

**Introduction:  
From Reason-vs-Madness to Science-vs-the Nonscientific (and  
Beyond)**

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The dimensions defined by the opposition between madness and reason and by this opposition's uncanny double—the disciplinary conflict between history and philosophy—do not of course alone determine even the most general discursive situation within which the phenomenon of the “borderline personality disorder” appears. The opposition between reason and *madness* is doubled and shadowed also by that between reason and *religion*, which increasingly assumes during the nineteenth century the more positivist form of a debate between *science* and religion.

Unreason therefore assumes in modernity the form not just of madness but also of faith qua religious faith, or more generally irrationally grounded persuasion.<sup>1</sup> After all, the period of the “great confinement,” the seventeenth century, is the period not just of French neo-classicism but also of the Reformation's consolidation, the Thirty Years War, and the Treaty of Westfalia (1648). This treaty can be said to “confine” religion when it confirms the principle of the subordination of church to state, radically inverting the medieval European theopolitical order. With the establishment of absolute monarchy, the seventeenth century thus unwittingly prepares the stage for Enlightenment discourses of bourgeois tolerance (the insane “asylum” of religion being the private sphere such tolerance posits as sacrosanct).<sup>2</sup> And it is certainly not by chance that the subordination of religious irrationality to the rationality of absolutist *raison d'état* roughly coincides in time with the “great confinement” of unreason. The privatization of religion (through separation of church and state) that follows the

development of Enlightenment reason extends this exclusionary confinement of unreason and draws its first set of consequences. Enlightenment “tolerance” simultaneously condemns religious irrationality to a kind of “house arrest” (or to the religious “don’t ask don’t tell” policy of liberal modernity as secularization) and thereby ensures future repeated returns of irrationalism as naturalizing-universalizing politicizations of private delusion. In short, these complex developments of the modern opposition between public reason (which takes philosophical and scientific forms) and private religion, which are subject to manifold reversals in various irrationalisms and totalitarianisms—romantic medievalisms, fascist national myths, religious fundamentalisms—from the late eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries, parallel and at points intersect with the development of the modern opposition between reason and madness (or scientific rationality and mental illness). While Foucault takes them to some extent into account, he has difficulty doing them “justice,” as his perhaps somewhat naïve reception of the Iranian Revolution illustrates.<sup>3</sup> But of course, the global rebirth of fundamentalisms did not occur before his eyes in the increasingly paroxysmal clarity with which it demonstrated itself on the world stage in the decades after his death in 1984.

Two aspects of this very complex history of the modern subordination of religion to reason need to be underlined for the sake of the present context. First, the ideological tension between scientific rationality and religion deadlocks the methodological debates about the figure of the “borderline”—and about psychopathology more generally—in two principal directions simultaneously. On the one hand, that which bases itself in subjectivity (or “affect”) and can thus be branded as

“non-scientific”—as often with Freud in recent decades, needless to say—immediately appears to be a mere private faith illegitimately laying claim to shared, public recognition. On the other hand, what is recognized as “scientific rationality” is automatically disqualified from generating statements about the interior states—by definition the religious sphere of private values—indifference to which is the very precondition of its recognition as “scientific.” Hence, the attraction of behaviorisms, genetic determinisms, and physicalist reductions of various sorts, including the neurophysiological and perhaps in some instances the linguistic. The result is tendentially an aporetic inaccessibility of the limit *between* these two positions, and hence of their structuring *interrelationship*, to analysis from either position. All of “us”—i.e. the various psychoanalytic, psychiatric, psychological, and humanities discourses (and the divergent theoretical positions within these) that thematize the “borderline”—have to situate ourselves and our friends and opponents *nolens volens* in the oscillations between these two positions—science and religion (as illusion or delusion)—both of which are defined around the borderline between them, a limit that both in principle exclude.<sup>4</sup>

Second, the undecidability of the status of discourses as scientific and non-scientific—an undecidability that results from their historical (and repetitive) origination out of the splitting apart of reason and unreason—is accompanied in our epoch by a broad questioning of the privatization of religion, a resurgent mass desire to “return” to a world in which private and public are reconciled in a higher unity. Obviously, we live in a moment in which the claims of the irrational on public life and public discourse have recently renewed themselves with ferocious force. These developments signal a global “crisis”—a globalization “crisis,” no doubt—in the management of the irrational:

an increasingly pervasive uncertainty about where reason ends and unreason begins, and about how to make sense of their relationship. The figure of the “borderline” (by which I mean both the individuals who end up falling under this designation and the theory that undergirds it) is a participant in, and a plaything of, the struggles to which this uncertainty gives rise. Indeed, it is not by chance that the prevalence and visibility of the “borderline” as a diagnostic phenomenon comes about after World War II in the context of an Anglo-American renewal of secularism, and thus of the reassertion of the separation of rational from irrational, sane from insane.<sup>5</sup> How, then, does the historically sedimented opposition between scientific and non-scientific discourses, together with those between reason and madness, reason and religion, structure the discussion of the borderline in the following contributions ?

I begin with the context of the articles by Apollon and his colleagues, Bergeron, Cantin, and Simonis. The critical engagement of psychoanalysis with science (and especially neurophysiologically based psychiatry) that extends itself across these otherwise diverse pieces is not just a theoretical response to the abstract relationship between these two terms, but arises out of a very specific situation of struggle in Quebec City, where these analysts work. The psychoanalysts of GIFRIC (Groupe interdisciplinaire freudien de recherches et d'interventions cliniques et culturelles), who founded in 1982 and have run since then the publicly supported Psychoanalytic Center for the Treatment of Psychoses in Quebec City, were engaged from 2001 until 2009 in conflict with the hospital with which the Center was linked, the Centre hospitalier Robert-Giffard, and the ministry of health. Biomedical discourse attempted, in this case, in accord with the tendency of recent decades, to thrust aside its formerly

exemplary companion, psychoanalysis. This development was foreseen, of course, by Freud in *The Question of Lay Analysis*.<sup>6</sup> The difficulty with the disengagement in this instance, however, arose from the fact that the Psychoanalytic Center for the Treatment of the Psychoses had been wildly successful, in the overwhelming view of users, their families, the staff, and the independent examination conducted by psychiatric personnel in the Canadian government's employ. As a result, it has been (thus far) impossible for the hospital to prevent GIFRIC from continuing to run the Center it established almost 30 years ago.<sup>7</sup> This Center for the psychoanalytically informed, multidisciplinary treatment of psychoses has for the time being survived a threat to its continued existence as an autonomous instance of the application and development of Lacanian theory.<sup>8</sup>

Yet it needs to be stressed that this struggle did not (or rather does not) simply concern the power-relations between the truth-claims (and truth-concepts) of applied science (as medical psychiatry) and psychoanalysis (or even Lacanian psychoanalysis) in general, but specifically as related to psychosis. The GIFRIC organization has specifically engaged itself—within, and in part against, the tradition of Lacan—to provide something *akin to* what Foucault at times saw in psychoanalysis—a possible “dialogue” between reason and madness—although not quite in those terms. The GIFRIC analysts attempt to establish not exactly the “dialogue” between unreason and reason, but rather the empty space within the social link where “madness” could speak and express itself, to some degree and in some sense, on its own terms. In this set-up, the analyst represents, or is meant to hold open, that empty space.<sup>9</sup>

In short, neurophysiologically informed, medical psychiatry as a discourse has been arrayed here, in this perhaps small but significant instance, not just against psychoanalysis, but against a particular form of psychoanalysis that claims to give back the status of subjectivity and full humanity to the psychotic subjects who otherwise appeared on the social scene as dehumanized objects. The essays by Apollon, Bergeron, Cantin, and Simonis all make important statements about, and from, this ongoing debate between different forms of reason. (The history of this struggle can be read, in part, online, at [www.gifric.com/Quisommesnous.htm](http://www.gifric.com/Quisommesnous.htm).)

Willy Apollon's "The Limit: a Fundamental Question for the Subject in the Human Experience," approaches the tension between the "scientific" and "non-scientific" encounters with the human psyche by situating empirical scientific observation in its psychic origin and status. Apollon indicates this origin at a particular point within a theory of child "development," but he emphasizes that this "development" includes what is non-observable, i.e. what eludes and yet contextualizes a strictly objectively "scientific" account. Apollon therefore neither defends psychoanalysis as a "scientific" discourse, nor acquiesces to the (dis)qualification of psychoanalysis as "nonscientific." He insists that psychoanalysis presents a knowledge, but one that, while not a matter of—either purely private or public—faith, is not accessible to (objective) "science" because it remains based on subjective and nonverifiable experience. Thus, Apollon situates scientific knowledge and the experience of observation and nomination within a broader range of experience to whose origins and unfolding psychoanalysis would have privileged access. Here psychoanalysis—and the philosophical anthropology that emerges in connection with its experience—determines the framing of science, and not the other way around.

While respecting both domains in their specificity, Apollon's argument situates scientific observation, on the one hand, and psychoanalytic experience, on the other, in two different dimensions of human experience, rather than addressing them principally as two different, competing conceptions or philosophies. These two dimensions are comprised of what Apollon calls the "mental image," as visually perceptual, spatial, and nominal experience (what Freud called perception-consciousness), on the one hand, and the "mental representation," on the other hand, which does not, in fact, represent anything and is itself nonrepresentable: it is the presentation of the nonpresentable. The internal resonance of this "mental representation" is not directly observable, for Apollon, because it originates in a proto-verbal, audible traumatization by the voice of the other, a traumatization that institutes a temporal dimension at once beyond and within language. Observation can grasp only the former, Apollon argues, because it belongs to this level of experience, but not the latter, which disturbs it from without like (or as) an hallucination—the irrationality or the madness of human being. The GIFRIC analysts posit this irrationality in its universality, understanding it as the very core of the human, because it is precisely the dimension of the human spirit (or culture or artifice), through which the human exceeds the domain of nature.

For Apollon, the experience of the "mental image," as spatial, is a limited experience of limits; the experience of the "mental representation," in contrast, is an unlimited experience, or rather an experience of unlimitation and limitlessness. According to this rewriting of Kant's transcendental aesthetics in terms of psychoanalytically understood historical a prioris—conditions of the possibility of human desire (I return to Kant in the Introduction to the third section of this Special Issue)—the linguistic and parental context of the mental image is the "mother tongue." The

mother tongue, however, is ambiguous—not unlike language or borders in general for a Derridian discourse—because it combines the audible dimension of the voice with the visual dimension of the image, rooting the voice in the image, but also always virtually or potentially unsettling the image with the voice, combining situatedness with nonsituation, position (i.e. being as spatial positing) with the (nonbeing of the) nonpositional, the vocal-temporal as such. The dimension of the denomination of observable things for which the mother tongue is responsible is what Apollon—distancing himself here from the more usual Lacanian linkage of the symbolic with paternal connotations—terms the “symbolic order” as that of “things said,” but an order haunted by “things heard,” the hallucinatory dimension of a voice that does not correspond to the naming of visible entities.

In Apollon’s displacement, the paternal function, or the fact of language, adds itself to this experience of the mother tongue and displaces it: rules (like names before) replace the always enigmatic object of the voice as the principle of spatial order, introducing the child into the social bond. After this point, Apollon introduces the problem of the limit in terms of the confrontation between the social sphere of limitation and the—in principle unlimited—expansion of interiority. This confrontation passes from the initial negotiations and demands of the adolescent, to the adult’s ongoing feud with the limits entailed by the social bond. Subjectivity appears here in the guise of the continuing attempt to express the limitlessness experienced by the subject as his/her true self in the ongoing encounter with the voice. The voice remains metaphysical here only in that, although itself a material trauma of “voice-recognition,” it gives rise to metaphysical experience. In the negotiation of the subject with society, the subject calculates the passage beyond the limits of the law in terms of safety and the



danger of death, i.e. total social isolation, but the calculation is one that subserves a survival that is always *nolens volens* an out-living of oneself.

The next contribution, Danielle Bergeron's essay on "The Borders Between Autism and Psychosis," stems likewise from a senior analyst from GIFRIC and the Freudian School of Quebec, who happens also to be a psychiatrist. Nonetheless, she has been involved in the same legal and theoretical-clinical struggle as the other members of GIFRIC, which has pitted psychiatric "reason" against psychoanalytic "irrationality," the alleged "scientificity" of the former against the ostensible "non-scientificity" of the latter. In this essay, Bergeron proposes a description of the subjective structure underlying a diagnostic category that is closely related to psychosis, but distinct from the "borderline personality"—*autism*. Like the other essays by GIFRIC analysts in this Special Issue (Apollon, Cantin, and Simonis), Bergeron's analysis circumscribes the scientific discourse in terms of observation, understanding scientific observation as focused on the mental image (or perception), an image defined by the mother tongue and haunted by an audible dimension irreducible to visibility.

Within this "framework," Bergeron draws on testimonial literature by autistic subjects to argue that autistic subjectivity is structured as an attempt to preserve an unmediated relation with the subject's own "mental representation," or inner voice(s). She understands and respects as a way of being this attempt, rooted in an early and unconscious decision or choice, to refuse as much as possible to enter into the mother tongue. The refusal avoids the encounter with an Other, and thereby the encounter with an Other's desire. Bergeron unfolds the effects of this choice in the autistic construction of a space without any Other, and of a language devoid of desire. In contrast, the psychotic subject enters into the mother tongue and finds him/herself

struggling with alien voices, with their imperatives, desires, and *jouissances*. Finally, as I read her, Bergeron implies here that the autistic refusal of the mother tongue, the autistic attempt to construct a literalist mother tongue of one's own, is *akin* to the scientific refusal of the voice within the mother tongue, but that autistic discourse *differentiates* itself from scientific discourse in that science attempts to *perfect* the mother tongue, the determination of the referential universe, while autism attempts to *withdraw* from and *evade* it.<sup>10</sup>

Our third contribution to this section, Alan Bass's article "Psychoanalytic Process, the Paradoxes of Self-Reference and Intermediacy," adopts a very different strategy in its approach to the problematic interrelationship between science and psychoanalysis. Instead of trying to establish the *differences* between the two fields, Bass works to establish a *rapprochement*. His attempt goes by way of references to contemporary philosophies of science and deconstructive philosophy. (Bass began his career as the translator of major early works by Jacques Derrida, notably *Writing and Difference*, *Margins of Philosophy*, and *The Post-Card: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, and became a training analyst and prominent writer on analysis who has pursued connections between the Derridian philosophy of difference, on the one hand, and difference as experienced and worked through in the psychoanalytic situation, on the other hand.) The scientific discourses whose compatibility with psychoanalysis Bass wants to stress, however, are those based on the Gödelian principles of undecidability and paradoxical self-referentiality. The scientific discourses to which he refers—neurophysiological reflections on the brain's self-reflexivity by figures such as Gerald Edelman and Roger Penrose—are therefore not the same as those to which Apollon

and Bergeron refer, these latter being empirical and applied, “evidence-based ” sciences such as contemporary mainstream psychiatry and neurophysiology. The positions the GIFRIC analysts and Bass sketch out are thus, in this respect, apparently but not actually opposed to one another. Yet the different rhetorical, theoretical, and polemical strategies they adopt are worthy of note and reflection.

Bass’s hypothesis is that “the reality of the impersonal process is the reality of self-referential, undecidable, intermediate primary narcissism. When analyst and patient meet in what I am deliberately calling this transitional space, repetition makes a difference ” (10). This position—in which Bass stresses that repetition is not simply opposed to change, nor death to life, identity to difference—works against the binary logic that organizes the conventional oppositions of reason to madness, science to the non-scientific, since the classical age and well before. It attempts to envision a place for psychoanalysis in “the strange Platonism of self-referential paradox and the strange positivism of undecidability, complementarity, transitional and virtual processes. ”

The final essay in this section, Yvan Simonis’s “A Way of Comparing Lévi-Strauss and Lacan,” contributes to the clarification of the relationship, and borderline, between structuralism (represented here synecdochically by Claude Lévi-Strauss), and psychoanalysis (as represented by Jacques Lacan). Simonis—an anthropologist who has worked extensively on Lévi-Strauss, as well as a psychoanalyst associated with GIFRIC—approaches both discourses as “sciences,” but he calls structuralism a “science of the evening,” psychoanalysis a “science of the morning.” What distinguishes the two is a different approach to the *Real*, and thus the *act*, which is thought to arise out of, or to occur on the order of, the *Real*. While the structuralist discourse—the “science of the evening” (which recalls the Owl of Minerva’s Hegelian flight) *presupposes* action but only

analyzes its *effects* in terms of the resultant sedimentation of codes, situating the subject as a “symbolic function,” psychoanalytic discourse—as a “science of the morning”—pursues a Real that inscribes itself beyond the “symbolic order,” as a non-representable and absent cause of the desiring subject. (The “symbolic order,” of course, is a term and concept that Lacan initially derived largely from Lévi-Strauss’s work on the elementary structures of kinship and related topics, but Lacan’s later focus on the Real pushes him beyond the limits of his mid-career, structuralist phase in which the focus of his work was on the “symbolic.”) Structuralism is thus akin to the observational sciences, as characterized by Apollon, Bergeron, and Cantin, in that it limits its interest to the representable “realities” and “possibilities” of the Symbolic and Imaginary realms, stopping short of the “impossibility” of the Real.

But finally, in his Appendix, Simonis does attempt to envision a site where the distinct sciences of morning and evening overlap, a noontime or midnight borderline between the two. This site is the algebraic formula Lévi-Strauss repeatedly used to summarize the structure of myth. Simonis adapts this formula here to describe the structure of the Lacanian subject, which would thus comprise the myth of the subject, or the subject of myth.<sup>11</sup> In Simonis’ adaptation, which he offers here explicitly as the hypothetical point of departure for further discussion, the formula means perhaps something like: what the mind knows relates to what the body desires as what the body knows relates to what desire (unconsciously) thinks. The split subject, separated from itself by a nonrepresentable Real, would be structured as a myth, myth conversely as a subject. Indeed, Lévi-Strauss himself proposes in “The Structural Study of Myth” (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 206-31) that one apply his formula for myth to precisely the Freudian

“family romance of the neurotic”: “This formula becomes highly significant when we recall that Freud considered that *two traumas* (and not one, as is so commonly said) are necessary in order to generate the individual myth in which a neurosis consists. By trying to apply the formula to the analysis of these traumas . . . we should not only be able to provide a more precise and rigorous formulation of the genetic law of the myth, but we would find ourselves in the much desired position of developing side by side the anthropological and the psychological aspects of the theory; we might also take it to the laboratory and subject it to experimental verification” (228). Simonis’ Lacanian support of Lévi-Strauss’s proposal closes this section of our “Borderlines” Issue concerned principally with various versions of the science/nonscience distinction, and with their implications for psychoanalysis.

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<sup>1</sup> The demonstration that such persuasion pervades reason was one of the main thrusts of works by Paul de Man such as *Aesthetic Ideology*.

<sup>2</sup> Not to mention that Galileo, Kepler, Newton, etc., all participate in the explosion of medieval cosmology in the seventeenth century (begun already in the sixteenth with Copernicus). On their significance for the modern condition, as one in which a certain felt limitlessness is accompanied by an extreme sense of human limitation, see for example the magnificent lectures by Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*. For the significance of Koyré in Lacan's thinking about "science," see Jean-Claude Milner, *L'œuvre claire*.

<sup>3</sup> Within the *History of Madness*, Foucault does discuss, for example, the entirely different role of religion in Samuel Tuke's Quaker reformism, on the one hand, and in Philippe Pinel's more secularist version of psychological reform (482ff, 491ff, and cf. also 367 and 523ff on religion and morality in relation to madness). But he does not formalize the parallelisms and mutual interferences of these two oppositions—reason/madness and reason (or science)/religion—which serve as uncanny doubles of one another. For example, if religion at times defensively attempts to preserve a public role for itself in modernity by aligning itself with the suppression of irrationality in the form of madness (as in Tuke), then madness in turn at times attempts to preserve a public role for itself by aligning itself, as autonomous art (e.g. in the several mad artists Foucault extols), with the secular suppression of irrationality in the form of religion. But there are many more combinations, which would need to be analyzed in their concrete forms in light of the parallelism of the two binary oppositions that here mirror and distort each other.

<sup>4</sup> Freud's earlier, Enlightenment-style approach to religion as "illusion" in *The Future of an Illusion* yields to this tendency to a great extent, whereas his adjustment of this position in *Civilization and its Discontents* does greater "justice" to the complexity of the opposition between science and religion. I have pursued this question further in "The Splitting of the Superego in the Process of Self-Consolation: Psychoanalysis Between Scientific Facts and Aesthetic Values."

<sup>5</sup> See Maclear, Oaks, and Sorauf.

<sup>6</sup> I have tried to expose the main theopolitical overdeterminations of the discussion of "lay analysis" in "Interpretation of Medicine or Medicine of Interpretation." A largely untapped goldmine on this topic is K. R. Eissler's book from 1965, *Medical Orthodoxy and the Future of Psychoanalysis*.

<sup>7</sup> Here, suffice it to note that the tensions with the hospital led to the government authorities' worries—ultimately proven to be unfounded—about GIFRIC's economic dimension. This symptomatic anxiety about excess (*jouissance*) issued, however, in the collusion between individuals in the hospital direction and in the press, leading to the publication of fraudulent and libelous reports about the Center, which were ultimately prosecuted, as GIFRIC was granted the right to continue to run the Center

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independently of the hospital in accordance with its articulated principles and successful experiences in the past.

<sup>8</sup> Dany Nobus shows usefully how Lacan attempts to defend or re-assert the scientificity of psychoanalysis, but at a distance from realisms and empiricisms, and by following first the structuralist and then the mathematical, topological model.

<sup>9</sup> In this respect, Apollon and his colleagues are more in sync with Foucault (and Deleuze and De Certeau) than with Derrida, although they diverge from Foucault and Deleuze in taking Lacan more emphatically as their point of departure and continuing reference, especially the Lacanian theory of psychosis as sketched in “On a Question Preliminary to any Possible Treatment of Psychosis” (*Écrits* 445-88), the position developed in oral form in the Seminar III on *The Psychoses* (from 1955-56). The Psychoanalytic Center for the Treatment of Psychoses is a concretization and realization of that theory, as supplemented and altered in many specific ways, notably by the addition of local kinship studies to trace the symbolic order involved in psychotic and nonpsychotic subjects, and by further elaborations on the notions of *jouissance* and the object *a*.

<sup>10</sup> The contemporary philosophy of psychology can perhaps be said to refer to the “mother tongue” implicitly when it speaks of “folk psychology” and makes the project for a scientific psychology the perfection (or rejection) of this “folk psychology” by means of its comparison with various frameworks laying claim to scientificity. “Contemporary . . . philosophy of psychology represents two ways of assessing the scientific status of this folk theory. The first way compares the systematic explanatory power of folk psychology to that of more developed nonpsychological sciences. The second way examines successful areas of professional psychology and compares the theoretical kinds (e.g. states, processes, events, and properties) of that putative scientific psychology to those (e.g. belief, desire, fear, hope, etc.) mentioned in folk psychological generalizations” (J. D. Trout, 605).

<sup>11</sup> For the discussion about this formula in Lévi-Strauss’s works, see the wonderful recent collection of essays edited by Pierre Maranda, *The Double Twist*. See also Mark S. Mosko and E.K. Maranda and Pierre Maranda, *Structural Models in Folklore and Transformational Essays*.

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