

At the Opening of Madness: An Exploration of the Nonrational with Merleau-Ponty, Foucault and Kierkegaard

I. The Pre-rational and Irrational through a Phenomenological Lens

- a. Mythical or dreamlike consciousness, madness [*la folie*], despite all their differences, are not self-enclosed; they are not islands of experience without any communication and from which one cannot escape . . . mythical consciousness opens onto a horizon of possible objectifications.¹
- b. Pre-rational: lacks the rational by taking place before or prior to the rational
 - i. My body may be in one place, “but this landscape is not necessarily the landscape of our life. I can ‘be elsewhere’ while remaining here, and if I am kept far from what I love, I feel far from the center of real life.”²
- c. Irrational: lacks the rational by being contrary or opposed to the rational

II. The Irrational through a Historical-Structural Lens

- a. What happened between the end of the Renaissance and the height of the classical age was therefore not simply an evolution of the institutions: it was a change in the consciousness of madness [*la folie*], and thereafter it was the asylums, houses of confinement, gaols and prisons that illustrated that new conception.³

III. The Supra-rational through an Existential-Religious Lens

- a. [Abraham] is mad and cannot make himself intelligible to anyone.⁴
- b. Supra-rational: lacks the rational by being above or going beyond the rational

IV. Conclusion

- a. *La folie est une possibilité de l’homme sans laquelle il ne serait pas ce qu’il est* [Madness is a possibility of man without which he would not be what he is].⁵

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), 305.

² *Ibid.*, 299.

³ Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London: Routledge, 2006), 120.

⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Sylvia Walsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 67.

⁵ Henri Maldiney, *Regard, parole, espace* (Lausanne: Editions l’age d’homme, 1973), 210.