

PREFACE

The history of madness, as it has been called, is so closely interwoven with that of religious life and thought that tracing and deciphering the points of connection and dissimilarity between the two needs little or no justification (Quétel 2012).¹ Spiritualities, as we encounter them within their various historical expressions,² whether in ritual or practice, or in texts – be they scriptural, hagiographical or mystical – are inextricably intertwined with beliefs, modes of perception, certainties and doubt, as well as with heterogeneous notions of transcendence. As such they are embedded in what we may call, to avoid circumlocutions, the symbolic, and thus language is as crucial to our understanding of spirituality as it is to psychosis. So much so that the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan thought that it was principally language that distinguished madness from mysticism. A point he illustrated by comparing the writings of Daniel Schreber to those of John of the Cross (Lacan 1993). To say this is to indicate a limit to symbolisation, a frontier that is expressed in an elliptical obscurity that characterises both mystic speech and the language of psychosis. Such a limit, of course, resonates with the possibility of its transgression (Oedipus).

Spirituality and psychosis

Although a number of books and articles have been published on the subject of spirituality and mental ill health, it is usually approached from the angle of healthcare or psychology³ and in terms of diagnostic categories (e.g. psychosis,⁴ substance misuse), different patient groups (children and adolescents, people with an intellectual disability, the elderly) and clinical responses (how to assess the spiritual needs of patients; spiritual care and psychotherapy). In addition, there is in the literature some discussion of the more fundamental question of the relationship between religion, religious experience and spirituality. Arguably, within this genre, attempts to define spirituality and its relationship to religion, understanding of the philosophical discourse underlying spirituality and issues concerning its context and historical perspective – familiar territory both to biblical scholars and theologians – are

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less frequently addressed. However, these issues are crucial to the notion of spirituality, whether we are discussing it in terms of religious belief – religion being the medium, as it were, through which spirituality is frequently experienced and elucidated – or the more general, postmodern conception in which it is not anchored to a traditional, culturally rooted form of theism. The situation where this is brought most visibly to the surface is in the case of psychosis, as it confronts us with the question of where belief stands in relation to rationality and thus in relation to sanity.

Psychoanalysis and the study of religious phenomenology

The exception to this overly pastoral, pragmatic approach is found in psychoanalytic studies of religion which have, over the years, thrown up a number of more academic works which deal with the history of religious phenomenology and its philosophical and historical foundations. The more erudite studies focus on the foundations of psychoanalysis in its relation to religious belief (Ricoeur 1970), particularly the influence on Freud of the Jewish mystical tradition (Ostow 1982). But with the exception of two recent studies, both published in 2012 and which deserve particular mention, these all appeared some years ago. The first of these recent works is by Delphine Renard and is an analysis of the essential proximity between the Jewish tradition and psychoanalysis based on a close reading of the four discourses of Lacan. The second, by Gérard Guillerault, is a study of the Catholicism of Françoise Dolto. However, neither of these books directly discuss the related theme of psychosis.

The studies in this present volume explore, sometimes from an oblique angle, various facets of that inward turn associated equally with psychoanalysis and spirituality. In so doing they bring together issues concerning the interrelation of psychosis and religious experience from a variety of fields, including the neighbouring intellectual landscapes of philosophy, psychoanalysis, anthropology and hagiography. This broad approach, which in itself resonates to some extent with Freud's own method of elucidation (*Aufklärung*),⁵ inevitably hints at the hidden symmetry between these various discourses.⁶ However, darkness inevitably appears, as Nägele (2007) puts it, at the sutures where radically heterogeneous processes interlace. This is what Derrida (1967) describes as an enigmatic conjuncture that resists unification. Yet it is precisely at this complex, though nevertheless quite intelligible, point that any serious work must begin.⁷ Such an approach goes back a long way, beyond the Sophists, to philosophers like Heraclitus. It is an approach in which myth is subjected to a rationalism that is not necessarily hostile to spirituality.⁸ Xenophanes, a deeply religious man, had said that if oxen could paint, they would paint gods that looked like oxen.⁹ Thus, he writes that mortals think their gods are born, have clothes, speech and bodies;¹⁰ that Ethiopians think their gods have stub noses and are black; that Thracians see them with blue

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eyes and red hair,¹¹ as the different races see the gods having their own characteristics. By a *reductio ad absurdum*, he concludes, animals would do the same. That is to say, Xenophanes understood the essential relativity of religious ideas and used this insight to drain off any residue of anthropomorphism from his conception of the divine (Jaeger 1947) while remaining responsive to the numinous. What Freud added to this was the notion that the gods were made not just in man's own image but in the image of the imaginary or ideal father. Psychoanalysis maintains that the complex concept of the father has great bearing, not only on our relationship to the Other – which is always elsewhere – but also to psychic structure in general and specifically to psychosis. Such an approach privileges analogy and biography. And this includes the terrain of *Krankengeschichten* (histories or stories of illness; what we would call case studies) which, as Freud himself realised, function more like novellas than science.¹² De Certeau comments shrewdly that psychoanalytic biography works from within, eroding and dismantling historical encomiums in much the same way as the mysticism of the sixteenth and seventeenth century did in relation to the religious institution (de Certeau 2006). In this sense, as critique, psychoanalytic biography functions to dissolve hagiography.

The languages of interiority, conversion and psychosis

The structure of this volume is that of a triptych. Part 1 depicts the languages of interiority as they allude to what has largely been, starting out with Freud's own works, a suppressed transcendence. Here we cannot but fail to be reminded of Dennis Klein's shrewd observation that, from its beginning in 1902 until 1906, all seventeen members of the original group of psychoanalysts were Jews (Klein 1981), even if we demur at reading psychoanalysis merely as a dissimulated form of Hassidism (Bakan 1958). As we now know, Freud was deeply suspicious of Jung, even prior to their break in 1912, precisely because he was not a Jew. The latter's subsequent breakdown, which has generally been referred to as his *Auseinandersetzung mit dem Unbewußten* (confrontation with the unconscious) resulted in his rejection of the Lutheranism of his father, as he recalled a childhood dream of a temple containing a giant ritual phallus (Bishop 2008). Yet, despite his Christian formation, and although his narrative is impregnated with patristic and scholastic references, it fell not to the Protestant pastor's son Jung, but to Jacques Lacan, more than to any other analyst, to reveal this Freudian distortion by punctuating his seminars with references to Paul, Luther and Pascal and, more particularly, to mystical writers including Hadewijch of Antwerp, Meister Eckhart and Angelus Silesius.¹³ Yet, even in its encounter with Buddhism, Lacanian space is filled with a Catholic concern, its appearance corresponding to the extraordinary growth in interest in Eastern religion in the West, since the Second World War.¹⁴ Zen, with its intentional attempts to express spiritual truths in a non-logical, non-rational way, came as

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an enormous liberation to many who felt intellectually constrained and restricted by the dominant orthodoxy of the time. It meant discovering that the Buddha is not what the effigies in the temple lead one to expect, 'for there is no longer any image, and consequently nothing to see, no one to see it, and a Void in which no image is even conceivable. "The true seeing," said Shen Hui, "is when there is no seeing"' (Rice 1972: 82). Indeed, the relationship between the visible (the ritual; the relic; the symptom) and the invisible (the gods; the heavens; the mind; the unconscious) is itself emblematic of that terrain into which psychoanalysis and the sacred are inserted.

It is the eye, in the act of seeing, that links the first to the second panel of the triptych. Jean Paris (1965) sees in Giotto's painting, *Stigmata of St Francis*, in the Louvre, a complex interplay of connections between the wounds in Francis' hands, feet and side, and the Christ figure which hovers above him.¹⁵ Their eyes are fixed upon one another, rays of light come from Christ's wounds and somehow represent the invisible gaze that links them. Through an analysis of these connections, Paris articulates an understanding of the power of the gaze and its relation to the function of the stigmata. Schreber had spoken of being penetrated by divine rays, in a way reminiscent of Giotto's depiction of Francis, which 'serve mainly to inflict damage on the body' while in a dissociated state of ecstasy (Schreber 2000: 141). Some of these rays Schreber describes as impure, others as pure. The pure rays, he says, build up or mend the damage. Here we find traces of the specular image in the fragmented body of the saint, which becomes an exemplum of the constituted nature and irreparable fragility of identity, and this includes sexuality, which in both hagiographical and psychoanalytic discourse becomes a 'privileged ideogram' (Brown 1991: 230). This echoes a stanza from John of the Cross: 'Your gaze was on my eyes imprinted so, That it effeminized (*me adamabas*) . . . On me you well may gaze' (Campbell 1972: 23). In this epitome of the imaginary, where manifold personal mythologies intertwine to give birth to the ego, the subject's relation to himself is made manifest ambiguously both as symptom and as *bios*, lifestyle. This dual disclosure amounts to what we might call an enunciation of the trajectories of conversion, in which the body is made to pay the price for having access to the symbolic (de Certeau 2006). This confrontation with all that lies below the threshold of the visible (Foucault 1994) is played out equally in asceticism and in psychosis, and here Augustine, Krishna, Nicholas of Cusa, Francis of Assisi, Arjuna, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, and an assortment of sadhus, devotees of the Tantra, make an appearance. That this is no mere excursus is clear from an examination of Freud's own interests. For he had corresponded at length with Romain Rolland about Indian mysticism and in 1931, on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, the Indian Psychoanalytical Society presented him with a small ivory statue of the god Vishnu. Freud put it on his desk (Vaidyanathan and Kripal 1999).

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It is the psychoses more directly that forms the third panel in the triptych. Reviewing the well-authenticated examples of religious madness and hysteria – including its associated abnormal physical phenomena as it had been discussed in James (1902), Underhill (1911), Delacroix (1908) and Starbuck (1899) – Butler (1951) questions whether it is possible to distinguish a genuine mysticism from ‘morbid pathological conditions’ (Butler 1951: 192). His conclusion is an interesting one. First, he says that in both cases – that of madness and that of mysticism – the phenomena (visions, voices, trances, etc.) may be identical and can therefore only be of secondary interest. Second, that in both cases the *visio* (literally, ‘what is seen’ – the vision, and the mode of organising the visible) and hallucinations spring from the unconscious.¹⁶ That is to say, they are written in a language we have forgotten how to read. And third, that it is only in the effect these experiences have on the life of the person that we are able to distinguish madness from mysticism. Citing numerous examples, Butler (1951) demonstrates that, whether or not we consider the descriptions the mystics give of their spiritual experiences as illusory or as intimations of divinity, they lived vigorous, powerful and coherent lives.¹⁷ Here, in this third section of the book we encounter some of our contemporaries who, like Jung, have been through periods in which they have been enveloped in their own suffering and struggle with sanity.

Our interest in publishing these papers is not in order to present a neat doctrinal edifice but rather, to some extent, to subvert the allure of the simulacrum, of systematic explanations and false architectures by indicating the ambiguities, disjunction and contradictions that lie behind these varied intellectual dialects. For this reason the introductions to each part of the book do not attempt to recapitulate everything the authors say or even to synthesise their arguments. The latter approach, though no doubt somewhat more respectful of the intelligence of the reader than the former, would still confer on the contributions an imaginary conclusion rather than the intimation of a further opening. Our approach tries to avoid settling into the resemblance between psychosis and spirituality by the imposition of any such *méconnaissance* (parody) of cohesion or solution to what is articulated in the variegated corpus of the text, but rather to punctuate the illusion of mastery or an easy understanding, by gesturing towards new, sometimes tangential, directions of thought.¹⁸ Some of the chapters, while lucid, are rather more dense than others and come with a sediment of notes and references. However, taken together, these studies – precisely because they form a catena that transverses a number of discourses – show that it is in psychosis that the question of where religious belief and experience stand in relation to sanity is brought most forcefully to the surface.

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Notes

- 1 See Foucault (1961). Quétel discusses the curious etymology of the French word *folie* (madness), which has its origins in Late Latin and from which the word *fool* (fool, imbecile) derives. These are difficult words to translate into English, as their sense ranges from folly to mental illness and madness, and from idiot to insane.
- 2 The background literature on the interface between spirituality and culture is vast but particular mention should be made of Michel de Certeau (1987), *La Faiblesse de croire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil – see esp. pp. 41–65).
- 3 The best example of this is J. Swinton (2001), *Spirituality in Mental Health Care: Rediscovering a Forgotten Dimension* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publications), on which most other recent studies depend. Swinton's research emerged from his background in nursing and healthcare chaplaincy.
- 4 One book which addresses the specific relationship between psychosis and spirituality is I. Clarke (2001), *Psychosis and Spirituality. Exploring the new frontier* (London: Whurr Publishers). Clarke begins with the premise that psychosis and spirituality could be said to share a mode of perception that is different from that familiar to the empirical sciences. A number of contributors then discuss this issue, which Clarke then ties together within a broadly cognitive model of psychology. There is, however, only a very limited engagement with the history of spirituality or psychoanalytic approaches and for this very reason one reviewer comments astutely that such things 'would require another book'; see T. Smiley (2003), *Psychologist* 16(1): 36.
- 5 Freud was a man of letters or to use Lacan's phrase, 'an encyclopaedia of the arts and muses' (Lacan 2006: 434) and his oeuvres abound with references to the classics, to anthropology, art, literature and religion. Jung and Lacan were no less well read. Lacan, with an erratic brilliance, in his seminars, evidenced the same broad literary tradition by including incursions into philosophy, history, literature, anthropology and mysticism – all of which he regarded as essential in the training of analysts. See J. Lacan (2006), *The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud*. In *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, in collaboration with H. Fink and R. Grigg (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co), p. 432.
- 6 Knowledge in any sphere is culture-bound and disparate discourses may seem at first to have little in common and even less possibility of finding common ground for purposes of communication. This has led postmodern thought to cast doubt on the possibility of meaningful dialogue and communication between cultures, however broadly or narrowly culture is defined. Yet, it is precisely because all discourses share a common grounding in language that synthesis and cross-fertilisation has frequently occurred in the history of ideas.
- 7 Psychoanalysis, philosophy and theology, as any other discourse, need specialised languages and it would not be possible to conceptualise discussions of psychopathology or religious belief and experience without resorting to terms and usages which belong to those disciplines.
- 8 This is not intended as an endorsement of Nestle's view but rather to see that reason adheres to the foundations that myth has laid for it as both myth and reason are narratives which aim to describe the world. See W. Nestle (1942), *Vom Mythos zum Logos. Die Selbstentfaltung des griechischen Denken vom Homer bis auf die Sophistik und Sokrates* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag) and R. Buxton (ed.) (1999), *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- 9 *all ēi cheiras echon boes (hippoi t') ēē leontes ē grapsai cheiressi kai erga telein haper andres, hippoi men th' hippoisi boes de te bousin homoiās kai (ke) theōn ideās egraphōn kai sōmat*

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- epoioun toiauth oion per kautoi demas eichon (bekastoi)*, Xen. fr. 15. See H. Diels (1906), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und Deutsch* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung), vol. 1, p. 49.
- 10 *all hoi brotoi dokeousi gennasthai theous, tēn spheterēn d'esthēta echein phōnēn te demas te*. Xen. fr. 14. Diels, *ibid.*
- 11 *Aithiopes te (theous spheterous) simous melanas te Thrēikes te glaukous kai purrous (phasi pelesthai)*. Xen. fr. 16. Diels, *ibid.*
- 12 The psychoanalytic interest in biography (including autobiography) dates back to its earliest days. Fliess had criticised Freud over it and the latter was well aware how unscientific his case studies seemed – see P. Gay (2006), *Freud. A Life for Our Time* (London: Max), esp. pp. 89–90.
- 13 By resituating the place of religious discourse within psychoanalysis, Lacan opened his seminars to an influx of young Jesuits. These included Louis Biernaert, François Roustang, Denis Vasse and Michel de Certeau. On the latter, see J. Ahearne (1995), *Michel de Certeau. Interpretation and its Other* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press) and the more recent assessment by Cecilia Padvalskis (2010), *Recorrido por sus Múltiples Pertenencias. Revista Teología* 47(102): 189–207.
- 14 In French, Swami Abhishiktananda (Henri Le Saux) and Jules Monchanin began to write on a Christian approach to Hinduism and Jean-Marie Déchanet on yoga from the mid-1950s. Cf. M.-F. Euverte, F. Jacquin, J.-G. Gelineau, P. Massein, X. Perrin and R. Williamson (2012), *Henri Le Saux. Moine de Kergonan* (Paris: Éditions Parole et Silence). The first edition of Déchanet's *La Voie du Silence* was published by Desclée de Brouwer in Paris in 1956. By the 1960s, interest in the East had become more widespread in Catholic circles and a number of writers published on the interface between Christian and Eastern spirituality, including, from 1961, Thomas Merton, who began to publish books on Zen Buddhism, which were almost immediately translated into French. Some books on the subject in English slightly predate the war, the first being A. W. Watts (1936). *The Spirit of Zen* (London: Murray). Although Bede Griffiths' autobiography *The Golden String* was not published until 1954, the author had begun by studying the *Upanishads* and other Eastern texts in 1946. Du Boulay cites an article he wrote on Lao Tzu entitled 'Integration' and published in *Pax* as early as November 1938. Here he described Lao Tzu as having a profound mystical intuition. See S. du Boulay (1998), *Beyond the Darkness: A Biography of Bede Griffiths* 276 n.13 (London: Rider); and B. Griffiths (1954), *The Golden String* (London: Harvill Press).
- 15 Deleuze and Guattari (1980) also comment on Giotto's depiction of the stigmata of Francis but follow more closely Sartre's reading of the notion of the gaze, in which paranoia – being seen by the Other – takes centre stage. Cf. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari (1980). *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie II*. Paris: Editions de Minuit; J.-P. Sartre (1956) *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. A.M. Seridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books).
- 16 The term hallucination (from Greek *aluō*, Latin *alucinari* – to wander in mind, to be ill at ease, troubled, distraught) was coined by Esquirol in 1817 to cover non-visual as well as visual illusions. Cf. É. Esquirol (1838), *Traité des maladies mentales considérées sous le rapport médicale, hygiénique et médico-légal*, 2 Vols. Paris: J.-B. Baillière.
- 17 In his comprehensive and masterly study (first published in 1908) of Catherine of Genoa – one of the 'mothers' that dominate and help denote the subversive character of the mysticism of the period – von Hügel had reached practically the same conclusion. Basing his discussion on Pierre Janet's work under Charcot at the Salpêtrière, von Hügel concluded that, while many of Catherine's hysteriform

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phenomena appear to be identical to the symptoms of hysteria, what differentiates her state from morbidity is that her personality is not disintegrated. Cf. von Hügel (1961), *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and her Friends*, 2 vols (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd) (see esp. vol. 2, pp. 3–61). Gay (op. cit.) is surprisingly reticent in his comments on Freud's dependence on Janet's ideas. See P. Janet (1893), *État Mental des Hystériques. Les Stigmates Mentaux* (Paris: Rueff).

- 18 *Méconnaissance*, literally 'misunderstanding' or 'misrecognition' in English, is the word Lacan uses to indicate, amongst other things, the way understanding always includes a denial of some kind.

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