Mental Illness and Imagination in Philosophy, Literature, and Psychiatry

Line Joranger

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Abstract. Can existential themes, such as anxiety, the will to die, or our simultaneous will to live forever be logically described? Does a literary language or philosophical and psychiatric term exist that can express phenomena nonreferential to the external world? In short, does a genre exist that can redefine the relationships between symbol and meaning? Drawing upon various theoretical perspectives developed by Michel Foucault, Ludwig Binswanger, Gaston Bachelard, and Karl Jaspers, this paper discusses the ability to depict life as we are living it, whether it is a product of mental illness or a matter of normal schizophrenic imaginings.

MENTAL ILLNESS AND IMAGININGS affect people of all ages, races, religions, and incomes. Mental illness as such is not the result of personal weakness, lack of character, or poor upbringing. Instead, mental illness shows incredible creativity in terms of behavior and thought. Nevertheless, it also disrupts a person's thoughts, feelings, mood, ability to relate to others, and the capacity to cope with the ordinary demands of life.

The understanding of mental illness as a medical condition includes diagnoses such as major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and borderline personality disorder. In 2012, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) approved a set of updates, revisions, and changes to the reference manual used to diagnose mental disorders. The revision of the manual, called the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), is the first significant update in nearly

two decades. The product of this revision, the so-called DSM-V, will cause people who are currently recognized as healthy rêve to be recognized as mentally ill in years to come.

According to Friedrich Nietzsche, there is a list of psychological states that are signs of a flourishing life but that are currently condemned as mental illness even though, under favorable circumstances, they could be defined as healthy. These states include 1) feelings of enhanced power and the inner need to make one's life a reflection of one's own fullness and perfection; 2) the extreme sharpness of certain senses, which creates a type of sign language, a condition that seems to be a component of many nervous disorders; and 3) a certain suspension of the will, a species of deafness and blindness toward the external world. The range of perceived stimuli is sharply defined.[1]

Seeing creative thinking as a form of neurosis is, according to Nietzsche, an objection to "modernity," not to "imagination" or "artistry." According to Nietzsche, inartistic states are a component of the modern notion of normality. These include objectivity, mirroring, receptivity, and suspended will. Artistic states, in contrast, tend to be defined as mental illnesses in modern medicine. These include subjectivity, ingenuity, imagination, and powerful will.

This paper is based on the assumption that all human beings have at least some degree of fundamental capacity to think and behave like "mentally ill" individuals; we have an urge to imagine things or to think about morbid phenomena that are disconnected from the objective or external world. With the help of various theoretical perspectives, I will seek to determine how we can outwardly express such nonreferential psychological states, which are in fact signs of a flourishing life, without being diagnosed as ill. To do so, this paper will address the diffuse intersection between mental illness, dreamlike imaginings, literature, psychiatry, and philosophy.

I

In his introduction to Swiss-German psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger's seminal 1930 essay "Dream and Existence" ("Le Rêve et l'Existence"/ "Traum und Existenz"), Michel Foucault attempts to understand mental illness and human existence (*IDE*, pp. 93–147).[2] This attempt leads him to perceive that we require a new definition of the relationship between *meaning* (the *signified/signifié*) and *symbol* (the *signifier/signifiant*) and between *expression* and *image*—in short, we need a new way of understanding how meanings are manifested.

According to Foucault, mental illness can be seen as a type of imagining or a way of dreaming while awake. Foucault refers to Andreas Baader, who defined a dream as the *luminosity* of *intuition*. For Baader, the dream was the *lightning* flash of *inner* vision, which, extending beyond all sensory and discursive mediations, attains the *truth* in a single movement. According to Foucault, Baader speaks of the "inner and objective vision" that "is not mediated by the external senses" and that "we experience in our common dreams" (*IDE*, p. 114). In the Romantic period, "the world becomes dream, the dream became world, and the outcome in which one believes can be seen coming from afar" (*IDE*, p. 113).

From this perspective, the dream could also be the shadowy apperception of those things that one senses all around oneself at night—or, on the contrary, it could be the instantaneous flash of light, the utter brightness of intuition. Foucault refers to the poetry that Cyrano wrote in his *Agrippina*, which he believes reflects such polar experiences as light and shadow, day and night, soul and world: "The cause of my mourning / Is the moaning sound of a fertile casket, / A desolate shade, a speaking image, / That tugs my garb with trembling hand, / That sobs by the head of my bed" (*IDE*, p. 121)..

Using literary reflections on dreams, imaginings, and mental illness, Foucault seeks to generate a text that explores how meanings are manifested, but that is neither philosophical nor psychological and that stands in contrast to the concrete, the objectivistic, and the experimental. According to Foucault, the histories of psychiatry and phenomenology have confirmed that these areas of thought cannot eliminate the distinction between *meaning* and *symbol*. By using different forms of poetic reflections, Foucault works to create a new definition of this relationship without slipping into philosophy or Martin Heidegger's deterministic notion of *Being* [*Dasein*] (*IDE*, pp. 95, 96).

According to Foucault, the Romantic poet Novalis followed Johann Gottfried Herder in conceptualizing dreams as the original moment of genesis; the dream is the primary source of *poetry*, and poetry is the most primitive form of language, the "maternal language of man" (*IDE*, p. 119). The dream is thus at the very center of becoming and objectivity. With its transcendental themes, poetic language is similar to mental illness and dream imagination, according to Foucault, because it is not obligated to imitate the external world. Poetic language and mental illness thus are similar to dreams and, like human existence, nonreferential. Seen in this way, our imaginary world and our poetic expressions cannot be isolated from their ethical content because in their common language, everything says "I." This is not because they

uncover secret inclinations and inadmissible desires, but because they restore the movement of freedom as it is meant to exist, showing how it establishes itself or alienates itself, how it exists as radical responsibility within the world, or how it is forgotten in the plunge into causality.

Although Foucault praises Sigmund Freud and Edmund Husserl for twice, in 1900,[3] attempting to allow men to recapture their meaning and significance, Foucault also asks whether it is really true, as Freud claims, that dreams are only functional images with a certain linguistic expression, which rise to the surface to address the external and internal contradictions of life. For example, is fire as a symbol only an expression of repressed sexual desire, whose goal is to disguise and suppress the original emotion, or is it something more (*IDE,* pp. 97–98)? Because Freud's entire understanding of dreams is determined by an overdetermination, a general theory of sexual instinct, Foucault believes that psychoanalysis reduces dreams solely to their physical expression (*signifier*). Psychoanalysis fails to see reality as a unique, meaningful language (*langage*) and as a communication tool that can explain and foster understanding of its content (*signified*). The Romantic thinkers, unlike Freud, suggested that the myths of *fire* maintained the philosophical theme of the substantial unity of the *soul* and the *world* in the dreaming imagination.

According to Foucault, the process of interpreting dreams and expressions is similar to the method used to interpret words in a language with an unknown grammar: "It becomes a method of cross-referencing of the sort used by the *archaeologists* for a lost language" ("telle qu'en utilise *l'archéologue* pour les langues perdues") (*IDE,* p. 99). Unlike modern medicine and philosophy, it represents a method of probabilistic confirmation, as in the deciphering of secret codes, and a method of identifying meaningful coincidence, as in the most traditional art of divination. "Dream analysis does not stop at the level of a hermeneutic of symbols. Rather, starting from an external interpretation which is still only a kind of deciphering, it is able, without slipping into philosophy, to arrive at a comprehension of existential structures. The meaning of dream continually deploys itself from the *cipher* of the appearance to the modalities of existence" (*IDE,* p. 96).

In this respect, Foucault criticizes Husserl's phenomenology as a subjective, inward analysis that he believes has failed to develop an objective theory of the act of expression as it is situated in itself. One would not be wrong, he argues, to define this problem as among the major themes of existential analysis. Foucault concludes that psychoanalysis has never

succeeded in making images speak and that phenomenology, despite its success in making images speak, has never succeeded in understanding its language (*IDE,* pp. 101, 107). Because of its constraints, Foucault believes that phenomenological analysis be supplemented with an *anthropology of art* (*anthropologie de l'art*) that helps to elucidate the movements that generate the trajectory of our existence (*IDE,* p. 133). He believes that this anthropology of art is visible in classical and Romantic *lyric.* He refers to several examples in which poetic writers during this era use their dream experiences to express the dichotomies of their existence in poetic terms.

II

According to Foucault, there are three specific forms of poetic expression that employ a type of language that reflects the inner world of morbid phenomena (mental illnesses) and existential dichotomies: the *epic*, the *lyric*, and *tragic* poetry. Foucault believes that these forms of poetry can express how meanings are manifested and how the relationships between meaning and symbol are constituted. In the epic form, he argues, we encounter our existential odyssey in the vertical trajectory from near and close spatiality through what he describes as those "great cloths woven of the dreamed and the real" (*IDE,* p. 133). In contrast, lyric expression is possible only in the alternation of light and darkness, through which existence plays itself out: "If the lyrical can survey all the changes of the world, all its motions, if it can, itself immobile, search out in every direction, this is because it seizes everything in a play of light and shadow. In the pulsations of day and night, which tell, upon the shifting surface of things, the unchangeable truth" (*IDE,* p. 134).

Finally, the axis of tragic expression is located on the vertical axis of existence. Tragic movement is defined by "ascent" and "descent." It emphasizes that privileged moment in which the narrative completes its "rise" and balances there, wavering imperceptibly, before the descent begins. This is why tragedy, according to Foucault, does not require time and space in which to extend itself—why it need not be set in a foreign land or even under the cover of night; it aims to represent the vertical transcendence of destiny. To explain what he means by this, Foucault refers to a text by German poet and dramatist Friedrich Christian Hebbels (1813–63), entitled *A Strange Dream*, which describes a nightmarish dream in which Hebbels moves vertically along a rope that God has fastened between heaven and earth (*IDE*, p. 134).[4] Each

time he has solid earth under his feet, Hebbels is thrown into the sky again and forced to grasp the rope tightly to avoid descending into the abyss. According to Foucault, in this way, tragic expression has the task of manifesting the destinies of vertical transcendence (*IDE*, p. 134).

Foucault seems to suggest that the strength of poetic language lies in its linguistic tone, its metaphysical code, and its vertical patterns of expression. With its transcendental themes, poetic language differs from medical and philosophical language by releasing itself from the task of imitating the external world.

III

Unlike Freud, Foucault believes that the essential function of dream analysis is less to revive the *past* than to make declarations about the *future*. Such analysis anticipates and announces that moment in which the patient will finally reveal the secret that she does not yet know and that is nonetheless the heaviest burden of her *present*. The dream anticipates the moment of liberation *to come*. It is a prefiguring of history even more than it is an obligatory repetition of the traumatic *past* (*IDE*, p. 127). "Man has known since antiquity," Foucault writes, "that in dreams he encounters what he *is* and what he will *be*, what he has *done* and what he is going to *do*, discovering there the knot that ties his freedom to the necessity of the world" (*IDE*, p. 113).[5]

Foucault's understanding of space is similar to his understanding of temporality. Foucault believes that we imagine space in a way that is not geometrical or mathematical, but rather emphasizes authentic subjective perceptions. In geographic space, motion is nothing but displacement, a change in position from one point to another that occurs according to a previously established trajectory. In lived space, however, the displacement preserves an original spatial character. It does not cross; it only travels. Until the moment when it stops, it remains a trajectory whose point of departure is known for certain but whose endpoint is unknown. Its *future* is not preordained by the geography of the setting; rather, it is generated by its authentic historicity. Understood in this way, "lived space" is like "lived time": it is nonreferential and can only be expressed using poetic, nonreferential language.

According to Foucault, in imagination and mental illness, our imaginary polar experiences of light and dark are not always identical to how we imagine the poles near and far. Foucault refers to his colleague, the French psychiatrist Eugène Minkowski, who described that dark space

where hallucinatory voices cross and mingle as being at once far and near (*IDE*, p. 131). In the dark world, spatial orientation does not reflect the laws of juxtaposition but rather reflects the special modalities of envelopment and fusion. In lived experience, space ceases to function as a divider that dissociates one thing from another; it is no more than the movement of shapes and sounds that come and go according to the flux and reflux of their appearance.

In his introduction to "Dream and Existence," Foucault wishes to explore how the essential direction of our existence is determined. He believes that it is important to note that the three polarities of "ascent" (*ascension*) and "descent" (*chute*), "light" (*solaire/lumière*) and "dark" (*nocturne/nuit*), and "return" (*proche/arrivée*) and "departure" (*lointain/départ*) have their own independent states and do not have the same universality and anthropological strength. He notes that Binswanger, who does not explicitly use these terms in his text, barely emphasizes anything other than the vertical dimension of ascent and descent.

Foucault believes that the anthropological importance of this vertical movement, first and foremost, is its temporal structure. In poetic terms, he expresses how Binswanger's famous patient, the anorectic Ellen West, experienced the end of her own life: "The whole movement of her existence channels into a phobic fear of a *fall* into the grave and in the delirious desire to soar into the ether, finding its gratification in the immobility of pure *movement*. But this orientation and its affective *polarity* designate the very form according to which *existence temporalities* itself. The patient does not take on the future disclosure of a fullness and anticipation of death. She already experiences death, there, inscribed in an aging body which is more burdened each day" (*IDE*, p. 135).[6]

Foucault's conclusion is that the vertical axis of existence helps to free the body from the mathematical time-space unit that limits our mental and physical experience of existence. He believes that the vertical dimension of existence (that is, the dichotomy between ascent and descent) plays a greater role in our understanding of the temporality of existence. According to Foucault, in the other dimensions of existence, one can identify situations, structures, and modes of being and explore the characteristics of *Menschsein*, but the vertical dimension and its poetic expression are necessary to the absolute, fundamental experience, in which *Dasein,* or the patient's own perception of *being-in-the-world,* is defined.

IV

Like Foucault, Binswanger praises the intuitive mode of expression employed in poetry in his essay "Dream and Existence." He believes poetic expression, to a much greater extent than science and philosophy, is able to communicate the essential aspects of human existence.

In his case study, "Insanity as Life-Historical Phenomenon and as Mental Disease: The Case of Ilse," Binswanger criticizes positivism for its inability to understand that every object of study is essentially founded on an intentionally chosen perspective (*ENDPP*, p. 233).[7] What someone sees as abnormal and wrong may be normal and right for another person, depending on the experience gained and the cultural framework of one's experiences. The same applies to our present perception of madness: what one today sees as insanity would have been understood by the ancient Greeks as a shock from Apollo and would have been seen in medieval times as a diabolical obsession.

In his essay "The Existential Analysis School of Thought," Binswanger indicates that one must understand the schizoid's autistic world on the basis of such a relativistic understanding of history. He believes that the schizoid and autistic *being-in-the-world* is inextricably linked to a historical perspective on life, which also shapes perceptions of time and space. When schizophrenics experience the world as enormous pressure filled with explosive energy, it is logical to believe that in everyday life, as well as in their imagination, they experience a space that is both dense and crowded, with a constant feeling of bumping into things or that they are constantly prodded. Their time structure is thus characterized by time constraints and speed. For Binswanger, it is in this type of anthropological awareness of existence that one can understand the schizophrenic experience of *being-in-the-world* as pressure on the body and soul (*ENDPP*, p. 206).

Binswanger also indicates that the unique individual existence reveals itself through the spontaneous verbalism of language (*ENDPP*, pp. 200–2). In "Dream and Existence," Binswanger believes that language and the poet's own performances, as well as the dream, derive their power from a real, essential, ontological structure. According to Binswanger, language must be seen as every man's spiritual homeland: "For it is language that 'poetises and thinks' for all of us before any one individual brings it to the service of his own poetic and thought-provoking powers."[8] Like Foucault, Binswanger suggests that our existence is composed of polar conceptions, or what he calls the "vertical axes of existence." When, in

a dream or in metaphorical poetry, one experiences "falling from the sky" or "flying up to it," Binswanger suggests that this experience reflects the concrete physical and psychological dichotomy between *descent* and *ascent* in one's own life.

If we are going to understand a patient's various forms of expression as something other than organic disease, Binswanger believes that we must follow Husserl's phenomenological spirit and free ourselves from standardized psychological and philosophical beliefs. Through what Kierkegaard calls "empathy," what Husserl calls "intuition," and our "imagination," we must attempt to put ourselves into the patient's unique life history, experiences, and different forms of expression. Through the unique power of imagination, as Binswanger sees it in "The Existential Analysis School of Thought," one can approach the patient's transcendental intentional acts and access the individual's life world (*ENDPP*, pp. 209). We are not talking about a naturalistic and objective life world, but about a subjective personal "inner" life world that helps to shape the human's being-in-the-world.

Although Binswanger, in the same essay, praises Heidegger in this respect for blurring the distinction between the subjective and the objective world to a greater extent than Husserl, he also criticizes Heidegger's existentialism for concentrating on the everyday ontological level of existence rather than the "ontic" level, or the historical and cultural level (*ENDPP*, pp. 191–213). To an even greater extent than Heidegger and in contrast to Husserl, Binswanger wants to return to the holistic ancient worldview that he believes did not distinguish between the *inner* and *outer* world, but instead managed to unite anthropological psychology, cosmology, and theology in one universal consciousness (*ENDPP*, p. 232). He criticizes Husserl's phenomenology for its basis only in an intentional act and for forgetting that it is inextricably linked to empirical phenomena (i.e., a naturalistic and psychological world). Unlike Husserl and Heidegger, for Binswanger there is no distinction between *explainable* and *unexplainable* phenomena. For Binswanger, all life stories are significant, including those of schizophrenics.

In his study of his schizophrenic and anorectic patient, "The Case of Ellen West: An Anthropological-Clinical Study," Binswanger presents great imaginary ensembles whose phenomenological meanings are the precursors to the concrete, singular images that give them expressive content (*ENDPP*, pp. 237–364). The world of Ellen West is divided between the underground world of burial, symbolized by the cold dark of the tomb that the patient resists with all her might by refusing to gain

weight, grow old, or be trapped in the crudely materialistic life of her family; and the ethereal, luminous world in which, in a single moment, one could attain a completely free existence without the weight of living, in which one would know only that transparency of love totalized in the eternity of an instant. Life has become possible for her only as a flight toward that distant and lofty space of light; the earth, in its dark closeness, holds only the imminence of death.

For Ellen West, the solid space of real movement, the *space* where things come *to be*, has progressively disappeared. It exists only beyond itself, both as if it did not yet exist and as if it already existed. The existential space that Ellen West occupies is that of life suppressed by the desire for death and the myth of a second birth. It already signals the suicide by which Ellen West was to attain the culmination of her existence. In her diary, she expresses her schizophrenic feelings in her own language: "I'd like to die just as the birdling does / That splits his throat in highest jubilation; / And not to live as the worm on earth lives on, / Becoming old and ugly, dull and dumb! / No, feel for once how forces in me kindle, / And wildly be consumed in my own fire" (*ENDPP*, p. 246).

V

Ellen West explains her schizophrenic feelings and her longing for death by referring to natural elements such as "fire" and "earth." According to French epistemological philosopher Gaston Bachelard's writing about poetry, the ontological foundation of poetry is the four natural elements. When *earth, water, air,* and *fire* meet man in his reflection, they show themselves as sources of a particular component of that *image*. Each element adds to man, particularly the poetic man, a particular dimension of *being*. To the extent that the human imagination confronts the world and to the extent that people are already a part of *being,* these elements constitute important cornerstones of the human imagination. In several books, Bachelard describes how these naturalistic elements affect people's lives and how their material properties and visual manifestation engender poetic creation.

In the book *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement,* Bachelard describes the dynamics of perception through what he, like Binswanger and Foucault, calls the vertical axis of existence, which illustrates the human connection to the polarity of earth and heaven. He describes how man, through his dreams and poetry, can evoke the polar

experiences of ascending and descending and of weight and weightless-
ness, which help to free the body from the materiality that binds it to
the horizontal and mathematical time-space unit that he believes limits
our mental and physical experience of existence.[9] In his book *The Flame
of a Candle*, he describes how lights and flames form parts of the vertical
sense of freedom and opportunity.[10]

Like Foucault, Bachelard believes that these images have nothing to do
with Freud's psychoanalytic libido experience. According to Bachelard,
images of flying creatures provide ways of disrupting the uniform sym-
bolism maintained by psychoanalysis. It would be a mistake, he suggests,
to suspect that a hidden sensual pleasure is buried in reveries of poems
about flight.[11] He asks how a dream's verticality can have such a powerful
effect on the human soul and poetry, how we can derive such joy and
hope from it. As a true poet, he answers that perhaps this occurs because
the dream and its song are at once lively and mysterious: "Before it is
more than a few feet from the ground, in the *light* of the sun, the *lark*
makes moats of dust. Its *image* vibrates as do its trills; we see it disap-
pear into the light. To give form to this syntheses of scientific thought?
Then, we would say: *In poetic space, the lark is an invisible corpuscle that is
accompanied by a wave of joy.*"[12]

VI

In *IDE*, Foucault suggests that Bachelard is correct when he shows the
imagination at work in the intimate recesses of perception and discusses
the secret labor that transforms the object one perceives into an object
of contemplation. "One understands forms by their transformation,"
he says, citing Bachelard; beyond the norms of objective truth, "the
realism of unreality holds sway" (*IDE*, p. 142).[13] According to Foucault,
no one has understood the dynamic work of the imagination and the
incessantly vectorial nature of its movement better than Bachelard, but
he does not agree with Bachelard that this movement culminates in
an *image* that becomes integrated into the dynamics of the *imagination.*

Unlike Bachelard, Foucault believes that the image and the imagi-
nation are made of different components. According to Foucault, the
imagination goes beyond the image, which he believes represents a
quasi-world. The true poet, he writes, referring to René Char, denies
himself the accomplishment of desire in the image because the free-
dom of imagination imposes itself the task of refusal on him (*IDE,* p.
144). Foucault believes that the value of poetic imagination is to be

measured by the inner destructive power of the image. According to
Foucault, poetic expression is the manifest proof. Poetic expression
does not reach its greatest height when it identifies the greatest number
of substitutes for reality. Foucault believes that the inventors of images
discover similarities and metaphors. The imagination, in its true poetic
function, mediates identity. If it is true that the imagination circulates
through a universe of images, it moves not to the extent that it promotes
or reunites images but to the extent that it destroys and consumes them.
The imagination is, in this sense, a true iconoclast (*IDE,* pp. 143, 144).

Foucault argues that *Ars poetica* has no meaning unless it teaches us
to break with our fascination with images and free our imaginations to
move toward the dream that offers them an absolute truth (*IDE,* p. 146).
In this respect, Foucault criticizes his colleague Jean-Paul Sartre's concep-
tions of the imagination, elaborated in his 1940 book, *The Imaginary.*[14]
In this book, Sartre makes a sharp distinction between imagination
and reality, although he believes that in some cases, it can be difficult
to determine what is imagination and what is reality. In *IDE,* Foucault
refers to an example in *The Imaginary* in which Sartre explains how
thinking of his best friend Pierre constantly invokes different images
that apparently make him present in his "real" life, although Sartre has
not seen Pierre in a year. In this case, Foucault believes that we must
ask ourselves how imagination, despite its negative unreality, can help
to create reality (*IDE,* p. 138). According to Foucault, imagining Pierre,
a person who is not present, is not the same as looking at him through
a keyhole or moving into his world in a magical way.

In expressing the notion that our aesthetic and imaginary lives are
divided into the details of beautiful moments in which we seek to shape
our *own* real experience as if it were a work of art and to make reality
nonbinding, Foucault describes Sartre's imaginings about Pierre as
these details of beautiful moments. By using the poetic and nonrefer-
ential language of inner, first-person expression, he describes imagining
Pierre as if he were present in his daily life and embedded in all things,
despite his physical distance: "When *I* imagine Pierre," he writes, "*I* am
the letter he is reading . . . *I* am the walls of his room that watch him
from all sides and hence do not 'see' him. But *I* am also his gaze and
his attentiveness, his dissatisfaction or his surprise before the letter. *I*
am not only absolute master of what he is doing, *I* am what he is doing,
I am what he is. That is why imagination adds nothing new to what I
already know" (*IDE,* p. 139).[15]

According to Foucault, this concept must not be understood as the imagination not contributing anything new. Although the imagination cannot teach us anything that we do not already know, the imagination's transcendent qualities help us to recognize our fate. Foucault believes that imagination entails a movement toward freedom, allowing one to create one's own fateful and beautiful world.

VII

In his three-volume work *Philosophy (Philosophie)*, the German psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers outlines his thoughts on the nonreferential function of literature. In the third volume he expresses the notion that a metaphysical language, or what he calls "*Ciphers*" (a coded language), represents a transcendental poetic idiom that is not obligated to imitate the *external world*. According to Jaspers, this type of language, and the manner in which it affects us, is possible for "*Existenz*" alone. "While music, architecture, and sculpture depend upon the real presence of their elements to make their *ciphers* speak, *painting* and *poetry* move in vision of things now unreal, of possibilities freely drafted in the direction of infinite worlds, with such objectivities as color and the language of worlds used as dependent means to other ends."[16]

According to Jaspers, the *transcendent code* of poetry can manifest the *real* wealth of the world. It allows us not only to read the different codes in *time* and *space* but also to read them in light of other potential realities, including other forms of art. Jaspers believes that poetic intervention and the movement of objects serve to remove the poetic and existential codes from the elemental power of Being. He believes that poetry's codes can help to redeem us from our Being and bring us closer to how we confront our existential codes in reality. Like Foucault, he believes that our aesthetic life is a life in which the *imagination* eliminates all bonds. Such a life is divided into details of beautiful moments. Expressed from the morbid inner, first-person perspective, *I* not only enjoy the products of art in life, *I* seek to shape my own real experience as if it were a work of art and to make my reality noncommittal. The only way *I* know is that of the form of the particular; to enjoy this, *I* must continually take up new and different experiences to ensure that *my* life will depend on *variety*.[17]

In his groundbreaking work *General Psychopathology* (*Allgemeine psychopathologie*), Jaspers suggests that our perception of variety and polarity is all-pervasive in our psychological life. We perceive activity and passivity,

consciousness and unconsciousness, pleasure and displeasure, love and hate, self-surrender and self-assertion, all dichotomous psychological states and drives. We also find a will to power and an urge to submit, self-will and social sense (I and We), an urge to move toward the light, toward self-direction, responsibility, activity, and life, and an urge to move toward the dark, toward safety, irresponsibility, peace, and death. We also experience an urge to disrupt order and an urge to conform.[18]

There are an infinite number of polarities that can be identified in this way. In their rich and varied iterations, they dominate the psychology of meaningful phenomena and the writing about it. All of human psychology, according to Jaspers, must address this type of schizophrenic polarity without necessarily seeing it as a sort of mental illness. In this respect, he criticizes Heidegger's philosophical and idealistic attempt to create a total ontology that seeks to determine the psychological life on the basis of concepts such as "being-in-the-world" (*Dasein*), "concern" (*Sorge*), and "anxiety" (*Angst*). Like Binswanger, he believes that Heidegger's philosophy leads to a philosophical fallacy when it does not fully take into account historical and cultural conditions.[19] In the second volume of *Philosophy*, Jaspers warns against mixing ontological questions with existential enlightenment, as Heidegger does. When this is done, however, he believes that it is due to our commitment to knowledge and our willingness to create universal truths without actually doing so.[20]

VIII

Imagine that mental illnesses, like dreams and imaginings, are how our psychological life expresses its inner polar experiences, which to a greater or lesser extent are common to all human beings. Imagine that mental illnesses are a question of degree and a question of how meaningful connections are manifested, and imagine that anything really meaningful tends to have a unique, nonreferential form. Our medical and philosophical urge toward generalization will destroy these connections, and we should be concerned about how the new and revised manual of mental disorders, the DSM-V, is being used.

If we expect systematic knowledge from psychiatry and philosophy, and if we cannot systematize meaningful mental connections because their essential nature is fundamentally nonreferential, we can at least design our methods according to the principles of *expressions*. We should remind ourselves of the sources on which the freedom, richness, flexibility, and depth of our understanding depend. What every thinker

understands is a matter of his human stature. Schizophrenic and polar experiences are experiences of creative understanding and have been creatively understood by all great poets and artists.

A close association between literature and human reality can provide the horizon within which the simplest everyday occurrence can become interesting and vital. The levels reached by one who wishes to understand and by what he understands will decide whether he is oriented towards the ordinary or the extraordinary, the plain and uncomplicated, or the complex and manifold. Meaningful connections are, as such, a matter of poetic expressions, not diagnostic and philosophical explanations.

The well-known French writer Antonin Artaud expresses better than anyone the idea of the relationship between the psychological life and literature in his text "Umbilical Limbo": "I am as much myself in a letter written to explain the inner contraction of my being and the meaningless emasculation of my life, as in an essay outside me, which seems like an indifferent gestation of my mind. I suffer because the Mind is not in life and life is not Mind. I suffer because the Mind is an organ, the Mind is an interpreter or the Mind intimidates things to accept them in Mind. I hold this book up in life, I want it to be attacked by things outside, primarily by all the shearing jolts all the twitching of my future ego."[21]

Unlike psychiatry and logical philosophical explanations, Artaud's text, similar to other expressive texts, shows how different literary genres can be an expressive form of art that can depict life as we are living it, whether that art is a product of mental illness or a matter of normal schizophrenic imaginings. Literature in general and poetic language in particular seems to have the power to create new definitions of the relationships between meaning and symbol and between image and expression—in short, a new way of conceiving how meanings are manifested. Seen in this way literature is not merely a way of reading; it is also a way of living, and it can do things in the world by changing our conception of it.

University of Oslo and Telemark University College

1.   Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), pp. 428–30.

2.   Ludwig Binswanger, *Le Rêve et l'Existence,* trans. Jacqueline Verdeaux, intro. and notes Michel Foucault (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1954). The original text was called "Traum und Existenz." My references to Foucault's introduction are taken from Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits, 1954–1975,* vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001); hereafter abbreviated *IDE* (introduction to *Dream and Existence*). The English edition of "Traum und Existenz," which I use when referring to Binswanger's text, is Ludwig Binswanger, *Dream and Existence* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1993). It is worth noting that Foucault, in his introduction, makes it clear that he intends to write an independent text. He does not want to reduce Binswanger's text by reflecting on it. He believes that original ideas carry their own introduction and that the independent history of these ideas is their only interpretation, their only fate, and their only form of criticism (see *IDE,* p. 93). I want to respect this claim by analyzing Foucault's introduction as an independent text.

3.   Foucault refers to the fact that both *Traumdeutung* (Sigmund Freud, *Die Traumdeutung* [Leipzig: F. Deuticke, 1900]) and the first edition of *Logische Untersuchungen* (Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* [Halle: Niemeyer, 1900]) were published in 1900.

4.   Friedrich Hebbel, *Aufzeichnungen aus meinen Leben, in Werke*, vol. 3 (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1965), pp. 729–30.

5.   The italics are mine.

6.   The italics are mine.

7.   Ludwig Binswanger, "Insanity as Life-Historical Phenomenon and as Mental Disease: The Case of Ilse," "The Existential Analysis School of Thought," and "The Case of Ellen West: An Anthropological-Clinical Study," in *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology,* ed. Ernest Angel, Rollo May, and Henri F. Ellenberger (New York: Basic Books, 1958); hereafter abbreviated *ENDPP.*

8.   Binswanger, *Dream and Existence,* p. 81.

9.   Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement* (Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1988), pp. 10–12.

10.   Gaston Bachelard, *La Flamme d'Une Chandelle* (Paris: PUF, 1961).

11.   Bachelard, *Air and Dreams,* p. 22.

12.   Bachelard, *Air and Dreams,* p. 84. The italics are mine.

13.   Gaston Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes: Essai sur l'Imagination du Mouvement Gaston Bachelard Texte Imprimé* (Paris: J. Corti, 1943), p. 13.

14.   Jean-Paul Sartre, Arlette Elkaim-Sartre, and Jonathan Webber, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2004).

15.   The italics are mine.

16.   Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 174. The italics are mine.

17.   Jaspers, *Philosophy,* vol. 1, pp. 50, 333.

18.   Karl Jaspers, *General Psychopathology,* vol. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 341.

19.   Jaspers, *General Psychopathology,* pp. 776–77.

20.   Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, pp. 372–75.

21.   Antonin Artaud, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (1978, repr., London: Calder & Boyars, 1999), p. 49.