences within the family or relational sphere, but it rarely produces compelling results. Its ineffectiveness is due to the psychoanalytical reduction involved and the transformation of one closed system (of the One) into another closed system (psychoanalytical theory)—apart from the fact that it gives the analyst a chance to show how proficient he is in the Freudian or Lacanian interpretation of symbols.

The hierarchical structure of uni-delusion encompasses all of existence: all the dimensions of life and the cosmos are pervaded by the spirit of the One. The One is like the eye on top of an infinitely large, all-embracing pyramid, an eye that sees through everything and everyone in its internal depths and irradiates it (also see the finale). In uni-delusion, no aspect of life is safe; nothing goes untouched by the "heat source," and everything comes under the spell of the One. Uni-delusion is also closed; there is no outside, so there is no portal or opening to the "other." There is no room for anything besides the One; there is only a blazing sun, without shadow or moon.

Uni-delusion can rapidly assume more prosaic forms. Sooner or later, the pyramid dissolves. When the One takes on concrete substance in uni-delusion, the mystical-mysterious sphere is quickly obliterated and uni-delusion can turn into one of many variants: delusion of reference, religious mania, megalomania, or paranoia (see part IV). The One then condenses like a cloud covering the sun. Exactly what that entails is vague, intangible, and ambiguous at first. Later it crystallizes out further and further, and rings of meaning develop: secret, mutually referential messages and codes, insights, vistas, spyholes, and clarifications. If the first phase of uni-delusion is like the desert, then flashing mirages rise up from the heat in the second phase, and in the third phase the desert dweller becomes entangled in a fight with the demons and temptations that advance toward him from the mirage.

In the following fragment from the mad poet and artist Friedrich Franz H., we detect a glimpse of the One and of eternity shining through the more

baroque passages. This is a typical example in which the One, in its textual manifestation, is already badly distorted, and we may be the only ones able to keep our eye on it. In this fragment by H. (in Navratil 1985, 213) there is an "illuminated world" where the light is eternal and immortal, in which we participate by keeping our eye properly focused: "The crocodile is a tropical animal. He lives near rivers and pools. The lord said, you are the crocodile, you are the existence of water under the sun. Your light recalls prehistoric human times. It recalls the dinosaurs, the aurochs, the dandelions, and so forth. It calculates its 'being' for its environment and for all the others on this earth. It glides along the beach of the rivulets and makes overtures to fish, and so forth. Now further disoriented. The light that we have is the eye. It shines on throughout eternity. It is another world in which we find ourselves. At one time we said, 'We are coming.' That was existence. The light exists for eternity. Our light never gets old, but neither does it die."

9.3.2 The Problem of the Doctrine of One

Some of the uni-deluded "believe" explicitly in the One, or something that resembles it, to a greater or lesser degree. In such cases, Plotinus and the doctrine of the One are indeed a suitable means for clarifying the mad experience and translating it into more intelligible language, a matter of merely streamlining something that had already been put forward by the madman himself. Whether statements about the One are meaningful or "true" is irrelevant, as long as the experience is fairly presented and explained.

With other people, uni-delusion and preoccupation with the One can be reconstructed only with difficulty behind a seemingly meaningless or tangled complex of expressions. It is we ourselves, then, who interpret the apparent madness as incorrectly understood "contact" with the One. In that case, Plotinus's philosophy functions as our own view of the world and our own way of organizing and articulating experiences. This may apply to the above quote from Navratil. Friedrich Franz H.'s poetic musings take on more value and meaning when we see them as attempts to describe the One and not as simply a mixed-up muddle.

Such considerations are also applicable to "religious mania." The way such mania is described is determined by our own belief or unbelief. Believers (or "Plotinists"), by the way, do not necessarily have more sympathy for people suffering from religious mania (or the uni-deluded). Rather, there is often a desire not to be associated with or "contaminated" by the peevishness of madness, so an attempt is made to draw a line between religious devotion and religious mania (cf. Ypma 2001, for example, and Arends 2014).⁵

The "religious delusion" here is the same as uni-delusion if the Plotinian One is replaced by the name "God." But it's rarely so simple. Religious mania can resemble uni-delusion in some respects: if the God in question, like the One, is regarded as all-holy, ineffable, and unknowable, with the Holy Trinity at a lower level; the angels in a more distant circle; and the saints, people, animals, material objects, and so forth beyond that. Religious mania also often differs from uni-delusion, just as Plotinus's doctrine differs from Christianity. Uni-delusion is more "conceptual" than "expressive." Plotinus's One is more abstract and less personal than God. In uni-delusion, a person "thinks" or "contemplates" on the totality of things, transcending all differences and words, while religious mania expresses itself more in terms of dependence, humility, and love of God. (Also see my discussion of the history of mysticism in 6.1.) If a religious mania has more in common with a Christian mysticism of being, infinity, or nothingness than with a mysticism of the One, then this religious mania belongs to one of the other three delusions. This topic will be dealt with in greater detail in the following chapters.

Naturally, in the actual lived practice of the delusions, there is a great deal of overlap between uni-delusion, religious mania, and the delusions of the later chapters, just as there are many similarities between Neoplatonism, Christianity, and the philosophies of being, infinity, and nothingness. The following quote contains at least as much uni-delusion as religious mania. In De Waard (2007, 37), one of the persons interviewed, a certain Hans, says, "I walked there a little way down a path, in those lovely surroundings with all those woods, and after about 150 meters I came to a crossroads. And right in the middle of the crossroads the heavens opened. I saw everything: total love. Everything was one, everything was connected to everything else. All wisdom was hidden there. I saw that I had been born from my father and mother. And that love is the driving force behind this universe. Such an experience is difficult to convey in words, because it was all instinctive, or at the level of the soul. I didn't see light or anything like that, but I felt total love. We all came to exist through love, and I had a very strong sense of an 'aha experience,' of aha ... oh, how stupid! Of course it's like that, of course everything exists through love! It was also very creative, real immense creativity, everything is creation. And all wisdom was there. I had an answer to every question."

We can see in this excerpt a kind of contact with or intuition of the One. It is also typical that Hans says, "Such an experience is difficult to convey in words." Hans's "pyramid of light" breaks down into clearer concepts, not so much those of the Plotinian Good and Beautiful but those of more

Christian and modern values, such as "love," "creativity," and "wisdom." Hans's moment is not, in itself, something that can be characterized as "psychotic." It is only much later that Hans will have to deal with phenomena such as telepathy and telekinesis, and occasionally he will appear to have lost his way—from "up there" in the heavenly sphere of the One to "down here," the world of "the Many" of everyday existence.

9.3.3 Inside the Uni-Delusion

Plotinus's philosophy is a doctrine of deliverance that all will find accessible, useful, and applicable. You don't have to give anything up for it per se. All that is required is thorough and deep thought as well as meditation, puzzling, brainstorming, brooding, and reflecting, and then suddenly the light goes on. This path of liberation is perfect for the type of madman searching for answers, emancipation, and spiritual release without getting caught up in physical training or moral ascesis. Such a uni-deluded individual is drawn more toward Plotinus than toward yoga or Christian humility. He believes in deliverance through thinking and contemplation, which others may see as "cogitating your head off."

In many religions, as well as in yoga and other spiritual techniques, the path of liberation is different: you have to pray a great deal, do good works, abstain from pleasant physical activities, or hold the body in strange positions. Unlike the "esse-delusion" in chapter 10, for instance, uni-delusion is a strongly spiritualized form of madness. While the esse-delusion involves falling into an ecstasy over everything that "is"—in part because the body "is"—in uni-delusion, the body becomes a "deanimated body" (as Stanghellini 2004 calls it), and one goes searching for the One with a "disembodied spirit" (Stanghellini). The One is everywhere and nowhere; it's a lovely idea for the mind, but for the body of the uni-deluded individual, it means nothing but fragmentation and alienation. If my mind is swallowed up in the One, my body is swallowed up in general scattered physicality.

As does every mystical path, Plotinus's path to deliverance and liberation first takes you "within," after which you automatically rise to higher spheres by means of interiorization. This, too, appeals to the uni-deluded individual: he may be walking around in the outside world, but he's "interiorizing" it completely. His perception becomes thinking (see chapter 2), but he does not see this as a problem; on the contrary, it is from the very depths of his inner thoughts that he expects deliverance—just as in Plotinus. This way inward must be walked "alone"; there are no traveling companions on this path. In uni-delusion, too, the flash of lightning, the deep thoughts, and the hierarchy of the One secret are strictly individual thoughts and moods.

Both Plotinus and the uni-deluded individual undergo a moment of transition: from what is barely conceivable, earthly, and communicable to a zone beyond it (also see chapter 8). Both Plotinus and the uni-deluded also describe flashes of insight in terms of light phenomena and sudden ecstasies. The following quote comes from an anonymous patient in Kaplan (1964, 112), but with slight alterations, it could be read as a description of the abrupt introduction to the One: "Truth, unlike love, was both wonderful and terrifying at the same time. It was sometimes overwhelming, sometimes cruel. Light symbolism was a dominant feature of the first illness. The sun was the mystical symbol of life and truth, particularly intellectual illumination. The sunlight was dazzling and blinding, prolonged exposure was dangerous. I felt I had been subjected to an excess of light, that what I was enduring was the utmost violation, an 'intellectual rape,' the rape of the mind by truth. In spite of my sense of danger, I could hardly believe that the truth could hurt me. I would stare at the sun, trying to see how long I could do this without blinking. I was also afraid that my eyes would be damaged by the light and that I would become blind. Light in general was a less violent symbol than the sun, it stood for moral insight or inner illumination. Blindness also symbolized spiritual blindness."

Once you make contact with the One in uni-delusion, it's as if you had become able to harness the power of the One. You experience power over the cosmos "via" the One. You also know the secret password, the mental "inward path" leading to other minds via the One: telepathy. This is not in accordance with Plotinus's precepts, by the way, but it is a common and understandable temptation that occurs in conditions of Insight.

Additionally, in Plotinus, the One is "outside earthly time." There is time "up there," but that is the pure, perfect non-time of eternity. Such time does not pass and has no extension. In this domain of eternity, everything is "frozen" in time, but everything is also "alive." Contact with this higher world outside of time is possible by means of pure thinking and contemplation. In the eternity of the One and in uni-delusion, there is no progress or change. There is no past, present, or future (see section 3.2.2).

When the One is "fleshed out" in uni-delusion, it takes on a mythical structure (see chapter 15). The histories and stories from "up there" never really pass. The One is stuck in a timeless loop. The everlasting return of the same takes place in the nonexistence of the infinitely thin but eternal present. The Plan, the System, and the Pyramid are never going to change. The conspiracy will never become a plot that develops and actually unwinds. For a moment, the lightning flash of holy light seems to offer an opening into eternity and deliverance. In the eternity of uni-delusion, the former

earthly life stands out in sharp contrast. But when the One takes on more of a body and becomes more substantial, there is often a danger of becoming entangled in the doom of eternal return. What seemed like an advancement in the thinking and ascending of the soul heavenward became a return to existence on a paranoid structure, passed down mythically. The One slips away and becomes the Other One: the ultimate opponent, the great dictator. The pyramid of light becomes a pyramid of stone. In part IV, I will elaborate on how this works in actual cases. Thus, in section 13.4, I will analyze the work of Schreber (1988), who in many respects is to be regarded as a uni-deluded individual, and in chapter 15, I will return to the theme of the myth.

The philosophy of the One was integrated into the lives and work of Plotinus and his disciples. To them, the One was the One and nothing else. Today, too, there are adherents of the Plotinian doctrine whose existence is organized around the One (or the Christian equivalent: God). Some of them are uni-deluded; they live out Plotinus's philosophy, and sometimes they show—in text, word, or even deed—the potential consequences, perversions, stumbling blocks, or dangers, a few of which were reviewed here.

If we were to consider the idea that madness is "philosophy lived out in practice," then positions in the philosophical debate would correspond with stages in the psychotic process. The discussions of Plotinus's fellow philosophers would then reveal the inner conflicts of the uni-deluded individual. Indeed, there are three important forms of philosophical criticism of Plotinus's One that can be linked to mad positions. First, is the One really the highest? Is not "existence" or "God" higher still? Yes! And that answer is lived out in the psychotic esse-delusion and Ω -delusion. Second, doesn't the One imply the existence of something like the "Beyond" or Nothingness? I will discuss that in chapter 12 with the \varnothing -delusion. Third, isn't there something like the Other in addition to the One? Perhaps. I will discuss that in part IV, where mad monism and mystical unity break down into mad plurality.

In the previous chapter, I underscored the distinctive characteristics of unidelusion by linking it to the Plotinian tradition of the One. Now I will discuss the "esse-delusion" (from the Latin verb "to be," *esse*, used as a noun), which is associated with mysticism and the philosophies of Being. First I will explain where and how the esse-delusion is to be found in general terms, then I will consider Custance's esse-delusion, and finally I will examine the relationship between esse-delusion and the substances used to achieve it, such as mescaline and hashish.

10.1 High Pressure: Introduction to the Esse-Delusion

In psychopathological terms, "esse-delusion" refers to a psychosis that has its roots in mania, while uni-delusion is a psychosis associated with obsessive paranoia. In and of themselves, esse-delusion and uni-delusion are indistinguishable. Differences appear only in the event of incomplete realization, or when factors outside the delusion are implicated (duration, prior stages, etc.; also see the discussion in the introduction to part III).

The uni-deluded individual tends to picture the "One"—regardless of its name or the form it has taken—as existing outside himself: the eye of the pyramid differs from his own eye. Because of this, uni-delusion quickly shifts into paranoia and megalomania. In the esse-delusion, however, "being" is not outside the person but is something in which both the person and the world participate: "I am, the world is, and we are both in this together."

In the esse-delusion, everything does not revolve around one thing, but each thing itself is fiercely involved in being. The esse-delusion is more ecstatic than the uni-delusion. In the esse-delusion, you discover "pure being": not only that "something is" but also that "you yourself are." The esse-delusion, like manic psychosis, is characterized more by ecstasies and so-called manic release than by uni-deluded conspiracies and persecution delusions.

Unlike uni-delusion, with its Plotinian philosophy of the One, the essedelusion does not correspond to any clearly demarcated relevant philosophy. Because the philosophy of being is highly varied, complex, and extensive, I am not going to try to pin esse-delusion to any particular philosophy or philosophical school. Instead, I will explain esse-delusion without explicit philosophical references.

10.1.1 The Discovery of Being

One day you wake up, even though you were already awake. You look, you listen, you move, and you speak, but you notice that these are merely outward activities concealing whatever is lying "beneath." You discover that things not only move, represent something, or mean something but that they also "are." You see, and what you see isn't just something you see, but it also "is." Everything you think, remember, picture, or imagine—all of that *is*. Behind all the facts, all the noise, and all the opinions having to do with ideas, uncertainties, and symbolism lies the silently present world of being. It's not all just this or that; it all "is" as well. Everything is "being."

It's as if you had been living only on the surface up until now: before, your eyes were open and you looked at things, but you only saw what you saw, never noticing *that* you saw. The fact of the thing seen supplanted the act of seeing. The being of seeing escaped you because you only looked at what you saw. It is as if now you were really seeing for the first time. Now you can even see with your eyes closed. The secret that everything *is* was outside your field of vision before. You were blind, but now your senses have become superfluous, as if you were seeing the true world "past" *The Matrix*. Being is bursting out of the shell of ordinary-looking. The new world is emerging "within" the ordinary world.

Coate (1964) writes, "I got up from where I had been sitting ... suddenly my whole being was filled with light and loveliness and with an upsurge of deeply moving feeling from within to meet and reciprocate the influence that flowed into me. I was in a state of the most vivid awareness and illumination. What can I say of it? A cloudless cerulean blue sky of the mind shot through with shafts of exquisite, warm, dazzling sunlight. ... It seemed that some force or impulse from without were acting on me; that I was in touch with a reality beyond my own; that I had made direct contact with the secret, ultimate source of life. What I had read of the accounts of others acquired suddenly a new meaning. It flashed across my mind, 'this is what the mystics mean by the direct experience of God.'"

You notice that something is happening. Not anything in particular, not anything that can be described; something is just happening. It doesn't

stop but keeps on going. You were, you are, and that continues, everything continues. Everything unrolls, and the roll around which everything revolves is the being that you have discovered. You haven't discovered what a thing is but that it is. What things are, what they signify—this we can talk about. But that talking obscures the fact that things simply "are." Besides the fact that things have an essence, you also discover that they are—they exist. This "being" of things is radiant. You see the light itself, without having to have an object that reflects the light. As Plotinus says (6.9.9), "Thus we have all the vision that may be of Him and of ourselves; but it is of a self wrought to splendor, brimmed with the Intellectual light, become that very light, pure, buoyant, unburdened, raised to Godhood or, better, knowing its Godhood, all aflame then but crushed out once more if it should take up the discarded burden." As if you had discovered fire in the flames, as if you were only now seeing that "there is something." (By the way, the fact that this quote is from Plotinus shows that there is an overlap between unidelusion and esse-delusion.)

What you see and experience is separated from its normal context. Being becomes more important than the goal or the function of being. The head of the hammer no longer points to the nail, so the handle of the hammer no longer invites you to pick it up. A hammer is a hammer is a hammer. A thought no longer exists in order to be carried out later on, to process something, or to understand something. A thought exists only for the purpose of being thought, of existing as thought. A representation or idea no longer exists in order to become reality later on or to be examined for its practicability; an idea is already reality by being an idea. Representations and ideas *are*, just as everything *is*.

The thought is no longer subordinate to the action, nor the action to the production, nor the production to the need, nor the need to the desire, nor the desire to the thought. It's as if the sand were freed from the sand-castle and allowed to blow around once again. As if the air from the air castle could be inhaled once again. The purpose of the mouth is not to get the food into the stomach; the purpose of the hand is not to get hold of the food. Nothing serves anything else anymore; everything is freed from its chains. Yes, the mouth can certainly eat, but not with the goal of later having eaten; the mouth simply eats to be eating. The present tense pushes aside any considerations with regard to the future and the past. Everything is, and what was is as something that was. The discovery of being is the discovery of time, and it annihilates the notion of time. As the Chilean-Spanish director Alejandro Amenábar put it in a film title: *Abre los ojos*, or open your eyes!

The seeds of the temptations of the esse-delusion lie in the nature of being itself. Once being is discovered, it can free itself from its soil, blossom, and go on to live a life of its own. Being seduces you to see it as more than being, to see it as an aura, an accessory, an idea, a power, an image, a thing. A monster of "superbeing" then emerges from being, a being-only-for-you, a manipulatable being, a being with points of concentration and vanishing points. The linguistic problem of being is that the verb "to be" follows the same form as that of any other verb. You might think, "I see that the ball is rolling, bouncing, and moving. But now I have discovered something 'extra': that the ball 'is'"—and by that you would mean that this "is" is an "extra" activity of the ball, similar to other activities. By thinking that language is the alpha and omega of all thought and philosophy, you run the risk of coming to a completely incorrect understanding of "being," but you also run the risk of seeing being as an "extra-existential" power, as a being-beyond-being.

10.1.2 Intensity

One term often used with regard to esse-delusion is "intensity." In the esse-delusion, everything is more intense: colors are more vivid; shapes more detailed; thoughts more acute, ponderous, and rapid; and feelings and moods more extreme and intense. In his introduction to the changes that occur in manic psychosis, Custance (1952, 31) uses the word "intense" three times on a single page: "this 'heightened sense of reality' consists of a considerable number of related sensations, the net result of which is that the outer world makes a much more vivid and intense impression on me than usual. ... the ordinary electric lights in the ward ... are not exactly brighter, but deeper, more intense, perhaps a trifle more ruddy than usual. ... There are a good many people in the ward, and their faces make a peculiarly intense impression on me."

To analyze and explain this increase in intensity, attempts are sometimes made to trace it back to an increase in meaning. I discuss this in Intermezzo II, "Revelation." Other times, intensity is traced to sharpened perception. But as I wrote earlier, such a bottom-up theory of psychosis is untenable (see section 2.2, among others). Nor does the intensity of esse-delusion lie in the fact that extreme feelings are involved, although outsiders sometimes think it does. The joy, the fear, or the sadness must be extremely intense, they say, which would explain the confusion and bizarre behavior. Of course esse-delusion may involve intense feelings, but these, too, are more likely to be a consequence of general "intensification," or an increase in intensification, than the cause. I am of the opinion that narrowing the explanations of

intensity down to one particular subcategory does not make the characteristic psychotic experience any clearer. In fact, reducing the notion to one of the categories could actually give rise to problems, from wrongfully attributed hallucinations and delusions to incomprehension and stigmatization.

Instead of reducing the intensity to an already familiar psychological category, I think it is better to consider it on its own. What does it mean that "everything is more intense"—not only colors, thoughts, and feelings but "being" as a whole? What is the "intensity" in esse-delusion?

The notion of intensity has something to do with "tension." It's not that this word gives us a better grasp of the subject matter, since "tension" itself can be understood only metaphorically and should be approached with care; however, the general climate of esse-delusion can certainly be called "tense" or "strained." Sometimes it's as if threads of light had been stretched tightly through space. "Straining with the effort." The deluded individual may think that the effort of being—the strain—is meant to clarify something for him. When things are regarded apart from their existence, as "essences," then you might say that these things "are" as soon as they're "intensified," as soon as being is conferred on them, or life is breathed into them, with the intense fire of existence. The "intension" of being confers life on things, draws them together into a living existence.

Let's take a look at the concepts of "intension" and "extension" in this context. "Extensional" and "extensive" are terms used for things that are "spread out," "rolled out," or "extended." It is argued that space and time are subject to extension in the sense that they are "stretched out" or "extended" (also see chapters 3 and 4). Normal existence could be called "extens": extended in time and space. In normal existence, you live in a geographic expansion and a calendrical extension. You are spread out and scattered across the system of coordinates of space and time. You are woven into a language that refers to demonstrable moments and places in time and space. You keep track of other moments and places elsewhere; you subordinate the here and now to the greater system that also comprises the "there and then." But in intensive esse-delusion, one withdraws from the extensive world. Time and space lose their value as extensive fields and networks of meaning.

Intensification is a form of "undeictizing," as I called it in 7.3.5. You raise the "deictic anchor" from the bed of historic existence and set sail on the ocean of an ideal world. Everything that happens in esse-delusion happens outside space and time, eternally, in this "third world," as the philosopher of science, Karl Popper, called it (Popper, 1972). In the "intentional" world, things are no longer separated from each other in time or space. Indeed,

everything is eternally "up there," and everything is everywhere. There is a strong sense of connection: since space and time can no longer separate things from each other extensively, everything is connected to everything else in being.

Consequently, all borders are torn down and the borders between people also disappear. Custance (1952, 36, 37, 38) says, "I come now to the third main feature of the manic state. ... Perhaps it can best be described as a 'breach in the barriers of individuality.' ... the 'sense of estrangement, fencing in a narrowly limited ego' disappears altogether. The shell which surrounds the ego and so often gets harder with the years is pierced. ... the sense of communion extends to all mankind, dead, living and to be born. That is perhaps why mania always brings me an inner certainty that the dead are really alive and that I can commune with them at will."

Often, such a feeling of intense connection is experienced and spoken of as love. Custance says (1952, 47), "In a way I had fallen in love too—with the whole Universe. Everything felt akin. I was joined to Creation, no longer shut away in my little shell." This strong feeling of love is experienced as being both physical and spiritual. Connection and fusion are taken both literally and figuratively. God and coitus are one—at least for Custance (44): "The normal inhibitions disappear, and sexual activity, instead of being placed, as in our Western Christian civilization, in opposition to religion, becomes associated with it." (47) "... the love of the flesh and the love of the spirit, eros and agape, were really one, so that the impulses of sex were not sinful but rather the holy fount of life itself." Exchanges of lofty words, gestures, and symbols are placed on the same level as exchanges of vital juices. Sex and religion can no longer be separated (47–48): "... the antagonism between sex and religion which is normal in Western Christianity, was turned into an alliance in my mind. Both factors were thus greatly strengthened" (cf. section 11.2.2.3 on Eliade).

Moreover, the intensity of things, and the connection between them, manifests itself in a natural coordination of body and mind. As Mr. Weber says in Bock (2000, 239):

"It flows. And so you move like a tiger." [Bock comments:] At this point he interrupts the conversation and demonstrates how he moved during his psychosis. He would have had to have been incredibly physically fit. Mr. Weber speaks of "the body being directly controlled by the soul." "What happens is that waves of feeling flow through the body. Somehow you listen better to what is happening inside you. The body is entirely controlled by the soul, not by the will. The I is liberated from the dimension of the will, which can be very relaxing. Having an experience like that is not entirely negative."

The intensity of esse-delusion is like a nonspatial and nontemporal clenching or contracting of what appears to be separate but is actually one, for those who have eyes to see. It's as if your bloated, fragmented, prior existence, filled with extensions of place and time, had curled up or rolled up into one intense point. In the most extreme case, you disappear totally into a single point, in a convergence of esse-delusion and uni-delusion (also see the introduction to part III). The initial contraction in esse-delusion may be followed by an explosion. A phase of total fragmentation may occur in which the intensely vivid concentration slackens into an obscure diffuseness of the many, giving rise to new extensional monsters. We find such images in terms of intension and extension, in terms of the spatial movement of contraction and expansion, and in the reflections of both mystical madmen and philosophers (see, for example, Schelling and Custance in section 12.3.3, and my exercise in Intermezzo IV.II).

10.1.3 Pantheism

As demonstrated in chapter 4, the notion of space changes under conditions of madness. In the world of esse-delusion, you enter as if through a mirror, through a Donnie Darko portal, through an Alice in Wonderland hole in the ground, or simply by "opening your eyes." As far as space is concerned, esse-delusion takes place "in the normal world." It's as if the world had changed into a suspense film where every scene counts. As if, up until now, you had seen only photos of life, and now suddenly you find yourself really there. Everything deepens in the esse-delusion; the world gives off its own radiance, the sun is no longer necessary, and we ourselves produce our own light. Plotinus writes in 6.5.7, "If a man could but be turned about by his own motion or by the happy pull of Athene he would see at once God and himself and the All. At first no doubt all will not be seen as one whole, but when we find no stop at which to declare a limit to our being we cease to rule ourselves out from the total of reality; we reach to the All as a unity and this not by any stepping forward, but by the fact of being and abiding there where the All has its being."

Keil, a person suffering from esse-delusion, puts it this way (1986, 24): "I knew magnificence! My own place within this universal master plan [see chapter 15] was so secure that I not only thought I experienced God, but I felt a part of God. This God was not limited to a figurehead somewhere out in ethereal space. It was a force, a power, a momentum which activated (always for good) life on earth. Even inanimate objects were part of this motivating agent which reigned supreme and with perfection over the entire universe. The feeling was one of an incredible oneness with all creation. ..."

In esse-delusion, everything is the same, but everything has also changed. The everyday, banal, accidental life has become divinely exalted. The transcendent, eternal world has descended to earth. God has stepped off his unapproachable throne, and gods roam the world freely. The connections here between esse-delusion and religious mania are clear. In the religious mania of esse-delusion, unlike in the religious mania of uni-delusion, all of existence, in all of its multiplicity, is experienced as divine.⁵

Despite this religious undertone, esse-delusion clashes with accepted interpretations of Christianity. For many of Christianity's variants, there is an essential separation between God and his creation, an infinitely vast gulf between the transcendent, which is divine, and the earthly, which is temporal. In esse-delusion, however, God is no longer a distant, unattainable, incomprehensible force but is immediately present in the here and now.

This is why the designation "pantheistic," which has a negative ring to it within the Christian context, is applicable to esse-delusion. As Zaehner (1957, 92) writes, concerning Custance's delusion, "In the case of Custance God seems to be simply a symbol for the Universe or the All, the totality with which he feels himself to be identified. This is, of course, real pantheism, if the premise that God and Nature are identical is accepted as true." Although Zaehner rightly notes that Custance—and madness in general—do have something to do with pantheism, the implications as he reports them are incorrect, as if in the esse-delusion, pantheism were a kind of theory or philosophy. As if Custance, in his madness, thought that "pantheism is the best world view." But what happens in esse-delusion is not that pantheism is *substantiated* as an idea but that it is *experienced*.

10.1.4 One-Sided Music

We can enter the mystical trance of madness by means of a verbal discourse, such as the one I am conducting here, but there are other forms of expression that will serve just as well, such as music and films (take a look at *The Matrix, Shutter Island, Donnie Darko,* or *Inland Empire*; also see 15.3). Plotinus uses a musical metaphor in the famous final passages of the *Enneads*. Without the rhythm, order, and direction of the One, we find ourselves "in utter dissolution," but when we "face aright" and turn to the One—as to a choir director—we are free.

The discovery of the One is like an about-face, but it's also like finding the right rhythm, like the beginning of a dance. Plotinus writes (6.9.8), "We are always before it: but we do not always look: thus a choir, singing set in due order about the conductor, may turn away from that center to which all should attend; let it but face aright and it sings with beauty, present effectively. We are ever before the Supreme cut off in utter dissolution; we can no

longer be but we do not always attend: when we look, our Term is attained; this is rest; this is the end of singing ill; effectively before Him, we lift a choral song full of God." The discovery of the One is like setting the beat and singing in a choir. But couldn't you also discover the One by singing along with the music?

Many thinkers after Plotinus (such as Schopenhauer) have seen the atmosphere created by music as a place to which one can flee to escape earthly mortality. It has often been said, seriously and jokingly, argumentatively and figuratively, that music can open the gates of heaven—and the caverns of hell—and can both heal people and drive them mad. James (1958, 322–323) says, "not conceptual speech, but music rather, is the element through which we are best spoken to by mystical truth. Many mystical scriptures are indeed little more than musical compositions. ... Music gives us ontological messages which non-musical criticism is unable to contradict, though it may laugh at our foolishness in minding them." Bock (2000, 240) says, "For someone suffering from a psychosis, music has an uplifting effect. It is the tones, the vibrations that you can hear and also say something about after you've heard them. The vibrations that psychotics experience can often be traced back to music." Another madman quoted in Bock (2000, 274) says, "In any case, when you are in this state there is a different kind of knowing, a different perception. You experience music differently; it affects you more deeply, it enters you in a strange way."

What kind of music is most mystically mad? Each person will answer this question with his own musical preferences. Wim Maljaars and I would suggest listening to Einstürzende Neubauten (also see Intermezzo III.III). The noted Dutch jazz composer Theo Loevendie says, "Only when I listen to Bach do I believe in God." Bach as apostle of the Christian God. A modern messenger from the other side was Jim Morrison, the charismatic vocalist of The Doors. Listening to his music, voice, and lyrics, one can swim along for quite some distance in a shamanic trance, especially when the experience is reinforced by mescaline or other "psychosomimetic" drugs (see section 10.3.3.3). A house party at which the volume is turned up to ten and pills are being popped by the handful can also induce serious delusions of being: losing yourself in dancing during moments of chemical ecstasy (XTC) is almost indistinguishable from the ecstasy of madness. The difference between the partygoer and the madman may be that the latter penetrates the other side more deeply. For the average partygoer, that other side is merely entertainment, a temporary flight, a short-lived counterbalance to a world controlled by clocks and calendars. For the madman, the ecstasy of the partygoer is the goal, the truth, and the life. And it's only when the dance ends and the partygoer takes his taxi home that the mad, solitary

dreamworld beyond the division between being and appearance really gets going.

From a mystical-mad point of view, the loner is the one who can escape the deadening madness of the collective. The path to the other side has to be walked alone; the Plotinian choir has only one member. Such a person is numbered among the voices and music of heaven, but others may see him as a lost sheep, as the choir member singing out of tune. I saw him at Amsterdam Amstel train station, standing on the other side of the tracks: the director. He waved his arms gently, looked upward with his head cocked—perhaps at some chirping birds—and chortled and gestured without anyone to hear him or converse with him. There was music playing somewhere, without source, without end, without sound: one hand clapping.

10.2 Writing Yourself Out: Custance's Live Report on the Esse-Delusion

To gain a deeper understanding of the way esse-delusion works in practice, I'm going to discuss a fragment from Custance (1952, 138–139), written when he was struggling with this delusion. Here he talks about what may seem like everyday events that are hardly worth mentioning but that assume a special significance in the light of esse-delusion. Others may wonder why anyone would get so distressed at such a moment. Commenting on these kinds of fragments, Conrad explains (1958, 56), "You always wait to see what it's really all about, but you never find out. An enormous number of banalities are communicated, to which people are always inclined to ask, 'So what?' You expect it to be the introduction to something of importance, but nothing important ever occurs. This is because for the sick person, all the banal events appear in the abnormal light of revelation, without any apparent explanation for it." Now I will try to take a closer look at the "abnormal light of revelation." More about the feeling of revelation in Intermezzo II.

THE ETERNAL SCHIZOPHRENIA

(Space-time Continuum, actual dimension X)

The meaning of this strange place-and-time addition to the subtitle is not self-evident. I think what Custance is trying to say is that he finds himself "in the space-time continuum," in a yet undetermined "dimension." I will come back to this later.

"The Eternal Schizophrenia" may seem a strange title. If I were asked to state, at this precise moment of the space-time (Interjection from Madame de Pompadour,

Grand Hotel, Heaven, never repeat never waste love/light you old sinner, end of message, Medical message: ECT never necessary sgd. Harvey) continuum, what I mean by this particular form of words I should find it somewhat difficult. For I chose the title as it were by instinct, by induction; it came of itself into my mind as a line of verse comes to a poet. I have not yet attempted to put (squeaks from padded room next door) into motion the opposite process of deductive reasoning which is needed to justify the title. (Note: nails in mourning).

In the first paragraph, Custance discusses how his choice of title came about. It appeared all by itself, in a flash, as often happens to poets. Custance calls this kind of thinking "induction," which should be augmented by the addition of what he calls "deductive reasoning."

What is striking here and in the text that follows are the additions that Custance makes in parentheses. Prior to this fragment, Custance writes that he wants to communicate the complete contents of his consciousness. Therefore, the parenthetical bits seem like thoughts and associations—a stream of consciousness—that came to him while writing. His first chain of associations, quoted above, takes him to Madame Pompadour for reasons that are not entirely clear. He then jumps to "never repeat never waste love/light" and then to a remark presumably about something that has happened nearby: a report from a doctor.

I have to choose my words very carefully. For what I am doing is, I believe, something which has not very often been attempted. (BEELZEBUB ON BED in form of blue fly). It is to think at precisely the same point in the space-time continuum by both methods of thought (coughing, running at the nose, bottom of feet wet) (blue check handkerchief)—inductive and deductive (so hot, have to remove coat and purple pullover query CAESAR'S) artistic and rational (itching), negative and positive—in the terminology expounded in Chapter IV of my book.

Custance says he's going to try something unique: to think in two different ways at the same time, inductively and deductively, which he also defines as artistic versus rational and negative versus positive. Exactly what he means by this is not clear, but anyone who has read Custance's entire book knows that it has to do with "the mystical-mad experience" of unified thought, grasping and expressing the *coincidentia oppositorum* (also see section 11.2.2). I would not use the terms "deductive" and "inductive," but rather "inner" and "outer," "remembering" and "perceiving," or "subjective" and "objective," if necessary. In any case, Custance believes that he is beyond complex opposites and that he has succeeded in "being one" and in thinking in a unified way. In the light of this experience of unity, Custance wants to write down "everything," to line up "everything" and to grasp the whole. This explains the remarkable heterogeneity of the parenthetical

additions having to do with the temperature, with coughing and itching, and with a fly (which seems to be interrupting the beautiful unity like a demon), and with thoughts and conversations with persons near and far.⁷ In the lava flow of Custance's experience, everything is put down consecutively and mixed up together. Everything is of equal importance. Every event "is" and is therefore important and worth reporting.

First of all it seems to me (had to open window owing to extreme sense of heat query "real"?) essential to fix my exact position (fly on pipe) in the space-time continuum, at any rate by what sailors call D. R. (dead reckoning query alive or dead?) (Interjection by Lord Crawford, Huntly and Palmer's biscuits:—Room probably "really" cold and advises me to go on writing (fly on + temple) to get warm (fly buzzes and settles on + THUMB (TOM)—SHIRT).

To build up his thesis on unified thinking, Custance wants to begin at the beginning of unified thought, at the point of laying down the basic facts concerning the "space-time continuum." But as he focuses on recording the present moment, more and more new "data" creep in: the fly moves; the method for estimating time leads to a consideration of "dead reckoning"; Custance feels hot and reflects on the "reality" of this feeling; and so forth.

I am at this present fleeting moment of time (1750/29/10/1949 B. S. T equals 1650/29/10/1949 G. M. T.) sitting on my bed in X 1 ward at — Hospital, —, — England, World, Solar System. I can check this statement by going to the other end of the ward—where I have actually no business—and looking at the clock. Dates, times, and everything coincide; today is Saturday tomorrow will be Sunday, Oct. 30th. Thus the statement I have written (must pump ship) (Balaam—arse/ass—says normal reaction to excreta) above should, rationally speaking, be correct. I can make it for the sake of the (Query SOCRATIC) argument with a positive or + sign.

Custance has now been able to pin down his position in time in an almost childlike way. Who among us has never set down his position in the universe by following the street and town in his address with the country, continent, planet, and solar system? It may be childlike, but it's also the impulse to accurately locate something "somewhere" in order to provide the lava flow with structure and place, so that everything neatly "coincides."

Now I called this statement a statement of position by D. R., or dead reckoning. I did this instinctively; that is to say I wrote it down without fully reasoning out in my head what its implications were. It was therefore a statement as it were from the negative or inductive side of things represented by the—sign, and I must now reason out positively, or rationally, exactly what I meant.

Once again, Custance notes that he is only at the halfway mark: the inductive element happens of its own accord; he has yet to provide the deductive proof. The "inductive" flow of important flashes and observations

keeps on coming, however, and there is no time to tackle the deductive in any depth. This feeling is typical in madness. As Hennell (1967, 51), says in describing his mad journey through nighttime London, "There had scarcely been time to consider the last strange sights on the way." Everything that happens is of great importance, but exactly what that importance is must be carefully worked out in due course.

When I was institutionalized in 2007, I was also convinced that everything was connected in a special way and was of great significance. I also knew that, in principle, I could explain everything quite well ("deductive"), but I thought it was a waste of time because new things kept happening. And indeed, why write It down? The Kirghiz Light is ultimately beyond description. I knew that I knew what the madness was, but I also knew that it was so powerful that I would never forget it—that I would always be able to write about it later on, when I had the time. Custance writes,

(Frederick the Great agreed that my room is now hot and advised me to open top window also. Have done so. Am sitting in shirtsleeves on January 1st/1950, defying the cold coming from Russia. Holy Year is working signed St Theresa +/St Ignatius Loyola T. O. O. (time of origin) x–y).

Dead reckoning is a navigational term (Drake) meaning the position according to source and speed, making allowance for any winds, currents, etc. and

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{RESUME PURPLE EMPEROR shut bottom of window}
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calculated according to the ship's chronometer by plotting a line on a/the chart. My position as described above is stationary (engine, reciprocating, piston and cylinder, male and female), in so far as this planet is "stationary"; it is estimated according to the hospital chronometer, or clock. It is, therefore D. R. in exactly the same sense that a navigational D. R. position is.

Many more digressions, interruptions, and additions, first concerning a conversation with Frederick the Great. Then the time question comes up again: the Holy Year has begun⁸ and "therefore" it is January 1 and cold (a time of origins?). Custance also reflects on the methods of determining one's position on sea and land. These quickly become quite abstract and touch on lofty existential organizing principles such as male and female. In the meantime, Custance takes off a purple sweater.

```
(Interjection by St Thomas:- doubt above X

(Apostle)

STOP OK

Light Programme. Leave off writing sgd. KOKO RT 1937/1/1/4/50

Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag and smile signed Angels of MONS/BEF/OK).
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How does this fragment clarify esse-delusion? Is it nothing more than a catalogue of banalities? I think there's more to be said here than that some person wrote down the incoherent thoughts that were haunting him. Custance thinks he's doing something exceptional: he is experiencing his inductive-deductive reasoning as all-embracing, inclusive, and intensive. Custance is "in esse-delusion." At every moment (including right NOW!) everything is present: every time, every place, and every person *IS*. As soon as you think about a person, he is present—so Frederick the Great "really" advises him to shut the window. Memories, fantasies, observations, calculations, repetitions—everything is on the same level of Being.

But because everything is of equal importance, and because new events keep on happening, Custance's report never really gets underway. It fans out like a delta, flowing to the sea. It is sometimes said that madmen cannot concentrate or focus on the essentials, an idea that is based on proper observations. But the problem is not so much an inability to concentrate as it is a new or intensified ability to recognize the simultaneous significance of *everything*. You might say that in esse-delusion, there is an expansion of the center of concentration, the place where one's focus normally lies. The concentric circles take on a boundless periphery; the focus is on all-in-one.

The only thread running through Custance's entire fragment is the repeated attempt to fix his position in time and space. Because his thoughts and experiences fly so forcefully in every direction, his anchoring in the here and now is constantly being called into question. Perhaps the preoccupation with time and place is only a result of his attempt to get something down on paper. If he were not sitting at his writing desk, he might continue to follow the mad lines of thought and break away entirely from the temporal fixation.

Another feature of Custance's esse-delusion is that everything tends toward the abstract. The fanning delta may end in an ocean, but it's an ocean of the abstract kind. Everything is great and compelling, part of that one pulsing cosmos, that radiant ball of being. The smallest events are of the greatest significance. For example, apparently there was a fly buzzing around while Custance was writing his text. So this insect has something to do with Beelzebub. It's as if Custance were constantly on the point of "taking off," as if his train of thought were being drawn upward, with the steam of the lava flow rising into veils of light.

Custance's esse-delusion has a clearly pantheistic or religious aspect. In his thinking and writing, instead of gliding over the ordinary earth's crust, he seems to sink through it—to the core—or to rise above it. It's as if a

divine house of mirrors were branching off behind every word, as if the lava were flowing beneath every thought, and the angels were laughing above every moment in the "space-time continuum." Even if you're an atheist, as Custance was before his madness struck, religious thoughts are brutally intrusive in esse-delusion. Custance himself writes this in the introduction to his book (1952, 12–13):

A religious outlook! Have I achieved one at last? I do not know. I cannot even say whether I am Christian or pagan at heart—if Christianity and paganism are really opposites, as they are usually assumed to be. But I can claim that through my illness I have been compelled to face those problems of ethics, conscience and religion which I had tried to evade, and this book is in part an attempt to come to terms with them.⁹

10.3 The Self-Induced Esse-Delusion: Huxley, Mescaline, and Other Drugs

10.3.1 Behind the Doors of Perception

"But the man who comes back through the Door in the Wall will never be quite the same as the man who went out. He will be wiser but less cocksure, happier but less self-satisfied, humbler in acknowledging his ignorance yet better equipped to understand the relationship of words to things, of systematic reasoning to the unfathomable Mystery which it tries, forever vainly, to comprehend."

These are the last sentences from Aldous Huxley's essay *The Doors of Perception*, published in 1954. This brief work, dealing with Huxley's own experience of mescaline, came out at the beginning of the psychedelic revolution of the 1960s and set the tone for later experiments with and writings about mind-expanding substances such as mescaline and LSD. In this pamphlet-like book, the famous thinker and writer touched upon themes that would provoke a great deal of discussion for years to come.

The heart of Huxley's argument is that mescaline gives you a better way of seeing reality and that this could be beneficial to everyone. He also argues that there are similarities between the mescaline trip, schizophrenia, and artistic inspiration. And he believes that such experiences lie at the basis of mysticism and religion. *The Doors of Perception* is relevant here because Huxley's descriptions bear some resemblance to esse-delusion. Apart from making a few apt remarks about madness and mescaline, this influential work has tended to throw the discussion of madness somewhat off track. That's because Huxley's trip does not go very far or very deep; he sticks to the surface, so his picture of the mescaline experience is quite limited. He

also implicitly does harm to the subtleties of the psychotic experience, even though he has a few things to say about it that are worthy of consideration. In short, there is reason enough to take a closer look at Huxley's work.

In the first part of *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley's account accords closely with what I have said about esse-delusion and the mad experience of time and space (see chapters 2 and 3). Huxley writes,

At ordinary times the eye concerns itself with such problems as Where?—How far? How situated in relation to what? In the mescaline experience the implied questions to which the eye responds are of another order. Place and distance cease to be of much interest. The mind does its Perceiving in terms of intensity of existence, profundity of significance, relationships within a pattern. ... What I noticed, what impressed itself upon my mind was the fact that all of them [books, flowers, curtains, and so forth] glowed with living light and that in some the glory was more manifest than in others. In this context position and the three dimensions were beside the point. ... Space was still there; but it had lost its predominance. The mind was primarily concerned, not with measures and locations, but with being and meaning.

Normal categories such as three-dimensionality and spaciousness are replaced by intensity and significance. As in esse-delusion, the extensiveness or spaciousness of time changes into an intensively experienced eternal present. Says Huxley,

And along with indifference to space there went an even more complete indifference to time. "There seems to be plenty of it," was all I would answer, when the investigator asked me to say what I felt about time. Plenty of it, but exactly how much was entirely irrelevant. I could, of course, have looked at my watch; but my watch, I knew, was in another universe. My actual experience had been, was still, of an indefinite duration or alternatively of a perpetual present made up of one continually changing apocalypse.

Huxley sees a relationship between his experience with mescaline on the one hand and mysticism and Platonic philosophy on the other, just as I do with madness. Interestingly enough, however—and unnecessarily, in my opinion—Huxley is critical of Plato, and he believes he has experienced something that, for Plato, would have been quite foreign:

Istigkeit—wasn't that the word Meister Eckhart liked to use? "Is-ness." The Being of Platonic philosophy—except that Plato seems to have made the enormous, the grotesque mistake of separating Being from becoming and identifying it with the mathematical abstraction of the Idea. He could never, poor fellow, have seen a bunch of flowers shining with their own inner light and all but quivering under the pressure of the significance with which they were charged; could never have perceived that what rose and iris and carnation so intensely signified was nothing

more, and nothing less, than what they were—a transience that was yet eternal life, a perpetual perishing that was at the same time pure Being, a bundle of minute, unique particulars in which, by some unspeakable and yet self-evident paradox, was to be seen the divine source of all existence.

Huxley points to the paradoxical antithesis between being and becoming, of "a transience that was yet eternal life." Like the mad mystic, he runs into the existential bedrock of reality, where being and becoming are one and the same, "being/be/coming." And like some of those suffering from esse-delusion, he sets out on the positive path of Being. Here Huxley bypasses the mad and confusing perplexity caused by the disturbing paradox of being and becoming, and in doing so, he also bypasses the notion of nothingness, which, in my analysis, is essential to the understanding of mysticism and madness (see chapter 12).

The being that Huxley discovers is mainly limited to a visual-sensory being; it comprises perception more than thought. For Huxley, the experience is more aesthetic than ethical or existential: "The books, for example, with which my study walls were lined. Like the flowers, they glowed, when I looked at them, with brighter colors, a profounder significance." While Huxley does say that the experience of mescaline does not involve visions, dreams, or hallucinations, he still puts the emphasis on the perceptible outside world: "The other world to which mescaline admitted me was not the world of visions; it existed out there, in what I could see with my eyes open. The great change was in the realm of objective fact. What had happened to my subjective universe was relatively unimportant." What Huxley sees "in the realm of objective fact" is pure being itself: "At breakfast that morning I had been struck by the lively dissonance of its colors. But that was no longer the point. I was not looking now at an unusual flower arrangement. I was seeing what Adam had seen on the morning of his creation—the miracle, moment by moment, of naked existence."

For Huxley, beauty is the path to supreme ecstasy, mystical truth, and higher reality, which he describes in semireligious terms: "I continued to look at the flowers, and in their living light I seemed to detect the qualitative equivalent of breathing. ... Words like 'grace' and 'transfiguration' came to my mind, and this, of course, was what, among other things, they stood for." Huxley was not the first one to think he had reached a higher world by means of beauty; Plato and Plotinus preceded him (see section 9.2). The difference between Huxley and Plato/Plotinus, however, is that the latter did not exclude other possible routes to deliverance, such as contemplation and ethics. On Huxley's aesthetic route, just as in mystical madness, things

are separated from their practical, functional context and end up in a new, aesthetic, or even religious light:

I was looking at my furniture, not as the utilitarian who has to sit on chairs, to write at desks and tables, and not as the cameraman or scientific recorder, but as the pure aesthete whose concern is only with forms and their relationships within the field of vision or the picture space. But as I looked, this purely aesthetic, Cubist's-eye view gave place to what I can only describe as the sacramental vision of reality. I was back where I had been when I was looking at the flowers—back in a world where everything shone with the Inner Light, and was infinite in its significance. The legs, for example, of that chair—how miraculous their tubularity, how supernatural their polished smoothness!¹⁰

Like many mad mystics, Huxley has the feeling that he is now, for the first time, seeing things as they really are—as they were intended to be seen. Everything that *is* bears witness to the deepest reality and the greatest significance. Such intense being cannot be properly represented in the written word, depicted in art, or expressed in music. Art is merely a surrogate for those who have never reached this "being" themselves: "Art, I suppose, is only for beginners, or else for those resolute dead-enders, who have made up their minds to be content with the ersatz of Suchness, with symbols rather than with what they signify, with the elegantly composed recipe in lieu of actual dinner." Oddly enough, Huxley also contends that art is able to show us something of that extraordinary reality. Artists, he says, have special access to this dimension: "What the rest of us see only under the influence of mescaline, the artist is congenitally equipped to see all the time."

Following this otherwise beautifully worded reflection come a few passages in which Huxley looks at and discusses some actual works of art with new eyes and a new mescaline gaze. His mescaline trip has taken him far past the paradox of being and nonbeing—and the chasm of nothingness—and safely delivered him to the trusty museum doors and to art criticism; that is, mescaline and madness become methods of artistic formation. The "danger" of such discussions is that they take the sting out of madness and mescaline and threaten to become a kind of iconoclastic onslaught in the negative sense of the word (see section 6.1).

This emphasis on the aesthetic—especially the visual—makes Sorabji skeptical of the similarities between mescaline experiences and what Plato and Plotinus wrote about (1988, 173): "with Huxley's mescaline, the visual imagery and the heightened awareness of physical objects is a central part of the experience, whereas for Plotinus and Augustine it was important that they left the physical world and visual imagery behind." Even Michaux (1974, 105), himself an experienced mescaline user, is critical of the mescaline iconoclasm: "Those who have taken a powder with quasi-magical

effects and consider themselves quite unfettered, entirely liberated, out of this world perhaps, are still running on tracks. They submit. ... People who consider themselves supremely liberated are in fact prisoners. There exists a banality of the visionary world."

Huxley is a romantic writer and thinker. His work is marked by opposites: between cool rationality and warm mysticism, between deadly planning and lively experience, between hard technology and soft authentic humanity. In *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley contrasts the "directly apprehended" reality that has been revealed to him with the limited reality of intellectual thought and systematic reasoning:

Systematic reasoning is something we could not, as a species or as individuals, possibly do without. But neither, if we are to remain sane, can we possibly do without direct perception, the more unsystematic the better, of the inner and outer worlds into which we have been born. This given reality is an infinite which passes all understanding and yet admits of being directly and in some sort totally apprehended. It is a transcendence belonging to another order than the human, and yet it may be present to us as a felt immanence, an experienced participation.

Here Huxley is attempting to identify an aspect of transcendence that I also tried to clarify with my description of esse-delusion. Unlike Huxley, I would not want to rule out systematic reasoning. There is an anti-intellectualism in such passages that affected Underhill (1911) as well and rears its head in a variety of forms in our culture; it is the idea that thinking is the enemy of "true experience." We see it in the way people often talk about drugs and how they are used: as intoxicants in order to "get away from it all," as a means of "giving your mind a rest." A typical example of this are the lamentations of a young soft-drug user. The following quote can be read as an amplification of the weak points in Huxley's argument.

I smoke weed because I'm totally focused on living in the now. I have moments when I don't do that at all, so my thinking takes control over me again. At times like that I smoke a joint, and when I do I can see the whole picture again, the purpose of life, which is "being." I can go back to "being" and build on it, to reach even more "being." Constantly living in the now—and actually I do need help with that sometimes, but that's just because I keep letting my "thinking" overtake my "being." Now I constantly have to say to myself: "Attention: here and now," but with experience it's getting better, and I'm sure that after a while I won't need the weed anymore. But until then I'm not ashamed to say that it really helps me, and not only when I'm stoned, but also for a long time afterward. It's a sort of reset button that lets me stay in the now all the time, even when I'm not stoned. I'm not strong enough on my own to keep it up without weed, but for a long time I've been happy to have gotten this far ... I've opened my own eyes, but the weed really speeds things up.

This was written more than fifty years after *The Doors of Perception*, not by a famous writer but by an anonymous visitor on an internet forum, and not about mescaline but about marijuana and LSD. Nevertheless, it contains the same theme and range of ideas found in Huxley. In fact, the slogan "Attention: here and now"—to admonish yourself to return to the immediate experience and not to get lost in thought—is something that Huxley also uses in his books (*Island* for one). And indeed, living an intense life in the here and now, in real being, with or without the help of drugs created for that purpose—who doesn't want that?

Under this ideal intensification of being, thinking is not an enemy at first. The esse-delusion also implies intensive, unrestrained, free thinking, and it's a cliché to describe this as mainly visual and passive. Mad thinking may be thinking-beyond-thinking (see chapter 8), but in order to get "there," the thinking should not be avoided, stupefied, or disconnected. Rather, it should be "reflected on" or "accelerated," as Michaux also believes. But when that happens, you cannot shut your eyes to the "total denial"—the realization that everything "that is" in a certain respect also "is not," which is the inner contradiction of esse-delusion. Because of the power of thinking and denial, the visually aesthetic character of esse-delusion automatically becomes less prominent, and the psychotic withdraws more deeply into a state of inner contemplation. Mystical madness then goes beyond the mescaline high of "being" and ends up in the madness of nothingness (which I will discuss in detail in chapter 12).

10.3.2 Too Much Being

Huxley presents the mescaline experience as the very height of being, equal to the best mystical and religious experience anywhere in the world. With the help of mescaline, he also hopes to gain a glimpse into the psychotic experience, which he then sees as a less successful, badly conducted, or derailed mescaline experience. How does he make this distinction?

Huxley argues that the mescaline experience resembles the schizophrenic experience, but he restricts himself to the positive aspects: "Most takers of mescaline experience only the heavenly part of schizophrenia." Although he describes the deeper experiences of psychosis as sick, fearful, and best avoided, his words also suggest longing, admiration, and compassion:

This, I suddenly felt, was going too far. Too far, even though the going was into intenser beauty, deeper significance. The fear, as I analyze it in retrospect, was of being overwhelmed, of disintegrating under a pressure of reality greater than a mind, accustomed to living most of the time in a cozy world of symbols, could possibly bear. The literature of religious experience abounds in references to the

pains and terrors overwhelming those who have come, too suddenly, face to face with some manifestation of the Mysterium tremendum. ... we may say that, by unregenerate souls, the divine Light at its full blaze can be apprehended only as a burning, purgatorial fire.

Huxley sees "disintegration" as a fearful business that he prefers to avoid, but he says both schizophrenics and mystics have had to pass through it.

The psychotic experience does indeed surpass Huxley's mescaline experience on a number of points, however. Huxley speaks of being "overwhelmed," of "disintegration," and of "the divine Light" using familiar terms and images, but I see the difference between Huxley's mescaline experience and mad mysticism first of all as a result of the simple fact that psychoses usually last longer than mescaline experiences do. Because of this, a psychosis is not only a disorderly, kaleidoscopic circus of flashing images; rather, its first ecstasy is followed by a succession and arrangement of moods and thoughts that issue from each other. That is, Huxley seems to be stuck in a kind of momentary, intense rapture; but in psychosis, schizophrenic logic-or "deduction," to use Custance's term—is born from this rapture. Speaking of this difference in duration, Huxley himself quite rightly comments, "His [the schizophrenic's] sickness consists in the inability to take refuge from inner and outer reality (as the sane person habitually does) in the homemade universe of common sense—the strictly human world of useful notions, shared symbols and socially acceptable conventions."

Yet Huxley regards the lengthy consequences of schizophrenia and the exposure to ultimate reality as mainly negative:

The schizophrenic is like a man permanently under the influence of mescaline, and therefore unable to shut off the experience of a reality which he is not holy enough to live with, which he cannot explain away because it is the most stubborn of primary facts, and which, because it never permits him to look at the world with merely human eyes, scares him into interpreting its unremitting strangeness, its burning intensity of significance, as the manifestations of human or even cosmic malevolence, calling for the most desperate countermeasures, from murderous violence at one end of the scale to catatonia, or psychological suicide, at the other. ... If you started in the wrong way, ... everything that happened would be a proof of the conspiracy against you. It would all be self-validating. You couldn't draw a breath without knowing it was part of the plot. ... If one began with fear and hate as the major premise, one would have to go on to the conclusion.

Huxley regards the self-created worlds that the psychotic passes through following the initial ecstasy as "desperate countermeasures," and he speaks of "murderous violence," "catatonia," and "psychological suicide." All of

that does occur, of course, but it's not as black and white as Huxley presents it. Huxley makes an overly rigorous distinction between good mescaline experiences that remain outside the domain of fear and bad "fear-and-hate" experiences that he says have a schizophrenic aspect. He fails to see that hate is the flip side of love and that negativity and denial can serve as the engine for exploring the ups and downs of the ultimate reality he both longs for and fears. This puts Huxley at a safe distance from what he calls the "mysterium tremendum." With this term—at least as the German theologian Rudolf Otto (1917) uses it—Huxley is referring to the diversity of manifestations of the holy or the divine, which includes shudders of joy and ecstasy, pure terror, and total dependence on the unknowable supreme.

Although Huxley says that psychoses and schizophrenia are determined by "fear and hate as the major premise," he does believe that the positivity he derives from the mescaline experience could help the schizophrenic. The following passage, written in dialogue form, is food for thought:

"Would you be able," my wife asked, "to fix your attention on what *The Tibetan Book of The Dead* calls the Clear Light?" I was doubtful.

"Would it keep the evil away, if you could hold it? Or would you not be able to hold it?"

I considered the question for some time. "Perhaps," I answered at last, "perhaps I could—but only if there were somebody there to tell me about the Clear Light. One couldn't do it by oneself. That's the point, I suppose, of the Tibetan ritual—someone sitting there all the time and telling you what's what."

After listening to the record of this part of the experiment, I took down my copy of Evans-Wentz's edition of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and opened at random. "O nobly born, let not thy mind be distracted." That was the problem—to remain undistracted. Undistracted by the memory of past sins, by imagined pleasure, by the bitter aftertaste of old wrongs and humiliations, by all the fears and hates and cravings that ordinarily eclipse the Light. What those Buddhist monks did for the dying and the dead, might not the modern psychiatrist do for the insane? Let there be a voice to assure them, by day and even while they are asleep, that in spite of all the terror, all the bewilderment and confusion, the ultimate Reality remains unshakably itself and is of the same substance as the inner light of even the most cruelly tormented mind. By means of such devices as recorders, clock-controlled switches, public address systems and pillow speakers it should be very easy to keep the inmates of even an understaffed institution constantly reminded of this primordial fact.

Here Huxley suggests that the fear and confusion in psychosis can be alleviated by means of a few measures: One should focus on "the Clear Light," and if one is not able to do so by oneself, someone else should be present to keep the psychotic's attention fixed on it. One should also be

diligent and not distracted. According to Huxley, this can be accomplished by making the message known in isolation cells and rooms in mental hospitals that "The ultimate Reality remains unshakably itself and is of the same substance as the inner light of even the most cruelly tormented mind."

This sounds like a good alternative to the chemical terror of antimystical substances. The emphasis on not letting oneself get distracted and on the stability of the otherwise undefined Clear Light has a great deal in common with Podvoll's remedy (see section 6.2). But does this not suggest an overly naive belief in the Clear Light (also see section 14.3.2, "Divide and heal")? Isn't Clear Light just one metaphor among many, one that is quickly deconstructed by the prism of the mad mystic into a kaleidoscopic vision? Nihilistic mystics who stand outside the moralistic mystical tradition—and that would include most psychotics—contend that Huxley's positive core message concerning ultimate Reality is already going too far. It expresses a typical Greek-Christian trust in the belief that Being, Reality, and the Mind are all forged from the same virtuous material. In his "Perennialist" enthusiasm, Huxley has too little regard for the darkness. 11

10.3.3 Mescaline Criticism

Huxley finds the mescaline experience valuable, and he sees similarities between it and the experiences of mysticism and psychosis. I have already made a few critical comments in response to the glorification of essedelusion and Huxley's promotion of mescaline. In the following sections I will discuss criticism "from the inside"; that is, criticism that argues that while some mysticism is valuable, esse-delusion should not be seen as part of it, since (1) it is godless, (2) immoral, and (3) uses unnatural substances.

10.3.3.1 Godlessness: Zaehner's criticism of Huxley Zaehner is an outspoken critic of esse-delusion. His *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* is aimed at demonstrating that neither psychedelic nor psychotic experiences have much to do with "real" religious or mystical experiences. Zaehner takes Huxley as a representative of mescaline mysticism, and he quotes Custance as a representative of mad mysticism. For Zaehner, these types of mysticism are two of a kind—what he calls "nature mysticism"—and I tend to agree with him.

The thrust of Zaehner's criticism is that in nature mysticism, the mystic may indeed lose himself, but he does not have contact with the true God of the Christian, Islamic, or Hindu traditions (1957, 22): "In the case of Huxley, as in that of the manic, the personality seems to be dissipated into the objective world, while in the case of Suso, as of other theistic mystics, the human personality is wholly absorbed into the Deity, Who is felt and

experienced as being something totally distinct and other than the objective world."¹² Zaehner does appreciate the loss of self that one experiences in an esse-delusion, but what one should expect to find on the other side is God or Allah and not something like the Clear Light, the "ultimate reality," nature, or the objective world.

This ecstatic absorption into the glorious world of nature is not simply a matter of losing one's way; it's the wrong way altogether. Drug users and madmen don't just miss out on having an encounter with the true God—they also end up in pantheism, Christianity's threatening competitor (also see section 10.1.3). Zaehner argues this by quoting from early Islamic literature, in which nature mysticism (both the mescaline and the mad variants) are called a form of "expansion." This expansion is seen in the Islamic tradition as a real danger on the mystical path and possibly a divine test or trap. And according to some Christian mystics, it could even be the work of the devil. The question of whether this experience of divine enlightenment is a false enlightenment—and is actually a satanic darkening—recurs in many guises.

So Zaehner places Huxley's lyrical reflections within the context of satanic temptations and pantheistic enticements. There are certainly some comments to be made with regard to this notion of "expansion" in the mescaline-induced esse-delusion. In the following quote, Michaux writes that while mescaline-induced "expansion" may be seductive and overwhelming (1974, 138–139), it ultimately leads to self-destruction: "A feeling of expansion, of uncontrollable expansion, which spreads and persists, inundating, radiating, oceanic, which will break like waves, which must break, which tries to swarm, a pullulation, a maximum, beyond the maximum, extreme, yet constantly increased by new surges. A state of seething. Something of extreme importance has to be declared, to be proclaimed to the entire world, with the utmost urgency. The consequences are familiar: thus dilated, one feels, one declares oneself extremely important, important beyond anything. If this state should persist, there comes a compulsion to call oneself Ruler, Emperor, God."

Mescaline, it seems, can induce an ecstasy similar to that experienced in the esse-delusion (Huxley), but it can also result in a dangerously seductive form of what Zaehner and Michaux call expansion. The same is true for madness. Madness can lead to an ecstatic, positive-mystical high, as Custance describes it, but it may also take you beyond the "celebration of being" in the ethereal regions of infinity and the dark shadows of nothingness—where the face of God is very different from that of Huxley's "Clear Light." (Also see chapters 11 and 12.)

10.3.3.2 Immorality Another point of criticism raised against Huxley's esse-delusion is that it is "too easy." Zaehner and Sorabji find it unconvincing that taking a pill over the weekend in some nice spot in the woods can produce the same results as years of ascetic exercise in a monastery. Sorabji (1988, 173) says, "This has seemed threatening, because it would then appear that the mystics and the drugtakers had as much or as little right as each other to claim that their experience put them in contact with God." This sounds like the criticism of people who insist that tap water is less genuine (or less appetizing) than water that has to be drawn from a well ten kilometers away and carried home along a dusty road and under a burning sun.

Yet another point of criticism is that "real mysticism" automatically leads to an ethically correct attitude of piety and modesty, while drug-induced mysticism, mania, and psychoses do not promote such qualities and might even impede them. ¹⁶

As far as the first part of this criticism is concerned, there is no evidence that mystics are better people per se. Anyone engaged in contemplation, meditation, and the spiritual life may not have the time or the means to engage in mischief, as their attention is focused on loftier, more spiritual matters. But the same is true for many nonmystics, such as philosophers and artists. In fact, Huxley uses the same argument (a weak one, in my estimation) to demonstrate that the use of mescaline results in better morals: "Contemplatives are not likely to become gamblers, or procurers, or drunkards; they do not as a rule preach intolerance, or make war; do not find it necessary to rob, swindle or grind the faces of the poor."

Some adherents of traditional mysticism claim that only mysticism, to the exclusion of other kinds of spiritual practices, can lead to better morals. But this is only true for mysticism that squares with traditional religion and conventional morality. The ultimate truth that you encounter in the heart of the mystic is not necessarily the "good news," which automatically results in good morals. Mystical experience does not, by definition, transform you into a "good person"—aside from the fact that there is no standard by which a good person can be identified.

The second part of the criticism is that Huxley's mescaline experience, Custance's mania, and the esse-delusion in general are themselves amoral or even immoral. Sure enough, Huxley responds with the following:

I realized that I was deliberately avoiding the eyes of those who were with me in the room, deliberately refraining from being too much aware of them. One was my wife, the other a man I respected and greatly liked; but both belonged to the world from which, for the moment, mescaline had delivered me: the world

of selves, of time, of moral judgments and utilitarian considerations, the world (and it was this aspect of human life which I wished, above all else, to forget) of self-assertion, of cocksureness, of overvalued words and idolatrously worshiped notions.

Huxley's mescaline experience is a strictly individual experience in which other subjects temporarily "disappear." In earlier chapters, I wrote in detail about how the same thing happens in psychosis: other subjects—as independent, autonomous, fellow subjects—disappear in the world of madness. The worst you can say about this is that it is just as amoral as other "conditions" in which someone becomes totally wrapped up in himself or avoids the company of others. Postage stamp collectors, when they're focused on their hobby, are not particularly concerned about the welfare of other people either, but this is seldom regarded as amoral—let alone immoral.

In the case of mad mysticism, new "subjectification," which is at odds with conventional morality, can sometimes take place following the initial ecstasy. When the psychotic sees forces and patterns of meaning around him, which he interprets in terms of good and evil, he may identify innocent people as the sources of that evil and treat them accordingly (also see part IV). The rare instances in which this happens during psychosis are partly why psychoses and schizophrenia are often associated with aggression and violence.

On the other hand, the psychotic may also do things that are usually regarded as "good," such as giving his possessions away to the needy (for example, see Custance's account of the financial gifts he made during his manic periods). In our time, when only bad news filters down to the level of public opinion, you rarely hear about psychotics doing uncommonly good things. On the contrary, when someone who is manic gives all his money to the poor, it isn't seen as a good deed but as a stupid one.

Finally, many of the moral objections raised against the idea that the esse-delusion is a form of mysticism are based on a low opinion of sensual pleasure. The esse-delusion can manifest itself in a high of sex, drugs, and rock-'n-roll, which people are less apt to equate with morality and mysticism.

10.3.3.3 Substance use: Rosenboom's white sugar A final criticism of Huxley's esse-delusion contends that "true being" or "real mysticism" is not to be sought outside the person with the aid of "unnatural substances." The message of mysticism, such as that of Zen Buddhism, is that you should not do something or search for something in order to reach enlightenment at some later point. Enlightenment does not issue from a substance; it is immediate. Enlightenment is the immediate realization of being, without

any detours. This criticism is supported by the fact that the esse-delusion can also be achieved without mind-expanding drugs; not all psychotics in mental hospitals or mystics in monasteries are drug users, not by a long shot. Perhaps the danger of such substances is that they do "nothing more than" bring about the esse-delusion, while the mad mystic can make his way much further into the mystery without any substances at all. Moreover, many of the thinkers and visionaries who are referred to in mescaline-related literature (such as in the work of Huxley) are often "wise" people themselves who don't need to resort to drugs.

In addition to a general criticism of all mind-altering drugs, there are also various "schools of being," each with its own favorite "substance" for attaining the esse-delusion and an explicit or implicit criticism of all other substances. From the 1960s onward, psychedelic drugs such as mescaline and LSD were promoted as substances for inducing the esse-delusion. These are sometimes called "psychosomimetic agents" (Osmond, 1967). At other times and in other places, other substances were named and advocated. So every now and then, we hear of some distant local tribe that finds happiness and bliss in a secret toadstool, plant, or potion. Shelves full of books have been written about the influence of various substances on the verbal expressions, rituals, and religious customs of distant tribes, from those in the Amazon region to those in India and Siberia.

A bit closer to home, William James ascribed qualities to certain anesthetics that Huxley also attributed to mescaline and LSD. There isn't much new under Huxley's sun, since James was already making the following observations (1958, 298): "Nitrous oxide and ether ... stimulate the mystical consciousness in an extraordinary degree. Depth beyond depth of truth seems revealed to the inhaler. This truth fades out, however, or escapes, at the moment of coming to; ... No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. ... It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity."¹⁷

James also writes about alcohol as an important inducer of mystical states (1958, 297): "The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates and says no; drunkenness expands, unites, and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the Yes function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth."

In Marcel Proust's great multivolume novel *In Search of Lost Time*, "time travel" is triggered by the eating of a small cake. In the Low Countries, pure sugar can also be transformed into holy manna. In his novel *Gewassen vlees*, the Dutch writer Thomas Rosenboom (1993, 83 ff.) describes the impressions and sensations experienced by his fictional character Willem Augustijn upon tasting beet sugar for the first time. The story takes place when cane sugar was common but beet sugar was a novelty:

At first he tasted nothing, but then so much sweetness was released that it was as if a lamp had been lit in his mouth. "My God," he stammered, "it's sugar ... white sugar ... !" Thunderstruck, he kept staring at the sparkling crystals in Dorrius's hand; he had never seen white sugar before. ... They both looked at the sugar in silence for quite some time, then Willem Augustijn whispered, "Truly, whiter than snow ..." The whiteness seemed to Willem Augustijn to glow with greater and greater transparency; it glittered delicately like star jelly, and, practically caressing it, he rolled his finger through the grains once more. ... Gradually Willem Augustijn's delusion condensed into an urge, a fervor; the white sugary blaze burned on in his mind, flared up even more brightly, and rose like the sun where he himself stood, a beginning, a longing, an appeal, but he did not yet know to what purpose. "This sugar, my God, I've been cured ..." he blurted out in a transport of excitement. "It's a medicine for the healthy, better than the universal elixir of alchemy. It's the theriac of chemistry ... an edible delight, a purgative for the soul, the Enlightenment as solid matter, synthetic fiber," Willem Augustijn continued, unstoppable. He bent over further and further as he spoke, staring at the living light. ... His face was so close to the hand that he could smell his own breath with every word he spoke; the sugar itself remained as odorless as the devil. "The idea of this sugar will cause its truth to shine wherever there is light. The Enlightenment is its hearth and home, and all of Christendom will swerve toward its whiteness ..." Something snapped. The beast of his zeal crept into his mind, and Willem Augustijn grabbed his head with both hands. A dazzling prospect opened up to him, a silver track down which he slid with a whoosh, deeper and deeper, faster and faster, higher and higher ... [Shortly thereafter, when the first ecstasy had subsided] The sugar was still barely glistening in the light of the flame without giving off any light of its own, but in his mind the glow shone whiter than ever, flaring up with every morsel he tasted, and as silvery as magnesia, as powerful as mercury. He had scattered a little mound of the crystals on the blotter in front of him, and he stared at it, endlessly nodding and bowing, while moving his hands around the flame. Everything was good ...

Besides the various substances that people use to try to discover something about truth, enlightenment, and the deeper realities, there are also the (literally) reactionary methods that actually discourage this effort. In recent decades the use of medications such as Seroquel and Zyprexa has reached

epidemic proportions. Out of fear of the strange, the unpredictable, and the bizarre, these medicines have been distributed throughout our society. They are addictive, they cause brain damage, and whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages is very much in doubt. In any case, such medications do not lead to an esse-delusion; they do not result in enlightenment or a mystical experience, and they will not be further discussed here. 19

Insofar as we already believe in a "means," does one specific "means" for reaching "being" have preference over the others? No. Many roads lead to Rome. A good book of philosophy by someone like Taylor or Kingsley can work wonders. Jim Morrison or Bach can also be very effective. Zaehner, whom I have quoted several times, ended up in an esse-delusion by reading Rimbaud. Huxley swore by mescaline and Willem Augustijn by sugar. Whatever works for you.

For those who are professionally involved with mad people in mental hospitals, I have two tips. First, experiment with a "psychosomimetic" substance, such as mescaline or LSD. As long as the difference between a mescaline or an LSD high and "real psychoses" is clearly understood, then experimenting with LSD, mescaline, or other psychosomimetics could actually be part of a psychiatrist's education (also see Osmond, 1967). Whether one is afraid of, concerned about, interested in, or obsessed by madness, such psychosomimetic substances can teach us a great deal. A second tip for people working in mental health is to try taking medications such as Zyprexa or Haldol but only to help you better understand what those who are prescribed these medicines have to go through. A taste of your own medicine!

11 The Infinity Trap: The Ω -Delusion

The mechanically wacky perspectives of a unicorn

Tell me, O blue-haired goddess of logic, how anyone can claim that the unicorn does not exist. On this infinite globe, with its center everywhere and its periphery nowhere, the possibility of existence is all it takes to really exist. Keep in mind that the plant and the stone are just as much at the center as the living creature, the sun as much as you yourself. If something were to completely illuminate itself, then mountains would unfold on it, lakes full of fish, all manner of animals, stones, trees, and shapes. You don't want to be tied down? Then turn around. The moment awaits.

—Harald Kaas, Uhren und Meere (1979, 51ff.)

The third type of mystical madness is the infinity delusion (Ω -delusion). It is said of both mysticism and madness that all borders there are removed or transgressed, that the experience exceeds all limits, and that contact is made with something ineffable and infinite. That infinity is the focus of this chapter, and once again I will tackle the problem of mystical madness by resorting to a variety of methods and texts—this time in the light of infinity. After the raging orgies, the drug-induced highs, and the esoteric reflections of the last chapter, here I will make a "dry start" by looking at numbers, arithmetic, and mathematics.

11.1 Cantor and Mathematical Infinity

11.1.1 Calculation

In this section I will approach the mystical madness of infinity by examining what it means "to keep on counting"—that is, what is infinity in number theory? Is it possible to keep on counting? Do you never reach a final number? Or do you end up in infinity? These questions lead to the heart of

philosophy—and madness. Before launching into the discussion, I would like to take a step back to ponder this question: What is a number anyway?

Numbers are part of everyday life. Young children learn to count at an early age, and talking about numbers seems as natural and automatic as talking about time. As long as you don't think too deeply about what a number actually is, nothing can go wrong. But reflecting on "number," like reflecting on "time," can result in philosophical astonishment, mystical contemplation, and mad raptures. Thus a great deal of what I wrote about Plotinus and the uni-delusion can be traced back to reflections on the miracle that 1=1.

So what is a number? Is it something that really exists, the way stones, trees, and people really exist? Or is it something that exists only in our heads? When you think about the number five, you may be inclined to think that it really exists. You can see five stones or five trees standing side by side, and you can say that "the quantity of something (trees, stones)" is a quality that "really exists." This sounds plausible for a number like five, but when it comes to a number like pi (the number expressing the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter), we are less likely to say that it really exists. You could still say that a circle really exists, or at least something like it. But pi seems more like a number that was invented to make it easier to perform certain calculations involving circles. It's more likely that pi does not really exist and that it comes into existence only at the moment that we relate the circumference of a circle to its diameter. But if you carry this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion, then you are forced to admit that the number five doesn't really exist either. Indeed, five exists only because we regard five separate "uncounted" things as a "fivefold group," an arrangement that we ourselves make. In short, the problem of the existence of numbers is not an easy one to solve. But that doesn't keep us from using numbers in our ordinary, non-mad and non-metamathematical lives without worrying about their "realness." When we ponder the question of infinity, however, we quickly run into these kinds of philosophical problems having to do with "what is real"—problems that are already present whenever we deal with ordinary numbers but that are less obvious there.

Anyone who thinks about infinity in mathematical terms cannot avoid the work of the nineteenth-century German mathematician Georg Cantor. He was the first to explore the realm of the infinite number in greater detail and to apply structure and order to various kinds of infinity. First, he made a distinction between ordinary numbers that can be reached by counting from zero, one, two, and so on, and numbers that cannot be reached by counting from ordinary numbers. An example of such an unattainable, The Infinity Trap 333

infinite number is the number N, which refers to the quantity of all natural numbers. The natural numbers are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and so on. Since, in principle, you can just keep on counting, there are an infinite amount of numbers and therefore N is infinitely large.

What made Cantor's work innovative was that he didn't stop there. He studied the kinds of rules that apply to this infinitely large number N, and he showed how the rules governing infinitely large numbers are different than those for ordinary numbers. An example of this is that ω (the symbol for such infinite numbers) plus 1 is still ω , while for ordinary finite numbers, x+1 can never be x, regardless of the value of x. Cantor also discovered that there are different kinds of infinity. Examples of this are (1) the infinite quantity of natural numbers (N) and (2) the infinite amount of real numbers (N plus all variants of such numbers: fractions, square roots, pi, etc.). Cantor proved that the infinity of N is smaller than the infinity of the real numbers, thereby demonstrating that there are many levels of infinity; all infinities may be infinite, but some infinities are more infinite than others.

Just as in the case of ordinary numbers, such as five and pi, it is not clear *how* these kinds of infinities exist, whether in thought or in reality. Nevertheless, we talk about them today as if they did exist, although their manner of existence is disputed. In a certain sense, they are conceivable and imaginable as well as describable and calculable. But there are discussions with regard to exactly what place they, therefore, might occupy in mathematics. There is even less agreement about whether they also refer to "something real" beyond mathematics, "in the real world." Frequently mentioned candidates for "real infinity" in the real world are time and space. It is claimed that space is infinitely divisible (see section 11.2.1) and that time is infinite as well—not only in the subdivision of small units of time but also in the infinite extension of time, year after year, into the future or the past.

The kind of infinities I have been discussing up until now are what Cantor called "transfinites," because they bypass the finite. These transfinites and their properties are the subject of extensive mathematical study. But the question of greater importance here is whether something also exists "above" the transfinites as "the most infinite" or as the "absolute infinite." Indeed, after concluding that there are different gradations of infinity, we must also ask whether the whole series of infinites will ever come to an end. Cantor thought they would. He argued that, in addition to the transfinites, there is also "absolute infinity," which is often indicated by means of the capital letter omega: Ω . The transfinites and, far below them, the finites or

"ordinary numbers" are weak "shadows" or limited reflections of Ω , absolute infinity.

According to Cantor himself, Ω is equal to God. Both Ω and God are beyond human comprehension. Absolute infinity, or Ω , is the source that gives rise to the transfinite and the finite ordinary numbers, analogous to the way the saints—and, "below them," all normal earthly lifeforms—are generated by the infinite God, and also analogous to the way the lower hypostases emanate from the Plotinian One. Cantor wrote (1932, 387), "Actual infinity appears in three different contexts: first, when it is realized in its most complete form, in a fully independent form not of this world, in God, where I call it Absolute Infinite or simply the Absolute; second, when it appears in the contingent, created world; third, when the mind grasps it in abstracto as a kind of mathematical quantity, number, or sequence. I make a strict distinction between the Absolute and what I call the Transfinite, that is: the actual infinities of the two latter kinds, which are clearly limited, are the objects of further growth, and thereby related to the finite."

Absolute infinity transcends everything, and the transfinites (according to Cantor) have both an ideal mathematical variant and a real variant that occurs in the world. Cantor was strongly criticized for this idea of two sides; nonreligious mathematicians found the positing of an absolute infinity just as objectionable as the assertion that God exists, while religious authorities thought this vision of the Absolute was too far removed from official doctrine. Another problem was Cantor's claim that the existence of transfinites had been revealed to him personally by God and that the domain of the transfinites was "closer" to absolute infinity than to the finite. In saying this, he was actually defending such a thing as "holy numbers," which themselves were not divine but did stand on a higher plane than ordinary numbers. He wrote (1932, 374), "Fear of infinity is a form of myopia that destroys the possibility of actually seeing the infinite, although in its highest form it created us and supports us, and in its secondary, transfinite form it is present all around us and even gives content to our consciousness."

According to Cantor, the three levels of infinity—in God, in the mind, and in nature—all have something in common: they are "actually infinite." This caused Cantor to be accused of pantheism, just as Huxley and Custance were. The similarities between Custance and Cantor go even further. Cantor had innumerable crises as well, which had to do with his belief in Ω , among other things. Cantor, the man who discovered transfinite numbers and was an expert on the subject of infinity, may at the same time have been the first to fall victim to a purely mathematical " Ω -delusion."

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11.1.2 Ad Infinitum

For us, Cantor's absolute infinity is emblematic of the infinity of mystical madness. Like the mad-mystical experience, Ω cannot be grasped by means of thoughts, words, or images. As soon as you hope you have defined it, it transcends and escapes any attempt to tie it down. In one of the few books that tries to think through the practical and philosophical implications of mathematical infinity, Rudy Rucker writes (1982, 69), "In trying to think of bigger and bigger ordinals, one sinks into a kind of endless morass. Any procedure you come up with for naming larger ordinals eventually peters out, and the ordinals keep on coming. Finally, your mind snaps, and maybe you get a momentary glimpse of what the Absolute infinite is all about. Then you try to formalize your glimpse, and you end up with a new system for naming ordinals ... which eventually peters out."

No matter how hard you to try to identify Ω in thought or in language, it's always something more—or something different—than what you had attempted. Like an absolute horizon that you can never get beyond, Ω always recedes. Nevertheless, Rucker tries to take on the "Absolute," which is reminiscent of the paradoxical way that we try to approach and encircle mystical madness. In the above quote, for example, Rucker suggests that Ω is something you can catch a "glimpse" of just when your "mind snaps" (cf. the title of my introduction to part II: "Glimpses into Troubled Water"). Rucker discusses this in greater detail later on (1982, 81): "A skeptical reader could, quite rightly, demand to know how it is possible to discourse rationally about an inconceivable object like Ω . I would respond that Ω is a given, an object of our immediate, pre-rational experience." So the infinitely large, incomprehensible Ω is also immediately present and precedes our very thought.

At other points in his book, Rucker writes about the counterpart to Ω in the language of mathematical set theory, which he calls V, referring to the set containing all sets. This set is ostensibly impossible; it cannot be thought or imagined, because set V would have to contain V itself, which would lead to an endless expansion of V—to the infinity of Ω . Rucker makes an interesting comment about those who dare to think about V and end up in the infinite regression of Ω (1982, 202): "For the various reasons discussed in 'What Is a Set?,' we know that the class V of all sets is not a set. V is not the form of a possible thought. This means that whenever a person believes himself to be thinking of the true V, he is deluded." Said another way, that person is not only thinking incorrectly but is also deluded; he is thinking the unthinkable. Rucker continues: "The situation regarding V is

exactly analogous to our situation relative to the metaphysical or theological Absolute. Virtually all thinkers who have discussed the Absolute concur on one point: the Absolute is not rationally knowable."

A remarkable phenomenon occurs when you think long enough about infinity. You seem to come back to reflections on the difference between the number one and higher numbers: reflections on the One and the Many. First of all, Ω is beyond anything that can be comprehended. Nothing can be said about it, no distinctions can be applied to it, and it cannot be compared with anything else. In a certain sense, it's a mute, silent thing, beyond all order—something that does not let itself be known and something about which nothing can be found out. In that sense, it is one thing—a thing that is absolute, the largest, the most, the best. It is the absolute limit, and you cannot "think past" it. And it is the one point where everything stops, the black hole into which everything disappears. But in addition to one, Ω is also "many": after all, it comprises everything, it's more than what you can think about, and you can never get enough of it. If you think that you're "there" now, there's "even more" beyond it. It's far past all of the many. In short, Ω is both oneness and multiplicity at the same time; it is the One that the counter is aiming for, beyond all being, but it is also that which contains the Many.³

Anyone who thinks about Ω long enough will find himself in the contradiction between the One and the Many, which itself is surpassed by Ω . But the infinite can also turn into nothingness: the nothingness that comes "after you've had everything" (all the numbers). Absolute infinity contains a negating element; Ω may be the place you go to if you keep on counting forever, but it can also be defined as the place where you have not yet arrived and where, in principle, you *are not*. Take a number, no matter how high or how endless, and it will not be absolute infinity itself. Paraphrasing Peter Falk in the film *Wings of Desire*, you might say that Ω is not the infinite where all numbers stop but is the infinite where all infinity stops. ⁴ It is the infinity that negates all further possibilities of infinity. It is the absolute negation that anything else is there. ⁵ So by pondering absolute infinity, Ω , you can also end up in absolute nothingness. ⁶

This brings us to the horizon of mathematics, metamathematics, and meta-metamathematics. When you stare intently in the direction of Ω but remain within the numerical, everything dissolves into a kind of infinite number soup. There, Ω splits apart into the One and the Many, or it is transformed into zero. But enough of this mathematical magic. Now it's time to hazard the leap out of the domain of the strictly numerical.

11.1.3 Number Leap

Cantor and Rucker give us a clue as to what's going on in mathematical infinity. But is there any "real" substantial infinity to be found in the world of numbers? Isn't it all just numerical sleight of hand—as interesting as that may be? This is where opinions differ. According to some, when you're in the world of numbers, you're already in the real world. As Galileo famously stated, "The book of nature is written in the language of mathematics." In other words, those who explore the world of numbers also learn more about the ordinary world. All kinds of mathematics that have been "thought up in the head" have turned out to be patterns reflected in nature. And numbers are knowledge. If you count to five in your head, you're also counting to five "for real," and even pi can be "seen" when you measure circles and their diameters. But supposing that the numerical really does govern the world outside mathematics, what about the ω -infinities and, especially, absolute infinity, Ω ? Are the ω -infinities and the Ω -infinity things in the real world that I can actually see? And where in the real world would Ω be found? In religion, in nature, in madness? If you were to leap from the mathematical Ω , where would you go?

Despite the incomprehensibility of Ω , Cantor believed that absolute infinity is the same as God; so it would be possible to take a leap from mathematical Ω to God. In saying this, Cantor aligned himself with a theological tradition in which the existence of God was deduced from the intellectually and rationally incomprehensible "idea" of infinity. Centuries earlier, Anselm had argued something similar: just the thought of something so great, so perfect, so good, so all-embracing as God or infinity would automatically entail its existence. In other words, infinity implies existence, or it would not be absolute infinity. Since the time of Anselm, such ideas or proofs of God or Ω have been a permanent feature of philosophical and theological thought. Some maintain that this proof of God's existence was "invalidated" by Kant, but further study by logicians such as Alvin Plantinga have shown that proof of God's existence such as Anselm's have not lost any of their validity (see Plantinga 1967, for example).

Rucker (1982, 81) also contends that Ω has a parallel in religion, but he does so in a somewhat different way. He doesn't say that the existence of God necessarily follows from the possibility of Ω , but he says that Ω lies at the very heart of religion: "We have a primitive concept of infinity. This concept is inspired, I suspect, by the same deep substrate of mind that conditions religious thought." There is something primitive about Ω , according to Rucker; I would rather describe it as primary or basic. It is something that

lies deep within us, from which religious thoughts arise. This puts mathematical preoccupation with Ω in the same zone as that of religion and religious mania. And Cantor, as I said, may have been an example of this mania.

Rucker makes a few other suggestions regarding the domain outside mathematical reality to which Ω might correspond. He says Ω is evident in the antinomy of the One and the Many. Rucker uses this antimony to outline a means of existence for the infinite (1982, 218, 215): "The world is One and the world is Many. The One/Many split is the heartbeat of the universe, the charged tension that makes things happen. ... One could almost say that the natural rhythm of thought is an oscillation between One and Many. As you look around the room there are constant microlapses of attention. You reach out and merge with the world, then draw back and analyze. At one instant there is only is-ness, at the next there is a person cataloguing his perceptions. One-Many-One-Many."

According to Rucker, infinity, seen in terms of the One and the Many, has something to do with "being" (is-ness). Rucker continues (1982, 191), "the simple predicate, 'exists,' does tie everything together into a unity that is, in principle, possible to experience directly. Rationally the universe is a Many, but mystically it is a One." Here we have a possibility for translating Ω into our notion of being—and the Ω -delusion into the esse-delusion.

Rucker says that the infinite can also be found in nature: in infinite time and infinite space (also see 11.2.1). For Rucker, infinity is not only an aspect of nature but also a guiding ideal. He says (1982, 204), "The approach toward any ideal perhaps can be viewed as an intellectual history consisting of more and more sophisticated concepts. The ideal might be the ethical notion of Virtue, the theological notion of God, the mathematical notion of V, the logical notion of Truth, the artistic notion of Beauty, or the spiritual notion of Love." Absolute infinity is not only part of the natural rhythm of lowly, everyday thought, but it also shines from the mountaintop, so to speak, drawing people up from the finite earthly to the heights of the transfinite and even to the absolutely infinite.

An important question that should be raised here is whether Ω itself can be found in all these different forms or whether these forms are approaches to Ω that are better understood as a set of many ω 's. If there is disagreement between Ω in the field of physics, for example, and Ω in the field of aesthetics, then I think it would be better to speak of a conflict between nonabsolute ω 's. There may be more than one mountaintop, all of them quite different. This is a problem that will keep cropping up as we go along.

One final comment: if Ω on earth can wrap itself in any number of possible guises, then where does it end? Rucker (1982, 205) puts the problem this way: "There is a kind of second-order One/Many problem that arises here. Are all the different absolutes the same? Are God, Truth, Beauty, the Class of all Sets, the Mindscape, the Good, and so on, really different facets of some single ultimate ONE? This is certainly debatable. If all wisdom leads to the same thing, then why are there so many different religions, different schools of thought, and different ways of seeking enlightenment? Is a jogger looking for the same thing that a writer is?"

From the point of view of infinity, everything does converge at Ω . A jogger runs toward the same point that the writer aims for in his writing. The jogger, however, never gets there, just as the writer is never able to boil down his message to a single point. But the point here is that we want to try to understand to what extent the concept of infinity can clarify something for us about madness, from its highest ecstasy to its deepest fear and terror. To that end, I now switch over to a discussion of absolute infinities with mad potency and substance—in both their blissful and their oppressive forms.

11.2 Rapture: Infinity Celebrated

11.2.1 Mystical Space Travel

11.2.1.1 Fencing with infinity: Fractals represented According to Rucker, mathematical infinity can be found in reality: time may well be infinite (see chapter 3), and it's possible that space is infinite too—infinitely small and infinitely large. The example he gives of infinity in space is the length of the coastline of England: when you slowly zoom into the coast of England, you notice that, upon closer inspection, each section of coastline that you first saw as straight is actually crooked. The closer you zoom in and the more precisely you are able to measure, the longer the perimeter becomes—until the measuring instrument breaks down and you slip into the realm of the molecular and the atomic. But if you could just keep on measuring, you would discover an infinite length. Although the surface area of England is not infinite, its perimeter apparently is. Within something finite, the infinite can lie hidden.

To see such infinity in space, we don't have to zoom in on England with a camera. There are also mathematical operations that, when shown graphically, reveal infinite branching within a finite and limited surface, such as with a computer screen. The so-called fractals demonstrate what infinity in space is with an ideal purity. If you search the term "fractals" on

the internet, you can quickly find links to a number of dizzying short films in which lines and surfaces seem to unfold and branch off in space, further and further, deeper and deeper—ad infinitum. Such spatial infinity is like the spatial realization of mathematical infinity.

But is what you see on the screen "real" infinity? You see "infinite branching," but are you really seeing it? Or is infinity taking place only in your mind, and is what you are perceiving really no more than an endless set of colored pixels onto which you are projecting infinity? Such films are really only the finite spatial execution or representation of an infinite numerical operation. Digitally, what you're seeing is a finite set of zeroes and ones, which is able to suggest spatial infinity thanks to the hardware of the computer and the screen.

Infinity is located somewhere between mind and matter, between thought and perception. Another question is whether this infinity concerns a lowercase ω or uppercase Ω . This Ω , absolute infinity, is not something you can "think up," since it's always more. You also cannot perceive it, since it's always more than the image of it that you can see. Rather, Ω lies beyond the limits of thought and perception. The short films of Mandelbrot fractals give us no more than a "suggestion" of infinity—but exactly *what* they suggest is literally impossible to say and even more so to demonstrate.

Spatial infinity of the fractal kind is suggested in a representation of a mathematical operation on a computer screen. It is possible that a mathematician who does calculations with Cantor's infinities also "imagines" or "conceptualizes" but without a screen—on the inside of his eyelids, as it were. Maybe he "sees" Mandelbrot drawings with his mind's eye. In principle, he doesn't really need any complex mathematical functions to do so; contemplation of 1+1, or even of 1=1—the One—can provide him with a "view" of Ω . And mathematicians are not the only ones who focus on a point in order to see/think/discover infinity. You might be a poet, or a psychotic, or a jogger.⁷

In any case, apparently we discuss and contemplate ω infinities and the Ω Infinity by using spatial terms like "immeasurably large" or "infinitely small." Absolute infinity is "beyond" all other numbers, metaphorically and spatially speaking. So you can also say that space is a domain within which you can identify infinity and perhaps discuss or even experience it. It may be that everyone sees infinity "in space," and that that is the heart of what "seeing" actually is. But perhaps at some moments, for some people, it is clearer that at least ω and maybe even Ω is present in space. Those who catch "a glimpse" (see Rucker above) of infinity in space might be poets, mathematicians, or joggers, but they might also be madmen and

drug users. In terms of fire metaphors, you could say that, in madness, the lightning of infinity strikes and leaves the madman in a state of ecstasy, terror, and perplexity. Seen in this way, "spatial" hallucinations may be Ω messages—fractals with a personal and cosmic message in which you can lose your gaze entirely.

11.2.1.2 High-flying art: Michaux's space lyrics Michaux (1974, 92ff.) describes an experience of spatial infinity that is interesting enough in this connection to take a closer look at. The experience took place under the influence of cannabis, but the specific vehicle is of secondary importance to the phenomenology of the journey into space being described. Below are a few abridged fragments from Michaux's description, which serve as a report of what can happen when you cross the borders of Plato's cave—by night light.

A black sky filled with stars stretched out all around me. I plunged into it. It was extraordinary. Instantaneously stripped of everything as though of an overcoat, I passed into space. I was projected into it, I was hurled into it, I flowed into it. I was violently seized by it, irresistibly. ... An utterly unsuspected marvel.

Michaux (or at least the "I" in this fragment) empties out entirely in space. He leaves everything behind; he is detached from everything earthly. He falls upward.

What I was experiencing was very different from admiration. ... As though torn from the earth, feeling myself carried irresistibly upward, borne ever farther by a marvelous invisible levitation, into an endless space, which *could* not end.

He floats without anything to tie him down, without substance: no earth, no water, and no air. This could be frightening, but it isn't. All ballast has been thrown overboard, and as a result he comes in contact with the heavenly—the spatially infinite abyss.

It could have been awful. It was an effulgence. The static, the finite, the solid had seen their day. There was nothing left of them, or almost nothing. Divested, I rose, propelled; stripped of possessions and attributes, stripped even of all recourse to the earth, all sense of place being lost—an unimaginable divestment, which seemed almost absolute, since I was unable to find anything it would not have taken from me. Surely, I had not seen, not really seen the sky before. I had resisted it, viewing it from the other side, from the side of the earth, from what is solid, if opposite. ... The sky—I was in it. At last we were in contact. And I continued to observe it, if the word "observe" applies to an abyss into which one is flung and from which nothing any longer separates you.

The following fragment can be read as if Michaux were falling from one spatial ω to the next, with everything tending toward Ω . The bliss and the

sense of being overwhelmed, the wonder, the idolization: in the infinity of space, a holy entrance to Ω opened up.

Space was permanent. It was not unvarying. In fact, it varied constantly. For a long time, it was on the increase. Spaces beyond the space formed themselves anew, spaces which after some time engendered others, and still others, so that each new kind of space canceled the preceding one, even depriving it of something or other, making it more immaterially space, purified space, with nothing heterogeneous left. Space, space beyond everything. Contemplation. Face to face and not only face to face. Everywhere I coincided with it, meeting it on all sides. Untranscendable and with no salient feature, nothing the mind could take hold of. ... And still I endured this distance, this deluge of infinity. As one endures the evening's cold. The distance had passed into another class, and I too had passed into another class. ... He who does not know what to believe in had just received—I see no other word for it—something like a sacrament, the spatial sacrament. As though the Infinite, to make itself manifest, had taken space for a simple and sufficient indicator, space as symbol and anthem.

After his mystical journey in space, weaving and swerving toward Ω , Michaux returns to everyday earth. He recalls Ω with nostalgia, but he knows that he is no longer "up there."

Extraordinary as this open sky may have been, by morning it no longer existed. ... No longer do I penetrate its depth, into which I had penetrated so deeply. ... I coldly view the apparent dimensions, their apparent radiance (that is, their relative radiance). I am here and they are there: I have landed. The dualizing consciousness has returned—the pluralizing, the plurilocalizing consciousness. The balcony is here, my body above it. The sky farther off. The mountain which will appear with the dawn, there! ... The balcony is made of brick, the mountains of earth, myself of cartilage, nerve tissue, and bone, and aware of my location. Space is no more than a concept, an estimate, a given. §

What are the consequences of such an experience of spatial infinity? What can you do with it? Many psychotics spend years being confused. They allow themselves to be stupefied by antimystical drugs, and they speak in doctor's language about "chronic illness" and "visual hallucinations." But when you refuse to be put off by the medical profession, what kinds of possibilities and dangers do you face? According to Michaux, you first run the risk of deriving rigid dogmas from your experience. Although it is recommended that such experiences be followed by further explorations of metaphysical worlds, there is also the danger of "mutilating" the Ω experience.

From such an immersion one often returns with dogmas. The barriers of the physical so utterly overcome, the metaphysical alone remaining and realizable, it is for metaphysical nourishment that one hungers, instantly and unbelievably, it is a

metaphysical response that one impatiently craves, it is a metaphysical world that one urgently needs in order to receive the revelation included within it. ... As I see it, the revelation of divestment, the beatitude within divestment, the matchless expansion, that ineffable, incomparable nonduality, should be protected from accommodation by any system, no matter how tempting, protected from being distorted, prematurely in controlled applications.⁹

Ultimately one ends up in everyday reality, with its customs and attachments, and Ω slowly turns into a memory of a distant star.

But once the ordinary was restored, reality re-established itself, insistent in its plurality which constitutes, which begins reconstituting the contradictions, the absurdities, the thousand complications and inescapable inadequacies of behavior, the stumbling blocks of the future. Legion are the bonds, and legion they reassert themselves. The habitations of bondage are invisible, and strong are the fine meshings which constitute a man's life. FAR, far now is the One, untroubled, far the sovereign state of simplicity.

11.2.1.3 Golden chicken or golden egg? Although you can't do very much with them, infinite experiences of space have value. According to Michaux, they let us see something ("a glimpse") of absolute reality and direct us to new paths of sense and meaning. In fact, he says, such experiences lie at the very source of metaphysical systems. Michaux himself says, "It is not absurd to think that in India, especially, the metaphysical experience (through direct action on the body) preceded the great metaphysical systems which were first elaborated in its mold, shaped to contain it. The search for the liberation from duality, 'to be no longer implicated by anything,' the masterly detachment from self and from one's own actions and behavior, appear to have emerged from exceptional experiences, which served as a model."

In section 10.3.3.1, I showed that Zaehner is critical of the value of what he calls nature mysticism. Yet even he (in 1957, 50) believes that after further reflection and generalization, such experiences can result in metaphysical systems such as those of Vedanta or Parmenides (or Plotinus, it can be added): "The 'natural mystical experience' is a widely authenticated fact. ... In all cases the person who has the experience seems to be convinced that what he experiences, so far from being illusory, is on the contrary something far more real than what he experiences normally through his five senses or what he thinks with his finite mind. It is, at its highest, a transcending of time and space in which an infinite mode of experience is actually experienced. ... Generalize this experience into a philosophy for which you claim universal validity and you get the Vedanta ... you get Parmenides."

Zaehner and Michaux believe that experiences of infinity can give rise to and inspire the development of metaphysics. According to this view, mystical experiences of infinity are authentic and precede philosophical reflection. According to others, such as Gershon Scholem, the distinguished authority on Jewish mysticism, the relationship is just the reverse: metaphysics, religion, and doctrines on salvation are primary, and they offer mystics a vocabulary and a way of talking about unusual experiences. As Scholem says (1965, 8), "The moment a mystic tries to clarify his experience by reflection, to formulate it, and especially when he attempts to communicate it to others, he cannot help imposing a framework of conventional symbols and ideas upon it. To be sure, there is always some part of it that he cannot adequately and fully express. But if he does try to communicate his experience—and it is only by doing so that he makes himself known to us—he is bound to interpret his experience in a language, in images and concepts, that were created before him. ... The symbols of the traditional religious authority play a prominent part in such structures. ... But these structures which are alternately broken down and built up in the course of the mystic's development also reflect certain assumptions concerning the nature of reality, which originated in, and derived their authority from, philosophical traditions, and then surprisingly (or perhaps not so surprisingly) found confirmation in mystical experience."

Here we encounter problems of language, experience, authenticity, and interpretation. But actually it's a chicken-or-egg problem: What came first, the experience without words or the words of the experience? Fortunately, this problem does not have to be solved here. All we have to deal with are the intrusiveness and transformative potency of the experiences of infinity, whether they are original or copies of copies.¹⁰

11.2.2 Merging Opposites

It is customary to explain Ω either in terms of number theory, thinking, and time or in terms of geometry, perception, and space. This gives us a readily comprehensible image, a system of coordinates that extends around us in time and space, with Ω free to maneuver far beyond the horizon of this overview. Thus, Ω remains at a safe distance, literally outside our field of vision. We may keep it at bay, beyond our imagination, but we haven't banished it from our lives. At any time of the day, from any nook or cranny, the abyss of Ω can open up. It can emerge when calculations are performed past distant limits or when the yardstick is extended far beyond the horizon, as in cases like that of Cantor. It can also manifest itself in the everyday (mad) experience. A good example of this can be found once again in the work

of Custance, which can be described not only from the perspective of the esse-delusion but also from the notion of the Ω -delusion.

11.2.2.1 Infinitely out of control: Custance adrift Custance's entrance into the realm of infinity begins with the collapse of conscience (1952, 50): "The burden of conscience, of the 'super-ego' of Freudian theory, is enormous. In mania it is lifted as it were by magic. And the lifting of the burden opens the gate into the Infinite, or so it seems." When the conscience collapses, more is obliterated than conscience alone. Also lost are the connections with other people and with ordinary activities and experiences. When these are gone, one is set adrift, ad infinitum. Speaking of this drifting, Custance says he was trying to reconcile contradictory ideas and to search for synthesis (1952, 86): "When mania is approaching my mind is wholly dominated by an urge to synthesize. I strive to reconcile conflicting ideas ..."

With his conscience gone, he thinks and experiences beyond good and evil. The contrast between good and evil is replaced by other dualisms, and they become important for organizing his experience and perception and directing his actions. The first one Custance mentions is an abstract dualism of positive versus negative, which he sees in contrasts between electrical poles and between male and female (1952, 87): "There was a fundamental opposition in the universe, but it was not the opposition of good and evil. I seemed to see, like a flash, two vast lines of connection stretching right back into the evolutionary process, which I could not help calling the 'Positive' and 'Negative' Powers of God. The image was plainly of an electrical circuit with positive and negative poles, and I made many attempts to draw it. Sometimes it seemed as though two currents were involved, running in opposite directions. Whichever way I conceived it, the electrical analogy seemed the most appropriate. Yet it was also associated with sex, and directly derived from the vision of the male and female organs which is always behind the ideas which come to me in a manic period."¹¹

The infinity involved in such experiences—or figments of Custance's imagination—has to do with searching for synthesis and attempting to process contradictions to transform them into a unified whole, all while analyzing new information and trying to integrate it into his experience. The monistic impulse, the search for the one infinity, keeps running up against new "data" that get in the way of an absolute, conclusive Ω . The ultimate synthesis is constantly being delayed; Ω is close at hand but remains on the horizon.

In some fragments, Custance writes about a kind of "hard core" of mystical delusion (the never-changing, primal image of all ideas). At such

moments he seems to be shortchanging his own experience by describing and explaining his desire for infinity in retrospect as a finite—and absurd—endeavor. Take a look at the following passage (1952, 89), for example, in which Custance presents a clear-cut image of madness and dismisses mystical madness as a kaleidoscope of images and thoughts that are nothing but the product of one's fantasy: "In a series of kaleidoscopic fantasies an extraordinary number of associations with these Positive and Negative Powers appeared to me, until, as I have said, it seemed possible to classify the whole of creation under one head or the other. The essential basis, however, remained at once sexual and religious."

In the light of this quote, it is doubtful that Custance ever reached the kind of perplexity and depth that Michaux did. However, it's important that we distinguish Custance's experience of mystical madness from his description of it after the fact. As we read earlier on, Michaux warned that experiences of Ω , when viewed in retrospect, are in danger of being mutilated and degenerating into dogmas. 12 In other fragments, Custance seems to have gotten more glimpses—if not waves—of Ω , such as when he writes about his madness (quoted in Zaehner 1957, 93): "'It is a strange and lovely land beyond individuality, and incidentally also beyond good and evil, since opposites are reconciled and the peace that passes all understanding rules supreme. In it there is no death, no final separation, no fundamental or absolute division or distinction, no time, for all that ever was still is, now and for evermore. ... Heaven and Hell wedded, the wonderful longing for the abyss; whatever strict logic and morality may have to say about the apprehension, there is no doubt that we are somehow touching the springs of the soul. It is the ultimate uniting, the final synthesis, the rebirth that makes all things new."13

The infinity in such experiences can be found in the bliss derived from the fact that everything is related to everything and that this becomes increasingly clear to you with infinite speed. The perception of reality merges with thinking about reality, and this is transformed into the absolute (or "infinite") synthesis of the One and Ω . All indications converge at the summit. The sense of bliss lies in the realization of a paradox: the expectation that something infinitely new and exciting is close at hand, along with the insight that essentially everything has already been made known to you. In psychosis, you can see through everything and everybody; you are the center of the infinite cosmos, and at the same time you have a strong, vague feeling of expectation, as if "there's something in the air." A frantic curiosity about the outside world goes hand in hand with an inner omniscience. You lose yourself in superficial details and banalities as well

as in monomaniacal inner abstractions and grandiloquence. In retrospect your own past turns out to have been a slowly unfolding manifestation of Ω . You frantically rewrite histories, cosmologies, and interpretations of personal encounters. You experience analyses, reinterpretations, and syntheses as earth-shattering events unraveling within you and around you at infinite speed. You yourself are Ω , you are becoming Ω , and everything will end in Ω .

The mystical-mad infinity trap can be compared to breaking the sound barrier. After an airplane has crashed through the barrier, it leaves the sound behind—but keeps on flying. The mystical madman has a similar breakthrough; he breaks through barriers by means of thinking, reflection, and hyperreflection. Established distinctions that are used to channel experiences, thoughts, and perceptions now become fluid. Opposites are eliminated and transformed into higher, more abstract entities. Custance breaks through the difference between good and evil. Eckhart makes a breakthrough to the divine by exceeding the limits of earthly time and transcending the body. In chapter 2, I discussed breaking through the border between thought and perception in terms of the *Wahnstimmung*. When you break through all the trees in the forest, there is nothing left to obstruct your view of infinity.

Understandably, when such periods are described in retrospect, it is not easy to say "exactly what happened." It all has to do with what you saw, but it equally has to do with what you thought. When you discuss "exactly what happened" with a psychiatrist, or in some other context that is hostile to mysticism, more than likely the experience will be reduced to a combination of "errors of logic" (delusions) and "errors of perception" (hallucinations), while its aspect of infinity will remain unaddressed. For want of a suitable vocabulary and "metaphysics" (see Michaux above), many psychotics and former psychotics end up in the gutter with nothing at their disposal but the constant flow of antimystic drugs, where a view of the stars and the infinite firmament is replaced by the prospect of a life of "disability."

11.2.2.2 Pray without ceasing: Nicholas of Cusa The breaking down of borders and the elimination of opposites in search of absolute infinity occurs in many schools of philosophy. Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) was one of the first philosophers to reflect on the meaning and consequences of God's boundlessness. He became known for the *coincidentia oppositorum*, or the "unity of opposites," a method of thinking linked to God and infinity.

In Custance we've already seen a fascination with transgressing borders and uniting opposites, for which Custance himself uses the term *coincidentia*

oppositorum. Nicholas's notion of infinity and its practical consequences are also discussed by Harald Kaas and Peter Sloterdijk—all the more reason to take a closer look at Nicholas's *coincidentia oppositorum*.

For Nicholas of Cusa, God *is* the infinite *coincidentia oppositorum* (cf. Copleston 1953, 41ff.). We mortals think and experience in terms of opposites; finite life on earth is marked by diversity and contrast. God—the infinite—exceeds all opposites. For us, things have a nature or an essence; in addition, it is possible that things also "are," that they exist along with their essence. With God, essence and existence coincide. If you recognize the essence of God, you know right away that he exists. Concepts like the very largest and the very smallest also coincide in God, and God "exceeds" the concept of size. This last example calls to mind Rucker's discussion of Ω . The modern infinity of space can be found not only in the infinitely small—when you zoom in on a small section of coastline, for example—but also in the infinitely large, when you try to hypothesize a "highest number."

The God of Nicholas is linked to what I earlier called "dethinking": ultimately, God, Ω , and the *coincidentia oppositorum* cannot be thought about. Karl Albert (1996, 116ff.) quotes from and comments on Nicholas of Cusa in this regard: "The unity of opposites exceeds our ability to grasp intellectually and is only accessible to the visual apprehension of the intellect, the visio intellectualis. ... This visual apprehension is beyond all sensory, analytical, and even reasonable understanding, because it carries one to a darkness that at the same time brings with it the brightest enlightenment." Here Nicholas is talking about another form of thinking, which he calls the visio intellectualis. This mysterious ability plays a role in all idealistic philosophy, from Plotinus to Schelling. The "knowledge" that this visual apprehension provides can be expressed only in metaphors. Albert continues his discussion of Nicholas with a lovely quote: "That is what Nicholas of Cusa is talking about in his description of the 'beholding of God': 'I have discovered that the place where You are found unveiled is girded about with the coincidence of contradictories. This is the wall of paradise, and it is there in paradise that You reside. The wall's gate is guarded by the highest spirit of reason, and unless it is overpowered, the way in will not lie open. Thus, it is on the other side of the coincidence of contradictories that You will be able to be seen and nowhere on this side.""

Nicholas's approach to God and the infinite happens along the *via negativa* (see section 7.1) by denying that God is something specific. And by again denying the conclusions to be drawn from such a denial, we shift the very notion of God to a higher and higher plane. God can never be expressed "in terms of a position (or an opposition)." This kind of negative

thinking can also be found in Cantor and Rucker. Rucker juggles with larger and larger numbers; whenever you think you've gotten there—to infinity—he shows that there are many series of infinities and that there is "always more," so that "the true Ω " keeps receding. Neither can anything substantial be said about the ultimate *coincidentia oppositorum*, God. There, all language stops. In this Cusian-Christian tradition, awe for the ineffably infinite is preferably expressed by means of a mystical silence. As theologian Ludwig Hödl (1991, 227) says, "On the path of reflection, the theologian [Nicholas of Cusa]—standing before the image of the 'all-seeing'—leads us to the borders of the unknowable. By way of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the notion of the border, he points to the mystery of the infinite surrounding us, before which the observer must fall silent."

Although, for Nicholas, infinity is the divine, there is also something troubling about the way he thinks. Infinity, he writes, is the *hellste Erleuchtung* (clearest enlightenment), but it is also *das Dunkel* (the obscure). The glowing rapture that Ω can evoke can switch to a dark shudder. In chapter 12 I will show that the ecstasy and joy we feel in response to infinity and its reversal, so applauded here, can easily turn into fear—a sense of dizziness at the emptiness and darkness of the abyss.

11.2.2.3 Pairing in the wild: Eliade and the orgy From the previous sections you might be led to conclude that these madmen, philosophers, and religious mystics have all taken up a strange sort of hobby in which they amuse themselves by pondering oddities such as infinity and the coincidentia oppositorum. That may be true, but according to Eliade, what they (we!) are so obsessed with is "one of the greatest discoveries of the human spirit." The coincidentia oppositorum, he argues, is more than a speculative theologicalphilosophical idea or a "nutty delusion." It's the result of an "existential tension" that can be released through symbolism and mythology—and madness, I'd like to add. Eliade (1965, 206) writes, "although the concepts of polarity and the coincidentia oppositorum have been used systematically since the beginnings of philosophical speculation, the symbols which have obscurely revealed them have not been the product of critical reflection but the result of an existential tension. ... One of the greatest discoveries of the human spirit was naïvely anticipated on the day when, by certain religious symbols, man guessed that oppositions and antagonisms can be fitted and integrated into a unity. From then onwards the negative and sinister aspects of the Cosmos and the Gods not only found a justification but revealed themselves as an integral part of all reality or sacrality."

So according to Eliade, the *coincidentia oppositorum* is not just a theory or idea that can or cannot be applied to the world. It also has to do with a

fundamental experience of the sacred or the divine, in all its paradoxical unity and division. It's not just a theological concept by which you can talk and argue about God; it's also a form of experience in which you can encounter the sacred or the divine. Seen in this light, the *coincidentia oppositorum* of Custance is not his worldview or his philosophy of life, but his own mad *experience*. As his own example of *coincidentia oppositorum*, Eliade posits the wildness of the orgy (1958, 418): "The coincidentia oppositorum or transcending of all attributes can be achieved by man in all sorts of ways. At the most elementary level of religious life there is the orgy: for it symbolizes a return to the amorphous and the indistinct, to a state in which all attributes disappear and contraries are merged." Here Eliade provides an analogy of, or perhaps an explanation for, the pairing of sex and religion in madness (see 10.1.2).

A second example of coincidentia oppositorum as it is lived out occurs in Eastern mysticism. Eliade (1958, 418) says, "But exactly the same doctrine can also be discerned in the highest ideas of the eastern sage and ascetic, whose contemplative methods and techniques are aimed at transcending all attributes of every kind. The ascetic, the sage, the Indian or Chinese 'mystic' tries to wipe out of his experience and consciousness every sort of 'extreme,' to attain to a state of perfect indifference and neutrality, to become insensible to pleasure and pain, to become completely self-sufficient. This transcending of extremes through asceticism and contemplation also results in the 'coinciding of opposites'; the consciousness of such a man knows no more conflict, and such pairs of opposites as pleasure and pain, desire and repulsion, cold and heat, the agreeable and the disagreeable are expunged from his awareness, while something is taking place within him which parallels the total realization of contraries within the divinity." While the coincidentia oppositorum of the orgy provides a link between the Ω -delusion and the esse-delusion, the Eastern coincidentia oppositorum connects the Ω -delusion with the \emptyset -delusion (the delusion seen from the perspective of mystical nothingness; see chapter 12).

11.3 Dread: The Infinity of Fear

I also went through a long period of fear. I'm still sometimes fearful of large, dizzying numbers that strike me as dangerous and inhuman—yes, even immorally large, irrationally large. It was as if at any moment they could tumble over the edge of themselves, an irrational edge, and fall into an abyss that was even more irrational and indefinable. I was sometimes frightened by those numbers, as if they could keep mounting inside me—which they did, of course, because they

were already inside me. After all, a human being consists of large numbers—my blood cells and brain cells alone!—and at such moments they were palpably present, as it were, wriggling inside me like swarms of ants or other tiny insects. ... It took a very long time for me learn to get used to it again, or almost get used to it. In my other world there's a suspicion of even larger swarms, formidably large, but they're more vague, much more vague ... swarms of time insects, like seconds or milliseconds ... the fear of getting lost in them ... of being carried off by them ... of being sucked along with them ...

—Sybren Polet, De gouden tweehoek (The Golden Duoangle; 2011, 237)

11.3.1 Infinite Weight

Sometimes the infinite is too much of a good thing. When that happens, it produces such a torrent of spaces, hypotheses, spirals, mirror effects, and muddles that you're swept away by them: Ω as tsunami instead of ocean, ; Ω as "disabling brainstorm" instead of beneficial hurricane. Custance, Huxley, Michaux, and others yearn for the mystical delusion of the past, but many madmen would rather maim themselves with antimystical drugs than return to the infinite.

Apparently Ω gets mixed reviews, and contact with Ω can produce a range of different effects. By and large, any difficulties brought on by the reception of Ω are to be blamed either on Ω itself, or on one of its lower ω vassals, or on the recipient of Ω . This results in different views and considerations, which I will discuss on the basis of fragments from Sloterdijk, Michaux, and Bock:

1. Maybe Ω itself is absolutely unbearable; you choke on it, you're dazzled by it, or you're stunned into speechlessness. Either way, Ω is too much of a good thing and must be avoided, or it must at least be consumed in properly adjusted doses. This vision can be found in theological reflections. Otto (1917), for example, emphasizes the frightening, terrifying aspects of the infinite God as well as the joy and astonishment that God can impart. The Eternal has both mercy and ruthless power at his disposal. Access to God and/or Ω should be mediated by people who are experts in spiritual welfare.

The idea of an unbearable infinity can also be found in secular anthropologies. In psychoanalysis, a view of humanity is professed in which the individual must be restricted, directed, and stifled at a very early age (or, in the foolish language of psychoanalysis, "symbolically castrated"; see Verhaeghe 2011, 61ff., for example). Only then can he hope to end up in a bordered, measured, and regulated world, protected from the tsunamic

ocean. According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, the human being is a symbol-creating creature who needs his symbols in order to be spared from "the Real." Should the Real nevertheless break into his experience, the result can be trauma and fear. Here, too, the border between the acceptable and the overwhelming aspects of the Real are monitored by experts in the realm of psychological well-being: the psychoanalysts.

Psychoanalysts and theologians assign a remarkable degree of authority to themselves, as if they had smoked a pipe at the oracle of Delphi or, like anachronistic Sherpas, accompanied Moses on his climb up Mount Sinai. While nothing can be said about Ω , they do manage to tell us how undesirable it is for Ω to break into human experience. Psychotics of the world, guard yourselves against the guardians of the unknowable! Just as strange as the thesis that Ω is necessarily consistent with the Good is the idea that the unknowable Ω is essentially malevolent. In addition, those who warn us not to get too close to the fire of Ω have a problem: How is it that some people can play with fire and rise from the ashes like a phoenix? What do they make of the lives and work of people like Nicholas of Cusa, Custance, and Michaux?

- 2. A more modest position can be found in the idea that, in some manifestations (or revelations), Ω leads to misery, while in other contexts, Ω can be quite tolerable. In the latter case, "doing calculations with infinity" and "writing metamathematical articles" can be acceptable ways of engaging with Ω . Ingesting the miracle of God under the direction of a priest can also be deemed acceptable. Nor are there any prohibitions against invoking the Real and the transformations of Ω into manageable chunks in psychoanalysis, or against taking mescaline in order to submerge yourself in the endlessness of fractals projected on a screen. In this view, good and bad infinities are not blamed on the nature of the individual and his relationship to Ω ; rather, they are looked at pragmatically in terms of the advantages and disadvantages of different practices of infinity.
- 3. In line with this last position is the notion that contact with Ω , or any one of its ω manifestations, is in itself acceptable, but as the contact develops, care must be taken to keep Ω pure so that it doesn't turn into one of its unpleasant variants, such as the paranoia of "multiplicity," obsession with the One, or fear of Nothingness. After all, Ω can change into a fragmented multiplicity leading to an infinite, insidious, paranoid fascination with the details of Ω . There is also the danger of the Ω -delusion turning into uni-delusion. In the next chapter, I will discuss this possibility of Ω

being transformed into "nothingness." According to this third reflection, the Ω -delusion should not be avoided as much as supervised.

- 4. Sometimes people speak very highly of infinity, and sometimes they are filled with horror and fear. Perhaps this is because Ω is mistaken for ω 's. Seen logically, there are several possibilities for this. In itself, Ω can be seen as good, bad, or neutral, and each ω can too. When infinity is described in positive and negative terms at the same time, this can be explained by stating that the "real infinite Ω " is indeed good and that the negativity is due to the fact that we are dealing with a "fallen ω ." Or conversely, when someone like Michaux speaks of the pleasure he takes in infinity, as we saw above, this may not be the true, monstrous Ω but a children's game with ω 's. In 11.3.4, I give a detailed example in which such considerations play a role.
- 5. Problems with Ω may not issue from Ω and the ω 's alone; they may also be the result of differences between the recipients of Ω . For some people, Ω may be unbearable. It falls outside the ordinary, the everyday, and the comprehensible. In principle, Ω is unknowable and uncontrollable and therefore uninteresting or even threatening, something repugnant and dangerous to a society that tries to know everything and reduce all risk. Those who do find themselves confronted by Ω will have to be extremely resilient, because before they know it, they will be given a diagnosis, and the development of Ω will be stifled by the violence of chemicals.

11.3.2 Infinite Cold: Peter Sloterdijk

In Michaux's mystical space travel, infinite space is a sacred revelation and a miracle. The idea of Ω in the guise of space—insofar as it can still be called Ω and not ω —can lead to euphoria, surrender, and ecstasy. In a sense, Michaux has infinite space in mind when he writes (1974, 97): "As though the Infinite, to make itself manifest, had taken space for a simple and sufficient indicator, space as symbol and anthem." Because Ω became spatial, and because infinite space manifested itself to Michaux as a sign or hymn, Michaux was pleasantly warmed by the light of Ω .

In contrast with Michaux's descriptions of warm contact, however, are all the laments having to do with cold, infinite space. It's located "out there, far away," and it's like the black shadow of a savage hellhound that keeps staring at you in the dark. As Pascal says in his well-known quote: "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces fills me with dread." These infinite spaces are infinitely dark, terrifying, threatening, alienating, seductive, and magnetic—like a black hole. The horror of infinite darkness is the

spatial variant of the fear of infinite time (see 3.2.2.1). If space just keeps on going, doesn't that reduce me and my space to nothing? Every orientation or direction seems to lose its value against the backdrop of spatial infinity.

Perhaps we ought to guard ourselves from the staggering thought of infinite darkness in order to keep our gaze from drifting off into the infinite distance, only to scatter and become lost altogether. We must protect ourselves by means of a barrier or a covering against the cold, within which we can live in safety and warmth. Outside it's infinitely dark, cold, and uninhabitable, so life inside must be enclosed, protected, and comfortable. In this reflection on Ω and ω , a distinction should be made between "good" and "evil" forms of Ω . The spatial manifestation of Ω is then a ω variant that results in fear and horror instead of ecstasy. This spatial ω is a "fallen angel," so to speak. In order to counterbalance it, we need another ω that is at least as powerful in order to protect us from the tsunami of infinite darkness. This, in short, is the basic idea behind the *Spheres* trilogy, written by the modern German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (2011, 2014, 2016): people build houses, think up stories, and create "symbolic immune systems (inner spheres)" in order to hold out against the unfathomable depth of dark infinity.

According to Sloterdijk, it's important that this "symbolic immune system" not extend itself into infinite space as well. Doing so would make it the equivalent of the threat against which it is meant to protect. This, says Sloterdijk, is what happened in the time of Nicholas of Cusa. Nicholas himself, and later Bruno, Spinoza, and many others, asserted in one form or another that "God is the infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." This comparison with a sphere gave God a spatial aspect; after all, a sphere is something we imagine spatially. Speculations on Ω therefore evolved into thoughts about infinity in space. While infinity was initially used as an attribute of the divine and as a praiseworthy superlative, attaching this spatial quality to the infinity of God made people feel understandably uneasy, Sloterdijk says. He writes (2014, 523),

"God is the infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." One could, with good reason, take the view that this literally eccentric thesis of high medieval hermetic theosophy was the time bomb, possibly one which had been ticking since late antiquity, that would one day blast open the well-rounded, Catholicized Aristotelian cosmos from the inside.

In other words, before the ideas of God, infinity, and space were integrated, it was still possible to believe in a "safe," delineated cosmos, a warm "symbolic immune system" that offered protection from everything outside. The Greeks may also have called the sphere infinite, but that was a different,

nonspatial infinity. The modern infinity of spatial vastness is incompatible with boundaries, comfort, and protection, according to Sloterdijk:

For how can the notion of an orb, which is only definitively identifiable as such through its finite periphery, still exist if this *sphaera* is unabashedly described as finite? This attribute still contains an echo of the ancient doctrine in which the orb and the circle possess a good or qualified infinity because, by returning into themselves, they unify beginninglessness and endlessness. Yet one can already hear a more modern concept of infinity making its demands; one cannot quite dismiss the notion that the hermetic orb no longer possesses merely infinite rotation and reflection, but also infinite extension. (523–524)

When you consider what it means to live in the spatial ω , you are bound to conclude that there is no longer a holy center that can be identified as such. Every place becomes a spatial center, without any distinction between the inside and the outside of the sphere. Everything is spatial, no matter where it is; the inside is the same as the outside, and orientation becomes impossible. Spatially seen, one place is no holier or "closer to God" than any other.

Thus the inside of the pseudo-circle falls back into the unredeemed. There is no longer an inside. ... Everything is outside. The consequences of the infinitist turn are unforseeable. The entire transcendence establishment would have to be swept away by the disastrous positing of the center as ubiquitous—for in the infinite, there is nothing to support the sacerdotal notion that certain persons and institutions are "closer to God." ... the infinitist fever spreads from the theospheric dimension to the camp of the cosmographers and cosmologists. (524–525)

The notion of spatial infinity as applied to the idea of God has a leveling effect: if God were somehow to become the center of space, he would be everywhere and nowhere. God is to be worshipped everywhere and in every way; in infinity, everything and everyone is the same. Seen in this way, there is a connection between the spatial ω -delusion and the essedelusion. Indeed, if the center of the divine Ω is everywhere, then everything is equally holy and "every being" is of equally immense importance. The trap of infinity becomes a celebration of every being. But according to Sloterdijk, the main feature of the spatial ω -delusion is that it is terrifying and can change into a negative esse-delusion. Instead of rejoicing over every detail of being, Sloterdijk expresses sadness over the futility of everyone being in the darkness of the spatial ω .

This god, with a center everywhere and a circumference nowhere, was simply no longer of any use as a morphological fortification against the outside. ... His kingdom is not of this inner world. ... Whoever meditates [on] this god finds themselves moving further out into the boundless, the unstable and the extra-human

than the coldest thought of the universe's emptiness and the bitterest separation from what is close and beloved could ever carry you. Anyone still wishing to keep their faith would have to approach a god who had discarded the intimate and the round. But who could conceive of themselves in a relationship with this theomathematical monster? (526)

For Michaux, the pursuit of Ω in the expanse of space led to an ecstatic form of solitude. For Sloterdijk, spatial infinity leads to extrahuman coldness. Those who come to inhabit the spatial ω -delusion miss out on intimacy and form a relationship with a "theo-mathematical monster." Sloterdijk's explorations of living and nonliving spaces are a warning against looking for answers in the spatial guise of infinity. Nonliving, spatial infinity is more like the thing we have to protect ourselves from by means of *non*spatial forms of infinity.

11.3.3 Infinite Fracturing: Michaux on Schizophrenia

Up until now I may have presented a distorted picture of Michaux: that of an irresponsible ego-tripper who explores beautiful inner worlds with the help of mescaline but who is unfamiliar with the real suffering of schizophrenia. That impression would not be correct. The very reason Michaux studied mescaline and other drugs was to understand the isolation, horror, and emptiness of psychosis. And Michaux's attitude toward infinity was not entirely positive. In the abbreviated fragment that follows, he searches for a way to distinguish "good" ω 's from "bad," and in doing so, he seems to suggest that Ω itself is unbearable.

In schizophrenia, says Michaux, the immeasurable and the infinite are sources of alarm. Infinity scatters and destroys the finite. In schizophrenia, normal time and space disappear, as do the customs and conventions of normal life. So does the underlying structure or organization in which the self, the world, and one's fellow humans take shape. The manifestation of Ω , as the schizophrenic encounters it, is too overwhelming—either as Ω in the schizophrenic's own person or as a "bad" ω . From Michaux (1974, 117ff.):

It is in the schizophrenic state that the "immeasurable" is most disturbing, most damaging. The vastness perceived by some [outside madness] was still part of reality, a baroque implementation in reality, an excess within the finite. ... Here [within madness] it is an entirely different matter—a more complete dissipation of the finite, on several levels, a breakup of time, space, and the functions and arrangements which sustain the world, other people, and one's "ego" self.

Michaux says the following statement is typical of someone who feels they have literally been handed over to infinite space: "Space seems to be

receding, expanding to infinity. I feel myself surrendered to an infinitely large space. The old space detaches itself from this other space like a ghost." About this statement, Michaux comments, "Hundreds of so-called schizophrenics ... have used the same words, have known the same boundlessness, the same dispersion of their own bounds. ... Whatever one does, one is in the endless waves of the boundless."

Michaux likens this mad, boundless world to the world of a baby. Babies know no boundaries either and have only global impressions. The most you can say about the world of a baby is that it is bounded by sleep. Raising a child into adulthood is a matter of breaking him of this boundlessness and making himself and the world seem limited, finite, and bounded. But Ω is always present as a kind of sleep, even in the lives of adults. Children are closer to the source of Ω and are also more receptive to ways of dealing with Ω , to religion. ¹⁸

The schizophrenic, by contrast, is overcome by Ω at a later age. He is no longer a child and cannot simply appeal to religion. He's too far gone, floating around in an infinity that's beyond the reach of priests and psychoanalysts. The infinity of the schizophrenic is a place of no return. It's not the infinity of an LSD trip, from which you awaken after a few hours, or the infinity of the theologian, who can preach a sermon about it without requiring any commitment.¹⁹

In this fragment from Michaux, infinity is all-embracing and crushing. Anything with form and structure is dissolved in it. To "make something infinite" amounts to atomization, fragmentation, repetition, refusal, and inhuman detachment that cannot be expressed in words. The state of Ω is beyond comprehension. Michaux writes (1974, 120),

Behind every entity there is a world. No organized unit subsists. His state has reduced it to dust. The infinitization, the perpetuation, the atomization, the undifferentiated fragmentation ... permits nothing but ambivalence, repetition, obstinacy, refusal, and an inhuman detachment. This is the only possible attitude to be taken by someone in whom everything is ... "disconnected," ... who is broken by the impossibility of "feeling together," of "imagining together," or "reasoning together," and for whom the body, the "person," the "other," the "real" ... are inaccessible. What he feels is not nothing, but it cannot be coordinated, cannot be expressed. An exasperating state, since those around you understand nothing, always guess wrong, and are satisfied with it.

This fragment from Michaux is food for thought. Here, Ω is described with ambivalence. On the one hand, it is the source or ground of human existence, the sleep framework within which we live, and the unstructured experience of babies. It is a zone that adults forget about and that

is traversed only by those under the influence of mescaline or in a state of schizophrenia. But in this fragment, besides being fundamental to our lives, Ω also constitutes a threat, a black hole from which no one can possibly return. Michaux seems to suggest that contact with Ω is indeed desirable and that religion is the means for making that contact. But too much "unprotected" contact at once would be too much of a good thing. This contrasts with what Michaux maintains elsewhere.

In part II, I wrote that according to Michaux, you must not let yourself be distracted by images and thoughts during madness (or a mescaline trip), but instead you must try to "make everything infinite." Podvoll (1990, 170) has this to say on the subject: "There is, however, a thought that is safe, that, in fact, is very helpful to declare: 'Infinitization.' It simply describes what is happening and it acknowledges the mechanics of confusion, without judgment or blaming oneself. It is a thought that arises from our critical intelligence and that labels and names the reality of the infinitizing machinery. It could be thought deliberately, 'In.fin.it.i.za.tion.'"

In this different vision offered by Michaux and Podvoll, psychoses are spiritual journeys on the ocean of infinity, in which one must be careful not to get caught up in images. Religious concepts, thoughts, and symbols are parts of the psychosis. The fragment above, however, supports the idea that ultimate "infinitization" is beyond all religion and is the hallmark of schizophrenia. In this view, "imaged" religion is not the problem but the solution. Here Michaux comes close to view 1 in section 11.3.1.

Two comments with respect to this fragment from Michaux: First, he is in danger of focusing too much on the contradiction between finiteness and infinity (at least that is how I interpret him). In Ω , all oppositions and dualisms are supposed to be things of the past, but there is still a tendency to posit Ω itself in opposition to finiteness. In other words, Ω is actually so abstract and mysterious that it may not be sensible—because it's considered too practical—to claim that schizophrenics are "locked up" in Ω , or in a variant of Ω (a ω), from which it is impossible to return. The danger here is that Ω becomes a concept among other concepts, while in a certain sense it was intended as a concept "that would put an end to all other concepts." Second, it makes too little practical sense to say that schizophrenics are "doomed" to the hell of an absolute evil. Even in the deepest psychotic hell, there's a way to get to the polar opposite; Ω wouldn't be Ω if it didn't have an emergency exit.

11.3.4 Battle of the Omegas: the Unger Case

Earlier I quoted from Thomas Bock's *Psychosen zonder psychiatrie* (*Psychoses without Psychiatry*, 2000), and here I will discuss a somewhat longer

fragment. Bock's book concerns people with psychoses who, to a large extent, have managed to avoid compulsory psychiatric treatment. Most of it consists of interviews with these people, who talk about the meaning of their psychoses and how they have integrated them into their lives. What stands out in Bock's brief sketches is the great variation of ways in which people deal with their madness. In addition, the interviewees have been influenced very little by the mind-numbing jargon of the psychiatric world, with its diseases, disorders, and symptoms. In this way, Bock shows what kind of ingenuity, creativity, and nuance can emerge when people manage to evade psychiatry. In the next section, I will discuss an interview with a Mr. Unger, chosen on account of the important role that Ω (and ω) play in his life, along with a few comments from Bock.

11.3.4.1 Significant visions In his interview, Unger talks about the extraordinary insights, inspirations, and visions he had gained and was continuing to gain. His first contact with Ω (or ω) had been thirty years earlier, when you might say he was "enlightened" or "struck by the lightning of Ω ." He speaks of visions he has had and mentions their special relationship to time; yet, they were so brief that you really can't say they unfolded within a span of ordinary earthly time at all. Unger also calls his visions holy and says he experiences direct contact with and access to something that surpasses the everyday. This contact cannot be described in terms of auditory or visual hallucinations.

In the fragments quoted here, Bock provides an introduction and commentary. In the passages written in italics, it is Unger who is speaking.

Unger had his first "inspiration" thirty years ago. It lasted only a fraction of a millionth of a second; I mean it was over immediately. Mr. Unger considers it a betrayal to talk about the visions in detail: They are holy to me, they're holy. They would damn me if I were to say anything important about those visions, because I am spoken to directly through them. You can't call them "voices." I don't hear voices; they're genuine visions.

These experiences had an extraordinary beauty, and they gave Unger strength. They cannot easily be explained, and Unger draws attention to the contradictions that are part of such experiences. I connect this with what I have written about the ineffability of mysticism and the paradoxes entailed in language, thinking, Ω , and ω .

The visions gave me strength. ... Throughout human history, visions have contained contradictions to enable full contact with God. God presents himself to people personally, not as we would want, but in a very different way. The first vision I had was so magnificent that you can't imagine it. It was like music from heaven.

Finiteness and infinity played a role in the visions as a pair of concepts, especially in the area of time.

The end times featured very prominently in my visions—end times, an eschatological worldview, those kinds of ideas. I have never wanted to commit suicide; I had a good life. On the contrary, I'm a person who searches for life and strives for immortal things, for experiences of immortality.

Unger later placed his experiences of and thoughts about Ω within a religious framework. He happened to come in contact with the Mormon church, where he found recognition for his visions and a sense of connection. Unlike many other Christian denominations, the Mormons are open to new revelations, visions, prophecies, and so forth. This denomination and its holy scriptures gave Unger the opportunity to develop his contact with Ω and to share it with others. In his interview, Unger distinguishes his visions from his problems and later psychoses.

I can only say that I could live quite easily with my visions until the psychoses began. They didn't interfere with my work or with the way I related to others. Quite the opposite. I became a Mormon at that time, and I also left that church at some point. He compares his visions with those of the founder of the religion. He founded the church on the basis of visions, in which I also believe. Mr. Unger is not troubled by his own visions, nor does he think they are unusual; they have been given a place within the context of his religion.

Unger had unusual experiences in the sense that what he went through was somewhere between thinking and perceiving, and it had an unusual intensity and significance. He was able to live for decades with his special experiences and to further develop Ω —or ω —within the Mormon church. Bock comments.

Mr. Unger regards the visions as a holy phenomenon. They give him the opportunity to impart symbolic shape to his experiences. ... Mr. Unger seems to have found enough support in his religion to enable him to tolerate his visions and integrate them. The religion he has chosen provides him with a language and a social context for sharing his extraordinary experiences.

Here Bock introduces language, symbols, and religion as methods for dealing with visions and unusual experiences. Unger, as an adult, succeeded in integrating his contact with Ω within a religious discourse over a long period. He did what Michaux calls for in section 11.3.3.

11.3.4.2 Impossible unions: Mormons and physics Later on, according to his own account, something went wrong for Mr. Unger. His experience of Ω (or ω), expressed with the help of Mormon ideology, came into conflict

with other ideas about infinity. Religious notions began colliding with theories of science.

I made a mistake because I stopped reading religious books almost entirely and turned my attention to Einstein and Stephen Hawking. But they fascinated me, that's for sure. There are two truths, so to speak. One originates with God and the other with human beings. Human truth is always metaphysical in nature. Many religions consist of metaphysical dogmas. It is impossible to win out over metaphysics, except by means of a miracle, by an act of God who is all in all. No one can possess God, the idea of God. That is something that a person can only receive.

In the end there's little that can be said about Ω . It is the absolute end point of infinity. As for Unger's story, it would be incorrect to place Ω "on the side of" either Einstein or the Mormons. Hawking didn't know any more about Ω than the Mormons do. Further, it is impossible to come up with a finite notion of Ω that is correct or incorrect, so Unger's later problems cannot be described in terms of an "incorrect notion of Ω ." Rather, the clash between the Mormons and Einstein that took place "in Unger's head" can better be expressed as a struggle between different ω 's. It was a clash between good and evil, truth and power, space and time, divine and human. Unger describes it as follows:

During my vacation I tried once again to read the Book of Mormon. I didn't read it though because I came across an astronomical atlas, which I bought. That atlas was a revelation for me, and ultimately it threw me off track. Nothing that is human is rejected by God. After all, everything has to do with the good. Everything is correct, including technology. But a person who has once had visions cannot serve two masters; my present experiences taught me that. There are two Masters. The Bible is composed with the help of Lucifer and Michael. And Lucifer is a formidable person, a person who is very clearly described in the Book of Mormon as a man who wanted to conquer the Kingdom for himself. Lucifer appeared to me. And that is why the psychosis broke out.

What the statement "the psychosis broke out" actually means is unclear. We have too little information about Unger, and even he probably did not know exactly what it meant. Seen in retrospect, you can interpret your own history in any number of ways, depending on the context. Who knows? Perhaps Unger would later lose his faith and see this crisis as a transition from Mormon delusion to a healthy atheism. Or after having made contact with psychiatry, perhaps he would begin to believe in the modern ideology of sickness and reinterpret his "psychosis" and "visions" as "schizophrenia." Or he would reassess his relationship to Ω and the more accessible ω 's and delve more deeply into the Mormon religion, but in his own way.

Interpreted sub specie aeternitatis (from the point of view of Ω), I would say there are two ω 's in collision here: that of the Mormon ideology and that of the scientific worldview. The latter ω is of no help in dealing with questions about the true origin of things, and it does not provide reference points for questions of inspiration and meaning, let alone questions of good and evil. The worldview of science offers us nothing but a "weak" ω that only pertains to space and time. Unger spent a long time with the ideology of the Mormon ω , which offers more clues for answering questions about meaning and origin, and good and evil, than the scientific worldview does.

It is therefore understandable that Unger tried to integrate Einstein and Hawking into Mormon ideology and not the other way around. In doing so, he was still trying to unite two masters under one ω banner, despite what he claimed. He used the internal dualism of Mormon ideology in order to contextualize the ω of science. That's when things went wrong, however, either because Unger's specific notions of the Mormon God and the cosmos were too rigid, or because Mormon ideology in general is not suited to that kind of integration and synthesis.

Unger let the Mormon dualism of good and evil, of Lucifer and Michael, encompass the scientific notions of space and time. This made Lucifer visible in nature, assuming an "extension" in the spatial ω . Evil took on a spatial form, and a world or sphere of experience emerged that could indeed be called psychotic. By integrating the spatial ω into the Mormon ω , Unger did not necessarily get any closer to Ω , but he did end up in a world of mystical madness. Unger had built a bridge between religion and science, and Lucifer was the first to cross it. Like the Christian God of the Middle Ages (see section 11.3.2), the Mormon God, as interpreted by Unger, may have become too large, too bloated.

This is how, on the basis of Unger's text, a Ω -delusion is constructed. If you look only at the fragments quoted so far, all you see is cosmological and existential doubt. Why this should be called a psychosis does not become clear until you read the more concrete continuation of Unger's story. It all has to do with his search for the true Ω :

I kept pushing the Book of Mormon further and further to the edge of my desk because suddenly I found the book by Stephen Hawking so interesting. It had to do with the Big Bang. There is no room for God in that picture. Before the Big Bang there was another Big Bang. It all boils down to the same question: "And what came before that?" This question is answered in religion. I picked up the astronomical atlas and marked it with a red pencil, and the Book of Mormon got pushed further and further aside. I hardly ate at all. But the worst thing was that until the end of my vacation I hardly ever slept.

Unger wanted to get to the bottom of this: the Mormon church versus Einstein. For him, there was no satisfactory meta-position. There was no *coincidentia oppositorum* on hand that could contain both the Mormon church and Einstein. Unger could no longer escape from his Ω -delusion, either by returning to everyday oblivion or by transcending the Mormon-Einstein controversy or by reconciling the two in a nonpsychotic way. At that point, the Ω question was of critical importance. I suspect that the diagnosis of psychosis was made partly because concrete objects, such as the books of Einstein and Hawking, the Book of Mormon, and the astronomical atlas, had become infused with magical meaning. Unger himself mentions the physical distance he took from the Book of Mormon, and he also talks about marking the texts with a red pencil.

It would not surprise me if the Ω question had taken on such proportions that, in Unger's mad world, a line made with a red pencil was equal to a Mormon vision or a Big Bang explosion. Enthusiasm, curiosity, and fanatical ambition to probe the deepest sources of existence often lead to wild pencil lines and piles of books. In the end, the diagnosis depends on whether someone can still be reached in his Ω -delusion or whether he is beyond all efforts to contact him.

I worked two days and then the weekend came. I definitely wanted to speak to the Mormons. Unfortunately I couldn't reach them, which I found really dreadful. No one understood what was wrong with me ... so I ended up in mental and psychological worlds, which are unnatural and get everything wrong. ... The police came to pick me up because I was playing my stereo too loud. I have a 1,000-watt stereo and lots of amps. Naturally the neighbors were startled.

While Ω is accessible day and night for anyone trying to reach it from the human world, none of the Mormons were home during the earthly weekend. And because the neighbors and the police were more interested in the volume of the stereo than in the arrogance of Lucifer in eternity and infinity, Unger's search finally ended in the mental hospital.

11.3.4.3 Behind the infinite struggle In his summary, Bock makes an interesting remark: "Once he leaves the protective verbal and social framework of his religion, and without an alternative framework, he can no longer adequately manage his environment. If the psychosis leads to an outburst, Mr. Unger is without the connections and daily rituals he needs to restrain it." It does indeed seem that Unger had sunk too deeply into the Ω -delusion, seriously reducing his ties to normality and daily rituals.

In this quote, however, Bock seems to be blaming the rigidity of the Mormon religion for Unger's inability to live with normal reality. But it's equally possible that the rigidity of scientific thinking (or Unger's interpretation of

it) offered no point of connection for Unger's existential questions. In this day and age, problems that arise between a scientific and a religious worldview are always first blamed on the religious worldview. Indeed, people who strictly adhere to a particular religion often run into problems when confronted by scientific ways of thinking. According to those who are trapped in an atheistic worldview, such problems might mark the beginning of emancipation—certainly if "apostasy" ensues. They're free to believe this, of course, but the opposite happens just as often. There are many people who live with a rigid scientific worldview, muddling along for years and years and being confirmed in their beliefs by their environment. But at a certain point they come in contact with the calamitous heat of the Ω fire. You may have no use for God and Ω , but when momentous crises and events take place such as death, divorce, and birth, in which the perplexities and paradoxes of Ω and the ω 's bore deeply into daily life, Hawking and Einstein are no better at offering solace.

Religion plays a complex role, not only in the case of Unger and of Bock's commentary on him but also in the writings of Michaux and Sloterdijk. They all speak highly of religion's ability to steer a person in the right direction when it comes to dealing with infinity. With religion, you're assured of a community with whom you can share your experiences of and thoughts about infinity and open them up to discussion. A religious community, along with its body of symbols, stories, and rituals, can temper Ω 's heat and fire to a certain extent. On the other hand, religious forms can also inhibit the direct, sacred experiences of Ω . The hallmarks of Ω —or, more accurately, the absence of hallmarks—are at odds with the mediating structure and established meanings of religious symbols and language.

Infinity itself plays a paradoxical role in the condition called psychosis, which is already paradoxical. Everything collapses in Ω , but Ω can never be reached. The harder you try to aspire to Ω and to say something concrete and meaningful about it, the greater the likelihood that you will miss Ω entirely and become trapped in a ω . The more Unger tried to impose sense on his visions and his life with the help of the Mormons, the less he was able to relate to the kind of beauty he found in things like the astronomical atlas and the greater his chance of ending up in some terrifying form of ω . Conversely, astronomers who hope to solve the riddle of Ω by staring ever more deeply into space become blinded by the gleaming darkness of the black light.²⁰

Actually we still do not know whether Ω is intrinsically benign or malicious. Many madmen will go to great lengths to make sure they never again see what they saw there and what filled them with such a desolate,

indescribable fear. Others will cherish that nonplace of infinity as a secret region to which they can retreat and disappear in times of anxiety.

For some people, Ω is everything, and for others nothing. And Ω appears to us in many forms that are both true and false, seductive and frightening. After all this—and before focusing on nothingness in chapter 12—I would like to pass on a few thoughts about revelation in an intermezzo.

Intermezzo II: Revelation

In section 8.2, I introduced terms such as "awakening" and "rebirth" as ways of describing the sudden transition to mystical madness. Another important term for this is "revelation." What first led me to even type the word "revelation" was my own ("intense") experience of it. Second, many autobiographies and reports of madness *and* religion are marked by a strong sense that something is being revealed. And third, researchers such as Conrad (1958), Kapur (2003), and Sass (1994) refer to such experiences in their own work. Reason enough to find out what revelation entails.

Experiences of revelation can be clarified by means of all three concepts of mystical madness: the One, being, and infinity. But a revelation is not limited to any one of these three, which is why I am addressing it in this intermezzo. To do so, first, I describe the general characteristics of revelation, which are also relevant to what I underwent. Then I present my own experience. And finally, I discuss three perspectives of revelation from the psychopathological literature.

II.I Introduction to Revelation

There is something temporary or fleeting about an experience of revelation. Although the revelation can take days, weeks, months, or years—and in exceptional cases, centuries and millennia—to work itself out, the experience itself is of limited duration. Mrs. Äther, as quoted in Bock (2000, 261), describes it as follows: "My psychosis is like a mountain with a number of summits and a kind of pinnacle of confusion, but it's also a peak experience in which something reveals itself. Everything takes on a certain sublimity. ... It's all a miracle, everything is interwoven with everything else in an extraordinary way. There are no boundaries, there is no differentiation, everything is connected to everything, and it's something you can experience. It is magnificent." As far as this temporary aspect is concerned, the

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revelation satisfies the condition of "transiency" as pertaining to "mystical experiences" (see James 1958, 293, cited in note 88, and in the discussion in 8.4.3).

It is sometimes argued that there are two kinds of revelation: from the inside out and from the outside in, striking at the level of one's thought or manifesting itself in one's perception. Conrad (1958) distinguishes the *Apophänie* (revelation in the outer world) from the *Anastrophe* (revelation in the inner world) in the mad revelation experience. Considering my own objections to this differentiation between an inner and an outer world, between thought and perception, I do not adopt this distinction. In the classical example of the Revelation of John in the Bible, the words "I heard" and "I saw" are indeed used a great deal, but it is also abundantly clear that what revealed itself to John has neither to do with an outer world of the kind that Conrad is talking about nor with a certitude about an inner world.

The term "revelation" implies ongoing change. A revelation consists first of signs, and then of an opening, and finally of full glory. As it progresses, it goes through changes of pace, transformation of shape, and theme. It is kaleidoscopic in character. One good example of this comes from Mous (2011, 116): "Lying on the narrow bed in my cell I saw thousands of years of history pass by like a time-lapse film. Paradise would return to earth; the Promised Land was at hand. I had a task, although I didn't know exactly what it was. The whirlpool in my head became a tidal wave of images that resulted in a vision or an apparition. I don't know exactly what to call this nighttime event now that it's over, but I felt the unmistakable presence of something supernatural, something that lifted me above the world, above time and above space. In the days that followed there was no stopping me. I talked the ears off everybody. Afterward I returned home by train, and during the next week I hardly slept at all." At first the revelation seemed more conceptual in character for Mous, but later he experienced it more visually, and finally Mous had the urge to make his revelation even more public (also notice the typical "water metaphors" of the whirlpool and the tidal wave; cf. 8.3).

Because of its magnitude, intensity, and depth, the revelation experience often leads to a change in one's position in the world and in life. In crude psychiatric terms, you might say that people who receive revelations run a higher risk of having more delusions and hallucinations as a result. When someone describes his experience in terms of a "revelation," he's bound to adopt a more religiously orientated attitude, if not to end up converting altogether. How an experience of revelation will later work itself out depends on what was revealed and how it was revealed. The ultimate

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processing of the revelation depends on the ground in which it later falls. Is it regarded mainly as psychological symbolism, as a neurobiological epiphenomenon, or as a religious breakthrough?

Besides limited duration and change, the concept of revelation also implies content: something formerly closed and unknown is now opened and accessible. Something that lay hidden in the bosom of the cosmos is now revealed. The mystical secret has now emerged in the light of day. But the secret remains a secret, despite the fact that it has been revealed. Initially, the experience of revelation itself has more to do with the feeling of "now you know" than with "what exactly it is that you know." It has to do with an inexpressible insight whose value actually disappears the moment it is seen as an explicit, articulated, and verifiable statement of fact. In addition, the texts as they are literally uttered by the recipients of these revelations are not the same as the revelations themselves; there is a mystical world of ineffability that lies between language and the heart. And there are no falsifiable assertions or theories contained within such texts.

Frese (1993, 71) describes the contents of his revelation and how he tried to spread the word to others: "I started to realize that all human beings were related in one big family of mankind, and realizing the joy of this fact made all other considerations unimportant, less than trivial. We were all family, and I was at peace in the wonderment of this one great truth. ... It was so wonderful. I had a message that must be shared with all mankind. Just like Mohammed, I had a message and the message must be shared. There was such joy in my heart as I went from person to person, joyfully greeting each of them as my niece or nephew." It isn't clear why this was a revelation for Frese, based on the contents alone. The messenger seems to be more interested in the medium than in the message (for the next episode in Frese's adventures see 16.3).

Revelations are often at odds with existing religious traditions—insofar as they are part of any religious tradition at all. If the revelation coincides with something that was already known, it isn't called a revelation but an inspiration, an insight, or an understanding. On the other hand, if the revelation brings something new to light, it will most likely be at variance with earlier revelations or visions that are part of the accepted canon. That's why a madman tends to experience tradition as an obstacle to his insights rather than as a stimulus or a safe haven.¹

Following the first moments of confusion and perplexity, the initial obscure feeling of revelation turns into a rich and colorful kaleidoscopic whole, written in legible script, spoken in human language, and cast in a form of recognizable images. In addition, as soon as revelations take on

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a definite shape and earthly content, theories are often put forward as to who the "sender" might be. "All those things I see and hear—where do they come from? Who is responsible for these impressive impressions of intensity?" The sender is high-ranking by definition, since communication from a lower source would not be considered revelation at all, but merely irksome—and sometimes helpful—whisperings from the voices of earthly creatures. Finally, if a person notices that he is being approached by higher beings, he himself can expect to be given a special status in the very near future. After all, not everyone receives messages from on high. If you do, you probably belong to the illustrious company of prophets, visionaries, and related crazies. More about what kinds of things happen in these subsequent phases is contained in part IV, especially 16.3.

II.II Tetralogy: Revelation at Home

II.II.I The Birds

I'm standing on the balcony. I see birds flying. A crow darts through the air, all movement. He lands on the ground and sits there for a moment, motionless. Another crow has had enough. He sets off and flies away "like a bird." The animals move, the leaves of the tree on the other side of the street move. I move too; under the influence of my willing body, I move in the wind. Everything is blowing in the wind, and those who are facing the wind are merely in the slipstream of the great Stream of time. Movement and nonmovement are riveted together, unified in what is happening. Earthly events are spread out before me—really, truly taking place, in actual reality, beyond my thoughts and at the same time within my thoughts and through me. Osmosis: flowing through the capillaries from the bottom of the history of every age, into the image and the imagination. Flowing in as from a river from which lava fans out into a blue sea. Like a liquid photographic slide. I see what the all-seeing eye sees; it's no longer "I see," but "it is being seen."

It is being seen: I have been to Assisi, but only now do I understand that all that time, I was walking around in the Garden of Eden. It was sweltering hot in August in Assisi. We went from church to church, from picture to picture, searching for sanctuary. But even then everything was within reach, closer than I thought at the time. Only now do I understand what Francis of Assisi meant when he spoke with the birds. It wasn't human language but unification and understanding using the signs of the divine language. Assisi is everywhere; the birds are everywhere. Every bird is the bird in *optima forma*. What I wrote in *Alone* contained a latent insight, a

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prediction that is now coming true. Only now do I really understand what I wrote back then as if in a trance (2007a, 178):

If you pay close attention, you really notice things. Nothing happens without reason, at random, but in one special way and no other. Birds fly in formation; each one at a certain distance from the next. When they land, they come down on exactly one spot, and no other. There is only one world, in which each occurrence takes place in precisely one way. That is a miracle. Just look at that bird and listen to what it says. Millions of years have passed and it all comes down to this, to this one. Everything that ever was took place before the present scene: a bird that darts through the air converges with itself and imposes itself on you as an existing fact. The colors, the trilling, the births, and the demises are all mixed together in such a way and flung onto the big canvas, as if that's the way it had to be. The colors of the magpie don't run into each other but are neatly separated. Its beak is permanently attached to the front of its head, and the bird perfectly assumes its own shape, and no other.

The beginning of this revelation scenario is artificial. The attention I paid to the birds was prompted by the passages from my earlier book. Although the magpie passage from that book sprang from my own fantasy as I was writing, it still induced a real bird revelation several months later.

Madness really exists somewhere, in one way or another, but its form, content, and meaning are formed somewhere else. A considerable amount of what is said and written in autobiographies and therapeutic talks comes to light only at the moment when the writing and the talking take place. Something did happen once, to be sure, but whether it was a metaphorical strike of lightning, a tidal wave, a whirlpool, a nothing in the midst of something, or a revelation, we don't really know until we talk about it.

II.II.II At the Wheel

I'm taking a little drive through the City when an imprecation of gladness almost escapes my lips, but I deliberately hold it in. I get It; it's a revelation. Every thought that arises within me *exists*, just like everything outside me exists, and all this existence is in harmony. Little thoughts whirl from me to the cars next to me, to the smile on the face of the bicyclist, and to the leaves in the wind. They come back to me as observations that I allow to flow through me in my thoughts. Everything revolves around and through me, and what used to be separate fragments and musings now click together perfectly and form bigger and bigger entities. Drops become brooks, rivers, and waterfalls, and finally the ocean, the cycle, the current.

The sun is shining, my gaze moves outward, and everything is good. I've bumped into the missing link, and now I understand what this expression

really means. It's so unbelievably simple the minute you recognize it. It was always there, ready and waiting, and it just had to be pointed out to me. I began to recognize it by way of the doctrine of good and evil. I used to think these were relative concepts, words as arbitrary as any other words. But now I understand that "the good" is the core of our existence, and striving for the good is the core of the self. Many people call this good God, or the Idea, or the absolute mind, but it's all the same One.

What it all boils down to is a pure being and a pure seeing. Seer and seen are one in the act of seeing. As long as you "see" well, you also see the good and the beautiful. Inner and outer then coincide. I have finally really understood the Greek way of thinking. In today's world, a distinction is wrongfully made between the reality of things and events, on the one hand, and of truth, goodness, and beauty on the other. Truth today is no longer regarded as something *in* the world but as a quality of statements *about* the world. But suddenly I "saw"—and that was a "philosophical insight," a "breakthrough"—that the True, the Good, and the Beautiful could literally be seen in the world. I see truth. That is the Insight. If your mind's eye accompanies your normal physical eye, you can "see" Platonic Ideas. The only thing that really exists is the Idea. In other words, God and all the rest are borne by God; they cannot exist on their own. Underlying every event, every act, every "seeing," is God.

For those who recognize this, time no longer exists as a ticking clock or as time that scatters and isolates things. Because of time, things model themselves on each other and reflect each other. Time can take you anywhere. Being is time, God is time, the mirror makes two things one. The time of eternity holds things together. And wherever you are is good, as long as you recognize this. For there is but one moment, and that is *this* moment, consisting of eternity. Everything happens at the same time, and you cannot exist anywhere else than where everyone exists, here in the present, always. While I turn the steering wheel, myriads of other events are taking place that are all connected by the tentacles of time. In the intensity of true seeing, all times merge together. I kept cursing with gladness under my breath, but I deliberately kept the curse inside. Otherwise the curse, too, would become part of the world. For whatever revolved through me, revolved through the world as well.

The earlier joy I felt about Francis and the birds continues in the car and expands in the form of all-embracing, racing thoughts. After the perplexing, silent ecstasy on the balcony, more agitating, churning thoughts and images are tossed up. The events start to revolve around the main person, as if a stone had landed in the pond and become the center of a whirlpool. The

throbbing universal insight concentrates itself on the individual recipient of this insight. The first fault line through the ecstasy becomes visible: good is distinguished from evil. At the same time, vigorous attempts are made to hold the whole diverging cosmos together with all its contradictions. Seeing, thinking, creating, and manipulating start blending into each other. Reflections on God, the world, and the soul crystallize out. The microcosmos of the curse binds itself to the macrocosmos of the worldwide balance between good and evil.

The content, structure, and thoughts from the revelation *then* are interwoven in a remarkable way with the theory and thoughts from *now* in *this* book. The model for *this* book, by which I hope to make madness comprehensible, is also the model that caused me to sink into madness back then—which, by the way, is but an extra recommendation for this model, both Münchhausian *and* Möbiusian. Baron von Münchhausen pulled himself up out of the swamp by his own pigtail. The arm that did the pulling was the arm that was pulled, just as the text I use to discuss madness is the text that expresses madness (also see section 14.3.3.3). The Möbius strip shows how a shape of "inversion" underlies the leap from the objective level (madness) to the subjective level (philosophy) and vice versa (also see the preface and section 4.2.2.3, among others).

II.II.III The Neon Hotel Building Plan

Dozens of dizzying dizzinessess! I've been through it all, and it all comes through me. It's enough to make you burst out laughing and smile. I understand everything: all thoughts, all forms—everything comes together at the central point of my mind. Each center can unfold to every dimension. The entire cosmos is present in every monad. Now I understand what they were talking about: Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, with their revelations, messages, and sacred teachings. They're actually only children's books, preparations for the real truth, playful allegories for how it really works. Everything was revealed a long time ago, and that fact is now the core of the revelation: everything is, was, and shall be. Glittering within the pyramid of eternity is the crystal. Once you get it, you fall through it. Simple, but hard to explain to those who don't see it. See! Hear! And that's it—ceaseless, beautiful, and magnificent. And, oh, all those millions of poor people who know nothing about it. As if revelations were reserved for chosen individuals, while It is accessible to everyone. Ah, all those poor people who never saw It and maybe never will. I have to explain It to them.

I see It reflected everywhere around me. The cars drive, the people walk, the birds fly. And every movement stands as still as an arrow within that time. There is neither movement nor stasis. Time unites everything, and at

the same time it fragments everything. But even in its fragmentation, everything stays connected because the fragmentation is thought of as unity in a person's thinking. There is always someone somewhere. No one does not exist. Just like nothingness does not exist. Death is nothingness—just a negativity—while there is only radiant, eternal, positive goodness. What a shame that my insights and ecstasies are so far removed from the normal. When I made it clear to Doreen that I had had a revelation, it shocked her and she left me. I have to find a way, a form, and a language for explaining all this. Everyone should profit from it. Only now do I realize that everything I wrote before was merely preparation; my books, my bachelor's thesis, my articles—it's all just foundational to my master's thesis. There I will summarize everything on a single sheet of paper.

Actually every book is foundational to real life. The entire dictionary is hidden in every word, the entire language in every whisper. I never have to read again; I'm already there, I've reached the goal. All I have to do now is write it all down for posterity. Teleology becomes logical theology. Oh, what a blissful life I have before me. In the coming years, I'm going to work it up into a four-part magnum opus: first earth, then water, then air, then fire, and thereby I will make my way to the crystal. But where to begin? Everything that occurs to me is like manna, a received treasure that must never be lost. I have to organize and develop my ideas, so the whole world can jump for joy.

The computer and the keyboard are too slow for my thoughts and insights. I've got to get it out there sooner, before it's too late. If I get hit by a car, everything will be lost. Oh, "dying"—that's so Old World. Now I understand it's literally nothing—just the mirror image of everything. The only drawback to my death would be that other people would no longer be able to know me and they'd remain unenlightened. A star dies, light is lost. I'm ready for it; I have nothing else to achieve; there is enough, more than enough. My only worry has to do with future generations. So I'm going to buy a handy, portable recording device that I can carry with me at all times to record my words. If I were to die, they can always work out the data and keep on "revealing," ha ha. Doreen doesn't see anything to laugh at, but it's so brilliant that all you can do is laugh. Quick, before the stores close. I only have half an hour. I've got to get one of those recording things, or I'll miss all the ideas and inspirations that come to me tonight. I jump on my bike; keys, money; race to the electronics store. They see me pedaling like mad; they watch me coming and going. Some of them know what it's all about. They've heard about it, or they've noticed it some other way in subtle, subliminal atmospheric changes. It's been a long time since such

spiritual earthquakes occurred in Western Europe. Logical that this intensification hasn't limited itself to my physical head and that there are other aftershocks and aftereffects involved. But I'll just act like everything is normal. I'll tackle it in a respectable way and simply write it all down. I'm not going straight to shaking up the whole structure of being. Right now it may be better to record things in secret. Maybe wait seven years before releasing it all to the public, if they're ready for it. So just act normal for now; radiate normality, just as I always do. Lock the bike. Bike thieves are always busy, even at historic moments. Especially at historic moments! Life goes on for ordinary mortals—I have to keep that in mind.

What a massive amount of electrical equipment for sale. What a commotion. What a crowd. It really does seem like a madhouse here. If I can just follow the logic of this limited subsystem, I'll automatically end up where I have to be. It's not so busy in the voice recorder aisle. These are dangerous little devices, machines that duplicate being and store it, that project new elements into existence. With a voice recorder, you can take bits of the past and inject them into the present. Wouldn't you need a special ID card to do that? No, it's just for sale, like everything else. They let anybody do it, and most people don't understand how it works anyway. I pick out one with enough memory so I can talk and record my words for at least four days, minus the pauses for eating, drinking, and sleeping. It's an Olympus, so that should be all right.

Not expensive at all, these recorders, if you grasp their significance. Now onto the checkout line, pay the bill, and out through the exit gates. If I can just act like my old self, nobody will catch on. Just make the payment, assume a bland expression, and saunter out of the store. Everything runs like clockwork: harmonious interaction, card in the slot, PIN code, and a few minutes later even my bike key slides right into the lock. I am now equipped with a tabula rasa, a means of preserving every inspiration and idea for the future. But a blank sheet of paper, an empty cassette, or an empty hard disk is too empty. Nothing comes from nothing. I need a counterweight—fuel, or some kind of linguistic ballast that I can use, transform, and work through. A text I can wrap my head around. Of course, I have to have Plotinus. That's an ancient key, code included, that no longer holds any secrets for me. I can slide through Plotinus like butter. So I'll pick up a copy right away. Then I'll be ready: any minute now the future may break out and explode!

The revelation propels itself upward: glowing visions and thoughts about unity in diversity are everywhere in abundance. Shooting up like a fireworks rocket, then scattering through the sky, arcs of glistening stars that

can't reach the earth anymore. In this third phase, it became clear that I was different from everyone else and from the "I" of a few days ago. I knew that now I knew more. I understood that I understood everything. The arrow had been shot through the roof of being, and the first cautious confrontations with infinity and nonbeing had already emerged. This is still the phase in which death can be repudiated and immortality enjoyed. As long as the rush and the momentum remain inside, then the flipside of being—the Ø-delusion—can be kept at a distance. Uni-delusion and esse-delusion cannot be strictly separated here. One minute, the being of each individual thing is applauded (typical of the esse-delusion), and the next minute the connection of all those beings together in the One or in God is admired.

As long as revelations remain limited to something ineffable and abstract, they belong to the esse-delusion or the uni-delusion. The "problem" with such revelations, however, is that the mystical secret is now on the brink of being made public. The recipients of these kinds of revelations always have trouble keeping it all under their hats. The temptation is great to think that what you have seen, or what you "realize," is something "momentous" that other people should know about. A subjective sense of happiness, a feeling of "ecstasy" about being itself, shifts into an urge to share this feeling, this experience, this insight with others. Something as beautiful as this should be for everyone, right? Revelation brings with it the urge to prophesy. When you notice that most people just don't get It, you realize that you are different (or have become different) from other people and from your old self. Because of your special Insight or Revelation, you not only have a mission, but you're also one of the Elect, chosen to bring the mission to its intended conclusion (this theme is continued in 16.3).

II.II.IV The Red Haze

Too bad Doreen wasn't there when I got home with my Plotinus and voice recorder. She left a note: it had become too much for her, and I had to work it out for myself. Maybe she's further along than I thought. If she says it's too much for her, at least she realizes how "much" is there. That's a good sign. Not being able to handle that "too much" doesn't matter. At least she's aware of the great profusion. What's typical of her is thinking that when something is too much for her, it's too much for me as well, and that I have to work something out, whereas I'm well past the point of problems and solutions. Typical case of projection. But she will be forgiven.

Because she left, I had enough time tonight to take my first notes. I didn't even have to use my voice recorder; I entered everything straight onto the computer. Gathered lots of material and "activated" lots on the internet, and tomorrow we'll see what comes next. Now it's time for a

much-needed rest. Outside they keep going well into the night. Cars stopping and starting. Car doors slamming shut. Lights on and off. Seems like something's coming; I just hope I haven't done too much to incite it. There are dangerous edges to all this, and that can stir up bad blood here and there. It's slowly getting quieter outside, thank goodness. I've got to wrap it up here, too, and go upstairs.

I turn off the lights, one by one. I shouldn't turn them all off. Some lights should be left on during the night. Or should I resign myself to the darkness and trust that everything will simply keep on going? Fortunately the tap works fine, even in the dark. So someone is still awake at the water plant, even when all the lights are out. How am I going to drag my body through the night? How am I going to get my mind through the darkness? Which room is still unthreatened? There are windows on every side, and outside the light and dark effects are waging a war with each other. I have to close all the curtains to keep out the disturbing outside influences. I've got to calm down, lie down, and rest. I've taken on a heavy task. Worked a lot today, wrote a lot, and now I've got to rest. When I'm in a horizontal position, I no longer have to keep my body erect. It flows through me like water. It's like ebb and flow, an undulation. I have to let myself be carried along by the retreating movement of the water, but the flow can't touch me. I do not become submerged in the ocean of sleep. I lie exposed with a face of sand, indelible. The water abandons me. I will never be able to step into the same river twice. Everything flows away from me into the delta, the fourth letter.

Check the tap one more time to see if the water's still there. I feel my way to the bathroom. It's dark outside—and inside too. With a flick of the switch, the bright light goes on. Everything emerges in a flash, clearly defined, closed in on itself and presented to me. Then I turn to the mirror, I look, and I'm shocked. I see myself and I don't see myself. I look through the eyes of my father and see his father and all the forefathers, mirror behind mirror behind mirror. At the end of this succession, looking through the eyes of humanity, I now see a single human specimen on the other side. He's ready, I know him, and I know what he has to do. He's overlit. I look him straight in the eye. I can do what I want. I am who I am; I've broken through the limits of time, and I've reached the ultimate freedom. Through my eyes I see It in his eyes. I intensify my gaze, put on the pressure. It oscillates between me and me. The light is a strangely filtered gray, something is making the frequencies falter. Oh, of course! There's always more, a familiar environment, care institutions. Because of it I can never be alone in the light. There's always an external light source; the power station's emergency backup, hidden in the "power lines." Ha ha ha, and what if I were to disconnect it right now? Just turn the light switch off? I've rented this house, after

all, so I can do whatever I want. If only they had wired it differently. Light off, light on, light off, light on, light off, and let there be no light. One, two, three, four, silence and darkness. I snicker. *I can do anything*.

Ay yai yai, I should not have let myself think that way. That is arrogance, hubris, thinking beyond the sun. Those who take on the sun end up in the camp of darkness. The first reactions are already in—ay yai yai—in the window across from my house the light has gone on, stays on for a minute, and goes out. Fortunately, it's just a wink, a language joke. It's not serious; a blackand-white checkerboard. Relieved, I take a breath. Air! And I'm just about to try it again: rest and sleep. But then It happens: the Inflow of the Holy Spirit, the Immaculate Conception, and the Sacred Heart all in one: the house across the street has been appointed from above as an intermediary, as a medium. Here it is, meant for you, a sign of truth, meaning, and totality. A red haze is illuminated from above, straight through all contradictions, thoughts, and illusions. I see red, pure red, square window red, a seal of blood, love, faith, and hope. Everything that can breathe life into the emptiness: color. It was shown to me: past being and nonbeing, and past black, white, light gray, and dark gray, is the paradise of sanctuaries, hearts, and the new world of irreducible color qualia. A pure red reveals itself, unsettled, excavated, from under the ground, from above the heavens, coral red, crystal clear.

After a short time, the ineffable experience of esse-delusion and revelation, when exposed to enticing metaphors and symbolism, finds itself transformed into what is called a delusion of reference and paranoia. After the all-illuminating flash of mad revelation, a new mad shadow world emerges when the first light is extinguished. The earlier open insight is replaced by a closed scenario in which the pieces of scenery are arranged around a single main character. The activities and thoughts of this character have become the sacraments of a cosmic one-man show. The original "pure" moment of revelation—if it ever existed—has led to a strange imposition of signs centered on the person: turning the light on and off takes on cosmic significance, the curtain lit red is both vision and revelation, and the crystal lets itself be known (and unknown).

II.III Analysis of Revelations

II.III.I Fear of Disruption: Klaus Conrad and World War II

Based on a large number of detailed cases of psychosis among German soldiers who fought on the frontlines during World War II, Klaus Conrad (1958) drew up a model of the development of psychosis in which he leaves

room for revelation. But Conrad's vision of the experience of revelation differs from my own on several important points. First, he analyzes the mood that is prevalent in psychoses in general as anxious instead of ecstatic, so that is also how he sees the experience of revelation.² Conrad provides many examples in which anxiety has the upper hand: "Case 91 had been constantly anxious and agitated since June 1940. ... It was as if something were about to happen, as if he expected to be punished for something, but he didn't know what it was. In January 1941, it got much worse. No one told him what he was being charged with, but that he was being charged with something was quite clear. ... Case 37 talked about how his illness started. He had had a feeling that some kind of danger was lurking, but he had no idea what it was. ... 'everything looked so peculiar, so unreal.'"

Anxiety is indeed one possible reaction to the rending of reality. But based on my own experience and on the descriptions of many other cases, I think Conrad grossly overestimates anxiety. As a psychiatrist who worked at a first-aid post during the war, Conrad may have had more contact with men who were suffering from anxiety psychoses than the average person. Or perhaps he was just more attuned to perceiving anxiety than ecstasy, as is still often the case. Or perhaps there were more anxiety psychoses than joyful psychoses during the timeframe and under the circumstances that Conrad was writing about. The fact that a German soldier in France in June 1940 had the feeling that "something is wrong" and that this led to anxiety is entirely understandable. But what is less understandable is that Conrad paid not the least bit of attention to these circumstances (also see 16.1.3 and 16.3.3).

The second difference between Conrad's view and mine is that Conrad deems suspicion and paranoia as characteristic of the revelation experience. According to Conrad, soldiers take the feeling that "something is wrong" quite personally, such as when they say (1958, 43), "Tell me what's wrong, what they want from me. ... Of course there was something wrong with me, but they won't tell me what it is." In my analysis, this attention to the self is a secondary reaction in which the original primary moment of revelation is imagined or expressed.

For Conrad, these two differences make the experience of revelation one of calamity, in which the person himself is left in a state of uncertainty (1958, 46): "It is all the unnoticed, inconsequential features of the environment, the 'physiognomy' of the situation, that have assumed a new and alienating shape. The calamity is reflected in the face of the situation, in which, however, one is abandoned to uncertainty. This calamity is more than just bad luck. It is no more and no less than the doubting of one's own existence." Conrad sees calling one's own existence into question as

merely something negative. He offers no analysis in which the revelation is perceived as impersonal or liberating.

Conrad rightly standardizes the terms "apophony" and "revelation" for his description of madness. Unfortunately he uses these terms only for terrifying revelations and not for feelings of ineffable mysteriousness, let alone for mad-religious jubilation and joy. In doing so, he sets the tone for later psychiatric descriptions of revelation experiences. But when we no longer find ourselves in social situations of regimentation, war, and fear, as Conrad's poor frontline soldiers did, the *Apophänie*, the *Wahnstimmung*, the mystical madness, and the experience of revelation can also contain "inspiring" revelatory aspects.

II.III.II Strikingly Public: Shitij Kapur and Neurobiology

The Indian psychiatrist Shitij Kapur is remarkably well-known among Dutch psychiatrists. In 2003, he wrote a much-quoted and influential article that attempted to link neurobiology to psychotic experiences and thus to involve antipsychotic drugs (Kapur 2003, 13): "The objective of this overview is to link the neurobiology (brain), the phenomenological experience (mind), and pharmacological aspects of psychosis-in-schizophrenia into a unitary framework." Kapur's work seems to have derived its popularity from the supposed insights it revealed into the psychotic experience, combined with an aura of scientific inquiry and a pragmatic description of the need for psychotropic drugs. Thanks to Kapur, experiences of perplexity and revelation can now also be regarded as "neurobiologically explicable," and effortlessly seized upon as a justification for starting treatment with antipsychotics.

Although it is impracticable to refute every case of meaningless reductionism and misplaced naturalism in psychiatry, I would like to say a few things about this article, especially when it comes to "revelation"—or in Kapur's terminology, "aberrant salience."

Unlike Conrad, Kapur describes psychosis not only in terms of anxiety and suffering, but he also discusses experiences of ecstatic esse-delusion, perplexity, insight, and revelation (much as I do, but in a nutshell). Kapur (2003, 15) writes, "patients report experiences such as, 'I developed a greater awareness of. ... My senses were sharpened. I became fascinated by the little insignificant things around me'; 'Sights and sounds possessed a keenness that he had never experienced before'; 'It was as if parts of my brain awoke, which had been dormant'; or 'My senses seemed alive. ... Things seemed clear-cut, I noticed things I had never noticed before.' Most patients report that something in the world around them is changing, leaving them

somewhat confused and looking for an explanation. This stage of perplexity and anxiety has been recognized by several authors and is best captured in the accounts of patients: 'I felt that there was some overwhelming significance in this'; 'I felt like I was putting a piece of the puzzle together.'"

Such experiences and descriptions are food for thought and provide material for further philosophical reflection and for stories about the meaning and significance of life and the cosmos—to which this entire book bears witness. But without any further discussion, Kapur formulates our meaningful experiences of revelation and perplexity, of unity and infinity, in terms like "inappropriate salience" and "exaggerated importance of certain precepts and ideas." Without examining the substance of the experiences, let alone trying to understand them, he argues that they are irrelevant and aberrant. The experiences are not caused by "real" outside stimuli, Kapur says, but are the products of "inner disturbances." To Kapur, such disturbances are meaningless in and of themselves and are merely the result of a disordered dopamine balance (2003, 15): "Under normal circumstances, it is the stimulus-linked release of dopamine that mediates the acquisition and expression of appropriate motivational saliences in response to the subject's experiences and predispositions. Dopamine mediates the process of salience acquisition and expression, but under normal circumstances it does not create this process. It is proposed that in psychosis there is a dysregulated dopamine transmission that leads to stimulus-independent release of dopamine. This neurochemical aberration usurps the normal process of contextually driven salience attribution and leads to aberrant assignment of salience to external objects and internal representations. Thus, dopamine, which under normal conditions is a mediator of contextually relevant saliences, in the psychotic state becomes a creator of saliences, albeit aberrant ones. ... What is unique about the aberrant saliences that lead to psychosis is their persistence in the absence of sustaining stimuli."

Kapur never explores the meaning, the greater coherence, or the spiritual value of mad experiences of revelation or perplexity. He places such experiences and wordings entirely within a reductionist-scientific neurobiological context (2003, 15): "It is postulated that before experiencing psychosis, patients develop an exaggerated release of dopamine, independent of and out of synchrony with the context. This leads to the assignment of inappropriate salience and motivational significance to external and internal stimuli. At its earliest stage this induces a somewhat novel and perplexing state marked by exaggerated importance of certain percepts and ideas." The problem with Kapur has to do with his many quasineutral but actually value-charged descriptions of psychosis. Terms such as "inappropriate,"

"aberrant," "exaggerated," and "out of synchrony" do not refer to objectively neutral facts or findings but to normative evaluations of behavior and experience. Kapur's tone is typical of today's psychiatry: it contains little interest in studying the basics, little detail, and little unbiased curiosity about the unknown. In short, there is progress in the control of the object but decline in the understanding of the subject.

This criticism notwithstanding, it is interesting that Kapur proposes to distinguish the psychotic condition of aberrant or inappropriate salience from secondary reactive symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions. This is a refinement and a nuancing with respect to standard notions, according to which a psychosis consists of nothing but incomprehensible delusions and hallucinations. In making this distinction, Kapur seems to be siding with the phenomenological tradition of Jaspers, Conrad, Sass, Podvoll, and myself, all of whom are trying to detect a plausible psychotic logic in the succession of psychotic phases.

So when Dutch psychiatrist Jim van Os (2009) came up with the idea of renaming psychotic disorders and schizophrenia "salience dysregulation disorder" based on Kapur's work, it wasn't so crazy after all. With this new name, more justice is done to the initial experiences of perplexity and revelation, and there is less emphasis on reactive delusions and hallucinations (Podvoll's "seductions"). Unfortunately, the appeal of this new name suffers somewhat when Van Os calls the salience "dysregulated" without explaining his motivation for doing so. Salience would be a much more interesting concept if it were investigated in terms of content and meaning (that is: phenomenologically). What, for example, is the difference between inappropriate and aberrant salience? To what extent is the psychotic experience of stimulus-independent salience similar to other stimulus-independent experiences of salience, such as those of artists or mystics? Is psychotic salience only aberrant, or is it also heightened or augmented, as Kapur suggests? How can the experience of aberrant salience be dealt with without giving rise to secondary destructive hallucinations and delusions? Or, what is salience exactly, and to what other experiences is it related?

Besides introducing the notion of "salience," Kapur follows the psychotic course of "aberrant salience" as it slips into delusions and hallucinations, from esse-delusion to paranoia and delusions of reference—a sketch which, in itself, is quite adequate. He also argues that paranoia and delusions of reference are a reaction to the earlier salience: "Delusions are a cognitive effort by the patient to make sense of these aberrantly salient experiences,

whereas hallucinations reflect a direct experience of the aberrant salience of internal representations." At the same time, however, Kapur also describes this shift as if it were an inevitable process, a "developing psychosis," driven by a disrupted dopamine balance to which the psychotic has been passively subjected. Kapur (2003, 15) writes, "For many patients psychosis evolves through a series of stages: a stage of heightened awareness and emotionality combined with a sense of anxiety and impasse, a drive to 'make sense' of the situation, and then usually relief and a 'new awareness' as the delusion crystallizes and hallucinations emerge."

Nevertheless, the overall problem in Kapur, with regard to salience and to delusions and hallucinations, is that he provides no theory or motive to explain why something would or would not fall under these labels. The question that still remains is, What are salience, hallucinations, and delusions anyway? In the introduction, Kapur writes, "I use 'psychosis' in this paper to refer to the experience of delusions (fixed, false beliefs) and hallucinations (aberrant perceptions) and the secondarily related behavior." Despite all the scientific terminology and the dopamine hypotheses, Kapur does not get much further than the disappointingly circular claim that the aberrant person, the psychotic, is having aberrant experiences and is thinking incorrectly.

Kapur relates the notion of salience to a change in dopamine balance. He also attempts to show how and why antipsychotic drugs work as they do, given the notion of salience and the dopamine hypothesis. Here, too, the concrete results are exceptionally meager. Antipsychotic drugs work because they "dampen the salience" of these abnormal experiences, according to Kapur (2003, 13), "and by doing so permit the resolution of symptoms. The antipsychotics do not erase the symptoms but provide the platform for a process of psychological resolution. However, if antipsychotic treatment is stopped, the dysregulated neurochemistry returns, the dormant ideas and experiences become reinvested with aberrant salience, and a relapse occurs."

With the definition of salience still unclear, and the basis of his judgments of aberration still without motivation, Kapur goes on to make suggestions for medical treatment. By firmly insisting that "the dysregulated neurochemistry returns" when medication is stopped, Kapur suggests that antipsychotic drugs must be taken for a lifetime in order to suppress aberrant salience. The effect of such drugs is that *all* salience is reduced, which Kapur seems to regard as an acceptable loss. And the fact that a sound "psychological resolution" can prevent the recurrence of "dysregulated neurochemistry" is something Kapur ignores entirely.

Kapur's greatest fallacy, and that of others like him, is what William James pointed out more than a hundred years ago: it is never the underlying neurobiology and associated aberrations that determine whether something is a disorder, an illness, or a blessing. Whether salience is aberrant—appropriate or inappropriate—is not visible in the neurons but is dependent on the value judgment placed on the salience itself. James (1958, 30-31) described it beautifully when he wrote, "When we think certain states of mind superior to others, is it ever because of what we know concerning their organic antecedents? No! it is always for two entirely different reasons. It is either because we take an immediate delight in them; or else it is because we believe them to bring us good consequential fruits for life. When we speak disparagingly of 'feverish fancies,' surely the fever-process as such is not the ground of our disesteeem—for aught we know to the contrary, 103° or 104° Fahrenheit might be a much more favorable temperature for truths to germinate and sprout in, than the more ordinary blood-heat of 97 or 98 degrees. It is either the disagreeableness itself of the fancies, or their inability to bear the criticisms of the convalescent hour. When we praise the thoughts which health brings, health's peculiar chemical metabolisms have nothing to do with determining our judgment."

No matter how aberrant the dopamine's behavior, the question of whether salience and/or experiences of revelation should be suppressed with antipsychotic drugs will always depend on the quality of the experience. Kapur simply assumes that the qualities of altered salience are always negative, that psychotic salience is aberrant and inappropriate, and that it must be beaten down by means of a lifelong regime of medication. Obviously, this entire book is an appeal to spend more time considering such experiences, to examine them more closely, and to distil from them their positive values. So proposals such as those made by Kapur—to regard not only hallucinations and delusions as disturbed, but the stage of perplexity and revelation as well—cannot count on our sympathy.

The studies carried out by Conrad and Kapur differ from each other in striking ways. For Conrad, the experiences at the beginning of the psychosis mainly have to do with anxiety and suspicion. He saw little perplexity, ecstasy, and revelation. For Conrad, the motivation to "take psychotics aside" (which in Nazi Germany in the forties usually amounted to "gassing" them, see 16.3.3) lay in the anxious mood and pragmatic considerations related to disturbances of the peace in the German army. Kapur, on the other hand, has little to say when it comes to anxiety and disturbances of the peace or other social problems. His emphasis is on the "abnormality"

of psychotic experiences and a supposed aberrant neurobiological correlation as grounds for "treating" the psychotic.

What is striking about Kapur is that, unlike Conrad, he hardly ever deals with the kinds of experiences that take place in the initial phase of madness. He does not discuss the history of his patients, or their closest relationships, or their ways of thinking or experiencing. He reduces their experiences of revelation and perplexity to mere episodes in the brain. He develops the notion of salience, which is interesting in and of itself, only at the neurobiological level. This might surprise anyone who has not been totally indoctrinated by the current biomedical model. But when we see how many millions of dollars Kapur has received over the years from pharmaceutical companies like Janssen-Cilag, Lilly, and Bristol-Myers Squibb, his attention to the propaganda of antipsychotic drugs becomes a bit more comprehensible.⁴

II.III.III Phenomenology and Revelation: Louis Sass and Daniel Schreber I

Many insist that the very idea of revelation attests to incorrect or delusional ideas. This is true of Kapur, but it's also true of Louis Sass when he turns his attention to Schreber (see section 13.4.3). Schreber sees, thinks, receives, and experiences a great many remarkable things. During large segments of his period of "madness," everything in the cosmos centers on Schreber himself, on God, and on the way they relate to each other. God communicates with Schreber by means of rays and nerves, and Schreber communicates back. In his struggle with God, with God's divisions, and with himself, Schreber also "receives" inspirations and "discovers" truths that are extraordinarily deep. Sometimes Schreber explicitly states that he has had divine revelations (1988, 41): "After all I too am only a human being and therefore limited by the confines of human understanding; but one thing I am certain of, namely that I have come infinitely closer to the truth than human beings who have not received divine revelation."

Sass criticizes Schreber's presentation of his "revelations" because he believes Schreber longs for the impossible. On the one hand, Schreber recognizes that everything that happens, happens "inwardly," within a world of private thoughts not accessible to anyone else. On the other hand, Schreber claims that these inner events are of importance to others. As Sass writes (1994, 55), "Schreber's claims seem, then, to involve a contradiction—or at least a continual equivocation—between two attitudes: one in which he accepts the essential innerness and privacy of his own claims, the other in which he assumes that they have some kind of objectivity and potential

consensuality. This duality is hardly unique to Schreber: many schizophrenic patients who seem generally aware of the innerness of their claims also consider their delusions to be revelations of a truth that they assume to be, in the same sense, both objective and potentially public in nature." And elsewhere (1994, 58): "We should not be surprised to find Schreber wavering between a purely subjective sense of revelation and one that seems to contain implications concerning the consensual and objective world."

This makes Sass's requirements for verbal descriptions of the psychotic experience inordinately stringent. It's hard enough, under normal circumstances, to separate the subjective from the objective in the statements we make. When we voice our opinion about how the world works or how we ourselves work, it's difficult to separate fact, fiction, interpretation, and fantasy. It's even trickier when we're trying to express the message of the inexpressible. Sass seems to be imprisoned in a phenomenological model in which experiences and statements must clearly refer either to the inner world (the subjective) or the outer world (the objective). When they qualify as objective, they have to be verifiable, and when they qualify as subjective, they are interpreted as psychological (cf. sections 13.4.3, 14.3.3, and 16.3.3). This makes revelatory experiences and prophetic language difficult to understand in the strict phenomenology of Sass. In evaluating and discussing revelations, phenomenology seems to run up against certain borders. When the phenomenological psychiatrist tries to follow and empathize with what is occurring in the psychotic consciousness, he has no choice but to regard as an anomaly anything that might force its way in from the other side. Whatever is revealing itself cuts across the inner and outer borders, and the madman can only bear witness to it in nonverifiable stammering and croaking. The phenomenologist may want to join the mad journey and report on the mad landscape, but when the tsunami or the lightning strikes along the way, he wants to remain untouched.⁵

II.III.IV 1 Corinthians 13: Faith, Hope, and Love

Apparently it is difficult to say anything of importance about mad revelations without embellishing them with delusions and hallucinations, drawing them into the realm of anxiety and suffering (Conrad), reducing them to a neurobiological level (Kapur), or criticizing them as meaningless assertions (Sass). But what if we involve the Bible in this discussion? To this end, I turn to the first letter to the Corinthians (chapter 13 in the Revised Standard Version, 1952) as a source of inspiration. This is a lyric discourse on the three concepts of "faith," "hope," and "love." In the rest of this section, I will find out what it has to say about the mad form of revelation.

Madness characteristically begins with the feeling that "something is about to happen." In its positive variant, this is a sense of "happy expectation." The world seems to be "pregnant with meaning." At the moment of the revelation, there is still no surplus of meaning in the world; there is only the yet unspecified sense that "everything is pointing to something." One of Conrad's patients expressed it succinctly (1958, 87): "The whole world is like that, as if everything were waiting for something." (Also see section 16.3.2.)

There is a suspicion that "it" can start at any moment; the world is at the point of bursting forth, exploding, as if there were something in the air—a promise that will turn the world around and pay itself out in benefits. It is not yet possible to indicate where the fissure in reality is located, but the fact that there is a fissure at all, and that His face is somewhere behind it, is certain. 1 Cor. 13:12: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully even as I have been fully understood." That which is revealing itself is so intense and fulfilling that just the thought of all the glory that will come to us is enough to cast everything in a glow of expectation.

The structure of this experience is that of hope. The hope of salvation, fulfillment, unity, and the eternity to come. It's almost here. We conduct rituals, we make tableaux, we go to special locations, we wait for a special broadcast, we're ready to receive whatever it is. Hidden in this hope is the certainty that "there's something there": a flash of belief in the universe, in being, in the cosmos, in the connectedness of the Many in the One. This is what is believed, in the sense that it is at hand.

This faith in the Crystal, with the hope that it can crystallize out at any moment, convinces the madman that the future has actually already happened. Hope enables him to reach out and pluck from the air that which has almost been revealed and make it his own ground of certainty. The future takes place in the past and assumes the indisputable certainty of something that has already occurred. The future paradise is the paradise lost. The mad revelation, with its hope and its faith, transforms linear, continuous, empty time into a time of sacred fulfillment (see section 15.2.3).

This hope and faith bring about joy and happiness because that which is to come is perfectly good. Love brings about hope in a communion and in the resulting joy. Love also brings about a longing for communion; it provides the energy to reach out from the lower to the higher, realizing the lower in the higher and vice versa. Love causes everything to be united with everything else and makes it good. 1 Cor. 13:13: "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

The revelation of love shows that everything is good, that the present is connected to what is to come and to what has always been but has remained unnoticed for so long. The revelation of love opens our eyes to what is hoped for and what is eternal in everything. When this love is discovered or revealed, we don't have to go any further. What always was but seemed lost has been found. All signs point to His coming, but His coming is infinitely more than all signs can contain. 1 Cor. 13: 8–10: "Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away."

Besides joyful revelation, there is a diabolical variant, with the opposing poles of fear, unbelief, and indifference. There, that which is to come is calamity. The terrible thing that is going to strike is so monstrous that the very thought of it causes it to happen. Here, too, the world is pregnant with meaning, and all we know about it is that it does not bode well. Calamity is in the air; the threat cannot be pinned down to anything in particular but is everywhere palpable. Instead of Corinthians 13, we think of the mood created in Revelation 13, for example.

In his comments on this reverse experience of revelation, James says (1958, 326), "In delusional insanity, paranoia, as they sometimes call it, we may have a *diabolical* mysticism, a sort of religious mysticism turned upside down. The same sense of ineffable importance in the smallest events, the same texts and words coming with new meanings, the same voices and visions and leadings and missions, the same controlling by extraneous powers; only this time the emotion is pessimistic: instead of consolations we have desolations; the meanings are dreadful; and the powers are enemies to life."

This dark revelation is indicated in two ways. According to some, the color of the revelation depends on the recipient. A person who is anxious by nature will feel threatened by all the pomp and circumstance from above and try to avert it. Paranoia and anxiety can then be understood as the reactions of an anxious ego that is afraid of lost identity and fragmentation. Others focus on the content of the revelation: that, in addition to being, nothingness can also be revealed. Suddenly it becomes clear that *there really is nothing at all*. This is the subject of the next chapter.

12 Absolutely Nothing: The Ø-Delusion

Some people say that nothingness lies at the heart of the mystical-mad existence. There's a lot to be said for that idea. Those who make their way further down the via mystica psychotica become more and more thoroughly detached, demagined, delanguized, and dethought. We can generalize these various demovements by characterizing the via mystica psychotica as a basic "de-xx-ing." When the de-xx-ing destroys "everything," you end up in a purely negative zone "where there is nothing." This nothing is both the goal of the via mystica psychotica and the concept that underlies the de-xx-ing (cf. the discussion in the introduction to part III). This is where the mystical-mad paradox is most strongly felt: nothing can be said about nothing. Even so, in this chapter, I'm going to attempt to say something about nothing and to place the focus on mystical-mad nothingness. I have already addressed nothingness indirectly, both in chapter 1, with the experience of unreality, and in various places throughout other chapters as the premise for the method of the via negativa. In this chapter, nothingness itself is the main subject, and it is the negative counterpart to the three concepts discussed earlier on: the One, being, and infinity. I will begin by introducing nothingness and discussing its relationship to "somethingness." But first, a poem:

The Last Days of Summer

Slower the wasps, scarcer the horse-flies blowflies are grayer, none of them angels, nothing is glorified, everything smolders

these are the last days, the last pause of summer is being written, the last flames of the year, there still remains

something of the years that were, and what is prophesied has darkened edges

it's time to sign yourself out, lock the garden within the garden, spare the opened book its coming ending, refrain from speech

don't speak of how the words fall past the lip, of poems inundated by the soil, no tongue will tell of hibernating things—

—Gerrit Kouwenaar, Een geur van verbrande veren (A Smell of Burnt Feathers, 1991)

12.1 "With Without My Coat": A Linguistic Philosophical Introduction

Long ago, before I was shaped and indoctrinated by the language's more subtle operating instructions, I had a childlike but razor-sharp understanding of what nothingness was. I wanted to go outside and play, but my mother thought it was too cold to run around without a coat. I didn't want to wear my coat, so I asked, "Mom, can I go outside with without my coat?" My mother, however, didn't want me to catch cold, so she said I could go outside only "with my coat." She also added that you cannot go outside "with without your coat." It's "with your coat" or "without your coat," she said, but "with without your coat" is impossible. This was followed by a discussion in which it wasn't really clear what this was all about. Later on, I would frequently get myself entangled in conversations like this one: there's coffee with sugar, but is there also coffee with without sugar, and is there beer with without alcohol?

Linguistic philosophical nitpickers who only acknowledge what is will say that the negation of the presence of a coat, of sugar, or of alcohol "means nothing but" the statement that, at certain places (around the bodies of small children), there is an X of the type "coat," and at other places, there is not; that in certain drinks, the ingredient Y (sugar or alcohol) is present, and in other drinks it isn't. According to them, all you can say about "notbeing-present" is that it has to do with a lack, a dearth, a want, an absence—without any substantial content. The negative is no more than the absence of the positive.

For the little boy who goes outside "with without a coat," things are quite different. Shrouded in the "not" of the "not coat," he experiences a freedom in the wind and a maneuverability in his play that would not be available to him if he were wearing a coat. This state is described in negative terms (without a coat); but with respect to the positively described situation (with a coat) it isn't only negative. There is a positivity lying hidden in the negativity of being-without-a-coat, which cannot emerge unless the thinking disengages from what is being negated. We cannot identify with the pleasure of the boy's unhampered play "with without a coat" unless

we leave the thought of the coat behind. If we want to understand the boy and his play, we have to rethink the negativity of "without a coat" and create a separate condition for it. This is easier if we regard "without a coat" as something positive that you can wear, as something you can "have" or "take with you," as in "with without a coat."

Negations often have this double effect. On the one hand, their existence seems to depend on an already existing positivity. If there were no coats, you wouldn't be able to go outside "without a coat." The positive coat is the condition for the possibility of "being without a coat." The nonbeing (the being-without-a-coat) seems parasitical with regard to being (being-with-a-coat). On the other hand, negations seem to be able to refer to an isolated state: without-a-coat indicates more than what we can read from the coat alone. The negation is the condition for this extraordinary state: something is created out of nothing, and in the act of negating, we "discover" something new. The uniqueness of this new state is in danger of being obscured, owing to the fact that we learn about it on the basis of the positive, contrastive terms that are used. But at the same time, this negatively described state derives its right to exist from the positive state.

This semantically existential dynamic also plays a role in descriptive psychopathology. A psychotic person, it is claimed, *cannot* concentrate, *cannot* orient himself, *cannot* engage in a normal conversation, and has *no* sense of reality. Often the "leap to positivity" is never taken. The psychotic is pinned down in terms of characteristics he does not possess, and no interest is shown in the positive aspects of the negatively described condition. The negative characteristics are only used to identify the psychotic, and no one ever asks "what it is like" to live in not-in-reality.

To what extent the leap from the positive to the negative is an obvious one partly depends on the relationship between the negated characteristic and the relevant subject. Sugar is not an essential ingredient of coffee, and it is easier to imagine coffee "with without sugar" than to imagine beer "with without alcohol," let alone beer "with without water." This last example, in which an essential characteristic or component is negated, seems to be a denial that the topic in question is still itself at all. Is beer without alcohol still beer? Is the gibberish of the psychotic still language? In such "heavy" negations, the leap in thinking is not from the positive to the negative but from the positive to the explosive: doubting the relevance of the entire category with regard to the topic of discussion. Beer without water is no longer functional as beer; confused language is no longer meaningful as language.

The ease and readiness with which the leap is made from the positive to the negative also depends on the kind of characteristics being negated. If

the characteristics are pleasant, the negative will usually be lamented as an absence of those characteristics. A description of a psychosis as the inability to carry on a conversation is more likely to evoke pity for the poor psychotic who cannot converse than curiosity about what it's like not to have a conversational agenda in your head. But emphasizing the "overcoming" of social and cultural inhibitions and limitations does lead to an interest in the psychotic life. When the psychotic language is not gibberish but scratch language (see section 7.3), then the multiplicity inherent in the term "scratch language" leads to more positivity than the univocal negativity of "confusion."

So the effects of negativity and nothingness are subtle, depending on where and how they appear. The negative can be regarded as an independent condition in itself (12.3), perhaps even as a source of sense and meaning (12.4), or conversely it can be seen as no more than a parasitic deficiency with respect to the positive (12.2). The negation can be regarded as an innocent statement about something (coffee without sugar) or as an explosive denial of the fact that something else exists at all (beer without water). The negation can be seen as a liberation from bad characteristics or as a loss of something valuable.

These kinds of nuances and considerations will reappear in the following discussion of the mad mysticism of nothingness; however, the nothingness of mad mysticism is a more inclusive and more fundamental nothingness than the negation of sugar or alcohol. Nothingness as I discuss it here is comparable to the negations and "nothings" of "coat" and "sugar," the way absolute Ω is comparable to the Cantorian, transfinite infinities. For this reason I am abbreviating this absolute nothingness as \varnothing , just as I abbreviated absolute infinity as Ω . This \varnothing is the underlying concept of all de-xx-ings along the via mystica psychotica. It is pure negation, without any evidence of a negated something or a negating authority. The name I have given to the mystical-mad state that expresses itself in \varnothing motifs is the \varnothing -delusion.

12.2 From Matter to Nothing: Nothing as Deduced from Something

In this section I will discuss the understanding of the relationship between nothingness and being, in which being is the normal state and nothingness is the aberrant, abnormal, and pathological state. Being exists by nature, and only when it deteriorates or becomes damaged or broken in some way does a state of nonbeing arise. This nonbeing has no other positive value and no characteristics; it is simply an absence of being, just as without-acoat is no more than "without-a-coat." In the most extreme views of this

kind, there is only being, and it is impossible to speak of more intense, decreasing, or absent forms of being. There is no nonbeing; it isn't even conceivable. As a result, being and nothingness cease being interesting, effective concepts at all. In less radical views about being, there are degrees of being, and being can decrease and even disappear in a variety of ways.

Time is often cited as that which erodes being. According to a preliminary view of time and being, the future and the past are domains in which being is diminished—indeed, they are less real than the present. Nothingness attacks being in the future and the past, and being that "is now" is the highest or the fullest. Those who walk with their heads in the clouds of the nonbeing future, or who stagnate in the trials and tribulations of the nonbeing past, "are less here" than those who are fully present in the now, according to this view.

Conversely, there are notions about time and being in which "becoming absorbed in the here-and-now of the present" is seen as a form of "deterioration of being." The height of being would then involve resisting the superficial, capricious present by becoming suspended in the imaginary clouds of an eternal being or of a paradisiacal being in a distant future or past—think of Platonic idealism or early Christian beliefs.

A third way of looking at the relationship between time and being is by always regarding being *and* nonbeing as a function of time. This last view—with Heidegger and Sartre as spokesmen—will play a particularly important role here.

In addition to the dimension of time, nothingness can also affect being by concealing it under a layer of appearance: in illusions, in play, in dreams, and in masks, a "nothing" is present that hides or does harm to the reality of real being. I discussed these two destructive forces—time and appearance—at length in part I, and here they will once again play a role, but in the background. Of course it is possible to imagine many more ways in which being is presented as strengthened or weakened. In the rest of this chapter, I will consider the idea that normal being corresponds to ordinary, everyday being and that nonbeing, or lesser being, corresponds to forms of psychosis and schizophrenia. Then I will discuss how this idea relates to philosophies of nothingness such as that of Sartre.

12.2.1 Phenomenology: Psychosis as Lack of Being

The twentieth century was the century in which a great number of philosophers and other thinkers and writers had a go at promoting ordinary life "as it is *really* lived." One of the key components of the twentieth-century self-image is what the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (1989) calls "the

affirmation of ordinary life." This held that the sense and value of life would be sought in the everyday things and not beyond it, in some isolated heroic or religious existence. Writers and philosophers from the first half of the last century endeavored to use language to describe the inner experience of ordinary life, which they contrasted with the external observation of behavior. It was thought that the more detached, generalizing methods of the empirical sciences were not capable of doing justice to the emotions and thoughts that make up everyday life, in all its ordinariness and complexity.

Bergson, for example, showed what kinds of subtle social mechanisms and psychological acrobatics are involved in something as normal as a laugh. Robert Musil gave a highly detailed description of the endlessly branching trains of thought and musings that float to the surface when (like the protagonist in his *The Man without Qualities* [Mann ohne Eigenschaften]) you "take a vacation from life" in order to live a life that is truly good. Sartre analyzed the situation of being caught while peering through a keyhole, showing how the interaction between one's own glance and the glance of the other—and the awareness of both—leads to confusing feelings of shame, wrapped in complex reflexivity and meta-reflexivity. The literary works of writers such as Musil, Mann, and Proust, along with the philosophical writings of Bergson, Heidegger, and Sartre, among others, form a corpus of texts full of endlessly twisting paths of "true being" in vivo.

In philosophy, increasingly systematic attempts were made, using more and more arguments, to distinguish "real human being" from the "simply being there" of lifeless objects. Searches were conducted within the subjective experience and in the human consciousness for structures of being that preceded or eluded objective science. It all had to do with questions such as: What is it that characterizes unique human existence as it is lived and experienced? Exactly how do experiences come about? How does being compare with the disappearance of being in time? Bergson sought answers to such questions in a kind of "life spark," an élan vital, that would be responsible for typical human creativity. Husserl studied how phenomena are experienced before we are even aware of them or talk about them. Heidegger formulated the concept of "existentials," which would more closely denote the "thrownness" of humans in the world. And Sartre stressed the fact that the human "exists," first of all, as a free creature, and that this is only later followed by knowledge and reflection.

Psychopathology and psychiatry sailed along in the same cultural current, explicitly trying to connect with the ideas of the philosophers mentioned above.² In mental hospitals and private practices, encounters took place with people who somehow did not fit into the much celebrated

pattern of normal ordinariness; their language was different, their behavior was different, and their thoughts and emotions seemed to follow a different path. While the phenomenologists tried to come up with a description of the ground of normal consciousness and everyday experience, the phenomenological psychiatrists tried to demonstrate that this very ground, the heart of existence, was missing from the lives of schizophrenics and psychotics. In their view, normal people are, while to a greater or lesser degree, psychotics—who sometimes claim this themselves—are-not; that is, psychotics have no ground; they are "bottomless" or, at the very most, have a "non-ground." Sass (2002, 255) summarizes a few thoughts about psychoses from this classical phenomenological psychiatry as follows: "such individuals [schizophrenics/psychotics] tend to manifest a loss of vital contact with reality and a dulling of their subjective lives. This transformation is neither a general lowering of the mental level nor a clouding of mental life (as in dementia or delirium). It is, rather, a diminishment of the sense of vitality, or of existence itself, that defies easy description."

Here Sass discusses concepts such as vitality, subjective life, contact with reality, and even existence in terms of loss and diminishment. He continues: "Such persons may be perfectly aware of the more objective aspects of reality; yet though they 'register and know,' they do not 'feel' the reality of what they experience. Such patients sense that they are not fully present in their actions and experiences: Although they may appear to behave just like other people, they have the sense that nothing is real, that they are only pretending." The important thing here is the difference between knowing one exists and experiencing or feeling that existence. For psychotics, the latter is missing. They *know* life well enough, and they can *think*, but they aren't really present—they do not *experience* being and they have feelings of unreality (also see section 1.2.2).

Another phenomenological psychiatrist, Wolfgang Blankenburg, said that the psychotics in question lacked any "natural self-evidence" (see 1.2.2.1 ff.). Quotes from his own patient "A." show that this self-evidence corresponds with the ability "to just be" in everyday existence. This ability "to just be" is essential to leading a normal life; it is the raison d'être that is missing in schizophrenia. Blankenburg quotes A. and provides additional commentary (1971, 95, 6, italics in original): "'The nicest thing would be just to be, in a perfectly natural way. But I have to do so much alone here ... everything is so unnatural ...' While patient Z. talks about the 'primary basis,' A. turns her attention to the 'fundamental things,' the 'simple relationships,' or the 'essentials.'" Just as with Sass, it's all about an ability (or an inability) that

cannot be described exactly, and that precedes knowledge. A. continues: "'It's not about knowing something. You can't just see it and understand it ...'"

The "experience of being" is missing for A. in that it's being questioned and doubted. A. cannot simply "be there." Every solid "being there" seems to get crushed by a questioning attitude. This questioning attitude again goes deeper than questions about knowledge, and it reaches out for the area preceding knowledge, the prereflective area that at the same time is the ground of everyday experience. A. talks about it in Blankenburg (1971, 75): "But they're actual questions! The answers are necessary in order to get any further at all ... everything, really everything is so questionable. Somehow I don't understand a thing about it ... You can't just live, just like that ... Just wander into life—it's simply not possible. ...'" Blankenburg remarks, "This 'just like that' is striking and important, because it is what the fluidity of daily existence is based on, the self-evidentness."

Blankenburg then distinguishes healthy (everyday) from unhealthy (psychotic) doubt. Unhealthy doubt goes much further than the doubt of a healthy person, for whom doubt does not have a negative impact on the "ordinary supportive ground" of existence.³ Sass characterizes extreme doubt, and the questioning of the prereflective, as "hyperreflexivity" (see section 1.2.2.1). Such thinking is powerful but impractical; it penetrates the prereflective domain, where it gnaws on its own basic conditions.

By analyzing the role of nothingness that underlies Sass's hyperreflexivity and Blankenburg's radical doubt, the Ø of the Ø-delusion becomes clearer. The Ø-delusion is "nihilistic": everything that lands within its sphere of influence is called into question, doubted, "analyzed to death," ironized, and turned upside down. "Nothing" is safe from the mad "disintegration"; all normal associations between experiences, words, thoughts, memories, and perceptions cease to exist, and the psychotic ends up in a state of formless chaos. Being deteriorates: the law of identity—"A is A" no longer applies, because the connection between A and A, the "being" inherent in the equation "is," falls away. In the Ø-delusion, "nothing is self-evident anymore," there is no longer a reliable basis of existence upon which one can experience, think, and doubt. Ordinary human reflexivity is stripped from the ground of existence and becomes a raging, nihilistic, inhuman hyperreflexivity in the vacuousness of Ø. A great many words may be spoken, but "it's all about nothing." In the eyes of an outsider, the madman gives the impression of believing too much and of living a life of delusions, but beneath all the roaring, there's a gaping emptiness.⁴

If life is a text, it consists of words, sentences, and punctuation marks. In the esse-delusion, every sentence is followed by an extra exclamation mark.

The Ø-delusion manifests itself textually by transforming every period into a question mark.⁵ Phenomenological psychiatry in the tradition of those ranging from Minkowski and Binswanger to Blankenburg, Sass, and Parnas has given us mountains of insight with regard to how the psychotic "text" changes in terms of time, space, and intersubjectivity under the influence of the nihilistic question mark, and this topic constitutes the theme of part I. But here in chapter 12, I will take a longer look at the question mark itself.

12.2.2 Sartre's Being and Nothingness and the Ø-delusion

In this section I will discuss nothingness and madness on the basis of *Being and Nothingness*, by the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. For Sartre, human existence is inconceivable without freedom and things related to it, such as responsibility and reflection. Man is the creature that has no essence of his own and is therefore unlimited and free. But for this reason, whenever he performs an act, he can draw only on his own lack of essence, his nothingness (cf. Sartre 2003, 49).⁶

In other words, because man can contemplate and "read" himself and his future possibilities by means of reflection, his future is essentially unlimited. Nothing forces a person to choose one possibility and not the other. It is the person himself who chooses one possibility and rules out, "nihilates," or "annihilates" the others. This negative aspect of human consciousness is also that which gives the world a certain form, by excluding all other possible conceivable forms (cf. Sartre 2003, 48). As such, nothingness is inextricably linked to being human and to meaningful human acts.

In this section, with the help of Sartre's discussion of nothingness, I plan to substantiate my position that the mystical madman finds himself "in nothingness." Here, too, the route to the \emptyset -delusion begins with questions and with doubt, and our journey will once again take us past the stations of time and freedom.

Although nothingness is inescapable in human existence, this nothingness—this negative or this negation—is not "primary" for Sartre; rather, to him, nothingness is a function of the positive, of being. That is why Sartre—unlike Heidegger—belongs in this section: because, for him, our world and our existence are first and foremost to be understood in terms of "being." In this line of thinking, the mystical madman who ends up "in nothingness" has merely "fallen out of being" and has not discovered the ground or a deeper truth underlying being (an idea that I will not be looking at further until section 12.3). As Sartre (2003, 40) says, "This means that being is prior to nothingness and establishes the ground for it. ... it is from being that nothingness derives concretely its efficacy. ... This means that being has no

need of nothingness in order to be conceived and that we can examine the idea of it exhaustively without finding there the least trace of nothingness. But on the other hand, nothingness, which is not, can have only a borrowed existence, and it gets its being from being. ... the total disappearance of being would not be the advent of the reign of nonbeing, but on the contrary the concomitant disappearance of nothingness. Nonbeing exists only on the surface of being." With this, Sartre denies that nothingness could be an independently active, demonic force that could attack and overcome being and reign over the chaos like a dark power.

Nothingness is necessary in order to make doubting and questioning possible. A question that casts doubt on the facts can never arise of its own accord from the fact that "all things are" or "something is" without outside interference. Doubt and denial themselves are not part of "being." As Sartre (2003, 45–46, 35) says, "no question could be asked, in particular not that of being, if negation did not exist. ... In order for negation to exist in the world and in order that we may consequently raise questions concerning Being, it is necessary that in some way Nothingness be given. ... In a word, if being is everywhere, it is not only Nothingness which, as Bergson maintains, is inconceivable; for negation will never be derived from being. The necessary condition for our saying not is that nonbeing be a perpetual presence in us and outside of us, that nothingness haunt being."

Questions are curious events; they do harm to the certainty of being. Questions change certainties into possibilities. Even if, ultimately, only one answer is possible, asking a question causes you to take more possibilities into account. In actual activities and events, the endless number of possibilities is reduced to nothing. With every move you make, you destroy thousands of worlds that might have been but that remain imaginary because of your own agency, which is based "on nothing." Questions give rise to doubt concerning the certainty and coherence of being. With one question something is loosened up, and certainty is made uncertain. A question makes that which is being questioned less real and places the questioner outside the being he is questioning.

Questions bring nothingness into the world. As Sartre says (2003, 47), "This means that by a double movement of nihilation, he [the questioner] nihilates the thing questioned in relation to himself by placing it in a *neutral* state, between being and nonbeing—and that he nihilates himself in relation to the thing questioned by wrenching himself from being in order to be able to bring out of himself the possibility of a nonbeing. Thus in posing a question, a certain negative element is introduced into the world. We see nothingness making the world iridescent, casting a shimmer over

things. But at the same time the question emanates from a questioner who in order to motivate himself in his being as one who questions, disengages himself from being."

By now it should be clear that this line of reasoning is consistent with what I remarked earlier: the mystical madman "slips away" from being by doubting everything, by calling everything into question, and by subjecting the most ordinary things to the scrutiny of a questioning and burning hyperreflexivity. This leads to perplexity that can be understood as the question mark with a capital letter, as the state of questioning in which there is no longer a questioned or a questioner, and as total nothingness: Ø. When being is swallowed up in questioning, the mystical madman disappears into nothingness. Hyperreflexivity is like the whirlpool that leads to an infinitesimal point of concentration in the endlessly vast, bottomless ocean of being.

When we extrapolate Sartre's comments on iridescence and shimmering from this quote, in the \emptyset -delusion we see "(mad) nothingness making the world (madly) iridescent, casting a shimmer over things." This iridescence and shimmering of "nothingness" are more than metaphors; earlier I showed how "something changes with the light" in madness and how strikingly colorful the colors are (cf. section 4.3.3 and fragment IV).

One of the most important paths to the mad world runs beneath the gate of time, and in Sartre, too, nothingness is intrinsically connected to time. As Sartre (2003, 126) says so succinctly and tersely, "This nothingness which separates human reality from itself is at the origin of time." That is to say, everything would exist without nothingness, but it would all remain undifferentiated. The present, the past, and the future, as in the static vision (see section 3.1.1), would mean nothing. As Sartre says (2003, 51), "Inasmuch as my present state would be a prolongation of my prior state, every opening by which negation could slip through would be completely blocked. Every psychic process of nihilation implies then a cleavage between the immediate psychic past and the present. This cleavage is precisely nothingness."

Without nothingness, the present would be absorbed into the flow of time; it could not serve as a leverage point for the division between finished, closed things from the past and open possibilities for the future. Human time, with differences between the present, the past, and the future, is made possible only by nothingness. This emergence of human time is either a "leap" or a "fall." On the one hand, man without nothingness is a thing without inner duration, without an awareness of present and past and with only a causal and determined reaction pattern, as reflexive as a knee jerking upward when struck by a hammer; nothingness is then the "leap" to a

human level of freedom. On the other hand, man without this nothingness finds himself in the eternity of the One, where human time, generated by nothingness and characterized by want and deficiency, is absent; in that case, nothingness represents the "fall" into earthly limitation.⁸

Nothingness and human freedom consist of man's ability to position himself with respect to that past and to regard himself in the present not as a product but as a conscious negation of the past. This "nihilation" is not something that happens occasionally; rather, it underlies all ordinary activity. Sartre (2003, 52) says, "It is necessary then that conscious being constitute itself in relation to its past as separated from this past by a nothingness. It must necessarily be conscious of this cleavage in being, but not as a phenomenon which it experiences, rather as a structure of consciousness which it is. Freedom is the human being putting his past out of play by secreting his own nothingness. Let us understand indeed that this original necessity of being its own nothingness does not belong to consciousness intermittently and on the occasion of particular negations. This does not happen just at a particular moment in psychic life when negative or interrogative attitudes appear; consciousness continually experiences itself as the nihilation of its past being."

In section 8.3, I explained how the psychotic, by descending into Husserl's deepest time-consciousness, can swim in the well of flowing time and try to turn the tide, psychotic-hubris-style. The counterpart of this in Sartre's analysis is to enter into "nothingness" and to let oneself be seduced by the illusion of "nihilating" power, the force of propelled perplexity. The psychotic hopes that by pushing ahead with negation in a hyperreflexive way, ad infinitum, he will totally nihilate earlier being and bend time to his will. Those who succeed at turning unsubstantial, non-existing nothingness into power will experience *creatio ex nihilo*. Meditating on or in \emptyset will give rise to an imaginary, ethereal mirror world: what is primary here is not the givenness of the other but the manipulatable nothingness of the self. Stirring things up in the nonmaterial world gives rise to an inside-out world, the negative of the light.

Sartre himself thinks about other ways of existing that he says will emerge from the operation of nothingness (2003, 53): "If our analysis has not led us astray, there ought to exist for the human being, in so far as he is conscious of being, a certain mode of standing opposite his past and his future, as being both this past and this future and as not being them. We shall be able to furnish an immediate reply to this question; it is in anguish that man gets the consciousness of his freedom, or if you prefer, anguish is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being; it is in anguish

that freedom is, in its being, in question for itself." Like Heidegger (see section 12.4.2), Sartre links nothingness and time to a mood or an experience structure of anguish. He writes, somewhat dramatically (2003, 63), "I emerge alone and in anguish confronting the unique and original project which constitutes my being; all the barriers, all the guard rails collapse, nihilated by the consciousness of my freedom. I do not have nor can I have recourse to any value against the fact that it is I who sustain values in being. Nothing can ensure me against myself, cut off from the world and from my essence by this nothingness which I am. 1 have to realize the meaning of the world and of my essence; I make my decision concerning them—without justification and without excuse."

In analyses in which \emptyset is linked with anguish, there seems to be an open channel leading from nonbeing to the being of the other. That is to say, with twentieth-century thinkers like Sartre, Heidegger, and Levinas, for all those who are entirely alone with their own unique projects, there is still another who demands justification, excuses, legitimizing, and compassion. In nothingness and in the \emptyset -delusion, paralyzing, existential doubt sometimes goes hand in hand with a desperate, urgent thirst for action. But for Sartre and Heidegger, even then the experience of nothingness is still linked with everyday existence, in which the normalizing other plays a role.

This is where there is a parting of the ways between Sartrean nothingness and the Ø-delusion. Sartrean nothingness is attained by means of a sort of Kantian reflexivity; in this reflexivity, others—reasonable human others of equal value—play an important role. In both Sartre and Kant, and even in Heidegger, reflexivity at its deepest has to do with the question, How can I be a good person with and for others, and in doing so be good for myself? In the Ø-delusion, on the other hand, *hyper*reflexivity cuts straight through the relationships of the self with the other. This reflexivity does not concern itself with the other; there are no reasonable human fellow subjects left in the Ø-delusion. Seen from the outside, hyperreflexivity, unlike Kantian reflexivity, seems to presume a calculating "utilitarian" ethic. Being good for the sake of the other is no longer a central feature.

Upon closer analysis, however, self-interest and personal benefit have no role to play in the \emptyset -delusion either; at the very most, there is evidence of a Nietzschean kind of paradoxical anti-ethic. So the much-discussed anguish that is so important to modern authors, from Kierkegaard to Heidegger and Sartre, is of less importance in the \emptyset -delusion. The \emptyset has nothing to do with morality. The \emptyset -deluded individual is beyond good and evil and beyond all anguish. He is creator in place of creature; he gives orders and is

no longer given orders. So in the \emptyset -delusion, a far greater range of moods and atmospheres than simply that of anguish can emerge, such as mysticism, erotic ecstasy, irrational ritualism, and more.

Unlike, say, melancholy, psychosis in and of itself it not experienced as anguish. Even if the psychosis of Blankenburg's patient A. were analyzed as a "loss of being" or an "experience of nothingness." But that would still not automatically imply anguish. This is consistent with my analyses of Custance and Podvoll: psychosis is not only ominous, but it's also mysterious and even seductive. Of course anguish should not be ruled out in any psychosis, but if we want to do justice to the more cheerfully tinted psychoses, we cannot insist that the \varnothing in the foundational structure of the psychosis consists of anguish.

Nevertheless, it is often supposed that what is behind the unintelligible language and actions of the psychotic is "anguish," which grants legitimacy to the decision to "help" the psychotic be cured of his psychosis. In the best-case scenario, the anguish hypothesis stems from a lack of information and a limited ability to grasp what is going on: many people simply cannot imagine that the incomprehensible condition of psychosis is really not that frightening for the psychotic. They try to talk to the madman but do not succeed because they assume that he is miserable, that he is suffering under his "illness," and that he needs compassion. In the worst-case scenario, the anguish hypothesis justifies the decision not to converse with the psychotic at all, paradoxically enough, but to sedate him with antimystical drugs. Anguish in that case is not seen as the shadow side of human freedom, as it is with Sartre, but as a symptom or expression of pathology. And you don't talk to an illness; you fight it.

In this process, the \emptyset of madness is first interpreted as anguish, and anguish is something you flee from; anguish has no right to exist and must be suppressed. For those actually dwelling in the land of \emptyset —the \emptyset -deluded—this flight can take the form of delusions that are merely secondary reactions to \emptyset . People cling to these hypotheses and notions in order to fill the void of nothingness. They create an other, whom they believe constitutes a threat to the self, and the threat replaces the original condition of \emptyset , where no other ever existed in the first place. In psychiatry, the flight from \emptyset is consistent with the reification—the "thingification"—of \emptyset . This consists in taking \emptyset and its dreaded accomplice, anguish, and turning them into things, seeking neurobiological correlates in them, and designing psychological predispositions for them, only to attack them with antimystical drugs. Sartre (2003, 64) rightly comments on this flight behavior:

Everything takes place, in fact, as if our essential and immediate behavior with respect to anguish [and nothingness] is flight. Psychological determinism [which regards Ø, and the concomitant Ø-delusion, as causally produced, and not as a condition that is consciously sought], before being a theoretical conception, is first an attitude of excuse, or if you prefer, the basis of all attitudes of excuse. [For it says that the \emptyset -delusion is caused by something else; it is determined and is not a state of freedom, (ir)responsibility, and (hyper)reflexivity.] It is reflective conduct with respect to anguish; it asserts that there are within us antagonistic forces whose type of existence is comparable to that of things [i.e., the Ø-delusion is something you can "see" in the neurobiological structure of the brain]. It attempts to fill the void which encircles us, to re-establish the links between past and present, between present and future. It provides us with a [psychotic] nature productive of our acts, and these very acts it makes transcendent; it assigns to them a foundation in something other than themselves by endowing them with an inertia and externality eminently reassuring because they constitute a permanent game of excuses [I/you/he/she/we cannot help it, for I was/you were/he was/ she was/we were psychotic].

So much for Sartre. Sartre provides us with a splendid philosophical description of nothingness, which can be used to describe much of the remarkable world of the \varnothing -delusion and its paradoxes. The difference between Sartre's \varnothing and the \varnothing in psychosis is that Sartre closely links "nothingness" with anguish. The \varnothing -delusion seems different than Sartrean anguish, however, and I have attempted to render the difference in terms of hyperreflexivity and the recognition/denial of "the other." In conclusion, the more I dip into the nothingness of Sartre here, the more this "nonexisting nothingness," despite Sartre, seems to take on an "independent existence" of its own, "to come to life." In order to discuss the experience of the demonic in psychosis, I will present visions of being and nothingness in later sections, in which \varnothing is more than the absence of being: namely, an independent domain, capacity, or transcendent given (see 12.4)

12.2.3 Closer to Nothing: Artaud I

In this section, I will discuss the work of the French dramatist, painter, poet, and cultural critic Antonin Artaud, a versatile artist who spent a great deal of time in the realm of the \emptyset -delusion from which he sent beautifully worded reports. Unfortunately, our view of Artaud's work has been somewhat hampered by all the text about him that has been circulated posthumously. The fact is that Artaud was venerated as a god in France, and his work attracted the attention of philosophers who were once regarded as fashionable and modern, if not postmodern: Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze, for example.

Following in their wake was a long series of postmodern and thoroughly deconstructed texts in which Artaud was brought in as the new Jesus, more or less—in academic, anti-Catholic France, it was in the guise of the "Anti-christ" of course. My choice of Artaud, however, is not based on the idea that he was some kind of revolutionary visionary of cosmic proportions, or because former modern French philosophers honored him by stuffing him into the deconstructivist meat grinder; it is simply because Artaud wrote exceedingly beautiful and relevant things about, and from the perspective of, the Ø-delusion. So I will be concerning myself with Artaud only insofar as he has something interesting to tell us about mad nothingness—and the abyss.

Artaud was a restless, searching artist in the beau monde of Paris following the First World War. He had a history of hospitalization in various sanatoriums, as a result of which he became addicted to opiates, and for the rest of his life his relationship with his unwilling body would be a difficult one. He was eccentric, and for a short time he seemed to have found a niche with the surrealists. But his hyperindividualism made him ill-suited to membership in any movement. His quest as a dramatist was to make theater "truly alive"; as a poet, it was to make something of enduring importance; and as an essayist, it was to attain a kind of undefiled state of existence. He was interested in spiritual techniques and the esoteric wisdom of the Tarot, in the wisdom of the Mexican Indians, and in Hinduism, and he was familiar with the works of sympathetic French writers such as Nerval and Baudelaire. In 1937 he traveled to Dublin, and after wandering through Ireland for a while, he returned to France in a straitjacket. He then spent nine years in French psychiatric hospitals and was given numerous electroshock "treatments" (read: he was subjected to abuse). At the end of his life (he died in 1948), he had a short, productive period outside the hospital, writing a few poems and essays for which he is now celebrated.

In much of his work, Artaud talks about what we describe here as the demise of being and the advance of nothingness, "unbeing" or "nothingizing." This "annulment" concerns all of existence in all its facets. Artaud describes this using terms that refer to mental and physical torture and loss (1976, 92):

The paralysis overtakes me and hinders me more and more from coming back to myself. I no longer have any support, any base ... I look for myself I know not where. My thoughts can no longer go where my emotions and the images that rise within me drive it. I feel castrated even in my slightest impulses. I finally manage to see the daylight through the barrier of myself by dint of renunciations in every phase of my intelligence and my sensibility. It must be understood that what is damaged in me is the living man, and that this paralysis that chokes me

is at the center of my ordinary personality and not of my senses of being a man of destiny. I am definitely apart from life. My torment is as subtle and refined as it is bitter.

Although Artaud uses many terms related to the physical body, it is seldom an identifiable runny nose, tennis elbow, or constipation that he complains about. Rather, it is the core of his entire existence that is slipping away from him. Artaud can't do anything to resist it, since it is the basis, the support, or the raison d'être itself that has gone missing. If the fire comes from within, there's no inner fire department to put it out. Nor can Artaud say something like, "If only X weren't bothering me, then I would ...," since he who can experience something like "bother" is himself being undermined. The attacking power is the same as the one being attacked. Artaud (1976, 169) writes, for example, "My lucidity is total, keener than ever, what I lack is an object to which to apply it, an inner substance. This is more serious and more painful than you think. I would like to get beyond this point of absence, of emptiness. ... I have no life, I have no life!!! My inner enthusiasm is dead. It has been years now since I lost it, since I lost this inner surge that saves me. ... It is a fact that I am no longer myself, that my real self is asleep."

It is as if Artaud were the embodiment or the personification of a "perishing" who is complaining about his perishing and cannot think of or imagine himself in any other way than in terms of "perishability," in which this same thinking and imagining are expressions of perishing. Artaud (1976, 169) continues: "Understand me. It is not even a question of the quality of the images, or the quantity of the thoughts. It is a question of fulgurating vitality, of truth, of reality. There is no more life. Life does not inform, does not illumine what I think. I said LIFE. I did not say the appearance of life, I said real life, the essential illumination: being, the original spark from which every thought is ignited—that center. I feel that my center is dead. And I suffer. I suffer at each of my spiritual expirations, I suffer from their absence, from the state of uncertainty through which all my thoughts inexorably pass, by which MY THOUGHT is diluted and diverted."

Blankenburg (1971, 43) makes the same kind of observation concerning his patient: "One often had the impression that the patient was not talking about her changes, but that the changes themselves were trying to express themselves in a faltering search for words." It is being that "unbeings" itself, that "is not." Being ends in nothing; everything, upon closer inspection, proves to be nothing. Artaud seems to experience "firsthand" what others manage to hold at bay, outside their bodies, both verbally and conceptually. In the following fragment, his attempt to spark "the pain of

being of the annihilating being" (I'm beginning to talk gibberish just like Artaud) results in an increasingly claustrophobic—not to mention hard to follow—word-dance of consciousness, mind, soul, emotions, and matter. Artaud (1976, 96) writes, "This sort of backward step which the mind takes when consciousness outstares it, to go in search of the emotion of life. This emotion, which lies outside the particular point, where the mind seeks it and emerges with its rich density of freshly molded forms, this emotion which brings the mind the overwhelming sound of matter—the whole soul flows toward and passes through its ardent fire. But more than the fire, what ravishes the soul is the limpidity, the facility, the naturalness, and the glacial candor of this too-fresh matter which exudes both hot and cold. The soul knows what the appearance of this matter signifies and of what subterranean massacre its birth is the reward. This matter is the standard of a void which does not know itself."

Artaud's suffering is total and intense, but because it is so all-encompassing, it is difficult to put into words. In Artaud's \varnothing -delusion there is a kind of negative ineffability (see section 8.1): something terrible about which nothing further can be said concerning what it is. Actually, it's even impossible to say that it is. If it were something, you would be able to identify it and defend yourself from it. But it is nothing. Artaud (1976, 169) says, "The trouble is always the same. Try as I may, I cannot think. Try to understand this hollowness, this intense and lasting emptiness. This vegetation. How horribly I am vegetating. I can neither advance nor retreat. I am fixed, localized around a point which is always the same and which all my books describe."

In Artaud, the impossibility of saying what the torment is seems like an important part of the torment itself. This same suffering from negative ineffability is shown by Blankenburg's patient (Blankenburg 1971, 43): "Something is missing. But what it is I cannot name, I cannot name it by name. I just feel it, I don't know how. How can I put it? I am so pressed down and debased. I can never be healthy and get involved. I don't know, it's always the same thing. I simply call it ... I don't know, no knowledge, it's so. ... Any child knows that! It just comes with being alive ..."

Blankenburg sees A.'s negative ineffability as a consequence of "the loss of the natural self-evidence." This has to do with the most ordinary, everyday, basic activities of life, in which A. apparently is not able to participate. Artaud also mentions "the facility, the naturalness," which normally would be responsible for the "movement of the soul" or "the flow of life." Like A., he has tumbled through this "facility and naturalness" when he sees "the abyss that denies itself." Unlike in Sartre, Artaud's "abyss" has little to do with responsibility or an existential "fear of freedom." Artaud's abyss is

more a trembling or a shudder that arises with the demise of being; that is, at any moment, whether others are present or not.

In attempts to put into words "what is going on" in the \emptyset -delusion, nothingness inevitably takes on more content and contour. When you try to describe "nothinging," both the language and our everyday way of thinking force you to wonder where nothingness strikes "primarily" or "first." Does it strike the person first, or his environment? Does it attack the mind first, or the body? Does nothinging begin in the inner world or in the outer world? It should be clear from previous chapters that I regard the transition in the mad world as being of such a fundamental nature that all such distinctions are irrelevant, because in the mad world the distinctions themselves are called into question and liable to shift. But in his attempts to express the \emptyset -delusion verbally, even Artaud cannot escape the need to make choices in his wording. Here he talks about physical suffering, and there about mental torment; sometimes nothingness begins in the very center of one's interior, but sometimes it's also a foreign threat from the ultimate "outside" alien.

Artaud often describes the "nothinging" without naming an active power that carries out the nothinging or causes it. But sometimes he mentions a vague "something" that will reduce him to nothing and propel him into the Ø-delusion. As Artaud writes in January 1924 in a letter to the literary critic Rivière (1976, 35), "There is something which destroys my thought; something which does not prevent me from being what I might be, but which leaves me, so to speak, in suspension. Something furtive which robs me of the words that I have found, which reduces my mental tension, which is gradually destroying in its substance the body of my thought, which is even robbing me of the memory of those idioms with which one expresses oneself." The nothinging caused by this something affects Artaud's entire "being," thinking, speaking, and experiencing. That "something" is an active power that is not further defined here. It wasn't until many years later that Artaud finally specified what that something was, and he pointed to actual, malicious "culprits" who were intent on his destruction (also see section 16.4.3).

In other fragments, Artaud says that "sickness" is the cause of nothinging. In another letter to Rivière from May 1924, Artaud writes (1976, 44), "As for myself, I can truly say that I am not in the world, and this is not merely an attitude of the mind. ... A sickness which affects the soul in its most profound reality, and which infects its manifestations. The poison of being. A veritable *paralysis*. A sickness which deprives you of speech, memory, which uproots your thought." For Artaud, it must be said, sickness did not have the same medical implications that it has today. In diagnosing himself and his condition of decline, he did not use detailed medical

or psychiatric terminology. Others have called Artaud a schizophrenic, but that in itself gives us little insight, since we want to understand what the "sickness" entails in terms of experience or \emptyset -delusion. At the very most, you might call Artaud's sickness "the sickness of life": life as sickness, with an irreversible deadly conclusion.

No one can maintain an exclusive practice of reporting on deterioration, pain, and nothinging. The fact that such testimonies of horror exist at all is proof that thoughts whose contents are exactly the opposite—and not so gloomy—are quite possible. Indeed, statements of how disgusting existence is imply that there is a standard by which good and bad, beautiful and ugly, and real and unreal can be measured. When Artaud and others like him try to plumb the depths of the horrors of \emptyset , it's always the plumb line itself that offers a glimmer of hope. The longer the hangman's rope goes unused, the more he will seize it to climb out of the abyss. Artaud's sketch of our horrible, negating, futile existence in the empty cosmos generates a contrasting background all on its own. It may be dark, but it does offer hope.

In much of Artaud's work, especially his cultural and social criticism, this hope is explicitly articulated. There is this, for example (1976, 370, 372): "What is required, in fact, is nothing less than breaking with the spirit of an entire world and substituting one civilization for another. ... Every important cultural transformation begins with a renewed idea of man, it coincides with a new surge of humanism." But even in Artaud's bleakest personal or existential passages there is still a spark of strength and a flicker of hope, despite the inescapable doom—as parasitically attached as it may be to the deterioration of being. The "nothingness" to which Artaud is being driven has a productive, creative core: *ex nihilo* becomes *creatio*. Artaud expresses this brilliantly (1976, 92) in the quote cited earlier: "I finally manage to see the daylight through the barrier of myself by dint of renunciations in every phase of my intelligence and my sensibility" (italics mine).

That is, in the process of "approaching nothing," the light will finally shine, owing to the fact that Artaud's glance will become stronger or his self will become weaker or the light will radiate more powerfully. Another example of hope (1976, 93): "These terrifying forms which advance on me, I feel that the despair they bring is alive. It slips into this nucleus of life *beyond which the paths of eternity extend*. It is truly an eternal separation. They slip their knives into this center where I feel myself a man, they sever those vital ties which bind me to the dream of my lucid reality" (italics mine).

Such passages are a convergence of hope and despair, being and nonbeing, light and darkness. At first, positive being still seems like the domain

from which Artaud has been cast out into nothingness. But when all of being is "nothinged" for Artaud, he finds himself in intimate contact with the total emptiness of the nothinged being, which at that very moment becomes a positive being. At such moments, hope and despair can no longer be distinguished; Ø-delusion and esse-delusion converge, and the mystical madman finds himself in the phase of paradoxicality: everything is there, and everything is not there. Light is dark, bad is good, pain is ecstasy. This theme will be continued in part IV, especially chapter 13.

12.3 Absolute Zero: Nothingness as the Basis of Existence

In the previous section I approached nothingness from the perspective of being. "Nothing" was the non-existing zone where you end up when you are no longer there—when you find yourself in the Ø-delusion. Removed from the heart of existence, you are beyond the borders of being. Artaud and Blankenburg, as well as Blankenburg's patient, describe the feeling of being "done away with" as unpleasant. However, Artaud—and, in a very different way, Sartre—also see a dim light shining in nothingness. If nonbeing is the source of freedom and the essence of humanness (Sartre) or the source of "paths to eternity" (Artaud), then we are closely approaching the turning point behind which nothingness is standing on its own and is a primary given with respect to a secondary being. In this section, I will be considering what the Ø-delusion looks like when it is assumed that nothingness is the normal condition and that being is an incomprehensible, unreal aberration.

By making this transition from nothingness and the \emptyset -delusion—which are parasitic with respect to being—to an independent place, zone, or domain for nothingness and the \emptyset -delusion, we are taking a step in this book that is diametrically opposed to the way twentieth-century phenomenologists such as Husserl, Sartre, and Heidegger thought about nothingness. For these thinkers, being and nothingness are completely interwoven—irreconcilable, granted, but also inseparable; they can neither be pulled apart nor thought about or regarded separately, let alone be made into spatially separate domains.

But that is what I am doing here. The transition I am making can be seen as no more than the neutral presentation of a different philosophy (such as that of Schelling; see section 12.3.3) that is more in keeping with the notion of the \emptyset -delusion. My interpretation of Sartrean nothingness as an independent source can also be seen as a philosophical fallacy, an essentializing or reification of "something" that, by definition, does not lend itself to it. So this philosophical reflection and possible fallacy are also

mad obsessions in the form of a "spatializing" (cf. Minkowski in section 3.2.1), a space-creating, or even an imagining of time and the concomitant notion of nothingness. In order to understand madness "from the inside out" and to reflect on it, we must take this step toward that independent nothingness—and we must do it obsessively.

12.3.1 Neon Light

Essentially, every bend in the via mystica psychotica is a negation. Travelers on the mystical-mad path pass through the larger stations of detachment, demagination, delanguization, and dethinking and the less conspicuous way stations of dislocation, degradation, disillusionment, and deep emotion. Perhaps the final resting place will consist of the biggest of all the delusions— \emptyset —and it will become apparent that the uni-delusion, the essedelusion, and the Ω -delusion do not penetrate mystical madness deeply enough. But finally the time has come. I am about to discuss the result of complete debeing, or total de-xx-ing. I am going to take \emptyset , or absolute zero, as the alpha and the omega that encircles, encloses, and unlocks everything.

In every domain, Ø functions as the drain through which all possible life is carried away, sooner or later, in the sewer of nothingness. In the domain of nature, most theories assume that the universe, as it extends in time and space, is finite and limited: that "beyond" the borders of time and space, there is "nothing." On the whole, sub specie aeternitatis, there may as well be nothing. Insofar as you are inclined to suppose that there is something there, that something quickly lapses into nothing upon closer inspection. But even if time and space are indeed boundless and infinite, this is cold comfort. Infinity does not imply that "something is there." In order to "be" there, there would have to be more than a wrinkle in the ocean or a crease in the carpet. If that something-that-is is no more than a spark, a soap bubble, or a face in the sand, then it's really nothing. Everything changes, everything flows, nothing remains. The heart of nature is empty.

Even when you pull yourself back from the mega-macro outside world and search inside yourself for something enduring—an identity or something to hold onto—there's nothing there, not even a stalk of straw, and you yourself are "as straw." What comprises our existence and supports us is shaky and without foundation. Pleasure is short-lived, everything comes to an end, all is vanity, and all that's left is memento mori. The light goes on, then the light goes out, and what remains is darkness. The theater curtain opens. Actors appear in living masks, they speak and they dance in colorful garments, they quarrel and fight, they get tired and slink away. The curtain closes. The masks hang on a hook, the props sit in a cabinet, the scenery rots

away in a dark shed lit only by neon light. Under the masks there is only flesh and blood, directed by soulless forces. What only seems alive is the result of blind laws, the intersection of sociological factors and biological urges and the result of neurological and chemical fluctuations. But even this says too much about nothingness: there was no stage, no light, no voice; in the beginning there was nothing, and there will be nothing at the end. In between are empty specters of the extremes of nothingness: the blackness, the emptiness, the silence. So we have these somewhat melancholic, repressed, everyday musings, which are quite tolerable as long as they don't probe too deeply into the consciousness or influence practical activity.

Such associative trains of thought and diffuse feelings find their variants in rationally thought-out worldviews and philosophies of nothingness, all properly supported by arguments. In order to sensibly maintain that "nothingness is the basis of everything," any indication that "there really is something" must be revised as a secondary phenomenon, so that "nothingness is prior to everything." In the philosophy of the Ø-delusion, being is refashioned into a curious epiphenomenon of nothingness. The challenge for the philosopher of nothingness is to demonstrate how everything that seems like something actually is nothing—"being is illusion; nothing is real"—or that, insofar as it already is something, it's still based on or dependent on nothing. Classical philosophical positions that lend themselves to such ways of thinking are solipsism, rationalism, and idealism. When the spirit (Hegel), the idea (Plato), the experience (Husserl), or existence (Sartre) precede matter, reality, knowledge, or essence, and when the first terms in a pair of manifestations—or wordings—always have to do with nothingness, then the Ø-delusion is not far away.¹⁰

12.3.2 Broken by Nothing

A living example of the Ø-delusion is provided by a patient of Jaspers (quoted in Sass, 1992, 310): "I am only an automaton, a machine; it is not I who senses, speaks, eats, suffers, sleeps; I exist no longer; I do not exist, I am dead; I feel I am absolutely nothing." We find a more extensive example of the Ø-delusion in one of the main characters of the novel *Martian Time-Slip* by Philip K. Dick, a science fiction writer who had an intimate knowledge of strange mental states (2012, 115, 117, 119–120):

Contemplating Dr. Glaub sitting opposite him, Jack Bohlen felt the gradual diffusion of his perception which he so dreaded, the change in his awareness which had attacked him this way years ago in the personnel manager's office at Corona Corporation, and which always seemed still with him, just on the edge. He saw the psychiatrist under the aspect of absolute reality: a thing composed of cold wires

and switches, not a human at all, not made of flesh. The fleshy trappings melted and became transparent, and Jack Bohlen saw the mechanical device beyond. Yet he did not let his terrible state of awareness show; he continued to nurse his drink; he went on listening to the conversation and nodding occasionally.

Jack Bohlen was overcome by the Ø-delusion through temperament, insight, fate, or whatever we might call it. His method of "contemplating" is consistent with what I discussed in section 2.2.2. What I call the Ø-delusion in this section, or absolute zero, is what Dick calls "absolute reality." There is no life there; everything melts away, becomes transparent, and decays into nothingness.

They walked along the street, past the shops, most of which had closed for the day. "What was it you saw," the girl said, "when you looked at Dr. Glaub, there at the table?"

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Jack said, "Nothing."
"You'd rather not say about that either?"
"That's right."
...
"Is it awful?" Doreen asked.
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"No. Just—disconcerting." He struggled to explain. "There's no way you can work it in with what you're supposed to see and know; it makes it impossible to go on, in the accustomed way."

"Don't you very often try to pretend, and sort of—go along with it, by acting? Like an actor?" When he did not answer, she said, "You tried to do that in there, just now."

"I'd love to fool everybody," he conceded. "I'd give anything if I could go on acting it out, playing a role. But that's a real split—there's no split up until then; they're wrong when they say it's a split in the mind. If I wanted to keep going entire, without a split, I'd have to lean over and say to Dr. Glaub—" He broke off.

"Tell me," the girl said.

"Well," he said, taking a deep breath. "I'd say, Doc, I can see you under the aspect of eternity and you're dead. That's the substance of the sick, morbid vision. I don't want it; I didn't ask for it."

Here Dick is referring to Spinoza's sub specie aeternitatis (viewed in relation to eternity). There you see the "morbid vision," and there you are dead. Once you've seen that nothingness, you're infected with it. After that you'll always know that "nothingness exists," but you have to act as if "nothingness isn't there."

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Doreen said, "You're a brave person, Jack Bohlen." "Why?" he asked.
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"Because you're going back to the place that troubled you, to the people that brought on your vision of, as you said, eternity. I wouldn't do that, I'd flee."

"But," he said. "That's the whole point; it's designed to make you flee—the vision's for that purpose, to nullify your relations with other people, to isolate you. If it's successful, your life with human beings is over. That's what they mean when they say the term schizophrenia isn't a diagnosis; it's a prognosis—it doesn't say anything about what you have, only about how you'll wind up." *And I'm not going to wind up like that*, he said to himself.

Like Manfred Steiner, mute and in an institution; I intend to keep my job, my wife and son, my friendships—he glanced at the girl holding onto his arm. Yes, and even love affairs, if such there be.

I intend to keep trying.

Like Artaud, Bohlen is engaged in a fight with this nothingness. This absolute nothingness is not only the absolute truth, and the (non)foundation of being. It also constitutes a diabolical force or power that wants to tempt him to turn away from all that illusory being.

Philip K. Dick beautifully describes what direction the psychotic is traveling in when he leaves the normal human world. He refers to the morbid vision, the absolute reality where you're "dead" from the point of view of eternity. This is indeed the Ø-delusion, but the images Dick uses are not to be taken too literally. When Dick writes, "He saw the psychiatrist under the aspect of absolute reality: a thing composed of cold wires and switches, not a human at all, not made of flesh ..." the reader might be led to think that the psychotic looks at other people like a doctor, with an analytical gaze, as if seeing a "machine" with a material basis, "composed of cold wires and switches." But this is a figure of speech. Dick is imagining the disintegration of ordinary categories of the "natural self-evidence" of the human world, in which you would "see" people deteriorating into cold wires and switches, as it were. But these are mere metaphors for the way hyperreflexivity works. I have already argued that in madness, "seeing" changes into remembering, thinking, and creating. A progressing, hyperreflexive glance does not stop at cold wire but keeps on deconstructing "until nothing is left"; until creatio ad nihilum—the counterpart to creatio ex nihilo, creation-from-nothing. 11

This psychotic process is a total negation that is not secondary with respect to a lost or illusory primary being but is itself primary as the negation or the (un)ground of a secondary being. Through hyperreflexivity and de-xx-ing, mysticism and madness, one stumbles onto this ultimate truth of nothingness: absolute reality. This nothingness is the place where everything "ends up," where everything "peters out," what everything "comes down to." In this vision, the everyday existence of the non-mystic, the nonmadman, the nonphilosopher hangs like a veil of unknowing over

the true nature of existence: nothingness. Nothingness is the ground, and being is the illusion that is built on top of it. Because nothingness here is the ultimate, fundamental truth of absolute reality, you cannot be introduced to it and then continue as before. As Bohlen says, "It makes it impossible to go on, in the accustomed way." The experience of the absolute "Un-" transforms and enthralls, and Bohlen finds it difficult to escape from the penetrating darkness of this truth and to return to daily life.

Another example is taken from a conversation I once had at a party. It was just an ordinary birthday party in which I began chatting with Crystal, a woman in her mid-twenties who told me something quite remarkable without seeming to be aware of it. After having barely exchanged three words, she told me that the week before the party, "her life had ended" and that now "nothing mattered anymore." Up until then, there had been "nothing wrong" and she didn't have "a worry in the world," but earlier that week she had experienced something that had meant the end of everything. What had happened? She couldn't easily tell me, because actually "nothing had happened." But why was everything suddenly meaningless, over and done with? Had she lost something or someone? No, she hadn't lost anything, because "everything was gone," and on top of that, "it had never been there" to begin with, so there was nothing to lose. That's why she didn't feel shocked or sad. Everything had simply stopped.

After a bit of hemming and hawing, and the umpteenth cigarette, she decided to tell me how it had come to pass. On her free afternoon, she had gone to a café by herself to have a cup of coffee, as she often did. It was a perfectly ordinary day, a perfectly ordinary week, and she wanted to drink her coffee in peace before taking care of some other things in town. While she was sitting there with her coffee, her attention was drawn by a man a couple of tables away. He was just staring into his cup and stirring it. He looked like an ordinary man, but somehow there was a sense of deep loneliness about him, as if he didn't belong there at that moment but could be nowhere else, nonetheless. Suddenly the man looked up from his coffee and stared straight at her for several seconds with a penetrating gaze. And with that, everything was over. In a flash, everything collapsed. It was everything and nothing. His fathomless gaze had made that immediately clear to her. The scales fell from her eyes.

The more she talked, the more my curiosity was piqued, and I expected this to be the beginning of some kind of love story. But I was wrong. After her eye contact with the strange man, Crystal had averted her gaze and simply realized that "there is nothing at all." "What do you mean by 'nothing?'" I asked her. "You had your cup of coffee in front of you, and you saw that man, and you were going to do some shopping. That's not nothing,

is it?" She cut me off. "Don't play dumb; you know perfectly well what I mean." And I had to admit that I did. So, reluctantly, I agreed with her, because, indeed, there is nothing. She knew it, I knew it, and many others know it too. But many people don't know it, or they suspect it somehow but they play ignorant, either consciously or unconsciously. Crystal said that the few people she had told it to that week had not understood her at all, and she was glad I seemed to understand her.

But any further attempts to exchange words on the basis of this shared understanding and shared nothingness were unsuccessful. Surely I realized that more talk would just be empty chatter? There was simply nothing, which meant nothing further to say and no ramifications, except for the fact that she now "understood everything and nothing." End of conversation. And a couple of weeks later, it was also the actual end of Crystal, for she brought herself to a definite and absolute end.

This example raises questions about the Ø-delusion as well as other delusions. How can you tell if someone is inhabiting the Ø-delusion? Was Crystal stuck in the same Ø-delusion as Artaud, as Blankenburg's patient, or as Bohlen, the main character in Dick's novel? Or was she caught up in a complex and confusing semantic linguistic game based on words like "nothing"? Or—which is quite possible—is the Ø-delusion itself ultimately nothing more than a confusing linguistic game? That remains a mystery. The delusions as I describe them are not a collection of verifiable knowledge claims or cognitive conditions. Rather, they consist of prior "pre-reflective attitudes" or "ways of perceiving the world." The delusions are difficult to describe verbally, since in the delusions, the very basis of language itself is being questioned. This gives rise to the problem of "verifiability," so it is not possible to identify any type of delusion with objectivity or exactitude. The same is true of the traditional terminology used in psychopathology and is otherwise not a problem. After all, the delusions I am describing are meant to serve only as convenient frameworks to facilitate the interpretation of people's experiences and stories, and to relate them to philosophical, literary, and other kinds of nonmedical text genres.

This example also suggests that a form of contact could exist between \varnothing initiates. According to Crystal, conveying the secret of \varnothing was possible by means of eye contact. So whether the strange man in the café was also \varnothing -deluded is not even that important. Whether \varnothing is conveyed consciously or unconsciously, the fact remains that, apparently, you can obtain insight into \varnothing by looking into someone else's eyes. The other form of contact between initiates was what happened between Crystal and me. We certainly seemed to understand each other, better than many a psychiatrist

might understand either one of us, because we both had "been there" (and she still was). But is an understanding of nothing actually understanding?

When absolute zero is found, there is really only one logical conclusion: to wordlessly inhabit the black void. Perhaps Crystal was right. How can you speak when words are hollow? How can you fill in the void when it's absolute? But as usual, in cases that cannot be talked about, there is very little silence and plenty of talking—by the mad Ø-mystics themselves and the philosophers of nothingness.

12.3.3 Fretting over Nothing: Schelling's The Ages of the World I

In this section I will show how philosophy and madness—in the work of Schelling and Custance respectively—can twist and turn around nothing in strikingly similar ways. Friedrich von Schelling was a German philosopher who belonged to the school of German idealism in the early nineteenth century, a school that included Kant, Hegel, and Fichte. Like so many other German idealists, Schelling's ambition was to understand and explain all of human existence and the cosmos, both past and present. And like his contemporaries, his philosophy consisted of searching for ways to comprehend and explain contradictions, such as that between freedom and determinism, unity and multiplicity, and finiteness and infinity. Such essential contradictions also play a role in madness. An example of this is Schelling's *The* Ages of the World (Die Weltalter), whose probing and sometimes dark metaphorical and mythological form comes close to the manic, raving meditations of Custance. Here I will discuss the place that nothingness occupies in this famous work (famous and infamous, owing to its supposed impenetrability¹²), which Schelling spent his whole life polishing and modifying.

The core idea of *The Ages of the World* is that there are two forces underlying existence and the world: that of "yes" and that of "no." This duo manifests itself in numerous forms in a variety of domains: as logical contradiction between affirmation and negation; as ontological contradiction between being and nothingness; as physical contradiction between expansion and contraction and between light and darkness; as temporal contradiction between the present and the past; as Christian contradiction between Jesus and the Holy Spirit; and so on and so on. This primal contradiction between nothingness and being generates and supports the whole cosmos: not only on the material and biological plane, the level of human consciousness, but also in the upper spiritual spheres. Schelling discusses a few aspects of the contradiction in the following quote, in which he emphasizes that people usually pay more attention to the expansive, affirmative "yes" than to the narrow, negating "no" (2000, 6):

Indeed, humans show a natural predilection for the affirmative just as much as they turn away from the negative. Everything that is outpouring and goes forth from itself is clear to them. They cannot grasp as straightforwardly that which closes itself off and takes itself, even though it is equivalently essential and it encounters them everywhere and in many forms. Most people would find nothing more natural than if everything in the world were to consist of pure gentleness and goodness, at which point they would soon become aware of the opposite. Something inhibiting, something conflicting, imposes itself everywhere: this Other is that which, so to speak, should not be and yet is, nay, must be. It is this No that resists the Yes, this darkening that resists the light, this obliquity that resists the straight, this left that resists the right, and however else one has attempted to express this eternal antithesis in images. But it is not easy to be able to verbalize it or to conceive it at all scientifically.

Schelling never ended up in a psychiatric hospital as a result of making such statements. He was a well-known and respected philosopher in his day. Yet many passages in *The Ages of the World* call to mind the endlessly meandering, manic-metaphorical texts that can also be found among the dwellers of the mad world. Perhaps it's because the average madman ends up speaking gibberish due to his sudden, unexpected contact with the One, with Nothingness, and with the Infinite, and that on account of the thematic similarity, Schelling was forced to use confusing language as well.¹³ Custance provides a fine example of this (1952, 98–99):

In the blinding light of this illumination, or apparent illumination, from the depths of being, practically everything in Heaven and Earth seemed to fall on one side or the other. ... God Transcendent is Positive, God Immanent Negative. Moral struggle and tension are Positive; forgiveness and moral release are Negative. Within Christianity, as I have said, Protestantism is Positive as opposed to Catholicism, while within Protestantism Lutheranism seems far less so than Calvinism. ... The Positive Sun (Light) opposes the Negative moon (Queen of Darkness), the starry sky faces the Negative Mother Earth, yet solid Earth is Positive as compared with rivers or sea or any form of water. Nature, and particularly organic Nature, is Negative; the inorganic has a Positive quality. In the human—or animal—body, everything associated with the reproductive function is Negative and with the nutritive functions Positive. Science is Positive, art Negative; intellect is Positive as opposed to Negative instinct.

Naturally there are differences between Custance's work and Schelling's *The Ages of the World*, as a result of which Custance ended up in a mental hospital and Schelling with a chair in philosophy in Berlin. While both thinkers place the dualism of "yes" versus "no" at the core of their systems, the machinery for deriving the cosmos from that core is more refined in Schelling and more anchored in tradition. Custance describes the interaction between

positive and negative forces fairly superficially, while Schelling places dualism within a complex, gradually developing process. Furthermore, Custance has a more expressive writing style and perhaps a more expressive thinking style. He conveys his ideas using spatial and visual imagery, while Schelling uses more abstract concepts and lines of argument. Because of this, Custance is more at risk of being swept along by his profusion of images, which—as I discussed at length in part II—can finally lead to superficial psychotic symptoms such as delusions and hallucinations.

These differences are not essential, however, and perhaps they can be traced back to the fact that Custance was simply less trained and schooled in working out, organizing, and expressing these kinds of complex thoughts. As a result, Schelling's argument is coherent and argumentative, while Custance's seems fragmentary and associative. In this regard, I suspect that in a conversation, Schelling would cling more stubbornly to his own text and assertions and would stand by them, while Custance would probably be able to take the discussion in any direction. Custance has a looser manic style, while Schelling's work—excusez les mots—shows persistent schizophrenic tendencies. Schelling's writing aligns closely with many others texts from the age of German idealism, both thematically and in terms of writing and reasoning style. His work was—and still is—taken seriously within a circle of people who are used to reading and writing such things. Custance's text, on the other hand, falls between all sorts of genres and writing styles and is not part of a corpus of texts shared by a community of fellow sufferers. For an outsider, however, Custance's text is more intelligible than Schelling's exactly because of its more expressive superficiality. I suspect that if a blind test were conducted by a panel of psychiatrists on the basis of the two works, it is more likely that Schelling would be diagnosed as a schizophrenic than Custance. One last difference between the texts is that Custance places his findings explicitly within the bounds of his own manic experiences and the inspiration they gave him, while Schelling seems to regard his thoughts as completely normal philosophical findings and lines of reasoning.

Besides these differences, there are also important similarities between Schelling and Custance. Both want to put "everything" into words, and both ultimately run up against an insoluble contradiction: that of the "yes" versus the "no," the positive versus the negative. Both use this contradiction to generate even more text and explanation about how the world works. Both use the basic divergent contradiction "high" and "low" to connect things like chemistry with Christianity (Schelling) and the shape of the sex organs with mysticism (Custance). Although the two work out their

arguments differently in terms of details, the spatial imagery they use is the same: for Schelling, it's contraction ("no" power) versus expansion ("yes" power), and for Custance, it's tightening up ("no" power) versus disintegration ("yes" power). Both also have a tendency to create new mythologies; history and life are not made up of an accumulation of empirical data but of the timeless interaction between the positive and the negative, borne by mythical, historical, and fictional figures.

Custance justifies this approach by stating that, in his mania, he has contact with the Jungian collective unconscious, which is associative in nature and places more importance on mythical themes than factual events. Schelling justifies the approach by arguing that there are mythical structures undergirding all philosophical thought. Finally, there is similar imagery in both texts. In 11.2.2.1, I described how Custance refers to electricity, with its positive and negative poles, and in *The Ages of the World*, Schelling uses the same image to clarify his idea of the "yes" and the "no."

One illustrative but not particularly informative similarity between my own experiences and the writings of Schelling and Custance is the following: At the low point (or the high point) of my most recent visit to the world of the mad in 2007, I was able to experience the cosmic depths of the eternal tension between positive and negative in the positive and negative electrical poles, and I thought I could hear it in the peaks and valleys of music—by way of my "KeN-wood" music installation. I knew I had "made it through," that I myself could determine what counted as positive and what counted as negative. This made it possible for me to hear music backward, in "reverse" sound waves. This mirror existence also expressed itself in other positive/negative inversions: because I could reverse the positive/ negative forces in madness, I was able to take advantage of and interact with the depths of matter. I knew that this telekinetic possibility was a carefully kept secret, and I understood why discussions about nuclear energy were always so heated. I was under surveillance because I threatened to collaborate with the leaders in North Korea via my No-Kia. By setting foot in the field of \emptyset , I had landed in a *New Klear* Reality (also see fragment IV).

And here I come to the reason I am comparing Custance's autobiography with Schelling's philosophy: both texts can be read as expressions of the absolute Ø-delusion—at least partially.¹⁴ According to the absolute Ø-delusion, nothingness is an "autonomous power"— not just a derivative of something or an absence of positivity, but a *positive nothing*. Schelling says (in Krell, 104), "Nonbeing is not the absolute lack of essence; it is merely what is opposed to the essence proper. Yet for all that it is not any the less positive essence." Thus, for Schelling, nothingness is an active power, and

the fact that we speak of this as an absolute Ø-delusion is based on the fact that not only is the negative "no" autonomous, but it is also primary with respect to the positive "yes." In Schelling, darkness precedes light, and the restricting, contracting "no" precedes the radiating, affirmative "yes." In the beginning there was nothing, and only afterward did something begin to shine. This is deeply at odds with the teachings of Plotinus and Greek thought, and it is diametrically opposed to the description of the esse-delusion and the Plotinian uni-delusion. Schelling also explicitly places himself in opposition to this Plotinism when he describes nothing as the basis of everything.¹⁵

Custance expresses the same kinds of ideas about what he experienced in the depths of madness: a unity that issued from two opposing forces that he, like Schelling, calls the positive and the negative. Just as with Schelling, and in accordance with the absolute Ø-delusion, the negative is primary for Custance; there was nothing before there was something (1952, 88): "In the beginning was the undifferentiated All, the primal Chaos, Darkness, which was somehow also God, the Perfect self-sufficient Individual, the One. Creation was only possible by division, differentiation, by producing the Many from the One, by God going out of Himself in the creative act. This produced in the first place Light—in Darkness there is no division."

With Schelling, just as with Sartre, the paradoxical "existence" of nothingness and the negative is linked to the possibility of freedom and of consciousness or mind. For the German idealists, Schelling among them, freedom is of greater significance than it is for Sartre because, for them, freedom is not limited to man alone, with his consciousness "based on nothingness"; rather, the whole world is free. Their reasoning is approximately as follows: everything that seems to be subject to laws is free, as seen from a higher plane, because every law presumes a lawgiver who is free to choose his laws. Therefore, "nothingness" plays a role not only in questions concerning the freedom and the essence of man but also in questions concerning the raison d'être of matter, the development of natural and cultural history, and the status of the divine. That is, for Schelling, nothingness plays an all-decisive and foundational role: the world is created out of freedom, all splendor and glory issue forth from nothingness, and the eternal "no" must be the ground of existence. According to the worldview of Schelling and the German idealists, he who delves most deeply into nothingness accumulates the most freedom. This theme also plays a role in Heidegger.

For Custance—and for myself—the role of the negative seems to be somewhat different: it is the concept for obtaining ultimate insight into and a

total explanation for all world events in order to thereby become the powerful center. Mystical meditations on the "yes" and the "no," the "one" and the "zero," can lead to the solitary delusion of cosmic domination for those who allow themselves to be tempted by images of power: he who stares too deeply into the crystal tumbles into a center of unbreakable glass. According to Podvoll's phase model (see chapter 6), we have now gotten through to the final stage, that of death and rebirth. The absolute \varnothing -delusion is the place where the existence of life is no longer certain. Wherever there is absolutely nothing, there is no life, but death is also denied there. It is a stroboscopic twilight zone, a salutary fog with a visibility of less than zero meters. The windows to others remain closed, but in itself, \varnothing is everything (see chapter 13).

12.4 Through Nothing to Liberation

Up until now, the desert of nothingness has seemed rather unpleasant. At its best, we simply cannot get around it (Schelling), or it's even what makes us human (Sartre). But in most of the cases I have discussed, \emptyset was frightening. However, when absolute nothingness is found at the finish line of the via mystica psychotica, this \emptyset will have to have something attractive about it—at least for those who voluntarily run the track to the goal of nothingness. I am now going to discuss three examples of mystical paths in which nothingness is actually regarded as the key to the heavenly gates: first, the luminous path of Eckhart and Christian mysticism; second, the dark prognosticating path of Heidegger; and third, the Eastern path, with its teaching of the abyss.

12.4.1 The God of Nothingness: Eckhart and Ruysbroeck

In Christian mysticism and theology, considered on their own, nothingness cannot be a goal in itself. The goal and final destination of every aspiration on the *via christiana* is, by definition, the Christian God. But becoming acquainted with \emptyset and dwelling in the \emptyset -delusion may well be intermediate phases along the way. When we let go of everything and enter \emptyset , we become more receptive to God's grace. When we empty ourselves, we make room for divine fulfillment (also see section 5.2). When the need is greatest in the darkness of \emptyset , then salvation by means of the radiant divine is at hand. For total detachment, demagination, delanguizing, and dethinking, we have to learn to understand that we see "nothing" with our ordinary eyes, that we hear "nothing" with our ordinary ears, and that the world in which we think we are living is crushed because it "is created from nothing."

It isn't until we understand this that we are able to make contact with the only thing that is "really real": God and the divine. Albert (1999, 177) quotes from and comments on Eckhart concerning this "nothingness of creation" as follows: "For Eckhart, the inclination toward nothingness is precisely what constitutes the essence of created being: 'For the shadow of nothingness can be sensed in all of creation.' That is because creation is a creation that comes from nothing, as Eckhart keeps on stressing. That is why 'every creature in itself comes from nothing,' or: 'Every created being, taken and understood as distinct from God, is not really a being at all but a nothing. Because to be separate and distinct from God is to be separate and distinct from being.'" In other words, only when we acknowledge the futility of all created sham being can we know where we must turn for real divine being.

The followers of some variants of naive Christianity are remarkably wellinformed about exactly what this real divine being comprises. They think they know how to get closer to God, what the correct image of his mercy is, what the words of his laws mean, and how pious thoughts can be distinguished from sinful ones. In more carefully considered schools of theology and mysticism, however, all statements about the content of the divine are seen as essentially insufficient and inadequate (the via negativa). "God is"—at least they can say that much (although even this modest statement is not shared by all mystics and theologians). But who, what, how, and why "God is" is something they don't know, and to this they resign themselves. This implies that the less God is given form and content, the more the absolute Ø converges with the absolute God. Indeed, as soon as you come to recognize Ø, you're already where you have to be. In this vision, detachment and emptying are equal to salvation and enlightenment. There is no additional fulfillment with "being," "light," or any other divinity. In other words, the matter is looked at sub specie aeternitatis, which does not lead to a "morbid vision" but to a heavenly vision and a divine point of view. So in descriptions of this empty, unknowable place where God is at large, concepts we use to describe \emptyset (nothingness, darkness, nakedness) are quite close to the joyful words about the love of God. Compare Ruysbroeck, for example (1916, 150, italics mine):

At times, the inward man performs his introspection simply, according to the fruitive tendency, above all activity and above all virtues, through a simple inward gazing in the fruition of love. And here he meets God without intermediary. And from out the Divine Unity, there shines into him a simple light: *and this light shows him Darkness and Nakedness and Nothingness*. In the Darkness, he is enwrapped and falls into somewhat which is in no wise, even as one who has lost his way. In the Nakedness, he loses the perception and discernment of all things, and is transfigured and penetrated by a simple light.

Of course there are many Christian paths that lead to God by way of nothingness, just as there are many \emptyset -delusions. There are also many parallels between the Christian route to God and the mad path into nothingness. By and large, the evaluation of a \emptyset -delusion from a Christian point of view depends on the extent to which God has form and content for the Christian evaluator. The more rigid Christian thinkers assess a person with a \emptyset -delusion in terms of the degree to which he seems to be walking the correct Christian path. In this case, "Christian therapy" is a matter of trying to put the deluded wanderer on the right path of Jesus & Co. and to impose on him the correct religious convictions. The important questions are whether the person still "really believes" and whether he is acting in accordance with Christian morality.

In the more cautious, tolerant schools of Christian theology and mysticism, people are more inclined to refrain from judgment with regard to where God does or does not dwell. They see the Ø-deluded person as a seeker among seekers. They realize that many roads lead to Rome, they understand that "no one knows the way," and they accept the fact that, for some people, the path seems to run through the land of madness. Among these Christian mystical thinkers are those who recognize the mystical path in the confusion of the Ø-deluded. The latter will project the anxieties and perplexities of the Ø-delusion on the antinomies, contradictions, and coincidentia oppositorum of the Christian faith, such as the "meaningless meaningful" language of Eckhart, the suffering of John of the Cross, and the abstract syntheses of Nicholas of Cusa. Their view of the Ø-delusion and their attitude toward the \emptyset -deluded can be called Christian because, in \emptyset , they recognize the possibility of a religious experience. Unlike many other therapists—including phenomenological psychiatrists and psychologists like Blankenburg and Sass—they actually see opportunities for salvation within the possibly fearful conditions of the Ø-delusion. And like many madmen who have spent time in Ø, they know that suffering makes just as much sense as nonsuffering and that absolute negation can be the key to a zone beyond all the dualism of negative and positive, light and darkness, matter and spirit, being and nonbeing. 16

12.4.2 Springing: Heidegger's Anxiety

In the previous section I talked about how nothingness and the \emptyset -delusion can be preparatory to salvation and closer acquaintance with God. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger describes a similar route of liberation through nothingness, in which encounters with nothingness and a confrontation with anxiety are the conditions for true life and great philosophy. Reaching God may not be part of it, but "authenticity" certainly is.

In this section I will explore to what extent the nothingness of Heidegger resembles the nothingness of the \emptyset -delusion, and I will discuss a few quotes from his famous lecture "What is Metaphysics?" (2018).

Heidegger begins his lecture with a critical discussion of modern science and its disregard for nothingness. According to Heidegger, nothingness is beyond the reach of the empirical-scientific method by reason of the fact that the scientific method is interested only in the identifying positivities—things and facts that "are." Subsequently, he searches for other paths to nothingness and describes how nothingness is present in everyday (nonscientific) life. According to Heidegger (2018, n.p.), nothingness is experienced in the feeling of anxiety: "Does human openness ever have such a mood that brings us face-to-face with the nothing? Yes, this can and does occur in the basic mood of dread, although rarely and only for a fleeting moment."

Although the encounter with nothingness takes place in everyday life, it does not happen often and lasts but a short time. This is much like the frequency of the \emptyset -delusion—here understood as an acute psychosis—which, for many, is also not a daily occurrence. The \emptyset -delusion may last longer, as in the case of Artaud or Bohlen, but the extent to which it can be called prolonged or brief depends on what exactly is meant by the \emptyset -delusion and what are regarded as further psychological effects not belonging to the \emptyset -delusion proper. This also applies to Heidegger's nothingness; he may call the experience of nothingness brief, but the effect of nothingness on authentic life and original philosophy should be understood as sustained.

Like our Ø, Heidegger's nothingness is difficult to put into words for the very reason that it has to do with the withdrawal and slipping away of that which is nameable. This results in a disappearance of every kind of grounding and in a general mood of anxiety that makes you uncomfortable and leaves you speechless (also see section 12.2.3 about Artaud). Heidegger describes it as follows (2018, n.p.): "During dread we say 'It feels so strange!" ... All things, and we along with them, sink into indifference—but not in the sense of disappearing. Rather, as beings recede, they turn toward us. It is the receding of the whole of what-is that presses in on us and oppresses us. Without the whole there is no hold. As beings slip away, what remains and overwhelms us is precisely this 'no ...' Dread reveals the nothing." 17

In the Ø-delusion, the discovery of nothingness can lead to despair, despondency, or rage. Heidegger, however, is among the optimistic nothingness experts, like the Christians (as described above) and the yogis (as described below). According to Heidegger (2018, n.p.), "In the clear night of the nothing experienced in dread, there occurs the original revelation of

the 'is' of what-is: the fact that things are and are not nothing. ... The more our preoccupations turn us toward what-is, the less we let it slip away in its being. Thus the more easily we turn away from the nothing, the more likely we are to fall into superficial, 'public' ways of being-open."

Later in his lecture, Heidegger had more to say about the atmosphere surrounding the nothing. It is not a wretched state or a mournful mood but rather a mild happiness that is part of creativity (2018, n.p.): "The dread born of risk is not the opposite of joy, or even of quiet activity and calm enjoyment. It transcends such oppositions and lives in secret communion with the serene and gentle yearnings of creativity."

Although many of Heidegger's pronouncements on nothingness may have some bearing on the \emptyset -delusion, "serene and gentle" is a characterization that has little to do with psychosis or madness. Granted, there does exist a psychotic gloating, a kind of secret one-upmanship in which, with a sense of irony and derision, one simply lets the things of the world pass one by. Frenzied joy and amazement also occur, and thus happiness. But the word "serene" is rarely applicable to psychosis and the \emptyset -delusion.

When this perfectly acceptable nothingness takes hold of you, you find yourself being dragged along and then springing into nothingness (Heidegger 2018): "Originary dread can awaken in openness at any moment; no exceptional event is needed to rouse it. Its power is as deep as its possible occasions are unexceptional. It is always on the verge of springing forth but seldom does. But when it does, it seizes us and leaves us hanging."

Here Heidegger describes the way nothingness and anxiety work without portraying the human being as either an unresisting victim of anxiety or as the conscious provoker of the anxiety. He does not comment on whether we are passively seized by nothingness or are actively summoning it. This makes Heidegger's "springing" resemble the Ø-delusion in the sense that it, too, is actively carried out as well as passively endured.

At the end of Heidegger's lecture, he concludes that nothingness is needed to shake life up every now and then and that having an encounter with nothingness is highly recommended, especially for philosophers (2018): "Philosophy begins only when our own existence undertakes a personal commitment to the basic possibilities of being-open as a whole. What most matters in this commitment is that we first open the space for beings in terms of a whole; then liberate ourselves for the nothing, i.e., free ourselves from the idols that each of us has and goes cringing to; and finally, as we are left hanging, let ourselves be swept back into that basic question of metaphysics, the question that the nothing itself imposes: why are there beings at all instead of nothing?"

Arriving at a "deeper" philosophy and a less superficial existence apparently requires this "springing forth" and being swept into nothingness. In nothingness we are free of the idols we usually worship. This resembles the idea that the journey through nothingness—or the Ø-delusion—is not necessarily harmful in itself, as long as you don't let yourself be distracted by illusions, images, hallucinations, idols, and demons. The same thread runs through Michaux and Podvoll, and I also address it in the next section on Eastern liberation techniques: when nothingness looms, it is a mistake to resist it or flee from it. Rather, one must "go through it" and "let it come and go." In a certain sense, Heidegger is even more positive about nothingness; in Heidegger's nothingness, the idols are not a temptation, and in fact nothingness is the place where you are safeguarded from idols.

Heidegger's step-by-step plan with regard to nothingness corresponds in many ways with the passage through emptiness in the mad world. Nothingness strikes only rarely, and even then it is short-lived; it leads to anxiety and speechlessness, and it is beyond the distinctions of passive/active and subject/object—and there in the distance, beyond nothingness, is a reward of depth and authenticity. In Heidegger there are also passages that cast doubt on any similarities with the \varnothing -delusion. According to Heidegger's concluding words, "the question that the nothing itself imposes" is "why are there beings at all instead of nothing?" But the mystical madmen as we know them seem more obsessed with a much more urgent question: "Is there anything at all? Isn't there actually absolutely nothing?"

12.4.3 Everything Illuminated by Nothing: Eliade and Capriles

The West has a great many paths to nothingness from which to choose, but the East has far more nihilo-centric soteriologies, philosophies, and lifestyles. Redemption in the East more often results in a "null and void" state—resembling the Ø-delusion—than in a state in which one is open to fulfillment and illumination by a well-defined God, as is often described in Christianity. This is why the East is so inviting to seekers of a mystical counterpart to the Ø-delusion. In addition, the search for personal redemption or enlightenment is more important in the metaphysics and gnoseology of the East—at least in India—than it is in Western philosophy. In India, the goal of accumulating knowledge about the world and the cosmos is usually to release and deliver oneself from the same world and cosmos.

Eliade (1958b, 13) says, "In India metaphysical knowledge always has a soteriological purpose. Thus only metaphysical knowledge (*vidyā*, *jñāna*, *prajñā*)—that is, the knowledge of ultimate realities—is valued and sought, for it alone procures liberation. For it is by 'knowledge' that man, casting

off the illusions of the world of phenomena, 'awakens.' ... Knowledge is transformed into a kind of meditation, and metaphysics becomes soteriology." This central position that nothingness occupies in the East, along with the emphasis on personal redemption, makes Eastern mystical paths interesting for the study of the \varnothing -delusion.

Both the final goal of this via mystica orientalis and the adventures and dangers that happen along the way closely resemble the perils of the route of madness. To shed more light on the ins and outs of the Ø-delusion, I am going to consult two sources that have bearing on Eastern soteriologies of nothingness. The first is Eliade's book Yoga: Immortality and Freedom (1958b), the standard work on the path taken by the Indian yogi (practitioner of yoga) to enlightenment, immortality, and freedom. Eliade presents a sober but insightful and clear description of what can happen on the path to Ø. The second work I will discuss is that of the contemporary Venezuelan philosopher Elías Capriles. Capriles is a good example of someone who attempts to combine and confront the knowledge and wisdom of the East with the philosophy and psychology of the West. Capriles (2000, 2006) compares a few paths of Western spirituality with the Tibetan Buddhist path. He fully aligns himself with the enlightened Tibetan Buddhist, and from that position he offers criticism and advice to those who are thinking of embarking on the path to nothingness.

Every path to enlightenment begins with normal life. Every description of a via mystica provides—either directly or indirectly—an analysis *and* a criticism of the normal state. In Indian worldviews, such as that of yoga, the normal world is seen as a world of pain and suffering, which is caused by an unattainable desire for oneness and fulfillment. This is regarded as the motivating factor behind the decision to let desire die out and to withdraw from ordinary existence. So the yogi deliberately isolates himself from his fellows; the path of the yogi is fully at odds with normal participation in society. The yogi does without everything that is usually called "human," from social relationships to the most basic habits having to do with the rhythms of his own body.

Eliade (1958b, 12, 95) writes, "The revelation of 'pain' as the law of existence can be regarded as the conditio sine qua non for emancipation. Intrinsically, then, this universal suffering has a positive, stimulating value. It perpetually reminds the sage and the ascetic that but one way remains for him to attain to freedom and bliss—withdrawal from the world, detachment from possessions and ambitions, radical isolation. ... The methods to emancipate man from his human condition, to conquer absolute freedom, to realize the unconditioned are antisocial, or, indeed, antihuman. The

worldly man lives in society, marries, establishes a family; Yoga prescribes absolute solitude and chastity. ... All of the yogic techniques invite to one and the same gesture—to do exactly the opposite of what human nature forces one to do. ... The orientation always remains the same—to react against the 'normal,' 'secular,' and finally 'human' inclination."

Eliade (1958b, 96) describes this yogic path as a route that leads one away from the normal, profane life and toward a sacred world: "The man who refuses his native condition and consciously reacts against it by attempting to abolish it is a man who thirsts for the unconditioned, for freedom, for 'power'—in a word, for one of the countless modalities of the sacred. This 'reversal of all human values' that the yogin pursues is further validated by a long Indian tradition; for, in the Vedic perspective, the world of the gods is exactly the opposite of ours (the god's right hand corresponds to man's left hand, an object broken here below remains whole in the beyond, etc.)."

Eliade's descriptions resemble the path of the Ø-deluded with regard to detachment from the normal social world and retreating to another purer, or madder, world. Social rules, customs, and manners are no longer important, and one isolates oneself from others. In a certain sense this other "sacred" yoga world, like the mad world, is antihuman: an anti-, contra-, or mirror-image world in which left and right change places and all human values are turned on their head (for parallels in the mad world, see section 4.2.2, for example).

Eliade, the scholar of comparative religion, discusses in neutral terms the sacred path of the yogi as one of many possible life paths. For Capriles, on the other hand, the Eastern path to enlightenment is not just one possibility among many; it is the only correct, true path that everyone ought to follow. Those who have not walked the path are not "supremely sane," but live in a "delusory overvaluation of thought." Capriles (2000, 163) says, "Supreme Sanity corresponds to the absence of what I will call 'delusory valuation' (or overvaluation of thought)."

Capriles sees the ordinary world as a false world, marked by a "not-knowing" that poses as all-knowing. This is the source of all misery, from personal frustration to social conflict and ecological crisis. So in the following quote by Capriles (2000, 169), "delusion" refers to what normally is called the absence of delusion, or the ordinary world: "Delusion gives rise to a series of emotional responses that produce recurring suffering, dissatisfaction, and frustration ... if we believe in the inherent, absolute truth of the entities, beliefs, and values of normal everyday reality, we will strive to maintain our identities, possessions, and so on, thereby giving rise to: (a) constant discomfort, dissatisfaction, and personal frustration; (b) contradictions

and social conflicts; and (c) ultimately, an ecological crisis such as the one we presently face."

It is interesting to look at Capriles's ideas from the perspective of the \varnothing -delusion. Like Capriles, many of the \varnothing -deluded have the idea that they alone are truly awake and that others are not very far along on the path of life and, as such, are not yet "whole" or "supremely sane." While others may call them mad, it is they who can really see absolute reality. Like Capriles, the \varnothing -deluded who have seen the light are also convinced that they are "beyond" all suffering and pain. While others say they are living in a world of delusion, they imagine themselves to be eternally happy, and the world of delusion, for them, is the ordinary world.

Capriles's philosophy contains the same unassailable core of \emptyset -delusion as we see in the worldview or life attitude of many diagnosed psychotics: "The whole world is fake, and only I see that everything is really nothing." This seeing, this insight, or this idea often arises in a moment or period of "awakening," "enlightenment," or illumination and is described by means of a variety of light, sun, and fire metaphors. Granted, I may be carrying the parallel between the Ø-deluded and Capriles too far: if Capriles is crypto-Ødeluded, then this applies just as much to many other thinkers and mystics of the Indian stamp. But Capriles isn't the only one, or even the first one, to be convinced that everyday reality is all sham, concealing an ultimate reality that is marked by paradoxes, by the ineffable, by light effects, and by possibilities for journeys into the extratemporal and extraspatial. What distinguishes the typical Ø-deluded person from such mystics is not so much the nature of the insight as it is the impulse to draw out the ineffable insight as far, as deep, and in as much detail as it will go (despite its ineffability)—it is an impulse to wrap oneself up in it, to thrust it upon others, and in so doing, to lose contact with them and, hence, the world.

There are more basic similarities between the \varnothing -delusion and Eastern mysticism. As soon as someone begins living according to the ideas of Capriles or one of his colleagues, there is a good chance that he—like a "real" madman—will wander from the proper mystical path and be tempted to abuse his growing insights for his own benefit. The interesting thing about the descriptions of Eastern paths to enlightenment is how much attention they give to such deviations from the right path. In my terminology, this deviation on the path to \varnothing is called a temptation of the esse-delusion (also see Zaehner, 1957, 1960, and the discussion in 10.3.3). Capriles and Eliade differ with regard to the necessity and meaning of this esse-delusion. For Eliade, it is an essential stage on the path to enlightenment, while for Capriles, it is a dangerous and seductive dead end, and I will discuss this latter view first.

Capriles espouses a Tibetan Buddhist body of thought that distinguishes between the false side-path and the true highway. In doing so, he critically examines several schools of liberation, which he calls "transpersonal psychology." Capriles (2000, 163, 165) writes, "often transpersonal psychologists do not distinguish between (1) what Buddhists call Awakening or Enlightenment, which I shall designate as Supreme Sanity, and which implies the spontaneous self-liberation of all types of comprehension in terms of thoughts, ideas or concepts, and (2) conditioned experiences of transpersonal realms. ... Transpersonal perspectives that merely focus on the achievement of transpersonal experiences, and which fail to distinguish between nirvanic, samsaric, and neither-samsaric-nor-nirvanic transpersonal experiences, cannot help guide people towards true sanity."

The seduction I see in the esse-delusion—as does Zaehner, among others (see 10.3.3)—is what Capriles calls the seduction of the "samsaric experience." In Sanskrit, the term "samsara" refers to daily life, with all its vicis-situdes and longings; it is characterized by misery and hardship and the fact that it never reaches completion or perfection. Capriles is of the opinion that the first results of the "transpersonal experience" one undergoes while walking the via mystica orientalis can be seductive, in the sense that seekers remain more deeply entrenched in samsara than before. While these "sham enlightened" people (according to Capriles) believe themselves to be enlightened, they have actually acquired only one great "panoramic" consciousness, and their ego has not disappeared but escalated.

In the following quote, Capriles (2000,165) uses terms such as "expansion" and "cosmic unity," which Zaehner also uses in the context of the esse-delusion (see 10.3.3.1):

Though broadening the scope of consciousness may give access to the transpersonal realm and the experiences of cosmic unity, and so on, that are characteristic of it, this does not necessarily amount to the transcendence of ego-delusion. If, rather than identifying with the limited entity indicated by our name, we identify with something much broader—the entire universe, the division-free continuum suggested by the New Physics, God, Buddha-nature, and so on-what we do is but expand our ego. And we do this in such a way that our delusory identification with a concept or a series of concepts would produce more pleasant results, and, therefore, would be more difficult to recognize as such, and consequently, to overcome. ... As our attention becomes more panoramic and seems to surpass the above usual distinction, giving us access to transpersonal realms—and, moreover, the knower identifies with the known pseudototality—it is said that we have gained access to the arupa loka, arupadhatu, or "Formless realm." However, instead of overcoming delusion and samsara, the individual who ascends to the Formless realms makes delusion and samsara become considerably pleasant—which makes it exceedingly difficult to overcome them.

That is to say, once you have embarked on the mystical path, with nothingness as your goal, there is a danger of being prematurely dazed by the pleasure you experience, making it difficult to remain on the right path. This resembles the esse-delusion that I (and Custance, and Huxley) have described as exceedingly pleasant. According to Capriles (2000, 169), the danger is not only that you do not reach the goal of nothingness but also that you become a victim of "demons and spirits": "While delusion gives rise to a series of emotional responses that produce recurring suffering, dissatisfaction, and frustration, if we believe in the inherent, absolute existence of supernatural reality, we may become the victim of demons and spirits, as has happened to many Tibetans and members of tribal cultures."

So if you encounter spirits and demons, it means you have not followed the path far enough or with enough determination. The mystic must look beyond such phantasms in order to find rest in the abyss of nothingness. Capriles's view of the dangers of the "transpersonal experience" is reminiscent of the ideas of Podvoll and Michaux concerning the seductions of madness. This is not accidental, given the fact that Podvoll was also strongly influence by Buddhism.

Eliade writes about the dangerous condition of "expansion" or "essedelusion" not as a deviation from the path but as a necessary intermediate stage. He explains how the yogi first strives for union with the cosmos and attunes himself to the cosmic rhythms (1958b, 97 ff.): "in withdrawing from profane human life, the yogin finds another that is deeper and truer (because 'in rhythm'); the very life of the cosmos. Indeed, one can speak of the first yogic stages as an effort toward the 'cosmicization' of man, to transform the chaos of biomental life into a cosmos ... a number of yogic and tantric practices are explained by the intention to homologize the body and life of man with the celestial bodies and the cosmic rhythms, first of all with the sun and moon ..."

According to Eliade, this phase of "cosmicization" must be passed through before the yogi can loosen and free himself from the same cosmos, the totality of being. He continues, "Final liberation cannot be obtained without experience of a preliminary stage of 'cosmicization'; one cannot pass directly from chaos to freedom. The intermediate phase is the 'cosmos'—that is, realization of rhythm on all the planes of biomental life. Now, this rhythm is shown to us in the structure of the universe itself, by the 'unifying' role played in it by the celestial bodies and especially the moon." For this necessary preliminary stage of the yogi's path, Eliade refers to phenomena that once again are strongly reminiscent of the esse-delusion, such as unification with the cosmos and the "homologizing" of the inner and the outer self.¹⁹

The striking differences between Eliade and Capriles with regard to recognition of the dangers along the way (necessary stage versus false turn) can be attributed to the goal and the context of their research. Eliade is aspiring to construct an overview of all possible human manifestations of religion or "the sacred." He is more of a comparative and contemplative scholar than a propagandist of any one school of thought. Capriles positions himself amid all sorts of ideas about how enlightenment in the East and the West should best proceed, and he does this more clearly than Eliade. However, the differences might also be explained by the fact that Eliade writes about the Indian form of yoga and Capriles about Tibetan Buddhism, which are similar in many respects but also quite different.

Capriles and Eliade agree on one point, however, and that has to do with the phasing of the mystical path. In both, encounters with spirits and identification with sorcerers take place *before* the encounter with sacred nothingness. Another possibility might be that absolute nothingness is achieved first, with demons, spirits, and paranoia appearing as a reaction. Whoever has seen the darkness of the light of \emptyset often ends up in a state of confusion. (More about this in part IV.)

Ultimately, one way or another, the Ø-delusion is reached: in the East or in the West, on the plains of the Ganges, in the Tibetan highlands, in the prayer cells of medieval monasteries, or in the isolation cells of today's psychiatric hospitals. To what extent do Eliade's and Capriles's descriptions of the goal or the finish line of the via mystica orientalis resemble the Ø-delusion?

According to Eliade, the yogi undergoes experiences of an esse-delusional or "macro-anthropic" nature during his "cosmicization." To reach nothingness, the yogi then extricates himself entirely from being and from the cosmos. Eliade (1958b, 95) writes, "Obtained after 'unification,' 'cosmicization' continues the same process—that of recasting man in new, gigantic dimensions, of guaranteeing him macranthropic experiences. But this macranthropos can himself have but a temporary existence. For the final goal will not be attained until the yogin has succeeded in 'withdrawing' to his own center and completely dissociating himself from the cosmos, thus becoming impervious to experiences, unconditioned, and autonomous. This final 'withdrawal' is equivalent to a rupture of plane, to an act of real transcendence."

By detaching himself from the cosmos, with its natural and biological rhythms, the yogi arrives at further and deeper (and emptier) stages than in the esse-delusion. Finally he ends up in the paradoxical condition of "samādhi," a term often used in the same context as "emptiness" or "nirvana." Eliade (1958b, 77) comments, "Samādhi, yogic 'enstasis,' is the final result and the

crown of all the ascetic's spiritual efforts and exercises. ... samādhi is the state of contemplation in which thought grasps the form of the object directly, without the help of categories and the imagination; the state in which the object is revealed 'in itself,' in its essentials, and as if 'empty of itself.' ... Illusion and imagination are thus wholly done away with by samādhi."

Eliade points out the similarity between samādhi and the coincidentia oppositorum I discussed in 11.2.2. Samādhi is an experiential category that unites even the most basic opposites of being and nonbeing, life and death. Eliade (1958b, 98) writes, "... samādhi is seen to be situated on a line well known in the history of religions and mysticisms—that of the coincidence of opposites. It is true that, in this case, the coincidence is not merely symbolic, but concrete, experiential. Through samādhi, the yogin transcends opposites and, in a unique experience, unites emptiness and superabundance, life and death, Being and nonbeing."

According to Capriles, in order to reach the \varnothing -delusion, or "supreme sanity," you must let go of "everything": all "overvaluation thought," every dualism, every concept, in order to finally end up in a condition of "nonconceptual, holistic Wisdom" (2000, 164). And you must not scrimp in your letting go. "The ego," in particular, must be abandoned; with half-measures the ego remains in place, and the only thing that leads to real enlightenment is a total purification and eradication of the "delusion" that things exist "inherently and absolutely" (2000, 169). Capriles (2000, 172) says, "The only purification that is definitive and irreversible is the process ... which neutralizes the basic human delusion at the root of all evil, resulting in a radical and irreversible transformation of the individual's experience." Clearly, for such a purification to happen, conflicts and dualisms must not be avoided but lived through and thereby abolished.²⁰

When all dangers and pitfalls are avoided, nirvana or samādhi are finally reached in the end. The via mystica orientalis of Capriles, unlike that of Eliade, is not above the apex of being, is not beyond the ecstasy in the universe, and is not attained by submission to the cosmos. It appears as an empty place following the total "extinction" of being, and it can therefore rightfully be regarded as part of the \varnothing -delusion—or at least as part of the \varnothing cult. The gate to \varnothing opens only after a Dantean "descent into hell."

References are often made to nirvana and samādhi (and "Dzogchen qua Basis"—Capriles) as a void that is the core of existence. This void, paradoxically enough, is also a state of perfection and total fulfillment. Eliade (1958b, 98) writes, "Samādhi ... is by its very nature a paradoxical state, for it is empty and at the same time fills being and thought to repletion ..."

Capriles, too, refers to both fullness and void in one and the same paragraph in his "Dzogchen qua Base" (2006, 1): "Dzogchen qua Base is the original condition of total completeness/plenitude and perfection, which is the true nature of the individual and of the universe in its totality and which consists in actual Buddhahood ... which has three aspects. The first one is the essence or ngowo aspect, which is voidness."

This paradox occurs in all delusions—and far beyond (also see chapter 13). Each of the monistic delusions I have described so far is based on a number: the zero of the \emptyset -delusion, the one of the uni-delusion, the "many" of the esse-delusion, and the infinite of the Ω -delusion. If you concentrate on a number and thereby plunge into mysticism, where you dissolve and go mad, you will finally reach the mad-mystical world. But as soon as you begin wandering those precincts, the number disappears: zero is no longer zero but may just as well be infinity; two reveals its oneness, and two onenesses become twoness; and many is always more and proves to be based on nothing. The number is the Jacob's ladder that loses its form and content after use.

Seen in terms of Podvoll's spiral model, this is the deepest level of the psychotic spiral. The first three levels were those of (1) speed, (2) desynchronization, and (3) absorption (described in part II on the via mystica psychotica). Level 4 is that of insight and power, and level 5 is that of "beyond-the-law." These are part of the uni-delusion, the esse-delusion, and the Ω -delusion, and they recur in part IV. The sixth level, that of conflicting commands, can be recognized in its sustainable-mystical form in the coincidentia oppositorum of 11.2.2 and earlier in this chapter. Podvoll's seventh and last level is that of death and rebirth. With Eliade's and Capriles's descriptions of ultimate Eastern realities beyond death and life, being and nonbeing, I have depicted a model of the "crystal" depth structure of madness.

Intermezzo III: Postmortem

III.I Emptiness

III.I.I Vanishing Point: Mad Emptiness

The Ø-delusion is characterized by a feeling of absolute emptiness based on the discovery that "rather than something, there is nothing at all"; that is, "upon closer inspection, everything turns out to be *empty*." What else can be said about this emptiness? Usually when you're talking about a thing—a sugar bowl or a stomach, but also a heart, a church, a consciousness, or a date on the calendar—you can say that it's full or it's empty. Fullness is often preferred to emptiness, except when it comes to prisons, cemeteries, and hospitals. The existence of an emptiness suggests that something could have been filled and that what could have filled it *is not there*. This suggestion is evoked by symbols on the outside (indicating a sugar bowl, for example) that convey the idea that the inside is full (of sugar, for example). The shape-content metaphor, or the vessel-filling metaphor, is powerful and widely applicable; the range of things and phenomena that can be said to be full or empty is extremely broad.

In much of modern philosophy and literature on the meaning of life (such as Taylor 2007) there are references to a general, abstract emptiness, such as the "emptiness of existence" or "the emptiness of modern man." Although this emptiness has to do with important, serious life problems, it is still essentially different from the emptiness found in the Ø-delusion. Voids of meaning refer to the triviality of life projects and the accompanying feelings of meaninglessness. In such voids, however, the everyday world of eating, sleeping, walking, and moving is not necessarily experienced as "empty." The void only has to do with a limited (metaphorical) space, whereas the everyday structure of time and space remains largely intact. Associated with such a relative void are thoughts like "if only my life had a purpose" or "if only I lived in the eighteenth century." In such

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relative voids of meaning, the emptiness in one space can be compensated by fullness in another kind of space. Someone who has an empty heart can overfill his stomach "to drive away the emptiness."

Mad emptiness, on the other hand, is absolute. It isn't about a symbolic space of meaning or a geographic or gastronomic space that can be filled in principle. The essential difference between mad emptiness and other emptinesses is that mad emptiness is not within some space but is an emptiness of space itself. It is an emptiness into which space itself is absorbed and annihilated. Mad emptiness does not tolerate any fullness "elsewhere," because in mad emptiness, there is no elsewhere—neither a here nor a there. So mad emptiness has to do not only with the "content" of all sorts of things but also with their form. In the language of the Ø-delusion, "the sugar bowl is empty" conveys the idea not only that there is no more sugar in the bowl but that the bowl itself is empty in the sense that there is no bowl and that, therefore, the concept "sugar bowl" comprises nothing. That which was thought to be a stable, unbreakable form proves, upon closer inspection, to be an "empty appearance." Because of the void's "total inclusivity," it therefore makes little sense for someone with a Ø-delusion to search for solutions in projects that elicit meaning—such projects will not bring the sugar bowl back.

Absolute emptiness is comparable to the absolute silence that is found outside the order of language—either beyond language or above it. Thus absolute emptiness is also outside the system of spatial coordinates. The difference is that when we try to depict absolute silence, we can make use of spatial metaphors, while depicting emptiness is problematic since emptiness itself is a spatial concept. At the very most, it can be said that mad emptiness is like a "vanishing point," a "black hole" into which "everything disappears": space, time, light, and energy. Mad emptiness does not refer to an empty place among other filled places; rather, it has to do with the elimination of the phenomenon and the notion of "place" altogether.¹

If you accept that nothingness can live a life of its own and that silence moves in a place "above" the house of language, then with regard to madness you can say that there is a nonspatial antiworld of emptiness and nothingness that extends "within" or "behind" the vanishing point. Here I will examine how Artaud approaches absolute emptiness and disappears into it, only to discover—or to create—a new mad world behind it.

III.I.II Living in Emptiness: Artaud II

In 12.2.3, I discussed the role of nothingness in the work of Artaud. Here I will look at the effect of \emptyset by examining Artaud's famous notion of "the void" (*le vide*). Like nothingness, the void in Artaud is not just a negatively

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charged concept. Even as early as 1925, twelve years before his famous collapse in Ireland, Artaud wrote (1976, 84), "If only one could taste one's void, if one could really rest in one's void, and this void were not a certain kind of being but not quite death either. It is so hard to no longer exist, to no longer be in something. The real pain is to feel one's thought shift within oneself. But thought as a fixed point is certainly not painful." Here nonexistence is the problem, because this nonbeing causes thoughts and experiences to keep shifting. The void can be quite pleasant, in and of itself. There is a subtle difference here between the concept of "emptiness" and that of nothingness; emptiness offers the possibility of a meaningful place (or nonplace).

In most other passages in Artaud, however, the void seems less enjoyable. It operates "on the inside" and strikes at Artaud's existence in his very heart (1976, 295): "I am overwhelmed by an immense and constant anxiety, an anxiety which takes the physical form of a kind of pain, a knot located at the point where the mind calls on itself or, more simply, I am obsessed by a terrible sensation of emptiness, incapable of summoning up any image, any representation. ... it prevents me from analyzing anything deeply with someone else. I have lost any point of comparison, any point of sensation for good and for evil, for good and for bad, in substance and quality!!!!!" The void is a knot, a pain, and an anxiety. It affects everything: Artaud's thinking, his ability to analyze and compare, and his sense of good and evil. In such passages, Artaud shows how nothingness, in the guise of the void, can be a disintegrating, paralyzing, nihilating, and annihilating force. Artaud finds it difficult to stand firm in the void's icy wind.

It's been shown countless times that something can emerge from nothing. Night can give birth to the day; blackness and silence can frame whiteness and words. Such reassessments and upheavals of nothingness and the void can also be seen in Artaud. In 1936 a virtue was made of necessity; the draining, paralyzing void became a source of creativity and meaning (1976, 362): "The movement which goes from the outside in and which is called centripetal corresponds to astringent force, whereas the movement which goes from the inside out and which is called centrifugal corresponds to dilating and repulsive force. Like life, like nature, thought goes from the inside out before going from the outside in. I begin to think in the void and from the void I move toward the plenum; and when I have reached the plenum I can fall back into the void. I go from the abstract to the concrete and not from the concrete toward the abstract."

The balance between emptiness and fullness, thought and thing, abstraction and concreteness, are also themes in the German idealism of Schelling, for example (see section 12.3.3). The difference, perhaps, is that

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Schelling, in his thoughtful and thoroughly crystallized philosophy, was better at taming nothingness—or holding it at bay—by making use of a more detached, argumentative approach. However, the subject matter and thought patterns of the madman and the philosopher do resemble each other. In Artaud's fragment from 1936, the void is the source of thinking, nature, and life, just as it is for Schelling. The similarity between Artaud and Schelling (and Custance, too; see section 12.3.3)—at least in this quote—is even more specific, and it's the idea that there are two essential forces, one that contracts and one that dilates.

Artaud then continues his contemplation of the void and goes further by declaring that the void has become the domain of poetry. Artaud holds up poetry and life as the opposite of the misguided European path of the spirit of analysis (1976, 362): "I call poetry today the understanding of this internal and dynamic destiny of thought. In order to recover its profound nature, to feel alive in its thought, life is rejecting the spirit of analysis in which Europe has lost its way. Poetic understanding is internal, poetic quality is internal. There is a movement today to identify the poetry of the poets with that internal magic which provides a path for life and makes it possible to act upon life." In an unsurprising way, Artaud is distinguishing between the domain of creative emptiness, real life, poetry, and magical forces, on the one hand, and the decline of European civilization and the analytical spirit on the other. Here Artaud locates the void on one side of a general cultural struggle.

Until the summer of 1937, Artaud would continue to regard emptiness and fullness as distinct notions. The meaning of emptiness may have been ambivalent, and its effect dynamic, but nevertheless, during this period, the meaning of the void was kept within the order and structure of controllable language. Until that time, nothingness was distinguished from everything, zero was not yet infinite, and \varnothing and Ω did not yet coincide. In the next section I will show how Artaud articulated his perplexity when he discovered and experienced that zero and infinity could be the same: that everything is empty, and at the same time everything issues from that emptiness.

III.I.III Propelled through Emptiness: Artaud III

In psychiatry, when a patient has undergone a crisis, psychosis, or madmystical experience, there is usually an effort to search the person's biography for signs of an underlying chronic disorder. In the case of Artaud, authorities in the psychiatric hospital eagerly drew conclusions about the way his entire oeuvre should be interpreted based on his crisis of 1937 and the time that followed. Pointless exercises were soon carried out in which Postmortem 439

the content of Artaud's thinking, experiences, and language were reduced to a collection of meaningless symptoms that could be safely filed away under the heading of "schizophrenia" (for an example of this in the Netherlands, see Van der Ploeg 2003). In such literature, Artaud—and people with psychoses in general—are consistently depicted as sick and essentially unintelligible. This doesn't make it easy for us to understand Artaud as a person, and writers and readers of his work are thereby deprived of the chance to gain insight into the mad-mystical world. So it is impossible to find a connection between Artaud's description of the Ø-delusion and descriptions of the "nothing-ish" dimensions of existence by such authors as Schelling, Sartre, Eckhart, and Eliade. In contrast to such approaches, I hope to show how it is possible to creep into Artaud's mind and understand his most frenzied statements. Nothingness and Artaud's void have already been frequently discussed in this book. Now it is time for a further immersion into Artaud's empty Ø-delusion itself.

Two weeks before Artaud's departure for Ireland in 1937, his essay "The New Revelations of Being" ("Les nouvelles révélations de l'être") was published. Here Artaud describes his revelations and thoughts from inside and outside the void. In the prologue he says that only now does he really grasp what the void consists of. For the first time in his life, he has really taken a plunge into the void itself (1976, 413–414): "For a long time I have felt the Void, but I have refused to throw myself into the Void. I have been as cowardly as all that I see." Artaud looks back on his life and considers the possibility that his earlier criticism of the world around him was really a protest against this void. The void had seized him, but he had denied it: "When I believed that I was denying this world, I now know that I was denying the Void. For I know that this world does not exist, and I know how it does not exist. What I have suffered from until now is having denied the Void. The Void which was already in me."

For the first time in his life, Artaud "sees" that the world does not exist, which means it is empty. The emptiness no longer comes from the outside, or from only the inside, but is equal to the foundation of all of existence. Being *is* nothingness. All differentiation disappears like snow before the sun. With this amazing insight, Artaud is forced to revise his relationship to the world, to time, and to his own history. Such radical reinterpretations of everything that is and was are typical of mystical madness. With the perplexity caused by this insight into everything and nothing, everything becomes clear and vivid, and everything becomes connected in a new way. Details and events from the past that once seemed unimportant now point to this compressed moment of revelation and union. Everything falls into

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place, as if you had been walking around in a kaleidoscopic chaos and were now, suddenly, looking from the outside into a heavenly peep-show: perspective and direction appear in the chaos—even though the direction is "nowhere." Related thoughts are now expressed in such terms as: "Only now do I understand that ..." or "Now I see what was going on when. ..." Artaud himself follows the introduction of his "The New Revelations of Being" with "I know that someone wanted to enlighten me by means of the Void and that I refused to let myself be enlightened. If I was turned into a funeral pyre, it was in order to cure me of being in the world. And the world took everything I had."

In this mad model for emptiness and nothingness, written by Artaud in July 1937, nothingness is still of a somewhat deeper order than being. Being may be the same as nothingness, but he who understands this lives more genuinely, more deeply, more actually in nothingness, so to speak, than he who relies on being. If we consider this carefully, however, it's an impossible notion; if the world really is the same as nothing, then you might just as well believe in the world, with its diversity of forms, when you stare blindly into that nothing. Artaud's sort of preferential treatment for nothingness is widespread among schools of mysticism. According to this idea, you are somehow "more advanced" and less easily taken in if you concentrate on and stare into the void of nothingness behind the veil of phenomena, even though that nothingness is identical to all the phenomena put together.

Artaud follows his narrative with the admission that, up until recently, he has clung to (illusory) being, but that now his intention is to stop wandering around in the esse-delusion. He is dead to the world from which he has fallen and has arrived in the realer reality of the void (which admittedly is of the same world): "I struggled to exist, to try to accept the forms (all the forms) with which the delirious delusion of being in the world has clothed reality. I no longer want to be one of the Deluded. Dead to the world, to what composes the world for everyone else, fallen at last, risen in this void which I was denying. ... I must end it. I must break at last with this world ..."

Reflecting on his insights and experiences of the emptiness of the world, Artaud runs into problems and paradoxes. For although the world and the void are essentially the same, the world is still capable of repudiating Artaud and banishing him to the void: "It is done. I have really fallen into the Void since everything—that makes up this world—has just succeeded in making me despair. For one does not know that one is no longer in the world until one sees that the world has left you." In addition, Artaud, in his Ø-delusion, has not managed to solve the problem of his own or anyone

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else's physicality. As far as his body is concerned, does he belong to the world, or is his body part of nothingness? How does his experience of pain and suffering relate to his physicality? Do the bodies and minds of others contain real persons? Is the body worldly and therefore unreal, or is it spiritual and therefore unworldly?

Such essentially philosophical problems weigh even more heavily on Artaud's mind owing to the fact that happiness, pleasure, pain, and suffering all possess the dualistic quality of being both physical and mental. So after his discovery of absolute emptiness, Artaud quickly turns his attention to thinking and writing about the paradoxes of body and spirit and those of life and death. In Podvoll's model, this is the sixth stage—that of conflicting commands. In a way that appears to be quite random, Artaud tries to solve these paradoxes by means of implausible ad hoc declarations: "The others who have died are not separated. They still turn around their dead bodies. And I have known how the dead turn around their bodies for exactly the thirty-three Centuries that my Double has not stopped turning. Now, no longer existing myself, I see what exists. ... It is a real Desperate Person who speaks to you and who has not known the happiness of being in the world until now that he has left this world, that he is absolutely separated from it. The others who have died are not separated. They still turn around their dead bodies. I am not dead, but I am separated."

Because the dualisms of life and death, I and the other, matter and spirit, are constantly impinging on the monistic Ø-delusion as it is actually lived, Artaud becomes more deeply entangled. The "I" that he uses to organize his writing and thoughts takes on an ambiguous character: he refers to his body, his tongue, his speech, his mind, his emptiness, *and* his fullness. Normally, when we say "I" we are referring to ourselves. The meaning of this "self" is not unambiguous, not even in normal life. But with Artaud, a special kind of "self-referential problem" arises. Because he tries to disappear so radically into absolute monistic nothingness, his "I" shatters into a fanned out pluralism.

The abstract absoluteness of nothingness, combined with Artaud's need to explain it in earthly language and bring it to life in the concrete world, gives rise to what we might call delusions: frenetic attempts to bind the unity of the One (or the Nothing) to the chaos of the Many, once and for all, in both word and thought. Because emptiness is equated with the fullness of being, and because every stable structure has disappeared, psychotic magic, megalomania, paranoia, and telepathy all lie within reach in Artaud's world. Typical of the emergent atmosphere of megalomania and solipsism are comments such as "What exists I see with certainty. What does not

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exist, I shall create, if I must." By swimming through the hole of nothingness and being freed from the known world, Artaud is washed ashore on the other side of the void. After being totally absorbed into nothingness, or the ecstasy in the Ø-delusion, the moment for a new mad world order rapidly approaches: a new "distribution," a Master Plan (see chapter 15). Artaud draws new borderlines between good and evil, between activity and passivity, and between body and spirit. The elements he uses to achieve this in "The New Revelations of Being" are mainly the materials and metaphors of earth, air, water, and fire. I will be discussing these kinds of new mad orders in greater detail in chapter 16. In this section I will discuss a few fragments from letters Artaud wrote after the publication of "The New Revelation of Being" in which he manages to describe the moment of perplexed and absolute Ø-delusion beautifully.

On July 30, Artaud wrote in a letter to André Breton that he doesn't believe in "anything" anymore. "Everything" has been played out for him. He has ended up in nothingness, and if he should run up against "something," he will "destroy" it in the void—for only in nothingness can one find purity and a new world (1976, 402): "although you have lost faith in everything there is still one last thing in which you want to believe, whereas my absolute pessimism makes me believe that *everything today must be renounced* to permit the establishment of a world I can believe in. And so long as I am able to imagine one thing, a single thing that must be saved, I shall destroy it in order to save myself from things, for that which is pure is always elsewhere." Here lie the seeds of later apocalyptic visions and messianic hope.

Two weeks later Artaud travels to Ireland. There he wanders around until the end of September, after which he returns to France in a strait-jacket. Little is known about Artaud's time in Ireland except for what can be gleaned from a few of his letters. In one of these, he includes a brief, concise description of the essence of the Ø-delusion: being disappears into the void, nothingness becomes everything, and this new whole acquires a different aspect and a new meaning (1976, 405): "I have abandoned a great many things in the course of an abominable existence, and in the end I have abandoned everything, including the very idea of Existence. And it was in seeking NONEXISTENCE that I rediscovered the meaning of God. If I speak of God, then, it is not in order to live but in order to die." The experience that occurs here—of the face that emerges in a glimmer of black volcanic sand—is no longer part of being as such. Here something completely new is taking place that cannot be related to any earlier experience: a new "world" is revealing itself.

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In the French context, it is natural for Artaud to use religious and even Christian language to describe his experience in the post-nihilistic phase. Artaud's motives, images, and thoughts from this period are similar in many ways to descriptions of the struggles of mystics like Eckhart and John of the Cross. In the same letter to Breton, for example, Artaud writes, "God did not create us as Men, but it was Men who created God and polluted the escape from man, that is, from the state of greatest suffering. It is Men who are responsible for suffering and not God. It is the state of man which proportionately defiles, pollutes, diminishes, and makes ridiculous the now anachronistic force of God."

Nothingness, being, the \varnothing -delusion, and emptiness were the engines that drove Artaud to his crisis. The first distinctions began creeping into his absolute \varnothing -delusion: those of god, man, time, historicity, suffering, and salvation. In this letter and in many later texts, the religious terms crystallize further into mad dualistic, triadic, and pluralistic arguments. Artaud writes, for example, "Now it happens that if this force manifests itself in what the Hindus call the Triad of Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu, and what we call the Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit, in reality the Son-Shiva is AGAINST that Creation-Manifestation of the Father which is PRESERVED by the Holy Ghost." The mad meditation and contemplation of \varnothing slowly change here into a mad crystallized narrative, branching out further and further and bending down from heaven to earth (to be continued in section 16.4.3).

There are people who have twisted their way through the \emptyset -delusion and been able to make interesting reports about it. In most cases, accounts of the Ø-delusion remain colored by the meanings and commonplaces of everyday language and normal thinking—not to mention the downward, leveling influence of modern, medicalized psychoculture. In Artaud's work, however, we can easily follow him as he circles around the void, closer and closer, only to tumble through the vanishing point of nothingness in the end. Nothingness seized hold of Artaud by degrees on an increasing number of fronts: physically, mentally, artistically, and philosophically. Artaud often presents nothingness as an enemy who has robbed him of his existence. Sometimes he sees in emptiness the source of all sense, life, and meaning. The void pursues him, but it also issues from him; he cultivates it and deliberately tries to reach the extremities of total \emptyset . In his accounts, we see the paradoxes of psychosis: Artaud is the ensceneur of his own madness, but at the same time he is its victim. He creates from emptiness, but it is in the same emptiness that he loses his footing. He strives to attain nothingness and serenity, but he also receives a world of endless intrusiveness and agitation.

III.II Silence

Kingsley (1999, 95) writes, "It's possible to enter that dimension, go through death while still alive. But afterwards you don't talk very much. What you've seen is shrouded in silence. There are things that just can't be said. And when you do talk there's something to your words because death is the place where all the words come from—like sparks that have their origin in fire. Then what's said has a certain power, but not because the words mean something outside them or point somewhere else. They have power because they contain their significance and meaning inside them."

Where there is nothingness, light cannot penetrate and an absolute emptiness reigns. It's deathly quiet there—no sound, no words, no language. Speaking has stopped; language has ceased. What else is there to say about these places of silence? Oddly enough, there is a great deal that has been said and written about them.

III.II.I Point of Silence

According to some thinkers, we are locked in a house of language from which there is no escape—and we can do nothing but speak. "Il n'y a pas dehors de texte" is the famous adage by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, which expresses the idea that each human experience or thought presumes a linguistic, textual structure that we cannot go beyond. Even if we thought we were straying outside the language, Derrida would tell us we're still fully woven into it. According to this view, language is the core of our humanness and our deepest essence; we live by the grace of language, to which and by which we remain "captivated." Life beyond language is literally unthinkable and inexpressible. Silence is never a "real" silence, and it is always marked by what is not being said. Silence is a derivative of speech. So silence is the empty place that contrasts with—and is defined by—the fullness of language. When the \emptyset -deluded person is silent, a meaning can be distilled from that silence within the order of language. Such views of mad silence are usually found in schools of psychology and psychiatry influenced by French structuralism and post-structuralism and by psychoanalysis.

Others insist that while language may be an important human instrument, indispensable in daily life, it is quite possible to think of and imagine human experience without it. According to this instrumental view, we leave the domain of language whenever we fall silent and momentarily "forget" language. Extralinguistic experiences are then nothing but ordinary experiences in which language is not involved; one falls silent when one has no need of language—or when one cannot or will not express oneself in

language. Language elevates man above animals and babies, and when one falls silent and no longer participates in human language, one returns to the level of the animal or the very young child. According to this view, silence is no more and no less than the absence of language. Silence takes place wherever language has not yet developed (in babies and animals) or wherever it has left for good (brain damage, cognitive and psychological disorders). When the \emptyset -deluded person falls silent, it would mean that he cannot or does not want to speak. Silence is a return to a simpler, imperfect state.

There is a third form of silence that is related to the silence in expressions such as "silence is golden." It is the silence of autonomous negativity and the mute void. Whenever this Ø-silence is confronted by the speech of others, contrasting meanings are likely to emerge, in which case the silence would resemble the first form of silence mentioned above. This silence is not always a free choice either, or something that functions within a greater whole, which makes it resemble the second form of silence. Using the metaphor of the house of language (cf. the next section), this third form of silence differs from the first form in that it is a mystical silence that takes place "outside." In referencing Ø-silence, one is not referring to a special place of silence indoors; rather, it is a silence that has managed to escape the walls and constraints of the house. The key that makes it possible to leave the house of language has been found. This silence of the Ø-deluded is different from the second kind of silence in that it has found an exit "on the top," as it were. The silence of animals and small children can be compared to that of creatures who have never before lived in the house of language. The silence caused by brain damage can be compared to being removed from the house of language by means of a side door. Mystical silence, on the other hand, presupposes an intact prior linguistic ability that has been neither forgotten nor damaged, but transcended. This silence escapes from the house of language by means of the skylight.

In the short story "The Gnome, the Giant, and the Middleman" ("De kabouter, de reus en de middenman") by Dutch writer Sybren Polet, a giant beautifully describes what happens when this third form of silence is discovered (2011, 274ff.):

In the beginning, the human being, be he large or small, does not really understand what everything is, mainly because he is part of it all, and what is outside himself seems infinitely large and vast, albeit a largeness and vastness that he thinks he'll be able to grasp in the end—and yes, that he already more or less grasps because he has categorized it under the comprehensible formulation "everything." ... Yes, well—then suddenly, like a stroke of lightning, comes the

realization that the word "everything" does not include everything, not by a long shot, and that an inconceivable and elusive spaciousness lies beyond his grasp, beyond the linguistic formulation, I should say, and that the entire language is not yet capable of even roughly expressing it. At that moment you feel hopelessly lost in an almost unimaginable space, or an intolerable spacelessness (if the notion of space on its own is too scary for you), and the language that, up until now, has helped to sustain you in the old space, suddenly proves to be of absolutely no value whatsoever: it becomes quite unmanageable, and in the long run you even get the feeling that all it's doing is pointing you in the wrong direction; so you write it off completely—you don't even distrust it; you just write it off. Period. Only if somebody happens to turn up and start asking you all kinds of questions are you obliged to slip back into that old malignity, language ... first you have to have known a language, even a lot of language, as much language as possible, before you can renounce it, otherwise you cannot step outside the language-that-is-everything. In order to un-do something you first have to have done it; in order—if I may put it this way—to un-language, you first have to have known the words and the concepts that formed your whole pre-world. But only then does it really begin.²

III.II.II Babel Still Life

In the past, you hoped to find the Kirghiz Light indoors: by studying the posters and the tapestries, by comparing the luminosity in the different rooms, and by calculating the shortest route from room A to room B. You wandered around, from room to room to room; each resting place was pleasant in its own way. All functions were met: living room, dining room, bedroom, study. But each room was limited in its possibilities, and none of them could contain or comprehend the Kirghiz Light.

You knew all about exits because the concept "exit" was the name of your recollection, but you had been taught never to search for exits at higher levels. You could leave the house of language only from the ground floor and only for brief periods. You had been told that the only way you could go outside was by living in oblivion—in the intoxication of earthly matters—by losing yourself in pleasure, by celebrating the speechless ineffable moment. The upper floors were regarded as untrustworthy, spiritualized, and suspiciously idealistic, and their retaining walls were as fragile as words. Exits at higher levels would lead to fall and collapse—until the moment you understood that there was a *reversed* collapse: collapse as the point of departure. Going out by falling in.

The house of language had no windows. You could see neither in nor out. Resignedly, you spun around in the dust and ashes of your own making—until the moment you figured out that it was an "open house," open at the

top. It was like an open cylinder or a roll of toilet paper instead of a bell jar or a closed box. Since then, the house of language has had two exits: one on earth and one in the sky. After that discovery, the air became the silent seedbed of language. In the past you always thought in terms of weight, restraint, and downward movement. Now you traveled along with the rising warmth and silently upward-circling prayer spirals.

Downstairs the words were chained together like stones. Meanings were defined by dictionaries and their contexts of use. Habits of speech were encapsulated by the practices of various life forms. Words, sentences, and text were kept firmly in line by roles, patterns of behavior, and relational demands. At the top of the house of language, however, words pointed the way to the firmament of freedom. Meanings there were like fuel for the empire of possibilities, sentence patterns were like sober garments—free to be worn according to one's own discretion and insight. Texts tumbled like crows in the medium of the vacuous.

You had thought that the house of language—like any other random house—would only be propped up and supported at the bottom. But because of the Kirghiz Light, the blueprint had now become perfectly clear to you. You no longer had to go downstairs to leave the building. In the past, every escape attempt failed because you always thought you had to come back by way of the ground floor. Your origins beckoned and tugged at you, and you were stuck to the bottom like rubber. Now you were free, and you shot straight up through the roof of language.

You didn't go through the skylight (the journey you had plotted was far too spacious for that)—not unless you call heaven's gate a skylight. The whole roof came off and now you could look up without further obstruction. Resistance caused by slow language and limiting linguistic patterns were behind you, or, more accurately, *beneath* you. Your point of view was reversed, and you could relax in the silent air.

Breaking through the borders of language, shot out into the wild blue yonder. There everything is reversed (and reverses itself): mirroring takes place. The bottommost stone rises to the top, and the upper floor becomes the foundation. You no longer live within the bounds of language but float above it, free of phonetic laws, dictionary definitions, rules of grammar, and discursive patterns. Free of language, free of hearth and home.

Accelerating upward like a coil, the meanings piled up. They no longer fit within a particular scale; certitude began to melt, to overflow, to cascade down, to steam. They multiplied, intensified—when all of a sudden, with a sigh, they caught fire, flared up, sputtered, and disappeared once more. You had outwitted the hunter, had come away unscathed, had popped out

of the hat like a rabbit. And there, above the house, you were free of words and were absorbed into the extralinguistic silence, as in a breathless mirage that sank down into a sharp line of noiselessness and condensed into a single mute point.

From the airy heights, words looked like nothing but awkward things, successions of sounds all cobbled together, thoughtlessly uttered here and there. Language became a layer of noise, a projection wall, a movie screen. From your empire of freedom, you saw that it remained a finite and limited whole. It was fascinating to hear people talking down below, to hear their tongues assemble the mechanical, prefab constructions of the language. In the words of one person, you could hear the thoughts of another, and coiling through the thoughts of the other were subterranean forces that only you could see from your high point of silence. The blaring words were like dream masks of many-headed monsters, fairy-tale princesses, and sorcerers. They formed a blanket, a quilt of rags all stitched together.

You were past all that. Your domain lay beyond the arbitrary utterance, beyond slips of the tongue, malicious gossip, deathblows, and parroted speech. The sharpened point of silence lay hidden in your mute tongue. Emerging from your concentrated point, speech came raining down like a fan of dust, uncontrolled sprays of useless, unstoppable mechanics. What you later read in the reports about yourself, you heard being perfectly expressed all around you: incoherence, fragmentation, disintegration. You saw the earth's surface on which the house of language rests turn into a swamp, and you preferred the air anchors. Those down below kept acting as if they were speaking in concrete, while you could already see the concrete decaying on their lips. Your world became that of silence, muteness, islands of peace and quiet, the archipelago of infinity in the ocean of nothingness.

A quote from Harald Kaas, "Poetry Born of the Absence of Things" ("De geboorte van de poëzie uit de afwezigheid der dingen," in Vogelaar 1983, 98ff.):

Deeper and deeper into the silence, there where muteness forgets things, close to the dead lions, the wood pigeons, and the children. Now everyone is lost who forgot to blacken their thumbs in order to find their fingerprints on the room's door knob tomorrow morning when the cock crows—the room where there are real tables and chairs, still wet from the sweat of a long night spent in dancing. The mice are asleep, invisible. Deep, deep in the silence. No speech, no muteness. Not a breath of wind. Land without fields and larks. No point in asking if the sky is still there. But could someone ask if it's still blue? That would truly be the No One, the one to ask the old question! And poetry would lift her eyes—the sky would turn blue, and slowly the pages of the Book would fill themselves.

III.II.III Obligatory Silence in Psychiatry

As in all professions and pursuits, a great deal of talking goes on in the world of psychiatry, so coffee rooms and consultation rooms are rarely quiet. Patients, too, are allowed to talk, and sometimes they're even listened to. Yet in psychiatry, there is a ban on talking about madness. The psychiatrist may speak as a professional, as a therapist, and even as a human being. The patient may also speak as a suffering person seeking help, as a responsible citizen, as a victim of an illness, or as a bearer of emotions. But what cannot be talked about is madness itself. This may sound strange to those who do not know psychiatric hospitals from the inside, but in the very place where you would expect madness to let itself be heard loud and clear, there is a taboo, a tacit embargo on madness.

Madness is not permitted, outbursts and outpourings of madness are "treated," and madness itself is hushed up. When madness does speak, the speech is said to have no meaning, to be a manifestation of a disorder, a symptom of an illness, meaningless signals from outside the linguistic order. The more manifestations of madness there are, the more medicines a patient will be given, and the more rigid the regime in which he will be placed. Language and the experience of madness are consigned to the realm of the silent and insane by those who deal with madness professionally.³

Fortunately, there's still hope for madness that is intent on manifesting itself. The internet, for example, is bursting with madness; anyone can have their say there. The patients' movement, with its many initiatives aimed at bringing the mad experience out in the open, is more functional and stable. And thanks to the various patients' movements, madness is now making its way to fields such as the union of experience experts as well as to rehab workers, to people who offer hospitality to psychiatric patients in places like art studios and galleries, and so forth. In addition, despite the taboo on madness in psychiatry as such, there is always freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press, so that madness can ultimately make its way into the land of spoken and written letters, either in abridged or unabridged form. In all these well-intended initiatives, however, there remains the danger of "neo-repressive tolerance." Under the pretext of "listening to the patient," the "listening model" may very well impose a rigid narrative structure on the patient, albeit implicitly and unintentionally. Stories of misery and suffering caused by madness are much more eagerly consumed than the kinds of narratives found in this book. Another danger is that madness will acquire a certain voice, a permanent spokesperson, and a recognizable location. The scream of madness is quite capable of screaming itself to death. That is to say: insofar as the heart of madness revolves

around \emptyset and Ω , every "voice," "scream," or "expression" will ultimately be an encroachment on mad silence.

III.III Midnight Express: The End of Wim Maljaars

This text is dedicated to the memory of Wim Maljaars, who met his untimely end in the isolation cell of a psychiatric hospital on Tuesday, September 2, 2008, during his "journey past the end of night."

He avoided daylight. That had been easier recently because the days had become shorter and the nights longer. He could hit the streets before 6:00 p.m. to get his grocery shopping done. That would give him plenty of time at home to digest his food and make his nighttime preparations. In these nocturnal experiments and meditations, he drank himself, slowly but surely, to deeper and deeper levels. He sank beneath the earth and grew closer to her, closer to the indivisible core of the black fire.

A few months earlier, when he heard they were going to perform at the end of the year, he had not paid much attention. He immediately bought two tickets, of course, one for her as well, although she had always been suspicious of his devotion to *Einstürzende Neubauten*. She traced her aversion to this German music group to what she called his "chronic illness" and to what his case manager, Kees, described as "psychotic vulnerability." Guilt by association—that was what this eighties music was all about. He really could lose himself in it completely, which had happened once before, but that wasn't what made the band dangerous as such. The problem had begun only when they had turned it into a problem. And now they had done it again.

According to her, things changed once he got his hands on the tickets. He stared at the rock band's logo a little too long for her taste, and she was afraid he would want to go back to that place she had managed to keep him from for so long: the black pool of loneliness. He himself had a different take. He just wanted to be *there*, in the center, in an indivisible core; the place where the go master finds his concentration and where Blixa Bargeld, the singer from *Einstürzende Neubauten*, composes his music. He had a vague intuition about what the place contained and how to get there. He knew that, basically, there was nothing wrong with the place. If only he could convince them of the fact. But in order to reach it, you had to be fully awake and clear-headed. Kees had forbidden him from getting rid of his pills, but he did it anyway. He had to. He was well-prepared; he had made a chart comparing his scores at the go club with the quantity of pills he was

taking. He could prove that the more antimystical drugs he took, the lower his scores went. Since the antimystical drugs also reduced his enjoyment of the music of *Einstürzende Neubauten* and his responsiveness to it, he had to get the pills out of his system—certainly now that the day of the band's live performance was approaching.

In the end it was about much more than enjoying music. He could live without pleasure but not without life, and life was what the antimystical drugs were taking from him. So he had to persevere, especially when it became evident that his girlfriend was antilife. She had enlisted the help of Kees to keep him away from Einstürzende Neubauten. There had been indignant reactions on the fan website. Stories were making the rounds that this had happened more frequently. When you finally figured out where the forbidden fruit was hanging, they all got together to try to keep it from you. So he had to go through with stopping, otherwise he might just as well be dead. In recent weeks, it turned out he was right. All sorts of things had become clear to him concerning the direction he had to take and the cracks in reality. He had read about the secret of the bonsai. The bonsai bloomed whenever you withheld radiation from the light source. It made perfect sense that this was a specialty of Japan, the land of the rising sun and of the go masters. Japan was also the home of sushi, the fruit of the sea bonsai. That had been the breaking point for her: she refused to understand that bonsai cultivation, the playing of go, and Einstürzende Neubauten were three names for the same indivisible core power, which the American astral NSA agents were threatening to destroy.

After that everything started happening very quickly. It began with the rediscovery of older music. Iron Maiden played along in the background. So did the Rolling Stones. But it was Jim Morrison and Radiohead that finally pushed him through. He didn't need his glasses anymore to see clearly; everything looked like polished glass. His vision was no longer distracted by fake fallout. He became a black hawk and a white snake in one. He began wearing his black woolen sweater again, the one with the holes. The black woolen threads enveloped and embraced him and spun through his thoughts, left, right, and straight through. He had brought home several sacks of black wool and had started a game of meta-go. It was as if he had awakened from a long slumber. He came to realize that man is really a nocturnal animal. You could only awaken in black. Ordinary daylight was an invention of the electricity-devouring machines, producers of heat lightning and blitzkrieg. In his night-time guise, the kinship with the snake and reptilian life became clear.

On the Discovery Channel he saw a program about antisolar life forms. Japanese researchers had discovered a new form of life in the deepest

darkness of the ocean. The energy used by life deep down did not come from the sun but from the depths of the earth. Terrabacteria derived their energy from the warmth of volcanic lava that solidified into rock beneath the ocean floor. These terrabacteria formed the basis of an antisolar food chain, a biotope that was independent of the sun, separated from the rest of earthly life. There, deep below the water's surface, was an antiworld without light but full of energy! With this immaculate energy, the bloodshed could be erased and the Japanese flag could finally be purified.

After that, he kept switching over to Japanese. He listened to Japanese radio programs via the internet, where he heard snatches of Einstürzende Neubauten being played with striking frequency. In order to foster his new life, he thought it would be best to make use of his own go skills in a modern way. Instead of letting himself be radio-passively sedated with Seroquel, like an American consumer, he decided to pursue a radio-active course. He drew on older registers and switched to different channels, such as that of the mikado pick-up-stick game. By playing mikado on the left and go on the right, he generated an opening in the contaminated field through which he could enter the indivisible core of the red heart and establish contact there. He had managed to purchase a new Sony shortwave radio just before closing time, and his Siemens headphones connected to it perfectly. He tuned in to Japanese frequencies and went searching for related antimatter. You could submerge yourself in much deeper frequencies when you switched from the warm-blooded mammal brain to the cold-blooded reptilian brain. Then you would reach the oily layers that had been extending themselves beneath the continents for millions of years. In the depth of the black Sony Sea—which was now called "blaso-nisi" in Japanese—he tried to detect diamond crystals that were immune to radiation and Geiger counters.

He drew the shapes of these crystals and noted their frequencies, including the site and time (Japanese time zone) at which they had been found. Tomorrow night, armed with this document, he would enter Nighttown with a radiant glow. At the last moment he had been able to exchange his ticket for Paradiso in Amsterdam for a ticket for Einstürzende Neubauten in Nighttown, in Rotterdam. He was too far gone, too deep, to go to something called "Paradiso." He knew his girlfriend from Paradiso. She had always been such a bird-of-paradise, with those beaded necklaces and flowery dresses. For a long time, he had believed in the light of her eyes. But he had received too many signals telling him it was just a façade. Later on it turned out she had been a colorful enticement, a witch whose whole purpose was to keep him from his main task. That's why he had switched to bonsai and dark-brown reptilian shades, and tomorrow he would travel to the "night city" of Rotterdam.

He always slept well before a breakthrough, deep and long. He had gotten everything ready the night before. He had laid out appropriate clothing and packed his backpack. At a little after six, he caught the train. The concert didn't start until after ten, but that gave him enough time to check out the situation in the night city and make some contacts beforehand. For the first time in a long time, he was leaving his trusty neighborhood, and for the first time in an even longer time, he was venturing outside the city. The route to the station and the train to the night city were long and full of mishaps. But he had a clear destination in mind, a specific place, something he could cling to should he lose himself along the way. In the train, he traveled incognito, disguised as a warm-blooded human. You had to do that in the American astral zone, where the data had to match or you'd get caught. He had to travel with a public transport pass that had his photo on it, and the photo had to match the image in the mirror. His name, printed in ordinary letters, had to remain stable and not shift into a Japanese hologram.

The earth hid its life deep in the ocean—antisolar life that was bound by the terrestrial fire. Any signs of life that reached the surface were sporadic at best. On the outside, the earth was exposed to the sun and its rays: flesh on the earth's crust transformed by the sun; the green, irradiated biomass metastasizing into the air. Only when you descended more deeply into the earth did you learn the pure, unirradiated secrets: traveling down for miles into the mine shafts, caves, layers of stone, magma, lava, and fire, to the antisolar biotopes. He had gone even deeper and worked below the matrix of antisolar life. By way of the blaso-nisi he had tracked down the metal fields that controlled the deeper layers. That was the domain of the earth's internal antinuclear forces, such as antilightning, antimoon, and antirain. It was said that Blixa Bargeld was involved, with his metal music. And the Antilleans (as in antiluna) also had something to do with it; they had been transported to the night city from the darkness of the African interior. The venue for tonight was settled: the night city and the radioactive game would be called meta-go.

To unburden himself, he had dementalized his secrets and stored them on the outside of his backpack. In the outermost compartment, he kept his external bogus goods: his public transport pass, his passport, and enough money to roll through the night. In order to prevent metallurgic seepage, he had packed his loose change in pieces of toilet paper. He had also tucked a street map of the night city into the outermost compartment. As you went further inside his backpack, the interior of the night city became clear. He had put his travel-go game in the large inner compartment. By merely adding the black and white bonsai beans, he turned it into a metago game. That was consistent with *Einstürzende Neubauten*'s steel strings,

and could be made battle-ready on the meta-go level. That ought to show those Americans what for! He was now a samurai among the go-players. Their logo was go, but their Sony metal band was meta-go. He had put the bonsai-beans and the mikado game in the deepest secret compartment of his backpack because they were not being used according to their normal function. That's also where he put his document with the crystal frequencies, a Dutch-Japanese/Japanese-Dutch pocket dictionary, and of course his map, which he would need to "get in."

After traveling through a dark and desolate landscape, he finally arrived at his destination: Rotterdam Central Station, Nighttown's main train station! After getting out of the train, he gave his ticket to the first uniformed person he saw and asked him what time the show was going to start. The somewhat bad-tempered railroad employee said, "How should I know? I'm not from the tourist office. You're in the wrong place." So he had to go further, deeper into the night city. He didn't know exactly where the event was going to take place, but he did have vague memories from earlier times walking around this city. Exit on the south side, go straight ahead a short distance, and there you are, in the downtown area. He walked to the center of town on automatic pilot. Rotterdam had been transformed—or to put it more accurately, transubstantiated—into a night city by the arrival of Einstürzende Neubauten. You could see it from the people walking down the side of the street. They seemed *mesmerized*. Like moths drawn to a lamp, they were being sucked in by the black hole in the heart of the city. He saw how their eyes were focused on a shared indivisible core and a common goal. A smile appeared that was frozen on the outside but warmed him from within. Now he knew where he was going and how to get there. It was as if he had been stuck in bubble gum or some kind of viscosity: sticky bits from the past, from what was, is, and should be. As if the elastic had been stretched further and further and then snapped, he was now being catapulted toward antisolarity: into the earth with its core of black fire. It was the tentacles of the sun that had held him in their web of light. Then finally the thread had snapped and he could switch to threads of black.

But not everyone had the same goal in mind. There was still a large "remnant" walking around, daylight people feeling their way with downcast eyes. They were uninformed: they didn't know that the black time had dawned, and more and more of them were filling the street the closer he got to the center. Finally he understood the "double mikado version" of metago. Black went first, as usually happens in go. Black had laid down a "night blanket," under which Blixa had covered the new buildings of the night city. He grinned. It was just the kind of move that a true meta-go-master

would make: to bring Blixa and the Berliners to the night city now that he was underground. With the help of the Antillean shock troops, the antisolar black could finally triumph. Look, there they go, not pressed up against the buildings but right down the middle of the street, down the green median strip. They acted as if they couldn't care less about the biogreen, as if they were immune to green altogether. With a knowing wink, he pulled a couple of bonsai beans out of his backpack and threw them at them playfully. Oops, that wasn't such a good idea. Yes, they were right, you shouldn't poke fun at them. Just look what's on those signs. Round signs, white with a red edge, blue, arrows, triangles, gleaming with reflected light. The traffic signs were stuck to the night blanket like a smart-ass white American metago move. But the game was not over! The blacks would strike back! To that end he took on the scanner function, surveying street, air, people, things, and birds, and broke everything down into black-and-white pixels. He then prismed all the colors to produce crystal patterns, which he algorithmed together with the help of his vast arsenal of meta-go strategies. The breeding ground and energy provider for this was Einstürzende Neubauten, and he hummed along:

Will will will kein Bestandteil sein
Will will will will kein Bestandteil sein
Will will kein Bestandteil sein
kein Bestandteil sein
nicht von dem was war—es war nichts
nicht von dem was demnächst kommt
nicht von nichts davon
nicht von dem was ist, allemal nicht, nicht davon

He synchronized the whole thing in 4D and set off: Go! His meta-go move had an effect. The number of go-eyes grew; walkways and flight routes were streamlined, light was further muted, shrill voices were diffused into a buzz. Yes, he was busy, all right, but he had to go further, deeper into meta-go. Just like the Antilleans, he crossed over onto a central path, right in the middle of the boulevard, between the collapsing buildings. Was this really meta-go? Were the buildings "here" going to drop down to the crust? Didn't that happen deep inside the earth itself? Didn't he have to enter the metro with two eyes in meta-go? Of course! He had to go underground. Blixa had been there since time immemorial. He walked to the big M and went down the stairs, like an artist in showbiz. He had come home to the earth's interior along with other like-minded people. They saw him; he was recognized. He went down to a deeper level; he was closer to his goal. The transition was tangible, in temperature and in pixels, in black-and-white

proportions, in movement, and in facial expressions. Everything was mutually attuned. They were one big family. They were antisolar creatures in a biotope without radiation, without light. The transition was musical. The concert had begun within the earth, and it was a world concert. They all played together. He heard their voices sounding through the corridors.

Kollaps / bis zum Kollaps nicht viel Zeit Kollaps / bis zum Kollaps nicht viel Zeit Kollaps / unsre Irrfahrten zerstören die Städte und nächtliches Wandern macht sie dem Erdboden gleich Kollaps / alles was ich kriegen kann Alles in mich rein Kollaps / süßer Kollaps bitter und bitter und bitter bis zum Kollaps Horden / die neue Goldene Horde diesmal ohne Dschingis Khan wir zerstören die Städte nächtliches Wandern macht uns blind Kollaps / sei mein Kollaps Kollaps / nicht viel Zeit / nicht viel Zeit schlag schneller schrei lauter leb schneller / bis zum Kollaps nicht viel Zeit wir sind die neuen Goldenen Horden diesmal ohne Dschingis Khan bis zum Kollaps nicht viel Zeit verbrenn mich reiß mich nieder bitter / bitter / bitter / bitter⁵

He had crept under the green biocrust, protected from the fallout, and had become part of the antiwhole. Now he could finally shed his human disguise and emerge as a nocturnal creature. He took off his daytime coat and shoved it into a garbage can so that he was no longer visible. The terminator entered his mind, and the black woolen sweater rustled against his body. He walked up to the metro gates, where the buttons were. The music was agreeable. There was a slot in the gates. Of course! The uniformed man at the station was part of the picture! So this was where he had to show his ticket. He shoved his ticket into the gate, but nothing happened. He pushed against the gate. It didn't open, and the round red light stayed on. A few

seconds later, it began to blink. Red alarm. So he had not gone unnoticed. Two Antilleans on the left passed through the gate effortlessly, one after the other. Why hadn't his gate opened? The music was deeply disagreeable. White had begun asserting itself. He heard American accents, and in an effort to raise a line of defense, he responded in Japanese. White kept bringing in heavier artillery: in a little shop on the right he saw two men in light-colored garments staring at him. White deployed a bunch of Michelin men, and in the distance he heard seagulls crying "Enola Gay." White was trying the big trick again! He had seen this before: he was stuck in a vicious circle in a point of no return.

White pinworms began appearing in the metro corridors around him: long, drawn-out, piercing shrieks, hitching rides on colorful beads, big letters on commercial bags, a tissue of glances and facial expressions. He was threaded into white's eyes. The worldwide web revolved around him. Frantically he mobilized whatever was still untouched and unirradiated, his earth-deep web. He pulled his little bag of bonsai beans out of his backpack and scattered them around, mumbling Japan's Breaking News under his breath: Tokyo Radio Active Night Samurai Two Red Echoes Blaso Nisi Nasi Nazi Chemical Hiroshima. The red circle was almost impossible to restrain. He was expanding; a red drop ran across a glowing metal gate. He kept stumbling on circles no matter how he directed this thought. He threw the beans as far as he could, but his projectiles always came back like boomerangs. Concentrating on indivisible black provoked attacks of white foam. Japan sang through the Rotterdam metro. He shuddered: the nuclear light had contaminated the Japanese flag forever, and Japan had turned into a labyrinth of meta-go lines. If you played go now, you played in blood. The blood was irradiated and should never, ever be allowed to touch the ground. Blut im Luft. It was aerial warfare. With Blixa in his throat, he launched waves of heavy air through the metro corridors, but they were no longer able to stop the red rain from falling. Underground, the red settled deep into the earth. The blood sank when singing became impossible. Red and white lines took notice and went into attack mode. Vignettes, nearby eyes, people from the crowd. His lungs let loose, his voice reverberated, his heart flipped in his chest, his limbs turned to dust, red trickled across the plate, the seagulls screeched nothing but "Yenyen-yen." The air was as thick as molasses; arms and metal tubes crept around him and tightened. Click-clack went the lock. There was nowhere for him to go. He was carried away. The next underground station would be the isolation cell, where his movements would be stopped for good by an attack at the core.

sag nein nein nein nein negativ nein das Leben ist nicht bunt geballt gehen wir zugrunde sag nein nein nein nein negativ nein Doppelnein Drei mal nein aher nein sag nein negativ nein Asvl / Exil hier nich und da nich frag mich nich ich weiss es auch nich aher nein nein nein nein aher nein Hauptsache negativ nein negativ nein mit einem Schrei geht es zugrunde mit meinem Schrei sag nein sag negativ nein⁶

III.III.I Postscript

I could expand the above text and work out the rest of the main character's movements. What happens after the red bomb meditation? What happens to the main character after he's locked up in an isolation cell? What happens to the tapped energies of Japanese go masters and German Blixa-music when the "black medium" finds himself closed in by six solid walls? Anything could happen, of course, and everything is possible. But despite all the possibilities, I would like to reflect for a moment on the fact that the source of inspiration for the above fragment, the actual late human being Wim Maljaars, perished, ceased to exist, was broken and blacked out in the isolation cell of a psychiatric hospital in Amsterdam.

Wim Maljaars was one of us. Whether you, the reader, are also "one of us" is for you to decide. "We," in any case, are the *Einstürzende Neubauten*

groupies, the abandoned children of the queen and king, the bonsai cultivators, the psychotics, the lunatics and maniacs, the dark thinkers, the eternal punks, the Adorno fans, the graveside rowdies, the game freaks, the life mutes, the hate haters, the minimal nihilists, the nondancing nerds, the bats, the solists, the solipsists, the solitaries and antisolarists, the white rats and the black angels. Ultimately, "we" includes every specimen of animal species to which the duo of God and Satan gave the ability to lose their minds.

Perhaps Wim Maljaars wanted something incomprehensible, absurd, and inhuman: to live the antisolar life, to become a meta-go master, to conquer thunder and lightning. Whatever it was, he certainly didn't want to die. If you read his website (http://wimmaljaars.nl/) you learn that he wanted to live, preferably in his own way. He had already been a frequent visitor to the isolation cell but not on account of suicidal tendencies or intense sadness. On his website, he actually voices concern that people with psychosis might be euthanized away.

Yet he died in the isolation cell. No one knows exactly how, for no one was present at the time, and afterward, attempts were made to sweep it under the carpet. On September 22, 2008, the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool* had this to report: "For the first week they shot him full of sedatives, says Zellerer [friend of Wim Maljaars], who visited him a few times. During the second week the decision was made to return him to his earlier medical regime. When that didn't work, Maljaars was put in an isolation cell. According to Zellerer, this was a room with plenty of observations windows so the staff could keep an eye on him. Zellerer and the family saw no need for such isolation, especially because he was not allowed to receive visitors there. Visitors always made him feel better. He struck them as somewhat muddled, but they didn't think he would harm himself or anyone else. Later they heard from the psychiatrist and one of the nurses that the last contact with him had been just before midnight. At eight o'clock in the morning Maljaars was found dead. He had choked on a piece of bread."

The Newsletter of the Foundation of Patient Liaison Officers of September 25, 2008, had this to report: "According to a forensic expert, the man had died of natural causes. The family insisted on an autopsy, however. This revealed that the victim had choked on a peanut butter sandwich. The hospital waited ten days to report the incident to the Health Care Inspector."

After his death, a connection was widely made in the media between Wim's decision to discontinue his antipsychotic drugs and his death in the isolation cell. Even the otherwise brilliant documentary about Wim Maljaars, made by Kees Hin in 2011, bears the misleading title *Wim Maljaars's Decision*, as if the heart of the "matter" was that Wim Maljaars had stopped

taking his antipsychotics. But Wim Maljaars did not die because he had stopped taking antipsychotic drugs. On the contrary, he died just after he had been heavily sedated—against his will. As so often happens, it was not the psychosis that caused Wim Maljaars so much misery but the violent chemical "treatment" under confinement. Considered on its own merits, his death had three causes, or, more discreetly worded, it took place under three "circumstances": (1) confinement to a lonely cell, (2) heavy sedation by antipsychotic drugs, and (3) the presence of personnel who were uninterested at best and malicious at worst.

The fact that Wim Maljaars's death occurred after my own isolation cell adventure was a blessing in disguise. In 2007, even in my deepest moments of confusion, despair, and delusion, I basically had a feeling of trust and safety, even in the isolation cell. When push comes to crazy shove, I *knew* that my cell was in the Netherlands, that human rights in the Netherlands were protected, and that although there was miscommunication at every turn, the main desire was to let me live. These ideas turned out to be delusional: apparently, you could not be certain of your life in an isolation cell.

Wim Maljaars will never be able to finish his game, but black still wins in meta-go. Black goes first, and black wins. Light expands from a mere point, but the point itself is black and always will be. Light shines, burns, and destroys, but the ash, turned in on itself, remains black. Light stretches out on every side, creating space and time, but waiting past the horizon of memory and perspective is darkness. Light is the globe, an explosion of nuclei, while black is the void, the peace and quiet of indivisible motionlessness. Light is radiation, radioactive, radiant clear shining, but light is always attuned to black, geared to black, swelling in blackness. Black resists light.

Lass(t) unsre Seelen vom Schimmel befreien
... vom Pilzbewuchs befreien
Im Aas sielen
im Aas
sielen
Lass(t) uns're Schädel
vom Pilzbewuchs befreien
... und wenn die Stadt brennt ...
Ja ... es sind unsre Fackeln ...
Lass(t) unsre Seelen abfackeln
Lass(t) unsre Seelen abfackeln
Lass(t) unsre Seelen
Abfackeln⁷

IV Crystal Fever



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Introduction: Complete Dis-Integration

In part I, the everyday world we live in was considered, obsessed upon, called into question, and dismantled (see section 1.2.2) by means of philosophical reflection and mad hyperreflection. In part II, I described this process of dismantling as the path of mystical madness. In part III, I described this path—and its goal—as an ecstatic zone, and I did so with the help of four philosophical concepts: the One, being, infinity, and nothingness.

In this fourth part I will see what the ecstatic zone looks like when madmystical oneness, or wholeness, is broken or "unwholed." From the perspective of the break (also see section 1.3.2), I will examine the philosophy of madness in terms of (1) the paradox (chapter 13), (2) the sacred (chapter 14), and (3) the Plan (chapter 15). The paradox is the impossibility of permanently undoing the break. The sacred is a practical way of drawing distinctions within the oneness in order to break it down. The Plan is a crystallization of the break and the broken oneness.

In this fourth part, I emphasize the multiplicity and disunity in madness—instead of the oneness and wholeness of parts II and III. If we think of the oneness as Crystal, and the multiplicity as the results of the search for crystal, then madness can be seen as crystal fever. Crystal fever develops when someone is in the grip of the memory of Crystal.

In a certain sense, this fourth part is both a logical conclusion and a chronological continuation of the previous parts. Speaking in terms of the mythical high-flyer Icarus—who plunged into the ocean after he had set his course for the sun—this part can be expressed as follows: Those who escape from the everyday world (part I) and then ascend into the *Wahn-stimmung* of mysticism and enlightenment (parts II and III) will eventually crash in one of the many forms of fragmentation: philosophical perplexity, solipsism, or chronic psychosis (chapter 13); religiosity and religious mania (chapter 14); or system construction, paranoia, and delusions of reference (chapters 15 and 16). The initial ecstasy convulses, the mad flight ends in

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paradoxes, and the mystical flow solidifies into divisions of sanctuaries and Plans.

But just as it's difficult to tell the difference between the goal (part III) and the path (part II) in mysticism and madness, so is it difficult to distinguish between the fragmentations and paradoxes of this fourth part from the ecstasies and raptures of the previous parts. In that sense, the paradox, the sacred, and the Plan are not so much *consequences* of the previous ecstatic experiences as they are different *ways of describing* the same madness. After all, we're still talking about philosophical reflection and mad hyperreflection (part I), mystical paths (part II), and philosophical ecstasies (part III), but now we're looking at them from the perspective of multiplicity and fragmentation.

In this part, mystical astonishment ends in apparent platitudes, philosophical analyses in labyrinthine systems, and mad insights and revelations in fragmented particles and incomprehensible symbolisms. In short, following the euphoria of the previous parts, here madness, mysticism, and philosophy tend to run aground. They get entangled in themselves, peter out, or simply revert to the ordinary "delusion of the day."

In the previous two parts, there was a clear, almost *monomaniacal* impulse and a *manic* energy evident in the content *and* the form of my text. In this part, the philosophy of madness becomes scattered and fragmented; the whole becomes *schizophrenic*. There is no longer one single point—one thread or line running through it all. The content disperses and gets bogged down, and the form modifies itself accordingly. Here the mad-mystical path is a sojourn through labyrinthine Möbius loops and curves and dead-end streets (see the final paragraph of Intermezzo II.II.II)—and the sojourn itself constitutes not only the theme but also the shape of the entire part.

This is most obvious in chapter 13. There, where the theme is the paradox, I describe several ways in which philosophers, madmen, and mystics have tried to deal with the paradox, to accept it, or to liberate themselves from it. Sometimes the philosophers assist the madmen in this effort (see section 13.4 on Louis Sass, Daniel Schreber, myself, and Ludwig Wittgenstein), and sometimes the madmen come to the aid of the philosopher (see section 13.5 on the Lacanian cell experiment).

In chapter 14, the fault line is between the sacred and the worldly, or profane. Mystical oneness and mad rapture often manifest themselves in broken forms of ecstasy and bliss, which are regarded as the sacred as opposed to the nonsacred. In that chapter I will consider the ways in which the pair of concepts "sacred and profane" is dealt with in madness as the

border between them shifts. I will also discuss the therapies that make use of these notions.

In chapter 15 I discuss the petrified constructions and rigid systems of madness. I summarize these under the heading of "the Plan." In this chapter, the focus is no longer on something ineffable but on what is described in traditional terminology as "delusions of reference," "paranoia," and "megalomania." In chapter 16, I show how the (mad) Plan is implemented in situations of actual madness by madmen themselves, whom I here call "psychoplanatics."

The lion's share of what is usually described as psychosis is included in the typology of chapters 15 and 16. Accordingly, actual madness could then be described as a pathological shift from normal plans to mad Plans rather than as a consequence or expression of the mad mysticism dealt with in parts II and III. The philosophical theory or mystical detour of the previous parts would therefore be unnecessary. Many healthcare professionals, as well as some madmen themselves, are quite satisfied with this view of madness. They are of the opinion that going mad is merely a matter of shifting from everyday, correct, sensible plans to an incorrect, senseless Plan, the Plan of madness. It should be clear from every word in this book that I do not agree with this view.

Finally, I devote a few pages at the end of the book to summarizing everything in a compact and succinct way. There I return once more to where it all began—the overture—and to where it ends—the finale: the rounding of the circle, the writing of the book that encloses itself, and the making of Crystal from crystal.

13 Paradoxes: Philosophy and Madness Tied Up in Knots

13.1 Introduction: Puzzling Paradoxes

Sometimes we can literally see paradoxes right before our eyes. In his famous lithograph *Waterfall*, M. C. Escher depicts water that is flowing both down and up. What we first see is a waterfall in which the water—by definition—is falling down. The water then flows slowly through a stone aqueduct. But as we follow this downward flowing stream, we see that after a few turns of the aqueduct, the water has made its way back to the top of the waterfall, ready to cascade down again. As we followed the water, we thought it was flowing downward. But now that we've arrived at the top of the waterfall we're forced to "see" that, in retrospect, the water is actually flowing upward. The aqueduct through which the water flows goes both up and down in Escher's lithograph. We are shown a paradoxical space that contains a spatial contradiction or even a spatial impossibility. We cannot see the two possibilities within one and the same reality. We're flung back and forth between two irreconcilable extremes, without any prospect of a possible reconciliation.

There are several ways to react to this graphic paradox. You can keep staring at the lithograph, alternating between seeing the water as flowing up and flowing down, without arriving at a definite perspective or conclusive view. You can disengage your glance from Escher's space and look at the lithograph as a flat surface with ink on it. You can also reject Escher's space altogether and say that what the lithograph depicts is impossible and has nothing to do with real space. All these are escape routes from Escher's own paradoxical space. Finally, Escher's space can also be regarded as a physical representation of a universal paradox that is not only spatial in its implications. Think of Heraclitus's well-known pronouncement, "The road up and the road down are one and the same." In that sense, Escher's lithograph is

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an image or representation of an essential aspect of reality, a fundamentally insoluble paradox.

Paradoxes are not restricted to representations of space; they can also be found in language. One famous example is the statement "All Cretans are liars," said by someone who himself is from Crete. The paradox lies in the fact that the statement can be neither true nor false. If it were true, it would refer to all Cretans and therefore to the person making the statement. If this person is a liar, however, that would make the statement false, and it would no longer be true that "all Cretans are liars." But then it would also no longer be true that the person making the statement would lie. And so on. Just as in Escher's lithograph, there are two possibilities in the case of the lying Cretan that cannot exist at the same time in one and the same world.

As in Escher's lithograph, there are several ways to respond to the Cretan paradox. You can stay imprisoned in the linguistic paradox and keep deducing truth from falsehood and falsehood from truth—like a snake that eats its own tail without ever being satisfied. You can understand the statement as a grammatical but meaningless sentence, precisely because of its paradoxical character. You can also try to change the interpretation of the sentence and impose a rule that any utterance cannot relate to itself and to the speaker at the same time. That, in fact, would make paradox a problem of linguistic and interpretive theory—which would not solve it either. Finally, the paradox can be regarded as an example of paradoxes of language and reality in general. It would then stand for the remarkable fact that all language taken together is an expression of a "subjective inner world" that, at the same time, refers to an "objective outer world." The Cretan statement refers to an outer world comprising "all Cretans," but in doing so it also includes the inner world of the Cretan making the statement. The Cretan paradox reveals the irreconcilability of the inner and outer worlds, of the subjective and the objective domains.

The Cretan paradox is a paradox of self-reference; that is to say, that which is being asserted relates to—or "refers back to"—the person making the assertion. In fact, all statements in which the word "I" appears contain this paradox, because "I" is always an expression of an inner world (an utterance of a speaker) as well as a description of an outer world (in reference to a condition in the world in which the speaker is involved). The simplest form of the Cretan paradox is "I am lying." In even more basic statements like "I am" and "I think," the self-referential paradox is also present but latent. In both statements, the speaker is expressing his own frame of mind, experience, or existence. As an expression of one's own condition or inner world, these statements cannot be doubted. But they can also

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be understood as a description of a condition in an objective outer world. Objective descriptions can be doubted and possibly even rejected as untrue. The paradox now is that these statements cannot be an expression of a condition and, at the same time, a description of the same condition. This is also apparent in paradoxical expressions such as "I may exist" or "I don't know for sure whether I am thinking or not."

In addition to space and language, many paradoxes also have to do with time, such as the well-known paradox by the Greek philosopher Zeno (fifth century BC). In Zeno's story, the fleet-footed Achilles runs a race against a tortoise who is given a head start as the race begins. In Zeno's paradox, we know that Achilles can easily win the race, but we also know that it is impossible for Achilles to win because every time he reaches the point where the tortoise just was, the tortoise will already have gone a little farther. The underlying paradox is that even though time can be divided into an infinite number of parts, that infinite number of parts "fits" into a finite amount of time that can pass. When we try to break through the paradox or solve it with the mathematical notion of limit, we have to assume that people are capable of understanding an infinite process as completed within the finite (see Hasper 2003).

Paradoxes are like puzzles. At first they seem like simple thought experiments or anecdotal stories. But when you think about them more deeply, you're soon astonished by the abstract, irreconcilable notions that underlie them: inner world and outer world, self-description and self-expression, finity and infinity. In this chapter, the focus is on the astonishment and perplexity that paradoxes cause. Normally our astonishment is short-lived, and we quickly move onto the order of the day. The idea running through this chapter is that the madman is in the grip of such astonishment and cannot find a way out: he is totally disoriented.

For madmen, getting caught up in a web of puzzling paradoxes doesn't just happen out of the blue, however—as if something had snapped in their heads. Often there's a comprehensible logic that can be reconstructed: a plausible motivation that leads from astonishment and confusion—and a dogged determination to solve the confusion—to bewilderment and madness. Both astonishment and paradox have their origin in daily life. It may have to do with problems of communication, interpersonal relationships, good and evil, and so forth. This astonishment at how reality is paradoxically knotted together can lead to perplexity, confusion, and ultimately to the creation of complex, protracted systems, whose purpose is to unravel and sort out the tangle of intricate lines, threads, surfaces, and tossed balls and make them consistent and comprehensible.

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Paradox has already come up in earlier parts of this book. It lay at the heart of the discussion of time in chapter 3, it played a role in the description of mysticism, and it was implied in the *coincidentia oppositorum* of chapter 11. In part III we saw that the various mystical forms were not ends in themselves, but that the madman "oscillated" between the \varnothing -delusion and the \simeq -delusion, between the unity of the One and the multiplicity of the esse-delusion. In the present chapter, paradox, as the contrast between two irreconcilable concepts or experiences, will serve as the guiding motif.

In sections 13.2 and 13.3, I continue the lines of reasoning introduced in part III. In chapter 12 I showed how Schelling's nothingness and the practice of yoga, as described by Eliade, were understood as the foundation of the world. In this chapter, I show how Schelling and Eliade deal with the paradox of nothing and something and what that can mean for notions of madness. In section 13.4, I discuss the case of Schreber in considerable detail. Dimly visible in the long, drawn-out, mad accounts in Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* are moments of and references to the kind of madness I wrote about in part III. This madness is hidden behind a complex body of mad (paradoxical) text, however, which I will analyze with the help of work by Louis Sass and Wittgenstein. In the last section, 13.5, I discuss an article by Lacan concerning a strange thought experiment that I will breathe new life into by means of a few added mad elements.

This chapter has to do with the fragmentation and complexity that insoluble paradoxes give rise to. I do not offer solutions or ways to be rescued from paradox; I simply show how paradox functions and what kinds of philosophical and mad crystallizations it produces. I demonstrate this—in this chapter and in the intermezzo that follows—by discussing the work of philosophical, mad, literary, and mystical writers, in which it is not always clear what is a philosophical argument and what can be regarded as a mad association, a flight of literary fancy, or a mystical incantation.

13.2 Paradoxes in the Absolute: Schelling's The Ages of the World II

The paradox or contradiction in Schelling is that of nothingness and being. When you see "nothingness" as the ground (or the unground) of all things, as Schelling does (see section 12.3.3), you soon run into the problem of how this nothingness relates to being: "If there really is nothing, why does it seem as if there is something?" How does being thrive on the basis of nothing?

Like Sartre (see section 12.2.2), Schelling also sees an insoluble contradiction in existence and thinking. When fundamental concepts are considered

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in combination, contradictions keep appearing. In Schelling, this mainly involves such contradictions as those between finiteness and infinity, contraction and expansion, divine perfection and earthly imperfection, mind and nature, and freedom and determinism (also see 12.3.3). In Schelling, the solution—or, to be more precise, the naming of this contradiction—is the Absolute, which corresponds with what I discussed earlier as God, the *coincidentia oppositorum*, and the holy fire. This Absolute is a paradoxical oneness that consists of two parts.¹

Because of the paradoxical character of the Absolute, there is little that can be said about it that is concrete and consistent. Nevertheless, Schelling thinks (as quoted in Copleston 1963, 126) that we do possess an intuitive grasp of the Absolute: "The nature of the Absolute itself, which as ideal is also immediately real, cannot be known by explanations, but only through intuition. For it is only the composite which can be known by description. The simple must be intuited." We cannot come to grips conceptually with the paradoxical Absolute, and neither philosophy nor science is capable of saying anything about it. It is only in mythology, poetry, and religion (and madness?) that something of the paradoxicality comes to light and can be communicated. In his study of nineteenth-century German philosophy, Pinkard says (2002, 322), "Schelling thought that ... any apprehension of God must be intuitive, that is, metaphorical and indirect, which, in turn, requires a way of telling a kind of 'myth' (similar to the myths Plato relates in his dialogues) which serves to refocus our ways of 'seeing' things in general."

The paradox, or insurmountable disunity, of existence was not "discovered" by Schelling or any of his philosophical colleagues, let alone by science, but in many ways, it had been indicated throughout history (Schelling 2006, 432): "The existence of such an eternal antithesis [we read "antithesis" here as "paradox" could not elude the first deeply feeling and deeply sensitive people. ... Therefore, the oldest teachings straightforwardly represented the first nature as a being with two conflicting modes of activity." For Schelling, the "oldest teachings" are the philosophies, cosmologies, and mythologies that see existence as having a Janus-like character. In these older sources, Schelling discerns a truth rising to the surface that is often ignored in modern times. Later on, attempts were made to smooth out this fundamental contradiction, the paradox in the Absolute: "But in later times, ages more and more alienated from that primordial feeling, the attempt was often made to annihilate the antithesis right at its source, namely, to sublimate the antithesis right at its beginnings as one sought to trace one of the conflicting modes back to the other and then sought to

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derive it from that other." In our age, these may be the senseless attempts to reduce everything having to do with "mind," "consciousness," and even "thinking" to the pole of brains, neurology, and natural science. Back in Schelling's day the relationships were different; at that time, this remark had to do with dogmatic materialists as well as "idealists" like Hegel—and actually with anyone who tried to simplify the ineffable puzzle of the mystery.

When Schelling goes into greater detail explaining the paradox and inner dynamic of the Absolute, he also uses mythical images and metaphors (2000, 20, 21): "The antithesis eternally produces itself, in order always again to be consumed by the unity, and the antithesis is eternally consumed by the unity in order always to revive itself anew. This is the sanctuary, the hearth of the life that continually incinerates itself and again rejuvenates itself from the ash. This is the tireless fire through whose quenching, as Heraclitus claimed, the cosmos was created."

Here Schelling uses the fire metaphor, so well known to us, to convey something about the paradoxical Absolute: "Hence, this is the first pulse, the beginning of that alternating movement that goes through the entirety of visible nature, of the eternal contraction and the eternal re-expansion, of the universal ebb and flow." Elsewhere Schelling describes the contradiction as the core of the Absolute and of life and as "the fire" through which "all life must pass" (2000, 90): "All life must pass through the fire of contradiction. Contradiction is the power mechanism and what is innermost of life."

After some mythical-poetic musings, he then names contradiction as "the fountain of eternal life": "From this it follows that, as an old book says, all deeds under the sun are full of trouble and everything languishes in toil, yet does not become tired, and all forces incessantly struggle against each other. Were there only unity and everything were in peace, then, forsooth, nothing would want to stir itself and everything would sink into listlessness. Now, however, everything ardently strives to get out of unrest and to attain rest. The contradiction that we have here conceived is the fountain of eternal life." Again, there is a striking similarity (see section 12.3.3) with the movements and metaphors (fire and water) of the mad stream of consciousness, like that of Custance and Artaud. The difference lies not in the text itself, the end product of reflection (and hyperreflection), but in the context of time, place, audience, and other factors.

Those who devote themselves to the ultimate ground of existence run into problems with the concept and the experience of time. And so does Schelling. He says that time issues from the discrepancy between two forces (cf. section 12.3.3). Because one force cannot exist when the other is present, and vice versa, more moments are needed so the forces can alternate

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(Schelling 2006, 438, 445): "If the one [force] has being, then the other does not have being, yet each should and must in the same way be that which has being. With this there is nothing left over except an alternating position, where alternately now one is that which has being and the other is that which does not have being and then, in turn, it is the other of these which has being and the one which does not have being. ... Hence, now one, now the other, is that which has being. Taking turns, one prevails, while the other yields."

So the tension of the paradox within the Absolute is released in an extended time in which several mutually contradictory positions are tolerated and alternate with one another. However, this "need" of the Absolute for a "place" for the contradictory poles does nothing to eliminate the problem of how this could have started in the first place: how and "when," in what "metatime," does earthly time, as something separate, issue forth from the eternal Absolute, and how can the Absolute comprise both the eternal and the temporary? In order to describe the problem and suggest a solution, Schelling makes use of (Plotinian) movement metaphors: "There is only an unremitting wheel, a rotatory movement that never comes to a standstill and in which there is no differentiation" (2006, 445). He then correctly notes that a wheel that is always starting up anew may be starting up eternally, but this does not make each startup unique in the sense of "creation"; no real time has been derived from it. In order for that to happen, something else is needed. Here we will leave Schelling's reflections for what they are (but see the finale, where the whole thing will be resolved). Some philosophers don't know how to begin (Wittgenstein and Hegel, for instance); others don't know how to end (like Schelling). But that doesn't means we have to follow any of them completely.

In his study on Schelling, the modern philosopher Slavoj Žižek has this to say on Schelling's positioning of man and his relation to paradox (1996, 64): "man is the unity of Ground and Existence precisely in so far as it is only in him that their difference is finally explicated, posited as such: only man is aware of being split between the obscure vortex of natural drives and the spiritual bliss of logos. ... Man is the only creature which can elevate itself to this duality and sustain it: he is the highest paradox of universal singularity—the point of utmost contraction, the all-exclusive One of self-consciousness, and the embracing All—a singular being (the vanishing point of cogito) which is able to comprehend/mirror the entire universe."

Seen from this viewpoint, Schelling's stories about visions and the intuitions of prophets and seers take on a different value. These are mythological and poetic attempts to express paradox in words. When we take the

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Schellingian philosophy—as presented in Žižek or elsewhere³—and extrapolate it to madness, the image of the madman as someone who speaks gibberish is transformed into someone faced with the maddeningly difficult task of expressing the paradox of the Absolute. Here we regard perplexity, rapture, and silence as ineffable lingering in the paradox of the Absolute rather than as incoherence or inadequate affect. We see stammering words and tossed up images as poetic attempts to convey the insolubility of a paradox. We locate a preoccupation with typically mad symbols such as the mirror, the Möbius strip, and the camera within the paradox theme: the doubling of the one and the impossible division of eternity and the present. And when the mad argument crashes into permanent delusions, we understand that the madman has let himself be tempted into seizing onto one of the poles of a paradox or taking the rowboat of the myth too literally.

The paradox here—or perhaps we should say the catch-22 situation—is that the more the madman realizes that his efforts are the same as those of prophets and philosophers like Schelling, the greater the chance of "psychiatric dis-integration" by paradox-suffocating chemicals. Unlike the German student Schelling at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the madman is trained to distrust paradox, to write off his insights and intuitions as symptoms of illness, and to muffle his raptures and perplexities as quickly as possible in order to return to the mental state of shadowy slumber that is regarded as healthy and normal. Despite today's terror of normalization, degradation, and imposed uniformity, many people still manage to escape the modern gloom of the medical discourse, and their work on the story of water, fire, the snake that bites its own tail, Andromeda, and meta-anthropoi continues under stroboscopic neon lights (also see Fragment IV).

Mrs. Hahn has a succinct way of putting it (in Bock 2000, 141): "In psychosis, contradictions rub up against each other, while normal adults have lost the ability to detect the truth of a paradox. ... A psychosis is an extreme condensation of experiences. ... We must learn to accept, gauge, and cherish in the depth of our being the paradoxes that are ours." Bock quotes from and comments on statements made by another psychotic, Mr. Weber, as follows (2000, 240): "In a psychosis, 'simultaneously appearing contradictions' can occur. The decisive factor with psychotics is that 'there are two dimensions of demeanor that are mutually exclusive and paradoxical, yet they exist. You cannot grasp them by means of language. Others cannot imagine what they are like: the person is either calm or agitated.' Psychotics, however, live in a state of turbulent calm or placid agitation. Other people have trouble with this simultaneity: 'They just don't know how they're supposed to respond.' A psychotic condition can never be identified by means of a single concept; it always lies somewhere in between."

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13.3 Indian Man-Gods: Eliade on Yogis and Paradoxes

In the East, spiritual life and experiential journeys take their practitioners across a region that, in the West, is fenced off with psychiatric barbed wire. Experiences of oneness and infinity, paradoxes of nothing and everything, and confrontations with temptations and illusions are unexceptional phenomena in the East, whereas in the West they're seen as mad vehicles on the dead-end road to the lunatic asylum. Earlier I showed how the \emptyset -delusion, in particular, has many inspiring Eastern counterparts (see section 12.4.3), and here I will show how paradox is viewed in the East. Once again I will discuss a few passages from the work of Eliade (1958b) on the high point of yogic enlightenment, samadhi, and on the experiences of paradox and the paradoxes of experience.

Samadhi corresponds with nirvana, the void, enlightenment (see section 12.4.3). The purusa—soul or spirit—of the yoga practitioner is freed and isolated from the dominance of the prakrti: daily, earthly, changeable, material life. He is liberated, detached from earthly burdens.⁴ According to Eliade (1958b, 85 ff.), prakrti has to do with a state of emptiness in the sense that one is no longer conscious of objects, yet the consciousness is not absolutely empty or lacking in content. It is a state, rather, in which one no longer "experiences"—as in, one no longer has the sense of a stream of passing experiences. In place of an experience spread out over time, the consciousness is filled with a total intuition of being. Although the experience is snuffed out, that does not imply nonexistence but a different kind of existence. In this other existence, experience (of objects by a subject, I should add) makes way for revelation (in which subject and object are one): "at such a moment consciousness is saturated with a direct and total intuition of being. ... It is the enstasis of total emptiness, without sensory content or intellectual structure, an unconditioned state that is no longer 'experience' (for there is no further relation between consciousness and the world) but 'revelation.'"

The consequences of this enlightenment are, first of all, that the intellect is done with its task. In the Indian tradition—more than in many Western mystical traditions—the intellect is not seen as a burden but as the condition for gaining insight into absolute reality and attaining enlightenment. But just as in Wittgenstein, the ladder on which one has climbed upward is abandoned after samadhi is reached. Eliade (1958b, 93) says, "Intellect (buddhi), having accomplished its mission, withdraws, detaching itself from the purusa and returning into prakrti. The Self remains free, autonomous; it contemplates itself." Freed from all burdens, the yogi is no longer "alive" in a certain sense; he is liberated in and from ordinary transitory life. His

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purusa is no longer dominated by time, and he finds himself in eternity: "The yogin attains deliverance; like a dead man, he has no more relation with life; he is 'dead in life.' He is the *jivan-mukta*, the 'liberated in life.' He no longer lives in time and under the domination of time, but in an eternal present, in the nunc stans by which Boethius defined eternity."

So far, Eliade's yoga route resembles the mystical path of the Ø-delusion. But then Eliade explicitly says that the yoga route goes much further, leading to a paradoxical grand situation and to radical change (1958b, 94): "Such would be the situation of the yogin in asamprajnāta samādhi, as long as it was viewed from outside. ... In reality, if we take into account the 'experience' of the various samādhis, the yogin's situation is more paradoxical and infinitely more grandiose." The yogi goes one step further or deeper than the mystic. He or she is more active, more powerful, and, in a certain sense, more immoral or inhuman than a humble Christian mystic. The yogi is not concerned with knowledge and surrender but with appropriation and "mastery" over himself: "In this act of supreme concentration, 'knowledge' is equivalent to an 'appropriation.' ... Simple 'reflection' of the purusa is more than an act of mystical cognition, since it allows the purusa to gain 'mastery' of itself. ... We should be false to the Indian paradox if we reduced this 'taking possession' to a mere 'knowing oneself,' however profound and absolute. For 'taking possession of oneself' radically modifies the human being's ontological condition."

This extraordinary form of "reflection" or "contemplation" of the purusa results in a "cosmic earthquake." The shaking of the ground—and the unground—changes the matrix of reality: being and nonbeing (the ideality of the soul and the reality of the earthly man) coincide, experience becomes revelation, and knowledge turns into intuitive, magical power. Eliade continues (1958b, 94–95): "'Discovery of oneself,' self-reflection of the purusa, causes a 'rupture of plane' on the cosmic scale; when this occurs, the modalities of the real are abolished, being (purusa) coincides with nonbeing ('man,' properly speaking), knowledge is transformed into magical 'mastery,' in virtue of the complete absorption of the known by the knower." In this state, the yogi plumbs the depths of pure being. He fully absorbs being, controls it, and has magical power over it. "And as, now, the object of knowledge is one's pure being, stripped of every form and every attribute, it is to assimilation with pure Being that samādhi leads. The selfrevelation of the purusa is equivalent to a taking possession of being in all its completeness." Parallels can be drawn between this magical cosmic transformation and revelation, with mad delusions of grandeur and ideas of telepathy and telekinesis (see section 14.2).

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The yogi is the personification of paradox. He lives on earth and in heaven simultaneously; he coincides with the cosmos and absorbs it but, at the same time, is a trivial part of it. He stands with one leg in the esse-delusion and the other in the \varnothing -delusion. Eliade (1958b, 95) continues: "Clearly, his situation is paradoxical. For he is in life, and yet liberated; he has a body, and yet he knows himself and thereby *is purusa*; he lives in duration, yet at the same time shares in immortality; finally, he coincides with all Being, though he is but a fragment of it, etc." The Indian tradition has always been focused on this paradox and has held up the paradoxical archetype of the "man-god" as its model: "it has been toward the realization of this paradoxical situation that Indian spirituality has tended from its beginnings. What else are the 'men-gods' of whom we spoke earlier, if not the 'geometric point' where the divine and the human coincide, as do being and nonbeing, eternity and death, the whole and the part? And, more perhaps than any other civilization, India has always lived under the sign of 'men-gods.'"

In the vision of yoga Eliade presents, that which is beyond all contradiction, which comes at the end of the *via mystica psychotica*, is neither one of the four mystical delusions nor the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the Absolute, or God. It is paradox. You can become paralyzed and entangled in this pursuit, erecting lonely crystal castles (see 13.4 on Schreber), or you can frantically search for solutions in philosophically sound writings (Schelling). But according to this Eastern vision, paradox can also result in liberation and enlightenment and lead you to assume the guise of a magical man-god. You have seen this earthly life for what it is, you have investigated it and destroyed it, having found the heavenly realms too light *and* too uncompromising, too tame *and* too coercive. What else can we do but become tightrope walkers, balancing on a cord between nothing and everything, hiding beyond an "intersection," playing a game of dice of which the unenlightened see only the outcome (see Fragment IV)?

13.4 The Crystal Castle: Schreber's Complex Memoirs

I have already quoted several times from Schreber's book *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (1988), and here I am going to take a deeper look at this remarkable work and its author. Daniel Schreber (1842–1911) was a judge in Leipzig and later held a high position at the court of justice in Dresden. When he was forty-two, he had his first major nervous breakdown, for which he spent six months in a mental hospital. When he was fifty-one, he suffered a more severe crisis and was committed for a period of nine years. In 1907, after his wife became critically ill, he had a third breakdown and

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was cared for in a mental hospital until his death. He spent the greater part of the last eighteen years of his life in a condition that would be described today as chronically psychotic or schizophrenic.

Schreber's work, like Artaud's, is buried under a layer of speculative writings and analyses by psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, cultural scientists, and social scientists. Schreber has even been the subject of a few films (*Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, 2006, in *Shock Head Soul*, 2011). His work comprises a wide range of interesting themes, such as inversion (in time and in sex) and telekinesis, but in this chapter I am going to concentrate on the role of paradox in madness.

Schreber wrote his memoirs many years after his madness had set in. His aim was to write a scientific treatise on God and his relationship to humanity (to Schreber, in particular), but Schreber also wanted to demonstrate that he himself was not insane and should therefore be permitted to leave the mental hospital. It was not his intention to produce a chronological or exhaustive report on his madness, to explain it, or to compare it with a "normal state."

Unlike Custance, Schreber never issues a straightforward account of his mystical experiences or abrupt mystical-mad insights. But with the help of the terminology of part III, we can reconstruct a mystical substratum in Schreber's autobiography and posit it as a form of uni-delusion in conflict with other forms of mystical madness. Expressed in terms of uni-delusion versus esse-delusion, the paradox found in Schreber is that the One—in this case God—is thought to be far beyond (or above) him and at the same time—as pantheistic experience in the esse-delusion—seems to constitute the inner essence of Schreber himself. Schreber's God is eternal and far away, but whenever Schreber experiences his own interior as divine, paradoxes and delusions emerge (also see 13.4.4).

In his autobiography, Schreber weaves a complex story over this mystical substratum with the aim of presenting himself and his experiences in a coherent fashion, helping himself understand the world, and explaining his view of God and creation. No significant role is played by other people in this story; in fact, Schreber explicitly rules out the *existence* of *other minds* or fellow subjects. Even his closest "fellow subjects," such as his wife, are no longer described as real fellow humans but as part of a cosmic game, a world conspiracy. He writes, for example (1988, 116), "When my wife visited me in person at Sonnenstein I believed for a long time that she was only 'fleetingly-improvised' for the occasion; and that she would therefore dissolve, perhaps even on the stairs or directly after leaving the Asylum. It was said that her nerves would be 'encapsulated' again after every visit."

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From such passages it can be deduced that some schizophrenics, like Schreber, are "solipsistic," which is to say that they do not believe in the existence of other people.

In section 13.4.1, I describe the mystical substratum in Schreber's text and show how the moments of mysticism there are transformed into solipsism. Illustrative of the tension between mysticism and solipsism—between paradoxical perplexity and schizophrenic narratives—is the role the sun plays in Schreber's experiences and language (13.4.2). In section 13.4.3, I discuss Louis Sass's view of the relationship between Wittgenstein's mysticism and Schreber's text. And in section 13.4.4, I consider solipsism as paradox, demonstrating which other paradoxes play a role in madness (that of Schreber).

13.4.1 From Experience to Text, from Mysticism to Solipsism

Looking back on his life, Schreber writes about the many "miracles" he has experienced. For him, a miracle is an event that falls outside the normal and natural order of things, in which the divine world breaks through (or "into") the earthly life—and, in particular, Schreber's private life. He writes, for example (1988, 166), that "all signs of life of human beings around me, particularly their speech, are caused by miracles ..." Miracles are phenomena that, by definition, cannot be explained within the realm of natural and historical reality; they are one-off astonishing events without precedent. A miracle borders on the mystical, and in a paraphrase of this quote, I would say that "everything around Schreber tingled"—that is, everything was bathed in a strange aura of meaning and allusion, and everything smoldered with mystery and sacredness. In Schreber's descriptions of miracles, we recognize the atmosphere of mystical madness written about in earlier parts of this book.

Schreber's description of time also contains traces of mysticism. In parts I and II, I showed that in madness, calendrical time disappears, a phase of desynchronization and mystical experiences of eternity then sets in, and, finally, the construction of new delusional time takes place. In Schreber, we also see calendrical time being replaced by delusional time, but without any explicit intermediate phase of mystical timelessness (1988, 85):

It was repeatedly mentioned in visions that the work of the past fourteen thousand years had been lost—this figure presumably indicated the duration the earth had been populated with human beings—and that approximately only another two hundred years were allotted to the earth—if I am not mistaken the figure 212 was mentioned. During the latter part of my stay in Flechsig's Asylum I thought the period had already expired and therefore thought I was the last real human

being left, and that the few human shapes whom I saw apart from myself ... were only "fleeting-improvised-men" created by miracle.

Here the normal structure of time is in tatters. Time "passes" differently than it usually does. A different, "dream" time appears—a solipsistic time—in which others are absent and in which there are only "fleeting-improvised-men" wandering around. In the place of real others, there are only vague entities, without location, voice, or identity, who circulate information about this new time. Schreber implicitly refers to this phenomenon with phrases like "repeatedly mentioned," "this figure presumably indicated," "the figure 212 was mentioned," which demonstrates Schreber's typical effort to provide a detailed, well-ordered, and reliable ("if I am not mistaken") account. Because of the precise, neutral tone he uses to convey these experiences, there is little left of the original (mystical) astonishment in his authorial voice.

The following quote, however, part of which I cited earlier (in section 1.2.1.2), glimmers with miracles and astonishment. Schreber writes (1988, 185), "My most important observation is, that for years I have experienced direct genesis (creation) through divine miracles certainly on *lower animals* and I still experience it around me hourly."

This passage refers to Schreber's perplexity when he *suddenly* sees insects flying around him. This, too, he experiences as coming from "outside the natural structure of time." In his memoirs, Schreber is trying to provide an objective basis in reality for this sense of astonishment by constructing a theory around it and by subjecting it to scientific inquiry. But by making this attempt to grasp, describe, and explain the miracle, he creates an argument that might be called solipsistic:

I have thus gained the certain conviction that *spontaneous generation* (parentless generation, *generatio aequivoca*) does in fact exist; ... the coming into existence of such life is due to the purposeful manifestations of divine power of will or divine power of creation. The animals thus created belong to different species according to the time of day or season; apart from spiders, the commonest are insects of all sorts.

Here the original mystical experience implies a perplexity with regard to the paradox between "must happen" and "can happen": anything might happen, but apparently "this" one thing must happen, "exactly at *this* place, at *this* time, to *me*" (see 1.2.1.2). However, this mystical astonishment at "the being" (or "the flying") of insects mutates into an elaborate, solipsistic argument in which Schreber thinks he has explained how insects can fly around at random and do so in one single way and no other, while they could have done otherwise: and right before Schreber's eyes.

When Schreber comes to the end of his memoirs and looks back on his extraordinary experiences, he once again reflects on it all and concludes that everything "really" does revolve around him. By summarizing his experiences and comparing them to claims made by people who are mentally ill, he develops a distinct, explicit solipsistic theory (Schreber 1988, 197):

I can put this point briefly: everything that happens is in reference to me. Writing this sentence, I am fully aware that other people may be tempted to think that I am pathologically conceited; I know very well that this very tendency to relate everything to oneself, to bring everything that happens into connection with one's own person, is a common phenomenon among mental patients. But in my case the very reverse obtains. Since God entered into nerve-contact with me exclusively, I became in a way for God the only human being, or simply the human being around whom everything turns, to whom everything that happens must be related and who therefore, from his own point of view, must also relate all things to himself.

The solipsistic worldview expressed afterwards in this reflection may be well formulated, but it's difficult to draw a distinct border between mysticism pur sang and out-and-out madness.

The shift from mysticism to solipsism is a common development and to be expected. When the mystical experience becomes "snowed under" and displaced by discursive, distorting narratives, the possibility of solipsism arises. In the interpretations and self-analyses that are found in psychology, psychiatry, and many autobiographies, deep-rooted convictions pop up that we might call "secondary delusions." The unbearable, ineffable lightness of the primary esse-delusion, uni-delusion, Ω -delusion, and \emptyset -delusion then make way for the secondary but stable and discussable heaviness of the delusion of reference, paranoia, and megalomania. A protagonist is put forward who plays a central role and does so in every experience and event. The story is then constructed around this person's adventures. The original "open" mystical experiences are understood and reported as if part of an ego trip, as if everything that happens actually occurs in the "closed" private world of the one who fancies himself a mystic. Accustomed as we are to thinking in terms of persons versus their experiences, we describe the mystical experience as the pathetic fantasies of a lonely, solipsistic king (or queen) without a real kingdom. The flaw in this way of speaking is that in the mystical experience, the difference between person and experience (between subject and object) is actually obliterated, and the solipsistic confinement occurs only in the language being used.

As for the infestation of ineffable mysticism by heavily verbalized stories, Schreber's text is representative of many people suffering from chronic

psychoses. In time, the original indescribable astonishment and inexpressible insight may be forgotten, disappearing behind fossilized stories, declarations, or systems of delusion (see chapters 15 and 16). The "normal" appears to shift to madness without any clear mystical intermediary stage (cf. my remarks in the introduction to part IV).

13.4.2 Further Developments: The Sun and the Absolute

In his way, Schreber was a sun worshipper. He wasn't the first, and he won't be the last. Sun symbolism is centuries older than the road to Rome. The sun can symbolize the One of Plotinus, the cosmic goal of mystical highfliers. It can also be seen as one of the many stars, one of the many sources of light and providers of energy in the universe. You can enter mystical madness with the sun, but you can also try to capture it in labyrinthine-mythological digressions or systematic-scientific descriptions. In modern times, the symbol of the sun has been partly stripped of its metaphysical connotations, but as the archetype of the giver of life, light, and warmth, the sun symbol is still slumbering beneath the surface of everyday consciousness. The metaphor of the sun, which is associated with being the source of light and warmth and the heavenly clock, is deeply entrenched in the human consciousness.

The sun plays many roles in Schreber's writing. Sometimes it's a stable but inscrutable, alien, and unapproachable source of light in the sky. At other times, it is part of a complex ("dis-integrated"), solipsistic, delusional system in which, in addition to Schreber himself, it seems to be the only acting and thinking anthropomorphic subject. And at other times its light penetrates the darkness, and a "Schreber-sun" shimmers throughout the language by means of mystical rays and nerves. In Schreber's medical report (1988, 269), the following comment is made:

In the garden the patient used to stand for a long time motionless in one place, staring into the sun, at the same time grimacing in an extraordinary way or bellowing very loudly at the sun with threats and imprecations, usually repeating endlessly one and the same phrase, shouting at her, that she was afraid of him, and that she had to hide from him the *Senatspräsident* Schreber, and also called himself Ormuzd.

In the first chapters of *Memoirs*, Schreber sets forth his religious views. Here the sun plays a role, but one that is not essentially different from its role in Greek philosophy. Like the stars, the sun denotes the extraterrestrial, the heavenly-divine, in which the question—for both the Greeks and for Schreber—is whether the heavenly bodies themselves are divine or whether they merely express and represent the divine (cf. Schreber 1988, 45 ff.).⁷

After that, the divine becomes more personal. God can observe the earth by means of the light of the sun. The sun becomes the eye of God, as it were. Schreber (1988, 47) writes, "Through the light emanating from the sun and the other stars, God is able to perceive (man would say: to see) everything that happens on earth and possibly on other inhabited planets; in this sense one can speak figuratively of the sun and light of the stars as the eye of God."

Here Schreber notes that we can speak of the sun *figuratively* as the eye of God. This is not a bizarre idea, by the way. The founder of modern physics and astronomy, Isaac Newton, said the same kind of thing about space. According to him, space is God's "boundless uniform Sensorium."

In the following fragments, Schreber has really "gone off the deep end." His abstract ideas about the sun and God constitute the background of—and perhaps the occasion for—some remarkable, personal experiences. He seems to have come in contact with God by way of the sun (1988, 47): "One has to consider her [the sun] directly or indirectly only as that part of God's miraculous creative power which is directed to the earth. As proof of this statement I will at present only mention the fact that the sun has for years spoken with me in human words and thereby reveals herself as a living being or as the organ of a still higher being behind her.

Schreber's earthly life—his own movements, thoughts, and observations—are reflected in his vision of the celestial aspect of God and the world. Schreber believes he is in contact with the hidden "far side" of the sun. His inner relationship with the Absolute, his thoughts about it, and his conversations with it (including both the light of the sun and the hidden aspects of its far side) now acquire an external reality. His inner thinking about—and within—the Absolute becomes identical to his external observations of the sun and his conversations with God. This is a mystical motif that expresses itself in terms of a complex story with several poles and actors, in which it crystallizes.

The underlying mystical sun moment that I am positing is further developed and verbally expressed in a "dis-integrated" story, a secondary sun delusion, which is a combination of delusion of reference ("Everything that happens refers to me"), paranoia ("They're all out to get me"), and megalomania ("My influence is huge"). It's a story that Schreber uses to try to solve paradoxes between uni-delusion and esse-delusion. In the following quote (1988, 84), he describes how he controls the abstract, eternal, powerful, cosmic sun by means of his own movements in his room: "I thought I could notice the sun following my movements; when I moved to and fro in the single-windowed room I inhabited at the time, I saw the sunlight now

on the right, now on the left wall (as seen from the door) depending on my movements."

Of course it is crazy to think that if you move, the sun will respond and copy your movements. Taken on its own this is an "erroneous" idea, but it is understandable to those who know the context. Schreber was neither the first nor the last to experience sun delusion (cf. Custance 1952, 37, and Conrad 1958, 14). A brief personal disclosure in this regard: I myself have experienced something like this in the isolation cell. As you sit there, mysteriously dropping through the floor (or the unfloor) of thinking, observing, and experiencing, you simply become aware of "movement." You feel, think, and see this movement in the flow of your thoughts, your feelings, and your perception. The light and darkness around you, the cloud passing in front of the sun, and the light and shadow effects in the empty cell are things you experience both internally and externally at the same time. A train of thought/experience can be constructed in this form:

~to be~to become~ // *motion, there is movement* // HERE AND THERE EVERY-THING IS MOVING // *I am moving and the sun is in motion* // I AM MOVING AND THE SUN IS MOVING // *I am moving, so the sun is moving.*

The most important "error" in this sequence is that a course of order and causality is created from the "association" between two elements (the sun and me). Without a third body to intervene in the experience, however—in the form of either one's own memory and habits or an authoritative "law-maker" from the outside—an association can be neither prevented nor compelled to be understood as a causality (also see Kusters 2004, 67 ff., and Hume 1988).

The matching (discursive) statement or thought that emerges from these mystical considerations might be "the sun is following your movements," as Schreber puts it. This "dis-integrated" idea can be located in the light of all the present speculations about God, sun, and world, and it also contributes to the development of the delusion dynamic and the delusion system. Thus a crystal ice palace can grow from a mystical drop of water. In the desolate, hazy world that then appears, there are basic mythical themes flitting about—symbolic shifts from high to low, from core to center; divisions, mergings, and interactions between different suns, gods, and Schreber. As Schreber writes (1988, 84, 88, 95),

I saw—if my memory does not wholly deceive me—two suns in the sky at the same time, one of which was our earthly sun, the other was said to be the Cassiopeia group of stars drawn together into a single sun. ... For a long time it was said that I was to remain under the protection of Cassiopeia, while the sun was

assigned to a different destination, and was probably to be preserved for her own planetary system and thus also for our earth. The power of attraction of my nerves was however so strong that this plan could not be carried out: the sun had to remain where I was or I myself had to be brought back again. ... Further, I have reason to assume that from this date (or perhaps three months later, about which more below), the sending forth of the sun's rays was taken over directly by God, more especially by the lower God (Ariman).

The complex, mad world that emerges this way relies as much on Schreber's thinking and perception as it does on his description written many years later. In this description, he regularly wonders whether everything wasn't a hallucination, a delusion, or sheer nonsense ("if my memory does not wholly deceive me"), only to quickly dismiss the idea. Schreber's "crystal castle" grows to such proportions, is so cosmically "extended," that any doubt with regard to a component can simply be evaded (or corrected) by adding a new space elsewhere.

Because memories, introspection, and interpretation are all interwoven in Schreber's text, the reader is no longer able to tell reality from mysticism, solipsism, and delusion. In the following fragment, for example, it's impossible to say whether he's talking about a strange observation, expressing a bizarre idea, or making a highly imaginative description (Schreber 1988, 125): "On the following day and perhaps on one or two more days (in fact in day-time while I was in the garden) I saw the upper God (Ormuzd), this time not with my mind's eye but with my bodily eye. It was the sun."

Earlier on, Schreber made a distinction between "seeing" with his normal eye and "seeing" with his mind's eye. In this fragment he says he saw with his normal eye, but what is striking is that we have to have known about Schreber's earlier mental development in order to understand the contents of this "vision." He continues, "It was the sun, although not the sun in her usual appearance as known to every human being, but surrounded by a silver sea of rays which covered a 6th or 8th part of the sky. ... However that may be, the sight was of such overwhelming splendor and magnificence that I did not dare look at it continually, but tried to avert my gaze from the phenomenon."

Because it was with his normal eye that Schreber saw the great sun, he argues that other people must have seen this extraordinary phenomenon as well. At the moment when the experience actually occurred, the possibility that the phenomenon might have been public in character did not interest him at all. At that point, he didn't believe in the existence of other people. Now at this later stage, as he is looking back and attempting to draw conclusions about "objective" reality from his experiences, the private character of

the vision becomes a problem. Schreber (1988, 125) writes, "One of the many things incomprehensible to me is that other human beings should have existed at that time apart from myself, and that the attendant M., who alone accompanied me at the time, remained apparently totally indifferent to this phenomenon. But his indifference did not really astonish me, because I considered him a fleeting-improvised-man, who of course led a dream-life ..."¹⁰

In all these sun passages, Schreber describes his experiences in a reflective, cautious way. He discusses the plausibility of his solipsism and addresses arguments as to why his mystical visions may have been hallucinations. At the same time, however, he describes the same thing from the inside and reveals what it was that became immediately and undeniably clear in his "visions." The tension in Schreber's text between self-observation and self-expression, memory and reconstruction, observation and thinking, metaphor and literal interpretation, make this document an incredibly interesting text—one that goes far beyond the level of whether Schreber was schizophrenic or not. Schreber's work is to be read as an account of what happens when borders are erased between interior and exterior, present and past, and when an attempt is made to describe the resulting experiences as both objective and subjective and to cast them in narrative form (think, too, of Custance's attempt to use two modes of thinking at the same time; see section 10.2). Schreber's work shows how a mystical moment can change—in terms of both experience and verbal description—into a long, drawn-out form of solipsism as a response to paradoxicality.

13.4.3 Exegesis and Laying on of Hands: Sass and Schreber II

In *The Paradoxes of Delusion*, Louis Sass discusses the work of Wittgenstein in examining the solipsistic aspect of Schreber's madness. Sass uses Wittgenstein as a clear-cut example of solipsistic or schizophrenic thinking or tendencies and as a way of commenting on that same solipsism. When philosophy serves this kind of double function, it creates a tension—in Sass's work and in mine. My aim is to make the strange, mad thought and experience comprehensible by comparing it to the thinking of obsessive philosophers such as Schelling, Sartre, and Plotinus. At the same time, I use these same philosophers to protect myself from the seduction of madness (also see the introduction to this book, section 1.4.2, and section 14.3.3.3 on Charles Taylor). In other words, based on Wittgenstein, Sass and I both conduct tours of the Sonnenstein Madhouse (the imaginative name of Schreber's second psychiatric hospital), but at the end of the tour—this section—it is no longer clear who belongs in that institution: Schreber, Wittgenstein, Sass, I, or everybody.

In the course of this imaginary tour, I will discuss several things with these guides, beginning with the unbalanced way in which Sass talks about Schreber's mysticism and solipsism in comparison with that of Wittgenstein. Sass admits that mysticism and solipsism are experiences or temptations of enormous importance in life. He refers approvingly to Wittgenstein's remarks on mysticism and expressions of mysticism, writing (1994, 75),

Wittgenstein himself insisted that, despite their absurdity and logical incoherence, sentences like "the only reality is the present experience" and "the only reality is my present experience" do correspond to something of enormous importance in human life, a profound metaphysical intuition about the experiencing self's centrality in relation to its world. And, he seemed to think, although this intuition could not really be said (because it was nonsensical, tautologous), it could in some sense be *shown*—by pointing to the mood, attitude or form of life in which the doctrine is rooted.

Although Sass emphasizes that Schreber lived in a form of solipsism, this reference to Wittgenstein suggests that the dividing line between mysticism and solipsism is wafer-thin. The mysticism of "the only reality is the present experience" is transformed into solipsism the moment that "the" becomes "my" in "the only reality is my present experience."

But either way, Sass is less positive about comparable experiences and utterances made by Schreber. Sass discusses the statement by Schreber quoted above—"everything that happens is in reference to me"—which is not qualitatively different from "the only reality is my present experience." But instead of regarding this as the expression of a "profound metaphysical intuition," Sass calls it "utter banality" (Sass 1994, 56, 57; italics in the original):

It is an important source of his paranoid-grandiose sense that as he puts it, "everything that happens is in reference to me." Thus, he feels he has *discovered* a surprising empirical fact, that experience happens only here, when in fact his experience could not on principle happen anywhere else. ... Because Schreber, not unlike solipsists in the history of philosophy, fails to recognize this fact, what is really an utter banality ("here is here") hits him with all the force of revelation. He feels he has discovered something substantial and remarkable when, in fact, he has simply adopted a certain attitude toward experience and an associated manner of speaking—what Wittgenstein calls, respectively, a "new way of looking at things" and "a grammatical move."

The discoveries and revelations concern "miracles," such as the remarkable experiences with insects discussed in 13.4.1.

For Sass, the difference between the discoveries and epiphanies of Schreber and the "profound metaphysical intuitions" of Wittgenstein seems to boil down to the fact that Schreber expresses his findings incorrectly, from

which he draws incorrect conclusions. According to Sass, Schreber regards the mystical insight as a "discovery" that has the "force of a revelation," in which the thing that is discovered is erroneously seen as "something substantial" and a "surprising empirical fact." Sass then claims that this is the cause of the secondary solipsistic delusions involving voices, visions, discussions with God, and so forth. It needn't have gone this far for Schreber, if only he had regarded his discovery, in imitation of Wittgenstein (a chronological impossibility, by the way), as "a new way of looking at things" and "a grammatical move."

Here Sass uses Wittgenstein to foster understanding for Schreber's mystical-solipsistic experiences and mental entanglements and to recommend a more moderate and restrained channeling of the mystical revelation. This is in line with my general theory of madness as a mystical experience or journey along a number of dangerous cliffs and temptations. In madness, the sirens sing of the image, the word, and the thought to tempt the traveler to lose himself in delusions and hallucinations. Those who read Wittgenstein carefully—or Husserl or Plotinus—can have the same experiences without falling victim to secondary delusions and ending up in a mental hospital and a straitjacket, subjected to chemical violence.

Although Sass recognizes the similarities between Schreber and Wittgenstein, he is more sympathetic to Wittgenstein's writings than to Schreber's. Sass regards Wittgenstein's occasional aphorisms as mystical pearls of insight whose value is clear from the start, while he constantly suspects that Schreber's crystal castle may turn out to be an empty castle of sand. At one moment he sees Wittgenstein's statements as analogous to those of Schreber, and the next moment he uses Wittgenstein to lecture Schreber on linguistic philosophy—and, in particular, on sensible and senseless language use. By resorting to a traditional form of linguistic philosophical criticism, Sass tries to label Schreber's assertions as "empty" and thereby senseless. Sass writes (1994, 56),

The solipsist who mouths the tautologies "this room is my room" or "the center of the universe is here" believes he is making an empirical statement on the order of "the dining room is my room" or "the center of the universe is at Hollywood and Vine." But "here" is not like "Hollywood and Vine," since the referent of "here" has no independent anchoring and shifts with the speaker. In using such an indexical, the solipsist only seems to be making an assertion. His statement is in fact empty, a mere statement that "here is here."

Although Sass's remarks would naturally be appropriate for anyone eager to understand Schreber as someone who makes informative assertions, they are less relevant when Schreber's statements are seen as expressions of mystical

astonishment or solipsistic insight. What Sass says about Wittgenstein and the laying on of hands is interesting and illustrative with regard to Schreber (Sass 1994, 56): "The solipsist—to borrow one of Wittgenstein's many metaphors for the futility of such metaphysical claims—is like someone who tries to measure his own height not by using an independent reference system but by placing his own hand on top of his ... head." Or, to use another metaphor, the solipsist is rather like a priest who ordains himself by the laying on of his own hands, or like Napoleon crowning himself by no authority than his own.

Sass says Schreber is mistakenly making objective statements because he is not using an "independent reference system" but is merely relying on his own ethereal experience. Yes, that's true. This form of laying on of hands is indeed unsuitable for measuring one's own height, and Schreber's truth-claims concerning the objective or intersubjective outside world are not valid. The objective existence of God or the possibility of conversing with God cannot be deduced from the fact that he "experienced" speaking with God. Schreber confused the expression and description of his experiences with the observations that are made with the help of a common reference system.

But the comparison with the laying on of hands also reveals what Sass is getting wrong when he thereby concludes that Schreber is a solipsist. You can also place your hand on your head in a sensible way, without having to measure anything. Pressing down on your head with your hand while at the same time experiencing the feeling of having your head pressed down is what I would almost call a *mystical* experience. You are then "two-in-one": both the actively pressing subject and the passive object being pressed. You experience that you are in-the-world, which is more than a mere idea or a philosophical argument but constitutes a total experience. If you place your hand on your own head, you are the measurer and the measured in one, with your body as the nonmeasuring yardstick. I invite the reader to step away from this book for a moment and experience a few seconds of such "mystical esse-delusion." Think about dancers as well: What do they do except "be" by moving in space? Not every physical movement or verbal utterance has to be entered into the archive of meaningful assertions. The laying on of hands can simply be an expression of being, just as Schreber's staring at the sun may have been.

As William James correctly noted, the problem of mysticism—and equally of madness—is that what happens is extraordinary and meaningful, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to distill any practical wisdom from such a powerful experience. Yet Schreber tried to do it anyway. For example, he deduced from his mad adventures that other people, even his own wife, could not possibly exist. He based this on what he experienced, and even

while he was writing his memoirs, he still partly believed it.¹² If we read Schreber's memoirs as fiction, it would be interesting literature of the fantasy genre. Because Schreber actually believed in his own thoughts, observations, interpretations, and narratives, and lived accordingly, however, he began having problems.

Sass and I both have problems interpreting Schreber. It's difficult to say exactly where he "went wrong" or "went mad." Perhaps Schreber did attach too much value to his fictions, but why should we blame him, and not others, for this? Everyone lives with fantasies, illusions, fictions, hollow words, empty rhetoric, symbols, and platitudes. Is the decision to call someone schizophrenic merely a matter of how far removed the fiction is from the norm?

Sass seems to suggest that when it comes to things you cannot talk about, it's better to remain silent, because the more words and phrases you use to try to express the inexpressible, the more entangled and inert you become. And whenever you actually try to explain this extraordinary mixture of insights, entanglements, and inertia to others, the more those others will see it as a sign that you have entered the morass of madness. Sass (1994, 59) says,

The solipsist is nevertheless driven to communicate and to convince. Schreber, for example, writes of wanting to demolish "mere materialism" and "hazy pantheism" to make way in our minds for the true Order of the World, an ambition that, we must presume, means making public the truth of his own (private) solipsistic vision. With its peculiar combination of doubt and certitude, of diffidence and proselytizing zeal, Schreber's *Memoirs* manifests the paradoxical yearning that is central to the delusional world of madness.

I will have more to say about this zeal for proselytizing later on (16.3). Here I want to remark that it is not so much the passion "to communicate and to convince" that drives someone mad but the content of those convictions and the degree of deviation from the norm. Sass continues, "Indeed, the very act of writing the *Memoirs*—which, as Schreber tells us in his introduction, is intended to communicate with and to convince his readers—testifies to the fundamental contradiction and the potential sources of vulnerability that can lie at the heart of an autistic world." This fundamental contradiction may lie at the heart of the autistic world, but I think the problem has to do with a paradox or contradiction that is not reserved for schizophrenia or psychosis alone; it is universally accessible—if not inescapable.

13.4.4 Proliferation of Paradoxes

Schreber fails to work all the paradoxes and perplexities into a "stream-lined" argument, as he humbly admits (1988, 152): "Obviously what I have

said above about the changed behavior of the upper and lower God and about the kind of phrases the latter used, contains a tangle of contradictions which cannot be unraveled."¹³ What kinds of contradictions and inconsistencies was he entangled in?

First there's the paradox of solipsism. According to Louis Sass, reading Schreber reveals the problems that are inherent in the theory of solipsism when it is consistently followed: you're flung back and forth between megalomania and paranoia. Typical examples of megalomania are experiences and feelings that convince you that you can influence the weather, which is rather common among inhabitants of the mad world. Living a life as the only omnipotent spirit in the world, as the supreme king of the universe—including the weather—may seem tempting. You'd be able to make the sun shine or influence television with your thoughts (in our time, at least). You could make things "materialize" or make them disappear by "thinking them away." So all the world's events would take place within the realm of your own all-embracing thought or within your consciousness, where you seem to be lord and master.

But the inevitable downside of this "internalizing of the outside world" is the "externalizing of the inner world" (cf. section 2.3). Things happening at a distance that normally cannot harm you are now taking place within you. What is said on television is now connected to your deepest essence. Sass (1994, 62ff.) says,

Like many schizophrenic patients, Schreber combines a sense of omnipotence with a sense of abject subjugation and powerlessness. His own consciousness plays two seemingly incompatible roles: for he experiences his own mind as the hub around which the universe revolves, the indispensable constitutor on which it depends, as if he were a sort of unmoved prime mover, but he also feels his own experience to be limited and constrained, like something contemplated and manipulated (perhaps even constituted) by some distant and ever-receding other mind.

While your deepest thoughts tell you that you're the ground of all being and that the world depends on you for its existence, you're also aware of strange phenomena in this world of yours that elude your control, which implies that your deepest being is something quite alien to yourself.¹⁵

I would like to make two comments with regard to Sass's analysis. Sass suggests that solipsism is a logical impossibility because the influence of the world on your mind would automatically be known to an "other mind." However, the inexplicable meanings and patterns in a solipsistic world (such as the sudden appearance of insects) do not imply another mind per se. As soon as a subject (mad or not mad, solipsistic or not solipsistic) becomes aware that "there is something" eluding his own consciousness or

control, he becomes conscious of something that is distinct from himself but is not necessarily another mind. The term "other mind" is too psychological a notion for what initially crops up. It might also be "The Force," Nature, God, or so forth. The fact that, in madness, such a primary object is quickly "personified" or "interpreted" as another observing consciousness or person is not a logical consequence of solipsism.

In some passages, Sass suggests that the problem of paradox is inherent to solipsism, but actually it has to do with the psychological variant of a common philosophical problem. ¹⁶ The eyeglasses you wear determine how you see and describe the world, but those glasses are also part of the world—which you want to describe with those same glasses. The problem of paradox in mad solipsism is no different from that of other paradoxes. At the very most, the madman is more entangled in—or obsessed by—paradoxes (cf. 13.1).

Sass himself does not strictly adhere to the idea that Schreber's paradoxes are only related to solipsism, by the way. He says that paradox can be described in spatial terms as well (1994, 65):

This oscillation can also be expressed in spatial or substantial terms. Schreber senses at times that his boundaries extend to the ends of the universe: "It appeared that nerves—probably taken from my body—were strung over the whole heavenly vault." But he also feels that he is tiny, an almost nonexistent being lost in the vastness of space.¹⁷

Sass then relates the solipsistic paradox to a more general philosophical paradox (1994, 77):

Schreber seems to be writhing in the coils of an epistemic/ontological paradox—endlessly shifting between two interdependent yet incompatible visions, the experience of his own consciousness as both a constituted object and the ultimate, constituting subject. The enigmatic, vexed nature of the *Memoirs* testifies to Schreber's inability either to solve these dilemmas or to ignore them.

Paradox also lies hidden in Schreber's attempts to tell a comprehensive story about God, the world, and humanity (Schreber himself in particular). As Sass remarks (1994, 63), "A similar equivocation is reflected in Schreber's odd relationship to God, perhaps the central preoccupation of the *Memoirs*." At this level of paradox, the main questions are these: Is God inside man or outside him? Is man (Schreber) an instrument or a doer of God's will, or is he independent of the divine principle, despite the fact that he was created by God? Is God close at hand, "living" in man, or is he infinitely distant? (Also see part III, especially chapter 11.)

Sometimes Schreber identifies with God, and in many passages, God's thinking, experiencing, acting, and observing is almost indistinguishable

from that of Schreber himself. At other times God, for Schreber, is the other, the not-me, the immeasurably vast Almighty that makes Schreber shrink to nothing in comparison. God decides on everything Schreber experiences, but conversely, Schreber's thinking about God also influences God. Schreber "oscillates" between the experience of a God who is near and one who is remote, between megalomania ("I am God") and paranoia ("God is out to get me"). Sass (1994, 65) says, "His notion of God, the 'I Who am distant,' captures this curious contradiction, this sense of both being and not being the epistemic, constituting center of the universe." This "curious contradiction" concerns everyone: there's a latent Schreber present in us all.

The extraordinary thing about Schreber's life and work is not in his discovery of the paradox but in the bizarre, endless ways in which he tries to solve the paradox and to develop it in terms of a coherent narrative. This makes Schreber part of the group of prophetic madmen who bear a complex message of revelation, salvation, and calamity, like Artaud, Custance, Nijinsky, and me. It also puts him in the company of philosophers such as Plotinus, Sartre, Schelling, and me, who don't know when to quit and who keep flowing away and turning themselves inside out in the vortex of the philosophical paradox.

13.5 Thought Experiments and the World According to Lacan

To delve more deeply into the mad paradoxical world, I would like to discuss a lesser known article by the French psychoanalyst and philosopher Jacques Lacan, written in 1945: "Le temps logique et l'assertion de certitude anticipée" ("Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty: A New Sophism"). ¹⁸ In this work, Lacan describes a famous thought experiment or puzzle (he calls it a sophism) from the world of logic, which results in a reflection on the presuppositions underlying our concepts of subjectivity, temporality, and human nature. In Lacan's version of the experiment, three prisoners are locked up together and presented with a paradoxical puzzle. The one who solves the puzzle first will be allowed to leave the prison. I will discuss this experiment first in its most basic form, with only two prisoners, after which I will look at the other variants.

In my conversation below with Lacan—and with the prisoners and guards from the experiment—paradoxes and madness play a role at different levels. First I show what Lacan's view of madness is, touching on a few well-known Lacanian themes such as the symbolic order, the imaginary, and the real. At this first level, this section is simply a Lacanian philosophy of madness. Lacan's body of thought can also be understood as an

all-encompassing philosophical construct, however, so at a second level I will show how this article by Lacan is itself like a crystal castle, with features that, if not mad, are certainly paradoxical. At a third level I will attempt to break down the borders between text and reality, between the thought experiment with the prisoners and psychiatry's real confinement regime, and between philosophy and madness. For this reason, I will gradually sneak mad elements into the text, such as that of the A4, to free the madman from his own crystal castle in a paradoxical way. So in addition to being a reflection of madness by Lacan, this is also a reflection on Lacan by the mad.

13.5.1 Escaping from Lacan's Imaginary Jail Cell

13.5.1.1 Imaginary advantages Lacan's puzzle with only two prisoners runs as follows. Say there are two prisoners in one jail cell, and one of them is allowed to go free. To determine which of the two that will be, a game is played. Each prisoner is given a black or white mark that he cannot see on himself but that can be seen by the other prisoner (such as a mark on the forehead). For our two (x) prisoners there are a total of two (x) white marks and one (x-1) black mark, to be divided between them (so one mark will be left over). The first one to correctly identify the color he has is the winner and will be released.

The game begins. One prisoner looks at the other and sees either a black or a white mark. If he sees a black mark, he immediately knows he must have a white mark, because there is only one black mark available. A white mark will not tell him anything at first, since in that case he himself could have either a white or a black mark. But as soon as he notices that the other prisoner does *not* announce that he knows what mark he has, he can conclude that he himself cannot have a black mark. If he did have a black mark, the other prisoner would immediately deduce that he (the other) has a white mark. But because the other does *not immediately* respond, our prisoner will have to have white, just like the other. As soon as he realizes this, he reports it to the guard. Assuming that the other prisoner is identical to our prisoner, he will reason and respond in exactly the same way, and after a brief moment of reflection, both prisoners will come to the same realization at the same time—only if both are bearing a white mark, of course.

If the prisoners are human beings, what qualities must they have in order to participate in this experiment and possibly get out of jail? The first rule that our prisoner must be familiar with and be able to apply is the universal rule that runs as follows: if all the black marks (only one in this case) are being used, the rest of the marks must be white. This is a simple rule. To be able to apply this rule, no more is needed than the capacity or

"consciousness" of a lifeless automaton or scanner that observes the environment and, with the help of the rule, deduces its own mark. (In other words, the prisoner could be replaced by a mere calculating eye or scanner.)

But the prisoner has to be capable of more than a scanner would be. The problem with a scanner is that, although it does observe and register its environment in a certain sense, it "sees" that environment only as a collection of dead objects and not as equivalent, calculating fellow scanners or as intentional beings of the same species, let alone as autonomous fellow persons, each with his own independent perspective. Our prisoner can get out of jail only by being able to understand his fellow prisoner as someone who reacts to him, just as he reacts to his fellow prisoner. For as soon as he realizes that his fellow prisoner is looking at him without walking away, he knows where he stands. In order to figure out what his own mark is, the prisoner must see the other as a rational fellow prisoner ("subject" is too big a word here, as we shall soon discover). If he fails to recognize the other as such, then the other will beat him to the punch with the right solution and get out of jail.

The transition from the first simple rule (if there are x black marks, then I have a white mark) to this somewhat more complex reasoning, in which the other is acknowledged as a rational actor, can be compared to the formation of what Lacan calls the "imaginary position." Without an imaginary position there is no self-image as distinguished from the other and there is no experience or knowledge of what the other desires. Lacan has this to say with regard to "proto-consciousness," or the position of what I call the scanner (1988, 14): "The former, expressed in the 'one' of the 'one knows that,' provides but the general form of the noetic subject: he can as easily be god, table or washbasin." With regard to the second position, Lacan says (1988, 14), "The latter ... introduces the form of the other as such, i.e. as pure reciprocity, since the one can only recognize himself in the other, and only discover his own attribute in the equivalence of their respective times." By taking into account the desire of the other, the prisoner learns how to identify his own mark. This second line of reasoning gives rise to a basic form of intersubjectivity and experience of time.

In applying this first experiment to the mad world, the following comments are of importance. The experiment suggests that you don't "get any further"—that is, you don't get out of jail—until you assume an imaginary position. This does not automatically follow from the preconditions of the experiment, however. It requires the tacit assumption that the fellow prisoner is also intent on getting out. But suppose this fellow prisoner is merely a hallucination or is reluctant to go along with the game? Then it would be

wrong to deduce from the other's delayed decision (or indecision) that you have a white mark. You would call the guard and tell him you have a white mark, while in fact you may have a black one. You won't get any further with this imaginary position unless it's supported by a world that is designed for it: that is, a world with fellow prisoners who all have the same imaginary capability and desire, and a world with a reward system that is adapted to it. If the experiment stipulates that a *wrong* answer will result in the death penalty, then reasoning from the imaginary position is not always better. Because if the other were a reluctant prisoner and you incorrectly deduced from his inaction that you had a white mark, the death penalty would await you.

One essential difference between a world with prisoners who act on the basis of the imaginary and a world with only "scanner prisoners" is that, in the latter, there is less progress or change in the experiment. A world with prisoners who act on the basis of the imaginary always results in action, while a world populated only by scanners can lead to catatonic immobility.

To judge whether intersubjectivity, rational reasoning, and successful actions "work" as they do in the experiment, we must use presuppositions regarding fellow prisoners, powerful guards, and a "real reality" of jail cells, the desire to be released, and a system of rewards. The deepest madness, in which there is no real "other," can be compared here to the position of the "scanning" prisoner. The Lacanian thought experiment is perfect for describing the relationship between such a schizophrenic scanner and the world, but it cannot provide any definite answers as to whether the world of intersubjectivity and imaginary positions is of a higher or better order than the world of scanners.

13.5.1.2 Indomitable time The way the two kinds of actors exercise their reasoning ability and apply the rules provides insight into the relationship between the imaginary position and the extra-imaginary (or pre-imaginary) scanner condition. The scanner's time is different from that of the person in the imaginary position. He responds immediately to his environment. From the number of black marks he sees, he *automatically* deduces the kind of mark he has himself (or not, if he sees no black marks). That automatism is not a process in time but merely the implementation of a logical, impersonal, atemporal rule. The scanner has no time—no more than, say, a thermometer, which automatically translates the degree of movement of air molecules into the mobility of mercury and depicts it on a numbered line. As a counterargument, one might point out that there is a time element not only in the action-reaction of air and mercury but also in a chain of implemented premise, implication, and conclusion (of the "schizophrenic" scanner).

The crux of this experiment is that the time involved is not intrinsically necessary. The fulfillment of a logical implication happens without hesitation; the time that hot air needs to heat the mercury can be drawn-out and lengthy, but the process can just as easily be infinitely accelerated, and time can disappear into the limit of nothingness. If we were to call this aspect of the scanner or thermometer "time," then it's time of a different order than the time in the imaginary position of our experiment. Perhaps this scanner time is what McTaggart (1908) calls *objective time* or *Time B*, what Bergson says is *le temps*, and what Husserl refers to as "objective time" (see chapter 3). We could also call it "natural time" or "cosmic time." This is the manipulable time in which nothing would be lost if we could accelerate it. Time here is only an added external factor, similar to other nonessential factors in an objective reality.

The actor in the imaginary position begins with the logical rule that the scanner follows: he looks to see if there are any black marks. What helps him further, however, is the hesitation or waiting of the fellow prisoner. That hesitation is the same as his own hesitation, a consequence of indecisiveness, reflection, and *meditation*, as Lacan (1988, 11) calls it. The simple existence of this hesitation in the other gives our prisoner something he can deduce from. It's precisely because "nothing is happening" that our prisoner knows that the other does not see him as having a black mark. The hesitation, or the passing of time, without being visible in terms of movement or change, is a necessary condition for thinking and acting in the imaginary position. This kind of passing time is different in character from the time of the scanner. The time of the scanner is characterized by movement. For scanner time, Aristotle's view of time obtains: "[Time is] number of motion in respect of 'before' and 'after.'"

The time of the imaginary actor has nothing to do with observable motion, however. It cannot be accelerated either, let alone be made to disappear. This time presupposes, or only arises with, mutual recognition as intentional actors, and at its deepest, it is linked with a first form of intersubjectivity. The *tempo* of this time is determined in the intersubjective space between the prisoners and their own agency. The one's hesitation and nonactivity is interpreted by the other as meaningful. In addition, the speeds of mutual interpretation are not arbitrary, since they determine who will be first to answer the puzzle. If the actors are equal to each other, if they each hesitate at exactly the same speed, they will arrive at the answer simultaneously. This time is what arises between the facing actors, and it is the source of action. It is a time that winds the actors *in* each other, and it is of a different order than the time in which nature *un*winds itself.

Unlike the time of the scanner or the thermometer, this time cannot be accelerated infinitely. In the case of the scanner, acceleration seems to fulfill a certain eagerness and bears within itself the promise of more efficiency and a liberation from future earthly processes. For the imaginary actor, time is not something to be gotten rid of as quickly as possible but is a necessity in which his relationship with the other actors is realized in a single act. The paradoxicality of such time is this: if the actors were to continuously speed up, initially nothing would be won (both actors would still reach the same outcome at the same time) and in the end, everything would be lost.

If the conclusion that our prisoner must have a white mark were to happen *just as fast* as, and therefore *simultaneously* with, the instantaneous deduction from the rule "if x is black, then white," then the prisoners would not be able to deduce anything at all! Regardless of whether you have white or black, the other would walk away immediately, and you would walk away immediately—but without coming up with an answer. If instantaneousness and protraction coincide, as this experiment shows, then information is lost. The time of the imaginary actor is necessary time. It issues from the existence or the recognition of the other, equal actor and cannot accelerate infinitely. The time and hesitation of the actors are not external additions to the experiment; they form an essential part of it.¹⁹

The two rules—those of the scanner and the imaginary actor—can be represented consecutively as follows:

- 1 ((x Z's [available]) & (if x Z's [in the jail cell]))-> self: W
- 2 If not(B(m, ((x Z's [available] & if x Z's [in the jail cell]))-> m:W)) -> self: W

In our case, x is 1: Z = the black mark, W = the white mark, and B(m, X) = "the fellow prisoner decides that (X)." Here, X is a decision.

The transition from a nontime, or a cosmic time, to a time of the imaginary position, can now be described as follows: For the scanner, there is only rule 1. In order for the scanner to become an imaginary actor, you have to learn rule 2. The difference between 1 and 2 is the transition (x Z's) to not(B(m,x Z's)). The difference between the two times can be presented as a difference in the complexity of the applied rules. In order to live in time, you must be able to move from inside the parentheses of (x Z's) to outside these parentheses in not(B(m,x Z's)). Time is the transition from inside to outside the parentheses.

This is a tempting representation of the problem. It causes time to expand, however, and gives you the impression that you can do something (move back and forth, in and out of the parentheses), which is not among the possibilities of imaginary temporality. If you focus on the parenthetical aspect

of the rules, then apparently time can be controlled and made spacious and calculable. But the beauty of the experiment is that it shows that this effort is doomed to failure. Indeed, if time were a problem of overstepping parentheses, it would also be something you could potentially accelerate and manipulate. Since that is definitely not the case in the experiment, then imaginary time must be more than a manipulable representation within a pair of parentheses. Time is part of the puzzle, linked with logical deduction, but it is not to be reduced to this and is an independent constituent of the problem.

The impossibility of reducing time to a logical formula is also discussed in Sartre (2003), assisted by the notion of nothingness (also see section 12.2.2). Sartre shows that nothingness is not just a predicative addition or a formal modification of a proposition, the contemplation of which is entirely optional. On the contrary, nothingness is an irreducible aspect of "being," something that makes possible the whole subject-object dynamic—and human time as well. In this experiment, nothingness is to be found in the not-happening, in the hesitation of the prisoner(s), in the formula's irreducible arrow. With this experiment, Lacan (like Sartre) shows that nothingness and time are connected at the deepest level. The apparent reduction of time to a pair of manipulable parentheses (or an arrow) can happen only if the special status of nothingness in the second rule of the imaginary actor in the above formula is overlooked. The apparent is a logical status of nothingness in the second rule of the imaginary actor in the above formula is overlooked.

With regard to madness, the difference between the scanning madman and the "normal" subject is not to be found in the power of the calculation but in the recognition of nothingness—here the hesitation, the waiting for the other—in the passing of time and in the solving of the problem. A scanning madman may not be capable of this, but the madman as described in part III, in terms of the \emptyset -delusion, is not excluded from this imaginary position. Whether someone in an esse-delusion has access to the imaginary position, however, is not entirely clear.

13.5.2 Varieties of the Prison Cell: The Limits of the Thought Experiment

13.5.2.1 Three-man cell How does the presence of three prisoners affect the experiment? The initial situation is like that of the two-prisoner experiment, but now there are five marks to be divided up: two black and three white. Once again, we follow one prisoner (A or A3, in which the 3 refers to the number of prisoners in the cell), who sees that his two fellow prisoners (B and C) have either a white or a black mark on their foreheads. And again the question is: How does our prisoner get out of jail? As above, the simplest rule is that (if x Z's [available & in the jail cell] -> W), in which x is now 2. So, if B

and C both have black marks on their foreheads, then A knows immediately that he must have a white mark, because there are only two black marks available. In that case, the basic rule is all A3 needs to get out of jail. If B were to have a black mark and C a white one (or vice versa), things would be a bit more complicated. In that case, rule 2 from the previous section is called for, and C may walk out immediately. That would mean that C has seen two black marks, and A would know that he himself has a black mark, just as B does. But sadly for A, it would be too late. If C does not walk out immediately, it would mean that C has not seen two black marks. That implies that C must have seen a white mark on A, since B has black, as A himself can see. In these two cases, A does not need to possess any more insight or skill than in the experiment with only two prisoners.

But the situation would be different and considerably more complicated if B and C both had white marks. In that case, the ability of neither a scanner nor an imaginary consciousness would be sufficient for A to get out of jail. Our prisoner would have to take a different tack, which be as follows: If he were first to suppose that he himself is black, what would fellow prisoner B then think? He would see A with a black mark, he would see C with a white mark, and he would not know what mark he himself had. This resembles the situation of just a minute ago, in which A sees a white and a black mark. As a result, A now projects onto B what he himself would do in that situation. If B (according to the presumption of A3) now notices that C has not walked out and, therefore, has not made a decision, C cannot have seen two black marks (A presumed; B deduced), for if he had, he would have walked out immediately. Since A has a black mark (still according to A's presumption), then B can only deduce from the fact that C has a white mark that he himself does not have a black mark and, therefore, must be white.

In short, if A had a black mark, then B—because of C's being white and not deciding—can deduce that he has a white mark (as A himself has also just deduced). If A has a black mark, then B will walk out, after some hesitation. But if B does not walk out, even after some hesitation, then A cannot have a black mark and, therefore, must be white. After two periods of hesitation, A3 can conclude that he has a white mark; otherwise, someone would have already walked out. Since the same line of thinking applies to his fellow prisoners, they will both come to the same conclusion at the same time.

A3's deduction is like that of A2 above but with an extra "layer" or "enfolding."²² The first layer is that of the general rule, which can be used by scanners. The second layer contains a rule from which someone can deduce his color based on the other's hesitation ("He's not walking out; therefore, he

sees that I have a white mark"). The third layer is of another order entirely. Here A must not only see B's hesitation in relation to himself, but A must also see the hesitations (of B and C) as springing from a mutual involvement, from which A himself is excluded. In that case, B's hesitation has to do not only with A's mark but also with the mark of the third prisoner—C's white mark—as well as with his (B's) ignorance of his own mark.

In order to make this rather complex argument, A must see B not only as an actor focused on the mark on A's forehead but also as a fully independent subject, someone whose desire is not only operative in the mirror world between A and B but who also has a reality entirely beyond A; namely in the mutual involvement of B and C, which is independent of A. That is, what B does has not only to do with A's mark but also with the mark of the third prisoner (C), which, in both A's and B's eyes, is white. For A3, B must be not only an observing subject that A himself sees, but he also must be an independently reflecting subject who takes into account a reality that is observable by A and B together (C's being white). In other words, A has now moved from a mirrored dual relationship to a more complex triangular network. In the experiment with three prisoners, A can only get out of jail by positioning himself as a subject; that is to say, by regarding himself and others as independent subjects and by playing the game along with them. Here A assumes a position in what Lacan calls "the symbolic order"; a third person has come along who breaks through the mirroring and mutual involvement between A and B and lays the foundations for an intersubjective reality.23

Lacan suggests that you can reach more from such a symbolic position than from an imaginary one. In this experiment, if you don't place yourself in the position of the other as independent subject, you will never be able to deduce anything about yourself and you won't get out of jail. If B and C do think and act as subjects and A3 does not, then A (assuming all three prisoners have white marks) will be the only one to remain in prison. Once again, however, the success depends on whether the others really do occupy a similar (in this case, symbolic) position. If, in this second experiment, the others are only imaginary actors, then A's deduction could be wrong. That is, if the lives of B and C did depend on the vicissitudes (the color) of A, there would be no reciprocity between them and their hesitation would imply nothing about A's mark. Here, too, the preconditions of the experiment (What are the consequences of a wrong answer? What kind of position do the fellow prisoners occupy?) are decisive for the various methods of deciding.

In applying this interpretation to the problem of madness, we see the following: Let's suppose that the madman is not a scanner but is of the

imaginary-paranoid sort who sees everything in relation to himself. In that case, he would not be able to deduce from B's and C's indecision that he himself has a white mark. If he himself has a white mark, and B and C *are* able to place themselves in the symbolic world, then B and C, after a bit of hesitation, will deduce that they both have white marks, and both will get out of jail. At that moment, the experiment will have separated the prisoner who has the imagining "narcissistic-paranoid" thinking from the two who are able to regard others as autonomous individuals.

A division then takes place, which A—from his imaginary thinking—can only understand as a consequence of his black mark. From the whole sequence of events, A deduces that he has a different mark, while B and C know this is not so. The mad A will blame the events and releases from jail on a secret plot to debar the black marks and let the white marks go free. In fact, the division or the difference between the mad A and the "normal" B and C would not be based on outer markings but on a kind of inner subjectivity. The wonderful thing about this thought experiment is that it can explain and identify a few kinds of typical behaviors, projections, interpretations, and concrete consequences of paranoid madmen in their interactions with "normal" people.

As noted, it has not yet been "proved" that the madman is wrong or that he possesses an "inferior" or "less effective" kind of subjectivity. Indeed, B and C could also be occupying imaginary positions. In that case, they would not leave the prison, and A would be wise not to say that he knows what color he has, since that statement would be based on false presumptions and might be incorrect. If B and C then did leave the prison, they would indeed be doing so because A is black, and A's suspicion that he is being imprisoned on the basis of his outer mark would be entirely correct. As such, B and C's "reassurance" that it is not the black mark that is keeping A in jail but rather his imperfect subjectivity would be rightly regarded by him as a lie.

With three prisoners, a different form of subjectivity and a different kind of temporality emerge. For the scanner or thermometer, time is elastic, ignorable, and basically of no importance. Imaginary time is essentially noncompressible and cannot be reduced to a spatial dimension. Time arises from the mirroring between A and B and from the nothingness that hangs between them as hesitation or $m\acute{e}ditation$. This imaginary time develops from the dual relationship. In the triangular relationship, this intersubjectivity returns to the outside world. Now it is the hesitation that B exhibits toward C, exclusive of A, that is reflected and meditated upon as a given. It is an objectified form of intersubjective time that now plays a role. There are two major differences between this and the original objective time of the

thermometer. First, even though this objective time is a time whose locus is outside A, it exists only because A himself is a subject and regards his fellow prisoners as fellow subjects. In the objective time of the scanner or thermometer, time as power regulates the course of nature, and the observer is subject to time. In the triangular relationship, objective time is also a given time of the symbolic world of subjects as well as a time that comes about thanks to its own subjectivity. Without the position of subject, there would be no objective time.

In the experiment with three prisoners, time differs in yet another way from time in the jail cell with two prisoners. With three prisoners, it takes longer to come to a decision, and the course of the decision has a segmented structure. With two prisoners, imaginary time has to do with a rule, an observation of hesitation by the other with regard to the rule, and a conclusion derived from that hesitation. Lacan calls these moments "the instant of the glance" (*l'instant du regard*), "the time of comprehension or of meditation" (*le temps pour comprendre*—or *le temps de méditation*), and "the moment of decision" (*le moment de conclure*).

In the second experiment, the second period—that observation of hesitation or "the time for comprehension"—consists of two parts. The first part concerns the interaction of B and C; that is, the "time of comprehension" of B with regard to C (as presumed by A), and it has its own "moment of decision." In this first part, the symbolic position of the subject is necessary when A projects himself onto the autonomous meditation of B. The second part begins with B's supposed "moment of decision" (which is not realized by B if A has a white mark), and it proceeds by way of a second "time of comprehension," in which A himself is the "comprehending" figure, to the final "moment of decision" for A. This second part has an imaginary quality; in this case, it has to do once again with the conclusions A can draw about himself on the basis of B's silence. Both parts require a certain duration and hesitation on the part of the other. Loosely formulated, this happens as follows: A projects himself onto B and discovers that if B projects himself onto C, and A (himself) were black, then he—being B—would have to leave the prison if he (A) were black. B does not do that, and when A—in the guise of B—realizes what that means during the first "time of comprehension," A then turns to consider the consequences for himself and arrives at the second imaginary "time of comprehension."

13.5.2.2 Four plus The increase in the number of prisoners from two to three affects the quality of the subjectivity and the experience of time. What happens when the number of prisoners is further increased? If there are four prisoners, the reasoning process that A undertakes to find out whether

he is black or white would initially seem like nothing more than an extra round of hesitations, an extra enfolding, an extra projection or exercise in imagining. If there are four prisoners, then A4, if he wants to get out of jail, will have to project himself onto B, just as in the experiment with three prisoners, but he will also have to project himself from B onto C and again from C onto D. This deeper hypothetical enfolding of subject positions—or "the enfolding of parentheses," expressed in spatialized-formalized form brings about no actual further change in the subjectivity of A. The introduction of a third prisoner breaks the dual, mirrored relationship between the two prisoners and establishes the subject in the symbolic world. The introduction of a fourth and a fifth prisoner brings about nothing in itself but an extra round of hesitation and reasoning or subjective moments of projection. Once our prisoner can project himself onto another subject in the case of three prisoners, he can project himself onto every additional subject. If, for example, there were a hundred prisoners, with ninety-nine black and one hundred white marks to distribute among them, the increase from three to one hundred would occur automatically. Then A could think from the position of B, as if B were thinking from the position of C, as if C were thinking from the position of D, and so forth.

According to Lacan (1988, 206, note 4) an increase in the number of prisoners per jail cell would only lead to a longer decision-making time. It would only mean an extra round of hesitation, caused by the extra-deep enfolding of the reflection. What Lacan has overlooked, however, is a new capacity that arises when a fourth prisoner is introduced to the game. This new capacity stems from A4's awareness that deduction of the color distribution is automatic, as I have just pointed out. The period of hesitation "from B to C" is of the same nature as that from C to D, and from all the following Xs to Ys. These equivalent periods of hesitation do not have to be considered each time within a newly added "time of comprehension." In the case of four or more prisoners, A4 can generalize with regard to the repetition of parentheses, the enfolding of the subject, and the time sequence. He does not have to think through each and every subjective projection, but he can simply remember that what was true for the third extra subject will also hold true for the fourth and the hundredth: that is, if you see only white marks, and none of those marks makes a move, then you yourself must also be white.

Lacan's view of subjectivity, temporality, and psychosis is based on a three-tier stratification of subjectivity: there is something like a "scanner attitude" (the order of the real), a reciprocal perspective (in the imaginary phase), and a "complete" subject position (in the symbolic order). According

to Lacan, aspects of madness can be placed on all three of these levels: catatonic-mystical immobility on the first level; esse-delusion, Ω -delusion, and incipient paranoia on the second level; and persistent delusional systems on the third level. A fourth level, however, can also be discerned by means of consistent, speculative, and creative reflection on Lacan's text.

Discovering the secret of the four makes it possible to break through the boundaries of the symbolic game. For if A4 were to put his generalization about the various "times of comprehension" to use, he would be the first of all the prisoners conclude that he himself must be white, thereby planting a bomb under the foundations of the entire experiment. He knows that if the entire route of reflection is passed through, all the white marks will walk out at the same time. However, he reaches this conclusion about the moment of decision earlier than prisoners who don't know the secret of the four. This gives A4 greater freedom to decide and more options for making a decision than any of the others have. He can beat them all in announcing that he has a white mark. A4 comes to this conclusion by generalizing about the symbolic time, accelerating it, and turning it to his advantage. If A4 also proves to have a white mark, he will have gotten out of jail in a most miraculous way (for a concrete example, see Kusters et al., 2007a, 208ff.).

The others, who don't know the secret of the four, will not understand this at all. They will think A4 is clairvoyant or is doing something completely incomprehensible. It's also possible, however, that A has a black mark and that he is actually premature in announcing that he has white. In that case, A4 will have done something that in itself is logically correct and that only misfires because he is no longer in step with the others. The others will not understand the basis on which A4 has come to this incorrect conclusion and may put it down to limited cognitive abilities on his part. A4's incorrect answer is not the result of limited abilities, however, but of an extra ability.

The secret of the four is all about applying abstraction and generalization to the game. You could regard this as a form of hyperreflection, since when A4 acts, the unwritten rules and assumptions about the symbolic game are breached and called into question. A3 becomes A4 because he grasps the preconditions of the game. With the arrival of the four in this lab-like model of the symbolic order, symbolic time—so beautifully structured and orderly—is once again shattered. In the time of the symbolic order, subjects are synchronized. Periods of hesitation, decision, and the repetition of "rounds of reflection" follow one another in a commonly shared rhythm.

When A4 starts generalizing about several periods of hesitation and using the abstraction derived from these periods, a kind of metatime arises

in which A4 carries out demonic calculations by which he can interfere in the rhythm of the game to suit his own ends. This mad time incorporates the three "lower" kinds of time, and the extra hyperreflection puts A4 himself beyond or above symbolic time. He desynchronizes and reaches for the crystal ball! With him, the periods of hesitation are compressed and therefore accelerated. A4 is drawn through the hesitation; he sees the possibility of "nothinging" the time. For the superficial observer (such as the guards), the madman and his mad time seem to be returning to the first time level of the manipulable nontime of the scanner. The mad fourth time annihilates human shared time and, in a certain sense, is the realization of Ø at a higher level.

The appearance of the four is also the beginning of the "revolt of the blacks." If the secret of the four is not yet known, the white-marked prisoners always discover and report that they have white marks before the blacks can say anything. The blacks don't discover that they have black marks until the whites have already acted on the basis of that fact. The blacks come to realize their blackness via the departure of the whites. Being deserted and left alone are proof that you have a black mark. Prisoners who have assumed an A4 character, however, will no longer stay in the cell like meek sheep, waiting for the symbolic game of musical chairs to be over; they will take the lead themselves—regardless of whether they're black or white. So from the outside, it's no longer possible to deduce who is white or black based on the decision of the prisoners to state their answers. The answers of the prisoners must be verified; the order of the answers is no longer relevant. It isn't symbolic time, which is regulated and held in common, that provides a decisive answer, but a mechanism of a very different order: the black-white verification of the guards. The seemingly natural selection—which in fact is symbolic and concealed—is replaced by a raw, realistic selection on the basis of marks.²⁴

Supposing there is still no A4 and that the number of prisoners with white marks is innumerable, or even infinite, then the waiting time, the hesitation time, and the reasoning time of the prisoners also become very large (if not infinite). We can then conceive of a large (infinite) mass of prisoners—both the blacks and the whites—each of whom sees a vast number of white marks before him and therefore remains forever indecisive. In this case, the whites do no better than the blacks. The temporal advantage of the whites over the blacks disappears in the infinity of the masses, and for the masses, acting in response to the discovery of the lack of blacks, it is infinitely delayed. Only if a last judgment were made by an all-seeing, all-controlling, proactive guard would it be possible to separate the blacks from

the whites. The only ones capable of breaking through the status quo in such cases would be the A4s—be they white or black. With their knowledge of the secret of the four, they can draw from the infinite number a finite number of conclusions for action. For those unfamiliar with the secret of the four, the infinite number leaves them no other choice than to wait and ponder endlessly in earthly time. A breakthrough in this rigidity is made by A4. Looking through the infinite whiteness beyond himself, A4 sees his own whiteness and manages to free himself from the infinite breach and duration of horizontal time. Once A4 is out of jail, he will assume the guise of a seer, a prophet, or a "god-man" (Eliade).

13.5.2.3 Gamblers and spoilsports In principle, A4 is not bound to a situation with four or more prisoners. His knowledge of and insight into the situation, as well as the probability calculations and generalizations he has implemented, can also be applied to jail cells with smaller numbers of prisoners and can lead to strange situations in which the entire game breaks down. In the case of three prisoners, for example, A4 could reason as follows: if he himself is black, the whites will be able to deduce their color sooner than he does. If he is white, he will recognize his whiteness simultaneously with the other whites. So if he is black, he loses; if he is white, he wins along with the other white or whites. If the other two both have white marks, and there are only two black marks and one white mark available for A, then A could think that he's better off gambling on the possibility that he is black right now rather than waiting for the others' responses. Indeed, the chance of having a black mark is 67 percent. If he gambles, he could be wrong, whereas if he waits, he may very well gain certainty, but his chances of getting out of jail would be only 33 percent. These kinds of drastic calculations and statistical assessments change the game radically. This could happen if A, like the others, was still unfamiliar with the game; but as insight into the basics of the game increased, A4 could start meddling with these preconditions.

A4's assessment of his chances is also based on assumptions regarding the rules of the prison regime. Perhaps the aim of the policy being followed by the prison authorities is to see what happens when everyone is white or when one is black; perhaps a 67 percent chance is unlikely. A4 has nothing here to learn from his imprisonment and the summary rules of the game. Perhaps the best strategy is to talk to the guards; perhaps there's a conspiracy of prison authorities against the blacks and/or against the A4s, just as A2 imagined there was in a three-plus situation (see the text above). If nothing is known beforehand of the probability distribution, it would depend on the character of the prisoners as to whether they gamble blindly

or prefer to wait, the latter of which would give them more certainty but would also increase their chances of answering too late. The appearance of an A4 in the symbolic order also upsets the order anyway, regardless of whether three, four, or more prisoners are involved.

A single A4 evokes admiration from the other prisoners. But what would happen if all the prisoners were to find themselves in this fourth stage? The entire game would fall apart; neither the prisoners nor the guards would really know why who is doing what. The more A4s there are, the more capabilities and insights the prisoners acquire—and the more chaos that ensues. The thought experiment works only if the prisoners stick to the rules of the symbolic order and don't depart from the game, so that the rules are what the game is all about.

Besides via the consciousness of A4, there's another way to sow confusion in the game: through actual inequality in the prisoners' speed of reasoning and observation. If the prisoners do not know whether the others are equally quick, the certainty regarding their own mark changes to likelihood. In the experiment with three prisoners, if B "understands" or "meditates" at a different tempo than A, what can A then deduct? He may already have passed through two periods of "understanding," and because so much time has passed, he may have decided that he himself must have a white mark. But he may decide too quickly; perhaps he does have a black mark and B was, on that basis, at the point of deducing that he himself had white. Whoever is quicker than the others makes decisions more quickly, but he is also more frequently wrong. And from a logical point of view, whoever is slower misses the boat more often than necessary. For an outsider, of course, there would be no difference between a fast-reasoning, normal prisoner and an abstract, generalizing A4. An outsider might insist that the supposedly hyperreflexive A4 is only a bit faster but is not qualitatively different in other respects from the other prisoners. For the fast reader, it may be clear that this corresponds with the different attitudes toward the aberrant behavior and experiences of madmen. Are these quantitatively or qualitatively different from that of the "normal" others? Are the differences gradual or discreet?

13.5.3 Cell of Death: Crossing the Border

13.5.3.1 Mass death We can take the thought experiment even further by subjecting the abstract marks to further interpretation. Following Lacan's suggestion (1988, 18), let's consider the implications if white meant "human" and black meant "inhuman" or even "dead."

In such a reading, the inhuman—or the dead—get the shortest end of the stick in the case of two or three prisoners. Only when the number of

prisoners increases and becomes a mass does it become easier for the non-humans to dwell among the humans. The humans then have more trouble distinguishing themselves from the nonhumans.

Interpreting white as human also means that as long as the prisoners are within the "time of comprehension," judgment is suspended with regard to who is and is not human; as long as time is passing, judgment is not pronounced and the question of humanity remains undecided. Only after the "moment of decision," the last judgment, is the chaff separated from the wheat.

A third thought in this interpretation is that if objective (scanner) time, imaginary subjective time, and symbolic objective time were all accelerated and disrupted—on account of the appearance of A4 and the other spoilsports—the prisoners themselves would never be able to figure out if they were human or not (living or dead). It may be possible to control the passing of time from a demonic external standpoint (that of A4), but insight into one's own humanity (whether one is dead or alive) is beyond reach due to a fragmented, shared symbolic time. The actors' control over their own environment (actors with A4 consciousness) would be considerable, and their decisions would be immediate, but the human aspect would be lost.

This is only a speculative thought experiment, as is all of philosophy. We could also switch roles and let the blacks—the dead—assume power by giving them a numerical majority of marks. In that case, the humans would be left behind in the cell of death while the dead would be freed and would manage to escape our confined space within its material walls. Broadly speaking, in this interpretation of white as alive and black as dead, we can say that the more we are surrounded by the mark of the other, the faster we can decide whether we ourselves are alive or not. Contrast with the negative speeds up release from the cell.

13.5.3.2 Solitary death In closing, there is one unusual question having to do with the solitary cell. Anyone who has ever been alone in a cell and descended into the depths of his being will encounter questions about time and the other, about death and life. Perhaps he will conduct the Lacanian thought experiment but in metaphorical or allegorical form. If he does, he will face a difficult problem. As the only person in the cell, is he white? And are there no blacks at all? Or as the only person in the cell, is he black, and was he left behind by clever whites who have already been released?

According to the preconditions of the experiment, the number of whites is always one more than the number of blacks. And since he is alone in the cell, perhaps he thinks he has a white mark and that he's a human being. Perhaps with this answer, the guard will release him. But in many actual cases, this is not what happens—think of the isolation cell in a psychiatric

hospital. There the prisoner is abandoned once again by the guards, left in solitary confinement and in an agony of doubt. Thoughts shoot through his mind: "Why have I been locked up? What have I done wrong? Was my answer incorrect? Am I inhuman? Have I been left behind and abandoned? Am I dead, stuck here in this cell forever as a nonbeing? Am I 'nothing,' and do I have the black mark on my forehead?" The prisoner oscillates between experiences of being and nonbeing, observations in white that are framed in negatives of black, thoughts about life, and fear of death. Maybe at some point he begins clinging to the idea of "not being here" and of being released with "black" as his answer. But even then, the guards will probably not let him go. This prisoner is under double confinement: in the cell and within a paradox. If he's white, they won't release him. If he's black, they won't release him either. Denying that he's mad will result in further detention; admitting he's mad will result in continued imprisonment.

Many prisoners don't get out until they're broken and defeated—until they've lost. But some prisoners leave the cell—and the game—by discovering the four, breaking through the paradox, cutting the Gordian knot. In despair, they oscillate between the three positions: as scanners, they examine the physical possibilities of escaping; in the imaginary position, they attempt to mollify the guards; within the symbolic order, they try to comprehend the rules of imprisonment. In the end, when "nothing works," a level opens up through a secret fourth dimension that is diametrically opposed to the superficial triangle of the three positions. The rules of the symbolic order are penetrated, the imaginary and the real are explored, and the prisoner shoots through the foundations—to the top, through the ceiling of the paradox; to the bottom, through a floor of nothingness.

Such prisoners break through, break in, and break out (see Kusters et al., 2007a, 208 ff.). They realize, "We are the invisible ones, neither white nor black, because we are past the 'moment of decision.' We have risen above the symbolic cell game and escaped. We see the crack in reality and stroll out of the cell they call 'reality.' They live in their own invisible cells, they long for liberation, for us, for our freedom outside the cell of self and the game of symbols. We have the crystal ball in our hands; we have our hands in the crystal ball; we have put time under our spell." These prisoners cannot be understood within the symbolic order. As soon as they admit to that order, it shatters into pieces, calendrical time dissolves, symbols and identities lose their stability, and the distinction between human/inhuman and being/nonbeing vanishes. Guards, prisoners, and visitors change places. Black-and-white becomes a dime standing on edge.

Lacan's symbolic order is based on a temporal dimension in which people wait for each other and in which actions carried out in time are attuned to each other. The Lacanian symbols have a continuity and stability with a temporal depth. Those who have mastered the secret of the four can see how this temporal depth is flattened and erased by the meta-temporalization in the matrix of the four. It's as if with the secret of the four you no longer have to operate from a fixed position, as if the position itself has become an element in a new game. With three levels, you're still juggling with three elements: water, air, and fire. But on the fourth level, the fourth element, the earth, which once formed the basis of lower juggling, has now become part of a higher game of magic. On the third level, you can go slower or faster, you can fight or pacify, but you remain faithful to the surface of the earth. A4 has degenerated, he has "deterritorialized" in the absolute sense, he has escaped vertically. 25 It's as if a line had been shot into space at right angles to the infinite flat surface and formed a whole new world. (To be continued in the finale and in fragment IV.)

Intermezzo IV: Imagination and the Tightrope Walkers

IV.I Osmotic Hopping: Sybren Polet, a Gnome, and a Giant

Carl Einstein (1885–1940, no relation to Albert) was a much talked-about author and art critic. He became famous with his Dada-Expressionist novel *Bebuquin*, which at the time was referred to as "non-causal absolute prose." Today, Carl Einstein is one of what I here call the literary tightrope walkers. A good example of Einstein's work is the following fragment (2008):

I stood before a large piece of sackcloth ... I soon noticed that the sackcloth was none other than myself. That was the first self-awareness. But I pushed on further. A great rumbling began. A storm tore me apart. I howled from pain. I observed that the largest part of the sackcloth had gone 'phut.' Then I became completely blinded by myself. Think of this: I was a steel mountain standing on its tip. Tender blooms of the soul covered the abysses which couldn't have been filled with baby-pink sofa cushions. I grasped the complete nonsense and realized that a gram of sand was worth far more than an endless world. ... Anyway, what I took from this was that it derives from the most effortless possible movement. I confess that in this case logic doesn't go far enough because each axiom contradicts the other. ... Be a curtain and tear yourself apart. Nag at yourself so long that you are something else. Be the curtain and the performance at the same time. When you have a desire, go in the opposite direction; otherwise you will get stuck in the mud. I have always said that reversal is equally correct. But don't go around anymore on two legs. ... The world is the medium of thought. It hasn't got to do with knowing; that is an extravagant tautology. Here it is about thinking, thinking. That, dear sir, changes the whole situation. Geniuses don't act, or only appear to act. Your goal is thought, a new, the newest thought.

Another fine example of paradoxical tightrope walking is from Sybren Polet in the following fragment, which again comes from the story "The Gnome, the Giant, and the Middleman" (see Intermezzo III.II.I, "Point of Silence"). The main character becomes acquainted with a gnome, who tells

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him what "It" means. The gnome is sitting behind a desk and speaking in the first person as follows (Polet 2011, 267ff.):

It's like somewhere very close and yet impossibly far away—the shorter distance is what makes it so frustrating, like a very narrow ditch or an abstract pencil line that you can't cross; there's a progressive fractionalizing that makes your existence seem like a perfidious eternity or a pseudo-timelessness, but meanwhile—or I should say in the meantime—it's more an eternal interval, a permanent post-existence proceeding from a permanent pre-existence. It's like going through two holes at the same time—without either one knowing who is arriving where, even without missing anything of yourself except the idea of an abstract and blank possibility that doesn't occur to you until later on.

What is Polet's gnome talking about? About paradoxical ineffability, about the crystal in a variant of scratch language. "It" is the paradoxical in space: close and far away at the same time. "It" breaks down and fragments time into eternity, pseudo-timelessness, and intervening time. "It" is "post-existence proceeding from a pre-existence." Just as some tiny subatomic particles apparently can go through two holes at the same time—that's how paradoxical yet real "It" is.

After a psychosis or a mystical experience, when you try to trace exactly where and what the core of "The Event" was, it's as if you were trying to grasp water, as if you had burnt your tongue in a flame, as if time had evaporated and condensed into fantasy. Something strange occurred, but how it occurred, what it was, and whether it was real or not—that all remains vague. You walk through the mirror, stroll around behind it a bit, and come back; "in front of" turns out to have been "behind" and vice versa, and everything is back where it belongs, silent. Ultimately nothing has changed. The only thing that sticks with you is a vague feeling that a "house search" has taken place. (Think again of the poem by Aleksander Blok in section 7.3.5.) The gnome in Polet's story continues,

But just when these thoughts come to mind, you find yourself back behind your desk, fiddling with your moustache, and you don't even remember where you've been or if you've been somewhere else, or was it only a part of you, that's how little time it took, if it took any time at all. The only thing that sticks with you is the vague feeling of something strange. But for me that's already become so normal that it's hardly worth my while to wonder whether it was different before it happened, and if it was, whether there's an essential difference in strangeness. I prefer to experience the feeling of I'm-there-and-I'm-not-there as normal, he concluded solemnly.

The gnome uses contradictions to clarify something that was nothing, entirely in the spirit of paradox: "I'm-there-and-I'm-not-there." In the terminology of mind/matter dualism, he expresses it as follows:

It's like being a spirit and a real, living creature at the same time, with this one difference: the spirit is so close that it's just shy of being matter, and the matter so sheer that it's on the verge of complete spiritualization. You have the feeling of both, but you don't know which side of the supposed border you're on, so to speak.

The gnome then deals summarily with the idea that It can be expressed and communicated—if that's what the Polet reader is thinking—and adds a dollop of paradox for good measure: "not-like-this" and "like-this," was-true and never-was-true. A feisty little fellow, that gnome! He wants to communicate something, something that is not a thing, something that is genuine and real but cannot be grasped, let alone reproduced, because then ... phut!

If I have conveyed it in such a way that it can be understood, then I have failed. There is nothing to understand, or almost nothing. It's something like the feeling of not-like-this and like-this at the same time, but with more not, except for the last fraction of the moment of understanding, when the opposite is the case—less not. But if you're sitting here, behind your moustache, then it's not true all over again: it only *was* true, without ever having *been* true, and without any guarantee that it ever-will-be-true-again, even if it's only for a mini-fraction of time or non-time. ... If now I say metaphorical, people will think I mean imaginary, not real, but what I mean is very much genuine & real: a metaphor is taking place, but don't ask me how. Just when you think you've figured it out: phut ...!

Over and over again, you can "discover" the truth, the mystical core, the paradox of paradoxes, and every time It happens anew. It's as if something extraordinary had struck, time after time, and you have the feeling that that extraordinary thing is just an after-image of a more extraordinary thing from the past, an indication of something that is almost about to happen and will reveal the truth. As if there were a code with a key and you can't remember whether the key fits the code or vice versa, and then, because of the oscillation involved, the key finally becomes the code and both cancel each other out.

It's like being given a treasure and then forgetting you have it, after which it's given to you again as if it were the first time, and all the while you keep searching for the first treasure that you had forgotten. Or it's like decoding something that's not a secret at all, or that has no code; maybe you've thrown something together yourself, unaware of a code, which is there just the same; or you've come up with a code, but you've completely forgotten it and it's beyond recovery. And what proof do you have of this futile investigation? *None*.

Further on in Polet's story, the "I" converses with a remarkable giant, who also spoke to us in Intermezzo III.II.I—a "hole man," a reservoir of the emptinesses or holes existing in other people. This giant attracts "nothingness" and is burdened with the emptiness of others. He's a sort of ontological-existential scapegoat. Attempts are made to get past the nothingness by hollowing the giant out completely.

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From now on, I myself am your holes; they are forever part of me. And what you all recognize in me, and sometimes even idealize, are those holes, your holes. As a giant, I am your hole man, so to speak. And through my holes you attempt to force an opening to the other, to explore it and suck it dry. And when I'm completely hollowed out, filled with holes, as it were, then you think you've achieved or approached the impossible: the great mysterious hole, the negative giant.

What we would like more than anything else is to be enlightened, in a light that makes everything distinct, transparent, and clear: an explosion of sense and being or an implosion into total nothingness and the point of emptiness. But everything will never become the One. The remains of duality and paradoxicality will keep haunting us: two in osmosis, between watery mist and fiery haze, sucking and breathing, unfilling and refilling.

But heaven forbid the expected ultimate implosion, and absorption of one world into the other, does not happen and is replaced by an agonizingly slow osmosis, going in, coming out, there & back, there & back, like breathing, breathing in the mist, sucking the mist in and out, like mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on a Body that consists of more and more holes, holes that fill up with mist, border mist, instead of the merciless, illuminating clarity that was intended.

It's not the nothingness but that which is attracted by nothingness and is like the emperor's new clothes. Everything is as-if—as if for just a second, there was weighing and weight amidst all the hopping and the tumbling:

And the final reality consists not so much of the holes as of the phenomena in and around the holes, the gliding back and forth, among the almosts & the as-ifs, which express the essence of otherness and that may be otherness' essence. The uncertainty that this produces is perhaps most like the familiar situation of being of two minds, but which is the right one? Which is the wrong one? What counts is the temporary balance between the two, that one moment before it all comes tumbling down, and the rest is normal: being of two minds.

IV.II Rectilinear Superficial Warped: Word Play with Harald Kaas

God is the infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.

-Nicholas of Cusa

What else are the "men-gods" of whom we spoke earlier, if not the "geometric point" where the divine and the human coincide, as do being and nonbeing, eternity and death, the whole and the part?

-Mircea Eliade

Imagine that everything emerges from Eliade's "geometric point"—and converges at the same point: the point from which all lines originate as well as the point where they intersect and end, as in a black hole. The geometric point is a mirroring point, in which two worlds are reflected. Which side are you on? Image and mirror image converge at this point. The point itself is not mirrored, the light itself is not seen, the eye cannot see itself. The mirror is an infinite surface that distinguishes two infinite spaces in infinite space. Every mirror duplicates the world. The mirror is a surface that creates and transforms two spaces. Through the paradox of the mirror, spaces are separated, but they are also connected and mutually aligned.

Harald Kaas (1940–1989) experienced periods of madness, which formed an important theme in his literary works and essays. He writes (quoted in Vogelaar 1983, 98ff.),

The world must be thought of as having boundaries in order to keep it from being utterly meaningless. On the opposite side of the boundary, however, words are raging that doom every earthly sentence in which they appear to be incapable of even being false. The loftiest of these words is "God," and like the other, it falls prey to being obsessed with itself. Crossing the border would mean being able to say when one's life has come to an end. That is why the idea of being able to die while one is still alive is a very old one, and it would command respect if it were properly understood. The person who dies while he is still alive would be outside himself; he could be afflicted by doubt as to whether everything that happens here, where we live, really is happening as it happens. However, because he is working on this side, seeing only what he can see from the other side of the inexpressible border, the sight of it plunges him once again into a state of doubt. The border that silences us has disappeared; in its place is another border, one that distinguishes good from evil. Those who understand me know that I haven't said anything. But isn't this how we measure the value of the written word, that it teaches us how to be silent with the greatest clarity?

Adjust the point in such a way that instead of two mirrored open spaces, there are two spheres shooting out from it, two soap balls or bubble gum balls that bulge out from one starting point to two different sides. Get ready for two growing, swelling, gray metal spheres, touching each other at a single point on the surface. Like a three-dimensional omega, two spheres touch each other at a zero-dimensional point. The two spheres attract each other; they cannot be separated. But they can revolve around and over each other. Each point on the surface of one sphere can touch each point on the surface of the other.

Then imagine that all the background space is unlit black, with the two spheres in the foreground: one black and the other white. Imagine that 518 Intermezzo IV

the white from the white sphere "bleeds" onto the black sphere whenever the white sphere revolves around the black one. The white sphere draws an infinitely thin white line across the surface of the black sphere. Imagine that where the white sphere "bleeds" white, black appears beneath the white on its surface. When the spheres revolve around and over each other, white curvilinear lines appear on the black sphere. The white seems to be peeling away from the white sphere and leaving a black emptiness behind. More and more infinitely thin lines of white spin off the white sphere and roll themselves up around a slowly materializing second sphere. The white sphere is taken over and erased by black lines. After a while, two spheres become visible, lined with white and black. And even later, the white sphere disappears into the black background, and the black sphere turns white.

Light touches darkness at the point of contact. The moment of tumbling. Border mist between water and air. God bleeds into nothingness. Nothingness takes away the light, sucks the white up, wraps itself in light, dresses itself in the emperor's torn-off clothes. We deplete the white light. We steal the white, we become the white, we flee from the black hole. All the black is sealed off, filled, until it becomes white.

Harald Kaas writes in *Uhren und Meere*, his collection of stories (1979, 61),

I remember something from my childhood; it was on the edge of a pasture in Bohemia. For me, too, Bohemia was located on the seacoast; I could have sailed away whenever I wanted to back then. But I didn't sail away. I began chasing butterflies. My grandfather had died, and I wanted to kill a butterfly to see exactly how my grandfather had gone away. But when I killed a brimstone butterfly, nothing happened. It stopped moving, that was all. Where was death? There was no death. Death was not a life experience. Maybe I understood, even then, that language erects a border around our thinking, which you have to see from the other side in order to make sense out of life. Now that I also know the other side, philosophy rises before me—especially in its most exact form—like a lock whose key you only receive if you willingly allow yourself to be muzzled by certain conventions.

Two mirrored open spaces have no inside or outside, but the two spheres do. The spheres are each other's opposite. Imagine that one sphere is the other turned inside out. What one has on the inside, the other has on the outside. When we "seize" a sphere and pull it through the point of contact, it is "reversed" at that geometric point, turned inside out. Like when an imaginary hand enters a balloon, grabs the point on the opposite side, and pulls it inside out through the point of contact.

Imagine that you're always on the inside of such a sphere but that you can look out through that one mirrored point or point of contact on the

surface. You see only the inside of your own sphere and only the outside of the other sphere, the side that is turned toward you.

A soap-bubble life is blown in through the paradox. Paradoxical transformations: pull the other sphere over your own sphere and turn it inside out over yourself; suck the other sphere dry and commit illicit transubstantiation of the sphere's contents; travel over the surface of the sphere and suddenly find yourself on the outside of the other sphere, as with a Möbius strip. Kaas (1979, 63) writes,

A world of glass, he thinks once again, but nothing is tinkling or shattering. One thing reflects another in utter silence. None of that dreadful cracking that the madman lives with, the man for whom the world has become glass: succulent, light green leaves shatter like glass in his hand, fingers seem to break at the slightest touch. No, here it is silent, here in the infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.

Soundless melodies. Pillars and the song of plants, the melodious glances of lizards and fish. Each one carries a world in its heart, on its back, in the hollow of its hand, the bowels, the genitals. ... The pulverized world at the bottom of the soul arranges itself like crystal: actual elephants with raised trunks walk through what emerges there. Trumpeting mutely, they disappear from the field of vision of the inner eye: the physical gladly conceals itself. Each time, different water streams toward the terns that are landing on the shore. But in the end everything is one, stable and real.

The geometric point has blown through itself, exhausted itself, and formed two spheres with an infinite diameter. The two inner spaces of the spheres are now infinitely large, just like the space outside the spheres once was. If the two spheres are infinitely large, their surfaces are no longer curved but flat, as on the "flat earth" (see fragment VIII). The former infinitely small point of contact between the two finite spheres now changes—in the case of two infinite spheres—into two converging flat surfaces: a mirror. With two infinitely large spheres, every point on the sphere's surface is a point of contact with the other sphere. Every geometric point on the surface affords access to the other side.

This means that the inside spaces of the spheres are infinitely spacious. The formerly infinite outside space has now been pressed infinitely flat, caught between the two flat surfaces of the spheres. The former outside space is confined within the mirror surface. All that's left is inside space on two sides of the mirror. The former space outside the spheres is hidden *inside* the mirror and is discernible as a mirror paradox. The secret of the absolute exterior is visible only to those who look in the mirror with their eyes focused on zero and infinity. Kaas (1979, 50ff.):

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Infinitely long ago, or a few days ago, I found myself standing in the center of this peculiar carnival, just as I am today; every word was meant for me, every ray of sunlight was beamed for me. Then I thought: it's the others; they know everything; all I have to do is find the leader, the guardian of the password. ... Finally I ended up with God and the Devil. I had been handed over to the All-Knowing. Everything about me was known. The tiniest particle stood for the whole. Escape was impossible ...

Later, when I had given up the search for the human, the diabolical, or the divine demiurge, I encountered myself in everything. Every word, every flower, the falling of a leaf, the grating of the axis of a wheel, the orbit of the sun in the sky, everything that happened was ... what was still happening ... and all the events of the future—it happened because of me ...

That made me almighty, but I could not recognize myself. I missed a second person, to whom I could say: you are not me! I had neither brother nor foe. I was everything. I could have destroyed the world if I had chopped off my head, and I could have saved the world by my death on the cross.

Now I know that this was all misguided. I say "I," without believing it. I believed that I no longer had control over my thoughts, that others had command of them. I said, "My thoughts are being manufactured." I asked, "In whose hands have I fallen?" Since I have lost the "I," the thoughts are more peaceful. I am nothing more. There is merely something passing through. I no longer say, "I am a ten-thousand-year-old unborn being." I do not say, "I am dead." But I also do not say that I am alive.

14 Deliverance and Doom in Madness and Therapy

When the integrated whole dis-integrates, what emerges is plurality: a pluriform world in which paradox assumes a body, a voice, clothing, a history, and human longings and vices. Here the One breaks up into fragments, periods, and aspects. Here infinity is forced to limit itself to a finite number of words, thoughts, and substances. This pluriform world is the ordinary finite world of modern times, with all its limitations and doubts.

The mad world is also pluriform. When we compare our ordinary world with the world of madness, what immediately strikes us is that in the mad world, pluriformity is linked to experiences of deliverance and doom and is organized around a notion of the sacred. In madness, the sacred is concerned with things that we would normally be reluctant to call sacred. Conversely, things we normally regard as valuable or sacred are not of great importance in madness.

Most of the time we aren't really conscious of our own assumptions about what is valuable, but the normal world also has sacred limits that cannot be transgressed. Because the madman deals with salvation and doom in a way that contrasts sharply with what is normal, however, what is sacred to the madman tends to stand out. For this reason, outsiders may see the mad world as enchanted and irrational, one that clashes with an earthly world that seems disenchanted and rational. In this chapter I will describe the atmosphere of this mad, fairytale world of magical realism, which uses elements derived from medieval magic and futuristic fantasy. I will also consider how, in madness, the relationship changes between the sacred and the wicked, the sacred and the profane.

To that end, in section 14.1, I will first discuss the analyses and critiques of the sacred as formulated by Eliade and especially by Taylor, as well as the apparent absence of the sacred in modern times. Then in 14.2, I will make use of Taylor's notion of the porous self in order to interpret mad experiences such as magic, telepathy, extrasensory perception, human-animal

transformations, and so on. I will also delve more deeply into transpersonification and mad human types such as the shaman and the sorcerer. In 14.3, I will discuss three therapeutical directions in which the notion of the sacred, rather than being seen as a *problem* of madness, is instead regarded as the *solution* to madness.

14.1 Charles Taylor and the Enchanted Worldview

The mad world falls under the spell of the "sacred" of madness. By the "sacred," I am referring to that which is one small but crucial step removed from the One, infinity, and being. The sacred still retains the memory of the ineffable, but it is articulated and thereby "dis-integrated," described and imagined as discursive. The sacred is mysticism, as it concretely renders itself on earth in clearly defined thoughts, actual objects, and real rituals (cf. Eliade 1961, 1958a, and Ricoeur 1967a). The sacred in madness consists of the earthly variants and specific concrete elaborations of what I described in part III as the uni-delusion, the esse-delusion, the Ω -delusion, and the Ω -delusion. The sacred in madness makes for difference, variety, and contours in the mad world.

In earthly reality, one place is a sanctuary while the other is not, one person is good while the other is not, one story is real while the other is not. The sacred exists only by virtue of its contrast with the profane. In our "ordinary" world, things also exist that are sacred in the sense of being unquestionable givens, unexpressed taboos, and fundamental value judgments. Usually we are less conscious of these things, however, while the sacred in madness is more conspicuous. In order to describe this different kind of sacredness, I will first explain what is usually regarded as sacred and how this everyday sacredness is desecrated in madness. After the everyday sacredness is desecrated, another archaic form of sacredness appears. I will approach this archaic form via the roundabout way of premodern time, which in some respects resembles the world of madness.

14.1.1 Common Musings on the Sacred

Religions exhibit the greatest clarity when it comes to defining what is sacred and what isn't. Some places are more sacred than others, such as the church building, the temple, and the altar. Some times are sacred, such as Sunday, Christmas, and the Sabbath. Certain objects can also be sacred, such as relics and icons. People and animals can be set apart on account of their sacredness, such as the cow in India and the saints in Christianity. Many of

these entrenched religious understandings of the notion of "sacred" are no longer automatically accepted today.

There are also sacred things in nonreligious life, although they are not always referred to as such. In everyday language, "sacred" means something like "especially valuable" or "inviolable." The term "sacred" is never used for something that is a mere means for something else but only for something that has a purpose in itself. The sacred has no interest in calculated considerations of usefulness or efficiency; something useful is always useful for something else, and something efficient is efficient with regard to a degree of efficiency. If a sword were sacred, for example, it wouldn't be because it's such a good fighting instrument. A sacred sword cannot be replaced by a gun, if a gun enables you to fight better. A sword is sacred because it refers to—or is derived from—a "sacred" domain. You can make the sacredness of the sword plausible, but only partially, by saying that it was used to win a decisive battle or was the property of an important person. But the transition from important to sacred is never automatic. You cannot make a sword sacred by winning an important battle with it or giving it to an important person.

Sacredness does not occupy the same sphere as other profane qualities or actions. The sacredness of an object is not to be reduced to one of its functions or to a feature such as size or shape (see Eliade 1958a, 13 ff.). What is sacred is not up for debate: it isn't determined by individual choices, preferences, or tastes. It is neither the subjective attributing of a certain judgment or quality nor an objective feature of objects that you can examine. The sacred transcends the subjective and objective; it belongs to the domain of the absolute. The sacred imposes itself, and once it is acknowledged or recognized, no discussion is possible. The sacred is also categorically not for sale; its value can never be expressed in terms of money. Indeed, if something is for sale, it can, in principle, be exchanged for something else, and as such, its value can be determined relative to other earthly goods. The sacred, however, is not earthly and cannot be exchanged, sold, or "compared" with anything else.

In times of secularization, leveling, and control, it is unusual to insist that some things are sacred. What is sacred is not for sale, and for that reason alone it is not interesting for many parties. Worse still is the fact that the sacred cannot be discussed, even though it is of vital importance. The sacred eludes any attempts to organize, control, or regulate. For this reason, many people would be glad to do away with it. Some maintain that there is no such thing as the truly sacred and that all supposedly sacred

things can be explained in terms of usefulness and self-interest. According to them, anything that has been declared sacrosanct should be destroyed, everything should be discussible and negotiable, and nothing should be allowed to be absolute or above the law—not even the law itself. Swords can be sacred only in the metaphorical sense of the word, and Sundays are sacred only if they don't interfere with consumers' purchasing practices.

There are two kinds of problems involved in such modern considerations. First of all, it's unclear in whose name the sacred should be desecrated. The disappearance of religious worldviews, in which the sacred plays a central role, goes hand in hand with a rising need for ultimate, unquestionable values. Desecration will lead only to an empty, meaningless world, without any direction or purpose. People who consistently adhere to a fatalistic perspective become cynical and empty, and they secretly long for "something" of value and meaning. The gnawing, unanswerable question remains: In the name of what higher good should the existence of a higher good be rejected?

In addition to rendering their own "core values" groundless, modern desecrating ideologies do not practice what they preach. Even those who loudly declare that they believe in neither god nor the commandments are steeped in core values that guide their everyday actions and thinking and can safely be described as sacred. That the disappearance of the religious worldview has not led people to plunge into the void of nothingness en masse is owing to the inconspicuous introduction of new or revived sacred values. Modern sacred values are no longer based on a divine revelation and a heavenly kingdom but on "man" himself. After the ousting of the sacred divinity, man has put himself on the throne. If there's anything that is "not for sale," people will answer, then surely it's man and his deepest essence—whatever that may be. Man is the only thing that can never be merely a means for achieving something else; he must always be the goal itself-according to the well-known Kantian adage from the Enlightenment. The sacredness of man-or for those who don't like that term, "the human rights of man"—are inalienable and nonnegotiable. Those rights are not dependent on what people do or what kinds of qualities they have; they are an a priori given.

The sacredness of man has many aspects. First of all, man has a free and autonomous inner self that should be respected, and he has the right to freedom and to his own opinion. Everyone is inherently equal and should be treated equally. In addition, that presumed inner self is an inexhaustible source of turbulence and riches that can be developed by the individual in an authentic way. In the modern world, modern man, with his autonomy,

authenticity, and integrity, is deemed sacred. Everything beyond man is considered subordinate.

According to Canadian cultural philosopher and philosophical anthropologist Charles Taylor—in his standard works *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989) and *A Secular Age* (2007)—this modern view is based on a self-image of man as a "closed self," as opposed to the "porous self" of other historical periods. In the experience of modern man, says Taylor, a sharp boundary has been drawn between inner experiences and thoughts and outer phenomena and things. I call this the "sacred" modern boundary. Taylor explains (2007, 33), "the enchanted world [of the Middle Ages and of madness], in contrast to our universe of buffered selves and 'minds,' shows a perplexing absence of certain boundaries which seem to us essential." My position, inspired by Taylor, is that mad desecration consists in violating this modern boundary, resulting in a reconsecration of things that are totally alien to us modern humans.

14.1.2 Desecration and Reconsecration

In his book on secularization, a monumental work of more than eight hundred pages, Charles Taylor (2007) traces the historical emergence of the modern self-image of the bounded, closed self (also see 14.3.3). He includes a description of the differences between the premodern and the modern self-image, which are useful to me in my description of the mad world. I will be commenting on a few quotes from this passage (2007, 29–37). One important difference between the two kinds of self is that in the modern self, thoughts and meanings are placed within a bounded, inner space, while in the porous self—of both the mad and the premodern character—thoughts and meanings are not located within a closed inner space; rather, inner and outer spaces flow into each other. Taylor writes,

The process of disenchantment is the disappearance of this [enchanted] world, and the substitution of what we live today: a world in which the only locus of thoughts, feelings, spiritual élan is what we call minds; the only minds in the cosmos are those of humans ... and minds are bounded. ... On the former view meanings are "in the mind," in the sense that things only have the meaning they do in that they awaken a certain response in us. ... But in the enchanted [and mad] world, meanings are not in the mind in this sense, certainly not in the human mind. ... So in the pre-modern [and mad] world, meanings are not only in minds, but can reside in things, or in various kinds of extra-human but intracosmic subjects ...

According to the modern worldview, the meaning of language, signs, symbols, and phenomena are ultimately located within the individual

himself. Meaning is not to be found in the world, fully formed and ready for the taking, but is placed in the world by people. Without people, the world is without meaning, sense, or purpose. If a psychotic believes he sees a great deal of meaning in the glance of a passer-by or in the numbers on a license plate, his modern contemporary (be he therapist, layman, or philosopher) will think that the psychotic is placing the meaning there himself. For the psychotic with the porous, premodern worldview, however, the situation is quite different. He sees what's in front of him, right? He really sees specific patterns all around him. He isn't making the associations himself; rather, the phenomena are really connected to each other in a particular way. In madness—and in the premodern era—the meaning of the world belongs to the world itself. Modern therapists, however, will try to convince the porous psychotic that his "false attribution of meaning" is the fault of a cognitive disorder or, as Kapur calls it, "inappropriate salience" (see Intermezzo II.III.II).

The porous psychotic sees "meanings" in the broad sense of the word; the world has become "significant and meaningful." He sees plans, good and evil intentions, and a sense of purpose in things and situations that, today, we see as meaningless objects and coincidences upon which we impose meaning. A thundercloud warns the psychotic to be cautious; a black cat is the harbinger of calamity. The madman lives in a world charged with signs, sense, and meaning, salvation and doom, good and evil, which can be localized neither internally nor externally because they exist thanks only to the disappearance of the border between the internal and the external. The psychotic will be trained by therapists to close this border between the internal and external. He will be enticed to leave this porous world of salvation and spirits and to declare his support for our closed self-image. Taylor writes about how such a porous world, with open borders, which is often associated with madness today, was the normal world that everyone inhabited until quite recently:

If we look at the lives of ordinary people—and even to a large degree of élites—500 years ago, we can see in a myriad ways how this [the "porosity"] was so. First, they lived in a world of spirits, both good and bad. The bad ones included Satan, of course, but beside him, the world was full of a host of demons, threatening from all sides: demons and spirits of the forest, and wilderness, but also those which can threaten us in our everyday lives. Spirit agents were also numerous on the good side. Not just God, but also his saints, to whom one prayed, and whose shrines one visited in certain cases, in hopes of a cure, or in thanks for a cure already prayed for and granted, or from rescue from extreme danger, e.g., at sea.

The world of spirits and saints—in the past as well as in madness—was not a world of stories that existed only in the mind or "in a manner of speaking." Spirits and powers manifested themselves in concrete sacred objects, at specific sacred places, and at set sacred times. There was a "spiritual power" or "holiness" that made itself known in the world. These "sacred" objects and powers had qualities that are no longer ascribed to dead things in our modern world. Taylor writes,

But power also resided in things. For the curative action of saints was often linked to centers where their relics resided. ... These objects were loci of spiritual power; which is why they had to be treated with care, and if abused could wreak terrible damage. In fact, in the enchanted world, the line between personal agency and impersonal force was not at all clearly drawn. ... These "charged" objects can affect not only us but other things in the world. They can effect cures, save ships from wreck, end hail and lightning, and so on. They have what we usually call "magic" powers. ... Sources of evil power correspondingly wreak malevolent ends, make us sick, weaken our cattle, blight our crops, and the like.

As for the degree of porosity of the membrane around the self, premodern selves resemble the psychotic self. Custance provides a typical glimpse of this when he writes (1952, 36–37—also quoted in 10.1.2), "Perhaps it can best be described as a 'breach in the barriers of individuality.' ... the 'sense of estrangement, fencing in a narrowly limited ego' disappears altogether. The shell which surrounds the ego and so often gets harder with the years is pierced." This can be interpreted psychologically in a number of ways: perhaps the psychotic is returning to an archaic stratum of consciousness that underlies all of us and that modern man has triumphed over. Or, to put it more positively, perhaps the psychotic has the ability to allow a religious or sacred consciousness—which is normally suppressed in modern man—to rise to the surface.

The great difference between the madman and premodern man, however, is that the porous psychotic self is not attuned to and coordinated with others, as the premodern self was. Perhaps the degree of porosity was once the same as that of the modern psychotic, but the way the premodern person dealt with it was something he shared with others: by means of a shared religious worldview, for example, or a shared attitude about life in general. The postmodern psychotic lacks the very beacon of the stable other.

Not only were thoughts and meanings independent of human agency, but so were good and evil. Today, people believe that good and evil can only be good or evil from a specific, relative perspective. Statements about good and evil are regarded as judgments, the basis of which lies in the person himself, with all of his human longings and needs. In the modern

era, "good" is what is useful or healthy for a person or what advances his freedom. "Evil" is whatever does harm to a person or to one of the things that are important to him. It's difficult for modern people to imagine that good and evil might be independent forces or eminences, coming from a domain beyond human thoughts and judgments. This, however, is one of the most distinctive differences between the premodern and psychotic worldview and that of the normal (modern) worldview. The premodern and psychotic worlds are permeated with the contrast and struggle between good and evil. Kaas (1979, 53) writes, "It's as if I see things differently, more clearly than before ... within a range that was closed many centuries before me. I no longer see good and evil only in people's words and deeds, but I see it everywhere, in the turning of wheels, the orbit of the stars, the growth of plants, and the formation of crystals."

In madness, man is not the good center who has to fend for himself in a dead, indifferent world. Man himself is one of the battlefields on which the struggle between good and evil is being fought. Anton Boisen was a clergyman who experienced madness and tried to integrate it into his work (also see Arends 2013). Boisen says (1960, 106), "As I look back over this [i.e. Boisen's own period of madness], viewing it more in perspective, I still wonder if there may not be some glimmering of truth in these strange ideas. We know so little about the unseen forces. Is it not possible that our minds are the scene of a struggle in which universal issues are at stake?"

In these strange worlds, evil is neither the absence of good nor a party or group of people with other interests, but it is an intangible network of forces that manifests itself in all sorts of ways. The contrast between good and evil is one of the most important forms of the contrast between deliverance and doom. Taylor writes,

Indeed, we can say that in this world, there is a whole gamut of forces, ranging from (to take the evil side for a moment) super-agents like Satan himself ... to minor demons, like spirits of the wood ... and ending in magic potions which bring sickness or death. ... the evil spirit has more than just weird and impressive external powers. The malevolence is more invasive than this. It can sap our very will to resist, our will to survive. It can penetrate us as living, willing beings, with out own purposes and intent. We can't restrict its action to the "external realm."

In the contemporary jargon of psychotic disorders, there is an eagerness to speak of "vulnerabilities." If you are "vulnerable" to psychosis, there are certain events (or "stimuli") that are difficult for you to process. This modern linguistic usage implies that vulnerability ought to be regretted as a form of oversensitivity or weakness. If you can reduce "vulnerability" with the help of medicines, you should never pass up the opportunity. If, with

Taylor's description, we allow ourselves to be carried along to the enchanted world, we find that vulnerability takes on a very different meaning. There the degree of vulnerability is the degree of openness of the porous self: the susceptibility to deliverance and doom, an involvement in good and evil. Described in this way, vulnerability is also "healability," an ability to relate to good and evil as a whole instead of screening yourself off from that domain behind an invulnerable suit of armor. According to Taylor, the enchanted world is a better place for dealing with your vulnerabilities:

We feel ourselves vulnerable or "healable" (this is meant to be the favorable antonym to "vulnerable") to benevolence or malevolence which is more than human, which resides in the cosmos or even beyond it. This sense of vulnerability is one of the principal features which have gone with disenchantment. Any particular attribution of danger, e.g., to a witch, fits in that world into a generalized sense of vulnerability which this attribution specifies. This is what makes it credible. The enchanted world provides a framework in which these attributions make sense and can be fully believable.

In the enchanted world—either mad or premodern—the door is open to noncontemporary ways of confronting threats and evil, such as rituals and symbolic invocations like praying, casting spells, touching sacred objects in the correct way, entering sacred places, and so forth. All these are methods for navigating the domain of good and evil and for developing perspective. Taylor writes,

Along with vulnerability to malevolence goes the need to propitiate, action to buy or win with friendship, or at least de-activate the enmity of these forces. And connected to this are notions of what it is normal to do to propitiate, hence notions of ought, debt; hence notions of guilt and punishment; which thus play a large part in this world.

In the enchanted world, redemption, punishment, penance, and purification are concerned not only with the inner world or mental health, as they are in today's way of thinking. The focus isn't restricted to manifestations of a sick or searching mind. On the contrary, these are real actions and events that are essential to maintaining order and sacred harmony in the micro- and macro-cosmic battle between good and evil. An example of the interweaving of inner thoughts having to do with good and evil and events in the outside world can be found in the work of Strindberg (1912, 47) (also see section 16.1.1):

In the course of the spring, while I was feeling depressed by my own and my friend's untoward destiny, I received a letter from the children of my first marriage, informing me that they had been very ill in hospital. When I compared the

time of their illness with my mischievous attempt at magic, I was alarmed. I had frivolously played with hidden forces, and now my evil purpose, guided by an unseen Hand, had reached its goal, and struck my heart.

Madmen, too, frequently have a sense that certain objects have gained power over them, or that other forces, persons, or "entities" have taken possession of them. If you find that another person is exercising influence over your own deepest inner self in a "magical" way, the modern view is that this is a clear sign of madness. According to the premodern and psychotic worldview, however, if the border between yourself and the outside world is not sharply delineated, and the difference between person and power is not very clear, then "possession" is no longer a clearly defined notion and is not necessarily a sign of madness. Taylor writes,

Even the line between ordinary cases of influence and full possession was not totally sharp. ... People spoke of possession when our higher faculties and powers seemed totally eclipsed; for instance, when people fell into delirium. But in a sense, any evil influence involves some eclipse of the highest capacities in us. ... And so the boundary between agents and forces is fuzzy in the enchanted world; and the boundary between mind and world is porous, as we see in the way that charged objects can influence us. The porousness of the boundary emerges here in the various kinds of "possession," all the way from a full taking over of the person, as with a medium, to various kinds of domination by, or partial fusion with, a spirit or God. ... And indeed, five centuries ago, many of the more spectacular manifestations of mental illness, what we would class as psychotic behavior, were laid at the door of possession, as in the New Testament times.

In the premodern world there were commonly held notions of the sacred. The domain of the sacred was the locus of meaning, where good and evil meet in an eternal struggle and where, paradoxically enough, eternal, timeless harmony reigns. If we were more familiar with this premodern world, we would see that it's not all about a naive belief in spirits but that the entire structure of experience was different; the borders between inner and outer ran in quite a different direction. What today is described as a loss of identity or a lack of ego-borders is, from the premodern worldview, a gain of openness and susceptibility to "cosmic realities." Taylor writes,

This [pre-modern worldview] opens to us a universe which is much more alien than this. Cosmic forces which breach the boundary and can act within are not only personalized creatures like us. There is a whole gamut of them, which progressively depart from the personal, until we need a quite different model; that of cosmic realities which nevertheless incorporate certain meanings; and hence can affect us, make us live these meanings in certain circumstances.

The madman, too, rarely harbors a naive belief in spirits. Where he does differ from the premodern man is that his experiences of the sacred are seldom embedded in a supportive community of like-minded people. He is much more likely to have his beliefs thwarted in a clinically "sober" environment that is populated by cynics hostile to salvation or mysticism.

14.1.3 Sacred Emanation

So in the mad world, the sacred border between interior and exterior disappears, and everything becomes a potential target of mad reconsecration: a color, for example, or a number, the name of a people, a VIP, the make of car, or a code word. Imagine it this way: heaven and hell open up and rain fortune (or misfortune) on a person or thing. As a result, this thing is lifted out of its environment and begins to radiate holiness.³ The object inspires awe and becomes the center of power, strength, and mysterious rituals. The following example has to do with the consecration of a thing (a cake) and an action (preparing the cake), which together constitute a sacred ritual (Kindwall and Kinder, quoted in Landis 1964, 157):

As the work progressed, a change came. The ingredients of the cake began to have a special meaning. The process became a ritual. At certain stages the stirring must be counter-clockwise; at another time it was necessary to stand up and beat the butter toward the east; the egg whites must be folded in from left to right; for each thing that had to be done there were complicated reasons. I recognized that these were new, unfamiliar, and unexpected, but did not question them. They carried a finality that was effective. Each compelling impulse was accompanied by an equally compelling explanation.

Landis adds this commentary: "This transition was from semi-organized rational thinking to a fantasy in which a sort of ritualistic magic process seemed to be the organizing principle involved." The sacred opens the gate into another dimension.

In "my" enchanted world (see Fragments II and IV), the Nokia telephone assumed additional sacred functions in addition to the usual profane functions of making calls and sending text messages. Nokia became a sacred symbol, a key, and a springboard to a network of sanctuaries. Opposite Nokia was the (German) Siemens phone, the ultimate evil.⁵ The numbers on mobile phones turned out to be intended not only for making phone calls but also for effecting all kinds of magical influences at a distance. The phonemes in the name Nokia exceeded the limits of the word and sought contact with Kenya, North Korea, and Kenwood. Carrying and showing off a Nokia was as powerful a symbol as carrying a cross in other creeds.

Nokian deliverance unlocked a space whose contents could not be completely fathomed and could only be guessed at. Thanks to my Nokia I came in contact with the sacred, and the normally impenetrable wall between the profane and the sacred was thereby demolished. Commenting on the way such sacred things work, Eliade says (1965, 202),

Religious symbols which touch on the patterns of life reveal a deeper Life, more mysterious than that grasped by everyday experience. They reveal the miraculous, inexplicable side of Life, and at the same time the sacramental dimension of human existence. "Deciphered" in the light of religious symbols, human life itself reveals a hidden side: it comes from "elsewhere," from very far away; it is "divine" in the sense that it is the work of Gods or supernatural Beings ...

Taylor's description of the premodern world helps us understand experiences of "porousness" in the mad world that are difficult to grasp. Eliade's descriptions of the more archaic and rudimentary sacredness permeate the more bizarre and whimsical madness. Eliade writes about how seeing and discovering worldly patterns is experienced as the "deciphering" of codes and messages from the gods:

For primitives, symbols are always religious, since they point either to something real or to a World-pattern. Now, at the archaic levels of culture, the real—that is to say the powerful, the significant, the living—is equivalent to the sacred. Moreover, the World is a creation of the Gods or of supernatural Beings: to discover a World pattern amounts to revealing a secret or a "ciphered" meaning of the divine work.

Nokia was real, powerful, and packed with meaning, and it was therefore sacred. Discovering additional possible uses for the Nokia phone was like exposing secret divine patterns. The preprogrammed Sudoku games on the phones referred to the base codes of the world's peoples and to important years in world history. Running through the menu was akin to running through the basic structure of reality, the dialectical unfolding of the absolute mind. Nokia was the name of my phone and also the name of a vast, vague network that included shops, computers, advertisements, Finland, KeNwood, KeNya, and all mobile phone owners. There were Nokia-whispering campaigns and allusions to "data"; images were concealed and answers clandestinely destroyed.

Nokia stood for communication, connection, transition, and transport—upward. By repeating the mantra "No-Ki-A," you could travel mentally between different levels. At the higher levels, it was more than a matter of telephony. That was where the battle between good and evil was fought—between the new digital-network economy and the old top-down industrial economy, between faith and paganism, between the black-and-white

world and the world of color. The higher I ascended, the closer I drew to the One and the more penetrating the salvation (also see chapter 9). In the "midfield" between the highest One and the lowest profane reality, an intermediate level took shape, consisting of a Plan that could not be precisely identified (see chapter 15) and that existed outside of time and space, where Nokia was one of the important actors as well as one of the code words. To further plumb the depths of the Plan, Nokia had to be unmasked, "decoded," and "fathomed."

The sacred may lose itself in concretely demonstrable objects, expressible thoughts, and explainable stories, but because of its supernatural origins, it's hard to say exactly where the sacred resides. The sacred is like a promise in which the thing promised is unknown, like hope without an object of hope. He who is possessed by something sacred cannot completely explain the why of it—for that would relegate the sacred to profane explanations and give it a goal and a framework outside itself, which is at odds with the essence of the sacred. For members of larger religious communities like the Catholic church, the indeterminable vagueness of the sacred is not a problem. Exactly what is sacred about a host or a wooden cross, and how it got that way, is something the layperson doesn't need to know, and even the well-educated Catholic can appeal to ineffable miracles that transcend human understanding. But he who is overcome by the sacred in complete isolation—without the support of fellow seekers or coreligionists—is in for some problems.

Nevertheless, the sacredness of words or concepts like Nokia is somewhat understandable. Brand names like Nokia, Nike, Kia, and Coca-Cola have acquired a holy aura in the nonmad world as well. They're symbols that drift through the public domain, popping up at unexpected moments, and they're associated with enjoyment and pleasure. They suggest that "via" these brands (in this case, by buying them), you have access to a happy world. In madness, however, such names are worshipped in another way: in madness, they drag you along so far that there's no longer any distance between the name (Nokia, Fiat, Apple) and the sacred domain. In madness, sacred symbol and the sacred itself coincide; the name is identical to the named. The name not only *calls on* the sacred but also *summons* the sacred. The uttering of "Nokia" is like a magical incantation. Carelessly plunking the Nokia down on a table becomes a secret, sacred sign, comprehensible only to the sacralized initiates. The Nokia itself has then become so sacred that, by tapping a few of its buttons, you can travel through space and time. You end up in a shamanic realm within a magical-mythical noncontemporary world.7

14.2 Madness: Sorcery and Magic

14.2.1 Penetration and Radiation

If all the gates are open and the existential skin is porous, then terrifying and dangerous forces and ideas slip in as well. The madman is vulnerable to minor fluctuations and variations in his environment, and every breeze feels like a hurricane. Unlike in the premodern times that Taylor wrote about, the psychotic has few socially accepted means at his disposal to protect him from evil influences. Michaux (1974, 135 ff.) has poignantly described this strange, lonely world. He first mentions the disappearance of the enclosed self, autonomous will, and self-control as the causes of anxiety, insecurity, and paranoid thoughts:

One is no longer protected by its (absent) will, by its (lost) self control, by its (vanished) ease in shifting position, directing and moving itself. ... One possible consequence will be that one no longer feels secure. Anxiety sets in. One wonders if someone might not take advantage of this condition. One expects to be observed, criticized, mocked ...

He then describes how psychological openness and susceptibility can lead to the discernment of strange "presences"—what in traditional psychiatry are readily labeled hallucinations:

The impression of being, instead of a body, a psychic being, causes one to expect psychic presences as well (it is later that they appear as physical). One has the impression of presences, one feels variations of presences, reinforcements of presences, of half-presences. Behind one, beside one, in shadowy places, but in the light as well, in corners, in recesses, one feels, one sees presences coming, already there are infra-presences, dense voids on the way to becoming presences.

These presences can assume all manner of conceivable forms. They cannot be further described by referring to what normally penetrates our "enclosing armor," since by definition these presences do not penetrate anything. The presences are to be understood as what appears when the "sacred border" between the inner and outer world falls away—as a byproduct of the annihilation of this border. I could describe them in terms of color, density, location, or duration, but these would not be colors and forms as we know them from the enclosed self. They could be called hallucinations, delusions, or phantasms, but these are only terms that the enclosed self uses to give name to what cannot be categorized.

For the porous self, the presences are sometimes terrifying, but they are also often familiar. The presences are the elements that give rise to moods and feelings. For the enclosed self, feelings and general moods are robust

givens, since they are what constitute the armor or the sacred border itself. For the porous self, the awareness of whirling presences causes the general mood to seem unstable, kaleidoscopic, whimsical, and complex. Not only does the sensitivity to vague presences increase, but so does the sensitivity to other "spirits," people, moods, and glances, as if the skin had become infinitely thin, the pupils had opened wide, and everything had the tendency to "hit home" more than usual.⁸

Hallucinations and paranoia belong to neither the subjective inner world nor the objective outer world, but they clot and cluster when the border between inner and outer becomes porous. This brings the psychotic into an enervating world full of mysterious forces and dark powers, which is understandably described in premodern ways—religious or medieval. No laws as we know them apply in this world: anything goes. Life there is heavy-going: before you know it, the net pulls tight, and they've got you! And you're given very little support from others in your struggle; there are few priests or shamans who dare risk such mad "mental conditions" (but see section 14.3).

Nevertheless, the psychotic is not entirely helpless; he is capable of making his own findings, his own reply. If the outer world uses magical means to influence him, he will attack the outer world in a magical way. Just as a single black swallow in the air can cause the psychotic's inner world to crumble, he himself can use his mind, his eyes, his hands, and his feet to make fire, break iron, and walk on water. The stars have influence on him, but he also has influence on the stars. Telepathy and telekinesis are the means of coping in the mad world.⁹

When it comes to thoughts and experiences like these, the mad mysticism of part III is in short supply. The paranoid, with his mental radiation and radar eyes, no longer finds himself in the ethereal condition in which "all is one" and the finite is subsumed in the infinite. The hazy light has dissipated, and a baroque, enchanted world has appeared. There are new borders, new shapes, new distinctions. Now the alleged knowledge of the sacred is enlisted for earthly, practical purposes. The psychotic goes from being a mystical madman and passive saint to being a practicing sorcerer. Silent mystical madness becomes turbulent insanity. In order to further understand this magical, enchanted world, we can study the worlds of science fiction, fantasy, and magic—in films, books, and games.

Take the book *Doorways in the Sand* by the American science-fiction writer Roger Zelazny, for example, in which at a certain point the main character ends up in a "Rhennius machine" that "reverses" everything (also see the Preface to this book). This theme of "reversal" also plays an important role in madness, which I described at length in section 4.2.2. In order

to properly understand this strange experience of "the world in reverse," it helps to read Zelazny's book. And by analogy, glancing through a selection of science fiction and fantasy books can do the same for telepathy and magic.

But, it should be noted, my emphasis on the phenomenon of reversal could have been inspired by this Zelazny as well as illustrated by him. Indeed, Zelazny's book *Doorways in the Sand* played a significant role in my own episode of madness in 1987. I interpreted Zelazny's star-stone as the mysterious sacred black stone of Mecca, and I understood that the secret of Islam had to do with the revolving throng in the square surrounding the structure where that special stone is kept. Without Zelazny's idea of reversal, I might not have fallen into the delusion of reversal, or so the critics could have said. The phenomenon of "reversal" is so prevalent in madness, however, that such a delusion could never have dropped out of the sky, neither in my case nor as a motif in Zelazny's book.

The spiral keeps revolving, however, and the paths of influence are seldom unambiguous. After the use of the Rhennius machine—first as an "experience motif" for my madness in 1987 and then as a theme in my books from 2004 and 2007—I decided to read Zelazny again. I reread the series about the magical kingdom of Amber, where everything centers on a certain family who, with the help of telepathy and telekinesis, are able to travel through a network of interconnected worlds. These "princes of Amber" are able to mentally modify their environments with regard to landscape, technological development, local population, and degree of order and chaos. The princes have the ability to travel through parallel worlds. The book gives the reader at least some understanding and feeling for the magical, telekinetic, and telepathic techniques involved in madness. But here too, in the summer of 2007, I may have been "inspired" once again to practice magical-mad landscape control on my own (see Fragment VI). Given the omnipresence of things like magic in episodes of madness, however, it seems more likely that Zelazny and I were drawing on the same source as far as magic is concerned.

14.2.2 Animo, Anima, Animal

Modern science fiction and fantasy aren't the only points of access to the world of madness. Mad themes can also be found in fairy tales and fables. In fairy tales, fables, and madness, all kinds of transformations and transitions take place between the human and the animal kingdoms, such as human-to-animal metamorphoses and talking beasts. If "anything goes," and the madman is permeable—if not "wide open"—to spiritual influences, devilish thoughts, and fantastic possibilities, then he can look at humans

and animals and their mutual relationship in a less conventional way. Inanimate objects may actually have a hidden life; a hammer is no longer a hammer but a vitalized representative of the sacred bond between wood and metal. The hammer doesn't just serve the work of carpentry; it also whispers about the merging of woodland forces with the unknown world of metal. What is true of "dead" objects is all the more true of the plant and animal kingdoms. The meaning or purpose of the sacred can be read in the way birds fly in formation and twitter, in the way flies and insects annoyingly pop up out of nowhere (think of Schreber), and in the way dogs wag their tails or bark their opinions at exactly *one particular* moment.

Although any animal can play a part in madness, it's striking just how often cats do. As Custance (1952, 35) notes, "At night all cats are gray, so perhaps gray was a feline color. I like the cat tribe, particularly when in the manic state. They are, I know, slightly Satanic, but it is the kind of Satanism I prefer; it reminds me of a favorite delusion—that I am Satan, the Servant of All, the Scientific Snake who told the truth in the Garden of Eden."

For Custance, the cat assumes a superfeline significance because of its color and its connection with the devil. 11 Sechehaye's Renee writes of even darker associations with the cat (1970, 99): "I had a dreadful fear of my hands and the conviction that I would be changed into a famished cat, prowling in cemeteries, forced to devour the remains of decomposing cadavers."

I remember my fear that a girlfriend of mine would change into a cat. She had stopped in to see me and had left for a moment to go to the bakery, leaving her black coat hanging limply over a chair. That empty coat led me to doubt things that were normally indisputable. Was she a witch who had peeled off her "pelt" and was now going through life as a cat? Were all cats witches? Had I discovered the secret truth about cats, and did I now understand the real reason people love cats so much? Or was I just running off at the mouth, and was this idea a sign that I was really losing it—as they had told me? How could I discover the truth?

The only way to know for sure was to drop everything and go looking for this girlfriend. But even before I could get my coat on, she reappeared at the door—in human form, or so it seemed. She was back from buying a currant bun, but I welcomed her as if she had been walking through a minefield, as if I hadn't seen her in forty years. I knew it was better not to tell her the reason for my happiness, because that belonged to the secret domain of the magical-sacred, and the more I talked about it, the more likely she was to have me declared certifiable. It's a paradoxical fate that confronts the madman: since he's afraid that people will find out what he's really thinking, he keeps his innermost feelings to himself. As a result, the "outside world"

sees and hears only the external side effects of those strange promptings, so they're much more likely to suspect him of being incomprehensibly, incoherently mad ("He's crazy. He talks to the birds.")

We encounter the same linking of animals with primordial anxieties and obsessions in fairy tales, fables, and myths, and among young children. According to psychoanalysts, what we find cropping up in such animal symbolism are primary images, longings, and fantasies. When it comes to madness, however, the direction of influence could go either way. The madman, unlike the young child, is already familiar with animal stories and symbolic representations, and because of the absence of any distinction between reality and fiction in madness, these stories—like all stories—are likely to come to life. Once again, this raises the chicken-or-the-egg question concerning the origins of madness (see the previous section and 11.2.1.3): Is the madman encountering deep truths (whether or not they are of the archetypical-magical, ineffable-mystical, or philosophical kind), or is he merely reusing concepts that were already lying dormant in and around him?

In some cases, it is abundantly clear that in madness, existing concepts are being reused, distorted, and obsessed on to the point of parody. In my own madness, I thought—partly in response to the huge flood of reports about the importance of genes and evolution—that the human being was a sort of modified ape. Suddenly I saw ape-like qualities in human beings everywhere. Of course, every sociobiologist sees this, but mainly as an academic pastime. In madness, however, the evolutionary ape story can have far-reaching consequences. For example, I "saw" trees and plants as the remnants of the primeval forest, from which prehistoric man had distanced himself when he moved on to the savanna. I "felt" how branches and leaves continued to attract people and how pedestrians subconsciously tended to walk wherever there was foliage and leaves. I suddenly realized that my house plant, which had always stood so innocently in a corner of the living room, was a wise, ancient survivor of the jungle. On the street I saw apes, fully dressed and shaved, using ape behavior—ape mimicry.

After this ape phase, I delved more deeply into evolution. I arrived at the insight that the most important struggle in all of world history has been that of natural species opposing each other—in changing coalitions. Dogs conspired against cats, and sometimes they joined forces as mammals against birds, fish, or insects. I understood that as long as there were cats, the human struggle against the cat could not be won—and that perhaps, from the cat's point of view, the cats had won already. Not by means of language, to be sure, but by means of other power strategies, the cat got what it wanted. The meow of the cat sounded from the historic depths and represented the mythic-cosmic struggle of the natural species.

At a still deeper level, it had to do with animals united against plants. Plunging ever more deeply into evolution and into my thoughts, I stumbled upon the contrast between organic and inorganic life. It was a matter of us organisms versus metal and the metalloids. Metal was threatening to penetrate our organic habitat. I now understood why there was so much to learn from advanced circles among the mad with regard to the metal they put in our teeth in order to lead us astray and shut us up. I managed to resolve that contradiction as well, and at the level of molars, molecules, and atoms, I was finally swallowed up in a purely mathematical ecstasy of pluses and minuses, ones and zeroes (also see part III). 12

In the following beautiful fragment by Sam Gerrits (Kusters et al. 2007, 34), we see how his changing into a Tyrannosaurus Rex is driven by his knowledge of evolution and dinosaurs. This fragment is a fine parody of evolutionary theory, and the dinosaur is the symbol or bearer of wild thoughts, actions, and perceptions:

I can be everything, become everything ... everything? I began to sneer. I walked to the middle of the room and danced up and down, pounding my chest like a gorilla. I closed my eyes and began to sing and scream, drumming on my ribs with my fists. "Welcome to my body, Tyrannosaurus Rex! I hereby invite you, Tyrannosaurus Rex!" I grabbed the wastepaper basket, turned it over in a corner, and used it as a drum. Singing and drumming, I tried to awaken the dragon, to call him forth. And he came. You have to know that the mental blueprint, the steering mechanism of everything that has ever lived, is never lost. It's still there, sometimes for millions of years, and it's waiting for you. It began with a shiver that affected my body. All my muscles tightened. I curled up in a ball and fell back against the couch with a bang. ... I couldn't really stand up or walk backward. I had trouble looking left or right. My muscles were all tensed up, yet I felt fantastic. It was so much bigger than my body. I sank into a luxurious bath of undaunted bloodlust. No analysis, no thinking. I was big, red, and I craved dead meat. I was hungry! I ran up to the mirror with a heavy tread, and the image there surprised me. I saw myself approaching the mirror in an odd posture, but through that mirror image I also saw the animal that had taken possession of my body. Fierce and ecstatic, bursting from every seam ..."

Gerrits and I both use clichés taken from evolutionary theory, and it may have been an incorrect application of that theory that gave rise to our mad experiences. On the other hand, our ideas are not much different from the common interpretations of that theory that make the rounds in coffee shops and newspapers. What makes our experiences so eccentric is probably the extremely obsessive thinking about and consequent application of such ideas. In the worst-case scenario, such experiences of evolution can lead to confinement in a mental hospital. But under more agreeable

circumstances, they merely trigger an intuition or insight that many people share. Who has never felt astonished by nature, history, or life in general during a walk in the woods, or thought deeply about life as a continuous struggle between eater and eaten, between one animal and another (see Louise Fresco, for example, in her book *Hamburgers in Paradise: The Stories Behind the Food We Eat*, 2016)?

Another excellent description can be found in the following report by the psychiatrist Leo Navratil (1985, 213). Here two parallel border-crossings take place. The mad Friedrich switches from the human to the gorilla, the crocodile, and the orchid. He also shifts from speaking German to English to Japanese. Like Gerrits and myself, he can be anything and become anything:

In 1973 Friedrich Franz H. was brought to us for the first time because of disagreements he was having with two roommates. He was in high spirits, talked non-stop, and asked if he could sing something for us. When he was given permission to do so, he got himself ready, concentrated for a moment, and began to sing a song in English with a loud, deep voice. After that he asked if he could sing another song in German; he sang the same song again, this time in German, and he then told us that he had written both the lyrics and the melody. He then remembered that he could sing the same song with the voice of a gorilla. He wanted to perform that as well, but first he had to wash himself. He walked to the sink, washed, got himself back in position, concentrated a bit, and began to roar in a horrible and terrifying way. Next he wanted to sing the same song with a crocodile voice. In order to do that he had to wash twice, which took so much effort that he almost had a seizure. After having concentrated once again, which involved contorting his face in a frightening manner, he uttered a powerful shriek and continued with the same voice as that of the gorilla. When this performance was over, he very much wanted to sing with the voice of an orchid. For this he had to wash once more. The orchid voice, however, was no more gentle or calm than that of the crocodile or the gorilla; there was no noticeable difference. In conclusion, Friedrich Franz H. sang the song once again, this time as a brick; now he sang with a remarkably distorted voice, after having first explained to us how bricks are made. Later he tried to speak Japanese, for which he had to "enter into the spirit of the Japanese language."

If we interpret such animalistic experiences mystically, we can see in them the transcending of a border that is normally regarded as impassable. The forms determined by others, such as "human," "ape," "crocodile," "German," and "Japanese," become elastic, malleable, and breakable. The madman feels free to be whomever and whatever he wants to be: man or ape, German-speaking or Japanese-speaking, crocodile or orchid. In madness, you experience an absolute freedom to cross borders and to define yourself—or to leave yourself undefined. In the ecstasy of "I am what I

think I am," these three madmen undergo experiences that are also alluded to in fairy tales and poetry (cf. the fragment by the same Friedrich Franz H. in 9.3.1).

14.2.3 Mighty Magicians

14.2.3.1 Transpersonification If the madman says he is a shaman, Jesus, or the president of the United States, that is patently untrue. Such stories can be dismissed as a consequence of a disturbance in the ability to judge and think, and there's no need to pay attention to the contents—which, in fact, is the practice in regular psychiatry. ¹³ In the following sections, I hope to do some justice to the fantastic variation in and cross-border whimsicality of psychotic personifications.

Mad personifications work just like animal transformations. In the abstract, these can be described as follows: According to the standard notion of identities (such as "dinosaur," "crocodile," "Jesus," or "shaman"), it's all about incontestable compilations of essential properties. A crocodile, for example, is green and long, has a large mouth with teeth, and belongs to the reptiles. If you are missing one or more of these essential characteristics, you cannot be a crocodile. People, dogs, and shamans are obviously not crocodiles. Besides these essential characteristics, there are also subordinate ones: in the case of the crocodile, he can lie very still and can be dangerous at unexpected moments, he can be made into handbags, and he often appears in fairy tales. Metaphors make use of these nonessential characteristics. If we call someone a gorilla, for example, we are using the subordinate characteristics of the gorilla—crudeness or coarse, ape-like strength—and ignoring the absence of the essential characteristics by which the gorilla is distinguished from humans. If someone lies flat on the floor, remains silent, and looks threatening, he is *like* a crocodile because he has a few of the subordinate characteristics, but we don't say he is a crocodile.

In madness, the following happens: The madman has not become colorblind; he can still tell the difference between green and red. He can also categorize particular specimens (crocodile) into all-inclusive classes (reptiles). However, he departs from the normal manner of thinking about identity in two different ways. First, he does not distinguish between essential characteristics and subordinate (accidental) properties (which is also the case in much of modern philosophy). If someone behaves "like a crocodile," the madman will call him a crocodile. What the madman, in fact, is doing is eliminating the difference between literal and metaphorical language. The madman makes constant use of the power—and confusion—of metaphors,

but with this important difference: in madness such metaphorical language is no longer contrasted with literal linguistic use. In madness, the two kinds of language converge, so that the "normal" conclusions—that a human cannot be a crocodile or a sorcerer, for example—disappear. This means that all possible subordinate properties can, in principle, be used metaphorically in madness—a practice by which, in the end, all potential worlds are actualized. Once again, anything goes.

The second difference between madness and the normal formation of identity is that, for the madman, what we normally regard as real characteristics—that is, characteristics referring to something real in the world—are no longer real but are a "construct," an "understanding," or a "fabrication." The mad world comes about when the normally accepted designations and assertions about the world are no longer seen as properties *in* the world but as our own ideas *about* the world. In madness, the world is fierce and empty, and its forms and properties are determined by the madman's mind, which floats above it.

These two related mad movements—of metaphor and idealization—are the methods by which personifications come about. The engine of motivation by which such movements are initiated lies in the introduction of the sacred, the penetration of human armor, and the enchantment of the world. I will now discuss two personifications with a magical aura, that of the shaman and the sorcerer.

14.2.3.2 The shaman By overstepping the modern sacred-human border, the madman enters a magical world of the invisible-mysterious and the visible-symbolic. There he spins his black yarns. He weaves signs and movements into his words and threads; he controls inner and outer phenomena, people, and things. In his dreamlike, lucid state of alertness he makes contact with a zone unattainable to others, a terra incognita. Some people call themselves "shamans" during episodes of madness; others don't call their experiences shamanic until after they're over; and others are described as "shamanic" by Jungian psychologists and shamanologists (cf. Perry 1974 and Lukoff 1990). What does mad shamanism consist of, and how can the term "shamanism" clarify our understanding of madness?

To explore this question, I will adapt and elaborate on a few quotes about shamanism from Eliade (1964) in such a way that they explain something about madness today. According to Eliade (1964, 3ff.), shamanism was an ecstasy technique among the peoples of Siberia, by which the shaman could leave his own earthly body in the here and now and, under controlled conditions, enter the land of the spirits and the gods. He says,

The shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld ... the shaman controls his "spirits," in the sense that he, a human being, is able to communicate with the dead, "demons," and "nature spirits," without thereby becoming their instrument.

Shamans occupy a special place in their culture. According to these cultures, the only way "ordinary people" can connect their terrestrial lives with the world of the celestial gods is through sacrifices and prayers. Shamans, however, can actually ascend to the world of the gods and travel around in it—just as our madmen think they can do. Although they themselves are not the creators of cosmologies, they are unique in their practical execution or living out of the cosmological concepts in their culture. Eliade (1964, 265) writes,

Shamans ... transform a cosmo-theological concept into a concrete mystical experience. ... the religious experience of the shamans is a personal and ecstatic experience, what for the rest of the community remains a cosmological ideogram, for the shamans (and the heroes, etc.) becomes a mystical itinerary. ... The shamans did not create the cosmology, the mythology, and the theology of their respective tribes; they only interiorized it, "experienced" it, and used it as the itinerary for their ecstatic journeys.

This is comparable to my analysis of the relationship between madness and philosophy: just as the shamans make a "mystical journey" based on a "cosmological ideogram," so an idealistic philosophy ("Thoughts shape the world") is transformed into concrete telekinetic acts ("My thoughts shape the world"). The shaman and the madman occupy a similar exceptional position in their culture (or think they do): at the very most, "ordinary people" can tell stories about a lost paradise, about which they can dream and philosophize, but shamans and madmen have what others can only point to with awe, and in their ecstatic state they can "really" experience it. Eliade (1964, 265) writes,

[In] a paradisal age human beings could easily go up to the sky and maintained familiar relations with the gods ... certain privileged beings (and first of all the shamans) preserved the power to actualize, for their own persons, the connection with the upper regions; similarly, the shamans have the power to fly and to reach the sky through the "central opening," whereas for the rest of mankind the opening serves only for the transmission of offerings. In both cases alike, the shaman's privileged status is due to his faculty for ecstatic experiences.

Eliade speaks of a "central opening." Disappearing through this central opening, this hole, is the shamans' great disappearing act; in their ecstasy, shamans—and madmen—reach their mysterious world by way of this

passage. It is my opinion that this opening corresponds with what I have called the recognition of the One, Being, infinity, and nothingness, among other things. Knowledge of and contact with this cosmic core gives the shaman and the madman the chance to "get to the other side" in a mystical way. I have already described this as a "reversal," a "revolving," and a discovery of the ineffable. The central opening is like a mirror or eye that the empty self discovers as the bottom of the abyss. In shamanic cultures, this is vividly illustrated as follows (Eliade 1964, 485):

Candidate shamans or the heroes of certain myths must go "where night and day meet," or find a gate in a wall, or go up to the sky through a passage that opens but for an instant, pass between two constantly moving millstones, two rocks that clash together, through the jaws of a monster and the like ...

According to Eliade, these symbolic images and descriptions point to a similar longing for the convergence and transcendence of paradoxical opposites—coincidentia oppositorum. It is a longing that we recognize in madness.¹⁵

Crossing over to the other world is expressed in terms of a sacred symbol. With the help of concrete magical objects such as a stick (Artaud) or a Nokia (myself), madmen and shamans work their way into that other world by means of magic. In archaic cultures, symbols such as a bridge, a ladder, a rope, and so forth were used as sacred means of transportation for the mystical journey. By doing things with these objects that others find puzzling, shamans and madmen propel themselves "up there" (see Eliade 1964, 493).

Shamanism has more to do with magic and sorcery than with purely contemplative mysticism, owing to the fact that the shaman distinguishes between good and evil, and he acts accordingly. The goal of shamanically controlled ecstasy is to advance the good on behalf of the community and the cosmos and to ward off evil. ¹⁶ The way the shaman protects the community from demons is remarkably similar to the madman's experience. Both struggle against demons and black magicians and defend the world of light against death, evil, and calamity. The discovery of the sacred brings with it the discovery of threats to the sacred. Like the shaman, the madman, in his ecstasy, goes forth to battle the forces that threaten the sacred and the good. If the battle goes further than tossing out a mobile phone or breaking a stick, the madman may collide head-on with the standard methods for advancing the good.

Like the madman, the shaman also knows how to penetrate what is usually considered an impenetrable domain: the realm of the dead. The shaman knows how to get to "the other side" in a dreamlike world that he regards as more powerful than the ordinary world. The entities and spirits,

the living and the dead, the gods and demigods that he encounters there constitute a "deeper" reality than that of conventional mortality. It's a sacred world from which you can acquire a "knowledge of death" that is relevant to normal life. Shamans and madmen both sense that they have "seen something up there" that is unknowable to others but of great importance. With regard to Podvoll's model in part II, this is the last stage: that of "death and rebirth." ¹⁷

One last striking parallel between madness and shamanism is the way both of them use language. Both want to express the ineffable, both want to describe something indescribable, and both make use of the nonreferential possibilities of language (i.e., poetic, metalinguistic, and expressive). Eliade (1964, 511) describes this as follows:

In preparing his trance, the shaman drums, summons his spirit helpers, speaks a "secret language" or the "animal language," imitating the cries of beasts and especially the songs of birds. He ends by obtaining a "second state" that provides the impetus for linguistic creation and the rhythms of lyric poetry. ... The purest poetic act seems to re-create language from an inner experience that, like the ecstasy or the religious inspiration of "primitives," reveals the essence of things. It is from such linguistic creations, made possible by pre-ecstatic "inspiration," that the "secret languages" of the mystics and the traditional allegorical languages later crystallize.

Poetry, secret languages, and inspiration all have their source in the domain from which the shaman also "ascends," according to Eliade. If the same were true of the madman, then the conclusion of Eliade's work could be paraphrased by replacing the phrase "the ancient shamans" in the last sentence of his voluminous study with "the modern madmen" (1964, 511):

What a magnificent book remains to be written on the ecstatic "sources" of epic and lyric poetry, on the prehistory of dramatic spectacles, and, in general, on the fabulous worlds discovered, explored, and described by the ancient shamans ["the modern madman"].

Without having to search too far, we can find many similarities between mad experiences and "real" shamanic practices—although this may be stretching the notion of shamanism a bit far. What's the point of such a comparison? First, insofar as we understand "the shaman" at all, it can help us to better understand the madman. What we saw in our discussion of the *via mystica psychotica* in part II is even more applicable with regard to the shamanic variant: that the means (shamanism) of clarifying madness is perhaps just as obscure as the madness itself—if not more so. In addition, shamanism is a practice that is so far removed from us that any comparison

quickly raises the question of whether the two things being compared here have not been taken too far out of context. The same problem of discordant context also shows, however, that while ecstatic, symbolic, magical, or ritualistic behavior may be seen as a basis for declaring someone "sick" in one place, such actions and experiences can serve as a means of actually preventing and curing sickness in another.

This leads to a few final considerations: Are heaven and earth really connected and capable of being united? How far can you go along with shamanic-mad practices? How long can you refrain from distinguishing between literal and figurative uses of language? Eliade (1964, 493) has made a few comments in this regard. First, he makes an interesting distinction between "real" and "aberrant" ("rudimentary," "mechanical") shamanism:

We have come upon numerous cases of aberrant shamanic practices; we refer especially to rudimentary and mechanical means of obtaining trance (narcotics, dancing to the point of exhaustion, "possession," etc.).

The question is why these three examples are to be regarded as aberrant. Here Eliade distinguishes between a worthy or pure form of shamanism and lower, aberrant variants. The difference between them corresponds to the distinction in "shamanic-psychiatric" literature between phenomena that are mistakenly called psychoses but are actually shamanic experiences, (or mystical, spiritual, or religious), and "real" psychoses. The latter—just as in "fake" shamanism—are characterized by drug usage or passive possession, for example (also see Lukoff 1985, Watkins 2010, and the discussion in 14.3.2).

Then Eliade makes a very interesting comment, however: that tragically enough, the aberrant forms of shamanism may be the only really consistent kinds of shamanism. Shamanism, he says, may lead to degeneration all by itself because of the impossible aspiration that lies at its core:

The question arises if, aside from the "historical" explanations that could be offered for these aberrant techniques (deterioration as the result of external cultural influences, hybridization, etc.), they cannot also be interpreted on another plane. We may ask, for example, if the aberrant aspect of the shamanic trance is not due to the fact that the shaman seeks to experience in concreto a symbolism and mythology that, by their very nature, are not susceptible of being "realized" on the "concrete plane" ... if, finally, these types of behavior are not the inevitable consequence of an intense desire to "live," that is, to "experience" on the plane of the body, what in the present condition of humanity is no longer accessible except on the plane of "spirit."

What Eliade is actually saying here is that shamans take symbols and myths too literally, too concretely. They want to make their journeys involving the relevant cosmologies "on the plane of the body." Shamans want to live and experience things too intensely, and they try to imitate the myths of heavenly ascension too concretely. When applied to madness, the question arises: Have shamans—and madmen—failed to properly understand the ideas of their own age, causing them to "go crazy," or is their way of going crazy a parody "in vivo," demonstrating that the cosmologies (or, in the case of madmen, the philosophies) have not withstood the practical test?

14.2.3.3 Sorcery of the yogis Images of sorcerers and witches lie hidden in the deeper layers of our experience. We know them from the world of children, which is ruled by mysterious powers and where no distinction is made between what may or may not be "logical." Maybe there is a witch under the bed. Maybe a ghost is hiding in the closet. And maybe the disappearance of toys is the work of wizards or gnomes. Raising children involves teaching them the difference between what is and isn't possible and what is and isn't real. The world of unlimited possibilities—that of the baby and the toddler—is slowly transformed into a world in which you know what you can and cannot expect. For a long time, children cling to the belief that there are beings walking around who can read their minds, who have magical powers, and who are involved in their lives as guardian angels or demons twenty-four hours a day.

Such suspicions of porous borders are exploited in a vast amount of fantasy literature, films, fairy tales, and games, where it is suggested that powers of great significance are lurking on the other side of the border. The popularity of the fantasy genre (the Harry Potter series, Tolkien novels) shows that in the adult culture, there is a need for something that transcends the drab everydayness of the nonporous self. According to the thinking of modern adults, however, there are no conscious forces or powers beyond man that aspire to good or evil. In madness, on the other hand, the receptivity for such forces is greater. The madman comes in contact with "something sacred" outside himself and becomes involved in a holy conflict between good and evil, a conflict in which magicians, sorcerers, and witches make their appearance. These beings can embody both good and evil, and they can be the madman himself or someone else. In chapter 15, I will present several examples of mad sorcerers. Here I will examine how magical practices like sorcery are regarded in the teachings of Indian yogis.

Once again, I will use the work of Eliade to draw a parallel between "real" Indian sorcery and what is experienced as sorcery in madness. According to Eliade, the yoga stage of sorcery is reached after many yoga exercises. These

exercises go further than other forms of meditation, and with the help of the correct yoga meditation the yogi can penetrate the true essence of reality. Eliade (1958b, 72, 73) says,

Secular meditation stops either with the external form or with the value of the objects meditated upon, whereas *dhyäna* [the highest stage of yoga meditation] makes it possible to "penetrate" objects, to "assimilate" them magically.

This is reminiscent of the convergence of knower and known, the vanishing of subject-object borders, and the disappearance of the armor around the ego or the "walling in" of the self. Yoga penetration or assimilation goes even deeper, however. Eliade describes how this works with a beautiful example of fire meditation:

(The meditation begins with concentration on some glowing coals placed before the yogin). Not only does it reveal to the yogin the phenomenon of combustion and its deeper meaning; it allows him, in addition: (1) to identify the physiochemical process taking place in the coal with the process of combustion that occurs in the human body; (2) to identify the fire before him with the fire of the sun, etc.; (3) to unify the several contents of all these fires, in order to obtain a vision of existence as "fire"; (4) to penetrate within this cosmic process, now on the astral plane (the sun), now on the physiological plane (the human body), and finally even on the plane of infinitesimals ("the seed of fire"); (5) to reduce all these planes to a modality common to them all—that is, *prakrti* as "fire"; (6) to "master" the inner fire, suspension of respiration (respiration = vital fire); (7) finally, through a new "penetration," to extend this "mastery" to the glowing coals before him—for, if the process of combustion is exactly the same from one limit of the universe to the other, any partial mastery of the phenomenon infallibly leads to its "mastery" in toto, etc.

It is interesting that Eliade is using the example of fire, given the role that "fire" plays in madness (see section 8.4 and the finale). Unlike the fire of madness, however, the yoga fire lacks a connection with the poetic imagination or intuition. According to Eliade, this meditation allows the yogi to break into the essence of reality in a way that is focused and controlled, clear and rational. He says,

This act of "penetration" into the "essence of fire" must be conceived neither under the species of the poetic imagination nor under that of an intuition of the Bergsonian type. What sharply distinguishes yogic meditation from these two irrational "flights" is its coherence, the state of lucidity that accompanies and continually orients it. ... It is never enriched laterally, by uncontrolled associations, analogies, symbols, etc. At no moment does this meditation cease to be an instrument for penetrating into the essence of things.

The yogi, like many madmen, thinks he has penetrated to a deeper level of reality. The yogi claims that having reached this deepest level, he is able to *manipulate* reality—and this is where the sorcery begins! He even seizes control over time, by which he can evade time altogether. Eliade (1958b, 86):

Samädhi [the state that is reached through yoga meditation] results in a constant identification between the meditator and the thing meditated ... in short, he can ideally (that is, without "experiencing" them) relive his previous existences. ... One succeeds in emerging from time by *traveling back through it*, that is, by reintegrating the primordial instant that had launched the first existence.

Escaping earthly time is a motif I have frequently discussed with regard to mysticism and madness. In this case, escaping time is linked to having power over time and reality. By dropping out of time, the yogi can "see" all times, know everything, and be aware of his own moment of death. By concentrating, he also knows the mental state of others. But even though he is all-seeing, he himself is not seen; he has the ability to remain invisible. Eliade (1958b, 86–88):

By virtue of *samyama* [the practical application of *samädhi*] the yogin realizes the whole infinite series of other men's psychomental states; for as soon as a notion is mastered from within, the yogin sees, as on a screen, all the states of consciousness that the notion is able to arouse in other men's souls ... *samyama* concerning the form of the body can make him who practices it invisible ... the other "powers" that can be obtained through *samyama* [are] ... the power of knowing the moment one is to die, or extraordinary physical powers.

With *samyama*, everything seems possible. All the yogi has to do is meditate on something and he knows everything about it and achieves astonishing results.

Samyama practiced on the moon gives knowledge of the solar system; on the umbilical plexus, knowledge of the system of the body; on the cavity of the throat, disappearance of hunger and thirst; on the heart, knowledge of the mind.

This state of mind is like that of the meditating madman, who thinks about words and other things in his bare isolation cell, thereby summoning up worlds and manipulating them into mad reality. The yogi doesn't even have to step out the door to gain the knowledge and power he achieves with *samyama*; he doesn't have to consult others to ascertain their state of mind—he sees it immediately. Yoga meditation leads to the deepest insights, to the highest power, and to the most remarkable abilities. The pressing question here, more than with mysticism, is whether the claims made by and about sorcerers (including mad ones) are tenable. Mystical

pronouncements have to do with a domain that cannot be verified or put into words, while sorcery and magic claim to concern themselves with influencing concrete, shared reality, and those claims are verifiable.

Power and magic are not the ultimate goal of the yoga path, however. In India these kinds of powers are highly suspect, unlike in shamanism, and although they are characteristic of yoga, the true yogi sees occult power as a temptation and departure from the path. ¹⁹ In this regard, Indian magic and sorcery resemble "miracles" in Christianity: as tricks to tempt people, but not as the highest goal of the *via mystica*. There are few yogis who succeed in getting past this powerful and tempting stage, the obvious result being confusion between magic and wisdom. ²⁰

As far as madness is concerned, the yogic path resembles Podvoll's, Michaux's, and my own model in part II. According to this model, if you are on the *via mystica psychotica*, you must not allow yourself to be dragged along by seductive images, thoughts, and associations that promise you worldly power. The insights one acquires during madness should not be used for one's own benefit but should serve as stepping stones to the highest insight. In the terminology of part III, the yogi-sorcerer would remain stuck in an esse-delusion, where he may lapse into magic and a sorcerer's frame of mind, while the true yogi would move onto the mysticism of the infinite and nothingness.

The sorcery of modern Western madmen usually evokes nothing but ridicule or pity, but the yogi-sorcerers were feared. The fact that their sorcery did not leave the entire cosmos in tatters was attributed more to the "benevolent gods," who managed to deter the yogis from these dangerous practices, than to a failure of sorcery. Eliade (1958b, 89) says,

Men, demons, or gods can become powerful to the point of threatening the economy of the entire universe. ... To prevent such an increase of sacred force, the gods tempt the ascetic ... when the yogin approaches the last differentiated stasis, the gods come to him and tempt him ... with celestial women, with supernatural sight and hearing, with the promise of turning his body into a "body of diamond"—in short, they offer him participation in the divine condition. But the divine condition is still far from absolute freedom. The yogin must reject these "magical hallucinations," these "false sensory objects that are of the nature of dreams," "desirable only for the ignorant," and persevere in his task of gaining final emancipation.

When we apply this notion of yoga to madness, we find that it isn't so much human weakness or selfish longings that shackle the madman with false images, delusions, and hallucinations on his *via mystica psychotica*. No, it's the gods themselves who prevent him from getting through to the

transmarginal zone beyond madness, with the goal of preventing the order of the matrix from falling apart (cf. the finale).

14.3 Holy Healing: Spiritual Therapies

14.3.1 Diagnosis of Deliverance

Madmen are not alone in consecrating themselves for their holy work. Since time immemorial, they have attracted admirers who consider the faith of the madmen as the key to human deliverance. The idea that fools, madmen, and lunatics are closer to a higher truth is old and widespread. Contact with the sacred is then seen not as a problem but as part of a solution.

Shamans were the first in history to make such a positive assessment of madness and other kinds of consciousness (see 14.2.3.2). Shamanic practices, and the corresponding worldview, have deeply influenced the way people in a mad trance are regarded. Like the shamans, the Greeks also sought contact with another world for counsel and support in the face of adversity. The most well-known is the oracle of Delphi, who spoke in the kind of unintelligible noises and gibberish that today is usually associated with psychosis. The messages from the other side that were received at Delphi were interpreted and analyzed by priests, philosophers, and kings and were considered beneficial. Thus Plato writes that madness can be a gift from the gods. In the *Phaedrus* ([360 BC]/2008), Plato has Socrates say, "there is also a madness which is a divine gift, and the source of the chiefest blessings granted to men. For prophecy is a madness, and the prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona when out of their senses have conferred great benefits on Hellas, both in public and private life, but when in their senses few or none."

In antiquity and in prehistoric times, the raving, the maladjusted, and the possessed were worse off than they are today. Hunger, slavery, banishment, and loneliness would have been their lot—as they always are for the outcasts of the earth. Even among the Greeks, not every schizophrenic avant la lettre could open his own oracle emporium. Nevertheless, classical and prehistoric peoples viewed the madman as capable of achieving something not reserved for everyone: contact with another world that proved to be so overwhelming and downright bewildering that he was able only to speak in tongues, oracles, and gibberish. If the environment of such "ecstatics," "seers," and "demoniacs" was sympathetic enough, and if the madman's behavior and writing could be guided in paths that were somewhat socially acceptable, then the madman could also count on evoking positive interest, even in the ages to come. His utterances and prophecies were

followed with special attention and his seemingly senseless language and activities were interpreted as mystical, significant, and visionary.

For centuries, this kind of madness was regarded as sacred and meaningful, and as a form of contact with another reality. Such contact could originate with the devil and therefore justify persecution, but it could also be of a benevolent-divine nature and thus be a cause for a form of canonization. Whatever the interpretation, although the meaning of madness was sometimes seen as satanic, madness was not stifled as a senseless epiphenomenon of a defective brain, as it would be later on.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the treatment of madness and the way it was viewed underwent a profound change. The medical profession took up residence in the mental institutions, and for the first time a separate category of psychiatric patients was formed, differing from all the criminals, vagabonds, and mystics. Under the direction of neurologists, the mental institutions became the place where the image of madness as a physical, individual aberration made its triumphant start. What for centuries had been seen as meaningful behavior was now reduced to a side effect of a physical disorder. The oracular gibberish of the seer and the mocking blasphemies of the fool were no longer listened to. "All mental illnesses are a disease of the brain" was the adage advanced by Griesinger—a century and a half before such an insight was thought to be original and revolutionary. The first therapies consisted of rest, cold-and-hot-water baths, insulin therapy, and even lobotomy and electroshock as ways of subduing the obstreperous spirit via the brain.

The last fifty years have seen enormous growth in the use of psychophar-maceuticals for suppressing madness, both inside and outside the mental hospital. Because these medicines do have some effect—although seldom the desired effect—the idea has now gained ground that madness is mainly a neurological problem. That means that the image of madness in psychiatry today is quite one-sided, though very prevalent.

Yet people have always been fascinated by the occupants of mental institutions. There's fear of the strange and incomprehensible, and there's also a hint of the sacred to be found in madness: heavenly inspiration, ecstasy, or creativity. We feel pity for or revulsion at the lunatic who goes around laughing to himself, but sometimes we also suspect he's onto something—something that has escaped the rest of us. Manic, frenetic agitation is tiring, but it can also make us jealous if we ourselves are so seldom moved by things. Psychotic mental leaps seem bizarre and unintelligible, but their original associations and far-fetched connections fascinate us.

In our age it is a colorful mishmash of neo-Jungian, progressive phenomenologists and postmodern mystics who still detect something of the sacred at the heart of madness—and of the madman. This whole book can be seen as an attempt to breathe new life into this form of antipsychiatry—or, more precisely, *neo*-psychiatry. In the following sections I will discuss the work of two philosophers, Charles Taylor and Peter Kingsley—work that is indirectly important to this connection between madness and the sacred. But first, I will cover something about a movement in psychiatry itself that follows this line of thought: transpersonal psychiatry.

14.3.2 Divide and Heal: Transpersonal Psychiatry

14.3.2.1 Good holy grounds In recent decades, a movement has been stirring within the domain of mental health care that is called "transpersonal psychiatry." In addition to classical and preclassical sources, such as the Greek oracles and shamanic practices, transpersonal psychiatry looks to a wide range of persons, movements, and worldviews for its inspiration, among them Carl Gustav Jung, Otto Rank, Roberto Assagioli, Stanislav Grof, Buddhism, kundalini yoga, the Sixties, perennial philosophy, Ken Wilber, and ecumenical mysticism. Discussion in this school has to do with spirituality and spiritual growth, changed and elevated states of consciousness, and transpersonal or transcendental experiences.

We get an idea of what transpersonal psychiatry comprises when we replace terms like "meaning" and "experience" with terms like "deliverance" and "ecstasy." The typical mad moment of all-embracing meaning without content is expressed in transpersonal psychiatry as a spiritual moment of holiness, "transpersonal" contact, and an elevated state of consciousness. Transpersonal thinkers regard this "contact with the source" or "seeing the light" as intrinsically salutary and enriching. In this respect they differ from phenomenological psychiatrists, who refrain from judgment about the further nature, correctness, and benignity or malignancy of this initial *moment suprême*. According to phenomenological psychiatry, this initial state of perplexity is seen as the cause of ecstasy and rapture as well as of anxiety and paranoia.

Transpersonal thinkers flesh out the idea of the holy (or "meaningless meaning") and claim to have knowledge of the nature and purpose of the spiritual. They know that God (or the One, "The Force," "ultimate reality," the "Ground," or what have you) is good and wants the best for "us." They may acknowledge that God can also be called "nothingness," but they see no problem in this.²¹ They believe that the struggle between light and

darkness has been won by the light (their light). Actually, the transpersonal school is a positive form of Christianity with an Eastern flavor. Nelson (1990, 280), whom I will be discussing at length, describes what others call God or the One as the "Ground," which he knows is not threatening or terrifying but friendly and wonderful:

Once a person begins to surrender to the Ground and recognizes it as friendly rather than fearsome, miraculous rather than menacing, he is no longer obliged to pit the rigid defenses of his ego against this far more resilient power.

The "Ground" is a modern, Californian, "New Age" version of the God of the New Testament. This Ground lacks the characteristics of the dark sacred that Otto, for example, ascribes to the Christian God; this saccharine holiness also does not fit into Eliade's category of the sacred. The Ground is a soft carpet of "universal love," a comforting bed of altruism and benevolence.

The goodness, intimacy, and security of Nelson's Ground runs counter to our view that, in madness, all ground disappears, and that madness has to do with non-ground. This positive spiritual content has other connotations as well: that the Ground is sown with universal love, for example.²² Armed with such a substantial definition of the "Ground," the transpersonal school makes strong moral claims with regard to life goals.

Although there are differences between the various transpersonal thinkers, they all believe that the acquisition and accumulation of more insight, transcendence, compassion, and wisdom are intrinsic aims in life. So their development model always consists of at least three phases: (1) a beginning, in which one is young and ignorant, (2) an adult stage, in which one adapts to the demands of society, and (3) the highest stage, in which one rises above daily life with wisdom and serenity. Transpersonal thinkers are of different minds as to the relationship between the first and the last stages: Is redemption equal to a return to the spontaneous experience of the newborn? Or does redemption involve transcending the earthly and merging with a transcendent, divine reality? Such implicit or explicit evaluations of experiences, life stories, or views of humanity are unavoidable in every philosophy of life. What is important to realize, however, is who makes the evaluations and what the consequences are (cf. the conclusion in 14.3.2.5).

One essential aspect of the transpersonal development models is the difference between real (spiritual) and false (psychotic) development or growth. In real development, one moves up to higher levels of consciousness, but in false development, appearances can be deceiving. In addition,

the difference between these two also results in very different forms of therapy.²³ This so-called "pre/trans fallacy" involves the trap into which fortune-hunters, yoga practitioners, madmen, psychiatrists, and philosophers can easily fall (according to transpersonal thinkers): that is, confusing upward transitions with downward transitions. An apprentice Buddhist, for example, can think he has reached enlightenment, only to discover upon closer inspection that he has reverted to a more primitive experience level. Conversely, someone can be judged as regressive or primitive, while what the transpersonal psychiatrist sees are signs of enlightenment.

This theme of "false enlightenment" and "false decline" also plays a major role in this book, since I see insight and ecstasy in many psychotic utterances where others might see mere confusion and anxiety. Although my ideas about madness are largely comparable to those from the transpersonal school, there are a few important differences that I will now discuss based on an analysis of the illustrative book *Healing the Split* by John Nelson, one of the classics of transpersonal psychiatry.

14.3.2.2 Trans trance transition I: Pulling back to go forward In *Healing the Split*, Nelson presents a comprehensive vision of the world, man, and man's spiritual life. At the heart of the book is a description of seven levels of experience, which Nelson calls "chakras." Nelson embeds his "spiritual" or transpersonal approach in a traditional biopsychiatric argument as well as in a speculative scientific discussion of "holograms." Apart from this unnecessary contextualization, he presents a clear and plausible development model by which he describes psychotic and spiritual experiences in a way that is both effective and insightful. The third experience level is the one best known to us because it is there that we live our everyday lives. This is the level on which we have an ego and a formed identity, with specific longings and goals. On the lower levels, that adult ego is not yet delineated, and there is no separate or differentiated self.

On the first level, a free exchange takes place between the pre-self and the "Ground." This first level is biological in nature: it is concerned only with survival and biological functioning. Although you are one with the Ground on this level, you have no awareness of union, let alone the ability to experience or express it. In cases of serious schizophrenia, Nelson believes, this may be the dominant experience level.

At the second level, a self comes into being that is not yet closed, forming the magical fantasy world of the child. Many psychoses lead back to this level, according to Nelson, which makes them regressive movements. At this level, there is contact with the Ground, but the self is not yet capable

of expressing this spiritual contact in a coherent and socially acceptable form. Nelson says this about the psychosis of the second level (1990, 253):

In this incoherent admixture of the personal and the archetypal, ideas flow through a series of bizarre symbolic images that are internally disconnected. Because the sequence of symbols fail to speak to the universal mind, the reader finds it difficult to empathize with what is being communicated.

I understand what Nelson is driving at, yet I find it disappointing that the psychotic is consigned to this second level only because his inner life is not accepted in communication with the "universal mind." This is much to his detriment, because if no communication is possible, then, according to Nelson, further development is not possible either, implying that the only solution is psychopharmaceuticals.²⁵

Details about this second level are important for Nelson's theory, because a condition can present itself as a regression to the second level even though the underlying situation is quite different: that is, a "regression in the service of transcendence" (RIST). So Nelson provides extensive criteria for distinguishing "real" schizophrenia from regression (1990, 248ff.):

ASCs (altered states of consciousness) associated with RIST begin abruptly, in contrast to schizophrenia's insidious onset. RIST is usually precipitated by a stressful life event such as changing one's career or spouse, starting a spiritual practice such as meditation or yoga, or taking a psychedelic drug. Sometimes RIST simply occurs when a person reaches a degree of maturity in which he naturally begins to doubt the meaning and value of his present life which he feels is flat or empty. ... In contrast, the disorganized thinking of schizophrenia is usually unrelated to specific life events, although nonspecific stress worsens symptoms.

It is commendable that Nelson places madness and spiritual crises like RIST within the context of psychedelics, meditation, and special life events. My objection to Nelson and his transpsychiatric school is not that he sees psychosis as a RIST but that he is too quick to dismiss other experiences as non-RIST. Admittedly, it is not always clear whether the emergence or onset of a psychosis is based on "stressful life events" or not, but the difference between schizophrenia and RIST is also not as black and white as Nelson makes it out to be. Nelson then says that, during a RIST, the person seems to retain a kind of "insight" into his own condition and that logic and abstract thought go undisturbed, unlike what happens in mania and schizophrenia:

RIST seldom completely deprives a person of his capacity for neologic and abstract thought, although paleologic may be intermixed with more advanced cognition. For this reason, a person experiencing RIST maintains some insight into his disordered state and tries to restrain his behavior, while impulsive behavior characterizes schizophrenia and mania.

The supposed "insight" into one's own condition as a distinguishing criterion is simply not consistent with the facts, and Nelson's remarks on abstract thinking in mania and schizophrenia are stereotypical and diametrically opposed to findings in the more nuanced phenomenological literature. Nelson then hints that, with RIST, there can be no anxiety or explicit paranoia, because RIST is more an "inner exploration":

Paranoid ideas seldom occur in RIST, or if they do, they reflect a global terror of the unknown rather than a specifically defined conspiracy. By projecting his inner terrors onto the outside world and imagining it to be everywhere on watch against him, a paranoid individual cuts short the defenseless inner exploration that is a hallmark of RIST.

This distinction is also incorrect and is based on the erroneous transpersonal idea that insight and anxiety are incompatible. But Nelson himself recognizes that RIST is not just an inner exploration that gives the impression of being benevolent; after all, it's an apparent regression to level two. He describes this effectively and argues that, hiding behind all the chaos and fantasy-filled images, are mythical and symbolic meanings:

RIST tells a meaningful story. ... Images of death and rebirth are prominent. ... As the ego descends into a psychic underworld, it may generate visions of falling or being sucked into a whirlpool. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, raging floods, and other violent upheavals express a recognition that repressed forces are astir ...

In the spirit of Jung and Perry, Nelson suspects that behind the storm of images there's a mythical journey through a psychic underworld, where a battle is raging between good and evil, and between animal and sacred archetypes. Behind all the chaotic, fierce, visionary tableaux and the high-flown, cosmic ideas about death and resurrection, Nelson sees a meaningful process in RIST that ultimately leads to the attainment of higher chakras or levels of experience.

RIST is hardly an eternal loss of the soul; rather, it is a healing descent into the underworld to recover something missing or lost, so as to restore a vital balance. ... The self is then reborn into a higher level of consciousness, maintaining access to the lower level when appropriate.

What has all the trappings of a fight with diabolical demons and irrational possession is translated by Nelson into higher symbolic logic. The breakdown or regression was only apparent; it was a temporary descent, making it possible to then reach an even higher level. Such interpretations accord with my own ideas in this book. Unfortunately, Nelson's explanation of schizophrenia contrasts sharply with actual experience, and he suggests that the difference between meaningful and meaningless, between

real and apparent chaos, can be objectively established. According to Nelson, the real chaos of schizophrenia makes no sense, and perhaps therein lies evidence of an "eternal loss of the soul."

14.3.2.3 Trans trance transition II: Misunderstood jumping talent There is little evidence of individual madness on the third level. This is the level of the strong ego that operates successfully and powerfully in the outside world, but it is also the level furthest from the Ground. At this level, it's all about power and control. Nelson thinks that, although this level has to be reached, once it is attained, it should be transcended in a quest for "more." The tension between achieving this level and longing for higher levels gives rise to many identity problems having to do with things like one's sense of purpose.

Above it is the fourth level, that of the heart chakra. This is the first spiritual level and the first wending back to the Ground. Here it's all about selfless love for everything and everyone. At the third level, one is selfish, individualistic, and competitive, but at the fourth level one lets go of the attachment to material things and social ties, and feels connected to all of humanity—if not to all living beings. At this level, Nelson's post-Christian ideology of love manifests itself most strongly. Whoever is having strange experiences, but withstands them in an atmosphere of faith and trust in a loving supreme being, is following the right path upward. Negative feelings and thoughts about satanic evil are permitted as long as the person arrives at a loving, calm, and abstract integration and not at an overly explicit, concrete personification of Satan himself. In short, if you suspect that your neighbor is the devil incarnate, Nelson will prescribe pills; if you thinks there are divine sparks sputtering in every human heart, you will be allowed to pass on to higher chakras. Nelson (1990, 254) writes,

Is the psychotic person's idea of Satan concretized into a cunning archfiend hell-bent on punishing his every shortcoming? Or is Satan viewed as an unevolved part of the self that resists higher strivings, an inner negativity to be reowned and overcome through self-knowledge? If a person says that he is Jesus, does he believe he is the historical figure of Christ, or is he expressing a feeling that divine consciousness dwells within him, as it does in his fellow men and women? And if he does express this literally, can he be guided into a more abstract way of integrating his inner realization? These distinctions direct a healer toward radically different treatment strategies [read: pills vs. talking].

Once again, this is all about the pre/trans fallacy: Does the movement—no matter how chaotic it comes across—tend upward, toward love and union with God, or downward, toward hatred, anxiety, division, and evil?

Nelson distinguishes not only between upward and downward but also between unimpeded ascent ("spiritual emergence") and a difficult, needful ascent ("spiritual emergency"), which can even go hand in hand with psychosis-like symptoms. While RIST is a chaotic running start from three back to two, and then upward to four and beyond, a spiritual emergency is simply an ascent from three, in which obstacles appear that create a semblance of madness.²⁶ If a person is seized by an experience, insight, or obsession that "everything is love," for example, it may be one of four phenomena, according to Nelson: (1) a schizophrenic regression to level two, if the experience is accompanied by nothing but chaotic stammering and inexplicable activity; (2) RIST, if there are indications of level two but with an underlying meaningful process; (3) "real" spiritual insight, an expression of growth and a breakthrough to chakra four; or (4) the same spiritual growth, but one that seems like a psychosis due to the presence of chaos and confusion, which is called a "spiritual emergency."

The fifth level is one of expressiveness, creativity, and universal symbolism. At this level, the person comes closer to the Ground and acquires intuitive inspiration thanks to a higher consciousness. At the fifth level, one has more contact with the world, sees more connections, and breaks through to the essence of perception and experience. "Emergences" to this level must be carefully distinguished from schizophrenic regressions, since psychotics are also convinced that they have "figured everything out," by means of revelations and insight, and that they have access to intuitive knowledge that is incomprehensible to others. The difference, however, is that someone who has reached the fifth chakra is not only plunged into the experience of raw chaos but is also made capable of distancing himself from it and reflecting on it.

The most obvious example of a person who has attained the fifth chakra is the artist. But how does Nelson tell the difference between a "real" artist and a schizophrenic who produces something that looks like art but isn't (according to Nelson)? What it ultimately comes down to for Nelson is that schizophrenic art—or schizophrenic poetry, in the following quote (1990, 297)—is bizarre and incomprehensible, because the schizophrenic's ego is too weak and because he has not reached the fifth chakra but is still at the second:

Like the poet who casts about for metaphors worthy of his vision, the schizophrenic tells us of an unfamiliar reality, of hidden meanings that lie outside consensual language and logic. But with an ego too weak to sustain the discipline of the artist's craft, and a psyche regressed to childlike second-chakra consciousness,

the schizophrenic is creatively impotent. As he tries to share his inner vision, his language contorts into bizarre forms, and his images degenerate into an incomprehensible order of symbol and meaning.

The problem here is that Nelson is making use of standard psychiatric terms that are applied to psychosis and schizophrenia, such as "bizarre" and "degenerate," which need to be explained. In addition, he is making use of circular arguments to the effect that "schizophrenic utterances are inferior and uncreative because the schizophrenic has a weak ego and is stuck at level two, as demonstrated by the fact that his utterances are uncreative."²⁷

Nelson's distinction between pre-personal regressive and transpersonal spiritual experiences is difficult to sustain. He tries to determine once and for all whether unusual experiences and expressions are a sign of spiritual "progress" or schizophrenic "decline." Although many of Nelson's observations and descriptions are effective, he does not see that the evaluation of unusual experiences is not a scientific or objective pursuit, but that it varies from moment to moment and from person to person. What the psychiatrist calls an expression of schizophrenic regression, for example, might be regarded by an art dealer as a supreme example of creative expression.

14.3.2.4 Trans trance transition III: Mad psychiatrists Despite all objections, these five levels of experience are quite plausible, and the charitable reader can readily concur with the distinctions Nelson makes between levels of schizophrenia, normal experience, selfless experiences of love, and creativity. My criticism is aimed at the need to clarify the motives for assigning someone, or someone's experience, to a lower or higher level, when the notion of lower or higher levels of experience or insight seems credible in itself. For the sixth level, however—the shamanic level—my criticism is of a different nature.

According to Nelson, the person who has reached the sixth level has even more access to the Ground. At the fifth level, nearness to the Ground leads to strong intuition, incredible insight into universal symbols, and enormous creativity. At the sixth level, however, nearness to and familiarity with the Ground results in proficiency in all kinds of sorcery. Magical forces, clairvoyance, and telepathic abilities are all at one's disposal. Like a cosmic wizard, one can change reality at its deepest "archetypical" structure as one sees fit. At the sixth level, there are no limits to what is possible. Nelson (1990, 314) says,

Once a person enters this subtle realm, it is but a small step to learn to manipulate these archetypal "blueprints" that underlie reality, and therefore to alter reality at will. Here is the rarefied atmosphere of the shaman, the Gnostic high priest,

the yoga master. It is a stratospheric plane of consciousness in which the magical is commonplace and there are no boundaries or limits. These powers seem miraculous to our everyday mentality, but to the sixth chakra adept, they are just another skill.

Here Nelson mentions the shaman and the yoga master. I myself have discussed them in order to show that the realm in which the madman finds himself resembles the realm we see in the traditions of shamanism and yoga. Nelson goes much further than I do, however. Magic, telepathy, and clairvoyance are not only comprehensible experiences within a certain world or tradition, but they are also verifiable facts that are observable and quantifiable in both everyday and scientific reality. Unlike myself, Nelson makes unequivocal statements about the objective existence of such things.

Exactly how do such magical experiences and actions work at the sixth level? In his explanation, Nelson uses jargon that has a lot in common with that of the yogis and of my own descriptions of "dethinking" in chapter 8. Thinking, as we normally understand it—as an activity that is external to the objects being thought about—is changed into direct contact with and direct intervention in reality, or what Nelson calls intuition (Nelson 1990, 315):

Thinking as we know it is at odds with the psychic activity of the sixth chakra, and the adept practices methods to stop his mind from thinking. He finds logic inadequate to process the subtle energies he confronts, so he cultivates intuition, a way of directly "reading" the Ground. Intuition is a finer kind of reason that takes in the seen with the unseen in an unfiltered apprehension of reality.

Thanks to this other form of thinking (dethinking), the sixth-chakra adept penetrates to deeper levels of reality, where he can manipulate everything. Nelson (1990, 315):

As introspection deepens, the adept begins to discern metapatterns, organizing principles underlying the unity of the cosmos, "archetypes of archetypes." This allows him to control reality in a way that transcends the laws of physics ... he becomes capable of telepathy, precognition, psychokinesis, psychic healing, out-of-body travels, and "channeling" information from nether regions of the Ground.

Nelson describes shamanic madness in a way that is particularly apt. For, indeed, those who are deeply submerged in madness do see "metapatterns," think beyond thought, and discover the deepest parameters of the matrix, the archetypes of the archetypes. We ought to be grateful to him: finally a psychiatrist who really believes our craziness!

Nelson relates his sixth level explicitly to the wisdom of the yogis, mystics, wizards, and superstitious Americans. For him, psychokinetic experiences are

not experiences that should be interpreted and understood from within the normal frame of reference, because he regards them as normal in and of themselves. Like Eliade's yogi, Nelson also says (1990, 316) that today's mad shaman may apply his forces and spiritual powers only for the good:

Virtually all major religious traditions recognize psychic powers. ... All major religions agree that attention to these powers before the self reaches a certain level of spiritual attainment risks a descent into madness. ... What is unique about people who have gained the sixth chakra is that they have cultivated an internal technology that enables them to alter consciousness at will ... a sixth-chakra adept ... uses them exclusively for higher purposes, such as healing or shamanic divination, and never flaunts or exploits them for self-gain.

The problem with such ideas is that no one can explain why those who have attained the sixth level never dabble in really malicious magic or in magic that is so obviously white that everyone is aware of it. Why don't the "shamans" of California combine their psychokinetic and healing powers in large-scale actions to treat AIDS patients, for example? And why have people at the sixth level never abused their impressive powers to destroy the whole world? Nelson's descriptions of and associations with such sixth-chakra experiences are beautiful and insightful with regard to madness, but the attempt to increase their social acceptance strikes me as futile (although there is a sizeable market for such ideas; see the followers of wizards such as Oglivie, for example).

If Nelson wants to believe all that, he's more than welcome. It gets more complicated, however, when Nelson tries to distinguish between transpersonal and regressive-schizophrenic paranormal experiences, the reason being that with regression to the second level, one also comes closer to the "Ground" and is more sensitive to spiritual intruders and magical influences. For Nelson, the difference lies in the fact that, on the second level, it is impossible to control paranormal powers. He argues that "schizophrenics" may have magical powers, but they have to spend a great deal of time suppressing the four levels because they're not yet ready for them. But how can Nelson justify his claim that schizophrenic magical ideas are real while at the same time saying they must be suppressed? It seems to me that the theory Podvoll and I espouse is better: concentrating on supposedly magical powers, megalomania, and paranoia is just a "diversion" on the mystical path, just a tempting escape route into the realm of fascination, hallucinations, and delusions—for both the enlightened mystic and the medicalized schizophrenic.

In the end, the spiritual quest reaches its highest level—the seventh chakra, or ultimate oneness. Nelson's descriptions are also satisfactory for

this last level, but once again he makes a rigorous attempt to bar the way to the schizophrenic. Here again Nelson makes use of the pre/trans fallacy arguments, and he relies on assumptions concerning the differences between pre- and transrationality. According to Nelson, the difference between the successful mystic and the failed madman lies in the ability (or lack of it) to control mystical madness. The true mystic decides for himself if and how he will allow himself to become submerged in his extraordinary state, while the madman is dragged along against his will. The schizophrenic's ego is too weak; he has never reached the third chakra. Nelson (1990, 348):

The essential difference is that the schizophrenic collapses into prerational consciousness and no longer has a working ego or command of logic to process this influx of unfamiliar energy. In contrast, the mystic transcends linear logic in favor of holistic means of processing information, although he is fully capable of linear thinking when a situation demands it. ... Although the mystic becomes temporarily imperceptive to the sensory world, this is hardly an infantile or psychotic state. Far from being lost in pointless fantasy or hallucination, he voluntarily enters into deep contemplation of consciousness itself, then returns to share his insights.

Here, too, I do understand what Nelson is saying. It seems plausible that there is a difference between those who, of their own free will, undergo unusual experiences that are temporary and controlled and those who have such experiences forced upon them against their will. But in real-life situations this dichotomy between "active" and "passive" madness is less distinct than Nelson suggests. In earlier chapters, I showed that, at the height of mystical madness, such a difference actually evaporates. The contrast between the road going up and the road going down seems to say more about the observer than the observed.

14.3.2.5 Trans trance transition IV: Ladders and circles Nelson writes about madness in striking, vivid detail and makes an admirable attempt at parsing the mad experience and spreading it out over seven levels or chakras. This analytical and taxonomical precision does create problems, however. Postulating seven levels, with various kinds of transitions in between, leads to a rigid division that uses random criteria to give something a name (such as "spiritual emergency," "spiritual emergence," "regression in the service of transcendence," or "'real' schizophrenic regression"). The presentation of a range of growth-process types is interesting in itself for its insight into madness, and it is stimulating for those in search of meaning (and mad meaning). The greatest shortcoming, however, is that Nelson, without any further justification, and in a way that is typical of classical psychiatry, claims that the ability to categorize and "diagnose" experiences lies entirely

with the transpersonal psychiatrist. It is up to the Nelsonian psychiatrist to determine whether a person is "really" clairvoyant—and must be guided by a healer—or whether the clairvoyance is not yet mature and must be suppressed by psychopharmaceutical drugs. The psychiatrist alone decides whether someone is crazy or enlightened. The psychiatrist has insight into the sacred.²⁹

Interpreting exactly what an experience means is something I would rather leave to the primary person (or persons) concerned. Besides, such interpretations are never written in stone. The very same event can be regarded by both the physician on duty *and* the patient as a "psychosis," with all the medication and medical treatment that this implies, but later be seen by the patient and others as a crisis, a spiritual experience, and so forth. A similarly flexible attitude about when something should be regarded as a psychosis or a spiritual crisis can also be found in the transpersonal school, such as in the work of Kampschuur (2013, 25): "Only when a crisis is ended in a spiritual way—in other words, when a harmonious solution is found for emerging difficulties, which in all probability involves a change in old life habits—does the crisis become a spiritual one."

There are two kinds of development models: ladders and circles. In the ladder model, development involves attaining ever higher or more complex stages; the individual develops further and further away from his origins. In the circle model, the individual departs from his origins, but he also turns back—or at least he tries to. Earlier in this book (especially in part I, but also in chapters 6, 7, and 8), Sass's view of psychosis and schizophrenia came up for discussion. His theory follows a ladder model. According to Sass, psychosis—especially the schizoid variant—represents a further development of consciousness; psychosis is characterized by obsessive reflection: hyperreflection in a state of hyperconsciousness. Psychotic experiences are "higher" on the developmental ladder, in a certain sense. They are the pinnacle—and at the same time a parody—of mental development. Nelson's model also looks like a ladder model at first glance, with its seven rungs. The goal of the individual is to climb the seven rungs to reach heaven or nirvana. But at both the beginning and the end of the ladder is the "Ground," the domain of all wisdom and the origin and goal of all human striving. Nelson's work may be based on the structure of a ladder, but it's a ladder in which the highest rung realizes something it had already discovered on the lowest rung: a state of oneness with and bliss in the Ground. There's a circularity in the ladder; perhaps it would be more correct to call it a spiral (see Podvoll's model in section 5.4.3).

In both Sass and Nelson, psychosis represents a longing for progress or improvement. For Sass, psychosis is progress in reflection (although misplaced) higher up the ladder. For Nelson, psychosis is a sign that one is moving back from chakra three toward the Ground—whether spiritually upward in the direction of level seven or pathologically downward to level one. The strange thing about madness is that it often moves in two directions at once: upward and downward, forward and backward, ecstatic and raging, pre- and transpersonal.³⁰ Madness is both circle and ladder. So throw the ladder away, embrace the paradox, break out of the circle, and step into the crystal. Crystal is the material from which ladders are made; it's the unattainable center of circles and spirals, the axis of the treadmill (see the finale). Crystal is not only found in the incomprehensible gibberish of chakra two and the foolish, detached love of chakra four, but it's also in the hermetic rituals of chakra six. Whatever people are crazy enough to believe.

14.3.3 Charles Taylor and the Sources of Salvation

The salutary power of the sacred is also discussed by Charles Taylor in his book *A Secular Age* (2007) (also see section 14.1.2). In this section, I look at Taylor's understanding of how the waning of both religion and the notion of the sacred has impacted modern psychotherapy. According to Taylor, a great deal has been gained in the treatment of the mad within an a-religious, amoral context—but something has been lost as well. To regain what was lost, he says, a renewed "spiritual perspective" is necessary.

14.3.3.1 Mind-numbing therapy Taylor (2007, 618–622) advocates for a reassessment of the role of the sacred and the religious in therapy. To that end, he first describes what has happened in recent centuries. Briefly summarized, what used to be called sin is now called sickness. Struggles with good and evil, so frequent in psychoses, are now seen as symptoms of disorders that must be remedied by means of therapy. Taylor writes, "certain human struggles, questions, issues, difficulties, problems are moved from a moral/spiritual to a therapeutic register." Taylor acknowledges the positive consequences of this change, and as far as madness and psychosis are concerned this goes without saying: madmen are no longer burned at the stake as witches, and exorcisms or other dubious healing techniques are no longer carried out. The madman is now accepted (in principle) as a person of equal standing—just one who happens to have a disorder or a sickness. He deserves to be respected and valued as other sick people are: as a "normal person" who just happens to have an ailment of some kind—about which he himself can do nothing. But there's a paradox in this apparent progress

and liberation of the madman: "This [change] is the 'triumph of the therapeutic,' which has paradoxical results. It seems to involve an enhancement of human dignity, but can actually end up abasing it."

This undermining is the result of a kind of "spiritual leveling." In the past, people placed themselves and others on a scale ranging from close to the good and the divine to far away from it. God, as divine perfection, was at the top. Somewhat below him hovered the angels, and beneath them were the dead and living saints. Even lower were the clergy, and descending via the level of the average sinful individual were the lowest regions, occupied by the pagans, the sinners, and the apostates. Dangling at the very bottom were the invisible demons, the possessed, and the followers of Satan. What today is called madness or psychosis was often viewed as the manifestation of a fight between upward forces (divine) and downward forces (demonic), a fight between good and evil that, in principle, concerned everyone. Anyone could fall into the devil's clutches, but they could also come closer to God. Although those who fought with angels and demons were usually not in an enviable position, their struggle was seen as human, worthy, and meaningful (also see section 14.3.1).

At the present time, these "spiritual warriors" do receive friendly treatment—all too friendly, in fact—but the struggle and the wrestling have lost all prestige. Their struggle is no longer a common one; ordinary individuals are no longer involved in such wrestling. The struggle between good and evil, between God and the devil, is no longer seen as relevant, let alone "realistic." Everyone is regarded as "average"; a longing for higher things and a penchant for lower things are no longer recognized as such. That is what "spiritual leveling" means: you have to act normal, like a "normally functioning person," and not engage with what is "irrelevant" (also see my discussion of Kapur in Intermezzo II.III.II). In fact, striving for higher things like perfection and sanctity puts one under suspicion, and if such striving appears confused and manic-psychotic, it is promptly labeled megalomania. On the other hand, confused worry about "evil"—let alone "the devil"—is seen as a sign of pathological anxiety and paranoia. Striving for the good, whether successful or not, is no longer recognized in psychosis; all that is seen is an ailing, sick condition without any intrinsic meaning. Innocent, yes: a madman is not to blame; he isn't even considered capable of guilt. The dignity that others accord the madman goes something like this: "So, go ahead. Despite the fact that you're sick, we still think you're a real human being and that you're deserving of respect." Taylor formulates it as follows:

But the difference perhaps lies here: in the spiritual [or religious] register, the "normal," everyday, beginning situation of the soul is to be partly in the grip of evil. Something heroic or exceptional is required to get beyond this; most of us are in the middle range, where we're struggling. So there is a kind of human

"normalcy" which is defined for this middle range. The basis for this is that there is a certain form of dignity in sin, evil. It is a kind of search for the good, but deviated by catastrophic, culpable error. Ultimately, there is nothing to this; it is just wrong; its glory and prestige turn out to be empty, tawdry. But within the error, there is a certain appearance of greatness, glory, which has a certain consistency. Hence the idea of normalcy in this middle range. As against this, just being sick has no dignity. It may be culpable (how people think of contracting AIDS), or it may be without blame. But it is pure failure, weakness, lack, diminishment. ... So healing doesn't involve conversion, a growth in wisdom, a new, higher way of seeing the world; or at least, these are not the hinges of healing, though they may be among its results.

A modern therapist would call this the very definition of progress. The fact that people used to struggle with good and evil, God and the devil, sin and the notion of guilt—and in some cases still do—would be a negative consequence of a view of humanity that, like Christianity and the belief in a supreme being, is better left alone. According to the modern therapist, thinking in terms of absolute good and evil is the basis of many psychological problems. How much better it would be—still according to this imaginary therapist—if people didn't judge themselves so harshly but simply accepted themselves for who they are? Acceptance of "human nature," with its minor problems and noncosmic struggle between a-little-bit-good and sometimes-alittle-less-good, would result in human liberation and improvement. If these modern therapists are right, then the negative consequences of the Christian worldview ought to be decreasing with the waning of Christianity. But that is not the case. Replacing notions and experiences of guilt and sin with notions and stories of sickness, and the insight that comes with it, does not in any way lead to less mental suffering. Acceptance of the self and liberation from guilt have not resulted in more happiness and satisfaction. Taylor says,

One reason to throw over the spiritual perspective evil/holiness was to reject the idea that our normal, middle-range existence is imperfect. We're perfectly all right as we are, as "natural" beings. So the dignity of ordinary, "natural" existence is even further enhanced. This ought to have liberated us from what we recognized frequently as the fruits of sin: impotence, division, anguish, spleen, melancholy, emptiness, incapacity, paralyzing gloom, acedia, etc. But in fact these abound.

Not only does the modern therapeutic discourse on sickness not result in progress, but it's also paralyzing and disparaging, and it robs the inner (and outer) struggle of its value and dignity. Sickness isn't something you choose. You aren't free in your sickness. You have no choice or responsibility. Concepts like sin and evil did have those things—even though the consequences were negatives. Taylor says,

There is no choice, where there is at least apparent worth and dignity on the wrong side—or at least attraction to apparent worth and dignity. ... The original fall is entirely in the nature of compulsions, or modes of imprisonment. So the difference is this: evil has the dignity of an option for an apparent good; sickness has not. ... The person being treated is now being approached as one who is just incapacitated. He has *less* dignity than the sinner. So what was supposed to enhance our dignity has reduced it. We are just to be dealt with, manipulated into health.

The modern image of madness as sickness has given rise to the professional champion of sick souls. While ministers and priests no longer have much to tell us about how to live a good, meaningful, and wholesome life, psychiatrists certainly do. They see our deepest strivings, fears, and experiences as part of an objectifiable and determinable natural world, and thus we are delivered into the hands of experts in the area of verifiable nature. Although the average religious maniac of the past was no more likely to be made a cardinal than his modern counterpart, today's madman who has had "contact with something" is far less likely to find a listening ear with a psychiatrist, let alone a chance of being healed. His struggle is diagnosed as a sickness and is promptly stifled instead of being sorted out. Taylor says,

Casting off religion was meant to free us, give us our full dignity of agents; throwing off the tutelage of religion, hence of the church, hence of the clergy. But now we are forced to go to new experts, therapists, doctors, who exercise the kind of control that is appropriate over blind and compulsive mechanisms; who may even be administering drugs to us. Our sick selves are even more being talked down to, just treated as things, than were the faithful of yore in churches.

14.3.3.2 Visions of change Taylor's alternative is what I have called "the sacred" and what Taylor calls "the spiritual perspective." According to Taylor, the madness that is kindled when the sacred strikes should not be extinguished or anesthetized as much as examined, channeled, and assessed at its true value. The spiritual perspective and contact with the sacred is healthy and, in principle, "healthful." Taylor describes this perspective by using terms such as "divine" and "longing for eternity":

We may feel drawn to it [the spiritual perspective], may pine for it, feel dissatisfied and incomplete without it. People speak of "divine discontent," of a "désir d'éternité." This may be buried deep down, but it is a perpetual human potential. So even people who are very successful in the range of normal human flourishing (perhaps especially such people) can feel unease, perhaps remorse, some sense that their achievements are hollow.

According to some, the acute breakthrough of this unease and remorse is called a "spiritual emergence" (see section 14.3.2), and can manifest itself as psychosis. For those who will have nothing to do with the sacred or the spiritual, however, the only possible explanation is sickness. In other words, according to "spirit deniers," any longing for a flight to higher realms "buried deep down" would be pathological. Taylor continues:

From the perspective of those who deny this supposed spiritual reality, this unease can only be pathological; it is totally non-functional; it can only hold us back. The denial of much traditionally understood spiritual reality has been a crucial factor in the therapeutic turn.

Not everyone will be eager to welcome things like "the sacred" or "the spiritual perspective" as the correct way to deal with madness and psychic struggles. But what Taylor is driving at can also be properly expressed in less high-flown, more secular terms: the choice is between madness as sickness and madness as existential conflict.

So the turn [from religion/existential philosophy to biopsychiatry] offers a radically different experience of our un-ease, anguish, emptiness, division, and the like. In one case [that of the spiritual/existential perspective], they may be telling us something important; they may be revealing some lack or misdirection in our lives. In the other [that is, the biomedical/therapeutic], they are akin to illness, and as such may be *symptomatic* of some mistaken direction (as my high blood pressure of my too rich diet); they don't constitute a (perhaps largely confused and masked) *perception* of this mis-direction.

The choice between these two perspectives is troublesome but of great importance. In the first case (the spiritual/existential), the content of the psychosis must be further examined, because the crisis, the madness with its delusions, comprises a "perception of this mis-direction," while in the second case, the crisis is nothing but a meaningless symptom of something else. The choice has great practical consequences. Taylor says,

So which perspective is chosen not only influences how others (doctors, helpers) will treat you, but also how you will treat yourself. In one case, the unease needs to be further understood, worked through, perhaps in prayer or meditation; in the other it needs to be got rid of, or at least rendered mild enough to be lived with.³¹

For Taylor, it's all quite clear: notions of "the One," being, or infinity, as I used them earlier, are not simply plucked out of the air; rather, they refer to the "spiritual perspective." Taylor himself speaks of "fullness," and he links this notion with striving for the absolute good. Striving for fullness can lead to problems and paradoxes:

Human beings are powerfully drawn to fullness under some or other definitions. And most people will concur that these aspirations can themselves be the source of deep troubles; for instance, strong moral demands can impact on our lives in the form of crippling guilt, which may incapacitate us in our actions and responses, including the moral ones.

Anyone who is seized by that fullness in the present age, in modern therapy, will be firmly brought back to earth and expected to reject such longing for higher things as pure fantasy. Taylor:

But a crucial feature of a purely immanentist therapy is that the cure of these incapacities is held to involve—or even demand—our repudiation of, or at least distancing from, any aspirations to the transcendent, like religious faith.

According to Taylor, however, this spiritual—or call it "existential"—wrestling, struggle, or quest, with all the mad consequences it may involve, is not incidental to the discovery of the sacred or spiritual perspective. It is a central part of it. Powerlessness, moral paralysis, confusion, and psychosis are not indications of the failure of the sacred perspective but a phase in the expression of the sacred. Contact with the sacred leads to conflicts from which you must not flee, but must try to unravel:

These [aspirations] produce incapacity not adventitiously ... but essentially. ... Whereas from the spiritual perspective, that the demands of faith can produce crippling conflicts reflects not their gratuitous nature, but our real (fallen) predicament; the goal must be to find a more adequate response to the spiritual reality, not to flee it.

14.3.3.3 Psychosis: Taylor-made, homemade? He certainly can turn a phrase, that Taylor! I felt that way when I first read *Sources of the Self* in the night train, bound for the northern Swedish town of Kiruna in 2003. Exactly four years later, in the mad, sweltering summer of 2007, I gave an intensive reading course on Charles Taylor at the International School of Philosophy and became even more enthusiastic. Taylor was the one who, in his work, handed me the key to the gates of madness. Thanks to him, I came to understand what it was all about, from Plato via Augustine to Schelling and beyond. I suddenly understood the urgent, practical, and essential importance of the problems that the great thinkers were wrestling with. It wasn't just a matter of arbitrary textual interpretations, interchangeable opinions, or irrelevant ways to pass the time. No, philosophy as Taylor does it is a matter of "practicing existential art." His *Sources of the Self* demonstrates that the source from which our selves arise is valuable and sacred.

Thanks to Taylor, the ideas of the good, the true, and the beautiful as aspects of the One and the sacred came to life—to my life. The philosophy of salvation became a reality: the One came down to earth, and I understood

what that entailed. I was moved, transformed, and "converted" by Taylor's subtle, Catholic theophilosophy. I quickly understood why most philosophers are, or were, religious or Christian. All at once, I saw the unbelievable beauty of Kant's great tripartite project by reading Deleuze's commentary on Kant. The world was transformed into a magnificent illustration of classical philosophy. The sacred had come down, sunk in, and was born (or reborn).

What I'm talking about here is not what constitutes the relationship between Taylor's body of thought and mine, or the content of religious mania, but about a more general paradox. Taylor's work was important in triggering my madness in 2007, but at the same time I'm using Taylor to tell the truth about that madness. Is that permissible? Am I not getting caught up in a mad spiral? Can I use the book that drove me crazy to comment afterward on the same craziness? I believe I can, assuming that the madness has some kind of content—a perplexing insight that is valuable and worth the trouble of spinning out afterward. Seen in this way, my madness of 2007 contained the whimsical, compact, and sometimes incomprehensible germ—planted by Taylor—of everything I have worked out in a more comprehensible way in this book.

Another problem in my use of Taylor is that applying his work may be valid only for psychoses that he himself inspires. This is a common problem. Custance explicitly describes Jung's body of thought in his own book and analysis. Shamanic themes are a feature of Lukoff's psychosis, and afterward he interpreted his madness with the help of shamanic literature. The psychosis of a famous American psychologist, Mary Newton, came about after her intensive study of Joseph Campbell's work on myths, and many years later she used Campbell's theory to interpret her madness. All of that is to say there is nothing unusual about my Taylor psychosis.³³

The same paradoxical circle or "Möbius strip" of content level with descriptive level also occurred in 2007. In the summer of that year, others tried to convince me that I was psychotic. I, however, was of the opinion that I myself was the authority when it came to psychotic experience because I had written a book about it: *Pure Madness*. That book gave rise to endless discussions and monologues about why I was or was not psychotic. In the depth of my madness of 2007, I understood that psychosis is truth and that this truth was encrypted in *Pure Madness* but that its full effect hadn't gotten through to me until then. I saw it all clearly: not every psychosis may represent the truth, but there is a remarkable, self-referential, paradoxical element of madness hidden in the depths of the truth (see chapter 13).

Naturally I'm speaking in this book not only as a philosopher and writer but also as an expert in the experience of madness. I played this curious double-role in compact form back in 2007, in the secure ward of the

psychiatric hospital. The psychiatrist who admitted me had reviewed *Pure Madness* a few months before. Nurses in the ward asked me to sign their copies of *Pure Madness*. Even during my stay in the madhouse, I was given a day's leave to speak about psychosis and time at a conference of psychiatrists. It doesn't get much crazier than that. Perplexity not only proved to be a diagnostic feature of psychosis, but it also pointed to the absurdity of psychiatry and society in general.

14.3.4 Peter Kingsley's Praise of Isolation

Another interesting and radical view of madness and the sacred is offered by Peter Kingsley, philosopher, historian, and specialist in ancient Greek philosophy. Kingsley calls himself a mystic, and his message is that pre-Socratic philosophy is a source of true, relevant, and untapped wisdom. Heidegger is known for the same idea, but Kingsley develops it better; he takes more daring positions and, at the same time, offers more historic evidence and precise textual analyses.

Kingsley's ideas run as follows: Pre-Socratic Greek philosophy did not develop as a reaction against earlier mythical, magical, or mystical practices. Rather, these practices formed its very breeding ground and raison d'être. It was Plato and Aristotle who distanced themselves from the earlier Greek wisdom and world views and interpreted the work of these predecessors in ways that were influential but incorrect. In reality, the true founders of Greek philosophy were Kingsley's heroes: Empedocles and Parmenides. If we read the works of these two philosophers carefully, with Kingsley's help, the aphoristic and sometimes obscure fragments are transformed into coherent and "revealing" words of wisdom. Empedocles, with his theory of the four elements, would later wrongfully be painted as a failed or outdated proto-physicist; "wrongfully" because his four elements of water, earth, air, and fire are essentially four "bearers," or metaphors, for an insight that is both bewildering and maddening. What this insight is lies hidden in Empedocles's text, and Kingsley alludes to it for us, his modern readership, in his own work. In Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic (1995), In the Dark Places of Wisdom (1999), Reality (2003), and A Story Waiting to Pierce You (2010), which are written like detective page-turners, Kingsley describes the sources, content, and later distribution of the esoteric—and almost sectarian—teachings of the early Greek philosophers.

According to Kingsley, Empedocles and Parmenides received their wise insights not through "lucid" reasoning and a sober mind but by means of dark trances and an enraptured soul. In later work (2010), Kingsley

explicitly refers to the influence and context of Asiatic shamanism in the emergence of Greek philosophy and culture. The first philosophers articulated their insights by means of symbolic, hermetic language that could be understood only by initiates and seemed, from the outside, to consist of open doors. The only way for us to properly appreciate these texts and thinkers is to keep in mind that, at that time, philosophy comprised not only wisdom, religion, and science, but also magic, mysticism, and medicine. In Kingsley's descriptions of Empedocles's person, teachings, and lifestyle, we recognize many aspects of the modern madman who has been thrown off-balance by revelation and bewilderment.

What Kingsley writes about "sacred healing" is of relevance here (for Kingsley's view of the work of the prophets, see 16.3.3). At the time of Empedocles, healing involved the invoking of the sacred. A person who was suffering or sick would withdraw to a sacred place and remain there, in seclusion, in what today would be called an "isolation cell" or "solitary confinement." That was not the cesspit or remedy of last resort offered by today's soulless medical establishment, but a sacred place of silence, meditation, and trance, rather like a monk's cell. Kingsley (1999, 55) writes,

Before the beginnings of what's known as "rational" medicine in the West, healing always had to do with the divine. If people were sick it was normal to go to the shrines of gods, or else to the shrines of great beings who once had been humans but now were more than humans: the heroes. And they'd lie down. They would lie down in an enclosed space. Often it was a cave.

Inside that cave, one would be visited by what today would be regarded as the problem to be remedied: visions, delusions, and hallucinations. At the time of Empedocles, what now would be called the psychotic *problem* was the sacred *solution*. Kingsley continues:

And either they'd fall asleep and have a dream or they'd enter a state described as neither sleep nor waking—and eventually they'd have a vision. Sometimes the vision or the dream would bring them face to face with the god or the goddess or hero, and that was how the healing came about. People were healed like this all the time.

That is, let the madness come; make contact with it, crawl into the eye of the hurricane, and let it take its course; don't interfere, don't force it, don't do anything. Just surrender. Kingsley follows with this:

What's important is that you would do absolutely nothing. The point came when you wouldn't struggle or make an effort. You'd just have to surrender to your condition. You would lie down as if you were dead; wait without eating or moving,

sometimes for days at a time. And you'd wait for the healing to come from somewhere else, from another level of awareness and another level of being.³⁴

You weren't left alone during that sacred "do-nothing" period, by the way. People who were familiar with such experiences and processes were there to support you, and they understood what you needed without interfering. Kingsley calls them priests; today they would be on the staff of alternative psychiatric hospitals, where attention is paid to the world through which the madman travels. Kingsley says,

But that's not to say you were left alone. There would be people in charge of the place—priests who understood how the process worked and how to supervise it, who knew how to help you understand what you needed to know without interfering with the process itself.

This knowledge and wisdom has vanished today, and the tendency is to rely on drugs:

Because there's no knowledge left any more of how to find access to what's beyond our waking consciousness, we have to take anesthetics and drugs. And because there's no longer any understanding of powers greater than ourselves, we're denied any meaning to our suffering. So we suffer as liabilities, die as statistics.

Kingsley describes in great detail what his view of well-being, inspired by Empedocles and Parmenides, means for dealing with fortune, misfortune, transcendence, and inspiration. Unlike Nelson, he does not attempt to separate the psychotic chaff from the sacred wheat but to inspire people with his view of the sacred and its transformative effect on the mind. Kingsley (2003, 448) also makes praiseworthy comments about the period *after* the sacred insights, *after* the first contact with the transcendent, in which he explicitly speaks of madness. Madness must be experienced and used in order to cast a light from the outside onto the many forms of normality or health. When you've been affected and permeated with madness, you can never again be harmed by the madness of normality. You're a "citizen of two worlds" and not limited by either one:

First, madness has to be experienced; then controlled. And to do this is to discover all kinds of sanities, of ways for operating skillfully in the world. ... To be controlled by insanity is to be feeble. To be controlled by sanity is to be even feebler. But when you have become so mad you are prepared to leave the purity of your madness behind then the memory of it, preserved in every cell of your body, will stop you ever becoming contaminated by sanity. This is what it means to live in two worlds and not be limited by either.

Madness is liberating. You rise above the reasonableness and, consequently, can move within it more freely: "The funniest thing is that those who know the ins and outs of reason, its back doors as well as the front ones, have a far better grasp of it than those who stay trapped inside it for the whole of their lives ..." Once you've really been alone in isolation, the borders between illusion and reality disappear, and you're free:

The secret is to be able to see this whole world as an illusion and still function in it as if it's real; to seem bound while inwardly staying quite free; to act bewitched like everyone else but, in doing so, to be deceiving rather than deceived.

The almost Nelsonian suggestion is that you yourself pull the strings of reality, like a magician, instead of being pulled on from the outside.

At this point, the attentive reader is going to think, "Why should I follow gurus and persuaders like Kingsley (or Nelson or Taylor) in the first place?" And indeed, some of the things Kingsley claims are a bit silly. It's difficult to maintain that only Empedocles and his disciples were the ones to see the light, that the rest of history and humanity was mistaken, and that it wasn't until the coming of the modern prophet Kingsley that the way back to the truth—and past it—was found. Kingsley venerates the pre-Socratics with the same detachment from reality and monomania that convinced Capriles that Tibetan Buddhism is the alpha and omega of all wisdom.

The aim of this chapter, however, was not to localize deliverance in one prophet, one thinker, or one particular philosophy but to show how the sacred operates in a number of commonly occurring mad *and* therapeutic guises. With the notion of the sacred, we immediately find ourselves in the midst of many disputes having to do with the sacred. These disputes take place around *and* within the realm of madness. Which notion of the sacred is the most suitable: that of Nelson, Taylor, or Kingsley? That of the shamans or of the "truly" mad? What is deliverance, and when does it bring nothing but doom? Different answers lead to different therapies and different forms of madness.

15 The Mad Plan in Story and System

15.1 Introduction: Crystallizations

In chapter 14, I wrote about what can happen when the rift or division in the One, in being, or in infinity is expressed as the difference between the sacred and the profane. In this chapter I will further examine the rift as it crystallizes out in madness. The fault line (or "differentiation") in mystical madness can break down and fragment even further, but it can also develop, reorder, or systematize. The results of this are delusional systems, crystal castles, all-pervasive conspiracies, and all-embracing theories. My term for the crystallization of mystical madness in a mad multiplicity is the "Plan." By this I mean what traditionally is known as delusion, but I give the concept my own slant and description in section 15.2.

Plans are made up of "tellable" stories that concern a sequence of related events; a plot or conspiracy is often involved. Usually several acting "characters" or forces are introduced in a kind of game that has to do with things like power, good and evil, love, hatred, wounds, loss, death, and birth. This mad game is played with sacred symbols, parables, and allegories, and in regard to the story genre, it most resembles a myth. I develop the Plan further in sections 15.3 and 15.4 using analogies and metaphors, such as those found in films, tests, and games.

By using the term "crystal castle," I suggest that the Plan can also be regarded as the mad elaboration of paradox in stories and systems (cf. the title of section 13.4). As a complement to chapter 13, I describe the long, drawn-out delusional systems in which the original paradox, with its perplexing astonishment, has been lost.

Being under the spell of the Plan is like being possessed by the sacred (discussed in the previous chapter). But I distinguish the Plan from the sacred by regarding the Plan as a further development. The Plan is more elaborate than the sacred in its details and elements from everyday life. In

addition, the Plan often has to do with a rift between the "I" and the world, the subject and the object, while the sacred only has to do with the difference between the sacred and the profane. Nevertheless, there is a considerable overlap between these two notions.

Expressing the Plan in words is relatively simple compared with the mystical madness of part III. It's easy to explain how and why the world got this way in terms of the struggle between Islam and Christianity, for example, or between Nokia and Siemens, or organic and inorganic. It's much more difficult—as in part III—to put into words that which escapes and exceeds these oppositions. Because of the apparent simplicity and transparency of the Plan, it's tempting for the investigator of madness to equate the delusional structures of the Plan with madness itself and to overlook the source from which they originate. This is often true for the madman as well, in retrospect. But all too often, madmen who find themselves in a madness-free period will laugh off their madness by recalling a few salient, relevant, crazy remarks and forgetting the source of the insight in which these remarks were embedded. So no matter how interesting and fascinating the Plans are in themselves, they only constitute the earthly, fragmented exterior of a sublime inspiration or enchantment.

This last idea has a counterpart in traditional psychiatric literature. There the crystallizations of madness as manifested in paranoia, delusion of reference, megalomania, and so forth are considered as only secondary cognitive compensations or reactions to other kinds of primary disturbances (also see Intermezzo II.III.II). In comparison with traditional psychiatry, however, I pay less attention to what that primary disorder might be. I also do not comment on whether it is indeed a disorder, rather than an "insight" or a "breakthrough." I describe reactions to the primary disorder in a more neutral way and do not regard them as intrinsically "disordered." Rather, I see the delusions and delusional systems as alternative attempts to keep the "contact with fire" from turning lethal. They are ways—many of them impractical—of giving form and narrative to ineffable mystical madness.

15.2 The Blueprint

15.2.1 The Myth and the Plan

It's a well-known idea in Freudian and especially Jungian psychoanalysis that mythical symbols, stories, and patterns play a role in the mad experience. In dreams and in madness, the archaic-primitive layers of the human mind rise to the surface due to the absence of rational "self-censorship." By studying myths—as well as dreams and poetry—you can better understand

the symbolic-archaic utterances made by the mad. According to this rather sympathetic approach, the madman undergoes a mythical process in a strange but meaningful world. One of the most outspoken supporters of the idea of a *via mythica psychotica* is the neo-Jungian psychiatrist John Weir Perry, who writes in *The Far Side of Madness* (1974, 9), "This inner world of the psychotic does not look like the one we know outwardly, but it is recognizable as a view of the cosmos familiar in myth and ritual forms since ancient times."

According to this view, mythical stories, much like delusions, are attempts to express the inexpressible. In myths, just as in delusions, explanations are given and stories are told about themes that remain essentially unfathomable and inexplicable: How did everything emerge out of nothing? How does good relate to evil? How is chaos transformed into order? And why does everything happen the way it does? Unlike philosophy and theology, myths and delusions contain stories about people with "heads and tails" and "hands and feet." Myths and madness can be regarded as dramatized forms of philosophy and theology. I could adapt this idea to tracking down and interpreting the mythical elements present in madness, but I'm not going to. Instead of myths, I'm going to use another concept: that of the Plan. Although my concept of the Plan does rely on ideas from the mythophiliac Jungian school, the term "myth" is less suitable here for a number of reasons.

First, myths are stories that fulfill an important guiding role in a culture and are universally recognized and acknowledged. The stories in madness, on the other hand, are those of a single individual, although they may have general characteristics in their underlying structure. That's why you can say "my delusion" but not "my myth."

Second, madness contains elements and motifs that are unknown in myths. Myths derive more from ancient societies that differ substantially from the modern world in which madness takes place. In the world of modern madness, contemporary phenomena such as TV and the internet often play a role, along with more archaic phenomena such as telepathy and metamorphosis. In addition, the data from which the mad world is built is composed of shreds of modern, scientific knowledge. Finally, mad stories often contain specific events and individuals from the "real world."

The most important reason for not using the term "myth" is its overt association with primitivism and childlike qualities. The term "myth" as a designation for the psychotic experience implies that the psychosis is a "return" to a childlike way of experiencing. In this (Jungian) view, the human mind is presumed to be built of layers, with the "top layer" being

that of rational, cognitive, conscious thought. This highest psychic layer corresponds with the last stage in the history of civilization. A psychosis would be an explicit journey (or "descent") to the underlying unconscious, and—because of the analogy between the structure of the mind and the advancement of history—it would also be a journey to a primitive-archaic form of consciousness. Although these are interesting ideas, they fail to take into account another aspect of psychosis: delusions involve not only the primitive unconscious but are also lucid and hyperreflexive. They are often more postmodern than premodern, more hyperreflexive than prereflexive (see Sass 1992, and the introduction to part II).

In addition, the term "myth" is imbued with a sense of restriction. Whoever finds himself in a "mythic" process of development is merely reliving ancient themes and ruminating on them. The term "Plan" is better suited to a view in which madness is not only an inner retro-journey but is actually one step forward and outward. A myth is an inward-looking repetition of what was already there, while the Plan is aimed at the fulfillment of a yet empty future.

Finally, the term "myth" places too much emphasis on secondary delusions—the symbols, the delusions, the personifications, and the images—at the expense of the primary process. The system of delusions is then readily reduced to a narrative dualistic model, in which the paradoxical perplexity of madness is lost. With the term "myth," the hastily erected structure of the system of delusion becomes fixed, and you lock the psychotic up in a crazy kind of mythical madhouse.

Of course there are modern, refined theories about the myth (such as that of Ricoeur). So in my notion of the Plan, I retain a great deal from the concept of the myth and refer to it frequently. But because the term is too contaminated with the objections mentioned above, I prefer "Plan" as an overarching term for "non-monistic" madness.

15.2.2 Planology

The Plan is the secret of the world as laid down in language and discovered by the madman. The Plan explains what the world consists of, where it comes from, who belongs with whom, what belongs with what, and what good and evil are. The Plan is a plan of action because it tells you how to act. It reveals what the original order looked like and how, with this knowledge, the ultimate order can be reached. The Plan generates a course of life. It is an existential plan for reform because it understands all random and meaningless movements and absorbs them into itself. It happens because it must happen; it is inevitable and necessary; it is the deepest essence of the cosmos.

At the same time, the madman needs to cooperate with the Plan, because otherwise everything will fall to pieces. The Plan is the interpretation of the present and the past in its totality, and it contains compelling signs about the future that can break out at any moment. It's a totality of values, contrasts, and relations, but with a narrative character. It contains fictional elements from films, novels, comic strips, TV programs, and entertainment, and it often has the structure of a game. Each participant in the Plan has a role, and the game can vary in tone from a blame game to chess to adventure games. Experience expert J. Keil (1986, 24) says, "I believed I was a significant part of an all-encompassing plan. Everything evolved around my existence."

Unlike the myth, a Plan is designed by a single individual. It can contain magical, mythical, and scientific elements, and it is not associated with childishness or primitivity. The initial capital letter sets the Plan apart from the conventional little plans that people make. "Plan" is also a better term than "delusion." A delusion denotes a stubborn and inaccurate idea about a well-defined object. A Plan comprises more than a single delusional idea and refers to an all-embracing underlying system—a structure. Delusions and myths have the connotation of being mere fantasy or unreality, while the term "Plan" has no such connotation and is couched in uncertainty. The Plan also alludes to actions in the future, while myth and delusion are more suggestive of the aftereffects of the past. With the Plan, it's also easier to form a link with "normal" strange ideas; the term is more suitable to a view in which delusion and reality differ only gradually and not in principle.

The Plan is a descriptive term, but it also contains a certain irony in that it refers to other Great Plans that were attempts to comprise the order of the cosmos and all earthly time. It draws on the same elements used by communists and Christians, for example, in their plans of salvation. As with other Great Plans, the fate of the world is laid down in the mad Plan, a fate that, at the same time, has yet to be proven and engineered. Of the four delusions listed in part III, the Plan seems most like a continuation of the uni-delusion; it can be seen as a psychotic elaboration of Plotinus's One. Finally, the Plan is also the psychotic counterpart to the psychiatric treatment plan; but while the treatment plan is meant to suppress the madness, the goal of the Plan is to spread the madness as widely as possible.

15.2.3 Plan Time

The Plan occupies a paradoxical position within everyday earth time. It arranges the world in terms of good and evil, black and white, dead and alive, and so forth. This installed order possesses a remarkable kind of gravity that is experienced as a primordial power or symbol, stemming from a

massive, mist-enshrouded past. The Plan is the order of "the forefathers," although it does not specify who they were or when they lived. Eliade's name for what I call the time of the Plan is "sacred time" or *illud tempus*. According to Taylor, a Plan and a Plan Time that are described this way belong to the "enchanted world" (see section 14.1), and he speaks of a "Great Time" (2007, 57): "The idea is of a Great Time, an 'illud tempus,' when the order of things was established. … The agents in this time were on a larger scale than people today, perhaps gods, but at least heroes. In terms of secular time, this origin is in a remote past, it is 'time out of mind.'"

Although the Plan and the Plan Time (and the Great Time) belong to an almost mythical, inaccessible past, they are at the same time present in the here and now. The Plan is the order of the cosmos that always prevails, so it also includes the present. Anyone who is conscious of the Plan can take part in this Plan Time. By entering the Plan and the Plan Time, the life of the everyday banal is transcended, and a meaningless, momentary world is transformed into a meaningful, eternal world. When life is "planified"—or "mythologized," if you will—then earthly life can be linked to a higher sacred life of gods and demons. It is possible to take part in such a sacred time by participating in fixed rituals in a fixed place and time. We then assume a prescribed role, and for just a moment, we play a sacred game that brings us closer to the divine. Taylor (2007, 57) continues, "But it is not simply in the past, because it is also something that we can re-approach, can get closer to again. This may be by ritual only, but this ritual may also have an effect of renewing and rededicating, hence coming closer to the origin."

For Taylor, the Great Time that is accessed through rituals is a sacred time about which stories are told within a community. The mad Plan Time, however, is hyperindividualistic. Nevertheless, what Taylor goes on to say about the Great Time is just as true for the Plan and Plan Time—but on the level of the individual and his course of life: "The Great Time [or 'Plan Time'] is thus behind us, but it is also in a sense above us. It is what happened at the beginning, but it is also the great Exemplar, which we can be closer to or farther away from as we move through history [or for the madman, 'through our course of life']."

Taylor distinguishes ritual from everyday practice and sacred time from profane time. But the mad world is a more extreme case: in madness, everything becomes ritual; profane time is entirely subsumed in Plan Time. For example, the madman Mr. Ein, quoted in Bock (2000, 268), makes the typical statement: "The split between good and evil, and life and death, was everywhere, down to the most mundane details. Even food was split into good and evil."

The madman thinks, experiences, and acts entirely within the framework of the Plan. He repeats the story of the eternal Plan endlessly. He loses himself in the Plan, leaves earthly time, and ends up in a quasimythical Plan Time. At that level, there is no progress or change as there is in earthly time, but only an "eternal present" and an eternal repetition of the same thing. Eliade writes (1958a, 429–30): "this repetition involves the abolition of profane time and placing of man in a magico-religious time [Plan Time] which has no connection with succession in the true sense, but forms the 'eternal now' of mythical time."

According to Eliade, that sacred time is a paradisaical time of awakening: "In other words, along with other magico-religious experiences, myth [and the Plan, for the madman] makes man once more exist in a timeless period, which is in effect an *illud tempus* [Taylor's Great Time], a time of dawn and of 'paradise,' outside history. Anyone who performs any rite transcends profane time and space; similarly, anyone who 'imitates' a mythological model or even ritually assists at the retelling of a myth (taking part in it), is taken out of profane 'becoming,' and returns to the Great Time."

When it comes to the Plan, the mood is not always paradisaical; in fact it can be quite hellish. If the Plan concerns the persecution or death of the central figure, then his death is the ultimate end of everything; all signs are eternally pointing to the fact that the person is dying or "will be made to die." In that case, the magico-religious experiences have to do with eternally stationary threats or murder, with being ripped apart, "dissected," fragmented, or torn asunder, which is described in many psychotic (and mythical or mystical) texts.

If all earthly activities are carried out within the framework of the eternal Plan, then the madman must get mixed up in some remarkable paradoxes. For example, the Plan may have to do with the struggle between good and evil, with World War II as its model. So in everything the madman experiences, "it's as if the war were still on." It's no longer a limited war in time and space, but an endless, all-encompassing war. The events of World War II keep repeating again and again, without ever getting old, without "really" passing away. The bombing of Rotterdam is something the madman will think he's observing every time he passes a dilapidated building. The invasion of Normandy will keep recurring whenever he sees a boat being docked somewhere. Because of the unremitting nature of Plan Time, the actual chronology of World War II cannot be reflected in the Plan-in-Operation.

Whenever the Plan is lived out in madness, it does so in a nonlinear fashion. One moment, the Plan is already in its final stage and the madman is

ruling the universe; the next moment Armageddon is revealing itself to him and he must fight for the triumph of goodness. At yet another moment, the Plan is still in its beginning stage and the madman feels called to prophesy about its coming. The Plan consists of a variable narrative sequence with a beginning, a plot, and an end, but it also follows a static systematic order, with the world organized into rigid structures. Because events and periods are all mixed together in the mad Plan Time, nonmad spectators are given a chaotic, kaleidoscopic image of something that, from the inside, is experienced as a pure, transparent Planning Crystal.

15.2.4 Plan Logic

So in Plan Time, events are not absorbed in a linear, historical fashion but are regarded as repeating manifestations of the Plan. In this respect, Plan Time resembles mythical time. The myths repeat themselves, and the archetypes, mythical figures, and mythical themes keep returning. People from the "profane time" are seen in Plan Time as participants or fellow actors in the Plan—or archetypes from the mythical world. Someone who speaks German is seen as The Eternal German; someone with a large nose is The Eternal Jew, and someone with a somewhat angular face and fur hat is The Russian. Three red cars in a row can be seen as a sign that the Russians are coming. This all happens within The Plan (or the story) of World War II, for example, and is not a later consequence or a memory of the actual war. There are no consequences of the Plan in Plan Time; Plan Time contains only expressions of the Plan. Like the myth, the Plan does not change, and everything is actually fixed in place. Nothing new ever happens, because everything that might be new is, upon closer inspection, part of the simultaneously eternal and ancient Plan. Anything new is only an example of the primordial Plan. What Eliade (1954, 95) writes about the "mythic, archaic man" applies just as much to the madman: "Archaic man [or the madman], as has been shown, tends to set himself in opposition, by every means in his power, to history, regarded as a succession of events that are irreversible, unforeseeable, possessed of autonomous value."

Because of the absence of any real progress or change in the Plan, experience is marked by association rather than causality, as it is in the case of the myth. Seen historically, association connects unrelated events, which are all manifestations of the Plan. The past is not a chain of events leading up to the present. Rather, the past is a script or a model, and the present is the implementation of that model. Mooij says the following with regard to the paranoid form of madness (2012, 180): "Life becomes an endless cycle in which the past continues into the future, unchanged. A 'short-circuit' has

occurred between past and future, with an elimination or implosion of the present. The future becomes an identical copy of a frozen past."

Because the Plan is the indisputable framework for experience, thought, and action, the question of whether the Plan "really exists" or not within the mad world is irrelevant. The Plan is the ground that keeps the madman from sinking into the swamp of madness. The Plan is beyond the contrast of fact and fiction; it's the presumed context within which questions about truth and falsehood actually make sense. The Plan cannot be robbed of its power. When things happen that do not square with the Plan, the mad "planatic" can simply continue operating on another level of the Plan. Thus, World War II can be regarded as a subplan within the greater plan of the "clash of civilizations," or it can be experienced as a struggle between atheism and religion.

As in an earlier example, the Plan can be grafted onto a historical period, but it might also have wandered out of a book, film, or computer game. Scenes from a film like *The Matrix* can constitute elements in the Plan as effectively as newspaper reports. World War II (as a war that really happened) can be just as decisive for the operation of the Plan as a book or film about the same war. And the "real calendar" is of just as much importance (or just as little) as the "narrative time" from a book or film.

Our experience of the normal world is made up of opposites, such as absence and presence, past and present, true and false. These normally basic contrasts are rarely of importance in madness. When such distinctions evaporate, the differences between fact, fiction, and fantasy disappear. Then slowly rising from the foggy mist comes the blueprint of the Plan. Whether a thing is true, good, or beautiful is no longer important; all that matters is whether, and to what extent, it is part of the Plan. Standards of truth, appropriateness, and humanity are replaced by one single new criterion: how close it is to the Plan. The closer to the fire, the more intense; the deeper into the Plan, the more fundamental. Earlier (in section 3.2.1), I described this curious change as "space-creating" or spatializing. In the mythic Plan Time, the parts of the Plan are located side by side in space rather than consecutively in time. So schematic drawings of the world plan are very successful in madness. Mandalas have a great power of attraction. The mad "psychoplanatic" (my term for someone who has a Plan) gets closer to the heart of the Plan when he—to stick with the example of World War II—sees black-and-white clips about World War II on Discovery Channel and lays his hand on the television. Time and space are no longer empty, featureless, linear dimensions in which experience takes place; rather, they themselves contain organized, qualitative focal points.

In the next example, Coate (in Peterson 1982, 304) shows what it's like to be caught unaware by the sacred (cf. chapter 14) and the Plan, when a psychiatric hospital is transformed, as if by magic, into a carefully designed sacred space—a cathedral. All this occurs in a mythical time, filled with semi-Christian symbols and tableaux. The logic is associative and "vertical"; events are not related to each other by a horizontal chain of causality, but each one is an expression of the heavenly Plan:

I had been specially chosen to be a kind of star actress in a celestial mystery play. I accepted this unquestioningly and with delight, while at the same time never completely identifying with the role I played. At one time I took the part of the Virgin Mary, at another I was the boy David; sometimes I was an anonymous figure representing a boy and a girl at the same time. Always my point of reference and of distant veneration was the black-robed, sandalled figure who sat motionless for hours at a time at the end of the aisle of a cathedral. ... The black-robed figure was a priest, the head of a religious order, who represented and at times actually became Christ. At meal times we filed into an adjacent, circular building, the chapter house, in which the ceremony of the Last Supper was recurrently enacted. The priest-figure served out the food which I helped, with due reverence, to carry round. Then, after seating myself at one of the wooden trestle tables, my duty was to see that the salt was passed up and down and especially from one side to the other. This was vitally important, for the two sides were not, as it seemed, a mere arm's length apart. The opposing rows of people seated there were really in far different places and in different centuries as well. Space and time converged here to make a meeting point. 1

15.3 The Script as Metaphor for the Plan

15.3.1 Film without a Screen: The Truman Show

Anyone who is aware of the Plan notices that every individual plays a role and is involved in a secret plot or conspiracy. The Plan may be the truth, but it's a truth kept hidden behind a pretense of reality. You have just discovered it. It's as if the whole world were playing a trick on you, as if they had arranged things in such a way that everything seems normal. But normal is now only "apparently" normal, and beyond that pretense is the Plan you have discovered. It's as if the pretense had been penetrated and you were given access to the "matrix" of the world, to the script that directs people, to the secret laws that things obey. Conrad (1958, 52) gives us a fine example:

During the ride, he noticed some rather astonishing things. Everything on the street had been deliberately constructed with him in mind. Many things had been arranged with the sole purpose of testing him, to see if he noticed. There was a big pile of straw, for example, that had nothing to do with anything else nearby;

there were big containers filled with stones for paving the street, although the street was in good condition. Walking along the edge of the street, where you could barely see it, was a sheep. People on bikes were coming at him from the other direction. Yes, it was so much, he could barely talk about it.

This is Conrad's brilliant description of the mood felt in the mad Plan. The world seems to have been deliberately put together in order to hide something: "*They* had the sheep walk in exactly that place, so that ..." Both the thing that is being hidden and the attempt to hide it are part of the Plan. The patient Clifford Beers (in Peterson 1982, 164) explicitly mentions this cinematic or artificial aspect of the Plan:

The world was fast becoming to me a stage on which every human being within the range of my senses seemed to be playing a part, and a part which would lead not only to my destruction (for which I cared little), but also to the ruin of all with whom I had ever come in contact. In the month of July several thunder-storms occurred. To me the thunder was "stage" thunder, the lightning man-made, and the accompanying rain due to some clever contrivance of my persecutors.

Conrad (1958, 73) describes this feeling as follows:

The sick person lives in a world that has rarely changed, in which everything has been built behind the scenes, as it were, and designed just for him, in order to test him or trick him. In addition, the familiar has become strange and the strange familiar, but he himself has been condemned to utter passivity. An almost all-powerful impresario, a god-like director (as it is generally assumed, without any further objections or doubts) is responsible for this play. Usually this great co-star hides behind the anonymous "one" or the passive voice [or "they," see 16.1]: "Things have been arranged in such a way, I am being observed, one wants this of me, one believes," and so forth.

Here Conrad uses theater or film metaphors, and he continues with a literary metaphor: "This attitude reflects a great deal of what is magnificently expressed in the work of Kafka. In this respect, the schizophrenic world can indeed signify the Kafkaesque world." Besides having the feeling that they are acting in a film or have been brought into the world of some oppressive novel, madmen also think they are taking part in a performance (see Kusters 2004, 36ff.), a computer game, or some other virtual environment. As one of Stanghellini's patients says (2004, 7) upon leaving one of his therapy sessions, "So if the *file* we're living in doesn't get cancelled in the meantime, I'll see you next Friday."²

The Plan is all about the Plan and not about its performers. For those living according to the Plan, the others aren't real fellow human beings but actors who keep performing the same play over and over again, forever.

Other people are replaceable, insubstantial figures, characters in a video game, or interchangeable actors in a never-changing theatrical piece (cf. section 1.2.1). Other people play only one role in the plot of the script. They're fake or transparent, and "improvised." Sass (1992, 271) writes, "Schreber believed that the whole of mankind had perished and that the people around him were only appearances—'fleeting improvised men,' he called them. Another patient reported that everyone around him seemed like a cadaver when he was psychotic, while a third saw only 'animated fakes.'"

The others deteriorate into caricatures, and to the "psychoplanatic" their behavior seems stereotypical or archetypical. What Eliade says about myth (1954, 43) can also be applied to madness: "The structures by means of which it [myth] functions are different: categories instead of events, archetypes instead of historical personages." To adapt this to madness: "The structures by means of which mad time functions are different: references to the Plan instead of events, stereotypes instead of living personages."

In the cinematic Plan world, the natural environment takes on the appearance of an artificially devised set. As is fitting within the Plan at that particular moment, the clouds move and the leaves rustle especially for the psychoplanatic. The suspicion arises that things are all parts of the scenery, perhaps made of a different material than what he once thought. Everything seems to be plastic. The light that shines is an unreal neon. The set/environment causes the psychoplanatic to ask questions like, Why does everything look like "this"? How should I interpret this setting? What is its significance in terms of the Plan? What is "the inventor" trying to say? What do they want me to think? If it's raining, for example, the psychoplanatic doesn't ask for an umbrella, but he asks what the rain signifies—just as the moviegoer doesn't wonder where the rain in a particular scene is coming from but only what the cinematic function of the weather is within the meaningful script.

Film itself as a medium is highly suitable for depicting this cinematic aspect of madness. Take *The Truman Show*, for example. This well-known film from 1998 depicts an "upside-down" mad world. The main character, an ordinary insurance agent, is the only resident of a town on a small island who *doesn't* know that his world—the island and everything that takes place there—is entirely invented and manipulated by a TV director. In fact—that is to say, "in film fact"—his entire life has taken place on the set of a reality TV show. All the people around him—even his wife, his best friend, and his coworkers—are playing a role in the show, and the only one being kept in the dark is Truman. The director's goal is to make a reality show that is as real as ordinary life. Without his knowing it, everything Truman experiences

is filmed and broadcast to an audience of millions, who revel in the reality and authenticity of Truman's life. The director keeps coming up with new challenges for Truman in order to maintain the suspense. Truman's whole world is controlled by this director. An enormous dome has even been built over the artificial island so the director can control the weather. Yet Truman begins to doubt the authenticity of his existence. At one point, a "star" accidentally falls from the "sky," and Truman discovers that it's a studio lamp. He begins to distrust the sincerity of his friends and to suspect that everything isn't what it seems—that they're playing a game with him behind his back.

The beauty of this film is that they really are playing a game with him. He really is the target of a plot. All the apparent coincidences have indeed been arranged in order to provoke a certain reaction from him. Truman slowly begins to grasp this (as does the viewer) and to suspect that a deliberate Plan is lurking behind the facade. The film shows us a plain, ordinary man, imprisoned in a reality show, who slowly loses his faith and trust in the world and comes to realize that a secret Plan is being hidden from him. As viewers, we sympathize with this main character and are carried along in his discoveries and insights about how the world works. As the film progresses, Truman sees more and more indications that something isn't right, and he launches his own investigation. At the end of the film, he sets out by boat across the water and bumps into a painted set of the horizon, behind which the director speaks to him "like a voice."

By cinematic means, the film does a splendid job showing what it's like to slowly discover that everything is fake, contrived, "like a movie." During his discovery of the Plan, we see how Truman imparts new meaning to his past with all its memories: that "suddenly everything is very different." What seemed like coincidences turn into meaning-laden indications of the Plan. What is normally called madness is reality in *The Truman Show*. What I call the discovery or construction of a Plan is Truman's awakening from delusion.

15.3.2 Monkey Wrench in the Works: Shutter Island and The Matrix

Generally speaking, plans can collapse, expire, prove unrealistic, or be abandoned. They can amount to mere fantasies, or they can contain terrifyingly rigid regulations for living your daily life. If a plan ceases to exist, it can be for a variety of reasons. The planner may have been too lazy to actually translate his dream into action. Maybe it seemed like a good idea at first, but upon closer inspection it just wasn't feasible. Maybe the people involved suddenly refused to cooperate, or the circumstances changed, or the person who came up with the idea simply didn't have enough money or resources to implement his vision in practical terms.

Such generalities also apply, more or less, to the plans being discussed here: the Plans. Some prophets with a vision, an ideal, or a calling do garner a following, while other psychoplanatics are voices crying in the wilderness with decreasing volume. The Plan I came up with in the fall of 2007 consisted (among other things) of a thorough and concise rewriting of my bachelor's thesis: the truth I had envisioned/invented would be disclosed in its entirety—and on a single sheet of paper! But no sooner was I graced with the revelations I had hoped for than my plan collided with earthly reality in the form of months of submersion in Haldol and other mindnumbing substances. My Plan of 2007 developed over the following years and took shape in the present book. But the furthest meanderings and crystallizations evaporated prematurely in the heat of the madness—as so often happens. How do Plans come to an end? What's the monkey wrench that brings it all to a halt? How can you escape from "the movie of your life"?

Plans can end slowly and vanish without your having to do anything or let anything be done. Fixed, tenacious ideas about conspiracies, persecutions, and secret signs can simply lose their charm. Psychoses can go on for a long time, but after a while the Plans that one was so passionate about at first can slip into the background. Their importance or promises dwindle, and boredom steps in—whether influenced by antipsychotic drugs or not. The One Single Infinite doesn't just split into fragments but also diminishes in strength and significance: it becomes diluted, gets bogged down, and sputters out.

A Plan can also end in an active way if you step in and actively try to abandon it. Influenced by psychoanalysts or trauma therapists, you become convinced that the Plan isn't real and that you've been acting on an invented stage set of your own making, with invented roles and performers. The construction of the Plan is recognized and understood to be the consequence of an earlier unconscious trauma. The mythical elements of the Plan are reinterpreted as the aftereffects, in symbolic form, of the traumatic event from the past, and they are endlessly repeating themselves in the present without actually going anywhere. When the trauma that underlies the Plan is consciously lived through and examined, the Plan itself loses its power and fascination. The scenery, the conspiracy, and the seemingly strange signs and meanings are drained of their force, and the patient awakens from a stupor of compulsive repetition.

Films like *The Machinist, Number 23*, and *Shutter Island* are good examples of this. Films like these feature a main character with enigmatic behavior, the meaning of which remains long hidden from the viewer (and from the main character himself). At a certain point, an unraveling happens, in which the main character and the viewer suddenly realize that the Plan and the

experiences of this character actually circle around a repressed trauma. The viewers are shown the trauma, and when the main character gains insight into what once happened, he comes to understand the apparent senselessness of the Plan and is able to transcend it or, more accurately, "leave it behind."

In view of the mythical aspects of the Plan, the plan-disengagement process is paraphrased as a semihistorical process of development. At first there is some sort of myth and the repetition of that myth, but at a certain point the myth is abandoned. Instead of a repetition of the same, the focus is now on the freedom and creativity of the different. Mythical, cyclic, and sacred time give way to historical, linear, and earthly time—at least according to a commonly held idea about the history of humanity and the advancement of its consciousness: that man slowly liberated himself from the rigidity of the myth and, by way of the stages of religion and philosophy, developed toward an enlightened, free existence. The psychoplanatic would have descended to an older archaic stage of consciousness, which he would have to conquer and leave behind in order to become a modern, free subject once again.

From the point of view of the psychoplanatic, however, just the opposite happens. Suddenly he's come to realize that what people tend to call "normal life" is rule-bound and artificial in character. From his point of view, he's the one who breaks the rules, who wrests himself from the constraints of things, who detaches himself from prevailing mores and ends up in a bottomless hyperfreedom through hyperreflection. His film is more along the lines of *The Matrix*, in which one or a few solitary individuals discover that what people call the ordinary world is a lie—a mechanical, artificial, unreal simulation whose purpose is to conceal reality and the truth. The psychoplanatic who turns to films like *The Matrix* for inspiration has escaped—or thinks he has—from the compulsory roles of the everyday, the things we take for granted that keep us immersed in a half-sleeping sham existence. He's not in the clutches of a mythic Plan, but he has defeated the Plan of normality.

15.3.3 Labyrinth: Vanilla Sky and Inland Empire

The end of a Plan can mean the beginning of a new Plan or the continuation of the original Plan in a different guise. It's as if an actor had wanted to step out of his role in order to talk with the director or the audience. The psychoplanatic challenges his role within the Plan; he wants to change the Plan or come up with a counterplan. He gives the appearance of having escaped the Plan, but as long as his counterplan is essentially parasitical, living off the original Plan, it's just an escape from Sub-Plan A to Sub-Plan B. Escaping from the Plan is often merely escaping to other levels—other rooms

in the crystal castle. After a few false escapes, the scripts and scenarios seem to multiply and become entangled, and the Plan is like a labyrinth without any entrance or exit.

It's possible that the Plan's main character has taken on a second role *outside* the Plan; for example, that of the viewer. So as the film's main character, he's both the center of world events—*and* the viewer of the same events. He acts according to the Plan and, at the same time, knows he's just playing a role, as everyone else does. But this doesn't mean the psychoplanatic has found an exit from the labyrinth. In dream terms, he's stuck in a lucid dream that he may be able to control but from which he cannot awaken.

The double attitude of involvement and detachment that such a split role involves is like the everyday irony that many people resort to in order to tolerate their role as employee, consumer, or citizen and give them material for their own narrative. Playing a role—and at the same time not taking it seriously. For outsiders, this creates a complex blend of irony and delusion. Thus, while watching television, a psychoplanatic can quite seriously talk to the heroes on the TV screen and influence them in magical ways, but then, without blinking an eye, go on to dismiss these bizarre actions and thoughts as childish fun or "just a joke." A similar example can be found in fragment I, in which I look up at the hallucination in the sky—but not for too long, so that "they" won't think that I believe in "their" hallucinations.

In the psychiatric literature, the notion of "double-entry bookkeeping" can be found in this context, which points to the intriguing fact that psychotics may make strange claims, but they don't often act on them. According to the double-entry bookkeeping theory, psychotics themselves don't take their delusion or Plan completely seriously, and they often view it fictionally as delusion or fantasy. That may very well be, but double-entry bookkeeping works two ways: the madman knows his Plan is nonsense, but the point of view from which he understands his own Plan as nonsense is still the same Plan—just at a different level. He remains within the realm of the Plan, even though he thinks he is onto it—after all, he now "sees through" everything, including the notion that the ordinary world is nonsense. He suggests that "there's nothing wrong"—with a meaningful and knowing wink of the eye—and he jokingly dismisses his own Plan as amusing rubbish.

This can be depicted visually by means of a famous lithograph by Escher from 1948, *Drawing Hands*, in which two identical hands are drawn, each one drawing a hand on a piece of paper. Each drawn hand flows into the

hand of the other, however. Both hands are therefore being drawn and are drawing at the same time. Or, within the Plan, the ordinary world is a cover, and within the cover, the Plan is merely a fabrication. No way out!

Besides being a main character or a viewer you can also become a "director," either locating the great divine Planner elsewhere or encountering him (which is what happened in *The Truman Show*). If you're both director and main character at the same time, you're like a god in earthly reality, like a king in an isolated kingdom (see the theme in the work of Schreber in section 13.4)—until something escapes your direction. Then it becomes obvious that there's another director on whom you are dependent, who knows and directs your thoughts, who lets you speak your lines. Owing to the fact that you adopt the positions of main character, viewer, and director, sometimes in rapid succession and sometimes simultaneously, the public witnesses alternations between and blendings of paranoia, delusions of reference, and megalomania that are difficult to understand.

The Plan's doublings and blendings of viewer, main character, director, and so forth can crystallize out to an extent that is hard to follow. One possible route runs like this: if I can see through the Plan from the outside, others should be able to do so as well. That implies that there are other chosen ones, as opposed to all the ignorant people who still believe in their role in the Plan. So I, together with these others, can see through everything, and we form a group that "pulls the strings." We stand outside the regular cosmos, but we have a reason for being there; we have goals, a program, and guidelines. In short, a new meta-Plan has arisen that remains part of the Plan in the broad sense. Again, within this higher Plan, there are people (or, more often, "forces") who are aware of this meta-Plan and people who are not.

In this way, an increasingly complex web develops in which power, insight, and struggle, along with unification and division, appear on all kinds of levels simultaneously. It's a fight of love against hate, religion against atheism, Blixa Bargeld against The Doors, color against gray, wood against metal, sugar against salt, being against nonbeing—and everything is equally reversed, pacified, polemicized, and transcended. The opposites pull together and separate; this is the beating heart of the Plan. If we were to apply the numerological mysticism model from part III at this point, then between One and infinity, a seemingly meaningless world of numbers would rise up—a proliferation of numerological mysticism, an eternal enumeration of the digits of pi cheering and tracing the circle, never sufficiently exhausted; sense and madness at the same time.

The cinematic experiences this suggests are those of unmasking, unraveling, and making an abrupt scene change. As soon as you realize what's going on, the masks fall away; behind the mail carrier's disguise you "see" a German, a heavy metal fan, a colorful Jesus figure. Narrative threads are developed and eliminated, and plots are solved and rewoven. Scenery totters, directions indicate that it has to change, and so it keeps on changing. Examples of films with this theme are *Inland Empire*, *eXistenz*, and *Abre los ojos* and its American remake *Vanilla Sky*. In such films, the main characters repeatedly "wake up" (*Vanilla Sky*, *Abre los ojos*), repeatedly open a door through which they step from one dream destination to another (*Inland Empire*), and repeatedly "upload" a new software program into their brain/hardware so that their journey through multilayered reality comes to resemble passing through the levels of a game (*eXistenz*).

In delusional plans, moods quickly switch from fear to delight, to excitement, to sublimity, to gratitude—like in a dream of reality. Sometimes you have the feeling that the sphere that surrounds you can be easily penetrated. All you have to do is turn the corner and they'll be there, your old friends, laughing at all the roles and plots that are entangling you. They welcome you like a hero (this motif is ominously worked out in the film *The Game*). But every exit that you hoped would lead to ultimate, true reality leads only to the next scene. The exit from the film is not in the film itself. Artificial light does not show the moth how to escape. A subscription to Plan Instructions does not provide for the possibility of early cancellation. The ground does not become more solid by going underground.

15.4 The Test as a Metaphor for the Plan

As the Plan progresses, a division of minds often takes place; on the one hand, there's the solitary main character in the script, and on the other hand, there's the rest of humanity, if not of the cosmos. Ultimately, you have to go up against the other actors, extras, and viewers; the director and producer; and sometimes even the owner of the movie theater—and you have to do it all alone. Just like Truman in *The Truman Show*, you notice that "everything they come up with" is meant *to see how you react*. You know you're in the spotlight, in the burning center of interest, and everything they do to you is by way of a test. This test feeling is one of the most trenchant, common experiences in Plan-related madness.

15.4.1 Playing Games: I and the Other

The existence of the test experience assumes there is a difference between the person who conducts the test and the person who takes it; between a testing environment and a tested psychoplanatic. In addition to a difference, there is also an inner solidarity, an exchange, and a dependence between tester and tested. The Plan Test is like a rudimentary "I-and-the-Other-game"—in which the I-and-the-Other-pair represents a first version of "diversity-in-unity." Thinking and being are still one-because what I think is at the same time what the world and the Other are—but a minimal difference has crept into that unity. What I think may still happen immediately in the world, but the Other in the world adds something to it. The Other distorts me and comments on my thinking. The world is my sounding board and sings my song with a tone-deaf voice. The world is me behind the funhouse mirror, and that I-as-the-Other laughs at myself. I think something, and that thinking is received by the Other, for I am the Other. The Other is holding something back, however—something unknown, something I have to recover. The Other knows what I'm thinking and doing. The Other sees me always and everywhere and reacts to me. Reaction comes after action, and there's little difference between them. If I do something, I notice the consequences. I think something crazy, and I see people snicker. They snicker at me, but also because they have something up their sleeve. They're giving me a sign. They see how I react. They're testing me.

It's like a computer game: me against the Machine. I'm fighting the Plan or the program; I adopt a role and enter into combat with the characters of the Plan. We react to each other and keep advancing in the game. I'm being tested to see whether I'm skillful enough to take on the machine. I end up at different levels; I go deeper and deeper into the Machine, and my flight rises higher and higher, in and out of the Other. There is no exit, no escape; with each level that I leave behind, I arrive at another level. I am never going to get out of the game, for the Plan has no exit, the outcome of the game lies in the rules of the game.

It's a cryptic question-and-answer game. Dusk is falling, and the question arises as to whether I have thought enough about the shadow side of the crystal. Crystal is unfairly divided; the hungry and the underprivileged need to be honored. In response, I toss four sugar cubes into the wastebasket. But then the street lights go on. I'm sorry—I don't want to suggest that diabetics cannot be divine. As a token of insight, I flick my cigarette lighter four times quickly, on and off. A child is crying outside. Of course I know that; they don't have to tell me. Do I have to keep taking that into account? This internet game is addictive. Whatever I type on the keyboard with my fingers has a remarkable effect in the mental world of the Net Plan. When I send them an e-mail, I get all kinds of strange messages and ads in return. The web is out to get me.

The Test is a first response to the uniform chaos of the One. The Order is that of me versus the world; the Plan is shaped like a test. In some cases, it is clear what is being tested. For example, I deduced from the fact that they had placed me in an empty cell "in quarantine" that I was suffering from an unknown and seriously contagious illness. They observed me and talked with me to see how I would react, from which they would be able to deduce what kind of illness I had. Sander A. told me he was sure that he had taken part in an assessment test, after which he would be admitted to a secret consortium. The fragment in the following section, 15.4.2, has to do with a test whose purpose is to see whether the principal person is fit to serve as an officer in the army.

In many cases, however, you have no more than an abstract test feeling, without knowing exactly what the actual aim of the test is. In section 15.4.3, O'Brien is only being tested "to see how she reacts." In the case of such an abstract test feeling, you're like a "guinea pig" in an unknown laboratory, whose mores and rules are unknown to you and where you may vaguely distinguish only a few lab-technician archetypes. For experience expert Daan Muntjewerf (2011, 23), the test was solely carried out to see what he could tolerate:

Why is this happening? Why am I lying here? The leather straps are burning into my flesh. The pain is brutally real. My head is spinning, searching for a reason for the sudden torture. From out of the depths a clear explanation comes floating to the surface of my brain: it's a test! I'm being tested by someone. Someone wants to know how much I can tolerate in life. My pain limit is being tested. Fine. If that's the way we're going to play it. All my muscles are ready and eager. I roar to the ceiling. This someone doesn't know who he's dealing with, that's for sure. You can't beat me down just like that. The soldiers roll me into the ambulance. I laugh at them. Is this all? The ambulance laughs too. I look around. The ambulance drives away to the hospital at full speed. The laughter in the ambulance stops. Act like it doesn't bother you. Brush it off. Make it clear to them that this is enough. No one reacts.

The test is a lighthouse in the breakers of the tsunami of madness. They test, I react; I think, they react. The question-and-answer model also suggests progress and a conclusion. After all, a test is always followed by "results," just like playing a game always ends in winning or losing. The Plan in its test guise seems to be moving toward something—a solution, dénouement, or result. There's still a vague hope that you will pass the test and be "set free." Your hope is to roll through the test to get to "the other side." This hope makes the chaos bearable. By seeing life as a test—or to put it in a less onerous and more ordinary way, as a "challenge," an "assignment," or a

"project"—meaning is created out of nothing, plans are wrought in the void, and pain is recast into test material for the purpose of salvation. Strindberg (1912, 48) writes, "Doubtless, I was being prepared for a higher existence. I despised the earth, the impure earth, its inhabitants and their doings. I felt like a perfectly righteous man, whom the Eternal was testing, and whom the purgatory of this world would soon make fit for deliverance."

The test experience blooms most successfully in an environment in which you are already being weighed and judged with suspicion and an observing eye. As such, the psychiatric hospital and the isolation cell are perfectly suited environments for facilitating the test experience. After the mad flush of the Highest Insight, the Enlightenment, the Power, the Game, and the Pleasure, you somehow have landed within four walls. For unknown reasons, they're keeping you locked up in that bare cell. Every few hours, someone stops in to chat a bit, and you notice that this person is secretly observing you and taking mental notes, and you know they will then issue reports and confer with others about you. They have cameras to keep an eye on you. You're given a program with rules and times, and they observe you to see whether you stick to them or not.

The Test requires that they imprison you, and you have to figure out how to escape. At first, you find yourself in a catch-22 situation. You think you can leave the cell anyway. They think the fact that you dare to say this is one more reason not to let you out. You're only allowed to leave the cell when you "get better" and are no longer "sick." You feel great, however, the very picture of health. But they say that if you were really healthy, you wouldn't be here. The fact that you're here at all is a sign that you're not well and you have to stay. You have to look elsewhere for the key to getting out. So you stop talking, or you scream, you fight, and you threaten. Nothing helps. You have to be cunning to get through their normality test. You have to pretend that you're normal, accept the role of normality. You also have to accept the lies they tell you about sickness and act as if you believe in them. You have to swallow it all, but as long as you don't swallow their antipsychotic drugs, that's a sign that you can't pass the test. You have to replace your role in the Plan with their specific role for you—that of a patient in the treatment plan.

15.4.2 Fight to the Death: Testing in Nazi Germany

Not only is the psychiatric hospital conducive to the "mad test feeling," but so are the barracks and the army. Conrad (1958, 10ff.) provides a fine example of this, in which Rainer, the test subject, comes to think he's being tested for promotion in the army. Rainer is a German soldier during World

War II, and after exhibiting quite a bit of bizarre behavior, he's driven by the doctor out of the army camp in France, where he's been stationed. At first this unconventional move makes him think they're testing him to see whether he's fit to be an officer. If all goes well—Rainer thinks—he'll be promoted and flown back to Germany:

Strangely enough, the moment he stepped into the car he had the feeling they were going to give him another chance. It was very clear to him that he had to be tested for a career as an officer. There was talk of papers, and he had to be taken to B. When they left, he thought he heard the driver ask, "Infirmary or airport?" When they got to the airport, he would then fly to Germany in order to attend the officer training school.

But once they begin the journey, the test no longer has to do with his officer's career. They want him for another reason. In one way or another that is difficult to define, everything that happens around him is "meaningful," contrived, and intended for Rainer alone. It's being prepared especially for him, "just like in a movie":

As soon as they left, he noticed that they weren't going the right way but were following an erratic route so that he would become disoriented. ... On one town square there were some infantrymen; just when they drove past, the soldiers made a certain movement with their weapons. That meant that he had to watch out. He saw many road signs that had a connection with his earlier life and evoked certain memories. He was convinced (and still is) that everything had been prepared beforehand.

Later on, in the hospital, the meaningfulness of everything around him becomes more and more insistent. Observations and memories flow into each other, and the normal coherence of things collapses and makes way for a supernatural coherence (or Plan) in which Rainer undergoes a test:

Then he was examined by a doctor. The doctor looked just like one of his uncles. This similarity paralyzed him. Even the voice was the same good-natured voice as that of his uncle. He began to lose coherence. Everything began to seem supernatural. ... Now he understood why the doctor was so well-organized: in order to test his responses. The doctor dictated his statements into a machine, but with a distorted voice, as he never would have done before.

"Something's not right." The ordinary has become strange. They've made it artificial, but the goal of all this is no longer clear. Maybe it's only meant to test his attentiveness. They deliberately do not tamper with any mistakes in the fabric of the real world:

In the magazines he was given he only pointed out the mistakes: people whose bodies were in impossible positions. There were also a number of errors in the

text, deliberately made to test him. ... Their purpose was not clear, but they wanted to test his attentiveness.

Rainer knows they're treating him for mental illness, but this too is part of the Plan. If he can get through the tests in the hospital, it will be good for him and for the German nation. The Plan and the test—Rainer discovers—reach much further back into his past:

He believed he had only one choice: persevere or stay here forever as a mental patient. He was also frequently conscious of the fact that the nation was going to exist forever, as long as people were brought up according to a Spartan lifestyle, as he had been. ... It slowly dawned on him that the observations reached far back, and that in any case he had been under observation before being in military service.

The doctors ask him what kind of "observations" these would have been. Why would they have wanted to keep an eye on him? Rainer responds to this with a beautifully formulated paradox: they're keeping an eye on him, everywhere and at all times, to see if he's aware that they're keeping an eye on him. If Rainer has one careless moment and forgets that they're observing him, he gets the feeling he's being duped:

[In answer to the question about the purpose of the observations] This is all about testing his attentiveness and discernment. ... Every attempt is made to make the observations as inconspicuous as possible, and with great success. For example, when there's disagreement on the ward, he joins in and takes sides without thinking about any observation at that moment. "But then I suddenly remember that I'm being tested, and that I've been thoroughly duped once again."

The things Rainer says and does are typical of the mad test feeling; everything that happens around him has to do with Rainer. Everyone and everything is involved in either testing him for a promotion or testing him without a clear purpose beyond the test itself. Rainer's case is also illustrative of the Plan-as-test. But seen in context, the mad test experience seems like a reflection of Rainer's surroundings. Rainer is asked what the purpose of the alleged observations might be, to which Rainer gives an answer that somehow makes sense—because nurses and doctors in Nazi Germany probably did keep an eye on their mentally ill patients. And when Rainer forgets himself during a disagreement on the ward, he may very well be right about the feeling that he's let his defenses down and has been "duped." Even his suspicion that he's been under observation far longer, and that the Plan and the test have been around for a while, is understandable. Undoubtedly "they" have been looking for potential officers for a long time, and they keep files on their findings. Although the test feeling has absurd features in Rainer's case, there is continuity between the reality and the madness of

"the test." The fact that Rainer has been confined because he thinks he's living in a test doesn't mean he isn't being tested. In less dramatic forms than in Nazi Germany, this is true for every psychotic—and nonpsychotic—who thinks he's being tested, observed, and monitored.

15.4.3 Operators, Flies, and Guinea Pigs: O'Brien

In 1958, Barbara O'Brien's autobiography *Operators and Things* was published, an account of a series of remarkable Plan experiences that began after a stressful period at her workplace. In it she describes how three ghost-like apparitions suddenly appeared at the foot of her bed and would go on to play an intimate and lengthy role in her life. From that moment on, "they"—the so-called "Operators"—held O'Brien firmly in their grasp.

Barbara O'Brien was told by the three—Burt, Hinton, and Nicky—what the world was "really" like and who pulled the strings: that is, what the Plan was. She had to pay a price for this knowledge, for from the moment that the Plan of the world was explained to her, she herself became part of it. Controlled by the Operators and the Plan, she felt obliged to travel all over America to shake "them" off and, at the same time, to carry out their orders. The sole aim of the curious Plan that O'Brien found herself in was to see what happened when someone from the circle of noninitiated mortals found out about it.

O'Brien (1958, 39–42) describes her first encounter with Burt, Hinton, and Nicky, who explain the Plan to her. Burt tells her they belong to the select company of "Operators." These are the "people" (or, more precisely, something like "super beings") who determine what happens in the world. The name these Operators have for ordinary people who have no knowledge of the Plan is "Things." One of their superhuman skills is being able to "read" all the thoughts and reflections of Things. They reveal themselves to O'Brien because they have chosen her for an experiment:

I had been selected for participation in an experiment. He [Burt] hoped I would be co-operative; lack of co-operation on my part would make matters difficult for them and for myself. They were Operators, the three of them. There were Operators everywhere in the world although they rarely were seen or heard. My seeing and hearing them was, unfortunately, part of the experiment. I thought: I have come upon knowledge which other people do not have and the knowledge is obviously dangerous to have; others would be in equal danger if I revealed it to them.

"Yes," said Burt, and he looked pleased.

But I hadn't spoken ...

Exactly how the three appear is never clearly explained in the book, by the way. Do they present themselves as voices, visions, thoughts, or dream images? Generally, Operators can also assume human form. When they do, they look like ordinary people, or Things, but they recognize each other as Operators. After explaining this to Barbara O'Brien, Burt goes on at great length about the Plan and O'Brien's paradoxical role in it. O'Brien is going to be observed; she has been selected as a guinea pig for an experiment that was conceived by the great Operator, Hadley. The observation is intended solely for the amusement of the Operators, who want to know what a Thing does when the Plan is leaked to them. Burt and Hinton also tell her that not only can the Operators read Things' minds, but they can direct their actions as well. All this puts O'Brien in a paradoxical position; she may have knowledge of the Plan, but because she herself is still a Thing, she is fully under the control of the Planners—the Operators. Her supposed insight into the workings of the world gives her no advantage. On the contrary, the price she must pay for it is a heavy one.

Burt continued. A great Operator whose name was Hadley had wanted to make an experiment of this type for some time. The experiment consisted of selecting a person like myself, revealing the facts of the Operators' world to the individual, and observing the results.

A guinea pig in a cage, I thought. ...

Things!

Hinton sighed. "Things. Yes, of course. Think of the word with a capital initial, if you like. It may help your ego a bit. All people like you are Things to us—Things whose minds can be read and whose thoughts can be initiated and whose actions can be motivated. Does that surprise you? It goes on all the time. There is some, but far less, free will than you imagine. A Thing does what some Operator wants it to do, only it remains under the impression that its thoughts originate in its own mind. Actually, you have more free will at this moment than most of your kind ever have. For you at least know that what we are saying is coming from us, not from you." ...

"Yes," Burt said. "Operators move about in the flesh. So far as surface appearance is concerned, Operators are identical with Things. No thing would be able to distinguish one from the other, but Operators can distinguish them easily."

Hinton's last comments are more explicit in their description of the strange consequences of the Plan and the Test—something that philosophy, too, can never stop exploring. Things think they're free and able to freely form their own thoughts, but actually they live in an illusion of freedom because they don't know anything about the Plan and the Operators. O'Brien, with her knowledge of the Plan, finds herself in the familiar paradoxical position of determinism. She is a Thing, too, and therefore she's not free, because she's controlled by the Operators. Unlike the other Things, however, she knows she is not free.

In the rest of the autobiography, Barbara O'Brien keeps trying to regain—or rather, to obtain—her freedom. She thought she had been free before, but that, it turns out, was a sham freedom. Now the guinea pig has been told that it's a guinea pig, but it's still a prisoner of its cage. O'Brien tries in all sorts of ways to free herself from the coercion of her Operators (and the Plan). One of the narrative threads in her book is her search for the great organizer (or "director"; compare *The Truman Show*) who devised the test in the first place. Like a Kafkaesque main character, however, she never comes in contact with the Master Planner himself. As the story progresses, O'Brien becomes more and more familiar with the Plan. The world of the Operators proves to be more sophisticated than it had seemed at first. Operators "own" Things, and they can earn points and advance in the hierarchy of Operators by means of good behavior. On closer inspection, Operators resemble Things in many respects (O'Brien 1958, 52):

What you're overlooking is that a Thing can be influenced chiefly because of its desire for money and power. An Operator's security and self-esteem revolve about Operator's points just as a Thing's revolves about money. With sufficient points, an Operator can do anything in an Operator's world. ... Operators and Things are motivated by similar desires.

A complex struggle is raging in the Operators' world between different groups of Operators. One of the ways for Barbara O'Brien to feel at least somewhat free is to choose the more suitable "party" in that struggle. She is able to choose a party owing to the fact that the "reach" of the Operators' telepathic powers is not very long—no more than a few city blocks. By traveling away from the places where she is being "sent" by the Operators, she temporarily gains a bit of mental freedom. But over and over again, she becomes trapped in a labyrinth of Plans and meta-Plans. In the next fragment she travels by Greyhound bus under the "protection" of her personal Operator. An attack takes place, however, carried out by another kind of Operator ("Flies"), which results in a complex game, actually a test within the Test, after which it's difficult to tell who is friend and who is foe (O'Brien 1958, 48–49):

Sharp complained suddenly that the bus was filled with flies. "And I'm not referring to flies," Sharp told me. "I'm referring to Flies."

"Fly is slang for an operator who doesn't belong to an organization as we do," Nicky explained. "Flies can be a nuisance and sometimes they can be dangerous if they try to molest your Thing. But I don't think we have to worry on a Greyhound bus.""

The "Flies" play a game with O'Brien in which a subject especially suited to her is at stake. The subject that the Flies choose is the position

of Operator. They make all sorts of comments about O'Brien's relationship with her Operators, making it clear that she'd be better off cutting herself off from them. Ultimately the object of the game of these Operators is to fill O'Brien with as much fear as possible:

The first Fly talked to me. Did I realize that for the rest of my life I would be living this kind of existence—that I would never again live the normal life of a Thing? For the rest of my days, I would be forced to sit and listen to the Operators talk. I would have, not life, but Operators' conversations.

The idea struck me like a blow. I could feel my heart jump. ...

The second Fly came in. Did I have any idea what would happen to me when I reached Hadley? Had I seen or heard of animals in experimental laboratories, cut and tortured while conscious, so that some doctor could observe and learn? This would be the same thing except that I would be the animal. ...

The third Fly came in. Did I know that Hadley had a cageful of freaks in his laboratory, an entire blockful of Things upon which he experimented? Hadley was famous from coast to coast for his experiments.

We have here a very complex game in which questions are asked that hark back to the suppositions of the higher Plan in which the questioners play a part. Finally, the game ends and the Flies leave:

The Game came to its close finally. The adjudicator announced the winner and the winning Fly scooped up the pot of "points" to which each Fly had contributed. The Game was clear enough. Each Fly had dripped his drop of poison, obtain an emotional reaction from me. The one who had aroused in me the greatest fear, I noticed, was the one who had won.

Barbara O'Brien's world of Operators and Things is like a morass; the harder she flounders the deeper she sinks. She is shown how the world works, but despite her knowledge of the Plan, she seems somewhat freer than Things, although new complications in the Plan keep appearing around every corner. The atmosphere in O'Brien's world is like that of a David Lynch movie, in which every door that opens reveals a new row of closed doors. O'Brien has made contact with mythical creatures who pull the strings behind the scenes of everyday reality, and as a result she ends up in a different mythical experience of time. All kinds of things seem to happen, but they have no real consequences in any shared human world. The Plan doesn't advance, and it doesn't unfold in a time that heals all wounds; it just keeps knotting, branching, deepening, and layering.

O'Brien's description differs from that of Rainer (see the previous section), first in terms of setting: O'Brien wanders around the United States, getting lonelier and lonelier, while Rainer is part of an organized army in wartime. Rainer's test experience is described (by Conrad) on the basis of

what he observes visually and how he interprets his observations as signs in a test, while O'Brien's test feeling seems to be based more on an inner (linguistic? auditory?) dialogue. O'Brien's episode covers a longer period, while Rainer's test feeling seems to be shorter but more all-embracing. Apart from these differences, Conrad and O'Brien share the experience of the test—in particular, of being a guinea pig and being under observation. For both, the Plan consists of an "I" and an all-knowing Other whom they sometimes try to escape from, sometimes try to cooperate with or become better acquainted with—or whose existence they try to deny altogether. Both keep discovering things that enable them to better understand how the game of the test and the Plan works, and in both cases the increasing insight does not result in more control, power, or freedom, but only in more layered confusion and entanglements of experience, fantasy, memory, and reality.

16 Typology of Plans and Psychoplanatics

16.1 "Them": Conspiracies and Persecution

This section deals with what may be the most well-known kind of madness: paranoia and delusions of reference, in which the whole world conspires to entangle the madman in one big conspiracy: "They're out to get me, they know everything about me." What the Plan amounts to is a persecution scheme; it's a film of the crime or horror genre. I distinguish between a "them" who never take their eyes off you (16.1.1) and a "them" who actually control your actions (16.1.2). In the third subsection, 16.1.3, the "them" is mechanized and the main character is pursued by something mechanical.

16.1.1 Lightning and a November Thunderclap: Strindberg's Inferno

Johan August Strindberg (1849–1912) is a famous Swedish playwright, poet, and essayist who went through a deep crisis in Paris at the age of forty-five. Recently separated from his wife and children, he started experimenting with alchemy on his own, immersing himself in the occult and in spiritual subjects—such as the work of his eighteenth-century countryman Emanuel Swedenborg. His crisis was expressed in a religious sort of Plan, in which he was the central figure in an all-embracing, mysterious plot. He saw signs of divine beings and became engaged with "them" in a complicated conflict. Strindberg describes this period of his life in his autobiography *Inferno* (1912). This work exhibits a typical feature of the Plan: that it's never entirely clear what it entails. Although Strindberg is given all kinds of hints and mentions great insights in the Plan, neither he nor the reader is able to fully grasp what it's all about.

Strindberg has a tendency to explicitly announce that there's a world conspiracy aimed against him consisting of only a few persons, and that at the same time this real world conspiracy is merely the manifestation of a

historic spiritual conspiracy of even greater proportions. Strindberg (1912, 73, 85) says,

To me, on the other hand, the powers had revealed themselves as concrete, living, individual personalities, who guide the course of the world and the destinies of men, as self-conscious entities or, as the theologians say, as "hypostases" ... If the initiated believe that I was then exposed to a plot woven by human hands, let me tell them that I feel anger against no one, for I know now that another stronger Hand, unknown to them, guided those hands against their will.

A few pages further on (91ff.), there's a concrete example of the "they-have-their-eyes-on-me" feeling. Strindberg describes a difficult night spent in an attic room in the villa of some friends. What seem like no more than mundane details become clues for him that "they're lying in wait for me." Investigating the "reality" of these threats is fruitless:

In the evening I observe two men looking over the wall of the institution towards our villa, and pointing at my window. The idea that I am being persecuted by means of electricity takes possession of me.

The night between the 25th and 26th of July 1896 comes on. We have searched together all the attic rooms near mine, and the loft itself, so as to satisfy me that no one with evil intentions could be lurking there. Only in a lumber-room an object of no significance in itself has a depressing effect upon me. It is only the skin of a polar bear; but the gaping jaws, the threatening teeth, the sparkling eyes irritate me. Why should this creature lie just now, just there?

Strindberg is convinced that there's something fishy about these unknown surroundings. When night falls, he braces himself and keeps an eye on the numbers of the clock—they seem to hint at some kind of numerical magic. When "nothing" happens, Strindberg himself takes the lead and challenges "them." This is a good example of test logic ("Everything I do automatically evokes a reaction from *them*"):

Without taking off my clothes, I lie down on the bed, determined to wait for the fateful hour—two o'clock.

While I am reading, midnight approached. One o'clock strikes, and the whole house is wrapped in slumber. At last two o'clock strikes! Nothing happens. Than in a dare-devil spirit, or perhaps only with the intention of making a physical experiment, I rise, open both windows, and light two candles. Then I sit at the table behind them, expose myself with bared breast as a mark, and challenge the unknown: "Attack, if you dare!"

This gives Strindberg the feeling that he's gone too far. With such an act (baring his breast), he acknowledges that "they're here." When you merely *think* they're after you, the Plan seems less real than when you act on it. As

soon as you start talking to "them," writing about "them," acknowledging "them," they become more real, and they strike back with great force. You're admitting that you believe in the Plan, you recognize that it exists, and your bare breast proves it. Acknowledging the existence of them can frighten you, to which "they" can immediately react—as if you had awakened the proverbial sleeping dogs.

Strindberg responds in a way that was appropriate for his day and age: he expresses his reaction in terms of "electricity." He then wants to confirm his intuition with hard facts; he wants to measure the electricity and observe it. But just as with the house search, he finds no objective threats. So how is he to understand his own physical and mental actions? In what way are the events in the outside world connected to his inner feelings?

Then I feel, at first only faintly, something like an inrush of electric fluid. I look at my compass, but it shows no sign of wavering. It is not electricity then. But the tension increases; my heart beats violently; I offer resistance, but as if by a flash of lightning my body is charged with a fluid which chokes me and depletes my blood. I rush down the stairs to the room on the ground-floor, where they have made up for me a provisional bed in case of necessity. There I lie for five minutes and collect my thoughts. Is it radiating electricity? No; for the compass has not been affected. Is it a diseased state of mind induced by fear of the fatal hour of two o'clock? No; for I have still the courage to defy attacks. But why must I light the candles and attract the mysterious fluid?

Strindberg's thoughts about the Plan and his purpose in the Plan explode into fears, suspicion, and extreme speculation, and this continues in a "chase" by "them" through the rooms of the villa. "They" manifest themselves in the carpet, in the clouds, in mice, and in trivialities. At a certain point Strindberg calls "them" the furies, but that's no more than a word for "them," or for "the Other," or "the other":

In this labyrinth of questioning I find no answer, and try at last to go to sleep, but a new discharge of electricity strikes me like a cyclone, forces me to rise from bed, and the chase begins afresh. I hide myself behind the walls, lie down close to the doors, or in front of the stove. Everywhere, everywhere the furies find me. Overmastered by terror, I fly in panic from everything and nothing, from room to room, and finish by crouching down on the balcony. The gray-yellow light of dawn begins to break, the sepia-colored clouds assume fantastic and monstrous shapes, which increase my despair. I repair to my friend's studio, lie down on the carpet, and close my eyes. After barely five minutes' quiet, a rustle awakes me. A mouse looks at me and seems to wish to come nearer. I drive it away; it comes back with another one. Good Heavens! Have I got delirium tremens, though I have been quite temperate the last three years? (In the daytime I find that there

are really mice in the studio. It was a coincidence, then, but who caused it, and what is his object?)

At the end of this ghostly night, Strindberg is once again awakened with a start. He spins yet another web of meaning, based on a flash of "intuition." This is a typical phenomenon: that words and images seem to bring about hallucinations and delusions of their own accord (see chapter 6). Here Strindberg expresses a mad tendency when he says (1912, 93), "That is a poetical expression which perhaps contains the whole truth." John Perceval (1840, 244) also refers to himself in the terse comment: "The lunatic mistakes a poetic train of thought for the reality." In this way Strindberg is knowingly carried along by his own imagination, in which the question remains (as it does with Schreber, and with myself) whether and to what extent the images and delusions being described did not emerge until afterward, during the writing process.

Then a distinct cry "Alp!" makes me suddenly start up. "Alp!" That is the German for nightmare. "Alp" is the word which the rainstorm caused to be formed on my paper in the Hôtel Orfila. Who uttered that cry? No one, for the whole house is asleep. Is it a devil's game? That is a poetical expression which perhaps contains the whole truth.

I mount the steps to my attic. The candles have burnt to their sockets; deep silence reigns. The Angelus rings out. It is the day of the Lord. I open my breviary and read "De Profundus clamavi ad Te, Domine!" That comforts me, and I sink down on the bed like a corpse.

Later in *Inferno* (144ff.), Strindberg again delves "deeply" into his Plan. The Plan involves the struggle of himself with the great Other. But given the omnipotence of that other, who might that be? And what role has Strindberg been assigned in the game with the mighty other? Working within the model of this Plan, Strindberg throws out ideas as to who he actually is: Is he Prometheus, whose status surpasses that of ordinary men, but whose suffering is also terrible? Strindberg identifies with a few timeless eminences (as Custance does; see section 10.1.2ff.). However, this furious search for certainty and identity only leads to the temporary insight that he is teetering on the edge of madness:

Who gives me the strength to suffer? Who denies me the power, and delivers me over to torments? Is it He, the Lord of life and death, Whose wrath I have provoked, when, influenced by the pamphlet *The Joy of Dying*, I tried to die, and considered myself already ripe for eternal life? Am I Phlegyas doomed to the pains of Tartarus for his pride, or Prometheus, who, because he revealed the secret of the powers to mortals, was torn by the vulture? ...

Doubt, uncertainty, mystery—there is my hell! Oh that my enemy would reveal himself, that I might to battle with him, and defy him! But that is just what he avoids doing, in order to afflict me with madness and make me feel the scourge of conscience, which causes me to suspect my enemies everywhere, enemies, *i.e.* those injured by my evil will.

For Strindberg, the doubt and insecurity are unbearable. Better to identify with knowing, frightening as it is, than to live with the chaos and dissatisfaction of not knowing.

Later on, Strindberg (1912, 151ff.) writes about arriving at a lucid insight. In one magnificent passage, he describes the parodoxical and vicious circular movement of the I-and-the-Other game: the more he is pursued by the great Other, the more forcefully that Other reveals to him his own insignificance, and the more it becomes clear that *he* is the one this is all happening to—an "insect ... elevated and puffed up by such an honor." The pinnacle of insignificance is still a pinnacle, a superlative. After reaching this insight, he goes through the circle once again. The pride of his insignificance must issue from an extraordinary fate. But after identifying with Jacob and Job once again, he decides he has had enough. The only thing that helps in struggling against the Plan is not to try to escape it but to simply to abandon it. This Plan will not be the first to lose followers due to sheer boredom or fatigue, nor will it be the last:

"Why," I ask myself, "have I not sunk down in humility before the voice of the Eternal? Because, when the Almighty with majestic condescension allowed an insect to hear His voice, this insect felt elevated and puffed up by such an honor, considering itself in its pride to be possessed of some special desert. To speak freely, I felt myself almost on a level with the Lord, as an integral part of His personality, an emanation of His being, an organ of His organism. He needed me in order to reveal Himself; otherwise He would have sent a thunderbolt and struck me dead upon the spot. But whence springs this monstrous arrogance in a mortal? ... There is no imaginable humiliation which I have not endured, yet the more I am crushed the more my pride asserts itself. I am like Jacob wrestling with the angel, and though a little lamed, maintaining the conflict manfully; or Job, chastised, and yet steadily justifying himself in the face of undeserved punishments.

Attacked by so many conflicting thoughts, I relapse from my megalomania, and feel so insignificant, that the incident dwindles down to a mere nothing—a thunder-clap in November!

For Strindberg, "the other characters" in the Plan are personal-religious types. "Their" aims lie in the human sphere; "they" use human methods and are also represented by "real people."² Strindberg talks about their

actions and the events they are involved in using Christian-religious language. Although many passages describe actions that are typical of the mad Plan, there would be no sense of strangeness in the same Plan presented in a somewhat lighter form. Fear, guilt, pride, and providence are often experienced and discussed in narratives in which personal-religious actors act in an all-knowing and all-powerful way.

So in the secondary literature there is much discussion as to whether Strindberg was suffering from a "psychotic disorder" or not. To call this Strindbergian Plan "pathological" has not so much to do with its content, as is so often the case, but primarily with the degree to which his Plan fits in with other people's "normal" plans. And second, it has to do with Strindberg's dogged resolve to "prove" the truth of his Plan. Strindberg describes the pursuit by the furies and his inner wrestling with belief in fairly dramatic terms, but these are not pathological per se.

Actually, the most surprising thing for the modern reader is Strindberg's propensity for a kind of scientific exactitude (the attempt to measure the electricity, for example) in combination with his religious-spiritual interpretations. But even in that respect, Strindberg was a child of his time; the nineteenth century had a rather naive view of science and measurability, along with a belief in the supernatural that was stronger and more outspoken than what we have today. Like Schreber, Strindberg's commentary on scientific reporting is something of a parody, whether intended or unintended (just as Custance and Nijinsky made parodies of religious discourse, and Artaud and I have made parodies of "philosophy").

16.1.2 Steering Force: Abstract Powers and Vague Influences

For Strindberg, the Plan is "theirs," cast in the form of a narrative and featuring a number of individuals and signs—sometimes clear, sometimes vague—that point to a religious conspiracy of cosmic proportions. Other psychoplanatics interpret "them" less specifically, reducing it to a "power" or, even less than that, to an indescribable "something." When people begin philosophizing about the foundation of their own existence, the world, and the universe, and they want to say "something" more than what the average scientific explanation of the world tells them, they often arrive at the same kinds of reflections: "There are forces unknown to us," "I believe there's something more," or "There is something, but I don't know what that something is, just that the something exists."

There's nothing new about a "somethingish" force like this. It appears as early as the late nineteenth century in Richard Jefferies's *The Story of My Heart* (1883). Without committing himself to any particular belief or image

of the divine, and based on descriptions of nature and introspection, Jefferies tries to say something significant about "It"—and leading from that, about "them." According to Jefferies, there's a force underlying everything about which little can be said, but which represents the essence (the Plan?) of the cosmos. This is a typical quote (1883, 81):

It is not force in the sense of electricity, nor a deity as god, nor a spirit, not even an intelligence, but a power quite different to anything yet imagined. ... I search for traces of this force which is not god, and is certainly not the higher than deity of whom I have written. It is a force without a mind. I wish to indicate something more subtle than electricity, but absolutely devoid of consciousness, and with no more feeling than the force which lifts the tides.

In and of itself, Jefferies's force has more to do with natural mysticism than with mad, paranoid plans. But this "force without a mind" already contains the germ of the more Plan-based forces in madness—the difference being, perhaps, that in madness, the force is often a *counterforce* directed at the central individual himself.

At the end of O'Brien's book, a "them" also appears in her Plan in the form of "something." O'Brien's fight with the Operators (see section 15.4.3) came to an end at a certain point and was replaced by another kind of Plan in which she found herself facing a force, a "something." O'Brien's "something" is more personal than Jefferies's force, in the sense that O'Brien is being personally addressed and directed. O'Brien's force is not a theoretical or mystical concept, but a real driving force that controls O'Brien's actions. Although this "something" later turns against O'Brien, the power has a positive effect at first. She writes (1958, 88),

Something told me, after I had reached the street and started to the food market, to return to my apartment. I did, wondering, and found that I had left my purse on the kitchen table. Something urged me to return to the rear of the food market, after I reached the checker's counter, and kept me rooted to one spot looking at one shelf until I finally noticed the item which I had been trying for days to remember to buy. Something urged me to turn up a side street which was out of my way; I did and in the middle of the block found a typewriter repair shop whose services I required. Something urged me violently to turn around and retrace a block I had just walked. I did and found a dollar bill on the sidewalk.

The patient G. told me about a force that is at work in his Plan. He is not alone in the world; there's also "something else," not so much a god as an impersonal force beyond himself who has personal dealings with him. For G., remarkable coincidences and striking synchronicities, like advertisements on the internet that comment on his private life, are evidence of this

force. The force does not speak through visions or electricity but in a way that is entirely contemporary: from "behind" the internet. In the periods when G. was more deeply submerged in his Plan (and when, according to others, he was "psychotic), he said "they" were working on him again.

In the following fragment about Walter W. (in Navratil 1985, 199ff.) there's a general power or force whose attention is focused on the principal figure himself, as in the case of O'Brien and G. This force is just as coercive as O'Brien's, but it has more pronounced qualities. It's a natural force in that it comes from nature, is of natural origins, and stands in contrast with "human" force. The fragment describes how Walter runs away from the institution that is caring for him after he fails to fix a broken camera. He goes into the woods and is physically "directed" by a natural force. He is not ordered by a voice from within but is controlled or driven by an outside force in an almost telekinetic way:

The power was stronger than he was. It guided his limbs and directed his steps. ... He wanted to go back, but suddenly he sensed that they had turned him around and were drawing him into the woods. He buried the camera next to a feeding trough; his hand was controlled to do so.

According to the Plan, Walter had been chosen and is being sent to rescue nature. The force carries him away from people and toward animals and the woods. As a not entirely natural creature—because he is human—he has a double role to play in nature; he is subject to nature and the force of nature, but at the same time he is the one who can rescue nature. But Walter never reaches this goal because he keeps making mistakes in the execution of the Plan. He is not obedient enough to the all-powerful natural forces.

It was his task to save nature, to protect her from human beings. He was not Christ. Christ had saved humanity. He had to save nature—and he had failed. He had fallen short because he acted on his own and did not always follow the higher power that led him.

Walter's goal is to achieve harmony and peace in the animal kingdom without murder and death. He decides to achieve that peace by not eating, but in that, too, he fails:

If he doesn't eat, he isn't hungry. If no one were to eat, no one would have a need for food. "Nothing in and nothing out." The animals didn't need to eat either, and therefore they didn't have to kill each other. As long as he didn't eat, the animals wouldn't eat. But if he made a mistake, a sparrow would instantly appear and eat a worm.

Walter is most strongly subject to the force of nature when he manages to merge with the essence of nature. Then he encounters more animals, and he can devote himself to the care of nature and natural harmony. But he keeps making mistakes; he steps on a snail, which he actually should have eaten in order to preserve the unity of nature. His struggle to do good is a struggle with the devil. The borders between nature and mankind and between life and death have shifted. Maybe stones, and all moving things, are also part of nature: "He understood that if he stepped on a stone that slipped away, then the stones were cooperating with him." In that case, his striving for "guidance" by nature, and for the salvation of nature, is nothing short of a striving for universal peaceful harmony.

Here, too, as in every mad Plan, everything revolves around the main figure. Walter is the savior; he can save nature and preserve harmony and peace. The problem with this Plan is that harmony in nature is not consistent with the killing of animals (both by animals and by humans). This means that true salvation can never be achieved—and that is the fault of the failing savior. Walter may be driven by nature, but because he departs from the will of nature, he is guilty—and that marks him as an outsider in nature, fighting with the non-natural, the devil.

It's a strange Plan if you have to eat snails in order to preserve harmony. With the exception of some Frenchmen, that in itself is reason enough to call such behavior pathological. Furthermore, Walter says he is being directed from the outside and is therefore a possible savior of nature. It's quite a strange Plan, but it's also understandable. Once again, the story would sound far less bizarre if the elements of Walter's experience were composed or expressed in a somewhat different way and in a somewhat different context. What are we to make of the nature lover, for instance, who feels himself one with nature during a walk through the woods and sticks a feather in his hat?

16.1.3 The Ghost in the Machine in Nazi Germany

The Plan often centers on a scenario that posits "me" against the rest of the world—if not the cosmos. All actions and events have to do with the struggle, or at the very least the "interaction," between "me" and "them." "They" could be God himself (Schreber), a vague sort of spiritual-religious conspiracy (Strindberg), or nature as a force that is impersonal but is focused on people (Walter W.). "They" make themselves known to the main figure through contemporary channels. In the past, "they" entered by means of electricity, but today this often happens via radio, television (my own experience), and, of course, the internet. Sometimes these means of contact are themselves actors in the Plan, in which case there is no longer a secret power "behind" the internet and electricity is no longer bewitched by a

higher power. Instead, "the media," the internet, or electricity themselves become active forces. What are usually understood as inanimate machines and devices can become vivified in madness.

Conrad gives a good example of this in *Die beginnende Schizophrenie* (1958, 102–103), in which the main figure, "case 10," is "possessed" or "controlled" by a machine. We see here a few typical characteristics of the Plan: the feeling that everything is being deliberately "conceived," devised, and prepared and the idea that "they" are all in contact with each other and send each other signals. For case 10, it's not all about a divine or human force but about a machine. This machine has a "volume control knob," which makes it something like a radio. The knob can be turned high or low, which has a correspondingly strong or weak influence on case 10. The machine works on the basis of an unknown kind of radiation that has a wave pattern. The waves, or influences, can intersect each other from the opposite sides. The machine is reminiscent of a mechanical timepiece; it is reliable and operates as accurately as a clock. The machine is all-powerful; it influences the movements of case 10 and even transforms his way of writing:

According to his own account, case 10 has been under the influence of the machine for several days. Recently he had gone into town. Once again, everything along the way had been prepared for him. All the people on the street were involved. They exchanged signals and directed him at every point. This must have been linked to the machine from which everything emanates, a kind of "wave machine" that can be adjusted to either "stronger" or "weaker." When the knob is turned to "very strong," he is totally powerless; he has to do everything the machine prompts him to do. Every little movement is directly controlled and determined. ... Sometimes the influences of the two sides crossed each other, which meant that the machine was not tuned properly. But otherwise everything ran like clockwork, down to the smallest detail. He wrote his wife a letter for her birthday. He immediately noticed that both his handwriting and the contents of the letter were directed from the outside. It wasn't his sentence structure, nor was the style of handwriting his: "I should know my own handwriting."

The influence of the machine is everywhere. The patient wonders how it works and thinks there must be a central headquarters from which the influence is controlled. The machine may be located "in the upper castle." He also thinks the machine is attended by people, because even when case 10 enters the little lanes where radiation could not possibly penetrate, he is still being manipulated. The operation of the machine also seems to interfere with electricity. The machine is not at all burdensome. Case 10 feels as if he is being propelled automatically; thoughts and words rise effortlessly to the surface of their own accord: "Writing is also quite striking. That is

curious; he finds it so easy. Even his thoughts flow rapidly and effortlessly, everything is lighter than it was before."

It is tempting to interpret this case within the context of Nazi Germany: the political order consisting of a central power from which influence and orders are issued, an order of punctuality and total power. The machine itself seems to have been modeled after pictures of machines of that time and ideas about how they worked: mechanical, invisible waves and volume control. This fragment is a good example of how the Plan acquires additional details within a particular time period. It also shows how, at a time when little is being said about the sacredness of spirits and demons, the sacredness and power of devices and machines increases. The spiritual forces, ghosts, and sacred objects from older times are replaced by digital powers, logos, and mobile digital devices, which in their own way conjure up a sacred dimension. It is the seers and madmen who—intentionally or unintentionally—deliver their very own parodistic commentary on the "mechanization of our worldview."

16.2 Superpower, Omnipotence, Dominance: Megalomania

16.2.1 Kings without Kingdoms

The leading figure in the Plan is not always a victim of persecution and conspiracies. Sometimes he has all the power and pulls the strings himself. In that case, the psychoplanatic decides what is going to happen, what story lines and plots are going to be implemented, how the surroundings are to be looked at, what meaning the signals reveal, and what the scenery is. The psychoplanatic is the director, screenwriter, and main character of his own film; he is the lord and master in his own Plan. Schreber undoubtedly had periods of kingship (see section 13.4). Another good example of a mad kingship suddenly falling into one's lap is described in the following quote (Karpman 1953, 279, in Landis 1964, 180):

I am causing lots of people to become insane, accidentally, by reason of the power that leaves me and comes back, people are changing. This power causes railroad accidents, which is awful. My presence in the world is injurious to many people. I don't understand how; it is just an observation. ... People's voices change when talking; sometimes they appear pale and drowsy, again peppy and full of life, and it seems to me that I am the medium of all that; it seems that I exercise some involuntary control over them. I know it to be imagination, yet it seems so true to me. ... I imagine people losing their teeth; babies are dwarfed; people have nervous breakdowns, etc., all on my account. ... I can't see how I could be such a freak of nature as to have these powers.⁴

Such thoughts and feelings of omnipotence come close to the experiences of oneness described in part III. There are a few small but essential differences, however. In mystical madness, there is no difference between an inner and an outer world; "what happens *outside*" and "what is thought *inside*" are of the same order. Such a mystical-mad state can lead one to believe that private thoughts influence worldly events. But we can speak of influence only when the unity of the inner and the outer world is broken and there is a germ of a Plan. For influence, omnipotence, and kingship, there must be a difference between the influencer and the influenced, between potentate and subject, between the king and his kingdom. Only when such a difference exists do kings, presidents, and gods appear who speak of beneficent works, extraordinary acts, and supernatural deeds.

Podvoll (1990, 188ff.) uses some striking quotes from Michaux (within quotation marks in the following fragments) to describe how the floating "supreme eminence" of mystical madness can result in napoleonic Plans. First there is the immensity of the Ω -delusion (see chapter 11), which is in danger of being spoiled because the mystical madness wants to appropriate it and establish a bond with it. The mystical madness wants to make a place for it:

He cannot "control" it, as Michaux said, "Immense is around him, is in him, is on him. ... But look," says Michaux, "he is going to spoil everything ... he is going to create a personal relation with that. ... He tries to find a suitable place for this excess and to live with it. How to find a suitable place for excess? ... Work suddenly appears to him petty (as do other people). He is in a reigning place."

Realizing that he is in a position of dominance, the mystical madman goes one step too far and becomes a psychoplanatic. He's going to simplify things and give them names; he extends himself into every concept, projects himself into words and images. Podvoll continues:

Sovereignty is in him. ... A little longer (how can he resist?), and finally, unable any longer to leave unfixed, impersonal, anonymous this prodigious monopolizing and supreme greatness, the secret which is choking him, being a simple man who believes in simplifying and who believes he has understood, he declares himself to be Napoleon. Or a saint, or a messiah, or the "greatest" of anything. He feels he must call himself something! This invasion of sovereignty, which fills him with such excellence, could not long remain unemployed.

In a cascading expansion, without stopping or being able to stop, he dilates to the maximum every notion of himself, "not one of which he can let pass without pouring himself into, without stretching out in it perfectly."

In mystical madness, there's no wondering about power or omnipotence. It isn't until crystallization in the Master Plan that an awareness of self versus the world begins to develop. If that world proves to be inferior to the main figure, it may result in his surprise and astonishment. It's as if the fate of the "Master of the Universe" had simply fallen into his lap, the psychoplanatic observes, almost embarrassed. This is described in Conrad by case 56 (1958, 75): "Extraordinary powers emanated from my body.' He asks in desperation, 'I don't know. Does this mean I am God? Because I can see what's going to happen in advance.'" (Also see the earlier quote from Karpman, and case 28 from Conrad in the preceding section.) The dynamic of such "megalomania" is of a very different order than what is usually understood as fantasies of grandeur. The main difference between the more ordinary narcissistic dreams of greatness and mad megalomania is that, in the latter, no throng of admirers or actual subjects are necessary; megalomania takes place in a kingdom without subjects.

16.2.2 One Mind, One Body, One War

How does omnipotence work? How does the psychoplanatic manage to cause train accidents, influence the weather, and turn back time? Psychoplanatic thinking precedes being. What exists in the form of thought and develops in language manifests itself in the outside world of its own accord. What stirs and is expounded within the psychoplanatic is carried out in the outside world. His will is law, and his subterranean thoughts emerge in phenomena.

In addition to inner thoughts and drawn-out reveries, simple appeals and orders can be enough to bring about large-scale changes. Conrad reports how case 28 caused the Germans to gain speed during World War II (1958, 75): "At a certain point, while case 28 was being driven to the hospital, he cried out, 'Faster! Faster!' As he shouted this, he had the overwhelming awareness that this could influence the war effort."

Besides thoughts that rush from the mind and words that flow out of the mouth, other substances and cycles are used to manipulate the world. Just as with Custance (see 10.2), the remarkable power of physical secretions is also at work in Conrad's case 28: "He felt that he was collaborating with the entire Wehrmacht in a most peculiar way. ... If he had to get up at night to urinate, he had the feeling that by doing so he was causing bombs to be dropped on England. At that moment he was very conscious that his urinating was immediately linked to dropping bombs. ... He possessed this skill 'like a God,' without wanting to."

In the depths of his thoughts, this psychoplanatic rules the world. Body and spirit are one, and his body is the body of the nation. His influence extends not only to the vicissitudes of the war but also to the changeability of the weather: "I was looking at some photos of beautiful weather in

a couple of magazines. And sure enough, the sun appeared and began to shine brilliantly. Then I looked at a photo of a rainy landscape, and storm clouds began to gather. I thought: I'm a little God, and the weather obeys me." It even strikes case 28 as incredible, yet he still believes that his will governs the meteorological laws. The patient has misgivings and thinks, "But that can't be true, can it? That's insane. I'm not even superstitious." Here again is the hesitation and astonishment at his own omnipotence. Case 28 doesn't want to use his magic improperly. At night he deliberately sits in the dark: "I don't want to misuse these powers, and I try not to. I don't make the sun shine at night, for example. Others might take advantage of the situation, abuse it, tempt fate. But not me."

16.2.3 Beyond the Limit: Crowhurst II

Here we pick up the thread of the story recounted in section 5.4.3 about the strange voyage of Donald Crowhurst, the participant in a sailing contest who ran out of options in the middle of the ocean. He tried to elude the laws of time and space by means of his knowledge of Einstein's theory of relativity. The last thing I wrote about Crowhurst was how he tried to escape earthly time, and in his diary he wrote (Podvoll 1990, 106–114), "God's clock is not the same as our clock. He has an infinite amount of 'our' time. Ours has very nearly run out. We on the other hand do not have very much time left." That was the point at which Crowhurst, in his lonely flush of "desynchronization" (see 5.4.3), stumbled upon a paradox: that of eternity versus earthly time. It was also the point at which Crowhurst came up with a Plan in response to the paradox, in which Plan he himself was the chosen one in a game with cosmic beings—fellow players in the Plan.

In his Plan ("the game"), Crowhurst tries to establish rules concerning his situation and the world; he attempts to draw up a blueprint for his Plan and to flesh it out. Drafting the Plan gives him a sense of security and power. He writes in his diary, "The only rule of the game is this: the game must be played in the mind and nowhere else but in the mind. ... Let us play. ... In just three days the work was done! Christ is amongst us just as surely as if he was walking about signing cheques." Along with the cosmic beings, Crowhurst now operates within a Plan that exists outside of time, a zone of power. He sees through everything from the point of view of the Plan, he resolves all contradictions and problems, and as a seer of earthly mortals, he can write,

You will have trouble with some of the things I have to say. Until recently—three days ago—I had a lot of trouble with them myself.

I was determined to solve the problem if it took me the rest of my life. Half-anhour later, I had set up the basic equations, and seen the pattern. Three days later I understood everything in nature, myself, in all religion, in politics, in atheism, agnosticism, communism, and systems. I had a complete set of answers to the most difficult problems now facing mankind. I had arrived at the cosmos while contemplating the navel of an ape.

Here Crowhurst has shot past perplexity and ineffable mystical Insight and has landed at the elaboration of a Plan, including "basic equations and a pattern."

Nevertheless, he is still drifting around at sea with no way out. If they should find him now, he'll be exposed as a fraudulent contestant (see 5.4.3). His earthly (or perhaps I should say maritime) situation is intolerable, and Crowhurst has no choice but to move into the labyrinth of his Plan. He tries to determine the position and status of his own omnipotence and that of God, and he runs into the typical problems that such an enterprise produces (such as with Artaud and Schreber, described earlier): problems of evil, time, and the differences between life and death. His Plan becomes a hermetic and expanded crystal castle, with Crowhurst as the lord of the manor. It comprises the evolution of the ape, via the human being, to an Übermensch-like cosmic, divine being. Crowhurst juggles with the transitions, similarities, and differences between these three, including his own position:

I was beginning to understand more and more of the cosmic beings. All cosmic beings had to throw themselves on the mercy of one man!

By this process I have become a second-generation cosmic being. I am conceived in the womb of nature, in my own mind. ... The quick are quick, and the dead are dead. That is the judgment of God. ... Now at last man has everything he needs to think like a cosmic being.

At this moment it must be true that I am the only man on earth who realizes what this means. It means I can make myself a cosmic being, by my own efforts, but I have to hurry up and get on with it before I die! ...

There are "limits" to the amount of integration apes can do. They have certain "rules." There is no limit to what intelligent, soulful apes can do.

Man is forced to certain conclusions by virtue of his mistakes.

No machine can work without error!

The only trouble with man is that he takes life too seriously!

With this last utterance, Crowhurst tries to cling to the idea of the Plan as a "game" while bobbing about at sea in desperation. Sounds of doubt and fear can sometimes be heard through the walls of his megalomaniacal crystal castle: "I was annoyed with the cosmic beings. Something was going wrong ... anguish of a cosmic being ... tentacles reaching out at me from the depths of the sea." Finally, he senses that something is about to happen.

His "transformation into a cosmic being" is going to take place, and he begins counting down. He'll be "there" within two hours. What follows then are several Plan fragments, written in staccato style, that are difficult to interpret. Podvoll makes one more attempt to interpret them, but in doing so he says, "He will proceed to have 'realization' after realization, all recorded in the terse, condensed poetry of those who are about to die. … He is struggling with the meaning of life, time, and death." I will reproduce the most interesting passage here in the form of Plan poetry:

Reason for system to minimize error To go—remove experience ... System of Books reorganize perfectly Many parallels. Realization of role of decision making Hesitation—time Action + time ... Books Soul of men into their work ... New reas[on] occurs for my game. My judgment indicates cannot not use anything 'put' in place, but have to put everything in place. ... The age process is new way of despair concept ... Understand reason for need to devise games. No game man can devise is ... harmless. The truth is that there can only be one chess master, that is the man who can free himself [from] the need [to] be blown by a cosmic mind. there can only be one perfect beauty that is the great beauty of truth. ... It is finished— It is finished

IT IS THE MERCY

I will play this game when I choose I will resign the game ... There is no reason for harmful.

Here Crowhurst is operating deep within his Plan, at the transition point from game to rules of the game, from Plan to Plan construction, Plan magic. Sense and meaning become hermetic, as if he were seeing glimpses of the crystal, but it was just beyond reach, melting like snow in the sun, flowing

into the water, the ocean. What happens after these last words is unknown. Here his ship's log ends, and nothing was ever heard from Crowhurst again. Eight days after the last entry, the ship was found, bobbing up and down on the ocean. Written into the fragmentation, despair, and meaninglessness of his last words is the fate of kings without kingdoms, roaming forlornly between sea and sky, all-powerful and all-knowing, but burning themselves out like overheated engines without anything to stop them.

16.3 Messengers and Mad Prophets

If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1958b, 225)

16.3.1 For All Humanity to Hear

Some Plans cry out to be made known, loud and clear, so all humanity can reap their benefits. If mystical madness is a private moment of revelation (cf. Intermezzo II), then the Plan is the public development, articulation, and transcription of that revelation. Psychoplanatics who seek publicity are transformed into fanatic proclaimers of divine insight and prophets of approaching revolution or apocalypse. I have given many different examples here of this phenomenon: the concept of "mystical madness" already suggests that something secret and ineffable is being "discovered," and this entire book can be regarded as the development or explanation of a mystical "revelation."

Yet in some cases, this missionary zeal is more assertive than usual. Huub Mous (2011, 119ff.) gives a very good account of how he was brimming with insights that everyone had to know about—starting with the pope. In Mous's case, it all began with an intense experiential process or post-adolescent identity crisis in which religion and Mous's place in the world were called into question. While staying in a monastery, he underwent the same sense of revelation that I described in Intermezzo II.I, "Introduction to Revelation." After this, everything began to move very fast—and was later caught up in a whirlpool. Mous had a few probing conversations, his train of thought accelerated, his experiences and observations intensified. His inner world became richer, faster, and greater, and Mous found himself in a realm of divine madness. He transcended, transformed, and discovered a new reality. He writes (2011, 119),

I was working on inventing a new language, perhaps a new religion. I felt myself ascending into another reality and gradually becoming one with everything. One with the universe, with all the stars and planets, with the current that connects

the atoms with the cosmos, but I especially felt one with the real heaven that is beyond the stars. And while my imagination climbed to higher spheres, past the body itself, I ended up in the rarified regions of madness.

Mous's heavenly flight took place on the wings of language and religion. He wrote a great deal, and his writing brought him to even loftier revolutionary ideas. Writing, thinking, and experiencing were all of a piece, and consisted of such power and enormous importance that even the pope had to be made aware of it. Mous writes (2011, 119ff.),

I wrote for days and nights in this way, hour after hour, associating, hallucinating, and prophesying in a steadily accelerating delirious flight. The words came of their own accord. ... I had written down my message to humanity in a state of grace, writing at God's command. And the text had to be handed over to the pope as soon as possible.

Inner urgency assumed a specific form. The very fact that his words came automatically was already something extraordinary that had to be described and revealed to humankind. Mous's writings were destined to become a modern version of Augustine's *Confessions*, sprinkled with motifs like "Jeanne d'Arc" and "the cross":

My road to Rome followed the path of Jeanne d'Arc, through Vaucouleurs, Reims, Paris, Orléans, and finally via Rouen. My French teacher was my envoy on the way to the Vatican. The Cross of Lorraine, of which I had spoken, had begun leading a life of its own. As I recall, I also drew that cross on the first page of my manuscript. Like a true Hubert, who came to repentance during the hunt, I drew this cross between the antlers of a stag.

This spiritual flight acquired a geographical counterpart in the form of ideas, symbols, and a route description. Mous's language became a combination of thinking and creating. It bubbled up, it flowed in and out, and the river became an ocean:

Drawing became seeing, and language became an oracle. I did not write, I was written. I wrote to God, but God also wrote in me. "You are great, Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is your power, and to your wisdom there is no end." These were also the words with which Augustine began his *Confessions*. My book would be a contemporary translation of his, not a literal version of the original text, but a new confession as well as a new catechism, a text I would write in the spirit of the times, hallucinating in the here and now.

Even though Mous was "hallucinating in the here and now," he also had a complete overview of his past and of history.

As I was writing I saw my whole life pass before me, with all the layers of meaning that lay within. I sat in the engine room of my own imagination and let whatever

had to happen happen. The absolute had taken possession of my mind and put an end to every doubt. Finally I was set free. I had the syndrome of Jeanne d'Arc. Whether you really hear voices or not, if you respond directly to the voice of God or to that of other demons, you end up in the insane asylum or on the battlefield.

Mous bore witness to how the Absolute worked its way in him. God was speaking through him, and who wouldn't record and publicize the word of God in such a situation?

I did not hear voices, but deep within myself something had started writing, seemingly of its own accord. God himself had descended into my language. His word had become flesh and had taken up residence in my body. My writing, which went on for hours at a time, was not a written account of a prior experience of the divine, as a mystic reports on a state of speechlessness, but an immediate experience of something divine that took shape in the writing itself, a process in which, in my experience, God revealed himself directly.

Mous correctly notes that this isn't a matter of "hearing real voices." God spoke through him, but not as a voice from the outside directed at Mous the man; rather, it seemed as if God were using Mous as a mouthpiece or "apostle." Mous was literally "inspired" by God or by the Absolute. His writing was not a report made after the fact, but an immediate expression of the Holy. This led to elaborate digressions:

The notations followed each other in a breathless, staccato style, but also one that was lyrical and florid: now pausing to gaze at the image of a white piano on the summit of Mont Blanc, and now enlarging on the physicality of the language, in which the word can be come flesh, and vice versa. ... My book was about everything: the state of affairs in the world, the Roman Catholic church, but especially about birth control, the invention of the birth control pill, about the pope and Jean-Paul Sartre, about the devil and God, and about the border of madness, which I thought I could cross by writing.

It's interesting to read here that in all the border-crossings and transformations, Mous himself is aware that it has "something to do with madness." And although madness is referred to as dangerous, Mous also seems to think he has discovered the secret of madness. The same was true of my experience as I described it in Intermezzo I. Mous's initial revelation had led to an intense urge to present it to the world and to save humanity. His prophecies had to do with the Absolute in the form of love, which appeared as a kind of "power" (also see section 16.1.2). Mous writes,

The nighttime experiences in the Slangenburg monastery in Doetinchem were a lot like an apparition. Not that I had literally seen something, but I did experience an overwhelming presence of something that seemed supernatural to me. ... I did

not hear an angel, not even a voice, but I felt an unparalleled power that took possession of all my thinking. It was a voice that wanted to write a message to humanity, a book that would make all other books obsolete, a message about the pure love that I wanted to put into practice for all of humankind.

It's striking that as soon as Mous puts his thoughts down on paper, he does not translate them into deeds. His verbally lyrical prophecies at the typewriter do not lead to door-to-door proselytizing. Although he initially wanted to witness to "the power" in order to save others, in the end he seems to have been swallowed "too far, too much" by the other world to be able (or willing) to carry out a mission in "this" one. Mous says, "When the last word had been typed, I turned the knob of the amplifier. The sound stopped, and I was convinced that by this simple act I had ended up in another world. Finally I was saved."

In that "other" world, Mous is beyond the distinctions of "this" side, beyond life and death, where symbols or objects like clocks and statues take on a "surrealistic" appearance that surpasses the confines of time:

My parents were dead. I was too, and yet I lived, like an enlightened zombie in the hereafter. ... I saw the heavens swing open above the Amstel. I wandered there for hours, my thoughts turning in circles. I walked to Central Station to look at the clock. I walked back to the park to see the big fence. I saw the golden angel with the sword. I walked. I prayed. I sang. I was happy, gloriously happy. A world of ideas was growing in my head that soon would burst apart like a soap bubble.

Instead of telling others about this other world, he strays into it himself and wanders around as if lost. Mous now lives entirely within the Plan and seems unable to leave it in order to spread his message. What he wrote and thought about earlier now comes to life in the city: biblical scenes, sacred symbols, and stories constitute a modern drama that takes the place of the former Word. Eternity and earthly time spin around as in a spiral:

I walked around in a world that was still in a deep slumber, a world of the dead in which I was the only living soul. Adam and Eve were back on earth, or so it appeared to me. I was the new Adam, the first person to rise out of the slumber of life, early in the morning, whereas no one else knew that everything had changed for good. My entire kingdom was of this world from now on. I thought I was immortal. I took off my glasses and crossed Ferdinand Bolstraat. Through a divine miracle I came out unscathed, and I was ecstatic. I kept looking at the sun and following it. Onto the Ceintuurbaan. Down the Hobbemakade. Across Museum Square. On the way to Vondel Park. The sun. It would take me back to paradise.

As so often happens, Mous's mental quest changes into a quest through space, filled with mythical symbolism, and ends in that mad element that always keeps coming back: water.

At exactly three o'clock I heard a clock strike in the distance, and I thought I could walk on water. That didn't go well. My decision to step onto the water was not even a conscious one. It just happened. Actually, I glided into the water, since the grass had become slippery because of the frost. Something in me had ordained this. I crept back onto the embankment and ended up at school, where I went to an abandoned upper story and, in my wet clothes, laid flat on the floor with my arms outstretched in a cross.

Another beautifully written example of missionary zeal is discussed in Watkins (2010). Like Mous, Frederick Frese undergoes a "transformation," followed by a holy mission. Frese's Plan differs in tone from that of Mous. It seems to have more to do with "glad tidings" concerning the "joy of being," which is reminiscent of the esse-delusion in part III. In Mous's Plan, despite all the blurring of borders, there seems to be a stronger awareness of a contrast between this world and the other world, putting Mous more in a state of uni-delusion or Ω -delusion. Unlike Mous, Frese proclaims his "revelation" in spoken word and deed, without having spent any time in a preliminary writing phase. Frese explicitly identifies with other prophets. Watkins (2010, 184ff.) describes Frese and quotes him:

Frederick felt his identity had undergone a complete transformation and that it was his personal mission to proclaim a great new message to humanity: "I was the uncle and everyone in the world was related to me. They were all my cousins, nieces, and nephews. Happiness was here. The world was one. People of all races and religions, of all ages, and of both genders were happily joined in family bonds, and I was 'Uncle Fred.' ... Just like Mohammed, I had a message and the message must be shared. There was such joy in my heart as I went from person to person, joyfully greeting each of them as my niece or nephew. I started with the people at the party ... we were all being freed, freed from our blindness. We had not been able to see that we were all one in spirit and in family ..."

It soon became clear that Frese's missionary zeal was assuming proportions that were unacceptable for "ordinary people," and he was quickly placed in a psychiatric hospital:

"I went into the street to proclaim to all the great truth that we were all one wonderful family and that we could now be as one in goodness and joy. And I danced and sang out the great news for all to hear. ..." As he was dancing in the street some of his friends at the party became concerned and phoned for assistance. ... The police took him to hospital to be psychiatrically assessed.

Just as with Mous (and with myself, Custance, and Artaud), Frese's glad tidings were ignored, and he soon ended up in an isolation cell.

"The physician I talked with was a very serious man. He did not seem to appreciate at all that I had a joyous message. Most people smiled when I gave them my

message. The doctor did not smile ... for some reason I was placed in a seclusion room. ..."

16.3.2 As if the Whole World Were Waiting: Tears of the Prophet

Conrad (1958, 85ff.) describes in great detail case 53, another interesting case of "prophetic madness" that has to do with receiving divine insights and outspoken revelations, just as with Mous and Frese. Unlike Mous and Frese, however, case 53 involves a much longer period of annunciation and mission; his prophetic history runs from 1937 to 1941, while that of Mous and Frese amounts to a few days at the most. Because the prophecies of case 53 are spread out over several years, his messages exhibit development, consolidation, and variation. Like Mous, case 53 has a strong desire to make his message known to humanity in writing. Despite the differences in social structure and zeitgeist (Nazi Germany versus the "free West"), the inspirations of case 53, as with Frese and Mous, are of the "fiery and religious sort." Conrad describes the beginning as follows:

One evening in 1937 he had the following experience. He lay in bed and his wife was sleeping beside him. Suddenly he shot bolt upright. He had to turn on the light and grab a pen to write down a few lines of poetry. These lines grew into entire poems. He had to keep writing, more and more. They were of a "fiery and religious sort," a "newly formed worldview." This repeated itself every night and became increasingly more extensive. ... He worked during the day and he was very tired, but he simply had to write down the strange "prophecies" and poems.

What is striking here—unlike in the case of Mous—is that the urgent inspiration limited itself to the nighttime, which may be why, unlike Mous and Frese, he had no contact with psychiatrists or other counselors for quite some time.

In the year following that first divine inspiration, the insights of case 53 become more explicit and practical; they relate to German society and politics. Case 53 thinks his messages are of the utmost importance and must quickly be made known. Like Mous and myself, he realizes that seen from the outside, his experiences and utterances might be regarded as madness. Conrad writes,

In the spring of 1938 he was in Würzburg for a speech by Goebbels. ... He was very agitated and passionate, as if he had to be there "in order to mediate." War had to be avoided. He felt an urgency to speak out, but he also knew that if he did so he would be regarded as a lunatic. So he walked into a police station and shouted, "I believe in God!" They restrained him and had his wife come, who took him home. ... From that point on, the feeling never left him that if he didn't act quickly and work out what he had to say, danger would threaten all of Germany.

Case 53 also saw remarkable visions at that time. As usual, it is unclear what the "visual" and the "conceptual" aspects of the visions were. Like Schreber, case 53 sees these visions or hallucinations in the sky, as if the heavens had opened up to him:

His gaze was drawn toward the sky. There he saw a yellow cloud that suddenly emerged and immediately jumped back, as quickly as a ball thrown against a wall. He still doesn't know what it was: a rare occurrence, a red-yellow cloud. ... Immediately after this experience he had to write: "Nationalists, be strong as the enemy approaches!"

Then came prophecy after prophecy, a "genuine revelation." These revelations resemble those of Mous and Frese in terms of intensity. And just as with Mous, there's a prominent fellow player or addressee in case 35's Plan. While Mous intended his neo-Catholic writings for the pope, case 53's advice was for Hitler:

The message was that during some battle, a punishment had to be meted out to the Jewish people. ... He did not know whether he himself was to participate in this battle, or whether he was only to act as a mediator. ... Sometimes he felt a spiritual connection with the Führer. Sometimes he felt united with "the Führer's weeping eyes."

Later it became clear to case 53 that his inspiration was coming from on high and that its purpose was to defend the faith. His last writing is religiously "inspired" and at the same time meant to influence practical German politics. When case 53 is called up for the army, he has a sixty-page manuscript in hand. In the army, case 53 has problems with his role as prophet and is treated with stunning brutality.

Once in the army, he told his commanding officer that he didn't dare handle firearms. The officer then beat him fiercely and said that if he were to repeat such a thing he would be shot. ... He also told him about a thrilling vision he had had; it was as if someone were to lay cables containing liquid fuel from England to the continent.

His eccentric and prophetic behavior soon became intolerable, and case 53 was sent to the army hospital for observation. There it was determined that although he was not receiving any "inspirations," he did occasionally see strange things:

At the moment he is not having any inspirations, but every now and then he sees bright signs of light, long stripes in the room or in the sky. These are long flashes, round fire, and sometimes black spots like gum balls: "For me, these are the elements that fight each other in heaven—which makes me shudder."

It is tempting to interpret these visions symbolically, which case 53 also does, calling them "elements that fight each other in heaven." The concerns of case 53 have to do with German history and the war:

He is now afraid that America will enter the war. ... "We cannot wage war forever; it costs so much money, and we need peaceful trade." It seemed to him that he had to act, to make speeches about peace and freedom, as if he had to represent the Führer.

While case 53's inspirations seemed at first to support German politics, he now sees that his religious inspiration and leanings are fully at odds with the German war effort:

He now thinks that Christianity will only begin when the war is over. The last two thousand years were not years of Christianity; all people did was wage war, kill each other, and live non-Christian lives.

Case 53 does not talk about his role in the greater cosmos. But he does notice that he seems to be surrounded by a sort of sacred expectation in these war years. Something is in the air. Something is about to happen:

He himself was only an instrument. As soon as people came near him, they became calmer and somewhat excited, as if they were waiting for something: "As if the whole world were waiting." (Also see Intermezzo II.III.IV, "1 Corinthians 13: Faith, hope, and love.")

Mous and case 53 are passionate writers. This is not uncommon, as Lukoff writes (1990, quoted in Watkins 2010, 186):

While writing my "new Bible" I held internal conversations with the "spirits" of eminent thinkers in the social sciences and humanities. ... I talked with them about the design of a new society that would herald a return to tribal living and I recorded brief summaries of the "messages" I obtained from each of them. While writing, the apparent clarity of my thoughts and beauty of my vision sometimes brought tears to my eyes.⁵

In my own revelation phase in 2007, I also wrote a great deal. I thought I had tapped a "poetry vein," causing the words to simply flow of their own accord. That's why I bought a recording device: to make sure I didn't miss any of my outpourings (see Intermezzo II.II.III). Considering the size of the present work, we might well wonder if and when my revelation phase ever came to an end.

The reason for such copious writing has to do first of all with the intensity and great importance of the insights one receives. They're so valuable that one is afraid they will vanish if not written down. In addition, the insights are so extensive that one cannot do them justice, or show them

off in all their glory, by limiting them to a conversation. Once they're committed to patient paper—or to endless computer files—it feels as if they're ready to be properly, clearly, and fully explicated. In addition, by writing his thoughts on paper, the psychoplanatic has the advantage of avoiding interference or refutation.

Writing in such a state automatically leads to more writing. One sees what is flowing out of the pen as one writes, which becomes food for further reflection and more writing. When a psychoplanatic writes, he soon feels spiritually connected to other writers near and far, and senses contact with the world's great minds and fellow seers (also see Custance in 10.2). What also sustains the act of writing is the fact that it is experienced as the creation of real worlds of meaning. The physicality and appearance of the writings of the mad give their work a special, sacred, sometimes magical charge in the mad world. In short, the prophetic psychoplanatic, in the depths of his writing, is a God.

16.3.3 Whereof One Cannot Speak, Thereof One Must Prophesy

Huub Mous, Frederick Frese, and case 53 all ended up in psychiatric hospitals. The revelations and prophecies of Mous and Frese were all ignored as far as their contents were concerned, and they themselves were treated with antipsychotic drugs. Less is known of the fate of case 53, but remarks made by Conrad about such "cases" are not encouraging. As an example, Conrad writes (1958, 47), "In 1943 the boy again became seriously ill, was committed to a number of mental hospitals, and was finally a victim of the euthanasia movement." The treatment of psychiatric patients by the Nazis was devastating, by and large (see Jahn 2012, for example). When and how did things go wrong for these three prophets—assuming something did go wrong? How did the derailment occur? And what did it consist of?

In fact, things went demonstrably "wrong" the moment they were committed. At that point, they apparently had broken certain laws or unwritten rules, which led to their removal from society. Their Plans had been too wild, too dangerous, and too transgressive in their execution. They should have been more cautious and calculating, with fewer risky practical consequences. If Mous had been less frenzied or "intense" in carrying out his Plan, he might have stopped halfway, and his writing and missionary zeal might have led to nothing more than a "spiritual breakthrough" (see section 14.3.2) without the need for psychiatry, psychotropic drugs, and terms like "psychosis." If Frese had been able to express his joy in life more calmly and in a more peaceful environment, he too might never have gone so far.⁶ And if case 53 had not been conscripted for military service in the German

army in 1940, his prophecies and visions might have continued to be well channeled, as they were for a long time before the war.

Critics of prophetic revelations and other Plans could respond by saying that things were already going awry with these three and that being committed to a mental hospital was the logical, unavoidable consequence of a disorder or illness that had developed autonomously. The thoughts, inspirations, and experiences of Frese, Mous, and case 53 may already have "gone off the rails" apart from any actual inappropriate behavior. Indeed, there is something to be said for the fact that they were too much seized by "distractions" (what others call delusions and hallucinations): by concrete images, written words, and crystallized conceptualizations of the mystical-ineffable.

I have already demonstrated that it isn't so much the revelation itself that is "mad," but the way it "descends to" and is received on earth. We have too little information on Frese. For Mous, the early stages are mainly marked by delight and perplexity over the paradoxes of the Absolute, the One, and being, but later on these turn toward a Rome here on earth via seductive symbols, exciting narratives, and concrete ideas. Yet it is difficult to say at exactly what point a poetically lively imagination switches over to dead-end madness. The same also applies to case 53: to what extent are the visions and inspirations that case 53 interprets as religious-political warnings and predictions to be regarded as inspired passion or creative eccentricity, and to what extent is he already caught in the black hole of madness?

Establishing the "turning point" between inspiration and madness is always difficult, and with prophetic madness it's even more complicated. Indeed, if the mystic—or the madman—were to fall completely silent, there would be no evidence of prophetic madness at all. In order to witness to the insight that has been revealed to him, he must make use of language and symbols that are universally accessible. If, however, he begins expressing himself using enigmatic language and strange behavior, either at our request or because he wants to please us somehow, it is nasty to accuse him of being "incoherent" or not "clear" enough—about something that is so unclear by definition. In addition, when prophetic psychoplanatics are questioned about their so-called delusions or hallucinations, they are much less concrete, adamant, and explicit than is generally believed. Mous quite probably believed that, at a certain moment and in a certain sense, he was God—or God's prophet—but it is absurd to take such a moment out of context and hold it up as proof that Mous had incorrect thoughts or "delusions." Conrad and his researchers do their best to attribute "hallucinations" to case 53, but here too, the so-called hallucinations of case 53 are too closely linked to the general atmosphere in which case 53 finds himself.8

Determining the degree of "derailment" is therefore extremely difficult; delusions and hallucinations come about while one is talking about them, and they do not constitute cut-and-dried facts. Besides being judged on the basis of the degree of derailment, which is somewhat stigmatizing and unsatisfactory, prophetic delusions can also be judged by their aesthetic or informative qualities—like any other kind of expression. If a prophetic psychoplanatic has a "good story"—good in terms of either content or form there are other places for him and his work besides the psychiatric hospital with its archives. As long as he doesn't let himself be seduced by statements that are too distinctly factual—or swept away into overly vague, ethereal, esoteric incomprehensibility—he has, in principle, a large audience at his disposal. A great many of the statements and writings of prophets such as Mous and case 53 can be refashioned into interesting texts. The pearls to be found in statements made by Mous and case 53—as well as in those by Kaas, Custance, and Artaud (not to mention myself)—can be absorbed and reworked into genres like poetry, esoteric wisdom, and perhaps even management, self-help, and philosophy—as long as the texts are able to hover somewhere above the earth and below the heavens.

Unfortunately, this happens far too infrequently. Brilliant statements such as case 53's, "It's as if all the world were waiting for something" ("Alle Welt ist so, als ob alles auf etwas wartet"), instead of being featured on calendars of wise sayings and aphorisms, are interpreted as symptoms of a disorder and nothing more. Earlier I described Van der Ploeg's attempt (2003) to reduce Artaud's lucid crystals to the secretions of a schizophrenic mind and Sass's unfounded preference for the mysticism of Wittgenstein to that of Schreber (see 13.4.3), despite his caution and open phenomenological attitude. That is the danger of psychiatry: although it promises to pay close attention to the mind, products of the mind are almost never judged on their own merits but only in terms of their symptomatic and diagnostic value.

Despite such opposition, the writings, "personal voices," and unique wordings of Mous and Frese do manage to find their way to the public—in Tellegen et al. (2011) and Watkins (2010) respectively. This is only partly true for the prophecies of case 53. Case 53 undoubtedly would have preferred that his work be studied as policy by leaders of the Nazi Party instead of going down in history as simply the writings of "case 53." On the other hand, his message has not remained entirely unnoticed, and his "story" has been recorded by Conrad.

Modern psychiatrists write far fewer extensive case studies like this than they did in Conrad's day. Today there is more of a tendency to tally and measure, and subtle experiences and utterances are filed away under

standard categories of "delusion" and "hallucination," never to be heard from again. In the past, it was still possible to express astonishment at patient experiences. Thus Conrad (1958, 85) says the following about case 53 in this remarkable note: "The case was dealt with by Steffen ... in his dissertation of 1942. From that we can infer that the 'prophecy' took place before the first atomic bomb." Conrad links this note to the passage about case 53's vision of "a red-yellow cloud," and seems open to the possibility that the messages of case 53 really do have prophetic or insightful value. Looking back, you could make the same claim with regard to comments such as "Over time [in 1938], it became clear to him that the whole point was to punish the Jewish people during some kind of conflict ..."

Conrad makes another interesting remark concerning the manuscript of case 53 (1958, 89), which makes sense both figuratively and literally: "It seems to the sick man as if he had been seeing everything two-dimensionally up until then. Now he has suddenly acquired a third dimension, and everything appears in spatial depth. The same idea, the same sentence that once seemed a banal commonplace, suddenly seems from this perspective to acquire an unsuspected depth: 'Mind is mind and will always be mind' is a platitude without any depth dimension, but for the sick man, in the light of his revelation, it is an enlightenment."

Yes, indeed. For the madman, depth appears at the two-dimensional level and at the level of meaning. An ordinary statement takes on cosmic significance. Hidden in every word is a deep world of meaning. What for one person is a banality—like a drop of water—for another person is a miracle of shape and content—like an ice crystal. Case 53 manages not to convey his deep insights to Conrad. For Conrad, they're all banalities: "Leafing through the manuscript of the sick man, the nightly labor that took months and years to write, one is shocked by how banal these 'inspirations' are."

Despite his meticulous case descriptions, Conrad pays very little attention to the social or cultural circumstances surrounding what he calls "beginning schizophrenia." His views in that regard resemble those of many modern biologically oriented psychiatrists. Conrad does not consider the context—the German army in time of war—a pathogenic factor or relate the contents of the "delusions" of his cases to the practices of the German army or to fascist ideology. What is striking, however, are the many delusions of fear and paranoia and the absence of madness of the more cheerful sort, like those we see in Mous, Custance, and myself.9

What makes the absence of social or cultural context in the description of delusions more understandable is the fact that Conrad was a member of the Nazi Party, the Nazi doctors' union, and the Nazi teachers' union (Klee 2005,

95ff.). The idea that German society at that time might have been a cause of schizophrenia rather than its adversary would not have been well received by Conrad. Similarly, the financial conflicts of interest between psychiatry and industry today explain why the sociocultural context is largely being ignored.

Let's assume for the sake of argument that prophetic psychoplanatics do reflect the spirit of the times and that they understand it and anticipate it, consciously or unconsciously. If that is so, then the status of these psychoplanatics changes into that of seers, "real" prophets, or mediums. They are the ones who receive the first signals of secrets that, for others, are still hidden within the folds of time. Consequently, the often incomprehensible statements made by prophets should be given extra attention, so that what the prophetic psychoplanatic says is not a symptom of an illness but an expression of wisdom and divine insight. This view would turn the relationship between psychoplanatic and therapist on its head. The psychoplanatic becomes the savior of others, the healer of his healers. This idea exists in an undercurrent of the patient movement known as the Mad Pride Movement, in which the madman is not pitiful or misunderstood; on the contrary, he is seen as an enlightened forerunner who has a real prophetic message to share, a message of "real" importance (see Cole 2012, for example).

This reversal of how the mad are usually thought of at the present time has something in common with the implications of Kingsley's view of early Greek philosophy (also see 14.3.4). According to Kingsley, those whom we call "prophets" today think and speak at another level of consciousness. Prophets give voice to the divine (1999, 71): "An iatros is a healer ... who heals through prophecy. But this isn't to say much at all unless we understand what prophecy used to mean. Nowadays we think it has to do with telling the future. And yet that's just the result of centuries spent trivializing what for the Greeks was something very different. It used to mean giving a voice to what doesn't have a voice, meant acting as a mouthpiece for the divine. It all had to do with being able to contact and then talk from another level of consciousness." To the extent that prophetic psychoplanatics have anything in common with Kingsley's ancient Greek prophets, they would, as mouthpieces of the divine, give voice to higher things. This is similar to when Mous says, "There was something deep in myself that began writing of its own accord. God himself descended into my language. His word was made flesh and dwelt in my body."

The question remains as to whether that other—prophetic—consciousness is really all that practical and agreeable. Nor is it possible to say how

important the bits of wisdom are that might emerge. In any case, describing them as real prophecy is quite consistent with the experience of madness. As a result of puzzling over an earlier perplexity, psychoplanatics experience their prophecy as a further deepening and a higher flight rather than as a "derailment" or "distraction" from the true path of enlightenment. Thus the prophetic-mad condition may be the royal offspring of the initial mystical madness and not its illegitimate child. This is something I can attest to. Outsiders who observed my psychoplanatic development saw a gulf between a first phase of intensive creativity and enthusiasm and a later phase of psychosis and confusion. Just before my so-called breakdown, they found me serene, inspiring, wise, clear-headed, and calm, while afterward they found me restless, impulsive, and incoherent. For me, however, it was one big, consistent whole: the later prophetic-magical phase was only the logical consequence and concrete development of what I had already discovered.

When the psychoplanatic is in the prophesying phase, he looks from the other side. He has overshot the mirror, twisted through the spiral, and ended up behind the veil. He sees and knows, and what he says and writes becomes instant reality. Sometimes he sees events or things that will take place "in the future" or consults with the voices and spirits of the long-departed. He finds himself among the like-minded and sees the world as a negative photographic slide, as if through Möbius glasses. He can talk, but no one understands him; at the very most they accept him. His language cracks the code with which it is written. Kaas (1979, 61) says, "When the madness rises like water and bypasses the flood marker, there are moments when something reveals itself that you cannot speak of openly. That is why it is most clearly announced in the stammering of those who have been burnt by its light, and who are condemned to remaining silent about it for the rest of their lives."

16.4 Journey to the End of the Day

16.4.1 Endgame Apocalypse

Plans can fall to pieces in many different ways. Sometimes psychoplanatics run into the lamppost of antipsychotic drugs, and when that happens nothing remains of the greatest Plans but strange scattered thoughts and self-stigma (identification with supposed chronic illnesses). Sometimes the Plans disappear on their own: the psychoplanatic returns to the normality of day-to-day planning and generally accepted opinions and self-images. All that is left of the Plan is the dream. Frequently, however, the Plans get seriously out of hand before they are "resolved," in the sense that they

collapse, fall apart, come to a halt, or "fizzle out" in some other way. While the "entrance" to the world of the Plan is often the gate of "revelation," the exit is often the storm drain of the "apocalypse"—and in some cases, revelation and apocalypse are the same thing.

Conrad (1958, 104ff.) uses the term "apocalypse" for the "catatonic" end phase, the stage in which the madman becomes rigid and utters little more than incomprehensible associations. According to Conrad, this phase follows an earlier "paranoid" phase in which there are signs of a coherent Plan. Sass (1992), in his chapter "World Catastrophe" in *Madness and Modernism*, talks about experiences that the psychoplanatic may verbalize but in which he loses "the thread" of the Plan, and the Plan crumbles into fragments. ¹² In daily psychiatric practice, terms such as "fragmentation" and "incoherence" are used in reference to this phase of the apparent collapse of the Plan.

Terms like "apocalypse," "incoherence," and "fragmentation" lead to an absolute, paradoxical endgame in which the terms themselves are, in fact, no longer helpful. If, in the late phase of madness, we were to rely only on what we could observe "on the outside," we would be making a big mistake. Something that seems like incomprehensible gibberish—incoherent stories and bizarre expressions—can contain a large measure of coherence for the person himself. In the reports of my own case, "incoherent" thinking was brought up just when I was experiencing a greater form of coherence. It may be that in other cases, terms such as "incoherence" and "fragmentation" do cover a mad content, but the question remains: When is something "really incoherent"? "World catastrophe," upon closer inspection, can prove to be "world creation." This is why I will not use terms such as "apocalypse," "end of the world," "incoherence," and "fragmentation" as descriptive diagnostic terms for the last phase of the Plan. Instead, I will explore three cases (Schreber, myself, and Artaud) in which madmen use terms that refer to the end times, such as "disintegration" and "apocalypse," but I will follow their own inner dynamics and logic.

16.4.2 Decay, Fading Away: Schreber's End of the World

First I will refer to Schreber's autobiography, for the last time. In section 13.4, I discussed the paradoxes and complex stratifications of Schreber's world: his experiences, his reflections, his crystal castle. Here I will discuss two fragments in which Schreber talks about "the end of the world."

Schreber calls his "visions" of the end of the world both terrible and impressive. In the first vision, he travels down into the earth by means of underground shafts and tunnels. This journey downward is also a journey into the past. Here we see the typical mad, "spatializing" tendency to

connect journeys in space and time (see chapters 3 and 4). Schreber writes (1988, 86–87),

As I said before, the innumerable visions I had in connection with the idea that the world had perished were partly of a gruesome nature, partly of an indescribably sublimity. ... In one of them it was as though I were sitting in a railway carriage or in a lift driving into the depths of the earth and I recapitulated, as it were, the whole history of mankind or of the earth in reverse order; in the upper regions there were still forests of leafy trees; in the nether regions it became progressively darker and blacker.

When Schreber steps out of the time capsule, he finds himself "outside time": in a lifeless zone like a cemetery, along with his wife and his fellow townsmen from Leipzig. His journey then goes back in time, toward the dawn of mankind, which also has to do with the end times. But Schreber never gets that far; he turns back, and on his return journey upward, the subterranean shafts collapse. Here, too, we see the typical mad Schreberian narrative style in phrases such as "it was said that" and "when news came" (also see 13.4.1). Using this objectifying, quasi-exact language, Schreber presents a number of remarkable occurrences and thoughts:

Sitting again in the vehicle I advanced only to a point 3; point 1, which was to mark the earliest beginning of mankind, I dared not enter. On the return drive the shaft collapsed behind me, continually endangering a "sun deity" who was in it too. In this connection it was said that there had been two shafts (perhaps corresponding to the dualism of the realms of God?); when news came that the second shaft had also collapsed, it was thought that everything was lost.

A little while later, Schreber describes a vision of the end of the world in which he once again travels down into the earth, meeting gods in a mythical, dreamlike way. He alludes to the dangers in this visionary world in terms of diseases (in this case, syphilis) that threaten (threatened?) mankind:

Another time I traversed the earth from Lake Ladoga to Brazil and, together with an attendant, I built there in a castle-like building a wall in protection of God's realms against an advancing yellow flood tide: I related this to the peril of a syphilitic epidemic.

Such passages could simply be dismissed as dreams or fantastic stories. Schreber doesn't do that, however; rather, he speaks of them as "visions," which, along with his "inspirations" and the remarkable physical changes he is undergoing, explain why he is in Sonnenstein and why such strange events have occurred. Perhaps it all happened because of a movement of the sun or because of earthquakes, Schreber thinks. And perhaps the sudden appearance of a magician in the modern world—in the guise of Schreber's psychiatrist—has brought about the world's demise. Schreber's disappearance from ordinary life may well have shaken the very foundations of

religion, he thinks, thereby inducing immorality and finally enabling the spread of dreadful diseases like leprosy and the plague. Traces of these diseases are still present on Schreber's body.¹³

Schreber's experiences with and discussions of "the end of the world" have a complex background. The apocalypse scenario on which he centers most of his text—of leprosy and the plague—is a combination of experience, observation, and thoughts. It emerges from Schreber's earlier visions but is also constructed from other elements: actual fears and events from Schreber's own time (the spread and infection of serious diseases like syphilis), "inspirations" (auditory "hallucinations"), fears based on a magical worldview (sorcery), astonishment at—and distancing and disassociating himself from—his own body, complicated religious reflections (also see 13.4.4), and the incomprehensible fact (for him) that he has been ostracized from public life and locked up in Sonnenstein. Schreber's claim "that plague has broken out" has a deeper background and is not merely a direct, arbitrary metaphor or meaningless delusion for the disintegration of his own subjectivity.

We could regard the abnormality of these constituent elements and their strange juxtaposition as "incoherence" or a manifestation of an "apocalyptic phase," but that would not be correct. "Genuine" fragmentation or incoherence could be present only if the constituent elements were loose, splintered bits of experience. That is not the case, however, since Schreber himself connects them all under the banner "end of the world."

Perhaps there were signs of an "apocalyptic phase," as Conrad defines it, during Schreber's time of thinking and contemplation. Perhaps he pondered and reflected on the plague ideas while in a state of what is called "catatonia," when all he could utter were fragmented shrieks. When that happened, however, Schreber always brought his incoherence to a close at a later point, while he was writing, by turning it into a good, comprehensible narrative. The ability to forge fragments into a single structure, to link experiences together, and to lump them all under the heading "end of the world" shows that there can be no evidence of real incoherence. And should there be signs of fragmentation during the experiences themselves, then beneath the conscious, fragmented surface, there is obviously an ability to organize thoughts by means of writing and reflecting that later forges the unity of an experiencing "I." Even the "fragmented cases" of schizophrenia that Conrad describes in his quantitative studies can, upon closer analysis, reveal an underlying Plan, unity, or coherence.

* * *

It's not a good idea to be too introspective. Introspection is considered unreliable, because with it, you can conjure up any kind of proof based on

your own experience or memory. Even so, by way of example, and for a bit of *couleur personelle*, I'd like to describe my own case at this point. In *Pure Madness*, the book about my experience of madness from 1987, I discuss my suspicions and fears regarding AIDS at several points, and I also formulate a few apocalyptic hypotheses (2004, 74): "Who knows, maybe I have an unknown form of AIDS virus. But no, if I had I would have noticed it. I feel fit as a fiddle and full of energy. And certainly they'd tell me if I had AIDS." Back then, during the eighties, when AIDS had begun to spread, many people asked themselves what their chances of contracting AIDS were. AIDS had just been "discovered," was much-discussed, and was accompanied by a great deal of fear and uncertainty in the media. Perhaps my fear of AIDS was comparable to Schreber's fear of syphilis.

In addition, of course, there was the extraordinary and incomprehensible fact—for me and for Schreber—of "suddenly" being locked up. That can't just happen, can it? Something very serious has to be going on; violence, confinement, and total collapse must have happened at a very rapid pace. It wasn't so much the disintegration of my subjectivity as it was the baffling confinement and remote psychiatric observation that led to specific hypotheses about the end of the world (2004, 146): "In recent years the entire culture has gone in this direction. You see it in the development of nuclear weapons and inhuman technology, Chernobyl, environmental pollution, and the AIDS virus. I am the result of this trend: a nuclear reactor in reverse. Modernity has bred me along with hundreds of other wounded front-line soldiers. The reversal of history is at hand. The world outside my cell is also being ravaged by this monster of technology, war, and epidemics. The world isn't the same anymore. It's apparent in everything I hear and see: the concerned glances they cast at me when I tell them about this, and my complete isolation from the outside world, are signs that the world is in a terrible state."

I had also discovered that plus and minus are actually the same—they were just two sides of the One. By means of rotation and reversal, I came to understand the higher connection between nuclear fission and nuclear fusion, between attraction and repulsion, and like Custance and Schelling, I saw the Absolute as the stillness between and above contraction and expansion. Armed with this surprising Insight, I looked at history—and my own confinement—in another way, translated in terms of a Plan as follows (2004, 146): "Yes, that's it: I have been hauled through the nuclear reactor. My thinking has reached the nucleus, split it, and reassembled the various components. The people who aren't as advanced as I am, those fools, only take things apart. But I'm past that phase, and I put thoughts back together.

I make unities out of contradictions. This form of creative thinking gives me power and energy, but it's also dangerous. Instead of nuclear fission I do fusion." The extraordinary experiences of Insight and centering may lead to a remarkable kind of egocentric worldview—comparable to Schreber's reflections on his role in the cosmic-apocalyptic Plan—but again, they are not signs of incoherence.

In my case, just as with Schreber, there were several complex factors involved in hypotheses having to do with AIDS and the end of the world. What seemed "confused" to the outside world was a coherent experience for me. Finally, because of a typically mad kind of linguistic creativity, I responded to commonplace statements like *Eet smakelijk* (Dutch for "enjoy your meal"—pronounced "ate smakelik") in a way that was incomprehensible to others but intrinsically coherent to me. "Now I get it," I would say to myself. "AIDS is not a disease. AIDS [pronounced 'ates'] is *makelijk* [makable]. My illness is something different, but it's not AIDS, because AIDS is makable, something you can make up, so it's only a fable. Good thing they said that to me. It's a relief to know I haven't got AIDS."

You can square anything this way, the critical reader may think. I don't mean to claim that the experiences of Schreber and myself always gave rise to extraordinary pearls of worldly insight. But the reverse does not seem to be the case either: the presumed "incoherence," fragmentation, and supposed collapse of subjectivity are confirmed only when the readings of the autobiographical material are superficial or biased. I cannot speak for others, but as long as the opposite is not proved, it seems to me advisable to understand apocalyptic experiences as just that—and not merely as signs of "inner decline."

16.4.3 Unfathomable Downfalls: Artaud IV

Schreber and I have done our best to write memoirs that have both a beginning and an end. Schreber because he wanted to prove he wasn't insane so they would have to let him go; I to allow people to share in the blessings—and the bane—of madness, along with the less explicit, mad goal of demonstrating that madness isn't nearly as crazy as people might think. These motivations result almost automatically in a text that is more expository, integrated, and unified than a collection of incoherent snippets and random associations.

Nothing of the sort can be found in the following fragments from Artaud, because they weren't written as an apology but as letters without any other ulterior motives. This section is the continuation of Intermezzo III.I.III. There we left Artaud in the depths of his \emptyset -delusion, from which

he would go on to develop proposals for a Plan. Our last quote from Artaud was from a letter to André Breton, written on September 14, 1937. Now we're going back in time, to July 30, 1937, when Artaud wrote a previous letter to Breton. From that point on, I will follow Artaud and the collapse of—or, more accurately, the collapse *into*—his Plan.

Artaud's euphoria, insight, and despair of 1937 gave rise to prophecies regarding the imminent destruction of the world. Artaud knows that these ideas and concrete predictions sound mad, but for him they are inescapable and indisputable. He talks about two levels of reality: the reality as seen by others and, beside it, his own insight into a reality that he feels is approaching and will sweep away the known world. What is slightly confusing for us as readers—and probably also for Artaud himself—is that he sometimes refers to the outside world as reality and sometimes as a dream, and that, in addition, he sometimes presents his own ideas as "astonishing realities" and sometimes as a "great dream." He writes the following to Breton on July 30, 1937 (1976, 402):

I know that everything I say in this letter will appear to be madness ... I know that in the presence of this Dream there will still be people who will say that the apocalypse has long since passed away and that we are in Reality.

But one need only look at the world around one to realize that Reality has already almost exceeded the Dream and that very shortly all the force of the Dream will be swept away by astonishing Realities.

For me, the only hope that remains in this world which my Spirit has already left is to watch the growth of this great Dream which alone nourishes my reality.

Artaud is convinced that something apocalyptic is about to happen, and he hints that he knows in detail what, when, and where that something will take place. He writes from Ireland to Anne Manson (1976, 403),

By that time next year *everything that makes up for you* the life of the world WILL HAVE BLOWN UP, you understand, and that you will not EVEN RECOGNIZE YOURSELF if you go on as you are.

Artaud himself is involved in what is coming. He is "in process of preparing" for it and has discovered it himself in writings from fourteen centuries earlier. Like Schreber, Artaud speaks of earthquakes, fires, and epidemics:

My haggard present life is in process of preparing something that is not a reverie but a Grand Design which the present Era has become too stupid to understand and this is why in a few months there will be nothing left of it:

A prophecy written and published 14 centuries ago, which I VERIFIED point by point and *in terms of* EVENTS for several months, foretells a future of terror for the World.

This future is at hand.

A large part of Paris will soon go up in flames. Neither earthquake, nor plague, nor rioting, nor shooting in the streets will be spared this city and this country.

Artaud delivered his apocalyptic forebodings and premonitions concerning the end of the world in sporadic letters written during a solitary trip around Ireland. Relatively little is known about this phase of Artaud's life. He must have exhibited very strange behavior in Ireland, because in the end he was sent back to France in a straitjacket. Of course anyone is "free" to believe that an apocalypse is coming (or even that it's happening right now), but it's the way Artaud expressed these thoughts and ideas that landed him in physical constraints.

For Artaud, as for Schreber, the sense of impending apocalypse and doom is a complex combination of apotheosis, explosion, and the crystallization of thoughts and experiences of emptiness, despair, and rage that had been held in check for months, if not years. In Intermezzo III.I.III, I wrote about how the germ of this situation emerged from the \varnothing -delusion and became couched in Christian vocabulary. Writing to Breton from Ireland, Artaud tells him more about the underlying factors and movements that supposedly would lead to the apocalypse.

In a letter dated September 14, Artaud describes a new savior, a new Christ, called the "Furious One," who will be sent by the old, true Christ to take up arms against the Antichrist. The new Christ will rise up against the pope, the rites of the "initiates," and all outer manifestations of religion. Elsewhere, Artaud enlarges on the theme of the "initiates"; somehow they have become enlightened or wise, and they have formed a worldwide secret society. The new Christ has semimythical status; he also incorporates the Hindu god Shiva, and he is a formidable "initiate," of which the other initiates are mere caricatures (1976, 407):

The Time has come, as announced by the apocalypse, when christ to punish his Church will raise up a Furious One who *will overthrow* ALL Churches and send the rite of the Initiates back under the ground. ... He laughs at religion and at the *external* apparatus of all religions as much as you can laugh at them, for this Man in whom the second Time, the Son Shiva of the Eternal Manifestation, was Incarnated, was a formidable Initiate, and the Men who came after him were a mere caricature of him.

Artaud uses the trinities of Son, Holy Spirit, and Father and of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma, who are more or less interchangeable in his Plan. Christ/Shiva represents change, especially the decline and obliteration of wretched existence as preserved by the Antichrist/Holy Spirit/Vishnu. The

Antichrist sustains bodies and nature, while Christ represents their negative power. The Antichrist interferes with access to the Absolute by means of belief in life. In these seemingly religious-mythical reflections, the more "abstract" existential or philosophical concepts and experiences of emptiness, fullness, history, time, god, goodness, evil, and the body slowly assume a more crystallized form of a Plan:

He [Christ] was the negative force of Nature, the one that saw the evil of living and summoned the Good of Dying. And he chose to pass through a body in order to teach us to destroy bodies, and to put away attachment to bodies.

It is the Holy Ghost, which protects bodies and makes us believe in the fact of living, it is the Holy Ghost which denies the Absolute. It is the Son who brings us back to the absolute.

Although these are abstract contemplations that take place in a kind of half-dreamed mythical time and world, they also occur in historical time, according to Artaud. The golden time of balance has come to an end, and the cosmic and real struggle between Christ (with his modern representative, the Furious One) and the Antichrist has dawned. This conflict will be won by Christ, but he will do it in an unorthodox way. "Normally," the victory of Christ at the end of time means the beginning of eternal peace and bliss. For Artaud, Christ will usher in the end of the world after a total war, and Christ's new apostle (the Furious One) will convince us that it is better not to live, not to exist. Here the afterpains of Artaud's Ø-delusion are still raging. The shape of the Plan is based on the vague and indeterminable shape that is assumed by mystical madness (1976, 409):

Now the times of the Holy Ghost are numbered, for we are at the end of the world. ... It will be war, all this will be the war of the Son against the Holy Ghost and the war of the christ against the Antichrist. ... But since the force of life is exhausted, the Antichrist, who represents life and attachment to the forms of life, will be destroyed. ... the Furious One ... will invite us to stop living and to feel that it is better to die.

Even these great expectations of salvation and doom need not be an indication of what is usually called "madness." We see far crazier texts circulating on the internet today with news of the consummation of the end times and the role of various religions and saviors. For Artaud it was the indulging, the intensifying, and the branching out—or the "application" of these ideas to daily life—that made him a typical madman. In the following passages, the meaning of his madness suddenly becomes clear. It seems that all the cosmic events and religious developments are to take

place within Artaud's own circle of acquaintances. Breton, to whom this fragment is addressed, actually knows the Antichrist in person, according to Artaud, and has shaken his hand. The Antichrist apparently frequents a certain café in Paris, and Artaud has been given something by the new, true Christ: a magic staff (1976, 406–408):

Now just as the Furious One exists today, the Antichrist exists too, and you yourself, Breton, know him. ... you have shaken his hand, he is younger than me, and he loves Life as much as I hate it. ... Now the true christ is he who has given me his own staff, his magnetic magic wand. ... For ludicrous as this idea may seem to you, the Antichrist frequents the Deux Magots. And another figure of the apocalypse has also been seen at the Deux Magots.

During this period, there is little left of Artaud's Ø-delusion, mystical madness, or delusional mood. The inexpressible, enigmatic emptiness from his earlier Ø-delusion phase has been filled with a concrete, crystallized Plan. Like any other Plan (see 15.2.1), this one contains a total explanation of the world and of good and evil, and it leads to tasks that Artaud is bound to fulfill. Artaud's Plan crystallizes further and further, and it assumes bizarre features. The Plan is in its apocalyptic phase; the earlier paranoia fans out into complex remarks, thoughts, and feelings that are almost impossible to follow. The year before, Artaud had traveled to Mexico. At that time, his experiences were still characterized by a general unity, indicating the presence of an all-embracing meaning in his life. His journey through Mexico was one of "mystical madness." But now, one year later, the madness has become fragmented and apocalyptic—at least that's how it seems from the outside. "

Considering how important the apocalypse was for Artaud during this period, it could indeed be called an "apocalyptic phase." The divine Plan involving Shiva, the Antichrist, and the end times landed up in the turmoil of earthly chaos close to home, where signs of doom permeated day-to-day life. This is a different sort of apocalyptic phase than that of Conrad, however. Looking at Artaud's earlier preoccupations and the different themes and motifs that marked his life, we can discern far more unity and coherence than we would expect on the basis of Conrad's case studies. So perhaps all three of the cases described above are more a "Plan of collapse" than a "collapse of a Plan." What appears to be chaos, incoherence, and the end of the world may simply be elements or aspects that develop within the mad Plan and not so much features of the fragmentation of the madman and his Plan.

Supporting such a hypothesis of continuity is the fact that Artaud's work from the period after Ireland—that is, after the apocalyptic phase—is not essentially different in tone, scope, or content than before. Artaud's post-Ireland work also contains a typical mixture of concrete, bizarre thoughts, on the one hand, and lucid, sharply formulated abstract aphorisms about religion and the void on the other. Concerning the latter, see Artaud's letter to a certain Ferdière written in March 1943 (1976, 425):

For the World and the things in it cannot, Mr. Ferdière, be understood or accepted without God, because when you consider them carefully, they are nothing but mystery and because every mystery in order to exist has need of this infinite extension which is God. Nothing has meaning and what is meaning were there not an Infinite and sublime Producer of the Mystery itself.¹⁵

So after Artaud's Plan unfolded in Ireland, in both its religious and paranoid elements, it would never really be absent again in its basic shape, its "blueprint" (see section 15.2). In addition, before Artaud's Irish period there were neither expressions of the Ø-delusion that marked the later Plan nor further crystallized, concrete claims about conspiracies and "telepathic" influences. So Ireland seems to have been the watershed—or the point of breakthrough. That was the only period in which Artaud really "lost it," when he was given the Insight around which he would keep on circling escaping from the Insight, attracted by the Insight, enchanted by the Insight. He himself says the same in a letter to Ghyslaine Malausséna dated January 9, 1944 (1976, 434): "And the explanation of all my miseries is that until my trip to Ireland I was thinking outside of God. God gave me the strength to look inside myself and to rid myself of Evil, for as you know I returned to him in Dublin." One year later, in January 1945, in a letter to Marie-Ange Malausséna (1976, 440), he wrote, "But I no longer see things the same way since in Dublin in September 1937 I returned to the faith of my childhood."

Artaud's life did not come to an end in a final fragmented phase. In the nine years after Ireland, he was kept under lock and key in a psychiatric hospital, where he underwent multiple electroshock treatments. But finally, he was released in 1946 and went on to enjoy a brief but very productive and publicly successful period. He wrote a few more lucid pieces, from radio plays to essays and poems. Even in this last work, Artaud and his Plan are clearly recognizable: the \emptyset -delusion, the extrapolated and inverted religious expressions, and the paranoid poems about magical influences and sorcery.

Artaud's visions from 1937 left their traces not only in his own life but also in the lives of several generations of French theatrical producers, thinkers, and philosophers. The "mystical lightning strike" of September 1937 spread via Artaud like wildfire. Derrida and Deleuze have commented extensively on Artaud's work and incorporated it into their own, and the number of Artaud interpreters and text experts is vast. The unfolding of his Plan drove Artaud to fits of madness and paranoia, but in a more mature, reflective form, it now belongs to the French intellectual canon.

If Artaud is a seer, a prophet, or a shaman sent to us by the gods, then his message contains the ominous foreshadowing of the great conflagration and "end of the world" that a few years later would destroy Europe and places far beyond—not orchestrated from Paris or Les Deux Magot, but from Berlin by another group of initiates. By taking Artaud at his word, we can understand the "breakthrough" or heavenly assumption of 1937 as a second coming of Jesus, happening in Artaud's vicinity or even within Artaud himself as the Furious One. We can imagine a mythical Plan-like mirror world that has control over our own and from which, at rare moments, something is released and "revealed" to us mortals. That makes Artaud something like a French Nietzsche, similarly preoccupied with a tradition and a past that won't go away. Like Nietzsche, Artaud was a dramatist who liked to tinker with the plan of the cosmos, with Christ and the Antichrist as his actors.

When I fit my own circumstances into this glorified vision, remarkable reflections and quadratic doublings emerge (two times two is four!). In the summer of 1937, Artaud wrote *Les nouvelles révélations de l'être*. In that work, he used the metaphors of earth, water, air, and fire to introduce a few newly found insights. In the summer of 2007, I myself wrote my bachelor's thesis about time and madness, which I hung on the same fourfold metaphoric hat rack of earth, water, air, and fire (see the overture). Just after the publication of his "new revelations of being," Artaud left for Ireland to receive his Irish Insights. After handing in my thesis, I also tumbled into the void and the fire of mystical madness. For both of us, these experiences were followed by shorter or longer periods of captivity—that is, psychiatric confinement.

I shall say nothing more about this, but the reader will understand what I mean: the Plan is not a psychological aberration. Rather, it is the matrix in which we are embedded, the air that lets us breathe *and* causes us to suffocate, and the earth that supports us *and* makes us quake. The Plan has neither a beginning nor an end; it has only contraction and expansion. The fact that you are reading this sentence at all means that our Plan has succeeded.

16.4.4 Stalemate on Paper: Harald Kaas's End

Schreber and Artaud speak to us from their lived lives, whether we understand their words or not. Using direct language, they try to explain something

about their inner cosmos, which—in accordance with good practice in both mysticism and psychosis—coincides with the outer cosmos.

Here, for the last time, I present a text fragment from Harald Kaas. It isn't an explicit apology or a parody of paranoia, a cri de coeur, a cosmogony, or an autobiography, although elements from all of these forms are present. Unlike such genres, with their claims to truth, Kaas's text is part of his collection of short stories *Uhren und Meere*. It's the depiction of a drama, a fictional "end game" put into words, whose various elements and motives should be clear by now. Kaas has woven into the story his own experiences and his knowledge of madness and Cusian stalemate (cf. Intermezzo IV.I). In a way that transcends time, the fragment also points forward to Kaas's future: exactly ten years after the publication of this masterpiece, he ended his own life. Whether that was part of Kaas's Plan, or whether it was what brought the Plan to an end, is unknown. Kaas (1979, 41–46) writes in the following detailed fragment:

"I came with Brother Ostler," he said with a knowing glance at Hans as they sat at table that afternoon. The young sister-in-law entered the room with her little one in her arms. "Hail to the women," said Arnulf suddenly. When his brother looked at him with astonishment, he said cryptically, "It's the dogs, the dogs. The dogs and the eyes that keep staring at you." Then he added, "Everything is being watched." He refused to drink his coffee because it might be poisoned, and he insisted on wearing blue socks to protect himself from radiation seeping up from the ground.

"My God," said Hans. "Oh, my God."

"Leave God out of it," said Arnulf angrily, and he looked at his brother with flaming eyes. "Or do you happen to know who God is? But you don't know everything, you know. ... No, you really don't know everything!" ...

After awhile he woke up again and said to Hans, who was standing beside the bed, "I am the higher logic, for I have conquered the Theorem of Contradiction. You see, in antimatter everything is totally different."

"Yes," said Hans. "I know."

Arnulf looked at him gratefully. "I will save you all," he said. But to his sister-in-law, who was standing next to Hans with tears in her eyes, he said dramatically, "Germany must live, even as we must die!" Then he fell back to sleep. ...

He woke up at midnight and went to the kitchen to get a drink of water. Hans found him there, standing on the table. He had wanted to climb onto the cabinet, he said, to get a bird's eye view of the world. That was the true perspective. But he let himself be brought back to bed without a struggle and took the tablets his brother gave him.

The next morning he was very talkative, and he spoke with deliberation about his journey, the work in the slaughterhouse, and his plans for poetry. He pulled out poems he had written and read them aloud, in a bit of a monotone, but with glistening eyes. "I wrote these last night," he said enthusiastically. "All twelve." But he quickly calmed down, became very amiable, and played with the children, who were very fond of him. "I'm your uncle," he said to them. "Your father is my brother, and your mother is my sister-in-law." Then to Hans he said, "That's right, isn't it? That's the way it is?"

"Yes," said Hans. "That's the way it is."

That evening he again became restless and began to talk incoherently. But the sister-in-law, who informed her husband, had the impression that he sounded confused mainly because he wasn't talking to her but to others who were invisibly present. Apparently he wanted to pass on secret, encrypted messages to these others. Who were they?

Arnulf kept walking in and out of the room, ducking and diving like a boxer. Once he described himself as a white negro, and shortly after that he hinted that he had access to political influence. He often used the word "namely"; he often said, "But you already know everything, don't you?" The next moment he could coolly say, "You don't know anything, and I'm not allowed to explain it to you." He seemed to be constantly reacting to events and circumstances that had gone unnoticed by his brother and sister-in-law, or to ghosts whose presence had escaped them.

After the children had been brought to bed, he began to enlarge in great detail on the essence of marriage, and he insisted categorically that man should return to the kinds of mating rhythms that govern the animals. "Every seed is holy," he shouted, raising a hand with grotesquely spread fingers, "and every word is seed incarnate!"

He wanted to eat. But he turned down sausages and meat, saying he preferred grass and nettles. He grabbed a bouquet of flowers from a vase and began pulling off the leaves, which he ate with gusto.

"Give me tablets," he suddenly said to Hans. "At least ten."

"That's too many," said Hans.

"Fifteen then," he responded, laughing.

"Later," said Hans.

Arnulf raised a finger to his lips. "Do you hear that?" There was a cracking sound coming from a corner of the room. "That is the power of thought," he said. "In the universe it's cracking everywhere."

He began pacing up and down again, and turned the conversation to politics. "Ireland," he shouted, "is a green island. And what can we deduce from that? We can deduce the accuracy of this sentence: God save France!"

He again asked for tablets and Hans gave them to him. After he had taken them, he said that great things were going to happen that night. He would rise again during his sleep. A place had been prepared for him in heaven, and Musculus the one-eyed would take him there. He lay down on the rug and quickly fell asleep. He began talking again in his sleep: people should be able to weep for themselves; that was important, extremely important.

The next morning Hans took him to the city, where there was a mental hospital in which one of his college friends worked as chief of staff. Arnulf followed willingly. When they were about to say goodbye, he said, "Too much! Really too much for me!"

"Yes," said Hans, and kissed him on the forehead. "It was too much for you." He could not have known that Arnulf was referring to the stars, which fell into his lap by the thousands, like the child in the fairy tale.

One morning in May he took his own life, at the very moment that *La Paloma* began playing on the radio. He had jumped out the window. His body was found in the courtyard, arms outstretched. "Like a bird," said the gardener, who was the first to reach him. "Like Icarus," thought the young chief of staff. He had almost said it out loud, but kept it to himself when he saw the others. But the pious gardener said loudly, so everyone could hear, "As if they had taken him down from the cross."

Finale: The Recipe for Crystal, or the Discovery of the Wheel

You have now read parts I through IV of a big book full of madness and philosophy. I have tried to explain what it's all about in a way that is clear and straightforward. But once you get it, you no longer need so much detailed information. It can all be stated, compactly and hermetically, in a few pages—the whole argument laid out in one fell swoop. In fact, it ought to fit on a single sheet of paper. It's actually very simple, and it always revolves around the same thing. For the sake of convenience, I have called this thing "the crystal," to begin with and to end with. Another name would do just as well, but we're taking a big leap forward by making a choice and choosing a name. And not just any name! How do we make crystal? How do we achieve crystal? The paradox is that crystal already exists and that, without prior knowledge, we never could have made crystal in the first place. Yet for the sake of description, I have to act as if I "don't know a thing," and approach the crystal from the outside. As if there were a way to get there, even though, in fact, I'm there already. As if there were a recipe, even though I'm already nibbling on the results.

Let me begin at the beginning, so beginners get it too. For the good of the cause, if we can maintain this ignorance of the crystal for just a little while, we may conclude that the recipe consists of four parts. Four is the secret number of madness, truth, and wisdom. Just look at what Pythagoras—hardly the least of them—claimed, and at what Schelling—another conceptual giant—wrote about it (Schelling 2000, 52; quoted in Ludwig Geijsen's profound and exhaustive analysis of *The Ages of the World* in *Mitt-Wissenschaft* 2009, 292):

Pythagoras must have known that one simply must count to 4, that 1, 2, 3 are nothing for themselves, and nothing comes to continuance without entering into the four stages of progression. Yes, four is the highest continuance of God and of eternal nature. The Pythagorean oath: "By the one who delivers to our soul the *tetractys*, the *fount of eternally flowing nature*"—if it did not have the above meaning, it had no meaning at all.

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Pythagoras and Schelling say it openly, while other philosophers say it cryptically. Think, for example, of Heidegger's (1954) allusions to "The Fourfold," as well as what I wrote about the secret of four in Fragment IV, "Forty-Plus," and 13.5.2.2, titled "Four plus." Unfortunately, most philosophers are not ready for this knowledge of the initiates. Neophyte philosophers think only in terms of twofold: on the one hand versus on the other hand, so-called insoluble dichotomies of body and mind, realism and idealism, or determinism and free will. Philosophers who arrive at a deeper insight come across a third factor: three as the mediating or overarching entity between or above two poles. Three is the golden mean, harmony, medium, or synthesis. With three we are complete, and "we" consists of a first, second, and third person.

But true wisdom—which is also madness—reveals itself only in the pattern of four. The fourth person is the mysterious power by which the foundation of the three is formatted. Four is implicit and concealed, and when this four is made explicit—or is exploited (and exploded!)—then Insight appears. Four works like a mirror, a transformer, or a portal. With four you can redefine situations, convert constellations, translate codes and texts. Four is the basement of philosophy and the subbasement of madness. Four is sporadically discussed in autobiographies and psychiatric reports. Perry (1974, 30) calls "the quadrated world" a fundamental aspect of the mad world: "Quadrated world: A fourfold structure of the world or cosmos is established, usually in the form of a quadrated circle (four continents or quarters; four political factions, governments, or nations; four races or religions; four persons of the godhead; four elements or states of being)." (Also see Arends 2013, 174ff., and Mous 2014.)

The fourfold form of the crystal can be interpreted in different ways. The interpretation that is most deeply embedded in our being is the division of earth, air, water, and fire, discovered by early Greek philosophers such as Empedocles and Pythagoras. Diogenes Laërtius wrote this about Pythagoras's teaching: "The first principle of all things is the monad; arising from the monad, the indeterminate dyad serves as the substrate of the monad, which is cause. From the monad and the indeterminate dyad arise numbers; from numbers, points; from points, lines; from lines, plane figures; from plane figures, solid figures; from solid figures, perceptible bodies, of which there are four elements: fire, water, earth, and air. These elements interact and change completely into one another, and from them arises a universe animate, intelligent, and spherical, with the earth (which is also spherical and widely inhabited) at its center."

Of course there are a few points of contention: why are wood and metal not included, for example? Is fire really an element of equal value? Isn't there a fifth element, a *quinta essentia*—ether, or crystal itself? We're going to ignore such questions here; there's no need to defend the Doctrine of the Four, or the Doctrine of Earth, Air, Water, and Fire. We're going to use it only as a means to an end, to attain a higher purpose. Making crystal is our only goal, and as soon as the crystal is made, the elements are no longer needed. After all, we don't question Wittgenstein about what his ladder is made of or how many rungs it has.

I EARTH

In order to attain madness by earthly means, you must demolish structures, transgress limits, and pulverize earth. Earth is the element of vastness, stability, and distinctions. Here is a forest, there a river, further on a city, and beyond that a mountain. Madness is like an enormous bulldozer, turning over both city and countryside and leveling it into a megazone of destruction and nothingness. Trees, grass, and animals become biomass. Sand, sea, and horizons become swamp. The Netherlands, North Korea, and Nazi Germany become one indistinguishable entity in a monochrome atlas. Borders disappear, glaciers melt, mountains flatten, hollows are filled in. Yes, the sea level rises, but at the end of the song of the earth, everything dries up into a desert. "The world—a gate to a thousand deserts, silent and cold."

The desert is the mirage of madness. Yellow, lusty, trembling, parched. The desert counts as emptiness, from zero to infinite zero. Sunlight creates insects there, and scorpions and snakes. The desert degenerates into a dualism of sand and air. The deluded man lies on the hard, hot sand, under the scorching sky. After a monistic sandstorm, everything becomes sand: sand above, sand below, mist of sand, haze of sand, crystal of sand. Madness appears like a visage of sand in a glass of water.

On the other side of the sandstorm is Egypt, the mythical land of pyramids at the top and pharaohs inside. There live the rulers of the crystal, masters over life and death, set free for all eternity within the pyramids. All wisdom comes from Egypt and is preserved in Egypt. The secret of the pyramid is that it is built on the earth but points to heaven. Its floor plan is a square, its apex is the point of the One. Plotinus was an Egyptian, and he saw this pyramidal point. Within the pyramid, you can transport yourself beyond this point: when the light enters at just the right moment, you can see—and hear—our world being celebrated and praised in the heavens. When that happens, you are transubstantiated from earth to air, and everything turns inside out.

When Boisen unraveled the secret of Christianity, he was sitting in an isolation cell in a psychiatric hospital, befuddled by extrapyramidal 652 Finale

intoxication (1960, 93): "The following night I seemed to be in some labyrinthine tunnels deep down in the recesses of the earth. Part of the time I was drugged with what I was told was 'bismuth.' This, it seemed, was the drug they used to preserve the old Egyptian mummies. ... A little later I found myself wandering through these subterranean tunnels until at last way down deep I came upon a horse-blanket within which was wrapped up some most sacred relics. They were connected with the search for the Holy Grail and represented the profoundest spiritual struggle of the centuries. Then I found that by lying flat on the floor near the ventilator shaft, I could hear the most beautiful voice I had ever heard."

In madness, the world becomes all hieroglyph and rebus. If you manage to crack the code, you win a vacation on the Nile that ends in a pyramid. Intrapyramidal movements are either happy-go-lucky or down-in-thedumps. Just as there is both joyful mysticism and "diabolical mysticism" (William James), so there are upward-pointing pyramids and "antipyramids," such as the pyramid of "Auschwitz" in the heart of the Netherlands, which is recognized in an inconspicuous, twisted form as the pyramid of "Austerlitz." A similar example is the 9/11 memorial in lower Manhattan, where two "antifountains" have been built on the site of the Twin Towers, depressions in the earth replicating the towers that rose into the sky. (Then there's the plan of Wim T. Schippers to build an "antiDom" next to the Dom Tower in Utrecht—a "negative Dom," a hole in the earth exactly as large as the Dom Tower and with the same proportions.)

Egypt is the beginning and the end. Whenever you travel against the current, sooner or later you arrive in Egypt. We are all Egyptians. A mystical madman once said in a flash of insight: "My parents are not my parents. I am an Egyptian princess." I myself was neither pharaoh nor prince, but I had knowledge of Ancient Egyptian, and I met Tutankhamen once. The wind blows decayed dust through grids and pipes, where desert sand whirls and Arabic voices say "over and out." There are always those moments when you come in contact with others from the extrapyramidal or transmarginal zone via secret channels. As Thomas Pynchon put it (see section 5.3), "You had thought of solipsism, and imagined the structure to be populated—on your level—by only, terribly, one. No count on any other levels. But it proves to be not quite that lonely. Sparse, yes, but a good deal better than solitary."

We hold onto each other by means of silent knocks. Egyptian Esperanto is a monistic language: there is no difference between vowels and consonants, nouns and verbs, first and second person. Actually, it's a language that contains just one word, which can only be pronounced noiselessly—or screamed out miles and miles above the rooftops. Empedocles was not of

this earth. He came down from the top of the pyramid and said, "I walk about like an immortal god ..." As the elders say of Empedocles (quoted in Kingsley 1995, 380), "It was as a fugitive from the anger of God that he too came to this world, for when he came down to this world he came as a help to those souls whose minds have become contaminated and mixed. And he became like a madman, calling out to people at the top of his voice and urging them to reject this realm and what is in it and go back to their own original, sublime, and noble world."

The miracle of the earth is what lies outside it. The extraterrestrial can all be seen from the terrestrial. But the first step is always the hardest. How do you get off the earth if the earth is all you know? How can you escape from the earth's first element? How do you raise yourself up, stretch yourself out? How do you discover the vertical dimension? How do you recognize your first crystalline taste of sugar? How can you count from one to two? Schelling asked himself the same question (Schelling 2000, 12; quoted in Geijsen 2009, 294): "Were the first nature in harmony with itself, it would remain so. It would be constantly One and would never become Two. ... A transition from unity to contradiction is incomprehensible. For how should what is in itself one, whole and perfect, be tempted, charmed, and enticed to emerge out of this peace?"

Sometimes they try it with rockets. Rockets seem to leave the earth in order to fly through airless space. But how do they do that? Do they really leave the earth? I have my doubts (also see fragment VIII). Can you really physically leave the earth? Isn't space travel all in your head? Friedrich Franz H., who for many years was in the care of the psychiatrist Navratil, described those doubts as follows (Navratil 1985, 213): "We build a rocket that's supposed to fly to the most distant corner of the universe. How do we make something like that? How would you illustrate and describe such a theory in philosophical propositions? I have one stone and I add one more to it. How many stones do I have then, one or two? How can I have two stones if I only had one stone before? There are many numbers, but taken all together there's only one number. And how about the formula for fast and slow? What is fast, a small number or a large one?"

II AIR

Anonymous astronauts don't need the Challenger in order to explode. Motionless, we rise unnoticed through mists of crystal from planet Earth to a castle in the air. Clothed in the garments of the emperor, we are kings, pharaohs, and orphans. From a great height, we balance on the top of an

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infinite pyramid and gaze down. There in the depth below lies Earth. From this perspective, all earthly differences vanish: no more borders, no mountains or valleys, no city or countryside, no fields or roads. Shot into space, accelerated in time. The earth keeps turning madly. Blue sea and brown land are smeared together. Light effects come in from the outside, the sun swings among the stars. Horizons let go and become loose threads, vertical tissues. Seconds packed with years are lined up like a diabolical abacus, each second dropping off in a horrifying countdown. What remains is rotation without a medium: an eternally distant vanishing point, a globe, an axis. But does the globe rotate on the axis, or does the axis rotate along with the globe? Is the axis the continuation of the vanishing point?

Then everything is reversed. A mirror version of the pyramid, an antipyramid, turns with its base toward the sky and its point touching the earth. This single point of concentration, on earth and in the air at the same time, becomes the contact point, the gate of emanation, the Plan Platform. A storm gathers, and the pyramid is blown around on its own axis. The pyramid starts spinning on its point; lateral lines and pyramid surfaces become indistinguishable. The pyramid becomes a cone, and in the wind the stone gyrates madly into thin air. The cone is like a top, a tornado, a swirling spiral.

At sea, the water was rough and desolate, dark and cold. Rising waves spattered drops into the wind. He hadn't drowned, but he was surrounded by air and mist, his hair wet, his body cold. Barely able to float, he gradually saw there was no land in sight. His situation was dire. Alone at sea, in tempestuous weather, without a boat or a raft. Luckily it was just a dream, or what seemed like a dream. It had to be. But the fears and dangers were no less real.

His sailboat was nowhere to be seen, submerged in the water, driven past the horizon, or simply dissolved—like snow in the sun. How had it happened? He hadn't been paying attention. That was all part of the past, which in the present situation had become irrelevant. His boat had been transported into this past. He now found himself in a new situation, a new order. His time had come, his moment had dawned, and now it had almost passed once again, before he could properly feel it. As a cosmic creature, he could just let his dream come to an end. His transvision contained more than what he saw so that what he saw would remain unseen.

Between pure air and pure water, from somewhere in the crystal mists, the tornado arose. There was the familiar column, distinctly visible through the sea mist, a narrow, dark gray cone of danger. Insofar as he could speak of "above" or "below" at his level, the tornado towered above him. Aweinspiring were its dimensions, unfathomable its power, and immeasurable its torsion. The tornado eclipsed his framework, exceeded his inner self,

and erupted on the high seas: He was sailing straight at him at full speed! As it is written in Ezekiel 1:4–6, "As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze. And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the form of men, but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings."

This was the moment of truth, but what had seemed so terrifying was gone before he knew it. He had been tossed around by the tornado and had ended up inside it. The moment had passed, and what he got in return was eternity. It was crystal clear to him that he had reached the tornado's eye. Inside was an oasis of rest. No danger, no distraction—only pure love, longing without striving, fulfillment without emptiness. He had awakened in the navel of the world.

The cone has no obvious core. The globe, on the other hand, has a clear center. You can revolve around a globe, be drawn to it, or bounce off it. But no matter what happens, the core of the globe always stays in the same place. It's different with a cone. The cone has a top, or—if the cone is standing on its head—a point. In a certain sense, this "top" of the cone is what everything revolves around. The cone also has a center, however, in the middle of its circular base, as well as a "center of gravity" just above the midpoint on the axis. In the cone of madness, you're tossed back and forth from one core to the other: you stand firmly at the base of the cone or pyramid, with all the splendor extending around you. Then you ascend to the top, where everything is intensely concentrated. It's there at the top that the explosion occurs, and the top goes on to generate infinite space.

Tornadoes are like cones and spirals. Podvoll (1990, 110) says, "But the spiral also represents the dizzying quality of being within its tornadolike whirling. In the full spin of a spiral, you don't know if you are spiraling out or going to the interior, if you are ascending or descending, if you are gaining or losing. In psychosis, the spiral represents the central dilemma: whether one is in the process of spiritual revolution or deevolution, each turn of the spiral gets you deeper into it. (I have often seen spirals drawn on the walls of back-ward seclusion rooms.)"

If madness is like a spiral-shaped tornado, what are its beginning and end points? Does the spiral turn inward or outward? Or is madness like a four-dimensional spiral? As the element of air, the spiral in tornado form can lift you up, let you float and turn, carry you along, and set you down in very distant places. As the element of air, the spiral can release you from the earth, temporarily or forever. It's the spaceship of the anonymous

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astronauts. It is Janus-faced: terrifying from the outside but serene and calm in the eye of the storm. Because of the invisibility and intangibility of the element of air, the tornado escapes from our grasp. We don't know if we're inside or outside the tornado, how spacious the eye is, or what there is to "see" there. We can enter the tornado only by moving through its wall. And whether we—as "we"—will survive such a move is unknown.

III WATER

On the opposite side of the sea's surface, the tornado is a whirlpool. The monotonous current—whether of time or of something else (see chapter 3.1.2 and section 8.3)—has its vanishing point and starting point in the whirlpool. The point of the whirlpool is not so much "outside" or "under" the current; it replaces the current as a basic principle. The whirlpool is like the tail of a comet; the point of the whirlpool is like the portal of the point of a mirror. To get to the eye of the tornado, you have to pass through a wall of destruction, a wall of air. To get to the eye of the whirlpool you have to enter so deeply into the current that you reach the point around which everything revolves. There you are catapulted out in clouds of light, feverish from the crystal.

I knew it already. I had already written about it in *Pure Madness*: "In the psychotic experience of time there is a savage whirlpool in which the psychotic must manage to keep himself afloat." Only now, however, did I really understand what was going on; yes, the psychosis is a whirlpool, but the idea is *not* to keep yourself afloat. You must not put up any resistance at all. Why should you? In the whirlpool, you can profit from the air as element. You can let yourself be churned around—which is just like letting yourself be carried along by a river's current. If you do, you'll spin through the spiral and come out the other side. If you don't, you'll stay on the immanent side, always struggling against the suspected danger of whirlpools, tornadoes, spirals, and pyramids.

The whirlpool is a source of energy and momentum. With madness, it's as if you had been given infinite power to swim underwater, to dive under the ice. They're all standing above you, shouting and gesturing in order to hold you back, to pull you out, but you know you have to go further, deeper, underneath. You dive through otherwise unreachable underwater tunnels and vanishing points. You swim in deep silence. Churning through the holes, you finally come to the surface in a region beyond this world, a zone past the zone. The spiral encircled, the water punctured by glass of sand, the underground air filtered. And you come back to the surface: in another capacity, on the other side, mirrored by oceans of air.

Having just risen above the water, and shot onto the land once again, you see the Four lying before you, stretched out and alive. Four sentinels with voices like colors, made up of language and symbols. The horizon of orientation gives way to vertical crashes. White-transparent crystal flutters down from above, black scorched earth creeps up from below. Between white and black, the world is transformed into the plastic of bright neon tints and colored reflective glass. For just a moment you saw a glimpse, in a flash, slipping between two moments, just like Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:22, 25-27): "Over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of a firmament, shining like crystal, spread out above their heads. ... And there came a voice from above the firmament over their heads; then they stood still, they let down their wings. And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were of a human form. And upward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him."

But you can get used to anything, and after a while the new earth fades into old earth. In the long run, it's nothing but the reinvention of the wheel. You turn it once, and once again, and once again, and once again, and you seem to come back to the beginning, where the whole business starts all over again. You've done the deep-sea diving, you've seen the pearls and the coral, and once you return to earth your outlook has turned 360 degrees. Think again of Alexander Blok:

The night, the pharmacy, the street, The pointless lamppost in the mist. A quarter century recedes—
There's no escape. It all persists.
You'll die—and you'll begin anew,
As in the past, all will repeat:
The icy channel flowing through,
The lamp, the pharmacy, the street.

As if a sheet of blank paper had turned itself inside out. Think, too, of Blankenburg's patient (1971, 135), who says, "Schizophrenia is exactly like squeezing out the contents of a cardboard container." In the end, everything just keeps on turning: color becomes color again, glass is transparent again, eyes speak fewer volumes. What remains are the wheels, which now can turn in two directions, the poles that can switch, and crystal is still the unquestionable core. By means of the secret of the crystal, you can travel—or "shuttle"—back and forth. As Deleuze put it (1989, 81), "The crystal-image was not time, but we see time in the crystal. We see in the

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crystal the perpetual foundation of time, non-chronological time, Cronos and not Chronos. This is the powerful, non-organic Life which grips the world. The visionary, the seer, is the one who sees in the crystal, and what he sees is the gushing of time as dividing in two, as splitting."

After the whirlpool, you find yourself among the deep-sea divers on dry land, the king's children without a kingdom, the illuminati by daylight. Which means you are related to those who preceded us in the night, who did not "rage against the dying of the light" but against the lighting of the darkness. And you renew contact with "fellow sufferers," with seers and fools and those who don't really exist. You live in the miracle of two worlds in one, as Kingsley says (2003, 448), "First, madness has to be experienced; then controlled. And to do this is to discover all kinds of sanities, of ways for operating skillfully in the world. ... To be controlled by insanity is to be feeble. To be controlled by sanity is to be even feebler. ... But when you have become so mad you are prepared to leave the purity of your madness behind, then the memory of it, preserved in every cell of your body, will stop you ever becoming contaminated by sanity. This is what it means to live in two worlds and not be limited by either."

IV FIRE

There's an old proverb that is popular in the Betuwe region of the Netherlands, which, roughly translated, goes something like this: "Asch is a hamlet just beyond Buren, and if Buren burns down, everything turns to ash." This bit of folk wisdom is meant to apply to people who talk a lot about unrealized possibilities and get worked up over irrelevant hypothetical situations: "If this, if that, if the other." The saying is geographically correct: just beyond the medieval town of Buren in Gelderland is the hamlet of Asch, and if Buren caught fire, everything would indeed be turned to ash. (Another interesting linguistic play on words, lost in the English translation, is that the Dutch word for "if"—"als"—is pronounced in the same way in many Dutch dialects as the name of the hamlet Asch and the Dutch word for "ash"—"as".) In terms of linguistic madness, the saying points to the connection between the mad postulating of fantastic "if—then" worlds and the ultimate difference (or indifference) it leads to: scorching fire, a city in flames, scorched earth.

But if our eyes flame up, if our soul turns inside out, if water starts steaming and rising, then the back of the frontal view appears. Our eyes become lasers, and whatever we observe falls apart. Our hands become candles, and whatever we touch melts. Our thoughts become like those of King Midas, and whatever we think incinerates. Everything is transformed

into ourselves. We are inverted nuclear reactors; in Chernobyl we saw the black light. After that, everything was like a do-it-yourself kit: beyond this and that, the something and the nothing, straight through the Red Sea. Empedocles shouted it from the rooftops and threw himself into the volcano.

Fire is the great leveler. Everything becomes a repetition of a repetition, a copy of a copy, a translation of a translation. Calendars and maps, summits and valleys, all burn with equal ferocity. Repetition works like a dynamo: a wheel, a revolving axis, and a variable point of friction. Kingsley (1999, 80) says, "You start to see the underlying principles behind events, the basic patterns that keep repeating themselves time after time; and repetition begins to show itself in everything."

But ash is not the only thing that remains. Something keeps revolving around the axis (also "as" in Dutch!), around the ashes—the eternally spinning wheel whose desire is to fly away. Rotating around the monism of the axis is the quadralism of the wheel. Look at that wheel turn! Around a stationary axis, the beginning of philosophy as well as its end. Kingsley takes aim at this point of philosophical concentration in Parmenides: "in whatever moves, Parmenides keeps seeing the same pattern of spinning in a circle. The chariot wheels spin on the axle, the doors spin on their axles as they open into the underworld. Everything becomes simpler and simpler—less unique, an echo of something else—until gradually you see where all this repetition of detail is leading ..."

Twisting your way through axis and wheel, obsessing your way through fire, water, air, and earth, you end up somewhere else. The repetition snaps, a spark separates two moments and draws them together in the fire. There something appears that is both new and unheard of, an undreamt sunrise, an awakening from wakening. While Plotinus and Taylor hesitated and left us to our own devices, Kingsley will take us further into the fire. He concludes, "Then you arrive at something that's beyond any sort of repetition because it's completely still and timeless." Within time the spark burns outside time. You stare into the fire and focus on the firing of the fire. Past the fire, past the becoming of nothingness and the being of eternity, you see a four-spoked wheel in the fire, and it's melting. Here's Schelling once again (2000, 20–21): "The antithesis eternally produces itself, in order always again to be consumed by the unity, and the antithesis is eternally consumed by the unity in order always to revive itself anew. This is the sanctuary, the hearth of the life that continually incinerates itself, and again rejuvenates itself from the ash. This is the tireless fire, through whose clenching, as Heraclitus claimed, the cosmos was created. It is circulating within itself, continually repeating 660 Finale

itself by moving backward and again forward as was shown in the visions of one of the prophets."

Like a fakir who has passed through fire, you escape philosophy and arrive in the magic realm of the crystal, in the company of alchemists and wizards. The fire melts itself. Experience expert Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:15–19) explains,

Now as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them. As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming of a chrysolite; and the four had the same likeness, their construction being as it were a wheel within a wheel. When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went. The four wheels had rims and they had spokes; and their rims were full of eyes round about. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose.

The walking bike is simpler in construction than Ezekiel's vehicle. He was given one for his second birthday: a wooden frame and handlebars, plastic wheels, rubber tires, and a soft saddle. In no time at all he had mastered the bike's operation, and away he went. Come and see! Someone born only two years before—and who hasn't been that age?—has figured it out. He gets on his bike, hands on the handlebars, one leg on each side, half sitting on the saddle, and he starts to walk. It's like an extended trot, propelling himself with long, bike-assisted strides—he actually step-jumps. Left-right-left-right, he's walk-biking.

But then he shifts to another level. By tapping the ground firmly with each foot, alternating left and right, he gains more speed and is able to fling both legs up at the same time. He's free from the ground; he's not walking anymore, but he's not biking either. He's *rolling*. On two wheels. He's rolling and riding as naturally as can be, hands on the handlebars, bottom on the saddle, and legs thrown up in the air. Full of joy, he sits on the saddle, concentrating silently on the bike's movement, moving through the air, rolling across the ground—everything happens in the twinkling of an eye. Two wheels beneath him, he sits on the saddle like an unmoved mover, linked to the silent axes and rolling across the ground. Everything one, everything at once—crystal! Let's hope all goes well!

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Wouter Kusters

Notes

Introduction

- 1. This was the Van Helsdingen Competition for the best work on the frontier between psychiatry and philosophy. See www.psychiatrieenfilosofie.nl.
- 2. I will consistently be using male pronouns like "he" and "him," as well as the term "madman," when referring to the mad individual. Naturally it is also possible for women to go mad. The masculine referents should therefore be understood only in a grammatical and not a semantic sense.
- 3. For contemporary notions of the existence or non-existence of free will, it would be interesting to examine what it means in the lived reality of some madmen to experience their own bodies and their own actions as being determined by impersonal outside forces.
- 4. The intrinsic connection between wisdom and madness has often been noted. Lezy (2007, 35) writes: "The philosopher examines basic existential conditions, the schizophrenic sinks through them. ... At the beginning phase of a psychosis one is confronted in a quite concrete way with what has always been presupposed: one really experiences the loss of trust in the familiar world, and this occurs in an irritating and hyperconscious way. One witnesses, as it were, what the philosopher attempts to understand by dint of only the greatest effort. ... It is not accidental that schizophrenic patients are often deeply engaged in the enigma of existence or of Being itself, and that they employ a language that sounds philosophical, even if they are not particularly gifted or are unfamiliar with learned discourse. It is also common for persons who dealt with practical and material matters before they became ill to begin focusing on abstract ideas and esoteric or mystical themes when their psychosis strikes. This is not something that emerges from an intellectual interest, but it is because these are ideas and themes that seem to connect with their own strange experiences."
- 5. We also see this double bind in some classical phenomenological studies. Blankenburg (1971) uses the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger to plumb the

depths of his case study, and he analyzes the mad tendencies in the same authors. Sass (1992, 1994) does something similar with philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Derrida, and Fichte.

Overture

1. During the period this fragment refers to, Willem Holleeder was one of the most notorious criminals in the Netherlands.

- 1. For more about what it means that madness is "more intense," see section 10.1.2.
- 2. The term "pararealism" is related to the equally apt "surrealism." I am not using the latter term, however, because it is too frequently associated with the twentieth-century movement of the same name. Moreover, "surrealism" has a connotation with "hyper" that is too strong and a connotation with "hyper" that is insufficient.
- 3. Even in psychoanalysis, the school of thought that claims to be sensitive to subjective experience, there is something called a "reality principle" that mad people are said to be unable to comply with. According to this principle, the madman withdraws himself (or his libido) "from reality." We hear very little about where he goes or what further meaning the place of withdrawal might have; we are told only that it is "fantasy" and not "reality." I am not aware of any nuanced analysis of what psychoanalysis actually means beyond common sense when it talks about "reality."
- 4. Müller (2009, 289) even goes so far as to defend the idea that all objectivity is based on intersubjective agreement: "The sun doesn't set unless I am not the only one to notice it."
- 5. Many things and experiences, such as numbers, individual taste, and pain, are not easily ranked in terms of a one-dimensional standard of realness.
- 6. Unrealness with regard to the past and the future is also expressed linguistically. In many languages, references to past and future events are given shape by the same usage as references to the uncertainty of events. For example, past tense and future tense verb forms can be used to describe events that have to do not with time but with uncertainty: "He went swimming if the water was warm," "He will probably be swimming," and so forth.
- 7. This accords with the increasing emphasis in psychiatric literature on the connection between trauma and psychosis.
- 8. In section 13.4, we will see that this meditation on "right on time" is both a source of madness (in Schreber's case) and a subject of philosophy (for Wittgenstein).

- 9. This three-figure code refers to the number of the ennead, the tractate, and the section respectively.
- 10. In section 11.3.4, Bock and a case from his book will be discussed in greater detail.
- 11. Sass (2003) writes, "Hyperreflexivity refers to a kind of exaggerated self-consciousness, a tendency for focal, objectifying attention to be directed toward processes and phenomena that would normally be 'inhabited' or experienced as part of oneself." Sass and Parnas (2001) describe hyperreflexivity as "the reflexive awareness of aspects of experience that are normally tacit or presupposed." Parnas, Bovet, and Zahavi (2002) call it "an excessive tendency to monitor, and thereby objectify, one's own experiences and actions."
- 12. Paul Moyaert (1983) describes this as follows: "A schizophrenic fascinates us because he confronts us with the ultimate groundlessness of any process of meaning. ... The knowledge involved in my discourse comes up against a radical non-knowing that mocks my certainties. ... The knowing of a schizophrenic contains a limitless yet intolerable irony with respect to our discourse. The schizophrenic confronts us with the staggering cleft and gaping chasm of a radical non-knowing. And this non-knowing can no longer be understood as a knowledge that is not yet known; in the face of this non-knowing we are powerless, and we can no longer defend ourselves."
- 13. Radovic and Radovic (2002, 277) also make note of this "as-if" quality, but in my estimation they are completely off target. They fail to mention the aspect of possibility but instead see it as a kind of clumsy language because it would be "too difficult" to "literally" say what is wrong.
- 14. This line of reasoning, which Stanghellini, Sass, and I support, has far-reaching implications for psychological theories of hallucinations and psychoses. It posits that visual, auditory, and other kinds of hallucinations are not similar in kind. Nonvisual hallucinations could qualify as hallucinations only if they were interpreted within a conceptual space that was itself spatial-visual. The implications and presuppositions of this idea are an interesting topic for further study.
- 15. Cf. Lezy (2007, 54): "Other people no longer have a life, as it were, outside the enchanted world of the person in question. ... It is not that the patient is trying to comprehend the invisible forces driving other people, but rather that the others no longer have a personal world of their own. Their sole preoccupation is with the patient. The invisibility of other people immediately becomes a ghostly invisibility because it no longer has anything to do with real people. Other people have become alien or spectral, but they are also totally focused on the patient, which makes them seem familiar. They belong with the patient, as either pursuers or defenders." One of Arieti's patients reports (1950, 291) the following: "The people in my uncle's office become all 'oriental businessmen' even if they have nothing to do with the East.

Whatever there is about them that does not fit into this concept is blocked from the picture. In other words, they lose all their individuality."

- 16. Solipsism refers to a line of reasoning in which a person believes he is the only really consciously living person in the cosmos. In solipsism there is but one consciousness, one mind, one intentionally living person in an otherwise dead, mechanistic, inhuman world. I will deal with this in more detail in chapter 13.
- 17. Masters and Houston (1966, 14) quote an LSD user: "My solipsism was accompanied by delusions of grandeur not logically consistent with it, yet reconcilable for the reason that they had a logic of their own. ... I was awed by the stereoscopic solidity of reality, the sheer substantiality of it all. Yet reality was my own thought and I was struck with wonder that one's thoughts could suddenly become so substantive and stereoscopic. I congratulated myself upon being able to create reality so well. I felt that others should be grateful to me for supporting their existence. I was holding them up, containing them, giving them air. I was benevolent and did not kick them."
- 18. Michaux writes about a similar absence of continuity under the influence of mescaline (1974, 41): "Ordinarily, I always have (everyone has) a continuum which confronts the image, the idea, a continuum in whose presence these images, or these perceptions, stream by and which, without necessarily entering into conflict with them, is tested, marked, in the fashion of an elastic band; it is ceaselessly modified, ceaselessly shapes itself, if only minutely, but the minute change counts, it is the 'imprint.' Band, current, resistance, or whatever, this elastic continuum, which normally underlies any alertness, was absent. It was not 'marked' after the passage of these images. Nothing of what should have been marked was marked. Nothing was imprinted. ... I perceived, and intensely, but the spot, once the image had passed, remained vacant."

Chapter 2

1. Sass (1992, 214) writes about this mad "mental grammar": "Normally, one does have the sense of living one's perceptions, thoughts and actions as if from within, with an implicit or semi-conscious sense of intention and control; one generally feels that one's own consciousness belongs to oneself, and that unless one communicates the inner life through word or gesture, it will remain private. These presuppositions are, in fact, so deeply embedded in our general outlook and mode of existence that to state them has the ring of tautology—as if any alternative were simply impossible to conceive. But strangely enough, with the development of a schizophrenic psychosis these very assumptions can be no longer be relied upon—and, in the wake of their collapse, the nearly unimaginable holds sway. A schizophrenic person may, for example, actually lose the sense of initiating his own actions ... such a person may lose the feeling that the thoughts in his own mind really belong to him, and may

conclude that what he experiences is actually the consciousness of someone else ... a schizophrenic may even have the feeling that his own thoughts are being extracted from his head in some weird manner."

- 2. A distinction is made in the literature between "bottom-up" and "top-down" hallucinations (compare, for example, Bayne & Pacherie 2004, Campbell 2001, Maher 1999 and the discussion in Thornton 2007). Bottom-up hallucinations occur when the perceptual process itself is "incorrect" or "disturbed," leading to the wrong conclusions; top-down hallucinations occur when thought processes are disturbed, which results in incorrectly "seeing something as." The essence of hallucinations is missing from this discussion, which attempts to reduce the common, meaning-laden quality of perception to a quasi-objective biological fact. In such discussions, a spot on the eye's lens cannot be distinguished from a hallucination, and logical errors cannot be distinguished from delusions.
- 3. In the same way that "normal people" know whether they're hearing or seeing something, people who have visions or hallucinations usually know how to distinguish between visions and "real" observations (Jannemiek Tukker in a personal remark). This is not always the case, however. One patient quoted in Sass (1992, 282) says, "I don't know when I talk to you, whether I am having an hallucination, or a fantasy about a memory, or a memory about a fantasy." "Normal people" are also sometimes uncertain as to whether they are remembering something or fantasizing it, or whether they saw something, just thought they saw it, or knew about it only through hearsay.
- 4. We will be coming across many more passages from Custance's detailed autobiography in this work.
- 5. This does not apply to all visual hallucinations, by the way. There is enormous variety among hallucinations, and there is a large, vague, gray area between neurological disorders and psychopathological hallucinations (cf. Sacks 2012). What I am describing is characteristic of hallucinations—especially visual ones—in the context of psychoses, manias, mystical experiences, and religious experiences.
- 6. In a personal observation, Jannemiek Tukker notes that she can describe her visions afterward as linked to a particular location in the normal, three-dimensional world: "I can always point to the place where the vision occurred and manifested itself, thereby projecting the vision into space. Jesus, for example, was hanging in front of the curtains, just below the ceiling. Another example: a bird flew through the window and into my belly. There it sat on its eggs, and I really saw the bird in my belly." The question, however, is whether the hallucination occupied a place within the intersubjective space while she was hallucinating, or whether she experienced it as a private occurrence. Note that Tukker does say, "Thereby projecting the vision into space."
- 7. Sass (1992, 44) writes, "The *Wahnstimmung* is a strange and enigmatic atmosphere, a mood that infuses everything yet eludes description almost completely ...

everything is totally and uncannily transformed ... the feeling of reality is either heightened, pulsing with a mysterious, unnameable force, or else oddly diminished or undermined—or, paradoxically, things may seem both unreal and extra-real at the same time. ... Patients in these moments may have a feeling of crystal-clear sight, of profound penetration into the essence of things, yet typically, there is no real, clear content to communicate." Jaspers cites the following example (quoted in Sass 1992, 53): "A patient noticed the waiter in the coffee-house; he skipped past him so quickly and uncannily. He noticed odd behavior in an acquaintance which made him feel strange; everything in the street was so different, something was bound to be happening. A passer-by gave such a penetrating glance, a kind of mechanical dog made of rubber."

- 8. Sass (1992, 60) says, "The experience of the Apophany is shot through with a profound and almost unbearable tension in some cases combined with exaltation. In this state of pulsing significance, the very ineffability, uncanniness and precision of everything seems nearly intolerable, as if the human need for meaning and coherence were being titillated only to be frustrated on the brink of its fulfillment."
- 9. Sass (1994, 35) provides a striking description of this process: "By interacting with the world—for example, by picking up an object—one is obliged to recognize the world's otherness. The very weight of the object and the resistance it offers to the hand testify to its existence as something independent of will or consciousness. ... By contrast, in a passive state the world may look rather different. The more one stares at things, the more they may seem to have a coefficient of subjectivity; the more they may come to seem 'things seen.' When staring fixedly ahead, the field of consciousness as such can come into prominence; then, it is as if the lens of awareness were clouding over and the world beyond were taking on the diaphanous quality of a dream. At this point a person can be said to experience experience rather than the world, to have the impression of seeing not, say, an actual and physical stove but a 'visual stove,' the stove-as-seen-by-me."
- 10. In psychiatry, immobility or catatonia is understood as a symptom of schizophrenia. This does not mean that every madman is immobile. Even when active, you can have a way of looking that can be characterized more as staring than looking.
- 11. Lezy (2007, 58) gives us a striking description of the mad world: "When it comes to psychosis, it is probably not possible to make a clear distinction between perception and cognition. This distinction is based on the psychology of the normal. We have a tendency to think that psychosis looks like normal functioning in principle but that it involves 'nonsensical discourse.' We pay too little attention to the fact that the entire structure of the experience has changed. This means that in psychosis, both perception and thought can be structured differently. Normal functioning is based on a clear distinction between the intimate inner world and the public outer world. In psychosis, this clear distinction can no longer be sustained: observations are all meaning and intention, while thoughts are often more perceived than

thought. We can also say that the outer world becomes more personal, while the inner world becomes more impersonal. In psychosis, what we normally experience as personal is often under alien rule."

- 12. What I actually should say here is that the gestures, words, facial expressions, and movements of other people out in the street, on TV, or on the internet *are* the memories and thoughts of the psychotic.
- 13. There is a parallel between madness and experiencing things in a mythical way. In both cases the images and impressions of the world take on the quality of "thought," while the inner world acquires a more substantial or material dimension. Ernst Cassirer (1925, 71) has this to say about the mythical experience: "Die mythische Phantasie dringt auf Belebung und Beseelung, auf durchgängige 'Spiritualisierung' des All; aber die mythische Denkform, die alle Qualitäten und Tätigkeiten, alle Zustände und Beziehungen an ein festes Substrat bindet, führt immer wieder zum entgegengesetzten Extrem: zu einer Art Materialisierung geistiger Inhalte zurück." (Also see section 2.3 and chapter 15.)
- 14. Similar experiences are reported by LSD users. For a detailed drugs/psychosis comparison, see chapter 10, cf. note 17 from chapter 1.
- 15. This is not madness, per se. In normal life, too, thoughts are interwoven with mimicry and physical expression. Perhaps it is typical of modernity to view human thought as being nonphysical, but in actual practice most thoughts can be read on people's faces. Even the association of thoughts with colors occurs in the normal world (synesthesia). Nonetheless, the physicality and concreteness of thought does go much further in madness. Not only can the emotional aspects of thoughts be experienced physically but so can "geographic" aspects; for example, a thought of the east can be experienced on the right side of the head.
- 16. This can lead to the experience of thought implantation, brain sapping, mind reading, and so on.

- 1. It may seem strange to call the theory of relativity static, but it is static because the theory does not distinguish between present, past, and future. "Static" sounds strange because it is a relativistic theory. Relativism and static time are perfectly compatible, however (cf. for example *The Philosophy of Time* by Richard M. Gale, published in 1968).
- 2. Ricoeur (1988, 16) notes, "The Aristotelian definition of time does not contain an explicit reference to the soul, despite drawing upon, at each phase of the definition, the operations of perception, discrimination, and comparison, which can only be those of the soul. ... It is physis that, by supporting the dynamism of movement, preserves the dimension of time over and above its human aspects."

- 3. Husserl ([1917] 1991, 75): "Es ist die absolute Subjektivität und hat die absoluten Eigenschaften eines im Bilde als 'Fluss' zu Bezeichnenden, in einem Aktualitätspunkt, Urquellpunkt, 'Jetzt' Entspringenden usw. Im Aktualitätserlebnis haben wir den Urquellpunkt und eine Kontinuität von Nachhallmomenten. Für all das fehlen uns die Namen."
- 4. Ricoeur (1988, 24) writes, "We shall continually encounter comparable homonymies, as though the analysis of immanent time could not be constituted without repeated borrowings from the objective time that has been excluded."
- 5. Cf. Kortooms (2002).
- 6. Ricoeur summarizes it this way (1988, 21): "The problem of time cannot be attacked from a single side only, whether of the soul or movement. The distension of the soul alone cannot produce the extension of time; the dynamism of movement alone cannot generate the dialectic of the threefold present."
- 7. This idea of a third kind of time can also be found in Ricoeur (1988), Achterhuis (2003), Blankenburg (1971), Cassirer (1925), Lacan (1966), Mooij (2006), and Stanghellini (2004).
- 8. Ward (1946, 93) writes, "I had no idea what day of the week it was, what week of the month, what month of what year."
- 9. An LSD user in Masters & Houston (1966, 9) writes, "I remarked to my wife that 'we are out of time, but that is not to say that time has run out.' What I meant was that, in the moment when I spoke, time's fingers had ceased their nervous incessant strumming upon the space that contained us. But that space was—how can one put it?—irregular. A space that expanded and contracted and imposed upon us the arbitrary quickening rhythms of its pulsations."
- 10. Ricoeur (1988, 21) says the following in this regard: "Must we not seek in the threefold present the principle of specifically temporal continuity and discontinuity?"
- 11. Speaking about one of his patients, Perry (1974, 9) says, "He thought of time as going backward, and he drew a diagram of the sun at the center of the cosmos and the four directions as time in reverse, called 'back-o'clock.'"
- 12. Recent phenomenology, such as that of Emmanuel Levinas (1979), has tried to avoid such conclusions. These attempts involve distinguishing between the "totality" and the "infinite" in order to separate the chaff of psychotic eternity from the wheat of a human type of eternity or infinity. It remains to be seen whether these attempts have been successful or whether they have simply been vain efforts to introduce a moral or Christian element into radical, mad forms of mysticism (cf. radical "nihilistic mysticism," such as that described by Gershom Scholem [1941, 1965]). Whether the infinite—and the truth—is "people friendly" or not will be discussed repeatedly in later chapters.
- 13. Compare Custance (1952, 53): "I feel so close to God, so inspired by His Spirit that in a sense I am God. I see the future, plan the Universe, save mankind; I am

utterly and completely immortal; I am even male and female. The whole Universe, animate and inanimate, past, present and future, is within me. All nature and life, all spirits, are co-operating and connected with me; all things are possible. I am in a sense identical with all spirits from God to Satan. I reconcile Good and Evil and create light, darkness, worlds, universes."

- 14. Cassirer writes (1925, 134), "In der Tat scheint, lange bevor im Bewusstsein des Menschen die ersten festen Begriffe über die objektiven Grundunterscheidungen der Zahl, der Zeit und des Raumes sich bilden, diesem Bewusstsein die feinste Empfindlichkeit für jene eigenartige Periodik und Rhythmik innezuwohnen, die im Leben des Menschen waltet." He connects rhythm, time, and number to mythical and magical thinking and writes, "Für die mythische Weltansicht und für das mythische Gefühl gibt, bevor sich ihm die Anschauung einer eigentlich-kosmischen Zeit ausbildet, gewissermassen eine biologische Zeit, ein rhythmisch abgeteiltes Auf und Ab des Lebens selbst. Ja die kosmische Zeit selbst wird, so sie zuerst vom Mythos erfasst wird, von ihm nicht anders als in dieser eigentümlichen biologischen Gestaltung und Umformung erlebt ... Den Wandel des Tages in die Nacht, das Erblühen und Vergehen der Pflanzenwelt, die zyklische Folge der Jahreszeiten: dies alles begreift das mythische Bewusstsein zunächst nur dadurch, das es alle diese Erscheinungen auf das Dasein des Menschen projiziert und in ihm wie im Spiegel erblickt. In dieser wechselseitigen Bezogenheit entsteht ein mythisches Zeitgefühl, das zwischen der subjektiven Lebensform und der objektiven Anschauung der Natur die Brücke schlägt." (Also see chapter 14ff.)
- 15. It is tempting to compare this with the following description of an LSD experience (Masters & Houston 1966, 22): "I then noticed that people got on and got off this bus. On and off. On and off. On and off. The eternal return. Primitive yet Christian. Circular but linear." (Also see the following note.)
- 16. Perry (1974, 13) provides an example of this: "A graphic picture of the clash of opposites came to her on the morning after admission. When she perceived patients grouping in opposite sides of the ward, she thought that this was a great war—two sides lining up to go at each other in a massive armageddon. One was the side of good, the other of evil; one the side of Christ, the other of the Devil." Here we see the framework of on/off or good/bad powerfully imposing itself in an everyday context.
- 17. For further reflection on the complex theme of time in madness and philosophy, see Schaub (2003) and Faulkner (2006).

Chapter 4

1. In Kant, space is linked with geometry and time is linked with algebra, but time and space together constitute the only two forms of perception. According to many twentieth-century notions based on physics, time is a dimension of the same order as space. In the phenomenology of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger, and in the writings of Bergson and Deleuze, the two are different, but they are also described in terms of mutual dependence. Bergson, for example, contends

that memory and perception, with the two correlates of time and space, are two ways of approaching the same domain of experience: becoming or movement (cf. Deleuze 1988). Merleau-Ponty argues that the three-dimensional aspect of space, in particular, is entirely interwoven with the subjective experience of time in movement (Merleau-Ponty 2012).

- 2. Mooij (2012, 175) says, "Dimensional space will be defective. We see a loss of the ability to occupy an active central position and to synthesize, from a central perspective, a spatial world. ... Internal space consciousness may be, in less severe cases, still intact, depending on the schizophrenic's knowledge of his whereabouts. Yet this may lead in extreme psychotic bouts to a disturbed spatial awareness, the point where even the left-right orientation may be reversed ... the perspectival structure of the world becomes almost necessarily flawed."
- 3. A stereogram is a picture that seems chaotic in its two-dimensionality. But when we focus on a picture behind the picture and "look through the picture," we suddenly see perspective and depth (see, for example, https://www.brainbashers.com/stereo.asp).
- 4. Such experiences also coincide with those reported by people under the influence of LSD. One LSD user in Masters & Houston (1966, 19) reports, "I remember looking at a finely detailed photograph of the Swiss Alps. I had admired this photograph before, in my pre-LSD days an hour or an aeon ago, but now its precision became reality and the temperature plunged and fine crystals of snow whipped across my face and I circled like an eagle above the crags and snowy summits of the mountain top."
- 5. Merleau-Ponty (2012, 254) describes an experiment in which physical means were used to reverse the basic orientation and he studied the psychic effects. In this experiment, the human subjects were given a pair of "inversion goggles," by which they could see "the whole landscape ... inverted." For a brief period they were quite disoriented, but after a bit of practice, they got used to the inverted space and finally were able to function just as well as they could in normal space. As Merleau-Ponty describes and interprets this, the test persons gradually turned their "inner mental picture" around and re-adjusted it. But, says Merleau-Ponty, such metaphors of an "inner inverted image" raise as many questions as they answer.
- 6. What exactly is the status of the difference between these two worlds? It's a complicated question. One answer is that they are actually the same: there is only one world, and left and right are terms that can be defined only in relation to each other. Speaking of the world as a whole, you cannot say with absolute certainty that it is left-handed or right-handed. Such descriptions can be used only to depict objects, relative to each other. According to this view, the mirror-image world is not really a possible world at all.

This is the relative view, which is defended in philosophy by Gottfried Leibniz. He said there is no absolute space (or time) within which objects have an

orientation. Orientation is the relationship between two nonidentical objects. In a universe with only one glove, it is impossible to tell whether it is a left-hand or a right-hand glove. The other answer is that turned-ness is an absolute property of any object and of the world in its totality. A left-hand glove is left-handed, even without a right-hand glove to compare it with. And the world as a whole has a certain rotation. The mirror-image world really is another possible world.

In this second view, two worlds are conceivable that are essentially different. In one world there is more right-handedness than in the other; the earth turns the other way, the DNA helixes have a different spin, and so forth. This other world is "another world" at every physical, biological, and psychological level. We can catch a glimpse of these other worlds by looking in a mirror. We can also try to imagine the mirror-image world and how it would work; and with a pair of inversion goggles, we could experience a small portion of it as well.

- 7. In Kusters et al. (2007a), I describe it as follows: "Seen in white light, things resemble each other. In black light they look individual, isolated, and particular. They only resemble themselves. In black light, things extricate themselves from each other and begin a life of their own. A magpie is a magpie is a magpie."
- 8. Cf. Conrad (1958, 41): "Im Dunkel, wo man es nicht sehen kann, und hinter den Bäumen lauert 'es'—man fragt nicht, was Es ist, was da lauert. Es ist ein ganz Unbestimmtes, es ist das Lauern selber. Die Zwischenräume zwischen dem Sichtbaren und das Dahinter, all dieses Ungreifbare ist nicht mehr geheuer, der Hintergrund selbst, vor dem sich die greifbaren Dinge abheben, hat seine Neutralität verloren. Nicht der Baum oder der Strauch, den man sieht, das Rauschen der Wipfel oder das Schreien des Kauzes, das man hört, ist es, das uns beben macht, sondern alles Hintergründige, der ganze Umraum, aus dem Baum und Strauch, Rauschen und Krächzen sich herauslösen, eben das Dunkel und der Hintergrund selbst sind es. ... Der Hintergrund hat völlig neue Eigenschaften angenommen, als er sie bisher hatte. Denn bisher brauchten wir ihn nicht zu beachten, es lag in seinem Wesen, dass er nicht beachtet zu werden brauchte. Was sich von ihm abhob, was Figur wurde, dem waren wir zugewandt, aber der Grund war neutral. Nun ist diese Neutralität des Grundes verloren gegangen."
- 9. Merleau-Ponty (2012, 296) makes a few penetrating poetic-philosophical remarks on night as being the apparent counterpart to day but having an entirely different atmosphere: "The night is not an object in front of me; rather, it envelops me, it penetrates me through all of my senses, it suffocates my memories, and it all but effaces my personal identity. I am no longer withdrawn into my observation post in order to see the profiles of objects flowing by in the distance. The night is without profiles, it itself touches me and its unity is the mystical unity of the *mana*. Even cries, or a distant light, only populate it vaguely; it becomes entirely animated; it is a pure depth without planes, without surfaces, and without any distance from it to me." And (2012, 447), "Eternity is the time of dreams, and the dream refers back to the day before, from which it borrows all of its structures."

10. Cf. Corbin (1989, 590): "Der 'gerade Weg' ist hier, weder nach Ost noch nach West abzuweichen; es ist, den Gipfel zu erklimmen, d.h. sich zum Mittelpunkt zu erhalten; es ist der Aufstieg ausserhalb der kartografischen Dimension, die Entdeckung der inneren Welt, die selbst ihr Licht ausstrahlt, die die Welt des Lichtes ist; es ist ein Innensein von Licht, das sich der Räumlichkeit der äusseren Welt entgegensetzt, welche im Gegensatz zu ihr, als Finsternis erscheinen wird."

- 1. Cf. Scholem (1960, 20, 43): "Alle anderen Mystiker suchen den Weg in die Form zurück, der auch der Weg in die Gemeinschaft ist; er allein, der den Abbau aller Gestalt als höchsten Wert erfahren hat, sucht ihn im undialektischem Geiste zu bewahren, statt ihn wie die anderen Mystiker als Antrieb zum Aufbau neuer Gestalt zu nehmen. Hier erscheint dann die Vernichtung aller religiösen Autorität im Namen der Autorität selbst als die reinste Darstellung des revolutionären Aspekts der Mystik. ... Der nihilistische Mystiker scheint der freieste. ... Freilich ist er zugleich, historisch gesehen, auch der gehemmteste und unfreieste, da die geschichtliche Wirklichkeit in der Verfassung der menschlichen Gemeinschaft ihn viel mehr als jeden anderen Mystiker daran hindert, diesen seinen Anspruch frei zu verkünden."
- 2. Heidegger does not do much to further elaborate this notion. For later phenomenologists like Levinas, the notion of "the other" plays a much greater role, and an existence and a world without the other is simply inconceivable.
- 3. *Gelassenheit* and *Abgeschiedenheit* are important terms that Eckhart uses to show what is necessary for a godly life. The first is also an important term in the work of Heidegger, referring to a kind of attitude or basic sensibility in one's existence. Opinions are divided as to how *Gelassenheit* should be translated into modern English (see Schürmann 1978) and what the relationship is between the Christian Eckhartian *Gelassenheit* and the modern *Gelassenheit* of Heidegger.
- 4. In such a context, the line from Nietzsche's poem "Lonely" takes on a much more positive connotation: "The world—a door to a thousand wastelands, silent and cold!"
- 5. A reader familiar with various social and cultural forms of expression will recognize in Crowhurst the hubris of the engineer *and* the scientist. Crowhurst thought he could deduce from his insight into space-time that he—as "disembodied spirit"—could escape from the physical universe. We see the same kinds of ideas in the contemporary school of "transhumanism": the same hubris, the same mental power, the same blind spots. In Custance (1952, 34), by the way, we see the same fascination with time, Einstein, and the escape to a position beyond a "time-space continuum": "... is space really infinite? According to Einstein it is not; it is a sort of finite infinity best represented by a multi-dimensional sphere *which it is theoretically possible to circumnavigate*. Einstein has always had a peculiar fascination for me, but it is only in manic periods that I imagine that I can really understand him" (italics added for emphasis). Just as in the case of Crowhurst, this fascination has to do with

the "desynchronization" that Custance expresses in terms of Wells's time machine—which might better be called a desynchronization machine: "My mind is filled with fantastic ideas revolving about Time and its associations, and in particular about the Wellsian concept of a Time Machine. Time seems to be as if it were fluid and relative so that it must be possible to move about in it. The 'space-time continuum' has a peculiarly vivid reality for me. ..." Perry (1974, 32) notes, in a comment on mad art, that this fascination with space-time often occurs: "At this level of regression we rarely find an art of the psychotic; far more commonly it consists of simple diagrams, often in the class of 'space-time diagrams' (portraying three dimensions of space and a fourth of time)."

Chapter 7

- 1. Also see the quote from Moyaert (1983) in note 12 from chapter 1.
- 2. Sass (1992, 178, 177) says, "A characteristic of schizophrenic language involves tendencies for language to lose its transparent and subordinate status, to shed its function as a communicative tool and to emerge instead as an independent focus of attention or autonomous source of control over speech and understanding. ... Schizophrenics often fail to provide clear transitions in moving from topic to topic, which gives their speech a disorganized, irrelevant, or even incoherent quality. Their language may also sound telegraphic, as if a great deal of meaning were being condensed into words or phrases that remain obscure because the speaker does not provide the background information and sense of context the listener needs to understand. The meaning of the schizophrenic's communication also tends to be obscure at those (relatively rare) moments when schizophrenics use neologisms, or, what is more frequent, when they employ common words in personalized and idiosyncratic ways without bothering to explain what they mean or even to indicate that they are using them in some special or metaphorical sense."
- 3. "There is no spoon!" (Quote from the film *The Matrix*, 1999.)
- 4. Translator's note: Hermans is a famous Dutch writer with a realistic, though alienating, style. One of his titles is *The Sadistic Universe*.
- 5. Alexander Blok, "Night," translated by Andrey Kneller. https://sites.google.com/site/poetryandtranslations/alexander-blok/-the-night-the-pharmacy-the-street-a-blok.
- 6. *Wortsalat*, or word salad, was the term used in early German psychiatry to refer to what were considered schizophrenic linguistic creations.

Chapter 8

1. A similar kind of nonthinking thinking is also used in other kinds of philosophy. It can be described as *intuitio intellectualis*, for example, which was later called *Anschauung* in German idealism and can be translated as "intuition."

- 2. The attentive reader will not fail to notice that we seem to have wandered away from Sass's phenomenological thesis that mad thinking is associated with a more spacious, reflective consciousness rather than a more restricted, primitive one. But mythical thinking is not primitive or archaistic, per se. It may also concern a mythical stage of thinking that actually rises above normal reflective thought (cf. the discussion in the introduction to part II and sections 14.3.2 and 15.2).
- 3. It is interesting that Conrad uses the term "agglutinating" here. As far as I know, this term is used only in linguistics. There it refers to a form of word construction prevalent in many languages, such as Turkish, Hungarian, and Swahili, but rarely in the Indo-European languages. Agglutination is the process of word formation in which each morpheme has a separate form, and a number of these forms are linked together like several suffixes in one word. In the European inflectional languages, morphemes are synthetically combined in a single unit, so that in Latin, for example, "plural," "case," and "type of word" are expressed in a single suffix. In nineteenth-century German linguistics, the agglutinated languages were regarded as more primitive than European languages such as Greek and German. In those agglutinated languages, it was said, you could relate things only in a "mechanical way," without being able to grasp the actual connections efficiently in your mind. We see traces of this Eurolinguocentric argument in Conrad, in which the madman, like the Turk, is regarded as defective in his thinking and linguistic expression. The pastiche, and perhaps reality itself, is exactly the opposite, as I have shown in section 7.3.5.
- 4. Scherer goes on to describe the dimension you find yourself in after this rebirth. He also briefly lists all the terms that will be discussed more fully in part III: "infinity," "the One," "the divine," and "the emptiness." From Scherer (1991): "Zu diesem Um- und Durchbruch gehört auch, dass ihm erst jetzt die unendliche Dimension seiner eigenen Persontiefe, seines Selbst, aufgeht. Er entdeckt in sich selbst einen geistigen Ort jenseits des normalen Gebrauchs seiner sinnlichen und geistigen Potenzen. ... Ist dieses Selbst des Menschen mit dem überseienden Einen identisch, so dass es in der mystischen Erfahrung zu seiner eigenen Göttlichkeit erwacht? Oder handelt es sich nicht um eine ontologische Identität, sondern um die Erfahrung der eigenen Persontiefe als des 'leeren Vorgriffs' (K. Rahner) auf das Grenzenlose. In ihm steht der Mensch in sich selber über sich selber hinaus auf das absolute Sein, das zwar in allem gegenwärtig ist, sich aber doch auch von allem und auch von dem es erfahrenden Menschen radikal unterscheidet. ... Indem er es erblickt, entgleitet es ihm auch schon, weil es sich in seine unantastbare Selbstgehörigkeit entzieht."
- 5. Those familiar with Aldous Huxley will have realized that the atmosphere in this chapter has a great deal in common with a work such as *The Doors of Perception*. I will discuss this work in depth in section 10.3.
- 6. Eliade (1965, 146): "The modern world has long lost the religious sense of physical work and the organic functions. ... They can only be understood by taking into account traditional man's need periodically to rediscover the shock of initial experience; in other words to live the different phases of his existence as he lived them for

the first time. Then all was new and significant and made a unit in a transcendental reality."

- 7. Nietzsche followed this quote with a few other interesting remarks—and several water metaphors: "Es ist merkwürdig, wie gewaltherrisch ein solcher Glaube mit aller Empirie verfährt: gerade an Thales kann man lernen, wie es die Philosophie, zu allen Zeiten, gemacht hat, wenn sie zu ihrem magisch anziehenden Ziele, über die Hecken der Erfahrung hinweg, hinüberwollte. Sie springt auf leichten Stützen voraus: die Hoffnung und die Ahnung beflügeln ihren Fuß. Schwerfällig keucht der rechnende Verstand hinterdrein und sucht bessere Stützen, um auch selbst jenes lockende Ziel zu erreichen, an dem der göttlichere Gefährte schon angelangt ist. Man glaubt, zwei Wanderer an einem wilden, Steine mit sich fortwälzenden Waldbach zu sehen: der Eine springt leichtfüßig hinüber, die Steine benutzend und sich auf ihnen immer weiter schwingend, ob sie auch jäh hinter ihm in die Tiefe sinken. Der Andere steht alle Augenblicke hülflos da, er muß sich erst Fundamente bauen, die seinen schweren, bedächtigen Schritt ertragen, mitunter geht dies nicht, und dann hilft ihm kein Gott über den Bach. Was bringt also das philosophische Denken so schnell an sein Ziel? Unterscheidet es sich von dem rechnenden und abmessenden Denken etwa nur durch das raschere Durchfliegen großer Räume? Nein, denn es hebt seinen Fuß eine fremde, unlogische Macht, die Phantasie. Durch sie gehoben springt es weiter von Möglichkeit zu Möglichkeit, die einstweilen als Sicherheiten genommen werden: hier und da ergreift es selbst Sicherheiten im Fluge. Ein genialisches Vorgefühl zeigt sie ihm, es erräth von ferne, daß an diesem Punkte beweisbare Sicherheiten sind."
- 8. Cf. Scholem (1960, 20, 43): "Alle anderen Mystiker suchen den Weg in die Form zurück, der auch der Weg in die Gemeinschaft ist; er allein, der den Abbau aller Gestalt als höchsten Wert erfahren hat, sucht ihn in undialektischem Geiste zu bewahren, statt ihn wie die anderen Mystiker als Antrieb zum Aufbau neuer Gestalt zu nehmen. Hier erscheint dann die Vernichtung aller religiösen Autorität im Namen der Autorität selbst als die reinste Darstellung des revolutionären Aspekts der Mystik. ... Der nihilistische Mystiker scheint der freieste. ... Freilich ist er zugleich, historisch gesehen, auch der gehemmteste und unfreieste, da die geschichtliche Wirklichkeit in der Verfassung der menschlichen Gemeinschaft ihn viel mehr als jeden anderen Mystiker daran hindert, diesen seinen Anspruch frei zu verkünden."
- 9. Ruysbroeck's original Flemish text reads as follows (Ruusbroec [1336] 2008, 8): "Ende aldus mochdi merken dat die intreckende eenicheit gods anders niet en es dan grondelose minne die den vader ende den sone, ende al dat leeft in hem, met minnen intreckende es in een eewich ghebruken. Ende in deser minnen wille wij berren ende verberen sonder inde in eewicheit; want hier-inne es gheleghen aire gheeste salicheit ... ende in die minne sonder wise sele wij dolen: ende si sal ons verleiden in die onghemetene wijtheit der minnen gods. Ende daer inne sele wij vlieten ende ons-selven ontvlieten in die ombekinde welde der rijcheit ende der goetheit gods. Ende daer inne selen wij smelten ende versmelten, wielen ende verwielen eewelijc in die glorie gods."
- 10. James (1958, 293) calls transiency one of the characteristics of the mystical experience: "*Transiency*.—Mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Except in rare

instances, half an hour, or at most an hour or two, seems to be the limit beyond which they fade into the light of common day. Often, when faded, their quality can but imperfectly be reproduced in memory; but when they recur it is recognized; and from one recurrence to another it is susceptible of continuous development in what it felt as inner richness and importance." With regard to the degree to which the experience actually passes, there is some uncertainty as to what should be understood as the experience itself and as the consequences of the experience. There is also the question as to whether mad conditions last just as long as mystical conditions (also see my discussion in the introduction to part II).

Intermezzo I

1. Referring to Jannemiek Tukker, coauthor of our book *Alone* (*Alleen*; Kusters et al. 2007).

Introduction

1. This opposition between reason and love is older than Christianity and was already present in Greek philosophy. Think, for example, of the range of possibilities that, according to Plato, lead to the World of Ideas; you attain the higher spheres either "by means of love" (in Plato's *Symposium*) or "by means of wisdom" (such as in Plato's *Republic*).

- 1. Other terms, such as "delusion of oneness" would also work, but I am using the term "uni-delusion" to distinguish a form of mystical madness that is associated solely with the Plotinian "One" and not with other notions of oneness.
- 2. Insight—like contemplation and philosophy—is seldom a goal unto itself. Frequently, insight is recognized as "insight" only when it functions within and is subordinate to some other practice.
- 3. Compare what Scholem (1960, 16) writes: "Von fast allen uns bekannten Mystikern werden diese [mysticism] Strukturen etwa als Konfigurationen von Lichtern oder Lauten beschrieben, die dann freilich bei weiterem Fortschreiten auch ihrerseits ins Amorphe abgebaut werden. Diese mystischen Strukturen aber sind durchweg von Symbolen der traditionellen religiösen Autorität bestimmt. Nur die allgemeinsten formalen Elemente bleiben sich unter den verschiedenen Gestalten gleich. ... Denn es ist ja eben so, dass auch Licht und Laut, ja selbst der Name Gottes nur symbolische Repräsentationen jener letzten Realität sind, die in ihrem Urgrund immer wieder als gestaltlos, amorph, erscheint."
- 4. It must be said that uni-delusion as a diagnostic category is not directly appropriate for psychiatric reference books. Typical, purely uni-deluded madmen are hard to

find, as are purely Plotinian mystics. But the same can be said of delusions that we do find in reference books, such as paranoia, delusions of reference, or megalomania. These forms of delusion seldom exist in a pure form either, and they often flow into each other.

5. We see this defense mechanism in many different kinds of delusions. When someone imagines he has no consciousness or free will and says he is being controlled by impersonal forces, then those who deny the existence of the consciousness and free will (such as philosophers Daniel Dennett and Patricia Churchland) will welcome this person as a shining example, or living application, of their ideas about the life without consciousness.

- 1. A popular cult sci-fi movie from 1999, in which the main character finds out that everything he knows, everything he has ever seen, is different from true reality.
- 2. It is striking how much this resembles Taylor's ideas of the "porous self" (see 14.1).
- 3. However, Mous (2011, 128) says, "In Heiloo, of all places, I had the unearthly good fortune of discovering that the borders between body and spirit can disappear entirely, and that the soul can be overwhelmed by the will and not only by the passions. For months not a single thought of sex entered my head. I was living in paradise as Augustine described it." Jannemiek Tukker (in a personal communication) does not agree with Custance's descriptions either.
- 4. *Donnie Darko* is a sci-fi movie from 2001. Its title refers to the main character, a schoolboy who can be described as having serious mental health issues and who is confronted with time travel and a tangent universe that features a time portal.
- 5. By contrast, uni-delusion's religious counterpart to the pantheistic esse-delusion comprises all the forms of Christianity and Neoplatonism that maintain a distinction and a hierarchy between God and creation, or the One and the "lower" hypostases—no matter how much pleasure one may take in the divine miracle of creation (see section 9.3.2).
- 6. Throughout the history of Christianity and Judaism, the term "pantheism" has been highly charged. In earlier times, accusations of pantheism could cause one to be cast out of one's religious community—or worse, as in the case of both Spinoza and Eckhart. As Kofler remarks on Eckhart (1966, 231): "Die Anschauung Eckharts läuft darauf hinaus, Gott als Sein aller Dinge nachzuweisen; das ist aber bereits Pantheismus, und mit Recht haben ihm seine kirchlichen Gegner vorgeworfen, er verwische in seiner Lehre die Grenzen zwischen Schöpfer und Geschöpf. Das Revolutionäre dieser Anschauung liegt darin, dass die Natur und damit auch der Mensch nicht, wie das Mittelalter es gewollt und getan hat, entwertet werden, sondern im Gegenteil, gleichsam vergöttlicht, was zum Anlag für ketzerische und soziale Forderungen werden kann."

- 7. Textually, there are indeed two other levels to be distinguished: inside and outside the parentheses. But I see this division as merely textual, like the division into paragraphs, something that Custance added later on.
- 8. The Catholic church proclaimed 1950 a Holy Year. The church proclaims a Holy Year, also called a Year of Jubilee, every twenty-five years. This may explain Custance's references to Catholic saints. The "cold coming from Russia" is probably a reference to the Cold War and to communist atheism, with Custance sitting in his shirtsleeves "defying it." This was a time of anti-Soviet hysteria, especially in the Catholic church. Moreover, in other parts of his book, Custance attempts to cross the Iron Curtain mentally and to reunite East and West by trying to visit people who were famous at the time.
- 9. Also compare an anonymous person in Kaplan (1964, 115): "I changed from a non-religious to a religious type of orientation, acquiring a sense of religious dependency and a capacity for religious communication."
- 10. The similarity between this and the quote from Sechehaye's Renee (1970, 55–56) that I cited in 4.2.1.2 is striking. The difference in the way the experience is valued is striking too.
- 11. *Perennialism* is the name given to the idea propagated by Huxley that there is a universal, eternal truth, an ultimate reality, a clear light that can be found at the heart of mysticism and religion and that is essentially "benign."
- 12. Zaehner expands on his criticism as follows (1957, 33): "There is a radical difference between both of them [the Vedantin and Christian ways of defining the unitive experience] and Huxley's experience under the influence of mescalin. For in strictly religious mysticism ... the whole purpose of the exercise is to concentrate on an ultimate reality to the complete exclusion of all else; and by 'all else' is meant the phenomenal world or, as the theists put it, all that is not God. This means a total and absolute detachment from Nature, an isolation of the soul within itself either to realize itself as 'God,' or to enter into communion with God ... why should not the manic phase of manic depression be counted as an equally valid route? But then ... whatever the similarities, we cannot overlook the difference that Huxley saw himself united to the legs of a bamboo table, whereas Plotinus and the Christian mystics saw themselves as in contact with a supreme being, or, in Plotinus' case, with something beyond being."
- 13. Zaehner writes (1957, 85, 87), "The term 'expansion' does in fact accurately describe what the nature mystics conceive happens to the soul. ... This state is now recognized as being the manic pole of what we now call a manic-depressive psychosis. ... This is the genuine pantheistic or pan-en-henic' experience quite unmistakably. ... It is an experience which makes the subject both quiver with joy and which nevertheless scares him: it is then quite certainly what Huxley experienced under the influence of mescalin."

- 14. Interestingly, in madness it's not unusual for a phase to occur in which the world is understood as a "test" ("They're trying to tempt me, to play me for a fool"), so that the fears of these Islamic mystics also have their counterpart in madness. I elaborate on this theme of "the test" in greater detail in section 15.4.
- 15. Zaehner (1957, 87) writes, "The early Muslim mystics ... conceived mysticism, like their Christian counterparts, as an askesis leading to union with God in Whose personal and unique existence they firmly believed; and they knew that this expansive experience which appeared to embrace all Nature, though not evil in itself, was a snare in their path: it was an 'insidious deception.' Christian mystics may well be referring to this experience when they speak of the Devil's ability to counterfeit mystical states. ... Qushayrī regards the state of 'expansion' as a trap set by God in the path of the aspirant Sufi through which He can sift the wheat from the chaff. ... They considered it to be nothing more than a divine testing."
- 16. Zaehner (1957, 66) says, "Here we are brought face to face with the dilemma as seen by the mystics themselves. The theistic mystics, with only a few exceptions, when faced with other persons who themselves claim to be mystics yet whose conduct is the reverse of holy, are horrified not because they doubt the good faith of their rivals, but because they had been brought up to believe that God is good, and that an evil fruit or a fruit that 'transcends' good and evil, that is, which does not recognize any validity in these two terms, cannot possibly proceed from God. Hence they will usually ascribe it to the Devil. Few Christian mystics have failed to warn their flock against the raptures which the Evil One may cause, 'for I tell thee truly, that the devil hath his contemplatives as God hath his.'"
- 17. Another anesthetic that was frequently used in the past was chloroform. Symonds writes about its effects (1895, 78–80, in Landis, 1964, 34): "I seemed at first in a state of utter blankness: then came flashes of intense light, alternating with blackness, and with a keen vision of what was going on in the room round me, but no sensation of touch. I thought that I was near death; when, suddenly, my soul became aware of God, who was manifestly dealing with me, handling me, so to speak, in an intense personal present reality. ... Life and Death seemed mere names, for what was there then but my soul and God, two indestructible existences in close relation." Landis remarks, "This description is qualitatively very similar to some which have been written by mental patients or, indeed, to some of the revelations of cosmic consciousness recorded by religious mystics."
- 18. A great deal of extensive, nuanced, and well-informed material has been written about the factors that have played a role in the broad distribution of these medicines. Examples are Whitaker (2010) in America and Dehue (2008) in the Netherlands.
- 19. Whitaker (2010) has this to say about such medicines: "Imagine that a virus suddenly appears in our society that makes people sleep twelve, fourteen hours a day. Those infected with it move about somewhat slowly and seem emotionally disengaged. Many gain huge amounts of weight—twenty, forty, sixty, and even one

hundred pounds. Often their blood sugar levels soar, and so do their cholesterol levels ... scientists report that the reason it causes such global dysfunction is that it blocks a multitude of neurotransmitter receptors in the brain—dopaminergic, serotonergic, muscarinic, adrenergic, and histaminergic. ... Meanwhile, MRI studies find that over a period of several years, the virus shrinks the cerebral cortex, and this shrinkage is tied to cognitive decline. A terrified public clamors for a cure. Now such an illness has in fact hit millions of American children and adults. We have just described the effects of Eli Lilly's best-selling antipsychotic, Zyprexa."

- 1. The perfectly round circle does not exist "in reality," and in that sense, the circle, too, is an ideal abstraction.
- 2. In the attitude of others toward this mathematical genius, there is also a parallel in the attitude toward mystics and the mystically mad. Cantor's preoccupation with infinity was later reinterpreted and dismissed as a "psychic disorder," unrelated to the contents of his Ω musings (see Dauben 1993, for example).
- 3. Rucker (1982, 204) says, "To say the Absolute is a One is to say that there is some unique limiting point or concept at the end of any such history. To say the Absolute is a Many is to say that there is only the working out of the endless sequence of approximations, with no single guiding notion at the end."
- 4. In the film *Wings of Desire*, Peter Falk has this to say about the desolate Bahnhof Zoo railway station in West Berlin during the eighties: "This is not the station where all railways end, but the station where all stations end."
- 5. This school of thought, in which everything and nothing run together, has been known in theology for centuries, where it is called apophatic or negative theology. You cannot say anything about God, so in order to say something, you try to say a great deal about him, after which you deny it all. This same school of thought characterizes the whole preceding chapter and recurs here again and again.
- 6. Rucker describes this school of thought as well, and clarifies it by comparing two kinds of mystical paths. He writes (1982, 209), "The Inward Way and the Way of Unity correspond, respectively, to moving towards a consciousness of Nothing and Everything, of 0 and infinity. The Inward Way involves trying to stop thinking thoughts, stop having motions, stop muddying the mental waters. One strives toward the Void that underlies all things. ... One tries to stop thinking, to stop thinking about stopping, to stop thinking about stopping, and so on. Sometimes it works. The Way of Unity involves trying to include more and more of the world in one's field of consciousness. One strives toward a sympathetic union with Everything. This activity could be characterized by the phrase 'And that too.' The metamystical thought I want to describe here is this: the Way of Unity and the Inward Way have the same goal. Nothing is the same as Everything."

- 7. Michaux gained access to infinity in the following way (1975, 34–35): "I closed my eyes and prepared mentally to observe within myself, although it was in front of myself, 'just behind my forehead,' a small area, say one square centimeter, and soon, disregarding it, a smaller area, such as one square millimeter. Nothing else is necessary. And I 'took aim.' The square then became deeper, deeper and deeper still, and worlds appeared within it, and within these worlds new worlds appeared whose depths revealed still greater, more distant worlds. ... The smaller the area at which you look, the more easily will there be infinite fragmentation within it. Space will splinter, scattering its blobs, and these will become more and more numerous and be increasingly divided within themselves, fantastically, and divisibility will be without end. This is it; you have arrived. In such a way one sets out again for the infinite."
- 8. Arjan Lelivelt (2011, 13) gives a brief and powerful description of such an experience of Ω : "It's as if up until then you had understood your own house to be the only reality, and for the first time you had ventured outside. There, to your utter amazement, you found other houses. But mainly you realized that outside all those houses there is an infinite outside."
- 9. Elsewhere (1974, 20) Michaux blames this mutilation on the everyday, aggressive, awkwardly adapted way of thinking, which he says is opposed to highly refined, deep, "solo" thinking: "Now the pragmatic returns; the ego returns, with its limits, its authority, its annexationism, its possessiveness, its grasping, its delight in imposing, in amalgamating, in forcing at all costs. And it all seems natural! There is a danger of the excessive preference shown to communicable, demonstrable, detachable, useful thought, with the value of reciprocity, to the detriment of thought in depth, pursuing depth."
- 10. Eliade talks about mystical experiences of "light," and finally he, too, stumbles upon this chicken-or-egg paradox. He makes a few interesting comments about it to summarize (1965, 76): "All types of experience of the light that we have quoted have this factor in common: they bring a man out of his worldly Universe or historical situation, and project him into a Universe different in quality, an entirely different world, transcendent and holy. ... One can say that the meaning of the supernatural light is directly conveyed to the soul of the man who experiences it, and yet this meaning can only come fully to his consciousness clothed in a preexistent ideology. Here lies the paradox: the meaning of the light is, on the one hand, ultimately a personal discovery and, on the other, each man discovers what he was spiritually and culturally prepared to discover." But he goes on to split the explanatory deadlock in two and correctly observes, "Yet there remains this fact which seems to us fundamental: whatever his previous ideological conditioning, a meeting with the Light produces a break in the subject's existence, revealing to him—or making clearer than before—the world of the Spirit, of holiness and of freedom; in brief, existence as a divine creation, or the world sanctified by the presence of God."

- 11. Elsewhere, Custance writes (1952, 45–46), "Then suddenly the vision burst upon me. ... The great male and female organs of love hung there in mid-air; they seemed infinitely far away from me and infinitely near at the same time. I can see them now, pulsing rhythmically in a circular clockwise motion, each revolution taking approximately the time of a human pulse or heartbeat, as though the vision was associated in some way with the circulation of the blood. I was not sexually excited; from the first the experience seemed to me to be holy. What I saw was the Power of Love—the name came to me at once—the Power that I knew somehow to have made all universes, past, present and to come, to be utterly infinite, an infinity of infinities, to have conquered the Power of Hate, its opposite, and thus created the sun, the stars, the moon, the planets, the earth, light, life, joy and peace neverending. ... at last, and beyond Time and Space, the opposites are reconciled, the Eternal Masculine and Feminine are united and there is peace."
- 12. In support of this view of Custance, it should be pointed out that his book (1952) was written during different periods, with different degrees of abstraction and reflection. He tends to be much more rigid when regarding his experience from a greater distance than when viewing the flowing experience up close.
- 13. In a less reflective vein, Custance writes the following with a greater sense of how the world of Ω actually feels (1952, 46): "The whole of infinity seemed to open up before me, and during the weeks and months which followed I passed through experiences which are virtually indescribable. The complete transformation of 'reality' transported me as it were into the Kingdom of Heaven. The ordinary beauties of nature, particularly, I remember, the skies at sunrise and sunset, took on a transcendental loveliness beyond belief. Every morning. ... I jumped up to look at them, and when possible went out to drink in, in a sort of ecstasy, the freshness of the morning air."
- 14. Eliade (1958a, 356) writes further, "Orgies usually correspond to some hierogamy. Unbounded sexual frenzy on earth corresponds to the union of the divine couple. As young couples re-enact that sacred marriage on the ploughed fields, all the forces of the community are supposed to increase to their highest point. ... Men cannot do better than imitate the example of the gods, particularly if the prosperity of the whole world and, above all, the course of animal and vegetable life, depends on their doing so. Their excesses fulfill a definite and useful role in the economy of the sacred. They break down the barriers between man, society, nature and the gods; they help force, life and the seeds of things to move from one level to another, from one zone of reality to the rest. What was emptied of substance is replenished; what was shattered into fragments becomes one again; what was in isolation merges into the great womb of all things. The orgy sets flowing the sacred energy of life."
- 15. I discussed this in part II in connection with Michaux and Podvoll as the danger of seduction or of the imagination.
- 16. "Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie."

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17. It would still be possible to distinguish places and persons in terms of "holiness" or proximity to God as long as our standard of measurement is nonspatial. Sloterdijk does not mention this, and it is less relevant in this context, since it has to do with spatial Ω .

- 18. Michaux (1974, 118–119): "In a way, this is something of a regression. The child at its earliest age identified hand, head, breast, the mother and himself in a global impression with no beginning or end. Only sleep ... returned to surround them, but is sleep a boundary? ... Man is a child who has spent a lifetime confining, seeing and accepting himself as limited. As an adult he has almost succeeded. Whatever he says or does, Infinity ... reminds him of something. This is where he comes from. That is why Infinity, taught to the child ... still in his early years, 'takes' so well. He offers little resistance to the infinite god inculcated in him in most civilizations at a time when he was virtually defenseless; a belief, which henceforth becomes second nature, is taken for granted."
- 19. Michaux (1974, 119): "Yet the schizophrenic rarely regains his religion. ... Religion was also a kind of localization ... a dam to keep Infinity blocked up, in its place. He who finds himself, as a result of treacherous chemistry in his body, in an exceptional state, in a Beyond that is beyond religions, beyond all superstructures, symbolisms, intermediaries (angels or saints and of course priests and sacerdotal representatives), is lost in an ... Infinity ... allowing for no return ... unlike the Infinity of the theologian who gives a lecture on it and then goes back home again. ... The schizophrenic is alone, without defensible borders."
- 20. See, for example, the remarkably naive comments made by Stephen Hawking in *The Grand Design* (2010) with regard to who should and should not concern themselves with questions about Ω . This famous physicist sincerely believed that his work on spatial ω would be relevant for nonspatial question such as "Why are we here?"

Intermezzo II

- 1. Cf. Eliade (1958, 25): "To anyone who has received a new revelation ... the earlier hierophanies have not only lost their original meaning—that of manifesting a given modality of the sacred—but they have now become obstacles to the development of religious experience. ... There is, in their lifetime, a revelation more "complete," more consistent with their spiritual and cultural powers, and they cannot believe, they cannot see any religious value, in the hierophanies accepted in previous stages of religious development."
- 2. What I call revelation partly corresponds with Conrad's phase of *Wahnstimmung* (1958, 43) (cf. also section 2.2): "Das Kennzeichnende der Wahnstimmung ist die Formulierung: 'Etwas ist los, ich weiss aber nicht, was; sagt mir doch was los ist.'" However, the vague, indefinable feeling that "something is wrong," "something fundamental has changed," which is difficult to name, roughly corresponds with the experience

of revelation. In addition, Conrad's second phase of *Apophänie* partly corresponds with what I call revelation. In fact, in this second phase, anxiety and paranoia define the mood of the madman even more strongly than in the *Wahnstimmung* phase.

- 3. Cf. also, "It is proposed that a dysregulated, hyperdopaminergic state, at a 'brain' level of description and analysis, leads to an aberrant assignment of salience to the elements of one's experience, at a 'mind' level."
- 4. See http://www.hms.harvard.edu/psych/docs/Shatij%20Kapur's%20CV.pdf (accessed June 22, 2012).
- 5. In practice, things are much more nuanced than what I maintain here with regard to "the" phenomenologist. There are many phenomenologists who actually are (or want to be) moved by their initial contact with the ocean or tsunami of madness, whether at the personal, professional, or theoretical level. Conversely, it is not only "the phenomenologist" who hopes that the lightning will strike elsewhere and the tsunami will affect coastlines other than his own. That is true for everyone.
- 6. "Alle Welt ist so, als ob alles auf etwas wartet."
- 7. These and the following quotes are from the Revised Standard Version of 1952.

- 1 For further solid philosophical analyses of "the perception of nothingness," see Sartre (2003), with his exhaustive analysis of the "non-encounter" of a person whom one had agreed to meet in a café.
- 2 Binswanger, for example, tried explicitly to work the notes and ideas of Husserl and Heidegger into his psychopathology, and Minkowski did the same with Bergson.
- 3. "Selbst da, wo sich der Gesunde radikal in Zweifel stellt, bleibt doch die selbstverständliche Alltäglichkeit des Daseins, selbst als aufgehobene, lebensmässig der tragende Grund und Boden; alles Fragen und Zweifeln bleibt einbehalten in einem weiteren Umfang vom Selbstverständlichem."
- 4. Cf. Blankenburg (1971, 7): "Gewisse Parallelen lassen sich, gerade wenn man ihre Dialektik ins Auge fasst, zwischen normalem Zweifel und Glauben einerseits, pathologischer Entleerung und Wahn andererseits nicht übersehen. So wie der Glaube die Möglichkeit des Zweifelns voraussetzt, so der Wahn offenbar eine andersartige radikalere Form von Bodenlosigkeit. Wie der Zweifel hinter dem Glauben, so kann auch diese Bodenlosigkeit hinter dem Wahn verborgen bleiben."
- 5. Cf. the quote from Moyaert (1983) in note 12 from chapter 1.
- 6. Sartre (2003, 49) writes, "Thus freedom as the requisite condition for the nihilation of nothingness is not a *property* which belongs among others to the essence of

the human being. We have already noticed furthermore that with man the relation of existence to essence is not comparable to what it is for the things of the world. Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible; the essence of the human being is suspended in his freedom. What we call freedom is impossible to distinguish from the *being* of 'human reality.' Man does not exist *first* in order to be free *subsequently*; there is no difference between the being of man and his *being-free*."

- 7. Sartre (2003, 48) writes, "In order for the totality of being to order itself around us as instruments, in order for it to parcel itself into differentiated complexes which refer one to another and which can be *used*, it is necessary that negation rise up not as a thing among other things but as the rubric of a category which presides over the arrangement and the redistribution of great masses of being in things. Thus the rise of man in the midst of the being which 'invests' him causes a world to be discovered. But the essential and primordial moment of this rise is the negation. Thus we have reached the first goal of this study. Man is the being through whom nothingness comes to the world."
- 8. If a total denial of nothingness were possible, it would lead to a form of essedelusion. There would be no more absence, no lack of anything, no longing, no room for detachment, no doubt, and even no death. The subject would entirely converge with itself, without any nothingness to separate it. According to Sartre, that would not be possible. As he says (2003, 113, 643), "Human reality is a perpetual surpassing toward a coincidence with itself which is never given. ... Everything happens therefore as if the in-itself [object] and the for-itself [consciousness, subject] were presented in a state of disintegration in relation to an ideal synthesis. Not that the integration has ever taken place but on the contrary precisely because it is always indicated and always impossible." Somewhere there is a notion of synthesis, (mystical?) unity, and totality for which we long, but we always end up with unhealed duality. Again from Sartre (2003, 114): "The being of human reality is suffering because it rises in being as perpetually haunted by a totality which it is without being able to be it, precisely because it could not attain the in-itself without losing itself as for-itself. Human reality there is by nature an unhappy consciousness with no possibility of surpassing its unhappy state."
- 9. A good example of this Artaud-delusion is found in Goodall (1994), who regarded Artaud as a kind of crypto-gnostic who was secretly engaged in refuting all of Western thought (although he himself didn't know it). The final sentence of her book, which is typical of the whole, reads as follows: "If Nietzsche's philosophy has led the way in the modern assault on the onto-theological foundations of Western humanism, Artaud's dramaturgy re-echoes the terms and images of an older and absolute assault." Anyone who is even slightly familiar with the mores of this part of the academic world, where such texts are passed back and forth, will recognize this as a claim that Artaud is an even greater hero than Nietzsche. In order to make this claim, you have to know that "Western humanism" is regarded as utterly flawed, that Nietzsche has been elevated in advance beyond every doubt and system of

morals, and that "onto-theological foundations" are seen as the pillars of Western evil.

- 10. The methodical doubt and distrust of everything that is not produced by the thinking process, according to such philosophies, has its counterpart in the existential doubt and uncertainty about existence in the mad world. We see the questions and themes from such philosophies either openly or cryptically reflected in the Ø-delusion— questions such as "whether there is an outside world," "whether we are nothing but brains in jars," "how we can prove that other people exist," "why everything is nothing but a dream," and so on.
- 11. Those who are accustomed to reflecting on these kinds of processes in terms of Lacan will understand it by first discerning the collapse of "the symbolic order" and observing that, as a result, the psychotic ends up in a fluid house of mirrors without anything to hold onto (imaginary order), after which he ultimately runs up against "the real." That would be a splendid discovery, to end up in an absolute reality, realer than everyday symbolic reality, were it not for the fact that the Real, upon closer inspection, is nothing.
- 12. Pinkard (2002, 321) says that the period in which he worked on *The Ages of the World* "amounts to some of the most obscure writing that Schelling, never the most lucid of authors, ever produced."
- 13. Žižek (1996, 6) makes the following comment in a very different (Lacanian) jargon: "[Schelling tries to] provide the definitive formulation of the 'beginning of the world,' of the passage from the pre-symbolic chaos of the Real to the universe of *logos*. ... Schelling has no problem with penetrating the obscure netherworld of pre-symbolic drives ('God prior to the creation of the world')—where he fails again and again in his *return* from this 'dark continent' to our common universe of language."
- 14. The more perceptive reader will already have noticed that I described Custance as a typical example of the esse-delusion. As discussed earlier (see the introduction to Part III), the delusions are intertranslatable, and in the mad world transitions are constantly taking place between the various basic forms.
- 15. Schelling (2000, 31, italics mine): "The systems that want to explain the origin of things as descending from above almost necessarily come to the thought that the emanations of the highest primordial force some time or other reach their extremity below which there is nothing. This extremity can itself be called only a shadow of the being, a minimum of reality, only to some extent still having being, but not really. This is the meaning of non-being according to the Neo-Platonists, who no longer understood Plato's real meaning of it. We, following the opposite direction, also recognize an extremity, below which there is nothing, but it is for us not something ultimate, but something primary, out of which all things begin, an eternal beginning, not a mere feebleness or lack in the being, but active negation."

- 16. The problem for such thinkers is making any well-founded distinction between madness and religious experience. Two interesting recent Dutch studies in this area that want to have their cake and eat it too are those of Ypma (2001) and Arends (2013). Although, like me, neither was ultimately successful in drawing well-reasoned borders between religion and madness, their attempts to do so are highly fascinating.
- 17. Cf. Heidegger (2018, n.p.): "We hang suspended in dread. ... in the unnerving state of 'left-hanging-with-nothing-to-hold-on-to,' all that remains is pure openness. As the unified whole of what-is slips away and the nothing crowds in on us, all utterance of 'is' falls silent in the face of it."
- 18. Cf. Eliade (1965, 44): "In Indian thought, liberty is inseparable from knowledge; the man who knows, the man who has discovered the profane structures of being, is a man delivered in this life, he is no longer conditioned by cosmic laws. Henceforth he has immediate enjoyment of the divine, he no longer moves like a human automaton obedient to the laws of cause and effect, but 'plays' like the gods—or like the flames of a fire."
- 19. In this phase, the seductions of sorcery and abuse of power by yogis also occur. I will discuss these in 14.2.3.3.
- 20. Capriles (2000, 172) says, "As long as we elude the frustration, dissatisfaction, unhappiness, anguish, and pain that pervade our everyday experience, we will have no chance to apprehend the illusion of duality at their root—and therefore no way to overcome either the root, the trunk, or the branches. Only when the illusion of duality is disclosed as such and turns into conflict, is it possible to overcome so that we cease being subjected to its negative consequences."
- 21. Capriles (2006, 4, 3) says, "The Path may be explained in terms of a gradation of being: whether we explain it in terms of descending through Hell and, by continuing in the same direction, then ascending through Purgatory and later through the Heavens toward the Empyrean, or whether we explain it in terms of the meditative experience of the aeon or kalpa, we are speaking of a runaway of the phenomenon of being unleashed by a deficiency in the mechanisms of elusion or bad faith, which allows us to fully experience the conflict inherent in the basic contradiction at the root of samsara, providing us with a springboard from which to plunge into nirvana" (italics mine). At the end of the Dzogchen path (Dzogchen is the Tibetan form of Buddhism that Capriles follows), every form of delusion disappears and you find yourself at the "Dzogchen qua Base" of nirvana. Capriles (2006, 3, 2) says, "Wayward patterns develop toward the threshold at which delusion may spontaneously crumble and Dzogchen qua Path (i.e., the unconcealment of the true condition of all reality) may manifest, making fully patent the total plenitude and perfection of Dzogchen qua Base—which is what the Divine Comedy represents as passing through the hole at the bottom of Hell."

Intermezzo III

- 1. "Emptiness" is a concept that plays a major role in Eastern philosophy. We find a compact and revealing example of this in Eliade when he describes the fundamental role played by "universal emptiness" in Buddhist philosophy (1965, 27): "In Mahayana philosophy the light of the sky at dawn, when there is no moon, has come to symbolize the 'Clear Light named the Universal Void' ... the term void (sunya) exactly signifies that it is free of all attributes, of all differentiation: it is the Urgrund, the ultimate reality. Comprehension of the Universal Void ... is an instantaneous action, comparable to the lightning-flash. Just as nothing precedes the dazzling flash that suddenly rends the mass of darkness, nothing appears to precede the experience of illumination; it belongs to another contextual plane, there is no continuity between the time before it and the timeless moment in which it takes place."
- 2. I have slightly adapted, shortened, and rewritten this fragment into a monologue.
- 3. This is true for most psychiatrists, but there are exceptions. The Austrian psychiatrist Leo Navratil saw a great deal of benefit in giving ear to the linguistic and expressive productions of his madmen (see Navratil 1985, for instance). There are many other psychiatrists who take a theoretical interest in schizophrenic experiences and psychotic processes and expressions, while, in practice, they continue to rely on the speed and efficiency of the hypodermic needle, in accordance with laws and practical considerations.
- 4. Lyrics by Einstürzende Neubauten, Kein Bestandteil sein (1987).
- 5. Lyrics by Einstürzende Neubauten, Kollaps (1981).
- 6. Lyrics by Einstürzende Neubauten, Negativ Nein (1981).
- 7. Lyrics by Einstürzende Neubauten, Abfackeln! (1983).

Chapter 13

1. Here Schelling's line of reasoning seems to be that a oneness that contains its own negation is a "more absolute" oneness than a oneness that does not contain such a negation. Žižek (1996, 62) says the following with regard to this paradox in Schelling's Absolute: "This tension in the midst of the Absolute itself is, therefore, far more enigmatic than it may appear. ... Schelling first opposes ... the Perfect and the Imperfect, then goes on to treat the two as complementary, and to conceive the true completeness as the unity of the two, as if the Perfect needs the Imperfect in order to assert itself." It is this enigmatic tension in the Absolute that is the source of the entire creation, according to Schelling. Pinkard (2002, 323) says, "In some fragments, Schelling seems to think that we have to conceive of the *Urwesen* [to be understood here as the "Absolute"] as in itself contradictory (or at least having some kind of basic, dualistic tension within itself), such that we can think of the creation

of the world as coming about as a result of this tension; on that telling of the story, there has to be a kind of basic polarity between an 'affirmative' and a 'negative' aspect that is internal to the *Urwesen* itself, which finally splits that essence in two (into eternal God and the temporal world)."

- 2. Schelling continues with a passage containing paradoxical movement metaphors that are strongly reminiscent of Plotinus's attempts to describe the One. Here he also postulates that the visions of prophets granted access to the paradoxical Absolute: "It is circulating within itself, continuously repeating itself by moving backward and again foreward as was shown in the visions of one of the prophets. This is the object of the ancient Magi teachings and of that doctrine of fire as a consequence of which the Jewish lawgiver left behind to his people: 'The Lord your God is a devouring fire,' that is, not in God's inner and authentic being, but certainly in accordance with God's nature. But the unremitting movement that goes back into itself and recommences is incontestably the scientific concept of that wheel of birth as the interior of all nature that was already revealed to one of the apostles, who was distinguished by a profound glimpse into nature, as well as to those who later wrote from feeling and vision." Also see the finale.
- 3. Žižek's (1996) interpretations of Schelling's *The Ages of the World* are interesting, modern, and provocative. There he regards Schelling's speculations on the Absolute as descriptions of Lacan's "Real," and he sees the creation of the temporary world out of the eternal Absolute as an analogy for the origin of the measured, symbolically determined subject from the infinitude of the presubjective experience.
- 4. Eliade (1958b, 93) writes, "Through the illumination spontaneously obtained when he reaches the stage of *dharma-megha-samādhi*, the yogin realizes 'absolute isolation,' that is, liberation of *purusa* from the dominance of *prakrti* ..."
- 5. Another example is from Schreber (1988, 113), where the "fleeting-improvised-men" are also described in the context of a miracle: "The human forms I saw during the journey and on the platform in Dresden I took to be 'fleeting-improvised-men' produced by miracle; I did not pay any particular attention to them, because even then I was tired of all miracles." Here we see an inflation of the notion of "miracle." Schreber has become accustomed to it, which raises the interesting question of whether we can speak of miracles at all if they become "normal."
- 6. Sass (1994) provides a fine analysis of the meaning and function of Schreber's manner of speech as part of his thought, experience, and delusional system.
- 7. Schreber (1988, 46): "An intimate relation exists between God and the starry sky. ... In any case the light and warmth-giving power of the sun, which makes her the origin of all organic life on earth, is only to be regarded as an indirect manifestation of the living God; hence the veneration of the sun as divine by so many peoples since antiquity contains a highly important core of truth even if it does not embrace the whole truth."

- 8. Custance (1952, 37) writes, "The sun is shining on the paper as I write, and it suggests to me at once that the *Sun* of Righteousness, which is also the Son of God, is watching and helping me. The sun suggests, as it has in fact often suggested to me before when I was in a manic phase, an intense sense of the immediate presence of God, in the person of Jesus. I feel that I talk to Him and He talks to me without the slightest difficulty." Conrad (1958, 73) quotes a few patients: "Die Sonne kam mir auch so komisch vor, stand plötzlich in anderer Richtung. Das andere war eigentlich nicht sonderbar, nur grad mit der Sonne, dass in der Tageszeit mir etwa verandert vor kam. Wie das möglich war, weiss ich eigentlich nicht recht ... mit den Sternen muss es wohl zusammenhangen, die Sonne ist ja auch ein Stern." Also, "An der Sonne ist mir mal was aufgefallen, habs aber nicht zu Ende denken können, ob sie nicht in der falschen Himmelsrichtung steht." And finally, "Die Sonne habe ich für einen Beobachtungsapparat gehalten."
- 9. Schreber (1988, 124) writes, for example: "While writing these lines I am fully aware that other people can only think this is sheer nonsense, as Dr. Weber is still among the living, a fact I myself have occasion to verify daily. Yet the impressions I received seem to me so certain that I must assume that sometime in the past Dr. Weber departed from this life and ascended with his nerves to Blessedness, but then returned to life among mankind; this notion may be unfathomable for human beings and a possibility only to be explained in a supernatural manner. After the power of its rays had been exhausted this smaller sun was then probably replaced by another sun."
- 10. Schreber (1988, 125–126) continues, "But I am absolutely at a loss to make sense of the fact that such a phenomenal impression should have passed him by (if he was a real human being) and the many thousands of other people in other places who must have had the same impression at the time. Of course other people will be ready to counter with the slogan that I suffered from a mere 'hallucination.' But the certainty of my recollection makes this for me subjectively quite out of the question, the more so as the phenomenon was repeated on several consecutive days and lasted for several hours on each single day; nor do I believe that my memory fails me when I add that that more radiant sun spoke to me in the same way as the sun did before and still does without interruption."
- 11. It's also interesting that Husserl uses a similar kind of example—in the fifth meditation of his *Cartesian Meditations*—as a way of overcoming solipsism. There is the danger of solipsism in Husserl's philosophical method. In order to reserve a place for "the other" in his phenomenology, Husserl uses the experience of "giving yourself a hand." By means of the disunity that arises between the one who touches and the one who is touched, Husserl tries to find proof of the existence of other subjects.
- 12. Schreber (1988, 114): "In the first period I was still convinced that I was dealing not with real human beings but 'fleeting-improvised-men.' I still cannot see that this was an error on my part; from what I experienced at the time and still experience daily I must rather leave open the possibility that I was right ..."

- 13. Schreber then continues, somewhat less humbly: "Almost insuperable difficulties arise even for me at every attempt to solve these contradictions; a really satisfactory solution would only be possible if one had such complete insight into the nature of God which not even I have attained who have certainly gained deeper insight than all other human beings, because human capacity is limited."
- 14. Schreber (1988: 47, 165; italics in the original): "In the circumstances contrary to the Order of the World which have not arisen this relation has changed—and I wish to mention this at the outset—the weather is now to a certain extent dependent on *my* actions and thoughts; as soon as I indulge in thinking nothing, or in other words stop an activity which proves the existence of the human mind such as playing chess in the garden the wind arises at once. ... The winds arise, however not uninfluenced by the existing state of the weather; but short blasts of wind coinciding with pauses in my thinking are quite unmistakable ..."
- 15. Cf. Lezy (2007, 66): "Regarding oneself as the center of the world can give one a feeling of divine omnipotence. This is often the case among psychotic patients, especially in their ecstatic moments, when they have the experience of being the source of everything that happens. They see the circle of meanings around them as their own creation. This experience is extremely unstable, however, because it can easily change to its opposite. The circle of meanings then becomes crushing or haunting. Living in the grip of this circle can feel both centrifugal (I determine everything) and centripetal (everything is pressing in on me)." (Cf. chapter 1.)
- 16. Sass (1994, 66, 71) says, "The patient experiences his own consciousness as constituting the very world itself while also experiencing it as an empirical fact in the world. ... It seems that, to remain a solipsist, the solipsist must inevitably waver between two unstable positions. ... The implication is certainly paradoxical: solipsism, strangely enough, seems to demand an other mind."
- 17. I wrote about this earlier in section 4.1, as the contrast between experienced and measurable space, and in section 11.3.2 with regard to the idea of infinity as the "warm" infinite space experienced "within" me versus the cold infinite space "beyond" me.
- 18. Published in English in 1988.
- 19. Lacan (1988, 9) says, "Their role [that of *suspended motions*], while crucial to the carrying-out [*pratique*] of the logical process, is not that of experience in the verification of an hypothesis, but rather that of something intrinsic to logical ambiguity."
- 20. Sartre (2003, 126) says, "The nothingness which separates human reality from itself is at the origin of time." (Also see section 12.2.2.)
- 21. Speaking of the nonspatial, temporal character of this logical deduction, Lacan himself says (1988, 9), "In complete opposition to this, the coming into play as signifiers of the phenomena contested here makes the temporal, not spatial, structure

of the logical process prevail. What the *suspended motions* disclose is not what the subjects see, but rather what they have found out positively about *what they do not see*: the appearance of the black discs. That which constitutes these suspended motions as signifying is not their direction, but rather their interruption [*temps d' arrêt*]. Their crucial value is not that of a binary choice between two inertly juxtaposed combinations—rendered incomplete by the visual exclusion of the third—but rather of a verificatory movement instituted by a logical process in which a subject transforms the three possible combinations into three *times of possibility."*

- 22. When prisoner A is in the jail cell with only one other prisoner, I refer to him as A2.
- 23. While there is an equivalence and an interchangeability in the dual relationship, Lacan insists that in the third phase the subject should be distinguished from the two other positions. Even though we, as observing readers or outsiders, can put all the subjects on an equal footing when regarding the experiment in its entirety (this is how they reach their conclusion *simultaneously*), Lacan nevertheless emphasizes (1988, 14) that the subjectification has its origin in the *competition* and *struggle* with the other: "The 'I,' subject of the conclusive assertion, is isolated from the other, that is, from the relation of reciprocity, by a logical *beat* [battement de temps]. ... the 'I' in question here defines itself through a subjectification of *competition* with the other, in the function of logical time."
- 24. An interesting side effect of this is that after the introduction of the four, the A2, who is reasoning from the imaginary position (see the previous section), seems to be proven right in a cell with more prisoners: whoever has to stay in the cell must do so because he has a black mark and not on account of his faulty subjectivity.
- 25. See Deleuze (1980, 134ff.).

- 1. Ricoeur (1967a, 168) makes a number of interesting comments regarding the sacred and the way in which it manifests itself: "The totality [of the universe] ... becomes available only when it is condensed in sacred beings and objects which become the privileged signs of the significant whole. Hence the primordial diversification of symbols. ... The Sacred takes contingent forms precisely because it is 'floating'; and so it cannot be divined except through the indefinite diversity of mythologies and rituals. ... If the plenitude were experienced, it would be everywhere in space and time; but because it is only aimed at symbolically, it requires special signs and a discourse on the signs; their heterogeneity bears witness to the significant whole by its contingent outcroppings."
- 2. Here we have followed Taylor in sketching the contours of good and evil within a nonmodern worldview. This does not yet give us a clear-cut alternative notion

of good and evil, however. After leaving modernity—for the Middle Ages (in terms of thought) or for madness (in terms of practice)—we find a wide variety of views about the good-evil relationship. There are views in which evil is thought to be everywhere and man is thought to be the only instrument capable of fighting for the good. Others insist that it was man who brought evil into the world and that his job is to rectify what he has done. Still other views hold that there is a kind of order in the world, which contains a balance of good and evil and which must be carefully guarded and never disturbed (see Ricoeur 1967a). In any case, the important thing in this chapter is that the psychotic travels through worlds with different views about the good-evil relationship, located on the other side of the modern horizon, and that we can understand madness better by aiming our gaze past this historic horizon.

- 3. Eliade (1961, 13) writes, "What matters is that a hierophany [revelation of the sacred] implies a choice, a clear-cut separation of this thing—which manifests the sacred—from everything else around it. ... The thing that becomes sacred is still separated in regard to itself, for it only becomes a hierophany at the moment of stopping to be a mere profane something, at the moment of acquiring a new *dimension* of sacredness."
- 4. Brown provides an even more explicit example (in Peterson 1982, 217ff.). He writes about how a visit to a barbershop changes into a sacred ceremony in a heavenly, timeless temple: "I stopped at a barbershop on the lower west side for a trim and a shave. The moment I entered the shop, I was impressed by its unworldly quality. It had a somehow regal, sanctified, ceremonial air about it. White marble washstands with brass spigots stood along one wall, and in a cut-glass case were shaving mugs with ornate gilt lettering on their surfaces. Far more than a barbershop, it was a temple erected in the previous century to the high, traditional tonsorial art. Here, I thought, they would know how to apply leeches and practice other lost arts of the days when barbers were chirurgeons. Dark, mellow mahogany, cut-glass mirrors, shaving soap, lotions, powders, steaming towels—it was altogether the celestial barbershop, and its atmosphere was luminous, electric. I asked the bald, old German who attended me for a crew cut, and was furious when he gave it a Dutch effect, as though a bowl had been put on my head and clipped around. He apologized abjectly and went on to shave me with what seemed a touch of pure reverence. I felt that I was being anointed in the religious sense; this old member of heaven's household staff knew I was a golden boy-deity and handled me accordingly. As I lay back in the chair and his too-gentle hands worked over my face, a beatific feeling flowed over me and, I felt, transfigured my expression. I sensed that my serene visage was meeting the regard of a greater being than that which shone through the eyes of the Chinese painting, and that He was finding me good to look upon."
- 5. When these events took place, Nokia was one of the most popular brands of telephone.

- 6. In saying this, I am departing from the notion of the sacred as Taylor uses it. For Taylor, secularization has reduced our sensitivity to the sacred. In the way I am presenting it here, there is absolutely no reduction in sensitivity but only change in what is experienced as sacred.
- 7. The idea here that, essentially, every symbol immediately sweeps you away from the here and now and takes you to another transcendent domain, and that symbols always cause distances to shrink, is an interesting one. So every symbol turns an experience into a spiritual deed. Eliade (1965, 207) writes, "It follows that the man who understands a symbol not only 'opens himself' to the objective world, but at the same time succeeds in emerging from his personal situation and reaching a comprehension of the universal. This is to be explained by the fact that symbols 'explode' immediate reality as well as particular situations. When some tree or other incarnates the World Tree, or when the spade is assimilated to the phallus and agricultural labour to the act of generation, etc., one may say that the immediate reality of these objects or activities 'explodes' beneath the irruptive force of a deeper reality. ... Thanks to the symbol, the individual experience is 'awoken' and transmuted into a spiritual act." If we follow this idea, then the psychotic is merely the one who has a higher awareness of the symbolic stratification and spiritual significance of the world, while "normal" people walk around with lesser awareness or in a condition of slumber.
- 8. Michaux describes this as follows: "The kind of antechamber each of us possesses, which permits one to keep someone nearby at a distance, no longer functions. ... The other person enters you. He violates your vital space. The glances of others are cast upon you without filtering. One is vulnerable, open to being traumatized, the threshold of suffering is instantly reached. ... Loss of psychic territory, of ownership of one's ground."
- 9. Examples of this are Peters and an anonymous person, both in Landis (1964, 180, 181): "My radar beam was a source of delight to me. Not only did it not diminish, but I found that I could exercise a certain control over it. ... I could repel attendants or patients at will. ... All that was necessary was to recognize the central source of heat in my solar plexus and move it into my eyes, stare angrily at my enemy and he would become pale, frightened and usually leave. Since the source of the power was definitely located inside me, in my chest, it must obviously come from the sun. Solar power, solar plexus. For this reason, whenever I was not engaged in some routine eating, visiting the latrine, having my bandages changed—I gazed at the sun, absorbing its light and warmth. ... During the paranoid period I thought I was being persecuted for my beliefs, that my enemies were actively trying to interfere with my activities, were trying to harm me, and at times even to kill me. ... In order to carry through the task which had been imposed upon me, and to defend myself against the terrifying and bewildering dangers of my external situation, I was endowed in my imagination with truly cosmic powers. The sense of power was not always purely defensive but was also connected with a strong sense of valid inspiration. I felt that I had power to determine the weather which responded to my inner moods, and even

to control the movement of the sun in relation to other astronomical bodies." (Also see chapter 16.)

- 10. Michaux (1974, 134ff.) beautifully describes how this works in practice: "It becomes difficult to tell if inert things might not be alive with a cunning hidden life, an intra-life similar to that life which we sense beneath our own. The hiatus between the animate and the inanimate is no longer apparent. ... Made dynamic, capable of movement, the source of movements, everything everywhere seems ready to become animate. The mineral kingdom no longer has its old weighty and restful solidity. Every object is charged, is potential. Whether made of wood, stone, leather, or any other material, it has lost its dense and stable look."
- 11. This is the last quote from Custance in this book. Here we part company with him by way of a quote from Podvoll (1990, 96) that tells us something about the rest of Custance's life: "The last that is heard of John Custance is that he was living at home with his family, hard at work trying to restore the family farm, raising animals, and delighting in the birth of his first grandchild. ... His last published words in a chapter called 'Down to Earth,' speak of his more balanced state of mind, still finding pleasure in the intensity of ordinary reality: 'There has been a thunderstorm, but it is a lovely evening now, with the ley in front of the window shining in the sun with that peculiar yellowish green that so often makes the glory of a sunset. On the ley a cock and hen pheasant symbolize that unity of *positive* and *negative* in a completed whole which still so infuriatingly eludes me. But instead of complaining I should be thankful that I have caught a glimpse of it."
- 12. Frese provides a similar example in Watkins (2010, 183): "I started to 'understand' that all decisions could be made by translating the decision-making process into numerical codes. I decoded many of the problems I knew the corporation was having, but unfortunately in the process, I myself started turning into various animals, in an evolutionary descending manner. I spent brief periods of time as an ape, a dog, a dragon or snake, a fish, an insect, and an amoeba; finally, I was turned into an atom in the inside of a nuclear explosive device that was on its way to destroy the Soviet Union and the rest of the world as well."
- 13. We could also interpret and transform these strange stories into what, for us, is a more comprehensible form. In psychoanalysis, such stories are regarded as symbolic expressions of an underlying psychological content that is not experienced by the madman himself but is expressed in symbols and personifications. The idea in psychoanalysis is that the psychoanalyst decodes the psychotic stories and exposes their real psychological-emotional meaning. Such psychoanalytical interpretations can contribute to an increase in understanding and insight in the psychotic worlds. The objection to this is that while psychotic stories about telepathy and the gods may not be dismissed as evidence of a thought disorder, they nevertheless are stripped of their original power and meaning and are placed entirely within the safe and trusted domain of an *inner* psychological struggle.

- 14. Ever since this magical-religious phenomenon has become known, comparisons have been drawn between shamans, the demon-possessed, and the mad (see, for example, Campbell 1972, Kalweit 1989, and Silverman 1967). Lukoff draws the strongest parallel and asserts (1990, 25), "All mental and physical illnesses, accidents, and other ordeals, by creating psychospiritual crises, open the door to the shamanic world of spirits and non-ordinary reality. In contemporary society, psychotic states of consciousness retain their power to awaken shamanic tendencies and talents." Eliade (1964, 4) himself makes this connection explicitly: "The writer who approaches shamanism as a psychologist will be led to regard it as primarily the manifestation of a psyche in crisis or even in retrogression; he will not fail to compare it with certain aberrant psychic behavior patterns or to class it among mental diseases of the hysteroid or epileptoid type." I am not going to describe shamanism with the help of knowledge about aberrant psychological behavior, however. My approach is quite the opposite: I will try to explain madness by appealing to what is known about shamanism.
- 15. Eliade (1964, 485): "All these mythical images express the need to transcend opposites, to abolish the polarity typical of the human condition, in order to attain to ultimate reality. ... In the myths the 'paradoxical' passage emphatically testifies that he who succeeds in accomplishing it has transcended the human condition; he is a shaman, a hero, or a 'spirit,' and indeed this 'paradoxical' passage can be accomplished only by one who is 'spirit.'"
- 16. Eliade (1964, 508, 511): "The shamans have played an essential role in the defense of the psychic integrity of the community. They are pre-eminently the anti-demonic champions; they combat not only demons and disease, but also the black magicians ... shamanism defends life, health, fertility, the world of 'light,' against death, diseases, sterility, disaster, and the world of 'darkness.'"
- 17. Eliade (1964, 511) writes, "It is as a further result of his ability to travel in the supernatural worlds and to see the superhuman beings (gods, demons, spirits of the dead, etc.) that the shaman has been able to contribute decisively to the knowledge of death. ... The lands that the shaman sees and the personages that he meets during his ecstatic journeys in the beyond are minutely described by the shaman himself, during or after his trance. The unknown and terrifying world of death assumes form, is organized in accordance with particular patterns; finally it displays a structure and, in course of time, becomes familiar and acceptable."
- 18. Elsewhere Eliade also remarks (1964, 477), "There is every reason to believe that the use of narcotics was encouraged by the quest for 'magical heat.' The smoke from certain herbs, the 'combustion' of certain plants had the virtue of increasing power. The narcotized person 'grows hot'; narcotic intoxication is 'burning.' Mechanical means were sought for obtaining the 'inner heat' that led to trance. We must also take into consideration the symbolic value of narcotic intoxication. It was equivalent to a 'death'; the intoxicated person left his body, acquired the condition of ghosts

and spirits. Mystical ecstasy being assimilated to a temporary 'death' or to leaving the body, all intoxications that produced the same result were given a place among the techniques of ecstasy. But closer study of the problem gives the impression that the use of narcotics is, rather, indicative of the decadence of a technique of ecstasy or of its extension to 'lower' peoples or social groups [italics]. In any case, we have observed that the use of narcotics (tobacco, etc.) is relatively recent in the shamanism of the far Northeast." (Cf. section 10.3.3.)

- 19. Shamans do use their peculiar abilities to show off their powers and insights. Eliade (1964, 474) says, "Like the devil in the beliefs of the European peoples, shamans are not merely 'masters over fire'; they can also incarnate the spirit of fire to the point where, during séances, they emit flames from their mouths, their noses, and their whole bodies. This sort of feat must be put in the category of shamanic wonders connected with the 'mastery over fire,' of which we have given many examples. The magical power involved expresses the 'spirit condition' obtained by shamans."
- 20. Eliade (1958b, 88) says, "It is easy to understand that the uninitiated have long confused these 'powers' (*siddhi*) with the vocation of yoga. In India a yogin has always been considered a *mahäsiddha*, a possessor of occult powers, a 'magician.' ... That all but a few of these god-men sought to exceed the human condition is obvious. But few of them succeeded in passing beyond the condition of the *siddha*, the condition of the 'magician' or 'god.'"
- 21. I have already discussed this odd credulity in another context in section 10.3.2 on Aldous Huxley.
- 22. We see this in what Nelson (1990, 259)—erroneously—claims to be the essence of religion: "The self stretches outward, once again opening to the energies of the Ground, allowing itself to be infused with what every major religion agrees is its essence: universal love." And (1990, 264), "Unconditional surrender to a grander power, to his heart's impulse to regain Eden, is his salvation, not his executioner. Once he surrenders, regeneration in spirit commences on its own, and his larger self recognizes the Ground not as a menacing force, but as an intimate and beneficent power that heals his wounds and graces him with newfound potency."
- 23. Williams (2012, 63): "A common assumption held by many, but not all, transpersonally-oriented psychologists is that while the line between spiritual emergency and psychosis is often faint, such a line does exist. These psychologists typically argue that spiritual emergency is a mystical experience that has the potential for great healing and beneficial transformation when the process is allowed to complete, whereas psychosis is purely regressive and needs to be checked as quickly as possible to avoid an ever worsening spiral into degeneration. The implications of this argument are that the most helpful interventions for each category of experience are essentially opposite, leading to a situation in which it is very important to distinguish one from the other."

- 24. Nelson juggles with scientific data to demonstrate the limitations of the same scientific attitude. This frequently happens in these kinds of "spiritual" books, in which modern scientific insights (quantum mechanics, chaos theory, multidimensional models, the theory of relativity) are presented as proof of age-old spiritual wisdom.
- 25. Nelson (1990, 253): "Buried in the concretized second-chakra images are fragmented themes of an aborted upward journey and of being hopelessly lost or damned, which reflect this person's feelings about himself and his chronic psychosis. Confronted with such pervasive and long-standing cognitive disorganization, however, a healer would be ill-advised to attempt purely psychological interventions."
- 26. Nelson (1990, 266) makes the following distinction: "A spiritual emergency is an ASC of profound disorientation and ego disruption that sometimes accompanies spiritual emergence. The ASC is often of near-psychotic proportions ... but it can end with a positive outcome if not interrupted. ... A spiritual emergency differs from both schizophrenia and regression in the service of transcendence in that the self neither regresses nor retreats in any other way, but actively engages the process even though it temporarily forfeits its ego-based ability to function competently in the social world."
- 27. Cf. Nelson (1990, 300): "Creative imagination reaches beyond the literal to transverbal symbols—exactly the opposite of regression to preverbal fantasy. Vision and high fantasy are not lower but higher modes of reasoning, involving a magical synergy that goes beyond paleologic and neologic. If the emotion-drenched symbols of the abstract painter are more than concepts, the fear-driven images of the schizophrenic are less. While the evocative metaphors of the poet are universals that succeed in being particulars, the concrete identifications of the schizophrenic are particulars that fail to be universals."
- 28. Nelson (1990, 316): "These kinds of paranormal powers are sometimes noticeable in people who have regressed to preegoic levels. This is why second-chakra regressions are often confused with spiritual emergencies that manifest sixth-chakra capabilities. To consider them identical, however, is to lapse into the pre/trans fallacy. During second-chakra regression, original repression fails just when it is most needed. ... During the in-between period, however, partial repression of the Ground from awareness is a requisite for sanity."
- 29. This attitude with regard to psychoses and spiritual experiences is something we often see in the transpersonal school. Thus, Kief writes (2013, 16), for example, "For those suffering a spiritual crisis the verification of reality is intact; for the psychotic it is missing."
- 30. Also see Berthold-Bond 2009 and Kusters 2007b.
- 31. Taylor also expresses this dilemma as follows: "We see how fateful the issue [the contrast between the biomedical and the spiritual perspective] is for a human life. To worry endlessly about the meaning of an unease whose whole basis is really organic is to have wasted time and effort and to have incurred unnecessary suffering. But to have tried to get rid of an unease that one really needed to understand is crippling."

- 32. In my interpretation of Taylor, I have adapted the notion of the sacred in such a way that it connects to the mystical-mad notions of the One, being, infinity, and nothingness. Such a notion of the sacred is "more dangerous" than that of Taylor, whose view of the sacred (and God) and madness is more naive—or more positive.
- 33. It will not have escaped anyone paying close attention that the size, number of pages, number of words, and even the book design of the Dutch version of *Sources of the Self* by Charles Taylor is strikingly similar—all too striking to the present work. The same kinds of interesting parallels can also be seen between Plotinus's *Enneads* and Kingsley's *Reality* (see the finale).
- 34. Cf. Kingsley (1999, 72): "If you look at the old accounts of incubation you can still read the amazement as people discovered that the state they'd entered continued regardless of whether they were asleep or awake, whether they opened their eyes or shut them. Often you find the mention of a state that's like being awake but different from being awake, that's like sleep but not sleep: that's neither sleep nor waking. It's not the waking state, it's not an ordinary dream and it's not dreamless sleep. It's something else, something in between. ... If we want to we can talk about ecstasy or trance or a cataleptic state or suspended animation. ... Once you experience this consciousness you know what it is to be neither asleep nor awake, neither alive nor dead, and to be at home not only in this world of the senses but in another reality as well."

Chapter 15

- 1. Such experiences of sacred Planning have also been reported under the influence of LSD. An LSD user in Masters & Houston (1966, 19) says, "I directed my attention towards the room and suddenly everything was holy. The stove, and the pottery and the chairs and the record player and the soup ladles and the old bottles—all were touched with sacrality, and I bowed to each of them in turn and worshiped. One pot in particular was so well endowed with divinity I dared not come closer to it than four or five feet lest I be burned to ashes for my unclean lips and impure heart."
- 2. Similar experiences have been reported by people under the influence of LSD. In Masters & Houston (1966, 30) someone comments, "I imagined myself a character in a novel, and had some bad moments when I seemed to be imprisoned on a printed page from which I could not escape. I wondered if all fictional characters were not thus alive and imprisoned between a book's covers, or on the pages where they appear."

Chapter 16

- 1. I have already shown that many mad experiences occur with reference to the technology of their time (telegraph, radio, television, internet).
- 2. They may not appear in the above quotes, but elsewhere in *Inferno*, Strindberg meets people whom he knows do play a role in the Plan.

- 3. This comment makes us wonder whether case 10 or Conrad was consciously referring to the same secret power found in Franz Kafka's novel *The Castle*.
- 4. Cf. Sass (1992, 271): "One patient believed his gaze was a kind of radar beam that moved people about or made them become pale and frightened; a second felt he could control the weather by shifts in his inner mood; a third sensed that, by means of an electromagnetic fluid, she was causing all the deaths, illnesses and catastrophes in the world, and was stealing the minds of those who went insane. One patient experienced physical objects and human beings as somehow emanating from her own eyes: 'Many things come out of my lovely blue eyes, e.g., bed sheets, smoothly ironed pillows and quilts of soft feathers ...'"
- 5. Cf. Tellegen 1971.
- 6. Frese would later become a professor of psychiatry at a few American universities and an activist for patients' rights.
- 7. This is similar to the problem of defining addiction, for example. If someone is obsessed with watching TV, or with gambling, sex, alcohol, or mountain climbing, how can we determine if it's a hobby, a passion, or an addiction? As in the distinction between prophecies and madness, we usually never get past questions such as "Is the person himself troubled by it?" "Does it impede his ability to function properly?" and "Is it healthy?" The answers to these questions offer no real insight into whether something is an addiction or a passion, however.
- 8. A "test" to determine how "stuck," how fossilized, or how "fanciful" the thoughts of a psychoplanatic are would involve a critical examination of his images and speech patterns. Unfortunately, the opposite is often the case. As soon as someone is caught speaking in a way that is strange and not immediately comprehensible, his speech is added to the list of delusions or hallucinations without any further attempt to determine whether he himself actually believes it or what it might mean in the greater scheme of things.
- 9. In this connection, it is also striking that, without any further comment, Conrad says this about case 53: "if he were to say something like that again, he would be shot."
- 10. If we adhere to such a vision, then some delusions from the Nazi period acquire a much more sinister aftertaste. See Conrad (1958, 112), for instance: "Auf der Fahrt nach Nauheim merkte Fall 64 dass der ganze Zug voll Kriminalisten sässe, die ihn beobachteten, man glaubte jedenfalls, er würde deutsche Stellungen an die Engländer verraten. Bald hörte er Bemerkungen: der gehört in eine Halde gestellt und erschossen. ... Nachts war es nun furchtbar: Im Zimmer über ihm hörte er dauernd, wie dort Leute abgewürgt wurden. Und erwartete jeden Augenblick, man werde auch ihn erwürgen. Man habe die Leute jedenfalls in die Badewanne hineingesteckt und unter Wasser gehalten, bis sie nicht mehr schnaufen konnten. Er habe das Gurgeln deutlich gehört und die Leichen dann durch

das Rohr hinuntergespült. Schreien habe er nicht gehört, die Leute seien wohl überlistet worden. In der Früh habe er gehört, als ob der Totenwagen an führe, die Leichen zu holen. ... Man habe getan, als ob die Kinder aufgehängt werden, er habe gehört: 'tut den Kopf herein'— und genau vernommen, wie sie stranguliert wurden: 'Jetzt weiss ich ja, das hat man mir nur vorgetauscht; aber noch vor 14 Tagen war es so, als ob die ganze Familie, Mutter, Tante und Kinder, aufgehängt würden.'"

- 11. Farber (2012), in his discussion of the modern patient movement, explains, "It is my contention that the Kingdom is now seeking to enter history, to incarnate, through the psyches of the mad. This is the unprecedented messianic event of the 21st century. There are others with this messianic sensibility—e.g., visionary activists; some Christians; new age authors—who are sane by conventional criteria, but my focus here is on the mad. For the mad are among the first to awaken. There is a greater percentage of persons with a sense of mission among 'schizophrenics' than among any other group in the country."
- 12. In the psychiatric literature, there is also mention of a "world catastrophe," which goes by the name of "Cotard's syndrome," in which you think "that the world has ended and you are dead" while others insist this is not so. Young & Leafhead (1969, 159) write, "Cotard's syndrome is a rare condition of which the central symptom is a nihilistic delusion which, in its complete form, leads the patient to deny his own existence and that of the external world." This seems more like a form of Ø-delusion, however, than something having to do with the apocalypse as a process of annihilation. In order to interpret their own strange experiences, sufferers of Cotard's syndrome reach for the most extreme means: if everything has "really" happened, then all we can conclude is that everything is "unreal." If this is life, then they are dead. One patient in Young & Leafhead (1969, 159) says, "I want to understand what has happened and I am mad or all of it has happened and I did die. Either way I can't win. I don't want to know which one it is. I'm scared of finding out." In these kinds of cases, the idea that the world has ended or that the person himself is dead is more a conclusion that arises from reflecting on his own experiences and not "an experience of a process of one's own demise."
- 13. Cf. Schreber (1903, 48): "In erster Linie dachte ich immer an eine Verminderung der Sonnenwärme durch größere Entfernung der Sonne und eine damit eingetretene mehr oder weniger allgemeine Vereisung. In zweiter Linie dachte ich an Erdbeben oder dergleichen. ... Ferner stellte ich mir als Möglichkeit vor, die Kunde, daß sich auf einmal in der modernen Welt so etwas wie ein Zauberer in der Person des Professor Flechsig aufgethan habe und ich als eine doch immerhin in weiteren Kreisen bekannte Persönlichkeit plötzlich verschwunden sei, habe Furcht und Schrecken unter den Menschen verbreitet, die Grundlagen der Religion zerstört und das Umsichgreifen einer allgemeinen Nervosität und Unsittlichkeit verursacht, in deren Folge dann verheerende Seuchen über die Menschheit hereingebrochen seien. Diese letztere Vorstellung wurde namentlich dadurch begünstigt, daß längere Zeit hindurch von zwei in Europa kaum noch bekannten Krankheiten, der Lepra und der Pest, die Rede war,

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die in der Menschheit um sich gegriffen haben sollten und von denen sich Spuren auch an meinem eigenen Körper zeigten."

- 14. Barber (1993, 165) writes about these two journeys: "The dramaturgical status of Artaud's voyage to Ireland is in stark contrast with that of his voyage to the Land of the Tarahumara. ... If Artaud exercises an extreme degree of imaginative control over the dramaturgy of his Tarahumara adventure—to the extent that doubt has been cast on its authenticity—it is clear from external evidence that in Ireland a crisis arose from a desperate and losing battle to impose such control."
- 15. An example of the more concrete bizarre fragments from Artaud's post-Ireland period can be found in a letter to a certain Parisot, written in September 1945 (1976, 443ff.): "There is an old matter which everyone is talking about privately but which no one in ordinary life is willing to talk about publicly. ... This matter is a kind of mass spell-casting in which the whole world more or less participates off and on. ... These magic spells are usually the work of groups of French people in Paris who meet at certain hours of the day or night in certain out-of-the-way streets in the vicinity of Nôtre-Dame-des-Champs, the Porte d'Orléans. ... When these magic spells are cast, traffic is stopped by the police for an hour on the street where they are to occur and this happened two weeks ago. ... I have answered these spells with piles of bodies right in Paris, and the streets where these bodies have fallen, have also been closed off by the police. ..."

Finale

1. Cf. Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night."

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