

On the Logics of Delusion

Remo Bodei

Delusion is an exceptional test case for the principal categories of common sense and philosophical thought such as 'reason', 'truth' and 'reality'. Via an engagement with the legacy of Freud and the most remarkable results of 20th-century psychiatry, my aim will be to analyse its paradoxical forms and to shed light on the logics that underlie and orient its specific modalities of temporalization, conceptualization and argumentation.

In English the term 'delusion' may be used in the sense of 'illusion', but it can also be used to indicate what in the romance languages we call '*delirio*' or '*délire*', and the etymology of this word is significant. Its origin lies in a peasant metaphor, in the act of *de-lirare*, of overstepping the *lira*, the piece of ground bounded by two furrows. The idea of moving beyond the area of sown ground also has connotations of sterility and excess. Like Odysseus, who feigned madness by ploughing the sand, people suffering from delusions struggle vainly to cultivate soil that will not bear fruit, turning their backs on the fertile fields of reason.

Delusion, then, has traditionally been presented as synonymous with irrationality (absurdity, groundlessness, error, chaos), whereas its mirror image, reason, has been defined as what is self-evident, demonstrable, true and orderly. Over time the two concepts have become complementary.

So, aside from any play on words, why should we talk of the 'logics of delusion'? The first step towards persuading oneself that it is not a baroque paradox is not to let oneself be influenced by the seriousness that terms such as *logos* and 'logic' have acquired, since *legein* refers to gathering, sifting and ordering. If that is so, nothing prevents us from talking about one or more logics of delusion, by which we mean specific modes – however anomalous – of articulating perceptions, images, thoughts, beliefs, affects and moods, according to principles of their own, which therefore do not conform to the criteria of argumentation and expression shared by a particular society.

It might be objected that such logics are not within the scope of our reason, that it

simply rejects them; or else that we should resist the temptation – as Roger Caillois has said in relation to dreams¹ – to regard delusion as any more significant than the designs on butterflies' wings or what appear to be the outlines of cities and ragged clouds on stones such as agates.

Yet to me the black-and-white alternative between delusion and logic, on grounds of their mutual incompatibility, only makes sense from the point of view of a narrow, defensive and self-referential rationality. Without necessarily cancelling out the difference in level between the two terms, or in any way abdicating our critical faculties, I shall show how a generous and expansive reason – more humble, but no less rigorous – may be capable of recognizing the kernels of truth, the typicality and the rich variety of delusions. This accepting approach is not based on conceit, on mere 'logical charity' (the desire to align oneself with psychical suffering in order to alleviate it) or on the intent to exorcize what one does not understand with a ritual '*Vade retro!*' ('Be gone!'). Rationality of this kind is prepared to take on board the contradictions and paradoxes of delusion, without allowing itself to be hypnotized and trapped by it. Indeed, it is aware of an asymmetry that works to its advantage: it can comprehend delusion, while delusion cannot comprehend it. It is therefore able to account simultaneously for genuine truth and its apparent negation (like the theory of heliocentrism, which explains how it is that we continue unavoidably to see the sun move around the earth).

If we adopt this perspective, the utter irreconcilability of logic and delusion becomes less plausible, and diffidence in the face of what is unknown or difficult to recognize evaporates. But the hardest task is still ahead of us: identifying and describing the forms in which delusion is organized, according to an intentionality and horizons of meaning that are irreducible to the natural character of the marks on butterflies' wings. Without idealizing delusion, we can see that it forces lazy or timid reason to be alert to its own pitfalls, to see itself not as monolithic, but as a series of procedures arising from a common origin, which must continually question themselves in order to evolve.

In accordance with a mental experiment suggested by the psychiatrist W. Blankenburg,² we might think of astronauts floating in cosmic space. On a common-sense level we were used to believing the force of gravity was absolutely valid and necessary, so that it even kept Antipodeans' feet on the ground, and we did not imagine that without it bodies would float, even while we accepted it could be absent. In a similar way, when we think about delusion, we have to break free conceptually from that psychic 'force of gravity' that bound us instantly and indissolubly to our standardized image of rationality. We have to face situations that, over and above their often absurd and amorphous appearance, may give us a glimpse of other worlds that are utterly incompatible with our own. In this way reason's force of gravity is not denied by its absence, provided that this reason, which I call generous, is able to consider and welcome experiences that go beyond the boundaries of the norm or what is generally accepted within a community, and able to understand that, even in their tragic aspect, they enrich us and let us live other lives parallel to our own, let us hope for other, sometimes creative, possibilities of language and idealization. But above all they push back the limits of our lazy, timid, hyper-defensive rationality. A generous, understanding reason is in fact a

type of rationality that allows delusion to have its private logics, its way of organizing its experiences, thoughts, perception of time, and is prepared to analyse them without preconceptions. So it is not a matter of thinking up a conceptual centaur who is half rationality and half irrationality. Generous reason is reason in process that knows full well there are different families of logics, but does not give up on the attempt to gather them in to the common source of a rationality that can be shown to be shared.

The question I have implicitly posed – approaching it against the grain, that is, from the opposite viewpoint to that generally taken – is not so much why delusion occurs, as why we continue for the most part to reason normally. Before I started studying the ‘logics of delusion’ I was for a long time concerned with theories of the passions and political ideologies,³ that is, those phenomena in human existence that seem irrational but invade quite a bit of our life and our time. Moving from the passions (or ideologies, which could be defined as collective delusions), to individual delusions acts for me as a kind of cleansing of our way of living and thinking: reason is no longer contrasted with irrationality, even in order to praise the irrational, the passions and delusions, but we avoid a type of rationality that is, as it were, closed off and assumed to be self-sufficient, that thinks delusions, dreams and other phenomena are completely meaningless. By contrast I believe that, within a pathologically distorted act of communication, delusions have a meaning of their own and serve to broaden and articulate our knowledge of the world.

In order to understand the reasons behind this it is necessary to take into account, in philosophical terms, a tradition that starts with William James’s *Principles of Psychology* (1890) and runs at least as far as Alfred Schütz, one of Husserl’s brightest followers. What is the significance of these two thinkers for our approach? In his *Principles of Psychology*, and indeed elsewhere, William James theorized the idea of a ‘sub-universe of reality’. In other words, he thought there was not just one single universe with the same rules and criteria of relevance. There are many universes of reality: for instance, alongside that of ‘paramount reality’, the reality that seems to us superior to all others, the reality of the daily life of those who are awake, there is the sub-universe of dreams, that of madness, that of myth, that of religion. Each of them has specific rules and criteria of relevance. Dreamtime is not the same as time by the clock; similarly, trying to deal with the myth of Zeus with the systems used in physics or mathematics gives bizarre results. Schütz developed James’s position and talked not of sub-universes of reality but ‘vital worlds’. They are not Husserl’s ‘lifeworld’, the indistinct background of our perception, thought and actions, but represent ‘finite provinces of meanings’. For example, play is a ‘vital world’ in which, as in James’s sub-universes, particular criteria and specificity operate. We move abruptly from one vital world to another. Thus, when children imagine themselves as a rider in antiquity or a character from a strip cartoon, they create a closed world compared with the ambient setting, with a kind of screen separating it from its surroundings. When their mother or teacher calls them back into the ordinary world, the world they share with others, the screen is torn and they return to another sub-universe of reality. In order to enter the sub-universe of delusion we have to make a similar leap as well, a leap that in fact resembles the one we make every morning when we wake up from a dream, or every day when we start to daydream.

In my view this project is justified because I am convinced that perhaps the most noted trend in modern philosophy, 'rationalism', which has become part of common sense, in seeking to imitate the successes of the mathematical and physical sciences, has adopted a model of absolute single reality that is *de rigueur* but strictly inappropriate to the human world. Unable to find anything corresponding to this model within its own boundaries, this rationalism has therefore abandoned large and crucial areas of individual and social existence to the fallow land of ignorance. It has thereby handed the task of establishing order there to political and religious authorities, history, traditions, habits and fate. To paraphrase Lévi-Strauss (who speaks of *pensée sauvage* [savage thought], meaning thought that is untamed, spontaneous, uncultivated), I would call *vie sauvage* (savage life) that whole area of human experience – including our passions, phantasies, beliefs and delusions – that is left to the 'irrational'.

It therefore still seems indispensable today that we carry out a long and exhaustive process of collective recognition of these areas with a view to reintegrating them into the intellect and cultivated life, and turning them into seed beds for the production and reproduction of meaning.

I shall begin with the hypothesis, mentioned in passing by Freud in a letter to Fleiss dated 6 December 1896 (an idea he subsequently abandoned), that our psychic mechanisms are not given once and for all and do not develop in a continuous and cumulative manner. They are constructed in successive layers, whose congruence is normally ensured by the periodic rearrangement and repositioning of ideas and memories. Each re-ordering of the past produces differing versions of the history of an individual, whose existence never unfolds in a straight line, by successive and constant additions, but rather proceeds by way of leaps and discontinuities. One's existence is split into different 'periods of life', homogeneous spaces of psychic time separated by breaks. After each break in the development of individual existence, there is a '*da capo*', a retranslation: new meaning is given to the 'psychic material', and in particular to the mnemonic traces, of the preceding phase within the cognitive and emotive horizon of the most recent period of life.

Just as the body 'transliterates' its earlier forms, absorbing them into new forms that preserve traces of the old ones even as they cancel them out, so the psychic apparatus reintegrates its material in more or less coherent forms. At all ages of life, discomfort that exceeds a certain threshold produces – 'almost always' but not every time – disturbances of thought that prevent the processes of translation. This is particularly true of the earliest period, in which the procedures of symbolization are not yet established. But there are traumatic experiences that, by virtue of the suffering they produce, resist any translation into the language of the successive ages of life. Thus the past manifests itself in two ways: either as dissolved in its recodification within new systems of signs, or as encapsulated in the space carved out by the traumatic event. In the first case, it undergoes a metamorphosis into a present that moves forward and is able to see it as already past. In the second, a blank in memory takes the form of a mould, a receptacle subsequently filled by actions, dreams, phantasies or delusions. The past and the present are then inseparable, since the past refuses to give way to a present on which it continues to bear (in the sense that it both 'presses' and is 'of concern').

All individuals are thus 'divided', traversed by faultlines and cracks. To pursue the metaphor of writing, individuals are like a palimpsest continually scraped clean and covered in new layers of signs, for which – as long as they remain alive – there is no *editio princeps*. Everyone's biography is in this way studded by areas of darkness, covered in secret wounds that have never completely healed, its temporal structure a complex curve, broken at various points, full of revisions and second thoughts.

When the work of transcription fails adequately to connect the different periods of life, a part of the subject is excluded and made incompatible with the rest. The focal point of discomfort is isolated, but at the price of creating an alien temporal 'enclave' within a psychic province subject to laws that are elsewhere suppressed, where the psychic materials follow procedures judged *a posteriori* as archaic.

Delusion begins to take the form of an attempt, generally failed, to translate itself into the present. Diving down into a past that has not been worked through, a current trauma acts to trigger deeper psychic charges that bring to the surface incomprehensible wrecks of what has already occurred. These then combine with new fragments of lived experience which eventually turn out to be just as incomprehensible. And so in delusion people are in the middle of a tangle of logics that at different times have each structured the experience then available to them and cannot now make sense of the confusion of the respective material. Caught up in this muddle, deluded individuals must create a personality and a reality that is at any one time synchronized with the shifting points of balance reached in the struggle between these logics. Their mind then becomes the matrix of further translations that are inappropriate, absurd and bizarre, yet in conformity with the new world they find themselves in.

When the different levels of the 'periods of life' intersect and intertwine, awareness of the logical, perceptual and affective present is dulled. The old wounds bleed again and in delusion one then seeks areas that are 'extraterritorial' with respect to the interests and preoccupations of the present. The usual temporal parameters are altered. The future especially is turned upside down by this, when the simple continuation of an unacceptable present is rejected. Then a kind of sickness of hope occurs, a weakening of the vital force, a loss of interest in oneself and the world. From that moment the life of the deluded individual is ended: any projection into the future and the world of the sane is closed off. The future comes down like a shutter and one is forced to crouch down in a time that closes in until eventually one is flattened by it. Many of us may, in moments of extreme depression, have felt the future is blocked before the inexorable approach of death. For most people, this is no more than a momentary occlusion of the future, of the effort to somehow impose order on the chaos into which an existence we now think of as a blind alley is falling. Delusion arises when it becomes permanent and unavoidable. As Eugène Minkowski said: 'The specific form of the delusional idea is basically nothing but thought that remains intact trying to establish a logical connection between the different stones of the ruined building.'

In delusion the past too is modified insofar as it merges with and modifies the present. Moreover, as we see in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* (1915), psychic time has a particular structure for Freud. Against common sense and the whole

philosophical tradition, Freud here states that coexistence and succession are intertwined. The idea is not as banal as it might at first seem. To bring out its originality, we need only think of the theories of Leibniz (as a point of contrast), for whom time represents the order of succession, while space configures the order of coexistence. With Freud, by contrast, time takes on simultaneously the twofold nature of Leibnizian time and space, insofar as 'succession implies also coexistence'. This initially obscure formula indicates that the past lives on with the present and the immobile (or that which moves slowly) stands alongside what flows, such that psychic time is in fact the coexistence of coexistence and succession.

From the viewpoint of the perception of physical space, the co-presence of past and present is just as unimaginable as ancient and modern buildings standing together in Rome, whole and in the same place. In our psychic apparatus, however, this kind of miraculous co-penetration of all stages is real, especially since Freud was convinced (in accordance with the physiology of his time) that 'in psychic life nothing can perish once it has been formed and everything is in some way preserved', such that in the right circumstances 'everything can come back to the light'. From this perspective, disturbances in thought and affectivity stem from an inability to distinguish and order the various stages of succession within coexistence; that is, from a break in the link between time as coexistence and time as succession.

What happens to people who cannot translate suffering encapsulated in the past (aroused and reinforced by traumas in the present) so as to accept their state or truly wish to change it?

I wish to put forward the hypothesis that psychoses arise when the discomfort caused by repressed material provokes psychic tensions so unbearable that they cannot be made manifest as localized symptoms of compromise; when, that is, their translation into the language of the present fails utterly. Delusion is thus the result of a break between different stages of existence that is very difficult to patch over. It is the result of an earthquake upending the layers of personality that had been effortfully laid down one upon the other. A trauma, stress or life event (or any quite ordinary, perhaps even happy, occurrence that affects the individual's personal life: marriage, divorce, the birth or death of family members, moving house or change of profession, unexpected financial gains or losses) may reopen wounds that had not completely healed, reactivate unsatisfied desires, reawaken old fears, feelings of guilt or misunderstandings, uncovering and aggravating latent cracks and exacerbating the old failure in setting the logico-affective boundaries of the internal and external worlds.

In the delusional individual, the old world not only sways, it is set aside and replaced by another one. However, its loss is counterbalanced and made good by the 'creation of a new reality' that does not present the same impediments to the satisfaction of desires. This is not a partial privation of reality: the whole universe as previously perceived, imagined, thought, as wrapped all around in passions and desires, suddenly crumbles and must nevertheless be rebuilt as fast as possible. This is how the content of delusion appears initially: like shreds or rags picked up hastily here and there to plug the cracks that have opened up between the world and me. The fear of seeing one's own life capsized increases with the realization that the rips

are concentrated where the partition between subject and object is at its thinnest and most fragile.

In other words, the deluded individual breaks the agreement (by no means tacit, in fact obsessively repeated and disseminated in innumerable localized versions) that requires everyone to conform to reality. In all these cases the concept of 'reality' should be understood in a sense that is more prescriptive than descriptive. In fact it indicates an obligation to be faithful – which guarantees the survival of both species and individual – to the discipline that prevails and is needed to maintain a shared world and bring each human being into tune with it by limiting the range of conceptual, perceptual and affective variation allowed.

Psychosis takes the place of reality, reshaping and remodelling the world via hallucinations and delusions, which thereby appear to be compensatory models: it is 'external' reality that has at all costs to adapt to 'internal' reality. Hence the endless attempts to reformulate the perceptual, ideational and affective present in such a way as to nurture and strengthen the mind's newborn reality. This is – in its way – a demiurgic work of remodelling the universe, similar to artistic creation or 'dream work' or a meticulous activity that is closer to the capillary nature of Roman colonization than the devastation caused by barbarian invasions. Delusion is paradoxically a project to found the unfoundable, an attempt at reconciliation in an alien world outside which one is lost, the search for an elsewhere to make one's homeland.

In its reconstructive form delusion is not simply falsity, absence of reason or error of judgement. Rather, it is paradoxically over-compensated truth, which – because it has been repressed, fought and denied for so long – finally bursts out like a coiled spring, expanding so powerfully and excessively as to break into areas of meaning regarded subjectively as contiguous. People wander, or more precisely they become 'extra-vagant' (moving outside the *lira*, the sown ground), because due recognition has not been given to a truth that, in its way, is obvious: a truth shut into the heart of experiences from preceding periods of life, a truth so terrible that it cannot become conscious. The recognition of this truth of delusion cannot occur without a pain that is initially more horrendous than the delusion itself. For it to be overcome, truth must prove preferable to the compensations offered by the 'secondary advantage' of unreality: it must lead not so much to accepting with resignation what one has always tried to ignore, but to welcoming it.

In delusion it is not that logic is lacking or the reality test has failed: it is that the content captured obeys a different logic. What logics are we talking about here? As early as 1956 Gregory Bateson⁴ and a group of his colleagues attributed schizophrenia (and delusion) to the effect of 'double binds', that is, messages that cancel each other out or orders that cannot be followed. When a mother claims to love her child, but does not want to let him grow up as an independent person, in reality 'she desires the child as such, and does not love him for what he is: he must satisfy her profound need for wholeness, purity and affection (being loved). He is not allowed to escape the function imposed on him and so above all he must not grow too much and cannot become autonomous.' The child is sent conflicting messages of the type: 'I (don't) love you / I (don't) love myself.' The paradoxical character of messages such as this can be summed up in the commandment: 'Be what you are not!' – the exact opposite of the classic precept (formulated by Pindar and Aristotle and then

again by Nietzsche): 'Become what you are!' The 'sender' of this message, in this instance the mother, is truly in the grip of narcissism, but a torn and unhappy narcissism (in which love and hate are turned on the self and others at one and the same time). It therefore transmits to the 'recipient' ambiguous signals of complicity and conflict. Clearly hypocritical, it promises the other love and freedom, yet also means by this passivity and dependence. And so there arise 'relational traps', unilateral manipulation that ultimately becomes reciprocal and shuts both parties in a cage with no exit. The manipulation operated by the weaker one then takes the form of a power game in which the one who submits effectively says: 'I'll become what you want me to become as long as you take care of me.'

In technical terms, Bateson and his group develop, at the level of distorted communication, an idea of deviance with respect to Russell's theory of logical types: 'The central thesis of this theory is that there is a discontinuity between a class and its elements. The class cannot be an element of itself, since the term used for the class belongs to a different level of abstraction (a different logical type) from the terms used for the elements.' The schizophrenic transgresses this rule of discontinuity and for this reason cannot discriminate between different modes of communicating with himself and others: 'We put forward the hypothesis that whenever individuals find themselves in a double-bind situation, their ability to discriminate between logical types suffers a collapse.'

In delusion what changes is the way the logical mechanisms shared by a specific community function, in the sense either of concept formation or of discursive development.

The psychiatrist Goldstein's⁵ ideas on the 'concreteness' of schizophrenic thought, or its inability to generalize, have for the most part been refuted today. If anything, the opposing thesis prevails, emphasizing the marked tendency towards abstraction, as though in broader concepts it was seeking a guarantee against the dissipation, confusion and flight of ideas. The concept of 'over-inclusion', proposed for the first time by Cameron,⁶ is thus especially worthy of attention, even if it stands in need of partial correction. Overinclusive thought, common in acute schizophrenia, consists in the inability to choose the relevant elements of a concept, eliminating those less relevant or completely unrelated. To give a simple example, it is an overinclusion to put 'St Joseph' in the 'furniture' category because he is a carpenter. Its complementary opposite is underinclusive thought, which is found in cases of chronic schizophrenia, and where by contrast the conceptual range is restricted, such that the category 'furniture' is applied to tables, but not to wardrobes or chests. The apparent concreteness of schizophrenic thought, as observed by Goldstein, and the prevalence in it of Cameron's overinclusive model, indicate phenomena that may not be incompatible with one another. Personally I believe that these positions – properly reformulated and related to another theory, that of Frith – may be combined to form a new theory capable of connecting and explaining very many phenomena.

According to Frith,⁷ overinclusion derives, paradoxically, from the hyperawareness of delusional individuals. They are not able to filter and thereby work through the vast flow of information reaching them from the external and internal world, and particularly the surplus information that in the clinically sane is lying beneath the

threshold of consciousness or, if it breaks through, is immediately eliminated and ignored. Such a position is diametrically opposed to the hypothesis – which Jung took over from Pierre Janet, transforming it in the process – that in schizophrenia there may be a ‘drop in the mental level’ to a ‘fatal degree’, at the moment when the individual comes into contact with the archetypes or symbols of the collective unconscious, a ‘tide’ of which washes over him.

In Frith’s view then, delusions are not the products of a troubled consciousness, but the outcome of a failed attempt to interpret coherently the incoming mass of data. I would amend this hypothesis by stressing that the flow is not completely without filters. It changes the filter: consciousness is awake and ready to gather much of what is normally considered insignificant, but this surplus of data is always assimilated according to other criteria, which may be loose but significant. It could even be said that the logics of delusion are modelled on the form of these filters, which select significant experience and thought, making them pass through the narrow corridor of consciousness.

So from this perspective the ‘concrete’ nature of schizophrenic thought may – I suggest – be nothing but the emphasis given to inappropriate elements of over-inclusion, to what has flooded into the field of consciousness, sneaking ‘illegitimately’ under the umbrella of a given concept without having been previously sifted or ruled out. This explains why the patient finds significance in what others would not even pay attention to, such as the colour of all the ties worn by the guests at a reception. Thus the abnormal heightening of awareness in mental processes produces a redundancy of information that deluded individuals are unable to catalogue or categorize adequately according to normal standards. This prevents them from ensuring that the flows of consciousness become effectively capillary and from developing complex information. The defective filter postulated by Frith suffers a blockage, a turbulence of thoughts and images forming combinations that are bizarre, yet not without meaning.

Overinclusion implies that, on one hand, the concept takes on a broader extension than that commonly accepted, yet on the other hand, within the concept, supplementary or inappropriate connotations are treated as relevant. The two processes are complementary. If we hold the key to the specificity of deluded individuals’ lived experience and the relevant features of their culture, we are also well placed to understand how the elementary associative chain that generated overinclusion was formed: furniture/carpenter/St Joseph. In this case the person is literally using a metaphor, that is, a meaning ‘shift’ that, in our Christian culture, leads from furniture to St Joseph. In normal thinking, if this association comes to mind, it is in any case dismissed because it is irrelevant or deviant for the purposes of normal communication (but potentially usable in a witty remark). From this viewpoint deluded people are highly metaphorical, for by means of analogical subjective intentions they crossfertilize and hybridize ideas and images that are remote from one another, sometimes inadvertently producing poetic effects, but more often associations that are weird or absurd.

Let us now try to extend the validity of this modified notion of overinclusion from the sphere of conceptualization to other fields, in particular those of discursive or syllogistic reasoning; the intersection between categories; and the contamination

between regions of experience normally thought to be distant and antithetical to one another.

For Von Domarus,⁸ the most striking anomaly in schizophrenic thought lies in the presence within it of a logic based on the identity of the predicates, rather than the subjects, of propositions. Dogs and tables are grouped together because they share the property of having four legs. A logic of this kind, compared with the *modus operandi* of 'primitive thought', assumes that delusions are a form of regression to phases that have been transcended philogenetically and culturally, to 'paleological' thought. Arieti, who shares this view, illustrates it by way of the following example: 'A patient believed she was the Virgin Mary. The process of her reasoning went like this: "The Virgin Mary was a virgin: I am a virgin: therefore I am the Virgin Mary."'

Von Domarus's ideas have been subject to justified criticism for comparing delusional thought to primitive thought, and it has been shown how in delusion one is dealing not with a simple turning back to the mind's interior, but rather with the breaking down of an already developed structure. The views of Von Domarus and Arieti can still be seen in what Matte Blanco⁹ has called the 'symmetrization' of a restricted class in a wider class: 'A patient said a man was very rich; when asked why she said so she replied: "Because he's very tall".' Both qualities were subsets of the wider set of those who have something to a high degree. Symmetrization leads to: 'very tall = very rich'. Like dreams and other unconscious phenomena, delusion is, in Matte Blanco's view, attributable to the working of this 'symmetrical' logic, which is moreover present in all of us alongside 'normal' ('asymmetrical' or 'heterogenic') logic. In the latter it is correct to say that 'all cats are felines', but not that 'all felines are cats', that 'A is the father of B', but not that 'B is the father of A'. In 'symmetrical' logic, by contrast, such equivalences are the rule (precisely because the statements are reversible, the subject turning into a predicate and vice versa, thereby cancelling out the asymmetry of relations). Human thinking and feeling are thus antinomic by nature. In them logics coexist that are incompatible yet they compete, each asserting its own truth. However a cohabitation of this kind does not imply that they merge into a higher order structure: 'They are like nitrogen and oxygen in the air: together, yet nonetheless separate, never combining to form nitrogen dioxide.'

I shall not dwell any longer on the solution I have offered to the question of deluded reasoning as based on the conflict between different logics and temporal orders (to say nothing of the conflict between affects). I would like to end with a few remarks of an existential nature and with an appeal to ancient wisdom.

In its banality and strangeness delusion reveals the latent fragility of everyone's experience, our reliance on assumptions that are uncorroborated, unanalysed or simply forgotten. We trust in these invisible linchpins around which we have automatically made our thought and our life turn for so long: at least as long as they do not come unhinged, dragging down the confidence we had in ourselves and in others as they give way. The loneliness of the polar desert in which deluded individuals enclose themselves with only their phantasies of persecution, jealousy and greatness for company; the visions and the voices; the anomalies in conceptualization and reasoning; the feelings of guilt, shame or emptiness; the suspicion or the unrepentant garrulousness; the ruin, the loss, the detachment from or dismissal

of what they love; all this can only drive them further from the path of common experience. So delusion is disturbing and feared precisely because it threatens and in a shocking way raises a question mark over the world of each and every one of us in all its supposed obviousness.

Should we therefore ignore it, consigning its pure absurdity to some wild land?

The frequency with which madness strikes precisely those individuals whose minds are alert, sharp and agile did not escape Montaigne. Hence his provocative and disturbing proposal, addressed to those who wish to immunize themselves completely against delusion and live within the horizons of a lazy bureaucratic rationality: 'Do you want a healthy man, do you want him well ordered and in a stable and safe condition? Wrap him in darkness, sloth and torpor. We must render ourselves stupid in order to become wise, and be dazzled in order to find our way' (Montaigne, II, XII).

According to the Swiss psychiatrist Luc Ciompi, delusion – like Descartes' good sense – is normally distributed equally among all human beings. Regardless of nationality, social class or gender the incidence of schizophrenia is in fact 1 percent of any population.¹⁰ It is true that it appears in different forms depending on place and period. It may seem to be something sacred or something repugnant, more true than ordinary truth or mentally deranged. Indeed our logical and emotional equipment is understood in differing ways: we have only to think that classical Chinese does not have the verb 'to be' or that in Bali the upbringing of children is still partly based on 'psychic cold showers' in which children are spoiled and protected by mothers who a short while later turn as cold as marble then become affectionate again.¹¹ While other psychic disturbances, such as depression, are more frequent in China and India, schizophrenia does not seem to have any preferences.

Deluded individuals believe in the immediate truth of everything that appears forcibly to them. In general it does not occur to them that this may be false or illusory. This is also related to the fact that they remain closely attached to the logic of desire, which eliminates all contradiction between possible and impossible, accessible and inaccessible, and have experienced this archaic logic as true even when the reality principle has been forced upon their reluctant consciousness. They have therefore not completed the transition from the logic of desire to that of acceptance of connections, the logic of a relatively well-consolidated rationality. So when the schizophrenic episode occurs, then in their eyes the artificial world crumbles while the true world of the logic of desire re-emerges, radiant and triumphant, the truth that they had to reject. The 'kernel of truth' – which is initially opaque to the interpreter because it is concealed beneath layers of distracting convictions and deciphered in relation to the history of their whole lives – is actually clear to the deluded: it is the rediscovery, the epiphany of a very old truth which they had to abandon because they were coerced and forced to as they grew up and became socialized. From the interpreter's viewpoint delusion is definitely the result of the clash of logics belonging to different 'periods of life', with the opportunistic use of recent or current material picked up randomly to shore up the delusion's fragile structure; from the delusional person's viewpoint, however, I would above all stress that it is about returning to the homeland, the place where nothing stopped them achieving their desires. Even what seems undeniably obvious to the deluded is in no way

inherently original: we are in fact dealing with a reconstruction of the past that is as mythical as the lost paradise.¹²

Remo Bodei

University of Pisa

Translated from the Italian by David Webb

Translated from the French by Jean Burrell

(See note below)

Notes

The original text of this article is in Italian. When it was presented as a lecture in the context of a colloquium on 'Madness and Philosophy' organized by the Society for European Philosophy at Staffordshire University in 2001, it was translated into English by David Webb. It was next translated into French for *Diogène* by Jean Pascaud, with Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat translating additional material from Italian. This version was translated into English for this issue by Jean Burrell.

1. Colloquium entitled 'Le Rêve et les sociétés humaines', Cercle Culturel de Royaumont, June 1962. Published in English as Von Grunebaum, G. E. and Caillois, R. (eds) (1966), *The Dream and Human Societies*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press. See also Caillois, R. (1956), *L'Incertitude qui vient des rêves*, Paris, Gallimard, and (1970) *L'Écriture des pierres*, Geneva, Skira.
2. Blankenburg, W. (1991), *La Perte de l'évidence naturelle*, Paris, PUF.
3. Particularly in Bodei, R. (1997) *Géométrie des passions*, Paris, PUF.
4. Bateson, G., Jackson, D. D., Haley, J. and Weakland, J. W. (1956), 'Towards a Theory of Schizophrenia', *Behavioral Science*, vol. I, 1, pp. 251–64.
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7. Frith, C. D. (1979), 'Consciousness, Information Processing and Schizophrenia', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 134, pp. 225–35.
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10. Ciompi, L. (1982), *Affektlogik. Über die Struktur der Psyche und ihre Entwicklung. Ein Beitrag zur Schizophrenie Forschung*, Stuttgart, Klett Cotta.
11. See Mead, M. and Bateson, G. (1941), *Balinese Character*, New York, New York Academy of Sciences.
12. For a better understanding of this text, see Bodei, R. (2002) *Logiques du délire. Raison, affects, folie*, Paris, Aubier/Philosophie. This is a French translation of Bodei, R. (2001), *Le logiche del delirio. Ragione affetti, follia*, Rome and Bari, Laterza, by Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat, to whom we extend our warmest thanks for his friendship and assistance. See also (1995) *Le Prix de la liberté. Aux origines de la hiérarchie sociale chez Hegel*, Paris, Cerf; (1997) *Géométrie des passions. Peur, espoir, bonheur; de la philosophie à l'usage politique*, Paris, PUF; (1999) *La Philosophie au XXe siècle*, Paris, Champs-Flammarion.