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Recovering the Voice of Insanity: A Phenomenology of Delusions

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Abstract:

This thesis attempts to recover the voice of those termed 'delusional' and gives reasons why they should have a place in the 'conversation of humanity'. It does this by challenging what I identify as a view of language use that I call the 'monological (as opposed to dialogical) folk-scientific observer' picture. I argue that it is the poverty of this picture that leads to the idea that delusions are empty speech acts, incomprehensible, or irrational and incorrigible false beliefs. These conceptions of delusions stand in the way of people labelled as 'delusional' being considered as competent partners in conversation.

In the place of such a picture, I draw analogies with poetical uses of language and outline a view of language as a means of organising experience. The experience of those classified as 'insane' is particularly chaotic and an ethical stance to them involves trying to imagine how their words can have sense. The thread that is followed throughout the thesis is that it is reciprocal trust that allows us to remain in a common sense orientation to the world and it is this that breaks down when people start to say things that are considered delusional. Trust provides an epistemic frame that rules out certain possibilities for making sense of the world. A breakdown in trust occurs because of a disruption of the person's perceptions of salience which prevents the person from being attuned to interpersonal situations.

Following on from this depiction of delusions, it follows that re-establishing trust with the sufferer is crucial to overcoming delusions and that the stigma attached to being seen as 'delusional' can stand in the way of this. It is argued that the person's existential stance can be understood as ironic and so an earnestly ironical approach to the person is ethically justified.

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Abbreviations:

JB   The Jerusalem Bible, New Testament

Texts by Wittgenstein:

CV   Culture and Value
OC   On Certainty
PI   Philosophical Investigations
PO   Philisophical Occasions
RPP   Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology: Volume II
TLP Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus
Z   Zettel

Statement of Copyright:

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Acknowledgements:

For all the Odysseans out there,

safe trip home.

Freud's idea: in madness the lock is not destroyed, only altered; the old key can no longer open it, but a differently configured key could do so.

<div align="right">Wittgenstein</div>

When a society decays it is language that is first to become gangrenous. As a result criticism begins with grammar and the re-establishing of meaning.

<div align="right">Octavio Paz</div>

Philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday.

<div align="right">Wittgenstein</div>

I think that we may trust a good deal more than we do.

<div align="right">Thoreau</div>

Introduction

Deconstructing Insanity:
Preliminary Meditations, a Methodology and an Outline of the Thesis

> We are not isolated free choosers, monarchs of all we survey, but benighted creatures sunk in a reality whose nature we are constantly and overwhelmingly tempted to deform by fantasy. Our current picture of freedom encourages a dream-like facility; whereas what we require is a renewed sense of the difficulty and complexity of the moral life and the opacity of persons. We need more concepts in which to picture the substance of our being; it is through an enriching and deepening of concepts that moral progress takes place. Simone Weil said that morality was a matter of attention, not of will. We need a new vocabulary of attention (Murdoch 1997: 293).

Iris Murdoch here seems to be saying that the propensity to deform reality with fantasy is a universal trait not restricted to those considered insane. In the thesis I will try to draw out the implications of this claim and attempt to enrich our pictures of insanity so that the reader may find reflections of themselves in these pictures and thereby grow in solidarity with those afflicted by insanity. If careful attention is the means, according to Murdoch, by which we stay in touch with reality and dispel fantasy, could a lack of attention be the cause of insanity? I will argue in this thesis that 'seeing things as they really are' requires trust and that a break down of trust precipitates a flight into fantasy. Trust gives us access to the world by anchoring the sense that things really are as they seem. Descartes' method of doubt would, by this account, be one way to deform reality, which is perhaps registered in the first meditation where he compares some of

his thoughts with those of a madman (Descartes 1988: 77).[1] To return to attention, part of developing a vocabulary of attention, as Murdoch claims we need to, will mean attending to what is meant by an exercise of attention.[2] It will therefore be necessary to look at what it means to focus our attention and one way of doing this is through focussing on what it is to carry out a meditation.

Following the example of Descartes, philosophy often begins with a meditation. Something about the world seems problematic. A meditation is an exercise in attention; in just attending to the problem and letting it unfold to see if there are new ways of looking at it or answering it. As Mulhall says:

> Often it is not clear who is on trial, the object or the viewer; so all the viewer can do is trust the object, spend time with its difficulties despite the fact that this investment may be betrayed, because only thus can the full impact be assessed (Mulhall 1994: xiii).

We need to allow the unfolding of the object in its particularity to challenge our own prejudices to the same degree that we put the object of our attention under scrutiny. In this case the focus of our attention is what it means to be delusional. Day and Krebs put it well when they claim, 'that Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy demands, not just a way of seeing, but…a way of attending to, and a willingness to discover, the aspect of things that are most important for us (for us humans) but that for some reason, we are driven to repudiate' (Day and Krebs 2010: 9). In the meditations that follow, I will try to make salient the aspects of delusions that are most often neglected in the philosophical and psychiatric literature but are most important to anyone suffering from delusions. Those with delusions have a life to lead in the same way as anyone else. However, certain pictures of irrationality constitute obstacles to dialogue and self-understanding. These initial meditations intend to lay out constricting pictures of the irrational and start on the task of deconstructing them. The need to enrich and deepen

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[1] Cavell also makes the connection between confronting scepticism and courting madness in Descartes' writings (Cavell 1989: 37).

[2] Wittgenstein can also be seen as valuing the fruits of attention in the way he directs his reader to focus on the nonsensical sentences of the *Tractatus* (1974). One way of understanding the point of the *Tractatus* is that it is the exercise of attention itself through which we can learn a new humbler 'way of life' and it is this 'know-how' that will allow us to see the world aright when we close the book (Kremer 2001: 62-63).

our concepts of irrationality is central to making sense of the existential situation of those suffering from delusions. These meditations will provide a general orientation for the problems that the thesis sets out to address.

Meditations

Irrational, Insane, Mad. These are three highly emotive terms that both encapsulate our fears about and express our will to exclude a certain group of people from what Mulhall calls 'the conversation of humanity' (Mulhall 2007b). The phrase 'conversation of humanity' registers the way any area of human interest can have a bearing on any other and that the unity of the different discourses is underwritten by the fact they are all areas of human life and human life has a unity. People considered insane still have what is recognisably a human life. However, by using the terms I have listed at the start, although there is a variation in how much we engage with people so labelled, at the extreme we stop conversation with these people altogether, we decide that they do not have and cannot have anything to say to the rest of us. In this way we draw a limit to who we consider as participants in the conversation that constitutes the core of what it is to live in a democracy. Democracy is the best way we have found so far of living with each other and maintaining a future not dictated by the interests of one particular group in society. If the conversation that constitutes democracy (with its spectrum of voices) excludes certain members of the community, the unity of the discourse is threatened as a particular mode of human existence is talked about rather than engaged in discourse.

Those considered insane seem to be excluded as competent conversational partners because of unchallenged assumptions about the way people can 'lose their minds'. If this group is excluded on the basis of caricatures that have developed in our depiction of a particular existential situation, then this leaves open the possibility that the members of any other group could also come to be considered incompetent partners in conversation. It may be worth stopping and thinking why this particular group is excluded. In this thesis, I will examine one particular area where I consider the patterns of our life together are becoming sedimented and cut off from a responsiveness to the particular situation of the people involved. To take a phrase from Octavio Paz (1961), one way to prevent the development of gangrene in our ways of being with one another is to, 'begin with grammar and the re-establishing of meaning' (Paz 1961: 263). The first thing to note about the terms I list at the beginning of this section, is that they highlight different aspects of how we depict people suffering from delusions. In

forming a diagnosis of what role delusions play in our life today it may be useful to try to cash out some of the attitudes expressed by these terms. So starts our meditations.

1. Irrationality and the Opacity of Persons

This first meditation will take as its focus the concept of irrationality. The term 'irrationality' when applied to a person implies that we feel the person is in some sense opaque to us. The person so labelled seems to be moving outside the realm of commonsense routes of interest, motivation, thinking and behaviour. This in turn generates fear in others. If the person in question does not respond to conventions of interaction then there is no predicting how an interaction will develop and nothing to stop their behaviour becoming dangerous. Rationality confers a particular kind of predictability in that a rational person is sensitive to the behavioural, conversational and moral norms of a particular situation; they may break them, but will then act within further norms of giving reasons, excuses and apologies. To call someone 'unreasonable' signifies that someone seems to be to a degree insensitive to these norms. The term 'irrational' applied to a person and not just a piece of behaviour, however, implies a complete break with such norms. The importance of rationality seems to be in the way it gives us access to another's mind; if we do not understand a piece of behaviour we can ask the person about it and are likely to be given reasons that make sense of it. We can usually see unambiguously for what reasons a person acted in a certain way or why they said what they did. If they act in an unusual way we can still understand how that piece of behaviour was a possible option because we see how their understanding of the situation is radically different from our own when we talk to them.

A way of illustrating the sensitivity we have to each other that defines what it means to be 'rational', is given in a quote from Bakhtin which I will copy at length as it accurately expresses the point I would like to make:[3]

> Two people are sitting in a room. They are both silent. Then one says, 'Well!' The other does not respond.
>
> For us as outsiders, this entire 'conversation' is utterly incomprehensible. Taken in isolation, the utterance 'Well!' is empty and unintelligible. Nevertheless, this peculiar colloquy of two persons consisting of only one – although to be sure, one

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[3] The quote is taken from *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World* by Michael Holquist (2002).

expressively intoned - word, does make perfect sense, is fully meaningful and complete.

In order to disclose the sense and meaning of this colloquy, we must analyse it. But what is it exactly that we can subject to analysis? Whatever pains we take with the purely verbal part of the utterance, however subtly we define the phonetic, morphological, and semantic factors of the word *well*, we shall not come a single step closer to an understanding of the whole sense of the colloquy…

What is it we lack? We lack the 'extraverbal context' that made the word *well* a meaningful locution for the listener. This *extraverbal context* of the utterance is comprised of three factors: (1) the *common spatial purview* of the interlocutors (the unity of the visible – in this case, the room, a window, and so on), (2) the *interlocutor's common knowledge and understanding of the situation*, and (3) their *common evaluation* of that situation.

At the time the colloquy took place, both interlocutors *looked up* at the window and *saw* that it had begun to snow; *both knew* that it was already May and that it was high time for spring to come, finally, both were sick and tired of the protracted winter – *they were both looking forward* to spring and *both were bitterly disappointed* by the late snowfall. On this 'jointly seen' (snowflake outside the window), 'jointly known' (the time of year – May) and 'unanimously evaluated' (winter wearied of, spring looked forward to) – on all this the utterance *directly depends*, all this is seized in its actual living import – is its very sustenance. And yet all this remains without verbal specification or articulation. The snowflake remains outside the window; the date, on the page of the calendar; the evaluation, in the psyche of the speaker; and nevertheless, all this is assumed in the word *well* (Holquist 2002: 62-63).

We might call the sensitivity exemplified by the two people in the example 'attunement'. One aspect of being rational is the ability to share (to 'tune in' to) a

multi-layered understanding of a situation with others. Through dialogue we constantly 'recalibrate' our understanding of situations with others and this is necessary because we continually find our situational understandings are wildly different (an appreciation of this may help us grow in solidarity with those considered delusional, a point which I explore in greater detail in Section 3.3). It is on the basis of this shared situational understanding that we are able to apply psychological concepts to others.

The fear generated by what we consider is too much irrationality is due to feeling that we can no longer apply the psychological concepts to people which we did in the past; their behaviour and speech, we decide, has become too unpredictable for us to become attuned to them. I will argue, however, that this is just a failure of imagination; of being unwilling to tune in to the person; of not searching to find a repetition of common psychological concepts in the new behaviour. We are all enigmas to each other and to ourselves to some degree, but we seem to draw a line with certain people (by, for instance, using the term 'irrational') and this allows us to shrug off the responsibility of attending to and thinking about what that person is saying to us. There may be many reasons why we do this e.g. tiredness, fear etc., but surely it is worth thinking about why we do this in our own case with particular people in our lives. Mulhall states:

> the capacity to apply such [psychological] concepts to any given person will presuppose the capacity to perceive human life as 'the same occurring again, but with variations' - that is, to see, to respond to, or regard new combinations of behaviour, utterance, and circumstance as a variation on one of the loose patterns (Mulhall 2001: 173).

I will try to show in this thesis how, using the many narrative resources in our culture (such as films and novels) as tools, we can widen the scope of our psychological concepts to those considered delusional. Widening the application of these concepts is a measure of how much we are willing to try to 'find our feet' (c.f. PI pg. 223) with someone in the midst of suffering and existential disorientation.

The paradigm of what we mean by and what we fear when thinking about irrationality can be found in the condition known as 'schizophrenia' or what I will be calling 'the

Odyssean condition'. The term 'schizophrenia', which from the Greek means 'split-mind' or 'split-midriff',[4] has absolutely nothing to do with the existential situation of sufferers; they just do not have split minds or (as the term is commonly understood because the term 'schizo' means 'split') multiple personalities. Giving a medical sounding term to it does not increase the dignity of the condition, but rather adds to the incomprehension of those diagnosed and the people they come into contact with. Also, 'schizo' is used ubiquitously as a short hand for psychopath and thereby implies that the person is dangerous. I believe a change of word is necessary as a start in dispelling the stigma surrounding the condition, at present, known as 'schizophrenia'. For all these reasons I will refer to this condition as 'the Odyssean condition' or 'Odysseania', and the sufferer as an 'Odyssean' (which is a genderless noun). I am open to discussion as to the particular word that is appropriate for the condition. However, I hope to acknowledge in using this word (by relating mine and their condition to the hero of the story accredited to Homer (2003), namely, Odysseus) the bravery of these travellers in alien and frightening worlds and to register their hope that they may one day return to the home of 'sanity' and a normal life. This term also acknowledges that the sufferer experiences different worlds and is just not uttering nonsense caused by static in the brain. Changing the word for what has been known as schizophrenia does not challenge the diagnostic criteria for applying the term (although this thesis does question certain assumptions about the concept) only the word we use to refer to it.

The paradigm picture we have of the Odyssean is of someone 'losing their mind'. This phrase seems to suggest that there is only darkness within; the mind is lost; there is only a blankness where there used to be a person. In place of this picture we can take a lead from a quote from Wittgenstein that perhaps, 'in madness the lock is not destroyed, only altered; the old key can no longer open it, but a differently configured key could do so' (CV 39e). In this thesis I will argue that, indeed, in the case of the person labelled 'insane' the lock is not destroyed, but instead, all that is required is careful attention to the words of the person. Through this it should be possible to build a relationship, which can then be the basis for helping to release them from the world they find themselves in and journey with them on the way back to commonsense (I argue the case for this in Chapter 8).

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[4] The midriff was thought to be the seat of the mind and the passions.

2. Insanity and the Concept of a Healthy Mind

This meditation will focus on the associations of the word 'insanity'. The Latin word 'sănus' means 'healthy' or 'sound' (Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary 1972: 1197). Given the etymological derivation, in the word 'insanity' there is a clear connection between irrationality and an unhealthy mind. This is further expressed in the way we call conditions of irrationality 'mental health issues'. I would like to challenge the idea that the Odyssean condition and other such existential situations are mental 'health' issues. In the rest of this section I will bracket neurodegenerative conditions such as dementia, which are clearly caused by brain diseases; but here again, I do not think applying the idea of 'mental health' is appropriate, as it is the brain not the mind which is diseased.[5] To me, it is highly inappropriate to apply the concept of health to conditions such as Odysseania. This is what Ryle would call a 'category-mistake' (Ryle 2000: 17).[6] In other words, I find that the category of health only causes confusion when applied to the concept of mind. The term 'mental health' would seem innocuous as a way of specifying what it means to live within the realm of rationality. However, for someone who has left this realm the corresponding terms seem much more unhelpful. The implications are that someone who has become irrational has a 'diseased' or 'disordered' mind and that they are 'ill'. One handbook for helping those caring for people with the Odyssean condition has the title, '*I am not sick, I don't need help!*' (Amador 2000) as this is a common refrain from those with such a condition. I would argue that such a claim on the part of persons affected is not due to a form of illness-blindness but rather to the fact that the situation they find themselves in seems nothing like having an illness as they have learned to use the word up until then.

Avoiding the term 'mental health' would stop conditions of irrationality being understood primarily as a breakdown in the 'brain mechanism' and help people to understand the condition as a change in the person's experience of the world. It would also help highlight the change in the interpersonal relations of the person. If irrationality is seen solely as a matter of having a 'diseased mind' the focus will be on

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[5] Szasz makes the point that unlike in the case of bodily organs which have functions so that we can identify the breakdown of their function as a disease process, a person does not have a natural function so the application of the term 'disease' to the mind is hard to justify (Szasz 2010: xxiii).

[6] Szasz calls the idea of 'mental illness' a myth (Szasz 2010: xvii), but I would hold to a Rylean criticism of the conceptual incongruity of applying the category of health to the mind.

finding the right drugs for the person (from my own experience of psychiatric hospitals the drug regime is sometimes the only thing considered in the recovery of the patient) and this leads to a blindness among carers to the whole interpersonal context of the sufferer. Admittedly, calling such conditions 'health' matters enables us to take away any sort of blame for the person's condition from the person, but with it comes the idea of a 'broken brain'. It is not disputed that drugs can be very useful in changing the mood range of the person with the condition. However, this is only the first rung of the ladder in regaining a footing in the everyday and medication may have deleterious consequences on the well-being of the person e.g. most anti-psychotics can lead to substantial and rapid weight-gain with the attendant risks of high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke; to loss of sexual function; to diabetes; and more rarely, to epileptic convulsions, cardiac failure and neuroleptic malignant syndrome, which can be fatal (Bentall 2009: 227-228). A focus on drugs can also lead to the psychological consequence that the person feels that their brain is somehow defective and this can harm self-esteem (in addition to the stigma associated with being labelled 'mentally ill'). It can also eliminate their sense that they have choice over which drugs they take to change their mood (as we all do in being able to drink alcohol/coffee/tea, smoke, eat chocolate/'comfort food' or whatever else) as the psychiatrist's word on their drug regime is taken as final.

The term 'illness' focuses the problem on the individual's brain rather than taking into account the whole context of a person in a disorientating interpersonal situation. To say it another way: it is not about fixing a broken brain. Brains do not think, people do. There is something highly objectionable to conceptualising anyone's mental existence as *diseased*. Bodies can be diseased, but what does it mean to say that someone's mind is diseased? People can be stressed, confused, disorientated, unable to work, violent, but to treat their mind as 'diseased' or 'not healthy' invalidates their experience (this will be discussed as a barrier to regaining trust in Chapter 7). It claims that somehow the experience of the majority or the doctor is the correct way of experiencing the world and anything else needs to be rectified. There is insufficient ground for the idea that there is one standard way as to how I or anyone else *should* experience the world. Hookway (2002: 261-262) argues that a plurality of epistemic stances to the world is necessary in order to progress in science and this requires admitting that a stance different from my own may have its place. More importantly, the attitude of intolerance

towards the experience of a person losing touch with a commonsense relation to the world stands in the way of meeting the person where they are and thereby drawing them back to such a relation (as I will argue is possible and ethical in Chapter 8). The important point is whether we can help ameliorate someone's suffering by joining them where they are, rather than expecting them, in the midst of existential turmoil, to meet us where we are in the common sense world. My own terminological preferences would side with calling such conditions 'mental struggle' issues as a short hand for the phrase, 'a mental struggle to keep one's feet in the everyday'. This also universalises the condition, because, I believe, we all have such issues; it is just that some people have more extreme versions of them, as I do.

3. Madness and the Feminine Aspect of Irrationality

To start this meditation on 'madness' I will begin with an etymological investigation. There is a morphological similarity between the word 'mad' and the word 'maid'. This association is given further weight when we look at an etymological derivation:

> Madrigal…from It. (Venetian) *madregal* 'simple, ingenuous,' from L.L.[Late Latin] *matricalis* 'invented, original,' lit. 'of or from the womb,' from *matrix* (gen. *matricis*) 'womb.' (Online Etymology Dictionary 2011)

This derivation links the prefix 'mad-' to the Latin for 'womb'. This might suggest that in Britain, at least, there was understood to be some sort of connection between irrationality and the state of being a teenage girl or young woman. The possible feminine sense of the term is also found in the way in which young women were in the past often described as 'hysterical' ('hyster' meaning 'womb' as in 'hysterectomy'; implying that it is a disorder caused by having a womb) meaning 'overly sensitive' and prone to extreme mood swings. Here we can see irrationality being associated with the feminine and it is not too hard to see the links between ideas about young women's irrationality and, what was then understood, as a 'weakness of character'. The Odyssean condition usually appears for the first time in people in their 20's. If the word madness associates irrationality with the feminine and especially teenage girls and their so-called 'weakness of character' then the appearance of similar traits in men and women in their 20's would be seen as a developmental regression. At least one strand of the psychoanalytic tradition clearly follows this logic in seeing the irrationality found in the Odyssean condition as caused by a regression to an earlier stage of development (Sass 1992: 89). The idea that certain forms of irrationality are caused by over-sensitivity makes them seem more socially acceptable. The term 'madness', although covering forms of irrationality such as Odysseania, is older than the medicalisation of irrationality and applies to aspects of it that are considered outside the remit of psychiatry. The term today is not as stigmatising as other words for irrationality and is often used in common parlance to mean someone who is acting a bit wild or unpredictably without all the stigma of the term 'insane'.

The so-called irrationality of women has, even in the recent past in Europe, been given as a reason for maintaining their status as 'the second sex' (that is, not having the right to vote, being considered property of their spouse, being paid less than men, etc.) (De Beauvoir 1972: 230). It is arguable that such anachronistic ideas about the feminine might play a part in the way someone considered mad does not always have the same rights or the same status as those considered sane. One illustration of this is the way most rights are stripped away for a time from someone who is sectioned. Admittedly this is done in light of the need to protect the person themselves and those around them, but there is also a sense in which the person has their voice taken away from them in the process of sectioning, in that they are not one of the parties to the discussion about how they are to be treated (this is looked at in Section 3.1). If ideas about the equality of women are now self-evident, it would seem high time to look again at our ideas about people deemed irrational and whether there might be a way to register their voice even when they are in the midst of existential disorientation. This thesis will attempt to foreground some of the means we have of listening to that voice.

4. Summary

My focus, in this thesis will be on delusions, as these seem to be paradigmatic of what Irrationality, Insanity and Madness mean to most people. By looking at these three words it has been possible to sketch a picture of how we might have come to our present exclusion of those with the Odyssean condition from the 'conversation of humanity'. As the title of my thesis implies, my concern is to try to recover the voice of people suffering with delusions in the conversation of humanity, which is at the heart of maintaining what I consider the true spirit of democracy. I will attempt to recover this excluded voice by a) trying to replace some of the pictures that lie at the base of our attitude to those with what we term 'delusions'; b) charting the development of delusions from a phenomenological perspective (using the methodology described below); c) trying to show what an understanding of the logic of delusions can show us about ourselves; and d) trying to outline an ethical approach to joining in conversation with those suffering with delusions as well as showing possible therapeutic approaches to them. I will concentrate on medically diagnosed delusions (while questioning the criteria of such diagnoses) because I do not wish to be drawn into discussions such as the one put out there by Richard Dawkins in the title of his *The God Delusion* (2008). I think this loose use of the term is unhelpful when people with the Odyssean condition are struggling in the midst of life-engulfing existential disorientation, and I think that such a use in a religious/anti-religious slanging match makes light of the suffering people with actual delusions have to deal with everyday.

However, there is an important point to be made about Dawkins' use of the term 'delusion'. The term as used pejoratively in public debate (as I will argue it can be in its medical use), to me, signals that the person using the term is taking a stance of not being willing to imaginatively enter a view point of another person and says more about the person using the term than the intended target. It seems to me to be an attempt to stop conversation and might be likened to saying, 'I no longer want to listen to you or explore your position. I don't accept you as a competent partner in conversation.' Or a more appropriate likeness of such a stance might be when a child puts its fingers in their ears and says, 'Na, na, na, I can't hear you,' when they want to stop a conversation.

Methodology

The methodology I have chosen to try to solve the problem of delusions could be termed 'phenomenology'.[7] This term comes with many associations that could get in the way of communicating with a large proportion of philosophers and psychiatrists as well as scaring readers without a background in philosophy, and so I feel it is necessary to outline how I have appropriated this term. First, (for philosophers) I declare that my approach finds a common thread in the writings of Plato about Socrates, in Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Murdoch and Weil, in that I believe all of these philosophers were self-consciously *existential* philosophers. By this I mean that they were trying to articulate through language a path through difficulties they had encountered in their lives. They did not do this, I believe, in order to make others follow, but rather, as Jesus went down to hell before the resurrection, they wanted to show their solidarity with those suffering in similar ways. To use a metaphor from Wittgenstein, we might say that they produced in their writings a travelogue of their own pathway back to the diurnal world (c.f. PI preface). In doing so they help others, who have not been to that particular hell, find ways to understand and 'be with' those who are there at the moment. Like building a bridge over troubled waters. Call this travel diary 'therapy' if you will.[8]

So why appropriate 'phenomenology' as my methodology, with all its complex history and its association with the Continental tradition (which would put me at variance with many philosophers in the UK, from what I understand of the present trends in academia)? My own take on the term 'phenomenology', and why I have found it is the only appropriate methodology for what I am trying to do, is that it takes experience as the starting point and, not only that, it also declares that there is a *logos* (or translating from the Greek, a truth; which means to me something like an internal coherence) to experience or to put it in more workaday language 'a structure'. Again, 'experience' is, to many philosophers, a term-of-art that has many associations and has been defined in many different ways in the history of philosophy. I am using it in its everyday sense

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[7] By using the term 'solve' I mean that I intend to diagnose what role delusions play in the context of someone's life and outline an ethical approach to those caught in such an existential situation

[8] I do believe that all philosophy, however abstract, is existential; but that is a conversation for another time.

with all its many valences as a word e.g. 'Are you experienced? Have you ever been experienced?' as asked by Jimi Hendrix in a song played with the band *The Jimi Hendrix Experience* (Hendrix 2003). So why not use 'consciousness' as the term for that which I am trying to chart a part of the structure? The answer for me is that this term immediately falls into the trap of reifying (in that it tries to give a name to what is common to all experiences and experience in general) something that just is not object-like in any way. This is one of the reason's Heidegger used the term 'Dasein', which can be translated as 'being-there'. There is a constant temptation, because of the success of science, to try and capture experience in terms of our ontology of objects in the world. To avoid this problem I take experience (not sense data or phenomenal qualities or other posited mental qualities) as being the starting point for our exploration of the world and ourselves.

The question then becomes how I avoid the reification of experience when I am willing to use the term 'structure' to talk about it. At this point I need to elaborate my methodology. By talking about 'structure' I am harking back to Kant's phrase, the 'conditions for the possibility' of something. That is, we start with certain experiences and then try and work out what conditions there must be for us to have these particular experiences and we know others as having had. My 'phenomenology' is focussed on the internal relations within experience at the level of the person. I look at how different experiences relate to each other e.g. how a certain experience requires a background context to be intelligible or how one experience, through an interpersonal situation, develops into another and what conditions precipitate this change. Sometimes I may use research from psychiatry on brain chemistry to explain why a certain type of experience might occur. From what I have said above, it may seem that I am trying to argue that what occurs in the brain is of no relevance to experience. This is not the case. If I have to pick a mind-brain relational theory, then I would say what happens in the brain can correlate with certain features of experience. So, for example, I use as part of my argument in Chapter 5, the finding that a dysregulation of dopamine in the brain has been found to correlate with the Odyssean's experience of random objects in the environment suddenly becoming salient for them (Kapur 2003: 14). Relating phenomenology to brain processes can be helpful for both levels of inquiry as long as it is not reductive.

For the methodology of phenomenology, language is absolutely central; it is the only way we have of sharing experiences with anyone else whose perspective on the world varies from ours (i.e. any other human being). This is not to say that we cannot share experiences worldlessly; examples of this abound e.g. watching a sunset with another person; listening together to a musical performance; sharing a meal; living and facing the rest of your life with another person in marriage. But even though there can be a wordless sharing of experience in all of these there is still a variance in perspective (in other words, a person's viewpoint on the world, which includes the way it is inflected presently by what has come before). Only in the last case might it be possible, after a lifetime together, to really share a viewpoint as much as it is possible for humans to do. Of course, such a shared viewpoint only becomes possible through the conversation of a good marriage where each partner conscientiously tries to make the other aware of their blind spots while being receptive to having their own blind-spots pointed out and ameliorated. Language is the means we have of comparing our perspective with that of another and thereby incorporating other takes on the world (I will discuss this notion of perspective further in Chapter 3 and 4 and elaborate on how the ability to take up other perspectives can break down in people suffering from delusions). Language as the articulation of experience becomes itself a focus of the study, as it was for all the philosophers I have labelled 'existentialists'.

Do we then need a phenomenology of language? What can we say about the experience of speaking and being speaking creatures? I believe that this is not a separable area of study but is bound up together with all the other aspects of experience and so of course will be looked at and expanded upon while picking out other threads of the pattern that makes up experience. One way of understanding language is as a means of organising our experience as summed up by Cavell's phrase, 'wording the world' (Cavell 1989: 58). Briefly this is the idea that words can be projected in flexibly inflexible ways into new situations (Mulhall 2001: 153) according to our training, interests and ability to see likenesses or aspects (this way of understanding language is explored in much greater detail in Chapter 8). This understanding takes the weight off the representative role of language and, for instance, allows that a single word or sentence can be used to crystallise or allow us to get a handle on what may, for a long time, have seemed something 'ineffable' or un-shareable in experience. Such a crystallisation can be

achieved through the novel projection or ordering of words to express the experience. Hence the need for good poets.

Next, I want to make salient why I think a study of medically diagnosed delusions is so important not just for understanding the sufferer, but also for understanding ourselves, when we have not been labelled under the term 'deluded'. When people develop delusions the 'structure' of their experience has changed in a way that is out of the ordinary. Trying to chart what has changed in the relations between their different experiences can tell us much more about the deepest underlying structures of experience than studying someone who has always remained within the 'non-delusional' (as diagnosed medically) frame of experience. The main thread I follow, in charting what I think breaks down in the existential condition of having delusions, is that the layers of trust that tie us to the common sense world break down and the deeper the cracks in the sediment of trust the more severe the delusion (the extreme of which is found in the catatonic state). I will defend the claim in this thesis that trust is a 'condition for the possibility' of a common sense orientation to the world.

Another aspect of my methodology that needs highlighting is my use of quotations in the thesis. Wittgenstein said, 'The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose' (PI 127). And, of course, reminders are not just assembled for other people, but also for the one assembling them who is as prone as anyone else to become captured by unhelpful pictures of language use (c.f. PI 115). My selection of quotations from other writers is based on whether they seem to crystallise such pictures (in a way that enables us to get a handle on what is problematic) or else they suggest to me escape routes from captivity in such pictures. I hope they may be of use to others, but certainly do not intend to invoke the authority of the authors cited to support my claims. The quotes stand as points of departure for thoughts of my own. Their sole authority is the work that they do on my own way of seeing a problem which hopefully others may find themselves attuned to. In a sense I am in dialogue with these writers and as I argue (and try to enact) in the thesis I believe that one of the goals of dialogue is the attempt to find and found community (c.f. Cavell 1989: 17) through a particular ordering of words. This involves an empirical approach of seeing where areas of resonance and divergence lie and the maintaining of a receptivity to having blind-spots pointed out on the part of both partners in dialogue. I hope, in turn, that my

readers might find the dialogical approach advocated in this thesis a helpful stance to take to this work. In line with this suggestion, it must be remembered that a text does not have the direct responsivity of a partner in dialogue. However, there is an individual standing behind these words. In the case of a particular dialogue with another person it may be found that certain orderings of words (including the quotations) used here constitute obstacles to, rather than promote, understanding. In such a case I would try to communicate my line of thought with a sensitivity to the person and the conversational situation (always open to the possibility of incoherences in my own perspective).

The final objection I can foresee is that it is all very well to chart the structure of the experience of someone with delusions, but, as I have said above, I would seem to be making a contradictory claim if I said I could do this without having had the experience myself. Well, in fact, I have had delusions and have been diagnosed with Odysseania, but at the moment seem to have docked in the harbour of sanity and so have the memory of the experience of being delusional to compare with the experience of sanity that I occupy at the moment. Using the methodology of phenomenology means that the thesis I put forward can only be generalised on a case by case basis. In other words, it is only valid if people with similar experiences or people trying to relieve the suffering of those with similar experiences find what I say helps to map out the terrain of their existential situation.

Outline of the Thesis

In this section I will give a brief overview of the chapters and give a basic outline of the argument of the thesis. Fantasy is probably the closest people not diagnosed with delusions have come to such an experience. In order to show the permeable nature of the barrier between sanity and insanity in Chapter 1 I look at the role of fantasy in daily life and in philosophy and how it can be dispelled through dialogue (taking the example of the sacrament of Confession). I also examine why it develops and how trust prevents us from arriving at full blown delusions. A picture of the human person is given based on the idea that it consists of the interplay of two aspects namely the finite (the body) and the infinite (our openness to the world). I posit the infinite in us as the faculty that both provides the condition for fantasy but also the cure.

Chapter 2 explores what problems are thrown up by the current debate on delusions. As well as setting out typical problems in the area it also attempts to show why the debate starts from the wrong premises and how questioning these assumptions may open the way for a different approach. In doing this it identifies and gives reasons for why we must enrich, what I call, the 'monological folk-scientific observer' picture of our epistemic relation to the world, if we want to understand delusions.

Chapter 3 uses the films *Breaking the Waves, Sixth Sense* and *The Fisher King* that treat the topic of insanity to illustrate and diagnose the two main deficient approaches to people suffering from delusions. I will employ the hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer in the diagnosis of these approaches and in prescribing an appropriate stance for relating to someone with delusions as an equal partner in conversation. The key principle that is followed in taking this stance is what Gadamer calls 'the preconception of completeness'.

Chapter 4 argues against the charge made by some philosophers that delusions are nonsense, in the sense of being a string of sounds that literally have no meaning, but only seem to be meaningful. I take this as the claim that the person speaking has no mind to express and that there is only 'darkness within'. This scepticism in relation to particular other minds is dangerous in that it seems to suggest there is an a priori limit to

who we should be willing to listen to and engage with. In response I develop the idea that even delusional speech that is hard to follow has the purpose of trying to open up a public space between the speaker and their interlocutor. Also, I argue that such an attempt to address another by the person with delusions puts the onus on us to acknowledge the address and that this is crucial in relieving the suffering of those who say things we consider delusional.

Chapter 5 is the heart of the thesis and develops ideas from Wittgenstein to show that our commonsense orientation to the world is anchored by something as fragile as trust. I develop an understanding of trust as an affective orientation that helps frame our epistemic practices. I then go on to claim that it is a reciprocal breakdown in trust that is the condition for the possibility of someone speaking in ways that we consider delusional.

In Chapter 6 I use the phenomenological method to show how normal worries we have about the expressiveness of our bodies can spiral into someone saying things we consider delusional. This chapter examines how paranoia and other delusional styles of thinking can result from the way that someone's body can become conspicuous for them.

Chapter 7 looks at the interpersonal implications of what has been argued in the thesis and considers how stigma develops and is maintained through our reactions to people we consider as delusional and therefore incompetent as partners in conversation and possibly dangerous. I elaborate this as a denial of the claims they make to be part of the community around them.

In the final chapter I expand in detail on the similarities between delusional statements and statements produced by poets. I conclude that both are articulating a particular mooded apprehension of the world, but in the case of poets, unlike someone with delusions, the poet is able to step back into a commonsense stance because they are still able to return to the ground mood of trust. I look at the ethical implications of the arguments of the thesis and identify the existential situation of the person suffering from delusions as an ironic one (their speech is not necessarily ironic, rather their whole existential stance is ironic in the sense that they are trapped between two worlds;

commonsense practices and a fantasy realm of infinite possibilities). Given such a stance I recommend that the best approach to someone who is suffering from delusions is to join them where they are (in order to try to regain their trust) within the mooded world which they articulate through their delusions. I suggest ways to rebuild trust that allow the person to return to a world in which they are not beset by constant threat and thereby regain their footing in a commonsense orientation to the world. In the postscript I relate what writing this thesis, as someone who suffers from the Odyssean condition, has meant to me.

Chapter 1

Fantasy and the Everyday:
The Role of the Infinite in Daily Life, Philosophy and Relationships

In this chapter I will take a lead from Murdoch and attempt to enrich our picture of what it is to be a person, with a view to framing the arguments I make in the rest of the thesis. I will be taking, as a guide, a quote from Kierkegaard that, what he understands as a 'self' and what I will be calling a 'person' is a, 'synthesis of infinitude and finitude' (Kierkegaard 1989: 59). A better way to think of the relation between the two aspects is as an interplay rather than a 'synthesis'. This highlights that the relation between the two aspects is a 'play' in the sense of 'a play of light on a body of water', that is, not fixed in how the two aspects relate. It is the *interplay* of these two aspects (the finite and the infinite) that I understand as making up the person. Using the idea of two aspects is a means of bringing out the salience of certain characteristics of one thing, namely the human person and, as such, these aspects are inseparable. Contra Descartes, the infinite is not a separate substance or a 'ghost in the machine', but rather one side of what it is to be human not comprehensible without the finite aspect. However, in looking at the infinite as an aspect of what it means to be a person, I will not be doing exegesis on Kierkegaard's writings, but rather looking at what it is to live in the space between reality and fantasy (that is made possible through the exercise of the infinite in us) as people do most of the time. The pertinence of this for understanding delusions is that before embarking on delusions proper it will be useful to examine the role of fantasy and its relation to what I call the infinite in people's daily life and also in philosophy. Along the way I will examine themes that relate to the understanding of delusions that is developed in the thesis.

One possible objection to my use of the terms 'finite' and 'infinite' is that they are too ambiguous to do the work I want them to. I will expand on what I mean by these terms

throughout this chapter and they will accrue meaning in the way that I use them. One reason for using these terms and not analysing them further, that I must make explicit, is the way they enable the necessary interweaving of the ethical and the interpretive aspects of this project to remain in view. There are indeed many aspects to be found in each term but I hope to show that holding them all together in one word enables us to develop a useful picture for understanding each other in certain circumstances (one of them being in relation to the purposes of this thesis). As with all of the words in this thesis (taking into account the dialogical understanding of language use developed herein) further objections to this depiction of the human person could be the starting point for a fruitful discussion.

'The finite', or another term we could use for it, 'the body' is the object that we are, that science can know and make sense of. It is the animal that human beings are and it can seem to us our full nature if the infinite is forgotten. Domination of this aspect can be found when we feel we are 'set in our ways' or completely objectified (which will be explored in Chapter 6). What I will call the consummation of (or exalting in) this aspect of the person can be found when we are doing sport or some skilled practical task and we feel fully at home in our bodies.[1]

The other aspect of our being human is what Kierkegaard calls 'the infinite' (it is possible to understand this as what Murdoch calls 'attention' in the quote that prefaces the Introduction) and one way of understanding this is just the basic experience of our openness on to the world, free of our particularity (e.g. the experience of just looking/hearing without being aware of the vehicle, namely the body, through which this happens). The domination of this aspect of the person is experienced through getting lost in fantasy where possibility stops being anchored in the real (I will explore the way fantasy is a part of and can harm daily life in Section 1.1).[2] 'The infinite' can be understood as the spontaneous and imaginative part of us (whereas 'the finite' can be understood as being defined by habit and instinct). A meditation, such as the one performed in the Introduction, is an example of the action of the infinite in us, in which

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[1] When I talk about the 'consummation' of either aspect of the person it must be remembered that the other aspect always plays a role, it is just that that particular aspect is prominent. For example, doing something athletic always requires the infinite to be carried out to the fullness of the person's ability and alternately appreciating something as beautiful requires bodily affectual responses.
[2] I am using the term 'fantasy' with the usual connotations it has in everyday use.

we allow something to unfold by staying with its difficulties or waiting for new aspects to appear in the perception of something. As Wittgenstein wrote about philosophising, 'we may not *terminate* a disease of thought. It must run its natural course and *slow* cure is all important' (Z 382).[3] The idea of a natural course to our attending to something indicates that the action of the infinite is not based on a methodical approach to solving a problem. Instead, by spending time with something, new ways of understanding the object are allowed to surface (an analogy might be the example of 'joining up the dots' in a new way). The consummation of (or exalting in) this infinite aspect of the human person can be found in experiences of beauty through any of the senses. Whatever we find beautiful compels us to spend time attending to it and in this way slows our workaday activity down and, I will argue, transfigures that very activity reawakening our interest in it (this is argued for in Section 1.2).

I will be analysing the role of the infinite in interpersonal relations by looking at the Catholic sacrament of Confession. We always exist in an interpersonal context and this context is internally related to being human.[4] However, this internal relation to others also means we can suffer at the hands of others and cause suffering to others and this is unavoidable. Confession is one means of dispelling fantasies that make us insensitive to others. I will try to show how dialogue in Confession requires the foregrounding of our infinite aspect to be effective. The importance of this for the thesis is found in the way in which becoming delusional represents a break with the community. Confession is used to highlight ways that such breaks with the community can be mended through dialogue (in Section 1.3). I look at the way our vulnerability causes a flight into fantasy and the idea that trust is the mood necessary for maintaining a balance between finitude and infinitude in Section 1.4

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[3] It is interesting to note his use of the phrase 'disease of thought' and whether he would have agreed with the projection of the concept of disease to the whole of the mind as the term 'mental illness' does. Presumably he thought philosophers had many diseases of thought but were not necessarily 'insane'.

[4] Even when alone, as in the case of Robinson Crusoe, we still relate to other people e.g. through feelings of isolation (i.e. being aware of their absence), or in keeping a journal that others might eventually read.

1.1 Metaphysical Problems in Everyday Life

The infinite part of us is what allows us to be spontaneous and is active in exercises of attention. One problem with the infinite is when it starts to relate things together in such a way that we become lost in fantasy. The dangers of fantasy exist side by side with the positive aspects of the infinite (which includes imagination, attention and spontaneity) and, as with any faculty, an imbalance in its exercise can harm as well as enrich our life. This section will attempt to chart the forms that fantasy can take and how they can interfere with our everyday life. This is obviously pertinent to delusions, as fantasy can be seen as the seed in everyday patterns of life that can germinate to produce delusions. I will deal primarily with fantasies underlying certain philosophical problems, as these have been quite precisely formulated and so allow us to analyse their structure and meaning in detail.[5]

To start with, I will look at solipsism. Louis Sass (1994) has written on the topic of whether solipsism can be used to interpret the delusions of Schreber.[6] Although this approach to delusions is one with which I am in strong agreement, my task here will be the analysis of whether the fantasy of the solipsist is one that can be found expressed in certain attitudes in daily life. My concern is what sort of imbalance in our relation to the world and others it signifies. Solipsism can be summarised as the belief that 'the world is my idea'. In other words the world is only there for me. It is a form of idealism where the world is no longer independent of my existence. Solipsism can be understood not merely as a philosophical curiosity that may be refuted with ease, but can also be used as a case study in how the infinite provides us with means of curing 'diseases of thought', as well as giving them the sustenance to develop as well.

One argument against solipsism, as a philosophical position, is that if the world just was my idea there would be nothing to contrast it with (e.g. the ideas of other people). The concept 'idea' here would then be meaningless because if there was only one idea and it was the world, any sense of its being mine or being an idea, as we usually understand

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[5] I do not think philosophy exhausts all the possible strains of fantasy that haunt our lives and a possible future study might look at all the myriad roles that fantasy plays in our lives.

[6] Schreber is an Odyssean who wrote extensively about his delusions in *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (1955). His writings have often been used as an example of Odyssean delusions, including by Freud.

the terms, would be cut away. This would entail that the position could not be meaningfully formulated. Some commentators say that a formulation of the position is just nonsense i.e. words put together in such a way that they are just sounds and have no sense attached to them (Read 2001: 460). However it might first be worth examining whether we can imagine a situation in which we might formulate this position and tell someone else what we were thinking in a way that is meaningful. If so, the important point would be what we were trying to do with these words. Wittgenstein gives a similar case:

> I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again
> 'I know that's a tree', pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone
> arrives and hears this, and I tell him: 'This fellow isn't insane. We
> are doing philosophy' (OC 467).

The context of 'doing philosophy' normalises many strange ways of speaking, but the important question is whether it is the case with solipsism that it is something that only a philosopher would come up with?

I can think of two senses of the verbal formulation of solipsism that we could express to another person meaningfully in daily life. One sense of it could be an expression of extreme loneliness where it is not just that we feel no one does understands us in fact, but no one could ever understand or empathise with our situation; at the extreme this could become the feeling that there is no one else, just ciphers.[7] Another sense could be the feeling of being literally imprisoned by the world; that the world is a screen all around us preventing us from seeing what is really there (in a similar sense to the Buddhist idea of Maya). These two ways of making sense of solipsism are in no sense exhaustive but I will use them to analyse whether we can see such strains of fantasy in everyday life. Obviously solipsism is the thought that the world is not independent of us, but more importantly it also includes the sense that other people are not independent of us either. To someone enthralled in the fantasy of solipsism other people can only exist as ciphers in their perception. And of course this will have ethical implications. If

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[7]'Cipher' simply means: any person or thing of little value; a nonentity.

we now turn to ethics, I hope to show that solipsism is not only a fantasy, but also can be expressed through a certain attitude to others.

Now, it is a defensible position to claim that the basis of all ethics is recognising the infinite in the other. Levinas (1969: 232) said something similar and stated that this was the basis for the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'.[8] I will only sketch this position in what follows, but it should be enough to provide a justification for the claim that solipsism can be found as a strain in everyday life. We commune with others through our bodies, but the inalienable dignity of everyone lies in the aspect of their person as an openness to the world (the infinite). This aspect everyone shares whatever their particular bodily attributes. The basis for the recognition (or 'salutation') of the infinite in others is based on the reciprocal recognition of the infinite in ourselves and being able to see it in the 'neighbour' whatever their bodily (finite) characteristics. This idea of the ethical is summarised in the words of Rabbi Hugo Gryn (an Auschwitz survivor):

> How you are with the one to which you owe nothing that is a grave
> test. Asylum issues are an index of our spiritual and moral
> civilisation (Gryn 2010).

The value of the infinite aspect of the person in front of us can be made salient if we take Jesus's injunction to 'love thy neighbour as thyself' as pointing out the symmetry between the valuing of the other person in front of us with valuing our own person. In our experience we have no direct relation to ourselves, as our experience is based on an openness to the world and we have no direct perception of ourselves as a person. Of course we can look in the mirror or see ourselves filmed, but both these means do not give us the ability to interact with ourselves as persons.[9] It is only through something analogous to dancing that we can get a sense of another person in relation to ourselves. The pertinent experiential feature of dancing can be described as a reciprocal sensitivity which it is impossible to have in relation to ourselves. Indeed, our ability to express ourselves at all is based on the reactions of those around us as we grow up. It is through

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[8] Something I will not go into here is whether this recognition of the infinite can be extended to non-human animals. Such a recognition would not necessarily prohibit meat-eating but would certainly highlight the demand to prevent cruelty to animals.

[9] It might be objected that we do sometimes talk to ourselves; however, this is hardly like a conversation in which we can experience another person's spontaneity. Soliloquies are more like following through a line of thought, rather than actively interacting with another perspective.

the reactions of our caregivers to our cries that we learn the word 'pain' (PI 244) and how to express ourselves verbally and eventually come to inherit language. In a personal interaction we not only are aware of the infinite in the other, but we also become aware of what others are responding to in us, namely the infinite expressed in our spontaneity. It is true that we sometimes do value the finite bodily characteristics of others when not interacting with them, but the activity of interacting with someone is similar to a dance in that there is a constant sensitivity to the action of the other on the part of both parties.[10] If we feel that the infinite in ourselves is valuable (perhaps through its exaltation in experiences of the beautiful) then this value is mirrored in our experience of the other with whom we are interacting. This is because we experience their spontaneity (and so the fact of another pole of openness to the world) through the interaction.

The attitude of solipsism is expressed in an occlusion of the other person as a pole of openness to the world, by their body. This attitude is sometimes formulated in philosophy as the Problem of Other Minds. Wittgenstein says, 'The human body is the best picture of the human soul' (PI pg.178). Or restated for our purposes, 'the animated human body is the best picture of the human person'. From this quote we can see both how solipsism develops and the means to overcome it. Solipsism is expressed in daily life when we find ourselves occluding one aspect (the infinite) of the person by the other aspect (the finite). And if this is based on a symmetry with ourselves (as I argued above) it comes down to repressing the infinite in us. At an Ash Wednesday service the priest says to each member of the church, 'remember (wo)man that you are dust and to dust you will return'. Our experience of the infinite in ourselves can seem at odds with the fact of our finitude. The experience that can make it seem like we have an either-or choice about which aspect to value (the infinite or the finite), can develop out of the feeling that it is impossible that this flow of experience will end. Faced with the fact of death we sometimes feel compelled to repress the infinite. Once we are blind to the infinite in ourselves we find it hard to 'see' the play of both in others and the finite is foregrounded in our relation to other people.

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[10] As a reader of this thesis pointed out, bodily characteristics can be foregrounded in some forms of interactions, especially in sexual activity. It is necessary to point out that interaction with another does not totally rule out the awareness of the body aspect, rather the spontaneity of the other person normally becomes salient.

The important point here is that solipsism (the sense that the world is my idea) can be expressed in the everyday as an ethical attitude. Blindness to the infinite in others means that other people become ciphers for us and in a very real sense the world is there just for me. Being unable to see the infinite in other people means that either we value others entirely according to bodily characteristics e.g. in terms of their membership of a class of people (which leads to racism, sexism, religious intolerance, stigmatising those with a disability or snobbery) or that anyone else simply becomes a means to our ends (as may be the case for sociopaths, if they exist). This is existential solipsism and is a very real aspect of daily life. In some cases the focus on the fact of being finite can be felt as the shame of this fact (a life without the infinite)[11] and because of the symmetry between myself and the other in front of me this internal violence towards the self is projected on to others; the person's own feelings of shame about being embodied is expressed by putting others into 'shameful' situations. The logic of this is that, in terms of the finite, my body is better than yours because I have created a situation where your finite aspect is humiliated and my body is thereby elevated above yours.

Existential solipsism can be something we all experience at times. It is one way of leaving the everyday and existing in fantasy and can lead on to unethical or even evil conduct. I believe that Wittgenstein focussed so much on trying to articulate this experience, not as an intellectual puzzle, but rather, in order to give full voice to a fantasy in which we are all capable of getting entangled. By giving full expression to this imbalance, Wittgenstein is saying, 'I've been there too; and there is a way back to regaining balance'. His aphorism above about the body picturing the soul is one attempt at a cure for this particular disease of thought. My own way of reminding myself of the infinite (in ourselves as in others) as part of bodily existence would be through observing or participating in dancing or improvisation (in music or conversation). The shame of being merely 'dust' (the word the priest uses for our finite aspect) is overcome in seeing how it dances in the light. Such reminders are part of the work of one way of doing philosophy that I call 'transfiguring the ordinary', which I will look at in the next section.

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[11] This can feel like an imprisonment in the world, which was one of the ways I described of understanding the existential meaning of solipsism.

1.2 Beauty and the Transfiguration of the Ordinary[12]

A return from fantasy to the everyday is the aim of any therapeutic intervention with people considered delusional and so, if this is also the aim of philosophers such as Wittgenstein (when he says his aim is to, 'bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use' (PI 116)), it would seem appropriate to examine their practice of philosophy more generally. In this section, I will focus on what role the idea of the beautiful, and its relation to the infinite in us, can play in this way of doing philosophy. There are two forms of fantasy that we will be dealing with in this thesis, firstly, clinically diagnosed delusions but also, secondly, philosophical pictures (which could also be called fantasies) that get in the way of our understanding of what it is to be delusional. Practices, such as Wittgenstein's, aim to dissolve the second form of fantasy, but I hope to show that as well as this, his practices can also be projected into our dealings with those experiencing delusions, to help sufferers return to the everyday (I will deal with this in Chapter 8).

Wittgenstein's (and others such as Cavell's) way of doing philosophy might be called 'transfiguring the ordinary'. Mulhall (1994) has christened the work of ordinary language philosophy, such as Wittgenstein's, as a 'recounting of the ordinary'; my position differs in that I believe that such practices not only remind us of what we already know but entice us back to it through our aesthetic sensibility; hence my use of the term 'transfigure'. My elucidation of some of the practices that constitute this approach to philosophy will use an analogy with the idea of the sacrament in Catholicism. I consider Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Weil, Cavell and Mulhall as exemplary for this way of philosophising. It is not clear whether any of these philosophers would sign up to the analogy between their practice and the Christian sacraments, but hopefully it will allow a re-presentation that highlights the ubiquitous nature of our need to re-affirm the ordinary.

A quote from Simone Weil sums up a way of understanding the interconnection of philosophy, ethics and aesthetics focussed on the everyday:

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[12] The idea of philosophy as one means of transfiguring the ordinary and an elaboration of what underlies the need for such a re-presentation can also be found in Cavell's book *This New Yet Unapproachable America* (e.g. Cavell 1989: 47).

> The beautiful: that which we do not want to change. The good: not
> to want to change it, in fact (non-intervention). The true: not to want
> to change it in one's mind (by means of illusion). The good — not to
> want to change what? My place, my importance in the world,
> limited by my body and by the existence of other souls, my equals
> (Weil 2004: 38).

The experience of beauty is of something that strikes us in such a way that we do not want to change it; the apprehension of it as beautiful just is seeing the object of our attention as perfect just as it is. Such an experience is articulated in McCarthy's book *The Road*:

> He remembered waking once on such a night to the clatter of crabs in
> the pan where he'd left steakbones from the night before. Faint coals
> of the driftwood fire pulsing in the onshore wind. Lying under such
> a myriad of stars. The seas black horizon. He rose and walked out
> and stood barefoot in the sand and watched the pale surf appear all
> down the shore and roll and crash and darken again. When he went
> back to the fire he knelt and smoothed her hair as she slept and he
> said if he were God he would have made the world just so and no
> different (McCarthy 2007: 234).

Here the character describes an experience through which he is willing to affirm the whole world as it is. In such experiences we are able to 'see' the world as 'good', as God is said to have done in Genesis. These experiences allow us to affirm that there is a value to life and living, and, indeed, we are able to affirm the value of our own existence because it is only due to the fact that we exist that this consummation experience of our infinite aspect (of perceiving the goodness of the world) is possible.

So what is it about ourselves that leads us to want to escape the real and live in fantasy? One line of thought (developed by Cavell in *The Claim of Reason* (1979)) is that we become entangled in philosophical problems (in the widest sense) because of the tendency for humans to want to overcome what they see as the limitations of finitude.

This is one way of understanding what Weil is responding to in the quote above when she talks about the true as not wanting to change the world by means of illusion. The work of philosophy can then be understood as getting the person to see that the facts about our lives that can seem like obstacles or limitations should instead be perceived as limits to our lives. Their overcoming does not make any sense as they are the conditions for the possibility of the intelligibility of the world and other people. Scepticism can be seen as a desire to know the world in a more secure way than through our human faculties, as if there were a means of arriving at a more direct access to the world than through our everyday procedures for finding things out and to other people than through the means provided by language. Ordinary language philosophy tackles scepticism by reminding us of 'what we say when' in order to bring the conditions for knowledge of the world and others to the fore. However, this can seem like a very deflationary account of what is possible for philosophy. Wittgenstein sums this feeling up when he says:

> Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? (As it were all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble) (PI 118).

If 'the destruction of anything interesting' is all this methodology of philosophy can achieve, why should it claim any of our attention? Wittgenstein's answer is that 'the aspect of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity' (PI 129). The disappointment we feel at the humble task of philosophy is a hankering after the facility and seeming profundity found in fantasy. In order for us to see 'the aspect of things most important for us' it is necessary to find ways of exalting in the ordinary and recovering the hidden beauty therein.

One way of tackling this problem of familiarity can be found in art, but also in religion. In Catholicism, the sacraments involve taking some everyday activity and relating it to the divine. For instance, in the sacrament of Communion the value of sharing a meal is celebrated with all the related values of family and friendship. In Confession the process of repairing a relationship is connected with our relation to the divine. In all religions the life of the community is understood as bound up with the eternal. In this

way everyday practices are transfigured and thereby their value as part of a life is re-presented (reflected back to the community) in a new light and reaffirmed. This reaffirming of the everyday is found in Wittgenstein's philosophy where we are invited to pay careful attention to our life with words and how this is inextricably bound up with our form of life (thereby taking our anxieties about language and showing how they express anxieties about our lives). I find that, through his words, our everyday practices become, again, worthy of careful attention and I am constantly surprised by simple facts about our life that I had passed over in the rush to try to understand the nature of things (as any budding philosopher may feel compelled to). Wittgenstein's writings focus our attention on the conditions of the human relationship to the world and others, and help us to recognise that the wish for depth in our understanding of things is inherently empty. Such a recognition is one way in which we can overcome artificial craving to go beyond the everyday. The words of this philosopher allow the familiar to become strange and enticing and thereby reignite our interest in the ordinary. Through the ordering of his words the ordinary is transfigured and our poor substitute fantasies can be left behind for a time.

The idea that 'transfiguring the ordinary' is a respectable aim of philosophy is given backing in the writings of Victor Shklovsky who takes the methodology of art as involving what he calls an 'enstrangement' of objects and forms of life.[13] In his book *Theory of Prose* (1991; originally published in Russian in 1929) he sets out why he thinks that great novelists continually find ways of making objects and parts of life seem alien. I do not know if Wittgenstein was aware of his work, but Shklovsky's justification for this methodology in prose, taken as art, can be seen to have a close family resemblance to Wittgenstein's methods of returning us to the ordinary. I will quote at length from Shklovsky's book and then comment briefly afterwards:

> If we examine the general laws of perception, we see that as it
> becomes habitual, it also becomes automatic. So eventually all of
> our skills and experiences function unconsciously - automatically. If
> someone were to compare the sensation of holding a pen in his hand
> or speaking a foreign tongue for the first time with the sensation of

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[13] I was alerted to Shklovsky's advocacy of the artistic method of estrangement and its similarity to Wittgenstein's method in a paper by Avishai Margalit (2009: 24)

performing this same operation for the ten thousandth time, then he would no doubt agree with us. It is this process of automatization that explains the laws of our prose speech with its fragmentary phrases and half-articulated words…If the complex life of many people takes place entirely on the level of the unconscious, then it's as if this life had never been.

And so, in order to return sensation to our limbs, in order to make us feel objects, to make a stone feel stony, man has been given the tool of art. The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By 'enstranging' objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and 'laborious.' The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest. *Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artefact itself is quite unimportant* (Shklovsky 1991: 5-6).

If we accept that a valid aim of philosophy might, as has been suggested by Shklovsky about literature, be to reawaken our interest in forms of life that have become to a degree 'automatic', then I am justified in not always maintaining a 'neutral-sounding' prose in this thesis. My exploration of what, I think, are the problems with our present understanding of delusions and of how we treat sufferers of them will attempt to unsettle our 'automatic' approaches to those we consider 'insane'. I will try, 'to make [the] stone feel stony'.

The quote above also relates to what I have said about the infinite. It is by creating a space in our workaday activity (by making the task 'harder' than it might normally be) that the infinite in us can come into play and thereby release us from 'enslavement' to habitual practices (the finite). This disruption enables us to carry out projects in ways that interweave spontaneity into the rhythm of the task we are engaged in. To end this section I would like to use what Shklovsky has said to re-contextualise a quote from Nietzsche that I do not think I fully grasped before taking in the necessity for 'enstranging' the ordinary in order not to miss life passing by. If we take Nietzsche seriously then the life of a philosopher is perilous in the way the life of the sufferer from

delusions is; but with this 'peril' comes a disruption of the development of the 'automatic' in our lives:

> A philosopher: a man who constantly experiences, sees, hears, suspects, hopes, dreams extraordinary things; who is struck by his own thoughts as if from without, as if from above and below, as by *his* events and thunder-claps; who is himself perhaps a storm and pregnant with new lightnings; a fateful man around whom snarling, quarrelling, discord and uncanniness is always going on. A philosopher: alas, a creature which often runs away from itself, is often afraid of itself – but which is too inquisitive not to keep 'coming to itself' again… (Nietzsche 2003: §292)

This description of 'the philosopher' comes close to what life is like at certain times for the Odyssean. Although no one would wish the condition on another, because of the suffering, isolation and stigma associated with it, the return from the Odyssean condition to sanity might enable someone to appreciate the wonder inherent in the ordinary again and find it transfigured.

1.3 Dispelling Fantasy through Dialogue

Having explored the place of fantasy in everyday life as an ethical issue and looked at the role of beauty and its relation to the infinite in returning us to the ordinary, the next area I would like to address is the role of the infinite in our interpersonal relations. I will take an example of a concrete situation in which there is an attempt to repair a break with the community (as is necessary in the case of helping someone to find a way out of their delusional state). To start with, it is necessary to recognise how our existence is internally related to existing with other human beings. That is, we exist interpersonally from the start; to be in some sort of relation to other human beings is hardwired in us from before we are born.[14] Alongside this, in the words of Iris Murdoch, is the fact that we are all 'benighted creatures sunk in a reality whose nature we are constantly and overwhelmingly tempted to deform by fantasy' (Murdoch 1997: 293). As was argued in Section 1.1, fantasy can cause us to become callous to the plight of others and this can lead us to harm other people through being blind to the infinite in them.[15] The question is then how we return to an equilibrium with others. One possible way is through dialogue. In certain types of dialogue, the infinite is in play in the sensitivity of both parties to each other (as I pointed out in Section 1.1, dialogue can be like a dance). If the infinite is actively being exercised in our interaction with another, it is brought to the fore and can be a means for once again saluting that aspect of the other.

As a case study of the role of dialogue in foregrounding the infinite I will take the Christian sacrament of Confession. The practice of Confession can be seen as one means of how people repair a break with their community by dispelling fantasies such as solipsism. In what follows I will explore the role of dialogue as a means of giving expression to inchoate feelings that form the background to our lives and how this is necessary for living a life in attunement with others. My first task is to come to an understanding of what could be meant by dialogue in the practice I am focussing on.

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[14] This can be seen in the fact that infants could not survive on their own and their behaviour from being born centres around alerting their caregiver to their needs. Infants have also been shown to discriminate the sound of their caregiver's voice soon after they are born (Gibson 1987: 521).
[15] This point was made specifically in relation to existential solipsism, but other fantasies could be shown to have similar consequences, such as the fantasy that some special quality makes me better than everyone else.

One way of characterising the sense of dialogue on which I want to focus would be to say that through it aspects of a person's life become 'verbally crystallised' in what we might call a 'narrative'. This leads to the point that, in Confession, the context is one of a conversation about the person's life and in order to be an appropriate interlocutor the priest must fill in the presuppositions necessary to make sense of what the person says as being relevant in this particular situation (Gadamer calls this the 'presumption of completeness' which I will elaborate on in Chapter 3). If the penitent deviates in their dialogue away from what is relevant to the situation, the interlocutor has the job of steering it back. Without this the dialogue might become unfocussed. Thus the priest takes what the confessor says as being a description of sinful behaviour. So we might say that the penitent takes on the role of self-accuser and the priest becomes the interlocutor.

The reason that narrative is important for this dialogical practice is that the telling of stories about our lives makes us take time to review and organise the past. The philosopher S.J. Brison gives the following account of the role of narrative in her own recovery from violence. As she says:

> Narrative…facilitates the ability to go on by opening up possibilities for the future through retelling the stories of the past. It does this not by re-establishing the illusions of coherence of the past, control over the present, and predictability of the future, but by making it possible to carry on without these illusions (Brison 2003: 104).

Brison, using her own experience of the way narrative can be put to therapeutic ends, articulates how narrative can play a role in enabling a person to come to a self-understanding of their experiential life that is very close to the account given by Sartre of the for-itself. Mulhall gives a summary of the Sartrean for-itself:

> The Sartrean self is thus not a substance but a relation: a relation to what is not, hence to negation, and a relation that is itself essentially negative or negating. Human existence is a matter of continuously negating what one was (relating to it as one's past,

what one no longer is), what one is (relating to it as one's present, what one need not have been) and what one will be (relating to it as one's future, something one is not yet). Each temporal relation is what it is only in relation to what it is not, and the whole it makes up is therefore essentially not a totality but rather a negation of any totalizing self-conception. Precisely because human life is temporal, it exceeds its own grasp; and if it did not human beings would not be free, because the self-identical is essentially determined and determinate. Only those capable of relating negatingly to themselves are capable of becoming other than they were and are, of exceeding any determination of themselves (even by themselves), of being essentially open to the future (Mulhall 2008: 175).

The view of oneself as self-identical (that is, taking the stance that how I was in the past will dictate how I am to be in the present and the future) and therefore fixated by unethical habits of behaviour or thought is precisely the fantasy that Confession seeks to dispel. However, just to tell someone that their past is contingent (that they could have made other choices and can now in the present) would be likely to reinforce a self-image that the other person has that they are essentially a bad person. In other words it might serve to reinforce their conception of themselves as too weak-willed to change, i.e. that they are self-identical and therefore determined to be the same in the future. The moment of self-reflection which happens before the actual dialogue in Confession gives the person the space to take stock of their life up to that point. This 'taking stock' allows the person to see how their life has failed to meet their past expectations for themselves. This type of perspective is exactly the sort of negative relation to their past that Mulhall describes above. In enacting such a self-accusatory relation to their past, by constructing a narrative of ethical failure, the person can see that their ideals of what it means to live a good life do not meet with what they have done in the past. The tension of this experience opens up the possibility that the person can acknowledge themselves as not being self-identical. From it, they can see how their expectations of themselves exceed the grasp of their self-conceptions up to this point. This can open up the possibility of a realistic appraisal that they are not necessarily tied to behaviours of the past. However, there is always the possibility of falling into a new self-identity of

being someone who takes their self as necessarily failing to fulfil the ideals they set themselves. Part of the interlocutor's role is to prevent this possible understanding developing which, in turn, requires foregrounding an awareness of the infinite as having a part in their narrative and so disrupting a settled sense of failure.

The obvious objection to my argument so far is that if a reflection on the past can affect such changes by itself, why then resort to the confessional? Why not just talk to friends or relatives? One important feature of this practice is that the self-accusatory narrative is told with an awareness of something that can disrupt current habits, namely, the infinite aspect of the person, which in Confession is understood as a relation to God. Ricoeur relates a way in which the infinite can play a role in our narratives. He says:

> When I interpret myself in terms of a life story, am I all three at once, as in the autobiographical narrative? Narrator and character, perhaps, but of a life of which, unlike the creatures of fiction, I am not the author but at most, to use Aristotle's expression, the co-author (Ricoeur 1992: 160).

That is, the person in recognising a relation to God is released from the fantasy that they are the sole author of their life-story. In other words, the context in which the narrative is given allows the recognition by the person that they are conditioned by something that exceeds their fixed state, and that they must allow this aspect to play a part in their reorientation. The presence of God in the confessional in the figure of the priest encourages the penitent not only to be truthful, but should be a further spur to making them understand themselves as being non-identical with their past. The idea of forgiveness allows a release from a sense of guilt that might anchor them in a conception of themselves where they think they are weak-willed and feel they are determined (by their character, that is the fixed image they have of themselves) to carry on in an unethical attitude to others. Their acknowledgement of the co-authorship of God in their life (through grace) enables them to re-orientate themselves to a future that exceeds the grasp of the settled habits of their past.

It could be argued, however, that the penitent does not require a priest as they could reflect on their own life while remaining aware of God in their life. The power of

dialogue is found in the way it brings to words parts of our lives that may otherwise remain inchoate. It is in the telling of the narrative, and through the skilful questioning of the interlocutor, that we ourselves are able to put shape to things we may be ashamed of, or sides of ourselves we may try to ignore. Putting things into words, in the presence of another, makes our life public in a way that just thinking about it does not (this is explored as a form of 'therapy' for delusions in Chapter 8). And, of course, actually going to the trouble of going to Confession means that we are forced to try to be truthful about ourselves to the interlocutor in a way we may avoid in everyday life, as it may cause suffering to see ourselves as flawed. This attitude of truthfulness can lead to surprising self-revelations. The truthfulness and self-examination required in being part of a sober dialogue is an essential part of telling a narrative that allows the person to see themselves as not being self-identical. If a significant part of our life remains inchoate, because we do not put it into words, it becomes impossible to dispel fantasy in our lives and we remain trapped by unarticulated pictures of ourselves. In the next section I will look at the motivations we have for escaping into fantasy in the first place.

1.4 Vulnerability and Regaining Balance through Trust

At the heart of our flight from the real into fantasy lies a fear of our own vulnerability. As Weil puts it:

> We possess nothing in the world-a mere chance can strip us of everything-except the power to say 'I'… So long as we ourselves have begun the process of destroying the 'I', we can prevent any affliction from causing us harm. (Weil 2002: 26-27).

As I understand her, the power to say 'I' is the power to inure ourselves to the harms caused by world through an exercise of the infinite. The action of the infinite allows us to provide ourselves with fantasies in which we can live. We have seen how fantasies, such as existential solipsism, can lead us to become ethically blind to others. If we wish to avoid this, it is necessary to look at the anxieties that lead us into such existential situations. These fantasies can be understood as arising through worries about the meaning of life. The meaning of life becomes an issue when we find ourselves wanting to become invulnerable to the contingencies of life by finding something that confers a value on our lives that cannot be taken away by circumstance. In terms of existential solipsism, this means conferring value solely on the finite aspect of our existence.

I will now chart (taking a lead from Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein) how fantasy develops through a search for invulnerability and how such a search taken to its conclusion can lead us back to the everyday. Mulhall (2007d) takes Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* as trying to show that the 'meaning of life' only arises as a problem for someone who is orientated towards transgressing what they see as the limitations of life. However questions to do with the meaning of life are not genuine questions. They are not genuine questions because there is no way that life could be given the type of meaning the person desires. This is argued by Climacus (one of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors) in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Kierkegaard 1992). The argument has been summarised succinctly by Mulhall (2007c: 506-507). In what follows I will briefly paraphrase Mulhall's summary. The starting point for the argument is the idea that in order to give their life a meaning a person searches for a

standard by which to make all their choices. For instance a person might decide that their whole life should centre around becoming an athlete. The standard then becomes for them their physical prowess. In this way a person's life would take on a definite shape and therefore would seem to have a meaning as defined in relation to that standard.

The problem comes when we realise that if we choose one thing as our standard it soon becomes obvious that the desire that grounds the aim we are pursuing is purely contingent in that in the next moment we could decide to aim for something else. Alternatively, fate may intervene e.g. in the form of illness for an athlete, in making adherence to that standard impossible. So we find that, if changing the standard at any moment is possible, such a standard cannot give us the invulnerable meaning to our lives that we require from it. This realisation brings us to the conclusion that it is our ability to choose which we should use as our standard. We can give our lives a meaning by choosing to choose. In other words our will becomes the defining standard; we will choose our goals and stick to them come what may. In the case of an athlete this means that in spite of illness or injury, we will stick to the attainment of our highest physical prowess. However, again, this standard will not do what we require of it. The capacity to choose is merely one part of a person's life and, as such, it cannot give meaning to the whole of which it is just a part. The realisation is that, again, the will is still something contingent as shown by the fact that we can have 'a change of heart' at any time and renounce choices that we made earlier. Or even if we do stick to this choice come what may, we find that the choice is an arbitrary one; it is merely one standard from the many standards we could have chosen and as such does not confer the invulnerable meaning on our lives that we were searching for. Choosing choice as a basis for the shape of our life still leaves unanswered in what sense it can give life a meaning because we can always question the value of choice. As Mulhall says:

> The question existence sets us is not answerable in terms of anything
> *in* that existence, because life cannot determine its own significance
> in terms of (some element of) itself. It follows that meaning can only
> be given to one's life as a whole by relating to something outside it;
> for it is only to something outside it that my life can be related *as a*
> *whole* (Mulhall 2007c: 507).

The only candidate for this position (something outside of life), according to Climacus, is God. The formulation of the God-relation that Climacus uses is that we must relate absolutely to the absolute (God) and this implies that we therefore reflect this relationship in our intra-worldly dealings by relating relatively to relative ends (that is, to worldly affairs). We can now see why the question of the meaning of life is not a real question. The only sense in which we can have an invulnerable standard of meaning is by not allowing anything in life to have an absolute meaning for us. This is because our relationship to God is not one more relationship in our life, but rather this relationship is expressed through all of our relationships to persons and goals in life. We express our absolute relationship to God by giving up the temptation to relate to anything in our lives as an absolute. This conclusion shows that the search for an absolute standard that would make our lives invulnerably meaningful was inherently empty. The only thing that could hold the place of an absolute standard is something to which we could relate our lives as a whole, and that must be something outside of life. To put it another way, our lives have all the meaning we could ever want and the difficulty is accepting this. This fact about the meaningfulness of life can be understood as the limit to our lives that we are continually mistaking for a limitation. Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus*, puts forward the bald claim that:

> The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the
> unhappy man (TLP 6.43).

Mulhall's gloss on the quote from Wittgenstein gives us a picture of what living without metaphysical problems might mean:

> The orientation of the happy person – a capacity to accept the world
> and its limits, to overcome any apprehension of oneself as limited,
> constrained or punished thereby (Mulhall 2007d: 245).

The acknowledgement that I am vulnerable is inherently difficult. The knowledge of this fact is not enough because this knowledge, taken as an unhappy truth, will entail that I continue to search for ways to overcome this limitation, as it seems to me. The happy person, in contrast, rejoices in the truth that (s)he is vulnerable. This is important

because one way of rejecting my vulnerability would be to kill myself and thereby make myself invulnerable to any further harm. However, the truth of my situation as a person is not that I am deficient because I am not invulnerable to harms, rather that my place in the universe is such that all kinds of affliction can crush me and the only way to live with this is by understanding that it is the very fragility of my life that is the condition for its being meaningful. With such an acceptance of the limits of life the needs of others become as important as mine, because in acknowledging my own vulnerability I can see it in those around me and so become aware of their sufferings. To exist in the knowledge of my own fragility is to enjoy in daily life what fortune brings my way as a gift, which I understand can be taken away at any moment, but is appreciated all the more because of its transience. Such a life is a life without fantasy, and even with all the suffering it entails, is worth striving for because it is the only way of leading a truly meaningful life. To summarise in the words of Mulhall, a life without fantasy can be recognised 'by the way in which…straightforwardly intraworldly problems entirely occlude the 'problem' of the meaning of life, in which that 'question' finds absolutely no foothold in one's life' (Mulhall 2007d: 242).

The key ideas I have been outlining above make clear that everyone in their lives sometimes fears or is afflicted by the harms inherent in life and one means of dealing with this is through fantasy. In the chaos of certain moods we lose our intuitive compass that gives a sense to our world; in extreme cases of 'mental struggle' we even forget there is a compass and stop looking for it. The domination of the infinite in fantasy comes about through a loss of the equanimity which is provided by a feeling of trust. I will analyse the concept of trust in detail in Chapter 4, but for now we can say that the trust (and the equanimity it brings) we lose can be in ourselves, in the people around us or in the world (in the sense that the world and its irregularities, up till this point, has been something that we felt we could cope with). Christians sometimes talk about 'faith' and some ally this to the belief that 'there is a God'. Another way of taking the term 'faith' is its transitive sense as 'faith in' someone or something. I feel this sense is essential for coping with life. Everyone needs a sense of faith in the fact that they can cope with whatever the future throws at them; in that the treatment some others will give them will be to provide support for them when they are suffering; or in that the world will not suddenly become completely alien and hostile to them for no reason. It is this loss of 'faith' or trust that, I believe, leads to people developing

delusions. I will explain in Chapter 5 how the escape into fantasy outlined above, that can lead to moral lapse in someone still in the commonsense orientation to the world, can, in the case of 'insanity', lead to a total loss of commonsense orientation. I stress that although a bias in our relation to the infinite can lead to moral lapse, the collapse of a sense of trust, in the case of someone with delusions, means that the person is no longer within the commonsense ethical world. Their actions cannot be judged as a moral lapse because from their viewpoint they can be trying to act as ethically as possible in a highly alien world.

To end this chapter I will briefly note a few points about the concept of 'therapy'. Therapy can be understood as a series of interventions that aims at returning the body to a form of homeostasis. Homeostasis, in terms of the mind, can be understood as what I have called 'regaining balance' and requires helping the person return to a mood of trust. One thing that should be noted is the ambiguity of the term 'homeostasis' if allied to the concept of 'mental health'. It could be taken as seeing the desired outcome of therapy as trying to get the person to conform to the expectations of others. For me this whole terminology of 'mental health' (as I argued in the Introduction) is coercive and needs to be replaced with the idea that the aim of therapy is to ameliorate suffering by helping the person to regain a sense of balance. In time this might allow them to regain a footing in a commonsense orientation to the world. In Chapter 8, I hope to show that poetry can be used to provide a route back to the everyday and in line with this I want to end this chapter (bearing in mind what I have said about the necessity of beauty to reawaken our interest in the ordinary) with a poem that I feel charts the journey and hopefully the return of anyone afflicted by mental struggles. It is by Maria Bravo Calderara and is called *The People of Orpheus*:

<div align="center">

You may not know this: the ones

who have gone like Orpheus

down to the regions of hell,

have a bond between them, much

stronger than blood.

These people holding in

past agonies, have learned

</div>

to build their own happiness

little by little.

You'll know them; a certain kind

of tiredness around

eyes that are smiling;

the way they laugh, the whole

of life in their laughter, all

its terrifying brightness

on the border with death.

No one can laugh like them.

They know they've lived on.

And listen to me well

hear what I say:

they are the only people

who know the path to Paradise.

(Calderara 2000: 63)

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at the role of fantasy in non-delusional lives. The motivation for this was to provide a background framework in which to understand the experience of being delusional and as a means of introducing themes that I will develop in later chapters in the thesis. I also wanted to point out how the seeds of delusion exist in normal daily life. I have argued that we become entangled in fantasy in response to a fear of our own vulnerability. Means of dispelling fantasy have been examined both through philosophical methods, that transfigure the ordinary and so entice us back to it, and through dialogue, using the example of the sacrament of Confession. In the next chapter, I will examine the current debate about delusions and argue that one way of addressing the problems is to see delusions as particular speech-acts in specific contexts.

Chapter 2

Rationality, Speech-Acts and Context:
Current Problems with Delusions, Reframing the
Debate and Defining the Scope of the Thesis

> We are not *isolated* free choosers, *monarchs* of all we survey, but
> benighted creatures sunk in a reality whose nature we are constantly
> and overwhelmingly tempted to deform by fantasy (Murdoch 1997:
> 293; italics added).

The thread that will organise this exposition of the current debate on delusions will be the idea that it is the ignorance of our epistemic state, as depicted by Murdoch, which helps generate the perplexity surrounding delusions. It is my contention that the picture of the person that lies at the heart of the confusions surrounding the concept of delusions is what could be called the 'monological (as opposed to dialogical) folk-scientific observer' model of our relation to the world. This likens our relation to the world as being one in which, in everyday life, we hypothesize about the world, test these hypotheses and then use 'rationality' to arrive at a coherent 'web of beliefs'. It is my hope that this thesis will show that the commonsense orientation to the world that grounds us in public space is a more complex and interpersonal phenomenon than this picture suggests. Our current understanding of delusions, in its impoverished state, can be seen as not only deforming the reality of delusions, but also deforming our attitude to those suffering from delusions (as I will elaborate in the next chapter). While laying out the present philosophical debate, I will attempt to reframe the understanding of delusions involved, by putting forward another way of understanding what a delusion is, namely, an inappropriate utterance defined in terms of an interpersonal context.

In Section 2.1, I look at the problems surrounding the definition of delusions as false beliefs. Although this may seem like a straightforward criterion for their identification, there is much debate surrounding their status as beliefs because of the way they are

incorrigible and can seem categorically different from normal beliefs in terms of their relation to other beliefs and to behaviour. In Section 2.2, I look at psychological theories that attempt to make sense of delusions. The main problem with these approaches is the way they strip a delusion down to a propositional attitude and miss out the phenomenological context of the aetiology of delusions. One possible response to the problems in understanding delusions is to enrich our picture of the background to their production. In Section 2.3, I put forward the idea that delusions can be identified as speech-acts that are produced due to an insensitivity to the norms of the conversational situation because of a certain mooded apprehension of the world. In Section 2.4, I set out the scope of the thesis, in terms of what types of delusions it attempts to elucidate.

2.1 Problems with Understanding Delusions as False Beliefs

The first point to make in addressing the current debate about delusions is the poverty of the 'false belief' definition. Delusions have been typically defined as false beliefs by medical practitioners and philosophers alike. *DSM-IV* defines a delusion as:[1]

> A false belief based on incorrect inference about external reality that is firmly sustained despite what almost everyone else believes and despite what constitutes incontrovertible and obvious proof or evidence to the contrary. The belief is not one ordinarily accepted by other members of the person's culture or subculture (American Psychiatric Association 1994: 765).

This picture of how we relate to the world is what I would like to call the 'monological folk-scientific observer' model. The first thing to note about this definition is that it pictures people as *inferring* things about external reality, rather than being *immersed* in the world. The latter depiction of our epistemic situation seems more accurate to me. In other words, the *DSM-IV* definition foregrounds the idea that people relate to the world as observers rather than active participants. It suggests that we find out about the world by making hypotheses, as a scientist would, and then testing them against evidence. It leaves out the fact that we are, in most cases, active in the world which, in itself, will change certain facts about the world. Such a picture is monological in the sense that it leaves out any consideration of the interpersonal in identifying delusions and in the aetiology and maintenance of delusions. I will set out the contemporary debate about delusions in what follows and I hope to show that many of the problems with delusions in the psychiatric and philosophical literature arise because of this stark model.

The first problem to address with the *DSM-IV* definition is that delusions may sometimes be factually true, as in some cases of the Othello syndrome. This involves the delusional belief that one's sexual partner has been cheating. Typically, a person with this syndrome will make repeated accusations of infidelity based on insignificant

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[1] The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-Fourth Edition* (1994)

evidence. They may go to extreme lengths to monitor the partner's movements and behaviour and may try to test their fidelity. It has been reported that such behaviour can lead the partner to have an affair. The belief that the partner is unfaithful may be defended on bizarre grounds by the person with the delusion, but the diagnosis that the person is delusional does not depend on whether the belief is false, as sometimes, in such cases, it is true (Fulford 1994: 211).

The second problem with understanding delusions as false beliefs arises because the definition of delusions as irrational and incorrigible false beliefs fails to accommodate all delusions and only delusions. The *DSM-IV* criteria specifically and arbitrarily rules out beliefs that are held in common in a community, such as religious beliefs. The belief in miracles can seem to some people as an irrational false belief that is maintained in the face of overwhelming evidence (an example of someone who maintains this is Dawkins, who applies the term 'delusion' to religious beliefs in his book *The God Delusion* (2008)). As the definition of delusions in terms of false beliefs does not effectively capture the extension of the concept of clinically diagnosed delusions, people have raised the question of whether delusions could be an entirely different kind of entity, which we could then define (Hamilton 2007: 232). One argument against categorising delusions as beliefs is based on accounts which have, as a condition of ascribing a belief to someone, that they act in a rational way. This idea has been put forward by Dennett (1978: 20). He states that:

> In extreme cases personalities may prove to be so unpredictable from
> the intentional stance that we abandon it [in other words, we stop
> ascribing beliefs to people], and if we have accumulated a lot of
> evidence in the meanwhile about the nature of response patterns in
> the individual, we may find that a species of *design stance* can be
> effectively adopted. This is the fundamentally different attitude *we*
> *occasionally adopt towards the insane*. To watch an asylum
> attendant manipulate an obsessively countersuggestive patient, for

instance is to watch something *radically unlike normal interpersonal relations* (Dennett 1978: 10; italics added).[2]

Dennett, here, claims that in order to apply an intentional explanation at all to a person it must be assumed that the person is more-or-less rational. Therefore, if we are to accord beliefs to a person we must assume that they have been arrived at rationally. If we take Dennett's position seriously, his justification for limiting the ascription of a belief to someone acting within the realm of 'rationality' comes from the fact that we use what people say to predict what they will do and also to work out what else they believe. In order to predict the behaviour of others successfully, according to Dennett, it is necessary that certain beliefs and actions should follow from certain other beliefs, and 'rationality' allows us to predict what the connections are. It is claimed that a belief does not usually stand alone but is part of a 'web of beliefs' that are mostly coherent and are systematically connected to each other and to action. If 'rationality' was not assumed to hold most of the time and nothing followed from beliefs people held, then, as Campbell says, '…[it would] not seem possible to say what the significance is of ascribing any particular propositional state to the subject' (Campbell 2001: 89). Delusions would seem to be the archetype of an irrational speech-act. For example, the statement 'I am dead' uttered by a patient with the Cotard delusion is performatively self-defeating,[3] in that, if the proposition was true it would be impossible to utter it. It may seem hard to see how this statement would relate to the patient's other beliefs and to their actions.[4] An example of how one sufferer related this belief to others is found in the case of a man who stabbed himself in order to show to others that he did not bleed because he was dead (Stone and Young 1997: 345). This might leave us at a loss as to what status we should accord to the speech-act, as it obviously plays some part in the person's behavioural repertoire. According to Dennett in the case of people with delusions the intentional stance breaks down and we should not talk about belief at all.

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[2] Just to be clear about what the design stance involves, Dennett says, 'we generally adopt the design stance when making predictions about the behaviour of mechanical objects' (Dennett 1978: 4). These quotes might be seen as expressing symptoms of 'mind-blindness' towards a certain class of people on the part of Dennett. Such scepticism about the existence of the minds of those considered insane will be explored in Chapter 4

[3] The Cotard delusion is the belief held by a person that she or he is dead.

[4] I hope to show that with a different understanding of language (relating delusions to poetical uses of words as I do in Chapter 8) this ordering of words could be understood as an accurate expression of the person's existential state.

If it were the case that delusions are not beliefs, not even false ones, the question would then be: what alternative criteria can we use to define delusions?

One attempt to give a more accurate definition of delusions is based around categorising them according to the degree of conviction with which a belief is held in spite of evidence to the contrary. This definition has the advantage that it can determine a belief as a delusion even if it turns out to be true. In elaborating upon this definition, Musalek has added that the conviction and the incorrigibility should be judged as pathological by the resulting loss of 'degrees of freedom' caused by the delusion. By 'degrees of freedom' Musalek is talking about the behavioural implications of the delusion, that is, how much the conviction directs the person's actions. In other words, 'the person with the delusion is no longer able to decide what he or she wants to do' (Musalek 2003: 157). One problem with this is that religious convictions can be incorrigible and not open to revision due to contrary evidence, and DSM-IV strictly excludes them as examples of delusions. They also usually involve a loss of 'degrees of freedom', as the believer will feel constrained to act according to the ethical code of the religion. It could also be argued that the degree of conviction with which a belief is held does nothing to confer pathological status on it. Many beliefs rely on slender evidence and are held with unshakeable conviction. An example might be some people's belief in UFOs or in the belief that they have lived other lives in the past. The main problem, however, is that, as Jaspers says, 'the attitude of the patient to the delusion is peculiarly inconsequent at times' (Jaspers 1997: 105). If this is so, then the behavioural 'degrees of freedom' for the person suffering from a delusion do not necessarily constrict with the delusion and so this could not be used as a criterion for defining them.

Jaspers, in his *General Psychopathology* states that what he calls 'primary delusions', as opposed to delusion-like ideas that can be understood from a psychological perspective, should be defined in terms of the 'primary experience of delusion' and in 'the change in personality' (Jaspers 1997: 106). He claims that these two factors combine to give us the criteria we need to identify delusions. This definition sidesteps concerns about the factuality of delusions, as well as the relation of the delusion to behaviour and other beliefs. The incorrigibility of the delusion is put down to a change in personality. However, he also states that we cannot understand delusions psychologically. He says that:

if we try to get some closer understanding of these primary experiences of delusion, we soon find we cannot really appreciate these quite alien modes of experience (Jaspers 1997: 98).

This position leaves the only way for us to understand delusions as being based on an experience caused by pathological processes in the brain. Jaspers claims that primary delusional experiences are:

those affective states which defeat understanding and arise endogenously *as a psychological irreducible*. Explanation can only point to sources beyond consciousness (physical events, phases, periods).... Delusions proper are the vague crystallisations of blurred delusional experiences and diffuse, perplexing self-references which cannot be sufficiently understood in terms of the personality or the situation; they are much more the symptoms of a disease process that can be identified by the presence of other symptoms as well (Jaspers 1997: 110).

Admittedly there is something that happens to someone's brain to cause the development of delusions. However, what Jaspers' account misses out is the proximity of the development of delusions to the way that everybody lives their lives to a certain degree in fantasy. If this is the case (as was argued in Chapter 1) then there is not so much a qualitative gap between the person with delusions and others, but rather an amplification of a feature of the existence of any human person.

It is necessary to look in more detail at Jaspers' position. A point that needs to be highlighted is that in the following paragraphs I am not dismissing the importance of Jaspers' work in setting out ways to try to understand conditions such as 'Odysseania'. Indeed the spirit of my enquiry follows in the wake of Jaspers' work in many respects. The main criticism I have of his position is that he claims to identify 'primary delusions' which he claims are 'un-understandable'. However, he also talks about 'delusion-like' ideas (or secondary delusions) which he distinguishes from primary delusions and claims are perfectly understandable in terms of a person's mood or

environment or other more or less obvious factors (this type of sense is what he calls a 'genetic understanding' or *Verstehen*). In this thesis I argue that we must start with the assumption that there is the possibility that we can understand the person however unclear their words seem. If we can see why this is important then the term 'primary delusion' can be seen as an unhelpful way of thinking about or classifying the words of another. With this in mind, an examination of what Jaspers actually writes about 'primary delusions' can be very helpful in enabling us to unlock the sense of the words a particular Odyssean uses and has been a source of stimulation for my own thinking about delusions. In what follows I am critiquing Jaspers' idea that there are 'primary delusions' (an idea which seems to have been widely adopted) rather than what he writes about them.

Focussing on the idea of a primary delusion, the delusional experience, as he sees it, is just the raw data for identifying someone as delusional and defies empathy. It can be described but cannot be explained in psychological terms. The statements made by someone with a delusion, according to Jaspers, are meaningful, as a description of the experience. However, delusions are also what he terms 'un-understandable' in that it is impossible to elaborate a psychological understanding gained through empathy. According to this account, there can be no phenomenology of delusions because there is nothing like the primary delusional experience in people not affected by delusions or any relation between the primary delusional experience and other normal experiences.

In response to this it is necessary to question Jaspers' view of language. If it is possible to understand the description of the delusional experience, as he claims it is (Jaspers 1997: 98), it is not clear why it should impossible to imagine oneself having that experience. For instance, we can imagine various sorts of experiences we have not had before when reading novels. Jaspers' claim that there is no relation between delusional experience and normal experience represses the fact that people who do not have delusions can also find their experience chaotic at times in a way that is similar to delusional experience. I would argue that the reason Jaspers claims that there can be no phenomenology of delusions is because he had never himself experienced them and so believed bridges between delusional experience and everyday experience could not be built. However, the person who has had a delusional experience is in a better position, than someone who has not had the experience, to see how such experiences relate to

ordinary experience. They are also in a better epistemic position to judge whether such experiences should be classified as un-understandable as they have both points of view to go on. The question of whether delusional experience can be understood without direct acquaintance can only be answered through particular attempts to show how other people can empathise with such experiences. It could be argued that someone with the experience of delusions is in the best position to do this. I hope to show in this thesis that bridges can indeed be built between delusional and normal experience.

Getting back to his definition of delusions in terms of the primary delusional experience and a change in personality, it could be said that the two criteria he gives do not do the work he wants them to do. This is because the only way of ascertaining whether there has been a change of personality and the person is having a delusional experience is through language and the fact that the person is now uttering delusional statements. And so it seems his criteria will not allow an independent identification of when a person's speech is delusional. In order to use the criteria we require a definition of what a delusion is in the first place and so the problem of definition remains.

A more promising line for understanding delusions is as meaningful statements that we (the non-delusional) can empathise with. Stich (1985) gives us an alternative criterion for ascribing beliefs to the person suffering from delusions, based on whether we can imagine ourselves doing or saying the same thing in a similar position. The advantage of Stich's criterion is that it allows us to include what would seem to be 'irrational statements' (which is what we might call delusions), as beliefs that we can ascribe to people, if we can imagine a situation in which it is conceivable that we might come to the same belief. Here we face a problem that people with delusions seem to go beyond the normal amount of error that we could imagine ourselves making in a similar situation. As Stich says:

> It is only the sort of error or incoherence that we cannot imagine
> falling into ourselves that undermines intentional description.
> (Stich 1985: 122)

The question of whether the incoherence found in delusions is of a magnitude that defies empathy on the part of those not suffering from the delusion lies at the heart of

my thesis. My contention is that this question is a matter of empirical exploration. The claim made in this thesis is that it is not necessarily true that all delusions can be understood, but that it is necessary to test the boundaries of comprehension in each case and that there is no a priori limit to whether we can share the perspective of someone who is delusional (contra Jaspers). Importantly, it is necessary to fill in much more of the existential situation of people who are delusional for such comprehension to be a possibility. This I will attempt to do in the thesis as a means of keeping open the possibility of seeing the person with delusions as someone we can attempt a meaningful dialogue with (contra Dennett). In the next section I will look at psychological theories of delusions and in Section 2.3 I will outline a way of understanding delusions that avoids the problems with the definitions we have looked at in this section.

2.2 Problems with Psychological Theories

Attempts have been made in psychology to explain delusions as within the realms of the rational or the understandable, if they are taken as a reaction to certain unusual experiences. These approaches attempt to interpret delusions as meaningful and open to psychological explanation. Having raised issues surrounding the definition of delusions as false beliefs, we will now examine contemporary models of the psychological processes involved in the development of delusions. The main psychological approaches to understanding delusions have been (a) to treat them as being incomprehensible and thus only open to causal explanation in terms of brain disease; (b) to take them as 'empty speech acts'; (c) to state that they are understandable in terms of an abnormal experience combined with, 'faulty inference and biased reasoning' (Hamilton 2007: 222); (d) to claim that they are beliefs that affect how we experience the world; and finally (e) to see them as 'imaginings' that are mistaken for beliefs (this approach will be examined in Chapter 8). The first approach (a) is exemplified by Jaspers (1997: 95-98) who, as we have seen, accords the primary delusions associated with the Odyssean condition with being impossible to understand in psychological terms. One problem with this stance, on top of the others I elaborated in the last section, is that it can be undermined if there is a different approach which does make some sense of the delusions in psychological terms. Explaining delusions through a psychological model is what the third approach (c) claims to be able to do.

The second approach (b) has been proposed by Berrios. He claims that delusions are, 'empty speech acts that disguise themselves as beliefs' (Berrios 1991: 12). He bases this assessment on the lack of an evidential base for the utterance combined with an absence of competing alternative propositions that are assessed alongside the delusional proposition. According to him a delusion is a, 'meaningless claim likely to be random in origin' (Berrios 1991: 12), with no informational content. The first objection to this is that were the speech act to be empty then, even though it looked like a sentence in English, it would literally be just a noise or be equivalent to the phrase 'piggly wiggle tiggle'. However, as was shown above, delusions can have a meaningful, if not 'rationally' consistent, relation to a person's wider behavioural repertoire, which would not be the case if they were just sounds. In a situation where a delusion seemed to have

no obvious relation to the rest of a person's behaviour, it is poor hermeneutic practice to assume in advance that no sense is to be had. For instance, a soliloquy in a Shakespeare play can have no obvious behavioural ramifications, but it helps us know what the person's take is on the situation they find themselves in. I deal with issues surrounding this approach in the next two chapters.

For the moment, to point out one way in which this approach is erroneous I will introduce a useful distinction made by Ratcliffe (2004: 34) between *experiential* and *inferential* beliefs. An inferential belief is one where evidence is used to infer a state of affairs whereas an experiential belief is a direct perception of a state of affairs that a person is 'struck by'. Ratcliffe gives the example:

> If A hears music and smells cooking, she *infers that* B is home.
> However, if A opens the door and sees B, she *perceives that* B is
> home. (Ratcliffe 2004: 34)

Berrios' account assumes that all beliefs must be inferential.[5] His definition of belief states that we must in all cases weigh up the evidence for a proposition before making a judgement rather than directly perceiving a state of affairs. This view of beliefs takes them to be propositional attitudes stripped of what, I will argue, is the contextual background that gives sense to the sentence in a dialogue. Now it is the case that some beliefs are inferential. We can infer one thing from other things (as Ratcliffe's example makes clear); this is not disputed. However, to say that beliefs in essence are 'propositional attitudes' that we arrive at through inference, is just wrong. The statement 'I am dead' when taken solely as a propositional attitude arrived at through inference, may well be taken to be 'empty' because it is performatively self-defeating and no evidence could possibly support it. On the other hand, when the person is seen as using these particular words to sum up their existential situation, the statement no longer seems 'empty'. Rather, it points to a change in which words are 'handy', or come to the fore for them, when the person is trying to express their predicament to someone else. An example of how certain words seem to force themselves on a person

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[5] Here I paraphrase the relevant points of Berrios' definition of belief; for his full account, which he takes from Price, see Berrios (1991: 8).

in a particular situation and result in a delusional speech-act is given in a first-hand account by Oliver Sacks of his experience after breaking a leg and having it in plaster:[6]

> [the leg] became a foreign, inconceivable thing, which I looked at, and touched, without any sense whatever of recognition or relation. It was only then that I gazed at it and felt I don't know you, you're not part of me, and, further, I don't know this 'thing,' it's not part of anything. _I had lost my leg_. Again and again I came back to these five words: words which expressed _a central truth_ for me, however preposterous they might sound to anyone else. In some sense, then, I had lost my leg. It had vanished; it had gone; it had been cut off at the top. I was now an amputee. (Sacks 1984: 49-50; italics and underline added)

Sacks, in this quote, is giving a phenomenological description of how a group of words can seem to force themselves on us as the only way of sharing an experience with others, or even relating the experience to ourselves; no matter how absurd or contradictory they seem. This 'handiness' of certain words in particular situations and the role of this fact about them in delusional speech-acts will be explored in the next section. Berrios wants us to move away from the traditional idea that delusions are false beliefs because of some of the problems I mentioned in Section 2.1 and instead replace it with the notion that they are meaningless speech-acts. His picture of the way we speak limits the meaning of a speech-act to its relation to external evidence and ignores how we use words in many different ways. The alternative approach that will be taken in Section 2.3 is that speech-acts are produced on the basis of a skilled 'know-how' sensitive to a conversational situation. I will hope to show that delusional speech-acts come about because a person's mooded apprehension of the situation is radically different from those they are in dialogue with.

The third approach (c) has been called an 'empiricist' position by Campbell (2001). Empiricists claim that delusions are beliefs and see them as being a psychologically understandable response to unusual experiences (Maher 1999: 567). Maher (1974), in

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[6] Also quoted in Radden's book _On Delusion_ (2010)

providing a single-factor account of delusions, opened the way 'for the renewed interest in generating psychological accounts of delusions since the 1980's' (Garety and Freeman 1999: 116). However, in most psychological accounts since then, the explanation for the formation of delusions is supplemented by positing of reasoning biases/deficits on top of the experience.[7] These biases/deficits are used to explain why people can have delusions without an anomalous experience and the finding that people with delusions seem to have a different reasoning style from the general population (Garety and Freeman 1999: 116). In the case of delusions without an anomalous experience the account is still empiricist because the 'normal' experience followed by aberrant reasoning, is the basis for the delusion.

An important finding for the empiricist approach is empirical evidence that patients with the Capgras delusion do not respond normally to familiar faces on skin conductance tests which measure affective response (Ellis and Young 1990: 244).[8] They use the affective response as evidence for the fact that the delusional subject is having unusual experiences i.e. the well-known face fails to produce 'the normal feeling of familiarity' that is associated with someone the person knows well. As the lack of 'affective familiarity' can occur in people who do not then go on to form delusions the account is supplemented by the finding that people with delusions tend to have certain reasoning biases. One particular bias people with delusions display is a tendency to 'jump to conclusions'; sometimes being willing to reach a conclusion when presented with just one item of evidence (Davies and Coltheart 2000: 13). Menon *et al.* (2008: 229) have suggested that this robust finding could be put down to the way that information presented to the sufferer appears more salient than it really is.[9] Although the Capgras delusion is often found in cases of brain injury, it is also reported where someone has been diagnosed with the Odyssean condition (Ellis and Young 1990: 241). The heightened salience of certain information to the sufferer, in such cases, can be explained by Kapur's (2003) theory that there is a dysregulation of dopamine production in Odysseania. This is experienced in the prodromal phase of the condition when a sufferer's perception of the salience of objects in the environment becomes

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[7] For an overview of some of the various approaches that can be understood as 'empiricist' see *Pathologies of Belief* (Coltheart and Davies 2000).
[8] The Capgras delusion is where the sufferer believes that a person well known to them (such as a wife or husband) has been replaced by an impostor (Stone and Young 1997: 328).
[9] The robust finding is that people with delusions seem to exhibit less 'data-gathering' before fixing on one hypothesis than normal controls.

erratic (Kapur 2003: 14). I will use this theory about 'perceptions of salience' as one of the factors in the breakdown in reciprocal trust that I argue is a condition for the formation and maintenance of delusions (this will be examined in Section 5.3).

The empiricist would say that it is possible for someone without the delusion to imagine coming to the same belief given the unusual experience and biases in reasoning. I am sympathetic to this claim made in empiricist accounts. However, one problem with many empiricist accounts, which limit their explanatory potential, is an impoverished depiction of background interpersonal context and the use of language in delusions. If we examine one particular account by Davies and Coltheart (2000), we can see that beliefs, in this account, are described as hypotheses that are then taken up with conviction. The assumption of Davies and Coltheart here is that delusions are sentential utterances that are produced because of a deficit in the processes by which we normally hypothesize about the world and in the way we integrate these hypotheses with our pre-existing 'web of beliefs'. This means that the account has to posit four steps of aberrations in cognitive processing to account for the aetiology of delusions (Davies and Coltheart 2000: 30). Analysing the cognitive factors that must be involved in the aetiology of delusion can seem like the best possible strategy for arriving at an understanding of such a perplexing phenomenon and can lead to empirically testable hypotheses. However, without an understanding of the whole context (interpersonal, existential and affective) the significance of findings of individual impairments/deficits in sufferers cannot be fully assessed. For instance, the finding by Garety *et al.* (2005: 382) that anxiety makes a clear contribution to delusional conviction, when taken on its own, is just another factor in a cognitive process flow diagram. On the other hand, if anxiety is understood phenomenologically, as being part of a loss of trust in those with whom the sufferer is in contact, then the reason why the delusion will be held with more conviction becomes clearer (I will elaborate on this in Section 5.3)

Turning to the fourth approach (d) which has been termed 'rationalist' and has been put forward by Campbell (2001), in a paper where he states that with delusions there is a top-down disturbance in some fundamental beliefs. By this he means that the change in a fundamental belief frames experience and action rather than the other way round. He suggests that this change in belief could result from an organic malfunction (Campbell 2001: 97). As Bayne and Pacherie (2004: 8) argue, it is unclear, if this were the case,

why the Capgras delusion should cluster around one theme rather than being as polythematic as Odyssean delusions are. Campbell's claim also runs into the problem that other biological models of delusions (such as Jaspers') have, in that it seems to discount the possibility of a psychological account without good reason. The problem here is that the claim amounts to simply restating that delusions are a mystery without providing anything that furthers our understanding. A claim made by Campbell, that comes from the rationalist position and does further our understanding of delusion, is that delusions seem to function like Wittgensteinian 'framework propositions'. According to Campbell's interpretation of passages from Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* (1975) these are propositions that form a background of certainty on which any other propositions can show up as being true or false. As Campbell says, 'they are not themselves, in any ordinary way, subject to empirical scrutiny' (Campbell 2001:96-97). Examples of such propositions are, 'there are a lot of objects in the world' or 'this is one hand and this is another'.

Campbell goes on to say that a change in framework propositions would change the meaning of the words the person with the delusion uses from their ordinary sense. The reason given for this is that a change in the framework would alter the ordinary senses of words because of a fundamental realignment of our understanding of the world. There seems, however, to be evidence that the words used in delusions retain their ordinary meanings while being projected in new ways. This has been shown in some cases where a delusional person is asked about their beliefs and they state that they would find them hard to believe if they were someone else (Davies and Coltheart 2000:29). Campbell is right to highlight the existence of a background framework to ordinary utterances. He is wrong, however, to see this background framework as being a set of propositions, rather than a set of practices and affective heuristics that enable us to orientate in social space. I will argue in Chapter 5 for a different interpretation of Wittgenstein's writings on 'framework propositions' which helps to draw a picture of commonsense as being made up of shared practices anchored by trust. What I think is right in what Campbell says is that a disruption in the background framework might make other groups of words (rather than those that are handy in normal circumstances) suddenly seem appropriate for a situation. However the use of these words would seem to remain related to their everyday meaning.

A certain picture of people's epistemic relation to the world seems to haunt most of the attempts we have looked at to understand delusions. This picture I have called the 'monological folk-scientific observer' model. One aspect of it, found in Dennett (1978), is the idea that rationality is the ability to use 'an on-board rule-book of inference' both to organise our own beliefs as rational beings and to navigate our interaction with other intentional systems (i.e. other people). Such a picture of rationality when used to understand people with delusions can be seen to lead to perplexity over what delusions are. It also can lead to 'mind-blindness' in our stance to people with delusions (if we were to take seriously Dennett's claim that we need to take a 'design stance' to such people (Dennett 2000: 10)). In order to avoid the impasse described above it is necessary to enrich our picture of rationality and see it as a form of 'know-how' in relating to other people and the world. I will set out this competing picture in the next section

2.3 Thinking of Delusions in Terms of Speech-Acts

The aim of this section is to explore the idea that delusions should be understood in relation to the social context of their utterance. In making this point I will put forward an argument that may on the face of it seem obvious. It seems, however, to have been overlooked, or not even considered by much of the literature on delusions, namely that that the term 'delusional' should only be applied to specific speech-acts in specific contexts. The term 'speech-act' is used here to highlight that delusions are inextricable from a context of dialogue and can only be identified on the basis of their contravention of conversational and behavioural norms.[10] These norms include, but are not limited to, relevance, appropriateness, non-contradiction, responsiveness to reason-giving and the amount of distress caused to the delusional person by the content of the utterance. These context-dependent norms are sometimes grouped together and called the boundaries of 'rationality'. This idea of a boundary of sense, I will argue, has no justification. It implies that there is one principle that the delusional person breaks that anyone could identify (in other words, the term 'delusional' has objective, independently identifiable criteria for its application) and that this is a strict universal boundary that is overstepped in the case of a delusional utterance. In opposition to this I will argue that delusional speech-acts can only be identified relative to context.

I also want to oppose the projection of the term to the person as a whole and will try to show that the idea of 'delusional persons' is an incoherent and unjustifiable classification. The classification of the parts of someone's speech as 'delusional' can very often slip from identifying an isolated or recurrent condition of someone's speech and come to be applied to the person themselves, casting all their behaviour in a certain light. I will argue in Chapter 7 that this labelling of someone as 'delusional' plays an integral part in maintaining a breakdown of trust. Trust needs to be rebuilt in order to help someone regain a footing in commonsense. The term 'delusional' is pivotal in creating the stigma of 'insanity' with all its attendant harms in terms of social

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[10] The reason a dialogical context is needed to identify a delusion is that a thought or a speech-act by someone in isolation does not allow the insensitivity to reason-giving norms, found in delusions, to become apparent. So all one could say if observing the behaviour and soliloquies of a Robinson Crusoe is that he seems to be behaving in a way similar to how we could imagine someone in his situation with a delusion acting, but without an interaction with another person we would be unable to tell if he really was insensitive to reason-giving norms.

relationships. If we wish to use the term 'delusional' (I am not suggesting we give up the term altogether), it should only be applied to a verbal utterance in a specific context and not to the person as a whole, who may otherwise be non-delusional in the rest of what they say. To assume otherwise is to stray into the area of discounting the person as a competent partner in conversation.

Considering a delusion as a speech-act also underlines my contention that utterances within a dialogue can be seen as the application of a certain kind of 'knowing how', sensitive to the context of a dialogue, rather than the expression of a 'knowing that' (which would be a matter of expressing propositional attitudes). Here I want to undermine the picture of speaking as the production of propositions that exist as abstract entities that we have some sort of attitudinal relation to. I will show how engaging in dialogue should rather be pictured as a skill in which words and phrases are 'handy' (come to the fore of our attention) to do certain things appropriate to the whole context of the conversation. This takes its lead from the Wittgensteinian slogan 'meaning is use' (PI 43) and can be understood as an elaboration of Wittgenstein's analogy between words and tools (PI 11). The relevance of this analogy to delusions is that the delusional person can be seen as trying to do something different from what we normally do in a conversation. I will be arguing that in any dialogue we are trying to do something be that to persuade, to fill in a silence, to direct someone's attention to something, to find something out, to tell a joke, etc. In Chapter 8, I argue that someone who makes a statement that is considered by those around them to be delusional is doing something that can be likened to the way a poet uses language (namely to give expression to a mood, as well as trying to open a public space). As Heidegger says:

> In 'poetical' discourse, the communication of the existential
> possibilities of one's state-of-mind can become an aim in itself, and
> this amounts to a disclosing of existence (Heidegger 1962: 205).

The person suffering from delusions can be seen as trying to communicate the existential terrain of their state-of-mind ('attunement' is a better translation of the word

Befindlichkeit here translated as 'state-of-mind')[11] with sentences that are 'handy' for them; whether they are taken from science fiction, horror, even religious narratives or elsewhere.

In order to make this claim, it is necessary to unpack the significance of 'attunement' for Heidegger and the sense in which I am using the term 'handy'. In *Being and Time* (1962), Heidegger gives a central place to the role of moods in what he calls Dasein's disclosure of itself and the world.[12] By 'disclosure' he means the way in which things appear in an intelligible form. In this sense moods, for Heidegger, provide the condition for the possibility of a world showing up for Dasein (Heidegger 1962: 176). Heidegger's main purpose in *Being and Time* is to get to grips with the meaning of Being, that which makes things in general intelligible for us. He calls this project 'fundamental ontology' (ibid. 34). Attunement comes to the fore during his investigation of what Dasein's 'being-in' the world means, that is, when he is dealing directly with Dasein's relation to the world (ibid. 170). Heidegger understands attunement as revealing to Dasein its 'throwness' (ibid. 174). By 'throwness' he means the necessary fact that the world matters for Dasein in ways that it had no hand in deciding (ibid. 177). For instance people do not have control over where they were born, which period of history they were born into, who their parents are etc. and yet these things give their life meaning and gives them a sense of who they are.

Attunement is understood as the passive element in Dasein's disclosure of its world, as opposed to what Heidegger terms 'understanding', which is active. By 'understanding' he means the way Dasein projects possibilities on to the world (ibid. 185). The way things matter for us is the basis from which we project our possibilities. Attunement is specifically the idea that a necessary condition for any dealings with the world is that things already matter to Dasein in a certain way that is given through our mood (ibid 176). To understand this assertion more fully we need to sketch one particular idea found in Heidegger's ontology about how we relate to objects. Heidegger puts forward

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[11] 'Attunement' is used as the translation of the word 'Befindlichkeit' by Joan Stambaugh in her translation of *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1996) which avoids the connotations of the idea of an 'internal' conscious state.

[12] Heidegger uses the term 'Dasein' to avoid the preconceptions attached to such terms as 'subject' or 'human being'. 'Dasein' literally means 'there-being' and Heidegger wishes to keep the term open and free of other accrued meanings so that it can be defined in his ongoing analysis of Dasein in *Being and Time*. For further discussion of this see Mulhall (1996: 14).

a conception of our relation to the world as being primarily one of involvement with socially inherited projects (ibid 116). Objects in our environment are primarily revealed to us as being 'ready-to-hand', that is, they are known to us as instruments that we use in fulfilling some purpose such as building a house (ibid 115). The purposes we project are not something we come up with from scratch but rather find their meaning in our society and are inherited from that society. Our actions and cognitions are only intelligible within the background of the meaning-giving context of our social practices. My use of the term 'handy' in this chapter connects the way we use words to the way we relate to tools as conceived by Heidegger's in his phrase 'ready-to-hand'. The claim I am making is that we use particular words according to their functionality for a specific social purpose.[13] To summarise, my gloss on the quote from Heidegger about attunement is that our attunement through mood inflects which words and phrases are 'ready-to-hand' for us and that delusions can be seen as trying to use words to articulate our attunement itself (or put another way, 'our mooded apprehension' of the world).

The obvious objection to the idea that in delusions people are expressing their attunement is that if this were the case why does the person not just write a poem expressing their attunement, rather than come out with propositions that are blatantly false or even nonsensical? The answer to this is found in the way that their attunement to the world, as given by the chaotic mood in which they find themselves, is all-encompassing. Such a mood impairs the person's sensitivity to a shared contextual background, leading to what the others present see as an inappropriate use of language. The incomprehension caused by the unwillingness of the others to try to imaginatively enter the viewpoint that may have produced the unusual speech leads to breakdown in public space between the participants of the conversation.[14]

This raises, in earnest, the question of what a delusion is. The obvious answer from the perspective of Anglophone philosophy, that I want to avoid, is that a delusion is some sort of mental entity that is given expression by a speech-act in the same way that beliefs are typically conceptualised as existing as mental entities. As I stressed above, I would argue that neither beliefs nor delusions are mental entities. In the place of the

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[13] This resonates with Wittgenstein's comparison between words and tools (PI 11).

[14] I explore in Chapter 8 whether a possible course of therapy may be to encourage those with delusions to write poetry, thereby allowing them to express their mood in a structured way and through this gain some space from certain all-encompassing moods.

idea that beliefs are propositional attitudes, I would picture them as certain ordering of words that are ready-to-hand in order for us to do something in a conversation. Of course, there are systematic relations between groupings of words and our use of them, but calling them mental entities seems to me unnecessary. My alternate picture foregrounds the idea that rationality can be understood as a form of 'know-how' in conversation; [15] we use certain orderings of words that are appropriate for doing something in the conversational situation. This does not mean that all speech is 'manipulative', that is, sophistry. It is quite possible within this conception to 'tell the truth'; it is just that sincerity is one possible mode of ordering our words to share something salient in our experience from our point of view. Without wading into the thorny debate over representation through language, I would like to use my thematisation of the infinite in Chapter 1 and say that the closest thing to the usual idea of 'mind' (as theorised by Anglophone philosophers), that I recognise, is our openness to the world. Language enables us to organise and share aspects of experience given through this openness. Beliefs can be seen as stories we tell that provide some coherence to the salience of certain groups of experiences. One phenomenological example that supports the idea that beliefs do not exist as mental entities underpinning our relation to the world, is that, in most cases, we do not have a belief about an issue unless a situation requires us to formulate one in a dialogue. That is, we find new orderings of words, through the demands of a dialogue, to articulate a feature of our perspective. It also explains the way we clarify what we think about an issue dialogically in arguments and debates.

Now I will outline the factors that need to be in place to accord a speech-act the status of being a delusion. As I claimed above, the main factor in identifying a delusional speech act is the way that it breaks conversational norms. To give an example of what I mean I will turn again to the Cotard delusion where someone states something along the lines of 'I am dead'. This may seem to look delusional independent of context as it is performatively self-defeating. However, this can be questioned when we take into account a common sentence that is similar but is widely used, namely, 'I am dead on my feet,' or if we have been caught doing something wrong we might just say 'I'm dead!' Although this is understood to be figurative in most cases, if said in a certain tone of

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[15] For a similar idea of language see Kremer (2001: 62)

voice with a certain facial expression, being at odds with the rest of the situation and with further asserting of the veracity of the literal meaning this could be seen as the beginning of a delusion by the partner in the conversation.

What I want to suggest is that the difficulty in defining delusions, which is a common place in the literature (David 1999: 17), is down to the complex situational factors that are involved in identifying a speech-act as 'delusional'. These factors include tone of voice, facial expressions and gestures, the context of what has gone before in the dialogue, the inappropriateness of the speech-act which can only be judged by those in the dialogue and by the contravention of other conversational norms such as relevance, the distress caused by the content of the belief, etc. Delusional speech-acts are identified on the basis of an intuitive grasp that something has gone awry in the conversation and this intuition is based on all the factors mentioned above. Alongside this, the classification of the term 'delusional speech-act' as a Wittgensteinian family resemblance concept should help to dispel the need to find a particular essence of the act. As with the term 'game' (to use an example from the *Philosophical Investigations* (PI 65)) there are many properties of individual delusional speech-acts that overlap between the uses of the term 'delusion', but there are no set of criteria that define them all. The term 'delusion' also overlaps with other concepts such as 'eccentric speech' or 'overvalued ideas'.

Focussing on the perspective of the person who makes the delusional speech-act, for some reason the delusional speech-act seems to the person uttering it the most ready-to-hand sentence to do something with (which may be to express their experience or explain their behaviour) in the context of the conversation. Their stubbornness in using such a phrase is related to the finding in poetry that only a certain string of words will do to express an experience or insight and that, for this purpose, no other substitution will do. This line of reasoning is targeted against a picture where the delusional person is a poor scientific observer using solely 'on-board' resources of the rules of inference and coming up with bad hypotheses built on faulty evidence. What the concept of 'ready-to-hand' sentences highlights is that it is not necessary to posit a background web of beliefs, that relate to each other in a rational way and which are revised on the basis of anomalous experience. Instead we employ heuristics or 'gut-feelings' (Gigerenzer 2007) that on the whole allow us to operate in the world efficiently without

going through immense amounts of computation. (Hookway 2002: 237). As the term 'gut-feelings' indicates this is regulated through our emotional and mooded engagement with the world. This can explain how a sudden change in mood, emotion or affective attitude could lead to a change in the sentences that become ready-to-hand. One study seems to show that those with the Odyssean condition tend to be more logical than normal subjects, in that their reasoning tends to be more in line with the rules of inference than normals (Owen *et al.* 2007: 453-454). If true, this would support my argument that, in the case of Odysseans, there is a disruption of the normal affective heuristics that make up commonsense leading to a reliance on formal rationality. This might help explain the incorrigibility of delusions, in that some delusions might be reached through water-tight arguments, but the problem lies with their premises that have gone widely astray due to a lack of an anchor in commonsense. The premises can be thought of as those expressions that seem most ready-to-hand for the situation. Again, I elaborate these ideas in Chapter 5.

2.4 The Scope of the Thesis

Before going further, it is necessary to be clear about what types of delusions the thesis will cover. There are many ways of classifying delusions. One method is to relate them to the supposed underlying biological pathology that is thought to give rise to them. According to this approach delusions can be classified in their relation to particular conditions. One category is psychotic disorders which, loosely defined, are disorders leading to a loss of contact with reality (I would prefer to describe this as 'losing anchoring in our commonsense orientation to the world'). This category has been divided up into conditions such as Odysseania, schizoaffective disorder, delusional disorder, substance-induced psychotic disorder and other psychotic disorders.[16] Then there are other separate conditions such as bipolar disorder, major depressive disorders with psychotic features or conditions related to specific brain damage which are sometimes found with circumscribed delusions like the Cotard or the Capgras delusion.[17] One problem with this form of classification is when it is assumed that there is some underlying biological pathology that will uniquely identify the disorder and distinguish these conditions from each other. However, apart from the last example (of circumscribed delusional conditions) there is very little agreement about what this might be in each of the other conditions. As I argued in the Introduction, the idea of a 'broken brain' should be dispensed with, as it is not only the brain that needs to be fixed but rather the person who should be cared for and helped to deal with their emotional chaos. What needs to be focussed on is the amelioration of the suffering and isolation caused by these conditions. The stress should be put on rebuilding the person's trust in the world and themselves and between them and their community.

A useful way of looking at the typology of delusional speech-acts comes from the semantic categorisation of Hacking (2000: 120). We can admit that there may be an underlying biochemical dynamic (which is yet to be fully understood) that causes the extremely chaotic mooded apprehension of the world found in these conditions, which

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[16] I would replace this categorisation with the umbrella term 'Odyssean conditions' while making a distinction based on which drugs can help with a return to a less chaotic mooded apprehension of the world.

[17] Again, if they involve delusions, these conditions could come under the term 'Odyssean conditions' with discrimination based on which drugs help a return to a more balanced mood.

is what he might call an indifferent kind (by which he means what is normally known as a natural kind i.e. a kind that is indifferent to our applying the term to it). However, we want to deal with the delusional speech-acts which are found manifest across all forms of the Odyssean condition (although certain themes of delusions are found predominantly in certain conditions as discriminated by the effect of certain drugs) and, I want to argue, are an interactive kind. An interactive kind is a kind that, by the very application of the term to the behaviour of people, changes their behaviour and therefore the application of the term. So, in summary, we might say that while some unknown biochemical dynamic X might precipitate the onset of delusional speech-acts, most of the dynamics of the production of the particular delusions occur at the level of the person and their social interaction. This does not, however, restrict us in the use of biochemical evidence to identify certain changes in the brain that might have phenomenological correlations that play a role in the aetiology of delusions. In what follows I will sometimes use studies that deal with those diagnosed with the Odyssean condition. This is based on the assumption that in most cases this condition is diagnosed because of the occurrence of at least some delusions at some point in the development of the condition. I will also use circumscribed delusions as examples because these provide an example of a relatively contained range of delusional speech-acts, dispensing with the need for a complex elaboration of the delusion. As well as this, some circumscribed delusions can also sometimes be found to occur in cases where the Odyssean condition has been diagnosed (e.g. the Capgras delusion).[18]

Another method of classification is to define delusional speech-acts in relation to their content. The main categories are whether the delusion is bizarre or non-bizarre and whether it is mood congruent or mood incongruent (Hahn 2007). Beginning with bizarre delusions, these are delusions that are impossible or highly implausible e.g. believing that everyone can hear your thoughts without you speaking. A non-bizarre delusion is one that is 'false' but definitely possible, e.g. that, contrary to all evidence, I believe that someone of a higher social status is in love with me. Mood congruence and incongruence is defined in relation to whether a mood disorder can make the delusion psychologically comprehensible (I understand all delusions to be the articulation of a mooded apprehension of the world; mood congruent delusions are simply where the

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[18] Circumscribed delusions may not be as circumscribed as is claimed in much of the literature (Ratcliffe 2004: 27)

mood seems obvious). Non-bizarre and mood congruent delusions are more easily understandable for those without delusions as they seem to be an exaggeration of beliefs we can all imagine ourselves having or in the case of mood congruent delusions the mood would seem to explain the delusion. I will attempt to show that we should be open to the possibility that all delusions are an exaggeration of normal anxieties and other moods. Taking this into account, I hope to provide a framework for understanding 'mood incongruent' and 'bizarre' delusions. However, the aspect of delusions that will be the focus of this thesis is how to understand the way someone can come to state things that seem highly implausible or even impossible and how they can be held with such conviction in the face of common sense and incontrovertible evidence. In light of this, my framework will extend to cover both bizarre and non-bizarre delusions. In Chapter 6, I will take the particular example of persecutory delusions to test the framework I have developed up until then. I allow myself the licence to take examples from any of the categories of delusion, on the understanding that what I am providing in this thesis is a way to engage with people suffering from delusions in conversation. My argument will be that no delusional speech-act can a priori be excluded from being something we can respond to and try to make sense of. The key point is that approaching someone who has said things we consider delusional should be done in a spirit of trying to find our feet with them by trying to imagine contexts in which what they say is obviously meaningful. Such an approach finds a paradigm, I would argue, in Wittgenstein's 'therapeutic' methods in philosophy.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to show the poverty of the conception of delusions as false beliefs and that this definition is based on a picture of our language use as 'monological folk-scientific observers'. I examined psychological theories and found that this picture also haunts these theories and leads to the perplexity over delusions. In contrast I suggest that we should think about delusions as individual speech-acts that can be classified as delusional because of the way they do not 'fit' the particular social context. In other words, it is necessary to take them on a case by case basis and thereby focus our attention on the person themselves. In the next chapter I look at deficient stances in relation to those with delusions and use Gadamer's hermeneutics to specify other more ethical approaches.

Chapter 3

The Preconception of Completeness:
Diagnosing Approaches to People Suffering from
Delusions Cinematically

Belief in the existence of other human beings as such is *love*.

The mind, is not forced to believe in the existence of anything (subjectivism, absolute idealism, solipsism, scepticism: c.f. the Upanishads, the Taoists and Plato, who, all of them, adopt this philosophical attitude by way of purification). That is why the only organ of contact with existence is acceptance [or another word, acknowledgement], love. That is why beauty and reality are identical (Weil 2002: 64).

In this chapter, I will claim that the traditional ways of understanding delusions amount to approaches that deny the person with the delusion the status of being a competent partner in conversation. This occurs through either assigning their utterances to the meaningless (or meaningful but incomprehensible) output of a pathological biochemical mechanism or else by denying that the utterances have any significance other than being false propositions about the world. I will use Gadamer's account of philosophical hermeneutics and specifically his notions of a 'preconception of completeness' (Gadamer 2004: 364) and 'a fusion of horizons' (Gadamer 2004: 300-304) as key attitudes that need to be in place when approaching a person with delusions. An approach that has these practices as its guiding ethical thread (in the sense of being open to the infinite in the other), provides the conditions for the possibility of the rebuilding of trust between the person with the delusion and others, by treating them as competent partners in conversation. In taking a look at the dynamics of how people approach those they consider delusional, I will use three films that can be seen as thinking through (c.f. Mulhall 2008: 130-134) what effects delusions can have on our relationships with

others. The inclusion of using the thought inherent in these films is not expendable or illustrative, that is, something that could be said clearly apart from the films, but rather, these films provide the 'meat' (in showing how we can project these concepts in everyday life) for making sense of Gadamer's abstract concepts.

Before proceeding further it might be useful to consider the ways of being in conversation with a film through interpreting it. The material to hand in a film is a collection of photos of the world; film can be placed in the metaphysical category of a 'world viewed' (Cavell 1974: 18), a world not present to us as we are not present to it. The attraction of such a world is that it has become objective and stable like the words of a book - we can watch it a number of times, rent it out on DVD over and over again - while what appears to us remains experiential in content like a memory. If we were to take seriously the idea that watching a film has a similar form to reliving a memory we might arrive at the fantasy that we can, paradoxically, have an objective handle on subjectivity. The question would then arise as to whose subjectivity becomes objective in film. This can, however, be immediately discounted by remembering that a film, like a painting, can make radically different impressions on each presentation. Notably a film is not a memory, it is not a part of a life, at its best it acts as a conscience, dramatising the ethically salient that we have forgotten or pass over in our everyday life. Alternatively, like philosophy sometimes does, it can be seen as transfiguring the ordinary, re-presenting it to us in a way that highlights the aspect of beauty in the world allowing us to 'see goodness'.

Of course, in the end all we are left with is a viewed world and how we respond to it rests on our own natural reactions. Following this path of thought we might say that a verbal response to a film (in the form of a review, an interpretation or an informal post-film argument with those with whom we have shared the experience of watching the film, which is undeniably a part of enjoying a film), is an attempt to explore areas of agreement and difference in our natural reactions with others in our community. Claims about films can be staked in many different ways, another filmmaker has the power to acknowledge a fellow filmmaker through the same medium in the form of quoting or remaking the film, but in order to make the claim public, the most obvious way is through an exegesis or interpretation. A commentator puts her subjectivity on the line in order to find community. An interpretation (and in the same way, I will argue in

Chapter 7, as speaking words considered by others as delusional) is making a claim of reason, which is a way of making a claim to community (Cavell 1979: 20). This can be understood as opening up the possibility that others might find themselves in your words as you open yourself to finding yourself in the words of others. This might be taken as the basic moral of Gadamer's 'preconception of completeness' which I will elaborate below.

3.1 *Breaking the Waves*: Exile

The first film I will look at is Lars Von Trier's film *Breaking the Waves* (Von Trier 1996). Stig Bjorkman gives a synopsis of the film:

> The film is set during the 70s, in a tiny Presbyterian community on the West Coast of Scotland. Bess (Emily Watson), a trembling imp of a local girl, marries Jan (Stellan Starsgard), a hearty oil-rig worker, courting the disapproval of the village elders. After the sexual ecstasy of their honeymoon, Bess can't bear having Jan return to the rigs. She begs God to return Jan to her, saying she'd put up with any trial of her faith. An accident on the oil rig leaves Jan paralysed from the waist down. Bess is consumed by guilt. Under the influence of his medication, Jan tells Bess she must make love to others and describe her experiences to him. She comes to believe that prostituting herself is her penance, the only chance of a cure for Jan (Bjorkman 1996: 11).

To fill in the rest of the plot, Bess's religious community reject her because of her behaviour and the local doctor and her sister-in-law try to have her sectioned. She runs away and is severely abused when she goes to one of the fishing boats, again as a prostitute. Her injuries lead to her death in the hospital. There is an inquest where the doctor starts to say that the reason for her death was that she was good, but then stops because of the incredulity of those holding the inquest. Right at the end we see Jan on the oil-rig now cured of his paralysis. The other oil-rig workers bring him out onto the deck where they can hear bells ringing although they have checked on the radar that there is nothing anywhere in their vicinity. The last shot is of a bell ringing in the sky, suspended over the oil-rig.

Von Trier said in an interview that with *Breaking the Waves* he wanted to do a film about goodness and miracles (Bjorkman 1996: 12). On first viewing, the film would

appear to be more aptly summed up as being about a tragedy caused by psychosis.[1] It will be argued that the bell tolling over the ocean (which is meant to be understood as a miracle) at the end of the film precipitates in the viewer a need to decide their attitude to the rest of the film that came before. Up until this point the film *Breaking the Waves* allows two attitudes towards the world (the viewed world as opposed to the lived world) to develop in the individual watching the film. The crisis point at the end forces the viewer to continue with one of the attitudes and dismiss the other. One we could term the 'miraculous' and the other 'tragic'. The claim of this section is that 'seeing goodness' (that is recognising the infinite in Bess) is a possibility only from the viewpoint of the 'miraculous' attitude however untenable or scandalous it initially seems. We shall address the divergent 'tragic' attitude first, as a symptom of a failure of faith that there is any way of understanding madness that has redemptive features.

The bell at the end of the film seems to signify that Bess has gone to heaven and that her suffering had a direct causal role in the miraculous healing of Jan. Laying out first the 'tragic' attitude, this ending seem to be, at best, gratuitous and, at worst, a sickly sweet 'happy ending' running against the truth of quotidian suffering in the world. The tragic understanding of the situation is expressed in the courtroom where the doctor (at the inquest into her death) states that it was the goodness of Bess that was the reason why she died. He then, immediately, takes this back as he seems to realise that this is a ridiculous reason to give for someone dying. The doctor exemplifies an inability to 'see goodness'. In retracting his statement about Bess's goodness, he thereby conforms to the idea that it would be unreasonable to claim that someone's death might be predicated on their goodness (as Christians might say about Jesus; or philosophers might claim for Socrates). His action implies that the world is irredeemably cruel in its randomness and meaninglessness. According to such an attitude, the combination of Bess's kindness and irrationality made her vulnerable to a cruel and pointless death. Here we find a blindness to the 'holy fool' aspect in which goodness might sometimes appear and, it could be argued, is found expressed in the madness of Bess. The only aspect such a stance can acknowledge is the irrationality of Bess and the tragedy that befalls her because of it. From such a point of view, the appearance of the bell tolling (miraculously suspended above the sea) at the end can only be, as Marx said of religion,

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[1] I am here using this term in a neutral sense to signify a disorientation that stops someone having a commonsense relation to the world.

'an opiate' (Marx 1972: 131); a fairy tale about happy endings that dulls our perception of the Schopenhauerian cruelty of the world. The documentary 'fly-on-the-wall' style of the film makes it seem that the film is trying to seriously depict the suffering that can be caused by an adherence to an outdated religious creed, especially when combined with a person suffering from psychosis. The direction the film seems to take for most of its unfolding is to condemn what religion can do to the 'weak-minded'.

This leads us to the question: does *Breaking the Waves* have a 'religious motif' as Von Trier himself maintains (Bjorkman 1996: 12) and what does such a phrase imply about the film as a whole? This should not be allowed to slip by without comment as this fact about it might imply that a large percentage of its viewers who happen to be atheist will find it irrelevant. In what ways could a film include the religious? From a secular viewpoint, religion means being a part of a certain community. Religious practices are directed towards God and if, as the atheist believes, God does not exist, then such practices are not directed towards anything and must just be understood as social practices. Some atheists might put their continuance down to the need for 'happy ending' stories (which, again, some might claim, are manipulatively used for purposes such as social control over sexuality and free speech). From this point of view a religious motif could only exist as a record of superstitious practices that somehow remains because of cultural inertia or because it provides some sort of psychological 'opiate' to people. Alternatively, the term might signify a form of propaganda or a moralistic diatribe. Taking the term internally, that is, from the perspective of someone with a belief in God, there are also problems, because to say that a film is religious has a far wider remit than saying that a film is about religion. The former would imply that the film is to some degree a religious act which is one possible interpretation of what a 'religious motif' could mean. Taking a lead from Kierkegaard, this could mean that the film is edifying (that is, it re-affirms someone's belief that there is a God and helps them to live in imitation of Christ) or that it is some form of indirect communication that attempts to 'trick' the uncommitted into bringing their own individuality into question (Kierkegaard 2000: 461).

Alternatively, we might want to say that the film deals with religious themes; meaning that the key to an understanding of the film is religious concepts or perhaps a knowledge of religious practices or literature. Of course, it can be surmised that in

making this film for public release Von Trier would have known that he could expect a literate, critical and mainly secular public. It might therefore be worth hedging our bets that the term religious is used in its widest possible sense of dealing with the way we value (or do not value) our lives. A final possible understanding of the term 'religious' takes the etymology of the term as 'to bind', that is, 'to re-join' together something that we feel is split in our lives such as transcendence and habit;[2] going on from my discussion of this issue in Chapter 1, religion can be a means to help us re-member that we, qua human persons, are the site for the interplay of the infinite and the finite. I think this film can help to remind us of this, and so could be seen as 'religious' in this sense.

If the 'tragic' attitude is one possible aspect through which we can understand the film, then what is the 'miraculous' attitude? This attitude is based on 'seeing goodness' in the world.[3] This leads us to the question: where can we identify goodness in *Breaking the Waves*? Firstly, it might be agreed that the concept of goodness is certainly not very salient in the film. Other commentators have noted that Bess not does fit the religious archetype of the saint, as sensuality would seem to be incommensurate with holiness (Makarushka 1998). None of the other characters stand out as being particularly 'good' people. The piety of the elders of the community is repulsive and is obviously a distraction in our attempt to place good in the film. Their form of dogmatic conservatism presents us with a dying community that has solidified in response to its fear of external change. Here we can see no redemptive features. Traditional religious categories do not seem to function in this film (although the fact that Bess falls/faints three times towards the end of the film seems a clear Christological reference to Christ's carrying of the cross). If we direct our attention away from the religious sanctioning of what it is to be good, it is difficult to see who or what is good. The sister-in-law and the doctor are representatives of sanity and reasonableness to a secular audience. However ambiguity arises when we see the harmful nature of the sectioning of Bess even though it is done because the doctor believes that Bess is in the midst of a psychosis that is

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[2] In that 'Joint' is another word for 'ligament' which shares the letter combination 'lig' with the term 'religious'.

[3] A direct embodiment of the phrase 'seeing goodness in the world' is found when Bess gets off a bus in the middle of a desolate landscape; she vomits as a reaction to the suffering caused to herself because of masturbating a stranger; moments later she sees a rabbit and responds with innocent joy to the animal, and pulls a 'rabbit face', the horror of the preceding experience disappears in the face of what she sees as the beauty of nature.

causing her to be a danger to herself. Care results in a passive form of violence. In exploring the issue of goodness in this film I would like to examine whether there are reminders here about the concept of goodness in relation to psychosis that we miss in everyday life.

Taking the title of the film, 'breaking the waves' as a possible clue, we would normally think of waves as breaking through their own internal force either against rocks or by running out of steam as they approach a beach. A wave is, as has been said of the human being walking, continually in the process of falling. From the moment of their formation waves are in the midst of breaking. To break is what a wave does on reaching a shore. In any sense we normally think of breaking as done by, rather than to, a wave. However this title suggests that the waves might be caused to break by the help of an external agency. The title could indeed be a catchy slogan for deconstruction if we take 'waves' as signifying dominant movements of thought within a culture. Breaking such a wave would involve finding aporias in it, that is, basic incoherences in the logic of such ways of understanding the world, that when presented to us as such allow us to give up certain ways of looking at the world (c.f. Wittgenstein's 'house of cards' (PI 118)). This, in turn might lead us to want to re-attend to the 'grammar' (look at our actual practices in this area, instead of assuming that we know what we do) of this area of our lives together. Could this film be seen as a deconstructive project presenting responsibility as an aporia, as Derrida does in *The Gift of Death* (1995: 85-86)? Derrida's interpretation of Kierkegaard's book *Fear and Trembling* (1983) seems surprisingly appropriate to the film.

The interpretation, from Derrida, as applied to *Breaking the Waves* might go as follows: Bess follows through her absolute responsibility to God in contradiction to the conventional morality of her community, even though the norms of her community are understood as sanctioned by and therefore should give way to mandates from God. Law is created for the good of the community to try to make the good objective in any disputed situation through procedure and prohibition. The paradox comes about because the law is created for the general good and therefore cannot recognise the individual as able to receive a mandate from the good directly and therefore be higher than the law. (In the same way, Jesus was condemned for allowing his disciples to break the commandment about the Sabbath; to which he replied, 'The Sabbath was

made for man, not man for the Sabbath' (JB pg. 49)). Any deviation from the law demands punitive measures. Law encodes a procedure for maintaining the good as a form of equality among all the members of the community.

However, in Bess's community the law, as a code, has become the God. Its place in the community is shown as self-subverting in that it destroys the life of the individual resolutely following its spirit rather than its letter. To the inhabitants of that community the law gives them a definitive handle on right behaviour, it ensures that the community cannot fall into evil through either internal or external pressure. However, as Wittgenstein points out, signs or words by themselves seem dead, and it is only through their use within a form of life that they have a meaning (PI 431). They cannot ensure that the 'form of life',[4] of which they are a part, is good. What would it mean to say that a particular 'form of life' is good? Here we reach the limits of language. We can say that a 'form of life' that respects basic rights would be better than one that did not, however this would be to ignore how deep conventions, such as the ones in Bess's community go. We could understand the ideas that make up the centrality of religion in that community as 'framework propositions' that define the horizon for talking about good and bad behaviour in that community (OC 162).[5] Goodness or ethics, as Wittgenstein states (PO pg. 40), is supernatural in that given all the facts of her life up till Jan's accident, a third party observer would be unable to say what the ethical thing for Bess to do would be. Facts about a person and the world they live in cannot reach what it is that it is ethical for them to do when the conventions they have been brought up in lead to a contradiction. There is nothing to say which way we should go when we see an arrow other than a convention that we have inherited through our living a life with others. Wittgenstein says, 'the sign-post is in order-if under normal circumstances, it fulfils its purposes (PI 87)', however, in Bess's situation there is no clear way to go and the law provides an obstacle to right behaviour, rather than a guide. In such situations, the responsibility as to how to go on lies with our projection of our understanding of what it is to be good into the new situation. It is the life of each

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[4] 'Form of life' here is taken in the sense of the particular form of life of this community rather than the sense of the term as the general human 'form of life'.

[5] In Chapter 4 I will put forward my own interpretation of how the sentences known in the literature as Wittgensteinian 'framework propositions' should be understood but use the term here for convenience sake, to make this particular argument.

member of the community that gives a life to its laws. Law therefore cannot prevent a community's moral drift away from its originating will to justice and charity.

It might be useful to remember here that we can only ever learn our concepts of good and evil embedded within a form of life and that Bess's behaviour, after Jan's accident, is an extension of what she learned through her community. Stanley Cavell provides a useful comparison of rule-following with paradigm shifts in the sciences that may throw light on Bess's predicament:

> The internal tyranny of convention is that only a slave of it can know how it may be changed for the better, or know why it should be eradicated. Only masters of a game, perfect slaves to that project, are in a position to establish conventions which better serve its essence. This is why deep revolutionary changes can result from attempts to conserve a project, to take it back to its idea, keep it in touch with its history. To demand the law be fulfilled, every jot and tittle, will destroy the law as it stands, if it has moved too far from its origin (Cavell 1979: 120-121).

Before Jan's accident Bess is happy to live within the teaching she has received from the elders and has internalised into the voice she talks to in her prayers. The literal conversational aspect of her prayer (in that 'God' seems to talk to her using her voice) may be understood by the viewer as the first signs of psychosis. After Jan's accident she maintains continuity with the ethos of the community through her conversations with this voice of 'God'. Even though after Jan's accident her community exiles her, it is also true that the more enlightened community represented by the doctor and her sister-in-law do not understand her and see her behaviour as madness. Their inability to acknowledge her world dismisses its reality. She finds herself exiled from both communities. In contrast to the secular community, her religious community acknowledges the reality of her new world in rejecting it, her reality is seen as a threat to theirs. Indeed it is a threat to theirs as we see when she makes the proclamation in the church that, 'you can't love words' (of course you can love words and language, but only as means to love other people by sharing experience and founding/finding community (Cavell 1989: 77)). Through this statement, delivered during a service in

the church, Bess seems to be trying to save the community; in the purity of her heart she represents their unattained yet attainable self (Cavell 1990: 8). Unsurprisingly, this can only seem to the community as a threat; Bess's challenge to the authority of the law, if taken up, would mean the destruction of the community as presently constituted.

With the thinking from the film in place we can now start to look at the necessary conditions for a virtuous (as opposed to a vicious) hermeneutics as laid out by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (2004). The first example I will look at is the approach to Bess taken by the 'enlightened' community of the doctor and the sister-in-law. This approach can be found reflected in the words of the psychiatrist Berrios, whose understanding of what a delusion is chimes with that of the 'enlightened' community. Berrios claims that:

> Delusions are likely to be empty speech acts, whose informational
> content refers to neither world nor self. They are not the symbolic
> expression of anything. Its 'content' is but a random fragment of
> information 'trapped' in the very moment the delusion becomes
> crystallised. The commonality of certain themes can be explained
> by the fact that informational fragments with high frequent value
> also have a higher probability of being 'trapped' (Berrios 1991:
> 12).

This approach denies that the person with the delusion is 'saying' anything at all and puts the utterances the person with the delusions makes, down to a pathological mechanism in the brain. The person with the delusion is no longer seen as a partner in conversation at all, but is rather viewed as producing meaningless sounds that only appear like beliefs but which are really static produced by a malfunctioning brain. Such an approach effectively prevents the treatment of the person with the delusion as an equal partner in conversation. This is exemplified in the way the doctor and the sister-in-law refuse to listen to Bess, and instead section her and attempt to have her taken off the island physically restrained by orderlies.

Secondly, I will look at the approach of the religious community to Bess in exiling her. They take Bess's speech and actions as based on a set of false (perhaps even demonic)

beliefs. This approach characterises a delusion as some kind of giant mistake about something in the world that is inexplicably resistant to correction. It assumes that something has gone wrong in the way that person makes claims about the world, that they are no longer competent in conversations about the world. Such an approach stigmatises the person by excluding them from being an equal partner in conversation and putting those who interact with them in a position of superiority over the person with the delusion. This approach involves a breakdown of trust and this (I will argue in Chapter 5), in itself, can have a detrimental role in the recovery of the person. This is shown in the film where what Bess desperately needs is someone to talk to, but instead she has been totally excluded from the community and is insulted and stoned by the local kids.

In a paper by Schmidt called *Respecting Others: The Hermeneutic Virtue* (2000), he outlines how Gadamer depicts different approaches to the other in his philosophical hermeneutics. I will argue that transposing insights from hermeneutics to the domain of interacting with people with delusions can help diagnose the problem with the examples of the two approaches found in the ways the characters in *Breaking the Waves* respond to Bess's 'delusions'; these reflect possible ways people with delusions are treated in our society. In addition this approach can suggest a more adequate way of relating to people with delusions that avoids stigmatising them as do the two approaches mentioned. Gadamer specifically deals with an interpreter's relation to an historical text but for the purposes of this essay we can take the person interacting with the delusional person as occupying the role of an interpreter because they are in a similar position of trying to make sense of the delusional other. I will use the term 'interpreter' to stand for the person interacting with the delusional person.

In *Truth and Method* Gadamer discusses three possible ways of relating to an other. The first two ways are found to be inadequate in that they assimilate the other to, what Gadamer calls, the prejudices of the interpreter. By prejudices Gadamer means the background assumptions that a person inherits from tradition and that forms a horizon within which what they say is intelligible. A horizon can be thought of as a world-view that has been conditioned by tradition and experience. The first two ways of relating to an other can be seen as omitting a self-critical perspective in relation to the other person; and this can come about through the very prejudices a person has about how a

conversation should go. The final way of relating to the other, that Gadamer describes in contrast to the first two, opens up space for mutual understanding as well as respecting difference.

It will first be necessary to describe the relations that Gadamer mentions and relate these to the examples of approaches to delusions found in the film. In the first relation, (that of the enlightened community) the other *is subsumed as an example of a universal rule*. Another way of putting this is that the person is seen as a 'medical case' rather than as a person. This fits with the quote from Berrios' philosophical approach where the speech act is seen to be the product of a malfunctioning mechanism in the brain. As Schmidt says, 'the other is reduced to an object within empirical science' (Schmidt 2000: 368).[6] The person is left to be understood through science and the background assumptions that would give meaning to the delusional person's utterances are ignored as irrelevant and empty. As Berrios says the utterances are taken as 'informational fragments trapped when the delusion is crystallised' (1991: 12). This characterisation involves a bio-medical explanation that fails to take account of the personhood of the delusional person.

In the second relation (the religious community) the other is acknowledged as a person but although they can put forward an opinion it is undermined by the superior position of the interpreter, who claims to know the truth of the delusional person's position. This would be an appropriate diagnosis for the definition of a delusion given in DSM-IV (quoted in Chapter 2). As Schmidt says,

> The other's speaking is acknowledged only if in agreement with
> the I's position, if not, it is combated until overcome. The I is not
> self-critical, does not allow the other's saying to count against
> itself, and so assimilates the other's perspective into its own
> (Schmidt 2000: 368).

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[6] This is also the attitude taken in Dennett's 'design stance' (Dennett 1978: 4).

Although preferable to the first approach this way of relating to the person with delusion still stands in the way of understanding the person and what the interpreter considers as their delusions.

Both these approaches leave Bess in exile from any community and, as is shown in the film, these prejudices not only harm Bess and eventually lead to her death but also harm these communities. This occurs not only through the guilt the communities experience over the damage they have done to her, but also because she had something to 'say' to both communities. Through her actions she tried to help both communities move on to a new unattained but attainable state in which their originating ethos could become more fully realised. However, because of their deaf-ears to what they considered 'delusional' it was only through her death that she could get her message across. It is perhaps in this sense that we can see an aspect of 'goodness' (in that the purity of Bess's heart became obvious to all including the doctor) through the tragedy and why Von Trier, in having the bell chiming over the ocean at the end, was not necessarily being gratuitous. In the next section I look at a film where exile is an ever present possibility, but which ends with acknowledgement of the world of the person considered delusional.

3.2 *Sixth Sense*: Acknowledgement

In *Sixth Sense* (Shyamalan 1999), the main character is a boy who experiences social rejection by his peers for being a 'freak'. He spends much of his time alone and seems very nervous socially. Not only this but he experiences what his psychologist describes as a 'childhood form of schizophrenia' that is, hallucinations and delusions. However, based on a case in which the psychologist failed to help a boy in a similar situation, he starts to listen to the boy's experiences and take them seriously. By acknowledging the reality of this boy's world he is able to help him deal with that world and find peace within it. This acknowledgement allows the boy to regain his footing in the social group of the other children in his school and his exclusion as a 'freak' is overcome without the boy losing what the psychologist had called 'his delusions'. I will argue that the fact that his 'delusions' are based around a supernatural ability that the film does not call into question, does not detract from the film's thinking through of a way to help a person with delusions regain a footing in the everyday.

This film plays out what it would mean to act on, what Schmidt identifies, as the third and appropriate hermeneutic relation to the other; where the other is recognised as an equal other. As Gadamer says the point is, 'not to overlook [their] claim but to allow [them] to say something to me' (Gadamer 2004: 355). This approach presupposes what Gadamer calls the 'preconception of completeness', that is, the interpreter grants, from the beginning in her conversation with the other, the possibility of their saying something both coherent and truthful with respect to the topic under discussion. The reason for having this preconception is that it enables the interpreter to critically question the prejudices that they bring to the conversation. This is a necessary condition for the operation of a hermeneutic circle in the understanding of the other. The interpreter's prejudices condition what is understood but must, in turn, be put in question in such a way that what the other says can be seen to make sense. This does not mean that the conversation will resolve with the understanding that the other is correct, but rather it means that the interpreter can question his or her own position. Schmidt gives an example of how the preconception of completeness can operate in conversation:

The horizon of the other is constituted by listening to what the other has to say. The other speaks a language that I understand.... Sometimes, due to a difference in language use, an individual word may be used differently. The I is able to hear this difference using the preconception of completeness. That is, the I projects another meaning, another prejudice, than his own for the other so that what the other says makes sense. Usually differences occur in what is proposed in the speaking. Here I must use the preconception to allow the other to say something meaningfully different and so the I projects a prejudice (a judgement different from his own) into the other's horizon. In conversation, as opposed to interpreting a text, the other can be asked and may confirm that indeed this judgement is being asserted. (Schmidt 2000: 367).

In the case of interacting with someone with a delusion, although the outcome of the conversation will in most cases not be an agreement about the delusion, the very process of conversation allows the interpreter to make sense of what the person with the delusion says and does. The interpreter comes to understand the background assumptions that make sense of what the person says. It is in this sense that it can be said that there is a 'fusion of horizons' as Gadamer calls it. This does not mean that the interpreter and the other must agree but rather that there is the development of one encompassing horizon, that is, a common world-view.

In listening to the other using the preconception of completeness, the interpreter changes their own horizon to include the saying of the other. This encompassing horizon includes the differences and the tensions between the interpreter and the other. In other words, the interpreter understands the prejudices of the other better and there is space to come to agree in certain limited respects. Even without agreement the interpreter has enabled a situation where trust is restored between the person with the delusion and their conversational partner. This occurs through the interpreter respecting the fact that the person with the delusion has something worthwhile to say. The preconception of completeness can be likened to the interpreter relating to the person with delusions as if the delusion was an expression of the sufferer finding themselves in an 'alien' world and trying to make sense of it themselves. This is exemplified in *Sixth*

Sense, where the boy is living with supernatural powers and is trying to deal with this as a child, on his own.

The interpreter and the delusional person already share a horizon in that the person has a history before they became delusional and that both interlocutors share a language and a culture. The new horizon that the delusional person now inhabits can be shared by testing how the common ground of the already shared horizon has changed, using the preconception of completeness as outlined above. This would take imagination on the part of the interpreter in trying to see what assumptions could give sense to the delusional person's utterances and then asking them if these assumptions fit with how the world seems to them now. The term 'preconception of completeness' can be likened to how we crystallise the meaning of what we say through conversation e.g. we say something and our partner in conversation says, 'do you mean X, Y or Z', and so the conversation helps us to make explicit to ourselves and others what our background assumptions are and allows us to come to a fuller understanding of what we mean. This is because what we say is normally based on unspoken assumptions that we may not be aware of. The person who is considered 'delusional' is normally blocked from doing this because there is a lack of the attitude of a preconception of completeness so their utterances are left underdeveloped and the person themselves will feel they are continually misunderstood.

One area this approach needs to be able to deal with is how to make sense of particularly bizarre delusions such as the claim by a person that they are dead. Is it possible in such a case to use the preconception of completeness? The problem in such a situation lies in the assumption that such a statement is meaningless because it is a performative contradiction. This however shows a lack of imagination tied to a stance of superiority in not allowing the person's words to call into question the assumptions the interpreter has about the boundary between sense and nonsense. There are many narratives from horror films or novels in which people come back from the dead in their own body or the person might imagine that they have died without noticing it and everything is just a phantom version of the real world. By imagining situations in which the words of the person would have sense it is possible that the interpreter can arrive at an understanding of the background assumptions that lead to the utterance. The key to making sense of the central character's world in *Sixth Sense* is something he

keeps secret till near the end of the film.   This is the fact that he 'sees dead people'. Once this key to his world is in the hands of his mother and the psychologist, the rest of his behaviour fits into place. It is this attempting to try to find the key that will allow access to a person's sense-making of the world that is at the heart of the preconception of completeness.[7] It is of course possible that the person with the delusion will not want to engage in conversation especially if they are paranoid. In such cases all the interpreter can do is leave open the possibility of conversation, and apply the preconception of completeness to what they do say, without necessarily being able to confirm the interpretation with the delusional person.

One example of such an approach in the philosophical and psychiatric literature is in the writings of Sass, Stanghellini and Minkowski. Although the papers and books Sass and Stanghellini publish are not conversations with people with delusions as such, they show evidence of taking seriously the preconception of completeness in the way they try to understand Odyssean delusions.[8] They use the utterances and the writings of people with the Odyssean condition to try to elicit the background assumptions which would make sense of what the person says or writes. This is not the same as engaging the person as a participant in a conversation and so does not enable the person to confirm or disagree with the assumptions that are used to interpret their words. However, they do provide an example of how such assumptions can provide a context that allows for a richer understanding of the person's world view. Sass, in his book *The Paradoxes of Delusion* (1994), provides an interpretation of the writings of Schreber, a person with Odyssean delusions from the late 19th century. He uses an analysis of Wittgenstein's conception of solipsism as the horizon that makes sense of Schreber's writings. Stanghellini (2004), on the other hand, takes various case studies from a range of people with Odyssean delusions and shows how all of them exhibit a lack of commonsense understood as the implicit knowledge we all deploy in everyday life about how to interact with other people and the world. He elicits this from what they actually say about their condition and about their relation to the world and other people (Stanghellini 2004: 99). Minkowski, however, did actually base his interpretation on conversations with sufferers (Urfer 2001: 282). As he describes:

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[7] The idea of a key to making sense to someone's delusions can be found to resonate with Minkowski's idea of a 'trouble générateur' (Urfer 2001: 282) in the Odyssean condition. I will elaborate on this idea below.
[8] For example see Sass 1992, 1994, 2001 and 2003 and Stanghellini 2000 and 2004

Sitting face to face with my patient, I am meticulously writing down his utterances, and then suddenly like in a flash, one of his sentences illuminates everything with a particular clarity, and I have a feeling of having seized a complex living whole, of having grasped the '*trouble générateur*', which now appears as the touchstone of the whole clinical picture (quoted in Urfer 2001: 282)

The 'trouble générateur', for Minkowski, as the quote highlights, is the underlying unity of the lived experience that frames how the person with the Odyssean condition relates to the world. Minkowski's practice involves being particularly sensitive to the sufferer's use of words in order to empathise with the person, 'almost as a leap whereby one transcends oneself in order to enter into the soul of the other' (Sass 2001: 254). He shows, for instance, that in cases where other practitioners might group instances of a certain type of delusion together, that it can be seen how, 'different the 'ideas of grandeur' that occur in general paralysis, manic excitement, and [Odysseania] tend to be' (Sass 2001: 255). All three of these interpreters base their understanding of people's delusions on what the person actually says or writes and take their words seriously. All of these interpreters come from the phenomenological tradition with its emphasis on the importance of uncovering the background structure of experience; the poverty of the understanding of delusions that results if this tradition is ignored should have been made clear from the discussion of contemporary debate in Chapter 2.

3.3 *The Fisher King*: Redemption

Finally, it is necessary to look at possible ways in which the hermeneutic approach can have therapeutic benefits for the person who is considered deluded and can enable us to avoid stigmatising sufferers (themes that will be developed further in Chapter 8). An often unrecognised aspect of being open to the speech of someone we consider delusional is the way it can re-orientate our own self-conception through what Gadamer calls a 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer 2004: 300-304). It may seem at first sight that an approach which tries to persuade the person of the falsity of their utterances would be the most efficacious in terms of recovery from the delusion. However, this approach (a form of exiling the person) is likely to lead to one of two outcomes. Either there will be a stalemate where there is no development of understanding of the other person and communication breaks down or it may result in the person with the delusion conforming outwardly to the opinion of the interpreter while remaining entrenched in their existential disorientation. In either case there will be a breakdown in the trust dynamic as the person with the delusion will not feel they are an equal partner in the conversation.

I will argue in Chapter 5 that a breakdown of trust plays a central role in the formation and maintenance of delusions. If this is true then it follows that attempts to reinstate trust could lead to recovery. Applying the preconception of completeness to help uncover the assumptions that underlie and give sense to delusional utterances is, according to Schmidt, to have granted freedom to the other to disagree and to have extended goodwill to the other in our friendly (rather than interrogative) questioning (Schmidt 2000: 368). This enables the person with the delusion to have the confidence to express the way the world now seems to them and come to a better understanding of, what we might call, their 'horizon' which can be understood as the background story that they use to make sense of their existential predicament. This better self-understanding of the delusional person as to their own background assumptions may itself lead to recovery as shown by the use of Socratic questioning in cognitive therapy (Alford and Beck 1994: 375-376).[9] In addition to this, the virtuous hermeneutic

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[9] 'Socratic questioning' is a technique in therapy where open questions are used so that people can find their own solutions to problems and explore their problems without being directed by the therapist.

approach avoids stigmatising the delusional person as being untrustworthy in their beliefs about the world and as being unpredictable in their behaviour as it allows the interpreter to develop an understanding that contextualises the person's utterances and behaviour making it intelligible.

The other aspect of trying to meet the person where they are, is that we may come across the possibility of redemption of ourselves through meeting the delusional other as a competent partner in conversation. Redemption comes in facing squarely the ever present possibility of losing one's own mind; a situation that is made to seem like a constant threat in the popular imagination in films and novels. In popular culture most of the time madness is portrayed as monstrous; as no longer human; as aping humanity. A meeting with someone considered 'insane' enables us, through 'seeing' the humanity in them, to recontextualise our fears of losing a grip on the everyday and see them as all-too-human fears that everyone hides. In meeting someone considered insane with the attitude that we will listen and challenge our own assumptions of what it is to make sense, we broaden our own 'horizon' (say our background story of what it is to be human and how we are to interact with each other). By looking at the film *The Fisher King* (Gilliam 1991) I will take seriously its thought that when we open ourselves to the world of those labelled delusional we not only rebuild trust with them, but find redemption ourselves from the fear of the way our own individuality could lead us to isolation (expressed in fears over sanity). To overcome such fears we need to be reminded that our individuality (and that of others) always has inherent in it the possibility of founding an expanded sense of community that rejoices in difference rather than fears it.

In *The Fisher King* Robin Williams is haunted by paranoid delusions and hallucinations as the result of trauma caused by the shooting of his wife in a restaurant several years before. He lives an itinerant lifestyle with other 'drop-outs' in the back streets of New York. Jeff Bridges was once a high-flying radio DJ who inadvertently played a role in the shooting by making an offhand comment about shooting the elite of the city to a man on his late night phone-in show. His guilt has also led him to drop-out; however, he lives, not on the street, but rather unemployed with his girlfriend who owns a video rental shop. A chance encounter, in which Williams saves his life, leads Bridges to believe he can overcome his guilt by helping Williams start a new relationship with a

woman he has loved from afar but has been too shy to talk to. This plan seems to be working and after the first date between Williams and the girl, Bridges rings up his contacts to get some work and seems to want to leave his own girlfriend and their lifestyle behind. However, with the possibility of happiness on the horizon, Williams experiences an acute paranoid attack in the course of which he is beaten up by thugs and ends up in a coma. Bridges finds this out and the fragility of his progress back to fame and fortune as well as the importance of the relations he made while a 'drop-out' is brought home to him. At this point he decides the only way to help his friend is to enter Williams' delusional world and steal what Williams believes is the Holy Grail, but which is just a football trophy (as Bridges well knows), from the house of a multi-millionaire with all the attendant dangers of breaking, entering and stealing from a highly secure mansion. In his willingness to take up the ironic stance and enter Williams' world, he not only rescues Williams, but finds redemption himself; by allowing himself to join Williams in insanity, he recovers a sense of what is important in his own life.

The thought that, I believe, this film works through, is the idea that we are all, in our individuality, in some sense 'mad' and that this aspect of ourselves needs an airing and an acknowledgement. A quote from Cavell may help bring out this moral:

> It is because certain human beings crave the conservation of their art that they seek to discover how, under altered circumstances, paintings and pieces of music can still be made, and hence revolutionize their art beyond recognition. This is how, in my illiteracy, I read Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*: that only a master of the science can accept a revolutionary change as a natural extension of that science; and that he accepts or proposes it, in order to maintain touch with the idea of that science, with its internal cannons of comprehensibility and comprehensiveness, as if against the vision that, under altered circumstances, the normal progress of explanation and exception no longer seem to him to be science. <u>And then what he does may not seem scientific [or reasonable] to the old master.</u> <u>If this difference is taken to be a difference in their *natural* reactions</u> (and Kuhn's use of

the idea of a 'paradigm' seems to me to suggest this more than it suggests a difference in conventions) then we may wish to speak here of conceptual divergence. <u>Perhaps the idea of a new historical period is an idea of a generation whose natural reactions – not merely whose ideas or mores – diverge from the old; it is an idea of a new (human) nature. And different historical periods may exist side by side, over long stretches, and within one human breast</u> (Cavell 1979: 121; italics in the original, underlining added).

The idea that strikes me, in this passage, is not only that is it possible that a different set of natural reactions can be found in different historical periods, but that we may continually find ourselves everyday with different natural reactions from all of those around us and all of those people around us may find the same thing about the people surrounding them; this suggests, to me, that the very substance of life may be a constant recalibration of our *natural* reactions so as to enable co-existence (I will look at this in Section 4.3). The slipping in and out of attunement in our natural reactions with others is a constant in everyone's life, as constant as the spinning of the earth and this fact may inform our darkest fears and nightmares. The surprising thing about insanity then becomes, *not* that some people's reactions spiral out of the locus of 'the everyday', but that for the most part we manage to remain in some tiny part comprehensible to each other most of the time. This is where redemption can come from, in trying to meet someone who has been labelled 'insane' at the place they are, 'in their world'. The attempt reminds us that we are opaque to each other and if Thoreau is right that, 'the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation' (Thoreau 1996: 11), it is because they find all of the people around them 'insane' including themselves and are not sure what to do about it, but are very frightened by it. The desperation comes from our constant attempts to cover over our own and other people's everyday insanity.

One area of life where this aspect of our existence does get an airing is in comedy where the irrationality of our lives can get a thorough acknowledgement; it is in the belly-laugh that all the tension caused by the constant stress of avoiding this fact gets its full bodily release. The comedy of Woody Allen and the Coen Brothers (perhaps we could say comedy inflected by a Jewish upbringing) fully registers the irrationality of the mundane. I think this is what Wittgenstein meant when he wrote, 'If in life we are

surrounded by death, so too in the health of our understanding by madness' (CV 50e). Acknowledging irrationality in ourselves and all those around us can be one of the fruits of spending time with, listening to, and engaging in conversation with someone labelled 'insane'. When we confront a very deep, intimate fear face on and take it out into the light we may find that it is not so fearsome. This is the journey Bridges and Williams go through in *The Fisher King* and it highlights the redemptive role of recognising our own insanity (as part of the human condition) in the behaviour of others and being willing to admit to the 'irrational' side of our own natural reactions.

Conclusion

In the next chapter I will examine what it might mean to say the speech of someone is empty and what we can do with one another's words even if we cannot get a definitive handle on their sense straight away. The idea of conversation as a means of recalibrating our natural reactions with each other will be explored in Chapter 5. What I hope this chapter has done is highlight the necessity of acknowledging that people considered to be delusional have a voice worthy of attention.

Chapter 4

Being Sceptical about Another's Mind:
Nonsense, Acknowledgement and Public Space

And in the naked light I saw

Ten thousand people, maybe more

People talking without speaking

People hearing without listening

People writing songs that voices

Never share and no one dared

Disturb the sound of silence

(*The Sound of Silence*, Simon and Garfunkel 2001).

In this chapter, I will explore the notion that speech can pass through an invisible boundary and become a mere likeness of language, while being purely sounds without sense. Some philosophers state that certain delusional speech-acts or writing-acts can be understood literally as nonsense. This claim grows out of roots found in Jaspers' phenomenology where he said that primary delusions are 'un-understandable'. This claim has been developed by others into the picture that the person uttering them is not expressing anything at all, which could be seen as the inverse of the idea of a private language or the only thing a private language could be. The interest of this picture (of another adult producing meaningless sounds rather than words) is not whether it has any truth to it, but rather what it is that tempts a philosopher to 'see' other human adults as emitting meaningless sounds. Such a form of scepticism in relation to another person seems to be an incarnation of the so-called Problem of Other Minds. From the perspective of the philosophers I will look at, the inability to know another's mind seems to have become focussed on a specific group of people and we need to understand how this has happened and how to respond to it. In order to cash out what is involved in this picture, it will be necessary to look at one particular condition of dialogue, namely the establishment and maintenance of a public space, which, in turn, is

based on the ability to jointly attend to the world. The importance of joint attention is that, in order to achieve this, there must be an attunement in what is salient to both speakers in the dialogue (as I argued in the Introduction). The patterns of salience in the environment, that both speakers are attending to, is what underlies the attunement necessary for the give and take of a conversation (this is a theme that will be taken up and developed in Chapter 5).

It is the ability to recognise that there are embodied perspectives other than our own, that grounds our ability to make sense of what another says. According to Wittgenstein, our ability to make sense of what someone else says is based on 'finding our feet' (PI pg.223) with the other person. We must believe that the other person in conversation has a perspective on things that we could possibly take up (physically or imaginatively). In the case of particularly bizarre delusions, some philosophers have denied a priori the possibility of being able to 'find our feet' with the person who is suffering from the delusion. Indeed, some commentators deny that the person has anything as coherent as a perspective for us to empathise with, and claim that there must be 'darkness within'. One commentator, although sympathetic to the attempt to use phenomenology in the understanding of 'psychopathology', sets out how some philosophers arrive at the position of assuming that there is no perspective to make sense of':

> We can, of course, show considerable interpretive ingenuity when called to do so; and this may require drawing upon fairly generalized knowledge about the psychological springs of human behaviour in addition to whatever particular knowledge we may have of individual peculiarities. However, what is exceptional about these moments is not just their relative infrequency, but also the difficulty and uncertainty with which such interpretive efforts proceed. Moreover, if these moments become too frequent, we abandon our interpretive efforts altogether, adopting an 'objective' stance towards those who seem generally unresponsive to psycho-practical norms. We judge such individuals to be: 'eccentric', 'irrational', 'disordered', 'mad', 'compelled', 'discursively unreachable'. At the extreme, such individuals fall outside the realm of subjects we can interact with as free responsible agents,

able to make commitments to us or to understand the commitments

we make to them (McGeer 2001: 119).

The problem with calling a delusion 'nonsense' is that the boundaries are thereby fixed without trying to test out the limits of sense. The boundaries of sense are not fixed in advance, but rather, we must empirically find where (if there are any) the limits of community are, through conversation. We may feel the speech of a delusional person seems 'empty' (in that it becomes very hard to extract 'content' from what they say), but we can understand the motivations, and reconstruct the background conditions that have lead to the utterances. A full working out of the horizon or background to delusions can lead to an expansion of community, in that we now understand the perspective of someone who was opaque to us before. I will argue that the claims of philosophers, who say certain bizarre delusions are nonsense, are ways of closing the public space between the person they consider delusional and others. This closing off of public space denies community with the sufferer and this has the potential to maintain the person's symptoms for longer than necessary. For long-term sufferers of delusions this could have disastrous consequences. This rejection of the voice of the sufferer of delusions can be seen to have an (presumably) unintended political aspect. As Mulhall says:

> The exercise of one's voice is therefore a way of exploring rather
> than relying upon the bound's of one's political community, the
> limits of one aspect of one's mutuality with others (Mulhall 1994:
> 64).

If we deny mutuality with the person with the delusion before we have even attempted a conversation we are, as I showed in Chapter 3, exiling the person from our community. An alternative approach to bizarre delusions is given in a quote, again by Mulhall, concerning speech that would seem to exemplify nonsense:

> After all we can all do something with and in response to fairy-
> tales, and nonsense poems and babbling children – even if it is not
> exactly what we do with the same words in other contexts (which

is not to say that it is entirely unrelated to those doings) (Mulhall
2007a: 122-123).

One possibility for what we can do with the words of someone with delusions, is to acknowledge the existential position and suffering that give birth to these words. Another area of our life where we try to give expression to our suffering is when we are in physical pain. If pain is taken as an example of something that a person suffers and which creates a barrier between themselves and others, there is evidence that the person can gain some relief when they find the words to express the type of pain they are experiencing (Scarry 1985: 328). In the case of pain, Scarry highlights how important it is to be open to the very difficult attempts to express pain:

> The success of the physician's work will often depend on the
> acuity with which he or she can hear the fragmentary language of
> pain, coax it in to clarity, and interpret it (Scarry 1985: 6).

To further extend the analogy with pain, Cavell (1976: 266) states, following on from Wittgenstein, that we cannot 'know' whether another is in pain (and this is the truth of scepticism), but rather we acknowledge the pain by responding to it in the same way as we must acknowledge our own pain. In the same way, we can see philosophers who claim that bizarre delusions are nonsense, as expressing a form of scepticism about the inner life of those with delusions. One way to counteract this is to show in what contexts the bizarre delusion can be seen to make sense.

4.1 Delusions as Nonsense

In this section I shall look at the work of Read and Thornton on delusions and nonsense and see what we can learn from it. To begin with Read, he claims that bizarre delusions are literally nonsensical, that is without sense. In other words, according to him, what severely Odyssean people with delusions say is empty of meaning and is equivalent to them saying, 'piggly wiggle tiggle'.[1] He claims that there is no way to interpret what they say.[2] Thornton's line is slightly different and is more agnostic in that he says that he is pessimistic about the possibility of an empathic understanding of the person with a severe mental illness. Both philosophers have slightly different arguments against phenomenological attempts to understand those with delusion. I will deal first with Read who states that:

> The utterly bizarre, the irreparably Other, the residuum which unfortunately *cannot be understood at all*, there are arbitrarily many ways of describing (or 'interpreting') – and thus, unmisleadingly expressed, *none*. In fact – as I explain in greater detail below – when we really understand this, we may well find it most useful, least misleading, least confusing, to say: there's nothing there to understand. We are faced with sheer nonsense (Read 2001: 460)

In his opinion those, 'very severely 'mentally ill'', such as Schreber and Renee,[3] are just incomprehensible. He tries to show this through an examination of Sass's interpretation of Schreber's delusions (as detailed in his book *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* (Schreber 1955)) as a form of solipsism. He goes onto give three arguments for this position.

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[1] Which in fact can be very meaningful, if said to an infant to make them laugh (as Mulhall points out), or even to an adult, who is meant to be a serious philosopher, such as myself; I find it puts a smile on my face.

[2] Although he does not give a good reason why we should want to *interpret* them, rather than, say, respond to them.

[3] Renee is a girl who wrote down her experiences of Odysseania in a book called *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl* (Sechehaye 1970)

Firstly, he argues that interpretation rather than description distorts the speech of the person with delusions; in the same way as Winch argues that a certain interpretation of the Azande's magical practices distorts them. Secondly, he argues that Sass gives more coherence to the words of an Odyssean's delusions than is justified, concentrating particularly on a passage from Renee's autobiography. Finally, he argues that comparing Schreber's delusions to solipsism does no good. This is because even if we dismiss the worries about interpretation, Wittgenstein, whose writing Sass uses to describe solipsism, meant for his elaboration of the position to be understood as sheer nonsense; just a set of sentences that give the illusion of meaning, but which in fact have no content to understand. Sass (2003) has already given what, I believe, is a successful defence of his position, which I will briefly elaborate, and then move on to what seem to me the important points that can be extracted from Read's paper. Sass focuses on the last point first, admitting that Schreber's delusions may seem contradictory at points and that solipsism itself is internally contradictory. He states that we should we should proceed in accordance with the principle of charity which means taking the line that, in trying to understand another, the criteria of which interpretation we should use, is based on searching for the one that makes what someone says as coherent as possible. However, sometimes interpreting the delusion as involving contradiction best expresses the 'ways in which that philosopher may be responding to *insurmountable* tension within human knowledge or existence' (Sass 2003: 127). Although Sass admits that solipsism cannot exist and that is why he calls the position of Schreber 'quasi- or pseudo- solipsism', he claims that people can have inclinations or yearnings that are most accurately expressed by the pseudo-notion of solipsism. He notes that:

> Surely, for example, it is not meaningless to say that human beings sometimes wish, against all reality, that the world would just be a figment of their own mind, conforming automatically to their wishes. Even if this is not the normal background to human language, surely it is possible to express this kind of attitude or yearning and thus to capture something of the associated phenomenology, with which all or many of us are somewhat familiar (Sass 2003: 128).

The critical question here is whether there is anything it is like to have these inclinations or yearnings to see the world through the fantasy of wanting to be the centre of the world. In the Introduction I tried to show that solipsism is a perfectly possible fantasy that can we can live in, while relating to other people; even in the face of a philosopher's denial that it is a coherent position. To take a similar fantasy that Wittgenstein tries to show is meaningless, we can look at the example of the private language argument. In this case, one example Wittgenstein gives is that of a person writing a squiggle in a notebook every time a certain sensation occurs to them. This person tries to impress on himself what the sign means by inwardly pointing to the sensation when he writes the sign down. The problem with this according to Wittgenstein is that there are, therefore, no criteria of correctness and so 'whatever is going to seem right to me is right' (PI 258). The inner ostensive definition is no more than an empty ceremony without a function. The point that Cavell (1979: 348) makes here is that even though the ceremony is meaningless, the actual noting of the sensation can stand on its own as a comprehensible behaviour because we can think of times when we might want to note a sensation, for example, when we are writing and want to note a mood that accompanies this writing. The ceremony, of pointing inwardly, seems necessary to us, according to Cavell, because we are frightened both, of not being able to express ourselves, and also of our natural expressiveness betraying us (this understanding of private ostensive definition will be used in Chapter 6 to try to help elucidate the background to paranoia). Both of these fears are perfectly understandable even if they give rise to a piece of meaninglessness. The moral here would seem to be that, for bizarre delusions that seem to be nonsense, we need to reconstruct the background inclinations that give rise to something that, at first sight, seems contradictory or 'empty'.

Sass then goes on to argue that passages from Renee's autobiography that Read quotes as being utterly incomprehensible, are actually perfectly understandable without the need for much interpretation. As this seems to be the weakest point made by Read, I will not go into too much detail. Renee is quoted by Read as saying:

> When…I looked at a chair or a jug I thought not of their use of function....but having lost their names, their functions and

meaning; they became things and began to take on life, to exist
(Sechehaye 1970: 40).

Read claims that he does not 'see how there is anything left which we can hear her as succeeding in saying with those words' (Read 2001: 463). As Sass points out this passage seems to describe what it would be like to see objects without their affordances (as described by Gibson) or alternatively without being able to see them in terms of Heidegger's 'ready-to-hand'. What is evident from Read's failure to make anything of Renee's autobiography is that the understanding of bizarre delusions depends on the stance of the interpreter, and whether they are willing to include the sufferer of delusions in the public space of a shared world. Read has excluded a priori bizarre delusions from the realms of sense and this has political implications in terms of whether the delusional sufferer is accepted as an equal member of the same community as Read.

Finally, I want to turn to part of Read's paper that Sass does not address, i.e. the question of whether it is legitimate to interpret people with delusions. Read gives an example of where interpretation is not legitimate using Winch's critique of an anthropologist who interprets the Azande's magical practices in terms of Western scientific practices and finds them wanting. This is an obvious case where a particular interpretation is illegitimate. As Winch says, the Azande are playing a different game and the role of the anthropologist is to describe it, not compare it with a practice that has a very different function from the one they are observing. However, the anthropologist might, more helpfully, have made the comparison with other practices we have (such as religious ceremonies), ones that are more like what the Azande are actually doing in their magical practices. Read claims that, in a similar way to the anthropologist, Sass's attempt to interpret bizarre delusions distorts them and also there is an absence of criteria for a correct interpretation of the delusions. Read is correct in his view that an Odyssean's delusions should not be compared with scientific epistemological practices, in other words, we should not compare them with a scientific observer making incorrect inferences about reality. That is why the 'faulty reality-testing' model of delusion is a *bad* interpretation. However, there are criteria for interpreting Odysseans and the best interpretation would be the one that the sufferer of delusions agrees is correct. Failing such an endorsement, the best interpretation then

would be the one that can best account for all the utterances of the sufferer. This is indeed what Sass does in his comparison of Schreber's delusions with solipsism. He does accept that he may not capture all the features of Schreber's and other similar cases, but the interpretation can be allowed to stand until an interpretation (or comparison) that is more inclusive comes along. Most importantly, pre-empting claims I make below, the interpretation allows an empathic understanding of the fantasy that leads to the utterances of the delusional person. We might, for the moment, allow Read the claim that there is literally no 'content' (in that there are no factual claims) in bizarre delusions or that the sense of the sufferers utterances hover between two meanings, neither of which satisfy the delusional person. However, the role of the phenomenologist in such a situation, would then be to map out this hovering and identify the background yearnings that give rise to the temptation to talk 'nonsense'. This is the one way that we can extract meaning from what initially seems nonsense, that is, by placing it back in the flow of life that gives sense to any speech-act we make.

Turning now to Thornton, the question arises as to whether interpretations, such as Sass's, are ways of empathically understanding the perspective of sufferers from delusions. Thornton instead argues that they are external descriptions that explain from an 'objective' perspective the structure of the delusion and so maintain the exclusion of the sufferer from public space. Thornton's position is slightly different from Read's in that he diagnoses three possible Wittgensteinian ways of empathically understanding the experience of the delusions of Odysseans. He concludes that his analyses of these three approaches give no hope for an internal empathic way of understanding sufferers. He says that the only option is the external, objective explanation of the psychology of sufferers, and even this way may be incoherent. However, I will argue that by taking certain ideas from his analysis of Wittgenstein's ideas about 'secondary sense', there is a key to how we can empathically understand the sufferer of delusions.

His first analysis (a) is (as with Read) targeted at Sass's work on delusions as expressions of philosophical confusion, that is, as solipsism. His argument is that, if Schreber was not explicit about being a solipsist, then he would not recognise his position as following from the same motivations as that of solipsism and therefore it is not clear that we are gaining empathic understanding. According to Thornton, it would seem that we gain an 'external structural explanation of his thought, not a shared

empathic understanding' (Thornton 2004: 220). Of course, the most obvious objection to this is that were Schreber still alive we could ask him if he thought solipsism, as described by Wittgenstein, aptly expressed his experience and it is possible he would say yes. It is an empirical question whether the interpretation allows us to share his experience. In other words, any interpretation is an attempt to create a public space which is always open to the possibility of local failure, but that further interpretations are always possible. Thornton then repeats the arguments used by Read about Sass's interpretation being based on a position without content, that is, sheer nonsense. He avoids the use of the contentious 'austere' reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* claiming instead that:

> [W]hilst Wittgenstein, especially in his later work, attempted to understand the source of philosophical confusions he did not articulate either his own or opposing philosophical ideas as coherent theses (Thornton 2004: 221).

Thornton argues that if there are no coherent theses, then there is nothing that being in the grip of solipsism is like. This argument falls foul of the objections raised above against Read, in that the emptiness or contradictory nature of the philosophical diagnosis, does not prevent an imaginative assimilation of the background of inclinations and yearnings that lead to utterances. To reject the attempt to reconstruct the background to the delusional utterances because of a priori principles of logic in the name of Wittgenstein is ironic in that on at least one persuasive interpretation of Wittgenstein he uses philosophy as a form of 'therapy'. It is claimed that he does this by taking seriously what the sceptic says and trying to reconstruct perspectives that lead to contradiction. Sass seems to be carrying on this tradition of Wittgensteinian philosophy in the field of psychiatry.

Thornton's second analysis (b) of delusions as Moore propositions lies beyond the scope of this chapter, but I will take up this analysis in the next chapter. Thornton argues that even if we could identify delusions as structurally like framework- (or Moore-) propositions, this would only be an external not an empathic understanding. Suffice it to say, that understanding delusions as framework propositions can be done if we understand such propositions as expressions of practices that frame a shared public

space. Delusions (taken as Moore propositions for the person) can give us an understanding of the frame through which the person orientates in the situation.

In Thornton's third analysis (c), he provides a key to understanding the speech of delusional sufferers, unintentionally, in his attack on the possibility of understanding delusions in terms of Wittgenstein's 'secondary sense'. He says:

> Secondary sense is an interesting intermediate between the normative rules that govern the use of words in their primary sense and mere nonsense. It helps reveal the need for shared responses if we are to think of words as being used in response to their meanings and thus going beyond Berrios 'empty speech acts', mere noise in Eilan's terms (Thornton 2004: 223).

Examples of words used in their secondary sense, according to Wittgenstein, would be saying 'Wednesday is fat' and 'Tuesday is lean' or 'the vowel u is red'. As Thornton states, others such as Hanfling have argued that assertions such as 'the music is sad' or 'everything is somehow not real' are also examples of secondary sense. As the quote above highlights, it is the shared responses shaped by the regular use of the word in its primary sense that allows the adoption of secondary sense. Thornton uses the case in Schreber's writing where he claims he can see his body as 'female', even though there has been no change in it and there are no feminine characteristics visible. According to Thornton, Schreber must be using the word 'female' in a secondary sense if it is to have any meaning at all, as the primary meaning of female obviously does not apply here (although there are many other uses of the term 'female' than just feminine characteristics). Thornton claims that here we do not have the shared responses necessary to understand Schreber in these passages. For Thornton, it is the same as the way those who can make nothing of days having width or vowels having colour stand to most of the rest of us. Surely, however, this is a very personal claim (that Thornton can make nothing of Schreber's use of the word 'female') and cannot be prescriptive for all. It is up to each person who engages with Schreber's writings to see if they can make sense of Schreber's use of the word 'female' and find community with him. Thornton, quoting from Lear, makes the following point:

> In one gestalt, one becomes aware that there is nothing to guarantee one's continued correct language use beyond the fact that one happens to share with one's fellow man routes of interest, perceptions of salience, feelings of naturalness etc. (Thornton 2004: 223)

Thornton makes this point with the intention of arguing that those, such as Odysseans, who display delusions do not share 'perceptions of salience' with the rest of us and so cannot be understood. He says 'we can make *nothing* of them' (Thornton 2004: 223; italics in the original, underline added). Here he coercively includes his reader in a rejection of community with delusional people by using 'we'. His 'we' is an attempt to form a community with his readers while at the same time excluding those with bizarre delusions from the shared public space of a debate in philosophy. The basis of this exclusion is the fact that 'we' do not share 'perceptions of salience' with the delusional person. This is an excellent example of how a barrier is erected between those considered to be 'delusional' and those we consider one of us 'normals'. Talking for myself, I do not recognise such a barrier and cannot find community in Thornton's 'we'. I find I can make sense of the writing and the speech of the people with delusions I have encountered. Also, I know from personal experience that I could express myself in a way that others could understand, even in the most disorientated delusional state, if people maintained an attitude of friendly questioning. In section 4.2 I will look at how shared perceptions of salience form the basis for joint attention which is a necessary condition for the constitution of public space. The moral of this section is that even though sometimes delusions can seem contradictory and therefore without 'content', there is always the possibility of reconstructing the background fantasy that leads to a delusional utterance and thereby making sense of it.

4.11 Excursis on the *Tractatus* and Nonsense

This section is an addendum; a correction; a part of an on-going dialogue with others and as such may seem out of place in the structure of the work. This is not so. It can be understood as an example of one way to respond to the words of others that I argue for in the thesis and how such responding can be productive. Sometimes conversations lead to unexpected places. Commentators on an earlier version of the text have led me to a change in my understanding of Wittgenstein. In trying to respond to their words I was required to focus my attention on how Wittgenstein used the word 'nonsense' and how others have inherited this term from him. The reasons why this Excursis is pertinent to delusions will become clearer through my exposition.

Mulhall has stated that we may understand a nonsense sentence as 'an abortive speech act' (personal communication). One of the implications of this depiction is that someone has killed it before it was born (speaker or interlocutor). Wittgenstein says that when we call something senseless, 'a combination of words is being excluded from language, withdrawn from circulation' (PI 500). However, presumably it is possible to bring them back into circulation if a situation demanded it as a way of getting something across. I will illustrate this with a quote from Wittgenstein:

> Consider the following form of expression: 'The number of pages in my book is equal to a root of the equation $x^3 + 2x - 3 = 0$' Or: 'I have n friends and $n^2 + 2n + 2 = 0$'. Does this sentence make sense? This cannot be seen immediately. This example shews how it is that something can look like a sentence which we understand and yet yield no light (PI 513).

After thinking about this for a time we can see that the second equation yields an imaginary number which we cannot use to quantify how many friends we have; obviously that is what he is getting at here. So the sentence is meaningless? But what if he had used a minus number as the solution of the calculation, maybe he would have wanted us to understand that he had lost friends recently. If we think about this for a moment longer we might find that there is a sense to be had here. The equation

produces an imaginary number so perhaps what this person wants to communicate is that he has some 'imaginary' friends. And this is a perfectly meaningful communication; it can mean that the friends he has act like friends but cheat him when they think he is not paying attention, or possibly he has friends in his imagination that he plays with there (as children do). One other way of understanding this communication is that a friend has died but he still wants to keep alive his memory and he considers him his only friend (remember this last example for later). And so Wittgenstein's example is not so straight forward. We are tempted to see it as meaningless when we work out the equation, but on thinking about it maybe it is not as meaningless as it seems. Maybe the author just wants to hide his thoughts from the general public or has some other reason to make us spend time on what he presents us with.

One possible way of understanding the *Tractatus* is that Wittgenstein was trying to get a whole attitude to language taken out of circulation because he saw that it achieved so little (c.f. preface to the *Tractatus*) like fiddling while Rome burns.[4] The attitude could be expressed as the way we seem to want to regiment language. He could obviously understand the attraction of this approach as many of the propositions in the *Tractatus* seem intended to help us to formalise language. He lets us feel the full attraction of this attitude, but also shows us how little it achieves (c.f. Kierkegaard's attempt to highlight that certain intellectual projects can act as a distraction from living fully). Perhaps he was trying to help others to let go of this temptation and find more productive projects? This could be one way of understanding philosophy as therapy.

Following this interpretation further, the work the term 'nonsense' might be understood as doing in the *Tractatus* would only be effective because Wittgenstein has taken the attitude to the extreme (given it an airing) and shown its results. Without the main body of the *Tractatus* the term used at the end would not have the force many commentators see it as having. To return to the argument of the thesis, Read's shooting down of a barely articulated perspective from an Odyssean with the term 'nonsense' without a full exploration of that viewpoint might seem to be trigger-happy to say the least. Read would be wise to refrain from using the term 'nonsense' in the way he understands

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[4] Of course, fiddling might be one way to deal with a crisis, but a better way might be to get a bucket and find some water.

Wittgenstein as doing if he does not at least follow part of the method that he claims to find in the *Tractatus* (as Sass might be understood as doing). It should also be noted that (as far as I am aware) Wittgenstein nowhere states that solipsism is nonsense, but rather he writes that his propositions in the *Tractatus* (some of which are about solipsism) are nonsense. From the fact that what I say about the European Union is nonsense it does not follow that all talk about the European Union is nonsensical.

If we understand there to be a particular method in Wittgenstein's work, then surely detecting a piece of disguised (or blatant to us, but disguised to the speaker) nonsense is where the work begins and certainly not the end point of a dialogue. By using the term 'nonsense' indiscriminately Read shrugs off the ethical demand inherent in Wittgenstein's work. If you can get someone with a delusion to see that it is an attitude that they should let go of, then all well and good. However, to do this you have to work with the words they use and not just tell them they are speaking nonsense at the outset. One way of using the term 'nonsense' is to try to get someone to let go of an attitude that is getting in the way of them living a full life (but do any of us have the authority to judge this?) and could only be used at the end of a conversation. If used at all, it should only be used by a concerned friend (or a therapist) with the intention of coaxing someone out of what both parties have agreed is a confinement for the person with the delusion.

At this point, I would like to approach the words of the *Tractatus* in earnest. It would be uncontroversial to say there is a lot of confusion surrounding it as a work and Read's approach to delusions (as I hope I have shown above) is a striking example of this. I would like to state here that I thank Read for his provocation (in that I felt sure that Wittgenstein would not have used the term 'nonsense' in the way Read does) that has lead me to read a work that previously did not hold much interest for me. The first thing I want to point out is that the *Tractatus* is a complex (or even 'complicated') object. This is the key to understanding it. Wittgenstein states baldly near the beginning, 'Objects are simple' (TLP 2.02). The meaning here is not clear. What would it mean for an object to be simple? Could he mean that he wants to talk about objects that are a very exact copy of a geometrical form with one particular colour that does not vary over its surface? Alternatively, could he mean that the objects that he is going to be talking about are indivisible, in which case why does he not say this? One

way of taking this sentence is as a definition i.e., 'when I talk about objects I mean things that are simple'. However, the term 'simple' here by itself does not mean anything. It is similar to the example he gives about the question of, 'whether the good is more or less identical than the beautiful' (TLP 4.003). Here it seems as if the sentence about objects is as nonsensical as the one about the good. However if we remember the example I gave above (PI 513 where he gives us a sentence where n is the number of friends he has) maybe we should stop for a while and see if there is a non-obvious sense to be made. A little later on in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein says, 'Everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it' (TLP 4.002). Wittgenstein has used language to construct the *Tractatus* so could he not be telling us that this book is every bit as complicated as he is? If we go back to the 'objects are simple' sentence, could this be a provocation to make us say 'that's just wrong! Objects are never simple in any sense'? Importantly, you do not have to be a philosopher to work that out. This sentence challenges us to remember something that we already know, namely, that objects are complex. Further, we can imply that this particular book in front of us (being an object written by Wittgenstein) could be as complex as the man who was known as Wittgenstein. By seeing that this is maybe the reaction he was trying to provoke in us it seems that he is letting us find for ourselves the key to make sense of what, at first, seems like nonsense.

Another key to his use of the term 'nonsense' in the *Tractatus* can be found in the *Investigations*. He says:

> To say 'This combination of words makes no sense' excludes it from
> the sphere of language and thereby bounds the domain of language.
> But when one draws a boundary it may be for various kinds of reason.
> If I surround an area with a fence or a line or otherwise, the purpose
> may be to prevent someone getting in or out; but it may also be part of
> a game and the players be supposed, say, to jump over the boundary;
> or it may shew where the property of one man ends and that of another
> begins; and so on. So if I draw a boundary line that is not yet to say
> what I am drawing it for (PI 499).

And, of course, he states in the preface to the *Tractatus* that his aim is to 'draw a limit to thought' (can we understand this as being the same as a boundary?) and on the other side is 'nonsense'. Could it be that he wants us to 'jump over the boundary'? Does he want us to play a different game from the ones we usually do with philosophical texts?

My response is that this is certainly how it seems to me. The *Tractatus* is undoubtedly a complex object. It is a compendium of jokes, inanities, puns, platitudes, tautologies and contradictions. There are many seeming profundities, but also real profundities, insights and sentences of beautiful clarity. The problem is that we are never sure which is which or how they relate to each other. We have to find our own way through it. It stands as a provocation to get us to start thinking for ourselves (c.f. preface to the *Investigations*). The famous quote at the end which states that, 'anyone who understands me recognises them [the propositions of the *Tractatus*] as nonsensical' (TLP 6.54) is merely saying, 'don't rely on me as an authority, I talk as much nonsense as anyone else; use your own mind to see if what I say makes sense, but please pay attention, there's a method in my madness (and not just one at that)'. An important point to get across is that the *Tractatus* is not solely a didactic work. He says this quite clearly in the preface where he writes, 'so it is not a textbook'. He then he goes on to state its real aim saying that, 'its purpose would be achieved if it gave pleasure to one person who read and understood it'. In other words, it is a playground of the mind for anyone who can think (that is any human). The text, I think, is primarily to be enjoyed. Of course we can learn things from it (and I will elaborate a couple of things I see in it below), but in order to do this we have to be receptive to the way he is using language (in the same way as there is a demand to be receptive in talking to someone labelled 'delusional'). We cannot trust our usual ways for making sense of someone else's words when we approach this text and so we are thrown back on our own sense-making resources.

This leads us to the relation between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*. Wittgenstein says in the preface to the *Investigations*, 'I have been forced to recognise grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book [the *Tractatus*]'. However, if all the propositions in that book were nonsensical then how could they be mistaken? Wittgenstein is again not being totally straight forward with us here. A couple of lines before this he writes:

> It suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together; that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking (PI preface)

The first thing to note is that he sees the two texts as inextricably linked. Secondly, the mistakes of the first one can presumably shed light on how he arrived at the thoughts of the second one. However, is this second point as clear as it seems? Can nonsense shed light on anything? How about if we take Wittgenstein as having meant us to switch the relation of the texts around and, in actual fact, the second text sheds light on the first? If we see something as nonsensical initially we can sometimes be helped to see its meaning by being instructed in how a novel projection of words is being done; in learning the novel technique being used to communicate something. This can be seen in the example of PI 513 where a sentence seemed unintelligible at first, but when we mulled it over it could be understood as communicating something intelligible in an unusual way. Indeed, instruction is one of the main themes of the *Investigations* and we saw above how a sentence from it shed light on how the term 'nonsense' could be used. If we keep on following this interpretive thread then suddenly an aspect shift can seem to occur. All the major themes of the *Investigations* can be understood as being about how to read the *Tractatus*. In this light it appears that the *Investigations* is an instruction manual for reading the *Tractatus* and that this is the only way to make sense of it and Wittgenstein himself. Taking the so-called 'private language argument', the private language he was talking about might be the language he wrote the *Tractatus* in, because absolutely no-one seemed to understand it. At the time it would have seemed to him to be private as only he knew what it meant. The term 'aspect-blindness' might be interpreted as the condition he thought everyone else must be afflicted with (who had read the book) because they did not seem to see how words could mean more than one thing and link up in new ways. The term 'language-games' could be a hint that he was being playful in the *Tractatus* and that he was playing a new game with language, but others could learn it.

If you are willing to go with me this far then the question becomes why he did not explain it explicitly, step by step to someone (maybe he did, but I am not aware of

this).[5] The answer seems to me twofold. The first part is that he desperately wanted people to think for themselves and not just give them answers, so he set a challenge that people would have to think about in order to get any sense from. He seems to have partially relented on this demand by writing the *Investigations,* but this leads me to the second part. The *Tractatus* seems to be at heart essentially a love note and a memorial to a dead friend (remember PI 513? c.f. the dedication to the *Tractatus*). This is a memorial built to weather the centuries. It is as hard as a diamond, but as playful as a butterfly. One might want to call it a memorial garden (in that one of the main aims of a garden is to give pleasure, alongside other things) that Wittgenstein erected and tended to all his life. When he saw that people did not seem to understand it and it was likely to fall out of view he wrote the *Investigations* to keep people interested in it and give them a training in how to read it. This would have been so that they could see why it warranted continuing interest. He knew that if his own reputation remained and people read his books then Pinsent (the man he dedicated it to) would be remembered also.

The story I have told above strikes me as similar to the short stories written by Borges. If what I have said is true then the *Tractatus* can be seen as highly pertinent to those labelled 'delusional'. Its words were never very clearly understood in Wittgenstein's lifetime and were repeatedly taken the wrong way (c.f. preface to the *Investigations*). Wittgenstein talks about the isolation he feels would be found in madness (CV 61) and his use of the term 'private language' suggests he must often have felt alone. In the collection *Culture and Value* he expresses the fear that he may never be understood in a line that goes, 'Oh a key can lie for ever where the locksmith placed it and never be used to open the lock' (CV 62). The language here resonates with the quote that I use

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[5] This raises the ethical question of whether to follow his direction to anyone who understands the text to shut up and keep it to themselves when he writes, 'He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it' (TLP 6.54 and c.f. TLP 7). Here the action he insists on (of not telling anyone else what the text means i.e. each reader must throw away their ladder so that anyone who wants to understand the text must construct their own) is necessary so that no one who does not work it out for themselves will understand it. And this means many people might have understood it, but followed Wittgenstein's injunction not to tell anyone else. It worried me that this was his wish and that I was about to write something that might contradict this. However, he went on to write the *Investigations* and in the preface to it he talks about some grave mistakes in the *Tractatus* which indicates to me that he had relented on insisting on his readers silence. He goes on to say, 'I do not wish to lay any further claim to them as my property. *I make them public* with doubtful feelings' (PI preface; italics added). Saying this, the spirit of the work does mean that we should not give too much away to each other as part of the pleasure to be found in reading the book comes from discovering new connections for ourselves (the dawning of new aspects).

as part of the epigram to this thesis from CV 39 and implies that he knew the isolation experienced by Odysseans intimately. At heart the *Tractatus* seems to try to communicate an intense emotion (in that the book can be understood as an act of love using words)[6] in a way that seems appropriate to the intensity. I think all Odysseans (and hopefully others) could relate to this. The moral (if there is one) might be that we should maybe step back and think about another's words before we consign them to the category of 'nonsense' or 'delusion' (even when the person themselves tell us that that is what they are) and perhaps we might learn something. One of the things we might start learning is to think. I think Wittgenstein is provoking us to start thinking for ourselves and inherent in this provocation is a vision of a better world. Imagine a world in which we all started thinking; that would be a world without borders, controls or limits (but don't take my word for it).[7]

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[6] Which also registers the corresponding pain resulting from the loss of the loved one c.f. PI 245

[7] I should point out that nothing in the thesis hangs on my interpretation of the *Tractatus* in this section, but if true it illustrates succinctly what I have been trying to say in the rest of the thesis.

4.2 Attunement, Joint Attention and Public Space

The thesis of this section is that joint attention is made possible by shared perceptions of salience. Joint attention constitutes the formation of public space and empirical exploration of where public space extends allows us to find the limits of community. I will argue that utterances that make up bizarre delusions should not be taken as literally saying how the world is objectively, but rather function as an attempt to set up a public space between the delusional person and others. The delusional person is primarily, through their speech, trying to gain some acknowledgement of their existential situation. They are *not* abstractly producing factually incorrect statements about the world, as some might seem to believe. In other words, like the Azande people, the person suffering from delusions is not playing the language-game of scientific hypothesizing about the world. They are fighting to regain public space from out of a debilitating existential situation. The expression of a delusion allows others to see how the perception of salience for the delusional person differs from their own, if the interpreter imaginatively reconstructs what inclinations or fantasies give rise to the utterances.

One particular theory of the biochemical underpinnings of delusions in the Odyssean condition is that they are caused by the dysregulation of dopamine production in the brain. According to this theory, dopamine controls the attribution of salience of things in the environment, that is, the dopamine system is a major component in 'a process whereby events and thoughts come to grab attention, drive action and influence goal directed behaviour because of their association with reward or punishment' (Kapur 2003: 14). Through overproduction of dopamine there is produced in the sufferer the prodromal phase of Odysseania where everything seems significant. This can be explained through the dysregulation of dopamine in that anything and everything in the environment will grab attention and create 'action-readiness'. Later the prodromal phase resolves itself when the sufferer finds an explanation, which resolves in the mind of the person, through an attribution of some change to the world, what has led them to this feeling of meaningfulness. This change in perception creates a barrier between the delusional person and others, as certain things will seem significant to the delusional person that seem of minor interest to the listener and vice versa. This will constitute an

obstacle for the listener in trying to make sense of the speech of the person suffering from the delusion because it will be harder to maintain joint attention between the two parties to the conversation.

Joint attention opens up the world as something shared and therefore allows the perception of the world as objective i.e. the feeling that the world transcends my limited perspective. By being able to imaginatively take up other perspectives we sense the world as being independent of our grasp of it. The fact that people with delusions are unwilling to give credence to evidence against their delusion signals the collapse of their ability to imaginatively occupy other perspectives on events, objects and people. Hobson (2007) has shown how it is important for children to be able to imaginatively take up or identify with other embodied perspectives on the world in order to participate in activities requiring joint attention. This is seen in the behaviour of young children when they show something to another person, thereby illustrating that they understand that the other person has a perspective on the thing. For the person with the delusion an abyss has opened between themselves and the perspectives of others. They are no longer able to open themselves up to imaginatively take on the perspectives of others. This is another way of understanding Sass's claim that there are analogies between Odyssean delusions and solipsism. This stance is given expression by Renee in talking about another person:

> I perceive a statue by my side, a puppet, part of the pasteboard
> scenery...[and she asks this person] 'Why do you behave like an
> automaton?' (Sechehaye 1970: 37).

It is important to stress that it is not just other people that seem artificial. With a collapse of other perspectives to identify with, Renee finds that the surrounding world feels like 'pasteboard scenery'. The struggle for the person with the delusion is to escape their perspective in order to re-establish the objectivity of the world, thereby making things appear real. This is illustrated by Renee following on from the quote above:

> At any price, by any means, I must conquer this unreality, for an
> instant feel someone alive near me, experience for a second the

life-giving contact that makes up in a moment for the loneliness of a day. I lean on my friend's arm and implore her to stay a few minutes more. If she agrees to my request, I talk, I ask questions, with the sole objective of breaking through the barrier between us (Sechehaye 1970: 38).

We can see in this quote how desperate Renee is to regain the multiple perspectives given by being able to identify with another; in her words she desperately tries 'breaking through the barrier between us'. In bizarre delusions the sufferer finds it difficult to initiate the creation and maintenance of public space and is instead trapped in their own world. One of the main reasons for them to initiate conversation is to try and create a public space in which there is joint attention between the speakers. The delusion itself can be seen as an attempt to open up a new public space by trying to redefine the situation in terms of the delusional person's perspective. One of the barriers to this, even before the first word is spoken, is what is called the 'praecox-feeling'. According to Sass, quoting Jaspers, the sufferer of Odysseania is 'someone from whom one feels separated by 'a gulf which defies description'' (Sass 1992: 14) and using the words of Bleuler, in coming across someone with the Odyssean condition there is:

The sense of encountering someone who seems 'totally strange, puzzling, inconceivable, uncanny, and incapable of empathy, even to the point of being sinister and frightening' (Sass 1992: 14).

The praecox-feeling can be understood as emanating from the new perceptions of salience the delusional sufferer finds themselves trapped in. This space of wildly differing perceptions of salience will prevent most of the normal ways people can come to be attuned to each other e.g. by smiling, shaking hands, looking the other person in the eyes etc. The praecox-feeling, as an affective evaluation of the person with Odysseania, is an immediate barrier to opening up a public space and, indeed, would seem to negate the very possibility of doing so. However, the person encountering someone suffering with the Odyssean condition is in the position to imaginatively enter the perspective of the sufferer, even if the sufferer is trapped in their own world. This is where the question of sense becomes an empirical matter rather than a matter of logical

limits. The ability to give sense to a bizarre delusion, and thereby constitute a public space, is a matter of trial and error and can be checked for accuracy by feeding the interpretation back to the sufferer.

4.3 Expression and Acknowledgement in Pain and Delusions

We can see the positions taken by Read and Thornton as forms of scepticism about the possibility of knowing the inner life of those with bizarre delusions. These positions can be seen as a local form of scepticism about other minds. Methods of overcoming such a form of scepticism can be found in the ways we can overcome scepticism about the pain of others. As Cavell puts it, actually being in the presence of someone puts an ethical demand on us:

> [Y]our suffering makes a *claim* upon me. It is not enough that I *know* (am certain) that you suffer – I must do or reveal something (whatever can be done). In a word, I must *acknowledge* it, otherwise I do not know what 'your (your or his) being in pain' means (Cavell 1976: 263).

We can always refuse to respond to someone's pain but that will itself be a way of acknowledging that there is a claim on us that we have chosen to ignore.

One aspect of the experience of pain is the breakdown in the practical possibilities that structure a person's 'being-in-the-world', in that the part of the body in pain (if the pain is particularly intense) is no longer functional i.e. there is a foregrounded sense that 'I can't' anymore (e.g. if I have a painful foot I can no longer walk, if I have a painful thumb I can no longer pick things up). This makes the world show up as being no longer 'ready-to-hand' for us, open to our usual practical interaction with it. Part of responding to another is to provide an amelioration of this breakdown and the way in which the other person does this will condition how the pain is experienced. If they respond with insight and understanding to the needs of the person this, in some cases, might diminish the sense that 'I can't' and so relieve the pain. However, if the person pain is ignored, the contrast with the others' ablebodiedness becomes foregrounded. In this way, the person's sense of 'I can't' is increased, bringing about a heightened awareness of the pain. One way of avoiding the exacerbation of pain is if the one in pain can see their state mirrored in another, as is found through the sympathy (literally 'feeling with') of another. The other person, who is not literally in pain, can in some

sense feel (through empathy) the pain of the person, and act accordingly through their body language and the way they treat the other. This depends on enabling the person to find ways to have their pain and their sense of 'I can't' expressed. The way the person expresses their pain will, to a large degree, be determined by how they acknowledge their pain. The other will be able to alleviate the sense of 'I can't' for the person in pain by reflecting back to them an articulation of the pain they themselves might find difficult to express.

The demand in the case of delusions is that we acknowledge the other's attempts to make sense of their world. In relating this to what we have said about acknowledging pain, the way to ameliorate the suffering of someone existing in a state of delusional disorientation is to try and put forward words that help crystallize the experience of the sufferer. It is in this way that we can show that we 'feel-with' the person suffering from existential disorientation. In other words, we acknowledge their existential situation as that of another human being suffering and trying to articulate their perspective by trying to find words that fit their situation and thereby show we have experienced similar situations (even if not exactly similar situations). This is one of the main purposes of engaging in dialogue, that is, to find and thereby found a community with others. To continue in dialogue with the delusional person will involve helping them to find words that capture and give relief from suffering by expressing their situation and allowing the background yearnings, inclinations and narrative that give rise to their utterances to come to light (this is looked at in Chapter 8). Philosophers, although not normally engaged in first hand dialogue with sufferers, can chart the background to the writings, case studies and anecdotes about sufferers from delusions, and thereby develop a richer phenomenology of delusions

One of the ways in which the experience of the sufferer of delusion can be acknowledged is through psychoanalysis. One sufferer who finds psychoanalysis particularly helpful is Elyn Saks as she recounts in her book *The Centre Cannot Hold*. She states:

> Medication has no doubt played a central role in helping me
> manage my psychosis, but what has allowed me to see the meaning
> in my struggles – to make sense of everything that happened before

and during the course of my illness, and to mobilize what strengths I may possess into a rich and productive life - is talk therapy. People like me with a thought disorder are not supposed to benefit much from this kind of treatment, a talk therapy oriented towards insight and based on a relationship. But I have. <u>There may be a substitute for the human connection – for two people sitting in a room, one of them with the freedom to speak her mind, knowing the other is paying thoughtful attention – but I don't know what that substitute might be</u>. It is at heart a *relationship*, and for me it has been the key to everything I hold precious. Often, I'm navigating my life through uncertain, even threatening, waters – I need the people in my life to tell me what's safe, what's real, and what's worth holding on to (Saks 2007: 305; italics in the original, underline added).

By paying 'thoughtful attention' to the words of those with delusions we not only maintain a public space but can begin to see our own failures to make sense in their proper light. An extension of public space to include those labelled delusional helps to make sense of the purposes of dialogue as a way of acknowledging and identifying with those we are in dialogue with and thereby extending our perspective on the world. It also reminds us of the central virtue needed for a good conversation, namely, humility. As Mulhall claims:

The process of attempting to educate or communicate with others is or should be a process of self-education and self-communication; for it is a means by which one's own reactions, what one takes to be natural or a matter of course, are brought to the surface, and their arbitrariness or peculiarity opened to question…the discovery of a divergence may lead us to question ourselves rather than to exile the divergent other…we might come to see what all teaching and learning isolates and dramatises – the moment in which my power comes to the end in the face of the other's seperateness (Mulhall 1994: 118-119).

This quote elaborates on a point I made in the last chapter, that conversation is a way of recalibrating our natural reactions with others. In the face of the other's natural reactions I am powerless to move them one way or another and the finding that my natural reactions are substantially different from others might radically isolate me. However, the very awareness of the fragility and contingency of the attunement of our natural reactions with anyone else (including those closest to us, who we may have known for years) allows us to approach dialogue with the humility. It also enables us to keep open the possibility of a recalibration at a deeper level in the face of an impasse between us at a more superficial level. The other's seperateness from me is what gives reality its independence from me; the fact that every other perspective is, in ways, radically different and will be in some ways incommensurate with my own enables me to see the universe as independent of my own conceptions of it. The other's seperateness from me is also shown in the way anyone's behaviour can seem irrational/insane/mad at times and this is based on the fact we cannot predict their behaviour or reactions most of the time. The irrationality of the other is something we fear, but it is also the aspect that we love in the other; the infinite; the fact that anyone we know always transcends our conception of them. It is at the crossroad of dialogue that we find both that we are alone (in that we are radically different from anyone else) and are not alone (in that we can find brief phases of attunement; we can speak for the other sometimes and they can speak for us sometimes, in some things). Dialogue is therefore central to bringing someone back to recalibrating their reactions to those of the people around them, when they have lost their footing in the everyday through developing delusions.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the claims of Read and Thornton that bizarre delusions are nonsense. They go on to claim that it is impossible to empathically understand the perspectives of those with bizarre delusions, as they are too incoherent to constitute a perspective and that the only form of understanding that may be possible is an external, structural explanation. I have identified this position as a form of scepticism about other minds and claim that one way to overcome this is to try to imaginatively reconstruct the background that leads to the words of the delusional person. Such an attempt allows the creation of a public space with those with delusions. This enables

the establishment of community with them which is a major function of dialogue and may be crucial to the person's recovery. In the next chapter I will examine the role of trust in the aetiology and maintenance of delusions. This requires developing the idea that trust frames our commonsense orientation to the world.

Chapter 5

Losing Anchoring in the Everyday:
The Role of Trust in Commonsense and its
Breakdown in Delusions

> Nietzsche's apparently extreme view that untruth is a condition of
> life ultimately refers to our ignorance of the exact ways in which our
> views, at every time, are simplifications of the world and are
> dependent on particular values; it calls to our attention the fact that
> we may have to remain ignorant of these simplifications and values if
> we are to engage in a practice for some time (Nehemas 1985: 72).

In this chapter, I will raise the possibility that any understanding of delusions cannot be based solely on what a person utters, but rather requires charting a change in the relatedness of the person to others. My contention is that delusions are internally related to (a) how the world is constituted intersubjectively and (b) how the person with the delusion interacts with all those around them. In order to explore this further, I will analyse the concept of trust and look at how a breakdown of reciprocal trust is a major factor in the formation and maintenance of delusions. It will be argued that the attitude of trusting provides the condition for the self-evidence of the commonsense orientation to the world.[1]

Firstly, I shall elaborate what I consider to be the salient characteristics of the concept of trust for comprehending delusions and try to come to an understanding of the role of trust in constituting an intersubjective world. I will argue that the term 'trust', taken in the sense of its everyday use, can be understood as an 'affective orientation' (Jones 1996: 4; I will cash out the meaning of this phrase below) to other people and the world in general which grounds a set of shared social practices (Solomon 2000: 235). It will

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[1] The idea that trust underlies our commonsense orientation to the world could be understood as one aspect of the untruth which is a condition of life, according to Nietzsche.

be important to bring out the sense in which trust operates implicitly in the background to everyday life. I will highlight the affective and practical nature of trust in order to outline the way that trust frames our experience without becoming an explicit object of awareness most of the time. An examination of trust's implications for an intersubjective world will require an investigation of the role of trust in our epistemic practices. Focus will be put on the central place of the social in attempts to know anything and in the constitution of commonsense.

Secondly, it is central to my thesis that a basic trusting attitude forms the background that enables commonsense interaction with the world and other people. The practices which ground this interaction can be given expression in certain beliefs. These beliefs have the status of being excluded from the possibility of doubt in everyday life. Wittgensteinian philosophers have called this class of beliefs 'framework propositions'. As Eilan puts it, framework propositions 'globally constrain our inferences and our interpretation of our experience' (Eilan 2000: 108). I will put forward an interpretation of Wittgenstein where 'framework propositions', rather than being something wholly cognitive, are explicit expressions of the practical ground of our commonsense interaction with the world, which Wittgenstein usefully compares to the rules of a game.

Thirdly, in the case of someone with delusions I will suggest that there is a breakdown in the background 'atmosphere' of trust. This leads those with delusions to call into question certain commonsense beliefs and norms (framework propositions) that they inherited from and, until this point, held in common with those close to them and those of their general cultural milieu. I will claim that critical to the formation of a delusion is a breakdown in a basic trust of people in general, but especially those close to the person with the delusion.[2] A breakdown of the normally invisible medium of trust leads to the 'loss of the natural evidence of commonsensical everyday reality' (Stanghellini 2000: 777). This allows for 'framework propositions' to be called into question and even discounted.

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[2] An issue that will be raised in Chapter 8 is the applicability of this account to more circumscribed delusions. Although the account primarily deals with the interpersonal dynamics of people with the Odyssean condition, there is no reason in principle why some parts or even all of the account should not extend to cover circumscribed delusions. However, this would have to be done by examining the interpersonal dynamics of such delusions in more detail.

Finally, I will look at how the identification of someone as delusional can be seen to imply a corresponding lack of trust in that person, which is one of the factors in the incorrigibility of delusions. The person is viewed as being, at best, no longer trustworthy in their ability to make sense of the world (shown in some of the things they say) or, at worst, they are regarded as being dangerous because of the unpredictability accorded to them. The breakdown in trust is reciprocal in that the person with the delusions does not trust those around them and the people around them do not trust the person they consider 'delusional'. The labelling of someone as 'delusional' suggests a global change in the person's relatedness to other people. It is this transformation of interpersonal relations that means that the term 'delusional' can not be applied with clinical neutrality, but rather comes with stigma attached. It is this stigma that plays a central role in the maintenance of delusions as it prohibits open conversation. The concept of trust plays a central part in identifying who is delusional and thus in what a delusion is. Returning to the contemporary debate, I suggest that no definition of delusion can be accurate if it does not acknowledge that the term casts an aspect of distrust on the whole person and not just sentences made by the person. Understanding framework propositions as the expression of practices that enable someone to orientate in social space helps to identify delusions as a new set of natural reactions to the world. The implication of this is that there is an opportunity to find a new community with the person suffering from delusions and their new natural reactions (which make up the delusion) through a recalibration in conversation, rather than dismissing the delusion as completely unintelligible.

5.1 Trust as an Epistemic Frame

Trust has recently come to play an important role in debates about epistemology.[3] Attention has focussed on how testimony is involved in gaining knowledge about the world. It has been pointed out that much research, especially in science, depends on the combined work of many researchers, none of whom have the required expertise to understand the whole project. This highlights that most of our knowledge, even scientific knowledge, rests to a degree on trusting the competence and truthfulness of others. For the purposes of this thesis, it is not necessary to review the extensive literature in this area. Instead, I will look at the part played by trust in how commonsense is acquired and maintained through training given by parents and others in a person's immediate social network. Before looking at commonsense, it is first necessary to have an account of what trust is. For this purpose, I shall adapt the accounts given by Jones (1996) and Solomon (2000). To start with, Jones analyses trust into an affective and a cognitive component. She says that trust is:

> An attitude of optimism that the good will and competence of another will extend to cover the domain of our interaction with her, together with the expectation that the one trusted will be directly and favourably moved by the thought that we are counting on her (Jones 1996: 4).[4]

I will start by looking at the idea that part of trust is an 'affective orientation', which for Jones is a stance towards others of optimism regarding their good will and competence. It is important to emphasise that the affect is not only directed towards the goodwill, but also the competence of another person. This is because, as Jones points out, it would not be possible to trust someone who we felt was incompetent in the relevant area of interaction, be it moral or technical. This affective orientation of optimism is, 'a

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[3] For an overview of the current research in this area, see Lackley and Sosa (2006), Kusch (2002) and Coady (1992)

[4] Although Jones uses the term 'affective attitude' to describe the emotional aspect of trust, I will use the term 'affective orientation' for the purposes of this chapter. This is in order to distinguish Jones's idea of an 'affective attitude' as a 'way of seeing' people (a non-explicit interpretation/contextualisation of another's behaviour) from Wittgenstein's idea about how attitudes are inhabited forms of life that structure our whole relation to the world. I will argue below that trust itself is an 'attitude' in the Wittgensteinian sense, whereas what Jones is referring to is a component of trust which I prefer to call an 'affective orientation'.

distinctive and affectively loaded, way of seeing the one trusted' (Jones 1994: 4). It has, 'its constitutive patterns of attention and tendencies of interpretation' (Jones 1994: 11), by which she means that there is a certain range of interpretations of the behaviour of the person who is being trusted that will be given credence and others that will not come into view. In other words, the actions of another person are seen in a certain light because of the orientation – that is, trust provides the background context which allows us to understand the actions of another. Certain behavioural evidence is given salience over other behaviours. For instance, in situations where a behaviour is ambiguous or even where it is not so ambiguous and it is likely that the person trusted has bad intentions, if there is still the possibility of ascribing good intentions to the person we trust, this interpretation will be foregrounded for us. As an example, Jones points to Othello's relation to Iago in Shakespeare's play. If Othello had not trusted Iago, his actions would have seemed obviously malicious, but in this case the misplaced trust limited the way Othello was prepared to see Iago. This example highlights that trust, in having an affective component, can lead to distortions in the way the world is perceived.

It is, however, also necessary to point out that, for most of the time, trust and mistrust track objective qualities in others and allow us to be attuned to one another. As Wittgenstein (RPP 602-603) points out, it is only when we mistrust someone that we think of them as hiding their inner life. When we trust someone we take the expressions of their inner life at face value (Hertzberg 1988: 318). This points to the fact that, for a child, trust is a necessary condition for them to learn how to see the actions of others as an expression of an inner life at all. This basic trust can be seen as a natural reaction to others that is refined through training and experience. It also highlights that mistrust comes at a later point in development and has to be learnt. The mistrust that we learn as we grow older is a specific move that can be made in interactions with others. In normal circumstances, mistrust is a judgement to temper the natural trust that exists prior to judgement.

Solomon (2000), in opposition to Jones, argues that an affective approach to trust treats it as a matter of individual psychology and misses out the fact that it is an essential ingredient in relationships or society more generally. Jones might seem to avoid this charge by incorporating as a component of trust the cognitive expectation that the one

trusted will be directly and favourably moved by the thought that someone is counting on them. This takes into account the role of trust as part of a relationship, but still leaves Jones open to the criticism from Solomon (Solomon 2000: 232) that she does not fully take into account the fact that trust happens in social space (that is, it is realised as part of the dynamics of a relationship) and is not simply a psychological state. In order to account for this fact, we can take on board insights from Solomon's account and characterise Jones' 'expectation' as being a skilled shared practice rather than being just a cognitive component. This does not exclude the possibility that the person can have the expectation as a cognition (for example as a belief), but rather highlights that the 'expectation' is primarily a practical way of interacting with another person, and the person need not have an explicit belief at all.

The practical nature of trusting is shown if we consider the problem of trust abstractly as a matter of why anyone would ever start trusting in the first place. For trust to be a possibility it must already exist as an inheritable practice in society; otherwise it would never get off the ground. If it were not an entrenched practice, there would always be the risk of someone who could gain from taking advantage of a trusting act that would make the rational choice of performing a trusting act unlikely. This highlights the reciprocal nature of trusting: in order to trust, we must engage in a practice that leaves us vulnerable, and we will only engage in this practice if we find that we are not exploited in at least some contexts with some people. The practice is intrinsically shared in that it is only possible if there are other people who will respond appropriately to our exposing ourselves to the possibility of harm. The very way in which we show that we are placing our trust in another person – that is, through non-verbal cues and particular manners of expression – can have an influence on the quality of the relationship and may even be transformative in engendering goodwill in a person not so inclined before. This is also necessary for the ongoing maintenance of a mutually trusting relationship. A sudden change in the non-verbal emotional practices that underlie a relationship can lead to a change in the way we see the other person and the degree of trust we have in them.

In line with Jones' account, I would argue that the affective orientation grounds what she calls the 'expectation' and what I have referred to as a social practice. I would argue that this is because the seeing of another person in a certain light frames the

possibilities for practical interaction open to the person who is doing the trusting. In other words, our apprehension of someone as trustworthy means that we will leave ourselves vulnerable to them in certain respects and take this practice for granted unless we are disappointed in this trust in a substantial way. Even in the case of disappointment, we may still be willing to see the person as trustworthy as long as there is a satisfactory explanation for why our trust was disappointed and why it would not happen again. This is part of why the orientation is taken to be affective as it is not automatically open to change by evidential considerations. Jones likens it to an 'affective lens' (Jones 1996: 12), and we can see the affective nature of it more clearly from Damasio's idea (1994) that we use emotions to guide us in making decisions that avoid the necessity for complex calculation. As Hookway puts it,[5] 'emotions are involved in making decisions with a holistic basis: the 'gut reaction' resolves uncertainties.' Emotions 'ensure that we stop the search for further information [in this case, evidence about whether we should leave ourselves vulnerable to another] at an appropriate time and without excessive calculation' (Hookway 2002: 258). From this account, we can see trusting or distrusting as forms of affective attunement to other people that come prior to reflective judgement. Trust, understood in this way, underlies and helps frame a common world in that most of the time we believe what people tell us about the world because of the epistemic 'stopping rule' (Hookway 2002: 258) provided by trust.[6] As Jones highlights (Jones 1996: 15), the advantage of the centrality of affect in the account helps explain the commonplace fact that trust and distrust can give rise to beliefs that are abnormally resistant to evidence (as exemplified in Othello's relation to Iago). This resistance to evidence is also a notable feature of delusions, which suggests a link between the two concepts.

One feature of trusting that needs to be stressed is that it is a ubiquitous social practice, as Bok says, 'whatever matters to human beings, trust is the atmosphere in which it thrives' (quoted in Baier 1986: 231). That is, almost any human activity requires this openness to vulnerability and so an 'atmosphere' of trust is the necessary background to most activities. By talking about an 'atmosphere', I am trying to depict the way the social practice of trusting underlies our everyday activities and makes them possible.

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[5] Here he is summarising research from Damasio (1994).
[6] By 'stopping rule', I mean the feeling that we do not need to inquire further about what someone has told us.

Examples of everyday activities, such as taking a taxi without fear that the driver will kidnap you or going to a restaurant without the fear of being poisoned, all require the background of trust. The atmosphere of trust will not always be the same in every community; in fact, in Mexico, the high prevalence of kidnappings occurring through taking taxis leads to a level of mistrust in this practice. However, people still take taxis; it is just a matter of being more careful about where the taxis are taken from and at what time. In this case, the mistrust is a matter of tempering the natural trusting attitude.

One possible criticism of this characterisation of trust as a ubiquitous background practice is that it seems to distort the actual application of the word 'trust' in everyday usage, widening it beyond its legitimate employment. A paradigmatic instance of where trust can be seen to be in operation would seem to be where someone asserts that they trust someone, can give reasons for doing so and then go on to act on that assertion. However, one possible situation in which it would be meaningful to say, 'I trust Jim' is a situation where Jim's trustworthiness had been called into question. It is only when we need to justify an act of trust that we explicitly state our trust. The background practice of trust will rarely become an object of our explicit awareness. It only becomes something that we have to make an explicit judgement about if incongruities in the behaviour of another have become salient or we have external reasons for doubting the motives of a person. Even then, it is likely that we will make the judgement on the basis of both our affective orientation and a comprehensive survey of the evidence for and against the person's trustworthiness.

Another possible criticism is that there seems to be a qualitative difference between the trust we put in close friends and family and the trust we have in someone we are asking for directions who we have just approached in the street. It seems that our trust in people we know well is a positive value held on our part and is based on interaction over a sustained period of time, whereas the other form of interaction requires merely a neutral stance that does not require anything as strong as an attitude of trust. In other words, it could be argued that it would be wrong to use this word in the case of our interaction with strangers, as it is not obvious that we have any affective orientation with regard to them. However, this is to underplay the way we rely on heuristics that allow us to get a 'feel' for a person or a situation in a short amount of time. We use a wealth of information from someone's appearance, their manner, their facial

expressions and the situation to provide an indication of someone's trustworthiness. For instance, in Britain, if someone is dressed as a police officer we might be more likely to approach them for help (although some other groups in society might find that the uniform elicits an affective response of mistrust, if they have experience of repeatedly being stopped and searched by police on the basis of their ethnicity or class). The uniform changes the way the person is viewed and determines our affective orientation towards them. Similarly, if someone's body language is more open, we are more likely to see them as approachable. We implicitly rely on feelings to tell us if we should act in a way that makes us vulnerable to others. To take another example, if we go into a shop to buy some items of food, we not only trust that the shopkeeper will not short change us intentionally, but we also trust that the food has not been poisoned in the process of making it. The practice of trusting frames the interaction and keeps certain possibilities out of consideration. If, for whatever reason, we are on our guard and see a certain other in the light of mistrust, in normal circumstances this will remain a localised phenomenon. In other words, only a restricted range of new possibilities will be considered in our interaction with them. In contrast, a consideration of paranoia shows the exponential growth of possibilities that may be considered without the framing action of trust. In what follows, I will argue that this framing role not only works in our interactions with others, but also in anchoring the self-evidence of commonsense.

5.2 Commonsense as an Orientating World-Picture

In order to look at the role of trust in constituting commonsense, I will first call upon a distinction that Wittgenstein makes between an 'attitude' and an 'opinion'. As McGinn says:

> An opinion is a judgement based on evidence, about which there may be a disagreement, and for which the notion of a mistake makes sense. Those things that are a matter of attitude are more fundamental: they are inhabited rather than judged; they are inseparable from the form my human life has; we could not even begin to say what an error concerning them would look like (McGinn 1998: 54).

I will make the case that a certain attitude of basic trusting in people in general forms the background to judgements about fact. Contra McGinn, I will argue that it is possible to see what an error concerning a matter of 'attitude' is like, precisely in the case of delusions. Here, the underlying attitude of trusting which the sufferer used to inhabit has become questionable for them, thereby turning it into a matter for their judgement or, in Wittgenstein's terms, a matter of 'opinion'. As I have argued above, this basic trusting is an affective orientation to people grounding a skilled social practice. It has become habitual and, as McGinn says, 'is woven into my…ways of acting and responding to the world, in a way that makes it part of the structure of the world I inhabit' (McGinn 1998: 54). This inhabited form of life is a refinement of the natural reaction of the child to their caregiver. From the earliest years of a child's life, trust, on the part of the child, forms a pre-reflective background to intersubjectivity and allows the commonsense world to be constituted.[7] The background attitude of trusting provides a frame in which an intersubjective world made up of common facts and norms can be built. The basis for intersubjectivity is originally provided by parents in the first instance. As Wittgenstein writes:

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[7] However, in some cases, the trusting attitude shown by the child will not be justified e.g. in cases where the caregiver does not respond appropriately to the needs of the child.

> As children we learn facts; e.g., that every human being has a brain, and we take them on trust….The child learns by believing the adult. Doubt comes *after* belief. I learned an enormous amount and accepted it on human authority, and then I found some things confirmed or disconfirmed by my own experience. In general I take as true what is found in text books, of geography for example. Why? I say: All these facts have been confirmed a hundred times over. But how do I know that? What is my evidence for it? I have a world-picture. Is it true or false? Above all it is the substratum of all my enquiring and asserting. The propositions describing it are not all equally subject to testing (OC 159-162).

Here, Wittgenstein claims that we inherit a world-picture from our parents as a child, which forms the bedrock on which we can intelligibly make enquiries and raise doubts about empirical propositions. This bedrock is only able to develop because of a basic trusting attitude. As Hardwig puts it in the context of scientific enquiry:

> In an important sense, then, trust is often epistemologically even more basic than empirical data or logical arguments: the data and the argument are available only through trust (Hardwig 1991: 694).

In the case of a child inheriting a world-picture, this is even more clearly true, as this is the means by which they also inherit a form of life.

A striking example of basic trust is found in one-year-old infants in the phenomenon known as 'social referencing'. This is the term given to the way children will respond to the caregiver's attitude towards objects and events that the child is unsure of or anxious about. The child will actually seek out an affective response from the caregiver in deciding whether to interact with an object (Hobson 1993: 214-215). This illustrates the implicit unquestioning trust the child places in the caregiver's responses to the world, which in turn help to shape the child's own responses to the world. This lays the bedrock for the future development of both a cognitive and social nature and allows the

formation of commonsense reactions and conceptualisations of the world. As Hertzberg (1988: 316) says, we would not actually say that the child trusts their caregiver because we cannot imagine the opposite of this instinctual response. Rather, this response to the caregiver is what later develops into trust. The important point is that this instinctual response of unquestioning dependence on the caregiver is prior to any mistrust. For the child, the caregiver is an exemplar and, as Hertzberg says, in the eyes of the child, they 'embody goodness' (Hertzberg 1988: 315). The instinctual need to follow the example and instruction provided by the caregiver comes prior to any independent judgement on the part of the child about what they want from life. The natural reaction of taking this person as an example to be followed is what allows the possibility of entering into a form of life.

The claim made here is not an empirical claim, but rather a phenomenological claim in that it attempts to arrange countless experiences of the author in a coherent fashion. A list of examples could be given to back up the coherence of the claim (one such is the Hobson 1993 study), but its force is found in whether it resonates with the reader as a picture of how their experiences relate to each other. Of course, the reader may wish to point out counter examples in their own experience that might show an unbalanced diet of examples on the part of the author (and a fruitful conversation may then ensue). Some implications of this picture could be operationalised and tested empirically (which is one of the possibilities for the future development of the ideas here) and hopefully if someone finds the picture useful they could develop, modify or fill in some of the details of it. However, testing the whole of the picture in one experiment would not be coherent because of the generality of its claims. It should be used according to whether it helps shed light on a particular area of our life together (and research into that area) or not. As with a paradigm in science, it is hopefully a useful way of looking at things (but as a phenomenological claim it should also have existential applications in a person's personal life) that can be judged on whether it helps bring clarity to our thinking about certain matters or instead leads to too many anomalies.

Next, it is necessary to have a clearer idea of what commonsense is. Campbell (2001: 96) has put forward the idea that delusions can be understood to function like Wittgensteinian framework propositions. This idea has a lot to be said for it in that it would explain the incorrigibility of delusions. The problem with Campbell's thesis is

that he uses a truncated interpretation of what Wittgenstein says about the role of certain propositions in our language-games. The insight from Wittgenstein is that any space of reasons is framed by certainties that cannot be called into question within a particular language game. For Campbell's point to be valid, he needs to give an account of why the framework propositions that the delusional person already has should be called into question and then replaced by others. I will argue that what is missing from his account is the role of trust. In order to see this, it will be helpful to highlight the connection between commonsense and framework propositions. For Wittgenstein, framework propositions are bound up with what he calls our world-picture. I would like to suggest that the term world-picture is a way of conceptualising our commonsense stance to the world. As Stranghellini has argued, commonsense is not readily definable. He points out that, 'being in line with common sense means possessing some healthy and well-balanced sensitivity, especially regarding everyday goings on' (Stranghellini 2004: 79). Wittgenstein's idea of a world-picture gives us a way of thinking about this issue:

> The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a
> kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game;
> and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning
> any explicit rules. (OC 95)

Taking a lead from Wittgenstein, it might be helpful to see commonsense as the rules of a game that is 'imprinted' (Stanghellini 2004: 82) on us from an early age. There are two main points about commonsense that Wittgenstein highlights in this quote. Firstly, commonsense is primarily a practical orientation to the world. As Wittgenstein says:

> Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an
> end;- but the end is not certain propositions' striking us
> immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is
> our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game (OC
> 204).

Propositions which mark the place where our reason-giving runs out are the expression of the rules of our interaction with the world and other people. This means that

commonsense is primarily a network of varying practices that we have been inducted into, that enable us to orientate in the world. Framework propositions are not a particular class of proposition that just happen to have a particular incorrigibility but are rather verbal articulations of practices that enable us to function. These practices are not propositions, but rather non-propositional ways of acting that, if necessary, can be expressed in propositional form. In this quote, Wittgenstein talks about 'language-games'. This is a term he used to emphasise the way that language is made up of overlapping and crisscrossing practices with different rules and functions. It also connects language to the playing of games, suggesting that using language is primarily a 'know-how' rather than a matter of 'knowing that'. Secondly, Wittgenstein implies that commonsense can be likened to a kind of mythology. The implications of this are that the social rules embodied in the world-picture are prior to and enable our empirical questioning of the world. In other words, the world-picture provides the yardstick through which we make judgements about the world (OC 477). Thinking of the world-picture as a myth highlights it is made up of a story of how the world is that may never have been stated explicitly, but was implied in the training provided by the caregiver of the child (OC 159).

The language-games that make up the world-picture are grounded in trust. As Wittgenstein says:

> I really want to say that a language-game is only possible if one
> trusts something (I did not say 'can trust something') (OC 509).

This is implied in the story about development I described above. To unpack the Wittgenstein quote, it is necessary to tie together what has been said about trust, commonsense and framework propositions. To start with, I have argued that trust frames our practical interaction with others. A child's natural instinct to trust their caregiver enables them to be inducted into the world-picture that allows them to function in the world. This world-picture is built up of practices and rules that can be expressed as framework propositions. These practices lie at the bottom of our language-games, providing the substratum on which anything else can be brought into question and a space of reasons (that is, language-games that involve reason-giving norms) can function. The attitude of trust anchors us in these practices as it provides an

epistemic frame that limits the range of possible interactions with others and the possibilities we are prepared for in any situation. This epistemic frame is constituted by an affective apprehension of others that orientates someone in social space by limiting the interpretations of other people's behaviour.

One issue I need to deal with in detail is the relation of commonsense to what others have called 'framework propositions' or 'world-picture propositions'. An objection to what I have said already might be that commonsense beliefs do not seem to overlap with the propositions that make up our world-picture. The mismatch can be seen in the way we can doubt beliefs that people might call commonsense, whereas Wittgenstein seems to be saying that we can have no epistemological attitude to propositions that make up our world-picture. Instead they provide the frame which allows us to say anything coherent at all. The confusion here is generated (a) by the multi-valence of the term 'commonsense' and (b) the foregrounding of the propositional aspect of the world-picture. My response to (a) is to accept that many of the beliefs we call 'commonsensical' can be doubted, however another way of using the term 'commonsense' is to refer to a general orientation that we hold in common with others and which enables us to understand each other. Of course this orientation varies slightly from person to person and culture to culture and this means that we sometimes use the term to argue over what is and is not commonsensical. As Wittgenstein states:

> The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other (OC 97).

This seems a pertinent analogy to apply to commonsense. A commonsense orientation is always without a sharp division between what is settled and what is in flux but most of the time there is enough commonality in orientation not to worry about what is river-bed and what water. Returning to the propositional nature of 'world-picture propositions', certainly the propositions (or sentences) that express a world-picture are not something we doubt (or are certain about). Their role is such that we do not have to direct attention to them and they fill that role so that we can get on with other things. They are settled, for the most part, and their being settled allows us to function.

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However, as I said above the term 'world-picture' is used in *On Certainty* primarily to refer to our way of orientating in the world (see OC 95 quoted above). If this is so then there is a match between our use of the term 'commonsense' and Wittgenstein's use of the term 'world-picture'; they are both primarily our ways of orientating in the world. And the trust I claim we have in a world-picture is not directed at propositions, but at a way of orientating in the world. In delusions it is trust in everyday practices (normal ways of going on in the world) that breaks down, not in the person's attitude to certain propositions. From this we can see that one of the reasons for the incomprehension between the person with the delusions and their interlocutor is based on the fact that what is river-bed and what water becomes an issue between the two partners involved in the conversation. That is, the slight recalibrations required of us in getting a sense of what is settled and what to be discussed in everyday life (in that we mostly share a common idea of how to negotiate the social world) become amplified when talking to someone with delusions. This is because the person identified as delusional can be understood to have lost trust in the usual ways of orientating (i.e. the river-bed), not in specific propositions. This loss of orientation leads to statements that are sometimes not immediately clear as to their sense (because they break basic rules of our common orientation to the world). The task in such a situation becomes recalibration on a much larger scale than is normally found in everyday life. With this understanding of the role of trust in place, it is necessary in the next section to look at how a breakdown of the 'atmosphere' of trust functions in the formation and maintenance of delusions.

5.3 Delusions and a Breakdown of Reciprocal Trust

One way of understanding delusions is to see them as the result of the commonsense world-picture being discounted and replaced by other strategies for interacting with the world. These strategies involve holding fast to possibilities that commonsense, framed by trust, rules out of consideration. This discounting of the commonsense world-picture is possible because of a breakdown in the atmosphere of trust with those in contact with the person. One neuro-biological theory, [8] claims that in the early stages of the Odyssean condition the sufferer's brain undergoes a dysregulation of dopamine production. This account can be used to help us understand the breakdown in the relationship between the person and their community in psychosis. According to this theory, dopamine controls the attribution of salience to things in the environment – that is, the dopamine system is a major component in, 'a process whereby events and thoughts come to grab attention, drive action and influence goal directed behaviour because of their association with reward or punishment' (Kapur 2003: 14). Overproduction of dopamine produces in the sufferer the prodromal phase of Odysseania where everything takes on an air of significance. This change in perception creates a barrier between the delusional person and the other as certain things will seem highly significant to the delusional person that do not even register with the other. The other person will also feel that the prodromal person is not following the natural flow of the encounter and is behaving erratically and unpredictably. As Cavell points out, it is precisely because we share routes of interest that we are mutually understandable to one another:

> We learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are
> expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further
> contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in
> particular, not the grasping of universals nor the grasping of books of
> rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand the
> same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing
> routes of interest and feeling, senses of humour and of significance
> and of fulfilment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what

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[8] I also looked at this theory at in Chapter 4 because of its phenomenological implications.

else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation - all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls 'forms of life.' Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest on nothing more, but nothing less than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying (Cavell 1976: 52).

As this quote points out, the unpredictable lines of interest and attention of the prodromal person will mean that a sense of threat is experienced by both parties in the encounter. This will act to drive out the atmosphere of trust that is necessary in order to maintain a public space with the other. The sense of threat can be seen to arise from the way other people experience an encounter with a person in the prodromal phase and is described in the literature as the 'praecox-feeling' (as elaborated in Section 4.2). The praecox-feeling (where the person can seem sinister or even frightening) can be understood as emanating from the prodromal person's erratic perceptions of salience preventing them from engaging in most of the normal ways people can come to be attuned to each other, for example by smiling, shaking hands, looking the other person in the eyes, etc. This emotional apprehension of the person in the prodromal phase of Odysseania limits the possibilities for engaging with that person and elicits a sense that this person may be a threat. This, in turn, has an effect on how the person responds to the prodromal person. The erratic behaviour of the prodromal person may lead to a complete breakdown in the encounter between the person and the other. For instance, the person in the prodromal phase of Odysseania may experience the other as acting evasively, and this could be true as the other person may be wary of upsetting the prodromal person because they seem unstable. The other person may try to show little affect when they are with the prodromal person because they are worried about them. This breakdown in the relationship can be understood as changing the atmosphere of trust the prodromal person is used to living in, and he or she may experience this as a change in the world itself.

An objection here could be that the breakdown in trust is nothing to do with affective attunement, but is rather because the person has started to say things that others consider delusional (has become psychotic) leading them to mistrust the person. The response to this is that, of course, coming out with odd and inappropriate statements will tend to

make other people wary, but such speech, by itself, does not lead others to attribute delusions to a person. People can come out with bizarre statements when drunk or overly tired or even in everyday situations (some people do this all the time) and people will laugh them off. It is only a sense that something has gone seriously awry in the interaction (as may be signified through a change in body language and general responsiveness) that will lead to a person being seriously considered as delusional. This again could be put down solely to the development of the psychosis in the person no matter what anyone else does. However, my claim is that there is a looping effect between the prodromal mood (that causes the onset of a breakdown in attunement with others) and the reaction of the others to this mood. Other people's reactions contribute to the person's sense that there is something to be suspicious about, which then feeds back into their failure to make themselves understood (I will explore such a loop in more detail in Chapter 6). The positing of a feedback loop in the breakdown of reciprocal trust helps to explain the feeling on the part of both parties, at least in the case of the Odyssean condition, that there is a change in the 'atmosphere' in relation to the other. It is also backed by the consideration that people who become delusional are not likely to simply forget the norms of commonsense interaction, but rather that they seem to become insensitive to them because their whole understanding of the situation has changed and the reactions of those around them help cement this understanding. This certainly holds with my own experience.

For the delusional person, the change in the behaviour of others around them can be amplified to become a change in the 'atmosphere' of trust which can appear as a global change in the way the world is. Due to the erratic nature of the prodromal person's attention, the person may sense a change in their situation without being able to pinpoint what it is. Jaspers refers to this as the 'delusional mood':

> The environment is somehow different – not to a gross degree –
> perception is unaltered in itself but there is some change which
> envelops everything with a subtle, pervasive and strangely
> uncertain light. A living room which formerly was felt as neutral
> or friendly now becomes dominated by some indefinable
> atmosphere. Something seems in the air which the patient cannot

account for, a distrustful, uncomfortable, uncanny tension invades

him (Jaspers 1997: 98).

In other words, to the person themselves it appears that they are acting as before (according to the same social rules), but the world has changed. To other people, the situation resembles the thought experiment Wittgenstein gives of a student who is instructed to write down a series according to the rule 'add 2' and does so successfully up to 1000, whereupon he continues the series by adding 4. When questioned, he replies that that he went on in the same way (PI 185). The justifications we can give for why one action accords with a rule and another action does not, eventually run out and we are left with a practice as the ground of our rules. If someone does not follow the practice, there is nothing we can say to justify our way of doing things other than the practice itself. The cement that keeps together our agreement in judgements is trust – that is, trust that we are not being deceived by going along in the familiar way. Without the atmosphere of trust, the sufferer, who is already beset with trying to make sense of a change in the salience of things in the environment, now feels that something undisclosed is threatening them. Such a feeling of threat, as I argued before, means that the usual anchor in the commonsense way of orientating oneself given by trust is missing. This opens the way for entertaining highly unlikely or even impossible interpretations of the situation. As these interpretations provide a means for orientating in a highly strange and threatening world, they take up the place left by the parts of the commonsense world-picture that have been discounted and correspondingly take on their incorrigibility. This incorrigibility is rooted in the way these unlikely interpretations enable the person to carry on in what seems a disconcertingly strange and dangerous new world. I will examine this in more detail in the next section.

Two more linked questions to look at before moving on to the incorrigibility of delusions are (a) whether this idea of a breakdown in trust could be applied to other mental struggle conditions; and (b) why, according to this idea, in cases where you would expect that someone would lose all trust in the people around them and start experiencing the world as a highly threatening place (as may happen in response to a traumatic event that leads to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) do they not necessarily develop delusions. To answer (a) first, I see no reason why my account could not be adapted to other cases. Take, for instance, obsessive-compulsive behaviour which has

been understood as a reaction to anxiety. Anxiety can be seen as an uncertainty about the world (or at its extremes a loss of trust in the world as found in delusions) and compulsive behaviours seem to be a way to allow this uncertainty to have an expression. I have not looked at this condition in detail and am only speculating, but it seems to me to be a similar strategy to delusion formation for coping with an intense unexplainable threat. One possible reason that it does not develop into the person having delusions is that this behaviour itself allows the person to give the emotion expression and so maintain an anchor in commonsense. If what I have said in chapter 8 about strategies for dealing with such emotions works with delusions then maybe verbal expression could help people to deal with this condition also.

Turning to (b), one way of responding to this question is to point out that in the case of traumatic events a person can normally see clearly the cause of their feelings of threat. This does not make the experience any easier to deal with, but the person is possibly less likely to respond to it by losing their anchor in commonsense. This potentially adds to the suffering they are going through because they then cannot get a respite from the threat and are stuck with the memory of the trauma. Leaving the realm of commonsense at least allows a person some diversion from the suffering found in their aversive emotions by redirecting their attention (although this creates other problems in terms of interpersonal relations). The trauma victim has the possibility of still trusting at least one other person, because they can understand where the sense of threat comes from and so do not necessarily project it on to every one else. In this way they may be able to remain in a commonsense orientation to the world (for good or ill). Again, what I say in chapter 8 may have some application to this condition. If we take fantasy as one way of dealing with threat then possibly it could also be used (under controlled conditions) to deal with trauma. Although these thoughts are speculative they suggest possible directions for further enquiry.

5.4 The Incorrigibility of Delusions

The experience that explains the incorrigibility of at least some delusions can be usefully compared to 'eureka' moments in solving a mathematical problem and the role of a cadence in a piece of music. The relation of such a mathematical 'eureka' moment to the experience of alighting on a delusion is described in a quote from the mathematician John Nash and illustrates how a delusion can seem to come to a person the way a mathematical solution can do:

> 'How could you,' began Mackey, 'how could you, a mathematician, a man devoted to reason and logical proof….how could you believe that you are being recruited by aliens from outer space to save the world? How could you…?'
>
> Nash looked up at last and fixed Mackey with an unblinking stare as cool and dispassionate as that of any bird or snake. 'Because,' Nash said slowly in his soft reasonable southern drawl. As if talking to himself, 'the ideas I had about supernatural beings came to me in the same way that my mathematical ideas did. So I took them seriously' (Nasar 1998: 11).

Here we can see how delusions can appear to the sufferer as being as self-evident as something we consider commonsensical such as that '2+2=4'. In other words, it is possible to interpret Nash as saying that delusions provide a solution to the tension of the existential situation in which the person finds themselves, in the same way as a mathematical solution gives relief to the tension caused by a mathematical problem. The feeling of relief on finding a delusion can be understood as due to finding a new orientation to the world and others that enables them to crystallise into an image (or narrative or picture or an ordering of words) the chaos that has engulfed them up till then. The delusion allows a resolution of the tension of an atmosphere of threat. This can be compared to the way someone becomes almost obsessive in trying to solve a particular mathematical problem with all the tension that comes with such an obsession. They will turn the problem over and over again in their minds, obsessively trying to come up with a solution that fits the problem. This tension is an expression of the mind

trying to find a resolution through a neat formulation that takes into account many interlocking factors. In the same way, the person in the prodromal phase of the Odyssean condition is trying to find a narrative (or ordering of words or picture or horizon) that makes sense of an extremely chaotic existential and emotional situation. The relief that the narrative provides makes it something the person will be loath to give up as it enables them to get a handle on the threat they feel. This means that the delusion will be held in spite of what others consider conclusive contrary evidence. Its centrality to the identity of the person is found in the way it provides a means of carrying on and relating to others in the face of the disintegration of the commonsense world-picture.

Another way of depicting this need for an emotional resolution is found in the figure of a cadence in music. The similarities between the formation of delusions and the resolution of dissonance in a piece of music can be found in the way that, if a piece of music is stopped before it has come to an end, then the person who has heard the incomplete version of the piece will probably have the music going round and round in their head until they do hear the final cadence. The example of music is very apt in that the composer takes us on a journey through dissonance which can bring up many emotional tensions and feelings, but we are always (in most classical music, at least) promised a harmonic resolution at the end. In the same way, the person in the emotional chaos of an existential situation that brings all their certainties into doubt and is experienced as an atmosphere of threat can be compared to someone listening to a particularly dissonant phase of a piece of music. The person craves an harmonic resolution and the delusion can be seen as providing this. No matter how improbable or impossible the delusion, it provides a release of the tension of uncertainty that they had been caught up in till then. The term 'crystallisation' may be used here to refer to the production of a delusion if we liken it to a cadence in music. That is, the various tensions caused by the feelings provoked by a piece of music need some sort of release and this is given at the end of a piece by a chord progression that satisfies human sensibilities as an appropriate stopping place. If the piece is cut short, the mind will go over and over what has been heard, whereas a cadence will give a sense of completion to a piece. Delusions can be understood as being produced by affective 'heuristics' that operate in a similar way to cadences in that the resolution on a particular delusion produces a sense of order and completion from out of internal chaos. Delusions can be

understood as becoming fixed due to the way they give relief to aversive emotional chaos.

The question then becomes why a particular stopping point should become entrenched. If one verbal crystallisation is found to give the required relief from emotional chaos why not then keep on searching for an even better stopping point. In fact, in Odysseania sometimes delusions can be fluid and only remain stable for short periods of time, but be held with unshakeable conviction during that time, while others can remain fixed for years. The answer here will come down to what the words do for the person in a specific situation when they are having a specific mood. To give an example, a religious experience can remain with someone for years, e.g. because of how it helped them to deal with particular problems at a particular time. The meaning of what was revealed through the experience is bound up with the situational context. In the same way, a particular verbal expression to deal with a particular situation can seem to express a truth for the Odyssean that does not go away even when the chaotic mood subsides. Other crystallisations may only seem appropriate in a particular mood and the meaning can seem to evaporate when they find themselves in other moods (or situations). This can be seen to happen because what happens before and after a particular crystallisation of words will inflect the meaning of that particular understanding of the world for the person. Also, if a particular verbal crystallisation does not cause too many problems for the person in their day to day life and it means a lot to them (possibly helping them get through other periods of chaotic moods) then the attraction of those words (tied up with the person's understanding of the meaning of the experience that gave rise to them) would seem self-evident.

The final issue to address here is the term 'delusional' itself. Although the term should only be applied to particular speech-acts, it very quickly slides to come to refer to the whole person, and the person is seen as untrustworthy in general. 'Delusional' becomes synonymous with 'psychotic',[9] and this is an unhelpful term in that it changes the focus

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[9] 'Psychosis' may be a useful term to refer to what the person is going through, but calling someone 'psychotic' acts as a barrier to understanding their speech and behaviour as meaningful. Even if a person is hard to understand, terms that are used to define the whole person as irrational put all their behaviour in a certain light, instead of being sensitive to the various things the person is trying to do through their behaviour and speech.

from identifying something someone says as hard to understand to invalidating everything that person says. Laing reports one sufferer as saying:

> We [Odysseans] say and do a lot of stuff that is unimportant, and then mix important things in with all this to see if the doctors care enough to see them (Laing 1965: 164).

This highlights the need to be sensitive to the sufferer's words, which can be obscured by viewing everything they do and say as being the result of being 'delusional'. The 'denial of community' involved in some approaches that deny the meaningfulness of the words of those with delusions will be explored in Chapter 7. Here, I just want to point out that, without a sophisticated and accurate definition of delusions as particular speech-acts (a definition that cannot be found in contemporary debate), the very term 'delusional' adds to the incorrigibility of a delusion as the speech of the person is not taken seriously as making an admittedly unusual but meaningful move in a conversation. Without the access to conversation, the person with the delusion will be unable to recalibrate their delusions against the reactions of other people. This highlights the need to approach the definition and phenomenon of delusions without prejudices about the limits of 'rationality'.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the role of trust is central to understanding the formation and maintenance of delusions. Trust constitutes the frame for our commonsense orientation to reality. In delusions, this frame breaks down leading to a change in the person's world-picture, which is made up of commonsense practices that allow us to orientate in social space. The breakdown of trust is reciprocal between the sufferer and those around them caused by a looping effect between the reactions of other people and the behaviour of the person experiencing the prodromal phase of the Odyssean condition. I examined experiences that are analogous to the experience of alighting on a particular delusion that could be used to explain the incorrigibility of delusions. I

looked briefly at how the terms 'delusional' and 'psychotic' encapsulate attitudes to the person that stand in the way of the possibility of the person recalibrating to commonsense reality through conversation (a point that will be explored further in Chapter 7). In the next chapter, I will look at how we can use the hermeneutic principles developed in this thesis up until now to elaborate the background pictures that make sense of certain delusions, such as paranoia and thought broadcasting, and how they can develop out of everyday anxieties.

Chapter 6

Making the 'Stone Feel Stony':
The Development of Misalignments of Body and Soul

To think a flower is to see and smell it,

And to eat a fruit is to know its meaning

(Pessoa 2006: 23).

In the last chapter, I examined how delusions can develop from a breakdown of reciprocal trust. In this chapter, I will cash out the dynamics of this breakdown by looking at the development of delusions that relate to fears over the expressiveness of the body. I will be using the hermeneutic approach advocated in Chapter 3, namely the 'preconception of completeness', to examine the background phenomenological context that might allow us to find our feet with people who have such delusions. I hope to show that these delusions grow out of preoccupations that we all can have at some time. In other words, this chapter will look at how common anxieties to do with the natural expressiveness of the body and its actions can develop into one of a cluster of delusions, namely paranoia, thought broadcasting and mind-reading delusions. In doing this, I will be taking a line similar to Laing in his book *The Divided Self* (1965) but with important differences in that I do not think the person necessarily develops a false self.

Firstly, I will argue that the seed for anxieties over the expressiveness of the body grows from a lack of attunement with others in conversation (as I outlined in Chapter 5) that leads to a breakdown in the natural back and forth that people feel in conversing with others. This breakdown leads the person to feel their body as obtruding into the conversation when it would normally be invisible. By this, I mean that a person's gestures and words come to seem clumsy to the person and they have to direct their consciousness to control what normally comes naturally. It is in this disruption of normal functioning that anxieties develop over the expressiveness of the body and of its actions, most importantly in the person's use of language. Cavell (1979: 351) has

described these anxieties as underlying the construction of the fantasy of a private language as developed in Wittgenstein's private language argument. The two related anxieties that develop from the same root are (a) that of not being able to make oneself known through the body and especially in language or, alternatively, the worry that (b) the merely expressive body (and also the use of language) makes one known regardless of any contribution from oneself.

The first of these anxieties (a) makes the body seem like an opaque object for the person and makes them feel as if the body essentially hides their soul from others. This worry, that the person's soul is essentially hidden for others, means that it seems to the person that others perceive only their body. Sartre's (1958: 222) analysis of the objectifying role of the look of the other as causing shame seems to fit here. This objectification of the person is an aversive feeling, and so the person wants to flee the gaze of the other. However, as the objectifying of the body is a symptom of the anxiety they have over the inexpressiveness of the body, the fantasy remains independent of any actual look. As a result, the person feels that they are under a constant gaze. The feeling of shame is internally related to the gaze of others and because the person feels the shame so intensely, there is a projection of an external point of view of a stranger watching them constantly and judging their actions.[1] I will argue that this in turn leads to paranoia. As the soul seems to be occluded by the body, so the person feels that they have something that is essentially hidden which the gaze of the other is trying to get at but cannot. Laing describes this experience as 'the divorce of the self from the body' and puts it down to the person being 'constantly afraid to lodge in the body for fear of there being subject to attacks and dangers it cannot escape' (Laing 1965: 161). In this case, the danger is the aversive objectifying gaze of the other. This feeling then starts to crystallise in a fantasy of being constantly watched and thereby objectified. This, in turn, can lead to ideas of surveillance; that the person is being watched by MI5, the CIA or aliens. The fact of the unprecedented number of CCTV cameras being used at present in this country, along with the ubiquity of reality TV shows, can only make such an idea seem more plausible. The film *The Truman Show* (Weir 1998) is one way we can make sense of what the person with the delusions is reporting. As argued in Section

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[1] A similar thing can happen in the case of auditory hallucinations where an internal 'alien' voice constantly comments on everything that the person does. In this case, as well, there is the internalisation of an external perspective on the actions of the person so affected.

5.4, such delusions become fixed due to the way they give relief to aversive emotional chaos.

The other worry (b) of the body expressing the soul beyond the control of the person generates the opposite idea of total transparency. The person feels they are condemned to being known. This experience of self-consciousness has been elaborated by Laing in terms of the dangers of visibility (a fear I will also look at as an obstacle to dialogue in Chapter 7):

> In a world full of danger, to be a potentially seeable object is to be
> constantly exposed to danger. Self-consciousness, then, may be the
> apprehensive awareness of oneself as potentially exposed to danger
> by the simple fact of being visible (Laing 1965: 109).

When visibility becomes a preoccupation, the body can be felt to express the soul beyond its control. At the non-pathological end of the spectrum, this can be found in experiences of blushing when embarrassed or of shaking when being asked to give a paper in front of colleagues. In these cases, our thoughts about the situation are expressed without our consent; the state of our inner life is there for all to see. Taken to the extreme, the body is bypassed altogether, leading to the delusion that others can see directly into the person's soul or that thoughts are being directly transmitted to those around the person. A good picture of this is given in Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights* (1995), where people from one particular world are accompanied by daemons which express the inner life of the person they are joined to, in a public way. It will be argued that the difference between mind-reading and thought transmission is based on the stress that is placed on the body's role as the medium of the soul. Reading implies that the body is a text of sorts that makes public the inner life, whereas thought transmission seems to picture the soul as being revealed through public access to the person's internal speech (the medium for other's access to such speech in the case of this delusion is in most cases put down to a radio signal that others can tune into).

All of these delusions have an effect on interpersonal relations with the person with the delusion. The objectification of the body in paranoid delusions will entrench the person's awareness of their body as an object in conversations and thereby intensify the

feeling of being watched and judged. For cases of mind-reading and thought-broadcasting evidence that supports the delusion can come from everyday examples of psychological comment such as, 'you're looking worried,' or, 'you're thinking about what happened at the weekend.' This is because normally we are pretty good at knowing what is going on with the internal lives of people we know, through their bodily expressions and through conversation. However, this could also be taken by someone with these delusions to confirm their suspicions. In the next section, I will start by looking at Wittgenstein's private language argument in order to show how the basic anxieties found in these delusions can be found expressed in philosophical concerns over the idea of language as being necessarily public.

6.1 Expression and the Private Language Argument

Wittgenstein writes:

> My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of
> the *opinion* that he has a soul...If the picture of thought in the head
> can force itself upon us, then why not much more that of thought in
> the soul? The human body is the best picture of the human soul. (PI
> pg. 178)

This quote can be understood as expressing an idea of the basic attitude that underlies
the smooth functioning of our interpersonal relationships. It claims that when we
encounter another, all the diverse aspects of my being as a person are expressed
seamlessly through my body. This includes my speech, which is one particular mode of
bodily action. This claim is made in opposition to the thesis that my inner life is
something that only I can know and which takes the body as a limitation on what others
can know about me in contrast to the absolute transparency I have to myself. The quote
above counters such a picture with the idea that the body is the condition for the
possibility of expression and the means of how I can come to acknowledge myself
through such expressions. The relevance of this idea to certain types of delusions can
be found through an interpretation of Wittgenstein's private language argument. My
central claim will be that both the fantasy of a private language and certain delusions
develop through worries about the natural expressiveness of the body and its actions.
The importance of this connection is that if we can make sense of delusions in terms of
anxieties that have played a role in problems philosophers address they can therefore be
seen as being in the realm of everyday concerns (if indeed the concerns of philosophers
can be situated in that realm).

To start with the private language argument, I will take my lead from Cavell's (1979:
343-354) unorthodox interpretation of what is going on in the relevant passages of
Philosophical Investigations. The key passage for this is paragraph 258. In this passage
Wittgenstein imagines himself as a diarist noting down an 'S' whenever he has a certain
sensation and, in order to retain the conjunction between the sensation and the sign,

performs an inner, private ostensive definition. He does this by trying to point to the sensation inwardly whenever he writes 'S'. The problem with this is that the purpose of this definition was to secure the correctness of the use of 'S', but of course, as Wittgenstein points out, whatever seems right is going to be right. In other words, there is no space between it seeming like I am having 'S' and it actually being the case that I am having 'S' as there is no independent standard of correctness for me to compare my sensation with. This has been taken as an argument that a private language 'which describes my inner experiences and which only I myself can understand' (PI 256) is impossible and that therefore language is necessarily public.

Cavell, however, argues that its moral should rather be the dependence of reference upon expression in naming our states of consciousness (Cavell 1979: 343). He points out that the diarist is perfectly justified in writing the 'S' in the diary; the 'S' has all the definition it would ever need. In other words, the very writing of the 'S' is an expression of the sensation 'S' and there may be uses for this behaviour, for example, to note a certain mood in which the person finds they write better. The 'S' behaviour stands on its own as a comprehensible human mode of expression. The problem comes when the diarist feels the need to conduct what can only be described as an empty ceremony of the inner ostensive definition. This is where Cavell diagnoses the worries which make the person feel the need to perform an inherently empty act (the inner ostensive definition). As Mulhall elaborates:

> If, however, the private linguist's desire to forge the connection
> between sign and sensation functions primarily to cover over the
> fact that those connections are already in place, then those existent
> expressive connections must be ones that he is unable or unwilling
> to acknowledge. As the very notion of a private language
> suggests, this unwillingness or inability will have two fundamental
> roots: first, a worry that merely expressive language is not enough
> to allow him to give expression to himself in language, to make
> himself known (here, the desire to impress a connection between
> sign and sensation manifests a desire that his signs really do have
> the faces of *his* sensations stamped on them); and second, a worry
> that merely natural expressive language makes him known

regardless of any contribution on his part, that giving expression to himself is beyond his control (and here, the emphasis on establishing a sign-sensation correlation is a way of denying the knowledge that his expressive behaviour *has* the faces of his sensation stamped upon it) (Mulhall 1994: 125).

I will argue that it is the first of these worries that is manifest in paranoia and the second is manifest in delusions of thought broadcasting and mind-reading. We can see from this quote that these worries, which I claim are at the root of these three types of delusion, are within the realm of normal human preoccupations. This returns us to the quote from Wittgenstein at the start of this section, which can be seen to express the idea that the connection between our states of consciousness and our expressions are perfectly in order as they are. It also highlights that we require our own expressive behaviour to make sense of ourselves (because we are not transparent to ourselves and necessarily hidden from others, rather we require our own expressive actions to know about ourselves). In the case of the delusions I have mentioned, these connections (between body and soul) are still in place. However, the delusional person passes over these connections because the fears described are amplified through a feedback loop in the person's relations with others (as sketched in Chapter 5) from being background anxieties to being full-blown delusions.

6.2 Paranoia and the Look of the Other

One source of the worry about inexpressiveness can be found in the common experience of being in conversation with a group of people. At its best, conversation is a natural give and take, where we feel able to listen and respond and lose ourselves in the flow of speech. This could be described as a way of seamlessly inhabiting the body. Occasionally, something might occur that pulls us out of the group feeling and causes alienation from the conversation. It might be that we feel bored by the conversation or feel insulted or irritated by something that that has come up during the conversation. We will tend to withdraw and experience ourselves as an outsider. As our attention moves away from the group and becomes directed inwardly, our mind might go blank and a common experience is to feel an inability to communicate where before it all seemed effortless. One such experience is recounted by a woman called Emily who had problems with paranoia:

> Sometimes at parties I'd find myself feeling very distant from the people I was talking to. It seemed like I had nothing to contribute to conversation. Even when I did have something I wanted to say, the people I was with didn't seem to want to hear it. Then I'd worry that, because I couldn't join in with the conversation, the others would think I was stupid. I'd think, 'I don't belong here, I don't fit in.' Sometimes (and this seems very odd), I'd almost feel as if I weren't there at all – like I'd somehow vanished (Freeman *et al.* 2006: 24).

This description illustrates how she came to feel self-conscious and became aware of the looks of people in the group no longer as open to listen to her but as a threat in that they seemed to be judging her silence. The feeling of not being there would seem to be caused by the lack of expressive possibilities open to her. One possibility is that such a situation could cause a person's body to become conspicuous through a heightened awareness of the clumsiness of their speech and actions. Alternatively, the feeling of being judged can lead to paralysis as the person focuses on how each of their actions must appear to others, until any potential action becomes stifled by the sense of the

objecthood of the body as it appears to others. In this case, the body is no longer seamlessly inhabited but feels more like an object on display, mute and ineffectual.[2] Sartre describes this well:

> By the mere appearance of the Other, I am put in the position of passing judgement on myself as on an object, for it is as an object that I appear to the Other. Yet this object which has appeared to the Other is not an empty image in the mind of another. Such an image would be imputable wholly to the Other and so could not 'touch' me… Shame is by nature *recognition*. I recognise that I am as the Other sees me… Shame is an immediate shudder which runs through me from head to foot without any discursive preparation (Sartre 1958: 222).

Although this account of the effects of the look of the other on a person omits the diversity of experience a look can have on another person, it does sum up well the experience of becoming an object for another person. I argued in Chapter 5 that people with delusions typically experience a lack of attunement with others in their prodromal phase. This is likely to be caused by a change in the salience of things for them which would undermine the patterns of joint attention that are necessary for the effortless flow of conversation when people are attuned. If this is the case, then it is likely that the experience of alienation that I described above would be common in the prodromal phase of the delusion; here Sartre's phenomenological description seems particularly apt.

The sense of being objectified relates to the worry of inexpressiveness found in the fantasy of a private language in that the body no longer feels like the field of expression, but instead becomes a thing that hides the soul. The delusional person literally starts to feel as if they live solely as an object. This experience would not necessarily happen straight away, but through repeated failures of conversation and the associated breakdown in trust this entails the worry would develop about not only the object-like body, but also its productions in language. Words and gestures would come to seem at

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[2] Ratcliffe (2008: 112-114) discusses the feeling of bodily conspicuousness that illustrates how bodily feelings can be part of a changed sense of belonging. This section draws on ideas from his discussion.

a remove from the person's intentions and feelings, and this would make the person feel their real self as being hidden by their body. Laing (1965: 143) describes this as the development of a false self and claims that this development is the key to understanding the Odyssean condition. I would not go as far as to say a false self develops; rather, there is a disconnection between the experience of body and the emotional and intellectual aspect of the person. The person feels that the soul can no longer be fully expressed by the body. The fear of inexpressiveness is internally related to being objectified through the look of the other. This is because being made an object by the other limits the expressive possibilities of the body as even small movements become the focus of the person's attention and the clumsiness this generates feeds into worries about how the person looks to the other. So as one of the anxieties intensifies (the worry about inexpressiveness) so will the other (the feeling of being looked at). This fear of inexpressiveness comes to a head because of the breakdown of a sense of trust in others (as described in Chapter 5), which means that their looks will seem threatening rather than friendly.

It could be objected at this point that many women (and sometimes men) experience being objectified through the look of another. This can be an integral part of the bodily experience of some woman (and men) in our society and does not lead them to develop delusions. As Young says:

> An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living
> the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere
> body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object
> of another subject's intentions and manipulations, rather than as a
> living manifestation of action and intentions (Young 2005: 44).

The main difference between this experience and that of a person who develops delusions is that in this case the woman is not necessarily condemned to feel that her body is inexpressive. The experience is such that in some or even most cases the woman can still express herself while under the look of another (and maybe even enjoy such objectification). Although it may condition the lived bodily possibilities open to women (as the phrase 'throwing like a girl' suggests), it does not drain the body of expressive possibilities.

The person suffering from delusions, on the other hand, finds themselves trapped by the look of the other person as being solely an object with no expressive potential. The sufferer feels that they are under an 'inhuman gaze' that resonates with the felt inability to express themselves. Merleau-Ponty describes such a gaze and its effects on communication:

> In fact the other's gaze transforms me into an object, and mine him, only if both of us withdraw into the core of our thinking nature, if we both make ourselves into an inhuman gaze, if each of us feels his actions to be not taken up and understood, but observed as if they were an insect's. This is what happens, for instance, when I fall under the gaze of a stranger. But even then, the objectification of each by the other's gaze is felt as unbearable only because it takes the place of communication…If I am dealing with a stranger who has as yet not uttered a word, I may well believe that he is an inhabitant of another world in which my own thoughts and actions are unworthy of a place (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 420).

This illustrates that it is precisely the worry that the person feels that their body is a barrier to communication that leads them to project the inhuman gaze of a stranger on others, even people they know well. Without this worry, they would feel the look of other people as a look from people who could be communicated with and could come to understand them. It is precisely the fear of being inexpressive that closes down the possibility of regaining a sense of the other's gaze as understanding and empathetic. The quote also highlights that such a gaze is unbearable; the feeling of being under such a gaze leads to the desire to escape it. However, the feeling of being incapable of expressing themselves would prove to be a barrier to breaking through to normal interaction. The experience of finding their body inexpressive might become inescapable, which in turn would feel as if their body was always being looked at, even when no one else is around. Sartre's term 'shame' is particularly apt as this feeling can be understood as the person always being aware of an external 'inhuman' perspective on their own actions and feeling judged as an object which is constantly failing to be

authentic (in the sense of expressing the inner) and therefore being guilty (appearing as just an 'naked' body devoid of expressive qualities). The real inner self would seem to the person to be occluded by the body with no hope of external recognition.

It is under such existential pressures that the crystallisation of the idea of being constantly watched or under surveillance can be understood. Someone or something (the gaze) can be seen as trying to get at the real person (the inner self), and this feeling of being hidden by the body might translate into the idea that the person has some important secret that they need to keep. The crystallisation of such a delusion is perfectly understandable in the present climate of terrorist threats, the widespread use of CCTV cameras and reality TV shows such as *Big Brother*. In other times, the Cold War could have played such a role, and before that (and also today) there was the idea of an omnipresent God. Such cultural narratives would enable the person to get some sort of handle on their changed existential sense of reality by giving words to a situation that threatens to overwhelm them. Fantasy allows a means of giving form to inchoate pressures that seem set to carry on intensifying.

One particular way of making paranoia understandable is through looking at the film *The Truman Show* (Weir 1998). In this film, Truman has been the central character in a reality TV show that has lasted all his life without him being aware of it. He is filmed 24 hours a day and lives in an artificial film set. All the people he meets are actors, although he thinks of them as his family and friends. When he turns 30, things start to fall apart when a stage light falls from the sky, nearly hitting him, and he hears a conversation about his commute to work on his car radio. His wife, Meryl, has a breakdown and leaves the set. His recourse is to hide away in the basement and from there he digs a tunnel to escape the set. From this short summary, we can see a context that would make sense of delusional paranoia. Although the anomalies of the fall of the set light and the radio conversation may not happen in the life of a person with delusions, there are always some unexplained events in anyone's life. More importantly, it is the context of a breakdown in relationships with those around him that leads him to the idea that he is being watched all the time as the explanation that seems to give a resolution to his doubts.

This situation leads Truman to want to escape; his explanation of his situation is such that he cannot relate to those around him as they are actors, which can be understood as an illustration of the feeling that their looks have become the gaze of strangers (in that he does not really know them; their bodies hide the real inner selves– that is, the way they would be in normal life and not on the set of a TV program). He is merely a body for them, acting out a role but unable to express what he really feels. This is illustrated through his continual thoughts about an extra, Sylvia, who was quickly removed from the set when he fell in love with her instead of the actor who was assigned to be his wife. This brings out a point that I will address in the last section, namely that the feeling of a lack of bodily expressiveness also hollows out the reality of others as the person constantly projects the gaze of a stranger on to the looks others give him. The fit of this film with the context of the person with paranoid delusions allows an illustration of the dynamics that can lead to a feeling of constantly being watched. This film illustrates the meaning of paranoid delusions by filling in a humanly comprehensible context for them.

6.3 The 'Naked' Soul

The description, at the start of the last section, of the setting of a conversation as a context where worries about bodily expression can arise is also appropriate for looking at the second set of worries, namely those about expressing oneself beyond one's control. Here, we can imagine becoming alienated from a conversation because we are blushing at what has been said; the worry is not that we cannot successfully communicate but rather that we are giving too much away e.g. people can see that we find a topic uncomfortable when we want to act cool and nonchalant. Another common experience is when a person makes a slip of the tongue such as calling a partner the name of someone who has been on their mind (known as a 'Freudian slip'). In such cases, the body seems to give away the thoughts of the person in spite of what they want to keep hidden. In contrast to the worries in the last section, in this case the body comes to seem treacherous as a vehicle for thought and emotion. Here, the fear is not that the body is trapped by the look of the other into a lack of expression, but that everyone really can see directly into my soul and the fear here is centred around a lack of control. This experience of a lack of control is heightened through the breakdown of trust (as described in Chapter 5) with others, which leads to an atmosphere of threat in which a lack of control feels potentially dangerous.

Whereas in the last section we dealt with the shame of being a 'naked' body in front of the other this fear is about the shame of being a 'naked' soul. The body is not felt to be an object for the other, but rather the soul seems to overflow the natural boundaries of the body, and the body is felt as being unable to hide any of the person's inner life. The central point here is the person's feeling that there are some things in their inner life that should not be exposed. As Laing (1965: 109) points out, the very visibility of parts of the inner life open the person to the possibility of harm. These worries find a basis in the commonplace Freudian idea that we are condemned to meaning in even our most insignificant actions and words. It is no coincidence that the slip mentioned above is often termed a 'Freudian slip'. From the perspective of psychoanalysis there is a constant battle between the Id's unmentionable desires and the Superego's conformity to internalised social norms. Without taking on all of the technical baggage of psychoanalysis, it is possible to summarise that the fear here is the threat of rejection (or

harm) from the social group if there is no way to hide at least part of a person's soul. The look that the person fears is not that of the stranger but rather the look of someone whose opinion they care about. The natural reaction to such a fear is shyness. However, this reaction is a way of intensifying the very emotions it is trying to hide (because such worries could cause the person to blush more than usual or have shaky hands in social situations) and can lead to general social anxiety.

How this very commonplace anxiety can be the trigger for delusions can again be explained through the breakdown in attunement described in the last chapter. Things become salient for the person that they normally would not notice and these things start to take on a heightened significance because of the very fact that they were noticed. These things could be conversations of people in the street, speech on the radio, insignificant observations of people that they know, etc. And all of these fragments of conversation can become weaved into a narrative that people around them somehow know their deepest thoughts, desires and fears. Any fragment of speech can with enough imagination be made to relate to some aspect of a person's life. And so the delusion develops that the body is not only treacherous, but is also transparent and people really can see into the darkest recesses of the soul.

At this point, it is necessary to distinguish between delusions of mind-reading and thought-transmission as these seem to delineate different pictures of the soul's relation to the body. Mind-reading seems to take the body as a sort of text in that the person thinks their thoughts can be read off their expressions and gestures and through what they give away in speech and so gives prominence to the role of the body. In fact, 'mind-reading' is a popular term in pop psychology for the act of stating what the other is thinking without sufficient evidence. Although we 'mind-read' in normal interpersonal interactions all the time, the delusional person thinks that this action by other people is always accurate. Their soul seems to be completely on display in their body. Thought transmission, on the other hand, bypasses the body altogether. The picture seems to be that thoughts are transmitted directly from the head in the form of radio waves that others can tune into. This would seem to have nothing to do with the body. However, the very action of engaging in internal speech relates this delusion to the body as being one of its modes of behaviour (i.e. speech). The picture seems to be that the body is sending the radio waves out in spite of the wishes of the person and so

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is once again involved in a treacherous uncovering of the soul. The two different pictures could be due to the stress the person puts on whether they give themselves away orally or visually, but both kinds of delusion are to do with the exposition of the soul through the body.

Again, I will briefly allude to one particular illustration of the picture that lies behind the generation of this type of delusion and this will aid in examining the context in which the delusion has sense. For this, I would like to take *Northern Lights* (1995) by Philip Pullman. In this novel, the main character, Lyra, is an inhabitant of a parallel world similar to ours, but where every human has an accompanying animal daemon which is their form of our soul. The daemon of children can change the type of animal they are at will and their form expresses the feelings of the child whose soul they are. For adults, their daemon is a fixed animal which expresses their character but which still expresses their emotions through its moods. If we agree with Wittgenstein's claim that the human body is the best picture of the soul, then Pullman's idea of a daemon is the best way of picturing delusions of the 'naked' soul. This is because if it is felt that the soul overflows the body, then only another body outside the person's own could express what is going on inside, and so the body must be duplicated with one body being a truer expression of the inner life of the person. Of course, if this was another human body, then we would have the problem of how it could express the person better than the person's own body. The question would then be whether it could be said to have its own inner life and if not there would be problems over deciding which body was the real person and could claim to ground the other. However, these worries are solved through having the daemon as an animal; the animal allows the expression of the person in a different mode from the human body in the way that drawing a picture or writing a poem can be a truer expression of the person than their verbal report of how they feel or what we see in a photo. Perhaps what we can learn from Pullman's story is that the fantasy of mind-reading or thought-broadcasting is a desire to find a form of expression over which people with these delusions can have more control than they have over their body at the present time. In Chapter 8, poetry will be looked at as a possible means of returning the expressiveness of the body (and language as a mode of bodily expression) to its natural harmony with the soul. In the next section I will look further at the role interacting with others plays in delusions concerning the expressiveness of the body.

6.4 The Role of Interpersonal Relations in Anxieties over Expressiveness

I have touched upon ways in which interpersonal relations lie at the root of feelings of alienation that give rise to fears over the expressiveness of the body using the example of conversation. In this section, I will briefly look at how interpersonal relations act to cement the delusions discussed above through a breakdown in trust. For the person with paranoia, people around them appear as actors or as not quite what they seem and this, I have claimed, is caused by the projection of the 'inhuman' gaze of a stranger on to the normal, various looks people (both friends and strangers) give. This will mean that the person suffering from paranoia will feel estranged even from friends who are trying to reach out to them because they will come across to the person with the delusion as insincere or threatening. What they feel about their own inability to express themselves colours their whole perception of the world, making everyone appear as if their souls are hidden by their bodies, thereby putting the possibility of authentic conversation out of reach. Such an attitude, that everyone is acting out a role (which is a way of projecting their fears about their own inexpressiveness on to others), will further close off possibilities for being able to express themselves, as the person feels enveloped in artificiality and a general atmosphere of threat. Fears about expression will tend to intensify the very thing that is feared, namely the inability to communicate. The people they interact with will take their behaviour as an unwillingness to communicate, and they will thereby be forced into truncated forms of communication. This is likely to reinforce the person's suspicions that they are under surveillance, and the other person is not really expressing what they feel but is merely testing them. Of course, the strange behaviour exhibited by someone who believes they are always being watched may itself cause them to be put under observation in a psychiatric ward, which can only further confirm their new world view.

Turning to delusions of mind-reading and thought-transmission, everyday conversations normally involve some form of putting forward characterisations of the other person in the dialogue. This may be through phrases such as, 'you seem under the weather' or 'you're still brooding about what happened yesterday'. These common forms of 'mind-reading' would only act to entrench the person in the delusion that they are transparent.

And if someone got something wrong about how they are thinking, this could be taken as an attempt to hide from the person the fact that their soul is on display. The belief that everyone knows your inner thoughts is resistant to being disproved because every new encounter can be interpreted as an allusion to those thoughts. This can be seen especially if we acknowledge the work that has gone into building a narrative around random bits of speech to the point that the delusion becomes a robust point of view.

One claim of this thesis (as elaborated in Chapter 5) is that delusions become possible through a breakdown of the normal atmosphere of trust. In this chapter, we have seen how it is the dynamics of a conversation that can enable fears over the expressiveness of the body to become amplified to such an extent that a person can start developing delusional understandings of the situation. The dynamic charted here is one possible way that delusions can form through interpersonal relationships and is likely to be applicable to the development of other delusions. By providing a phenomenological understanding of the development of three types of delusion and using the imaginative resources provided in literature and philosophy, I hope to have shown how the utterances of people with paranoia, mind-reading and thought-broadcasting delusions can have an intelligible relation to their existential situations. If this is so, then it helps strengthen the case that it is possible to empathise with someone with delusions through careful attention to the words used by the person and an enriched understanding of the interpersonal context of their production.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to sketch a way of entering a hermeneutic circle that makes the motivations that lead to delusions of paranoia, mind-reading and thought-broadcasting humanly comprehensible. I have taken as my starting point for elucidating these delusions an interpretation of the private language argument that looks at our anxieties over expression in language. I argued that it is in these common worries that lead us to forget the seamless way we can express ourselves through our bodies that we find the seeds for the development of the delusions listed above. I have also taken fictional works, which develop a narrative context in which these delusions can have sense, as tools that allow us to fill out the phenomenological context underlying such delusions. In the next chapter, I will examine how stigma, professional distance and

fears about visibility on the part of the interlocutor constitute obstacles to recognising the claim to community which those with a delusion make in trying to speak to others.

The Denial of the Claim to Community:
Assumptions that lead to Misrecognition and a Breakdown of Dialogue

The realisation that we all live in fantasy at times (which I made the case for in Chapter 1) enables us to see that there is not so much a qualitative gap, but rather a continuum between ourselves and those we consider insane. It is due to the fiction that there is a fixed objective boundary of rationality beyond which there is only nonsense (which I examined in Chapter 2 and 4) that leads us to exile those suffering from the Odyssean condition and other forms of psychosis from the wider community. In this chapter, I will outline the different ways in which we exile those we consider insane from the conversation of humanity. In the next chapter, I will look at possible ways to a) help those suffering the Odyssean condition to make their way back to the world of the everyday and b) enact an understanding of our own solidarity with them as a way to rebuild trust. As a means of breaking down obstacles to this I will now look at the ways in which people suffering delusions are denied community with the rest of us and how this denial of community is a key factor in the maintenance of delusions. It will be necessary to explore what delusions can teach us about the conditions for the possibility of discourse by charting the assumptions which lead people to refuse dialogue with those considered delusional.

I will take my initial direction from a claim Cavell makes about the methodology of ordinary language philosophy in *The Claim of Reason*:

> The philosophical appeal to what we say, and the search for our criteria on the basis of which we say what we say, are claims to community. And the claim to community is always a search for the basis upon which it can or has been established. *I have nothing more to go on than my conviction that I make sense*. It may prove to be

the case that I am wrong, that my conviction isolates me, from all others, from myself. That will not be the same as a discovery that I am dogmatic or egomaniacal. *The wish and the search for community are the wish and search for reason* (Cavell 1979: 20; italics added).

The 'deluded' person, in addressing their speech to others, is acting under the assumption that they are making sense and have something relevant to say to others. It would seem to be this assumption that isolates them from others (in that others take their words not to be expressions of anything worthy of their attention). The incorrigibility of delusions is one way that sufferers of delusions show their commitment to their words. This inevitably leads to an abyss between the sufferer and others. Their interlocutor decides that they can no longer continue in a dialogue because the other is 'delusional' and therefore no longer a competent partner with whom to carry out a dialogue.

If we take the search for community as being synonymous with the search for reason, as Cavell suggests, then a denial of the person's claim to reason (the claim being implicit in their delusion) is also a way of denying community with them. The person suffering from delusions is then suspended from the 'conversation of humanity' (Mulhall 2007b). Their words are judged to be without any relevance to our life. This very way of excluding a person as a conversational partner threatens to disrupt the unity of language by imposing a limit to who we are willing to see as competent speakers. It also restricts who we see as legitimate citizens in our democracy (as having a voice is one of the most important rights we have in democracy and underlies all our other rights).[1] The boundary as to who we take as a competent partner in dialogue is drawn by taking delusions as 'noise' (in the form of either an irrational, unmovable false belief or nonsense) that can represent nothing other than the suffering of the person. In other words, a delusion is understood as outward manifestation of an underlying brain disorder (in the way a scream manifests physical pain) rather than as a deeply personal way of 'wording the world' (Cavell 1989: 58). The deluded person's words do not fit with how we project our words in similar situations and so they become opaque to us

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[1] In many languages the word for 'vote' and 'voice' are the same (e.g. 'Stimme' in German, and 'golos' in Russian).

and we exclude them as partners in conversation. Wittgenstein (PI pg. 215) points out in his remarks on seeing-aspects that we can say a word out of context, such as 'bank', and mean it as the side of a river or as the place where we deposit money and we experience the different 'meanings' depending on which one we intend (this is a figurative sense of the word 'meaning'). We can also repeat a word until it loses its 'meaning' for us. We cannot see how the words the 'deluded' person uses can be meant by them and so the words seem to be idle. They are 'empty' to us in a similar way to when we experience the loss of meaning in a repeated word. We can understand the claim that is being made but it does not seem to fit the context and so seems devoid of 'meaning'. We are not sure how to take their words and feel that they cannot really *mean* them. In such a situation, the words can seem to lose their relevance to the context, hence the attraction of describing the words as 'nonsense' (Read 2001: 460) or as 'un-understandable' (Jaspers 1997: 110) or as 'trapped information' (Berrios 1991: 12). We can understand these labels as ways of diffusing the tension that is created by utterances that look like straight-forward beliefs but play a very different role in the life of the person suffering from delusions.

The image of the 'delusional' person represents a threat to our image of ourselves as people who are responsive to the world. If the person with delusions can become unresponsive to reality, then why can't it happen to me? What if it has happened to me already? Descartes separated his own sceptical musings from the ravings of madmen through fiat. Our only way of defusing this sceptical threat of an unrecognised psychosis in ourselves is through dialogue– that is, through finding that we can and do speak for others and they can and do speak for us. We need to continually recalibrate our take on the world through conversation with others. We reassure ourselves that we are in touch with reality by searching for and finding community with others. However, this is precisely what is denied the 'delusional' person once they have been labelled as such. It will be the work of this chapter to outline the ways in which the picture we have of the person suffering from delusions works as a barrier to dialogue and thereby to the rehabilitation and inclusion of the person as someone with a voice worthy of our attention. The recovery of the voice, of those considered delusional, can be understood as demanded by the ethical concept of 'tikkun olam' (repair of the world) which will be elaborated in the Conclusion of the thesis.

7.1 Dialogue and Recognition

To start with, I would like to present one approach to the concepts of dialogue and recognition, and relate this approach to what goes wrong in the case of delusions. Williams says:

> The absolute necessity for *recognition* in the exchanges of dialogue means that, while we can indeed at one level say what we please (that two and two are not four), the construction of a life requires that we discover how we can speak in a way that does not just repeat or reproduce what is given, yet is at the same time occupying the same world of thought and perception that others in their speech inhabit. Speech may be free but it needs to be *hearable* − otherwise it fails finally to be language at all. And I as a speaker need to acquire skills to listen or my response will be no response… <u>Apparent nonsense suggests that someone is trying to say something other than what you have heard in mere words; there is interpretative work to be done…</u> <u>Dialogue goes on because of a trust that recognition will be possible.</u> And acknowledging that misrecognition happens is part of the fuel of continuing the process; acknowledging that I misspeak myself prompts me to allow time for probing another's misspeaking. To assume that the words I am confronted with represent systematic coherence is to treat the words of another as if they were indeed the mathematical formulae outside of which freedom and discourse stand (Williams 2008: 134; italics in the original, underlining added).

This can be taken be in taken two ways in relation to delusions. The first way would be to attribute the failure to instantiate recognition down to the delusional person and claim that it is they who are failing to instantiate the most basic requirement of dialogue (they fail to be 'hearable' as Williams puts it). This charge takes it as obvious that one interlocutor is evidently on the side of commonsense and so has no responsibility to try and understand what the person with the delusion is trying to get across (because the interlocutor can claim that the person with the delusion is not hearable). The

interlocutor fails to see how there could be any form of recognition between them and the deluded other when the other is committed to such 'nonsense'.

Dialogue, as an open public space where the paths of discussion to be taken are not decided in advance, is based on maintaining faith in the possibility that we can learn something from the other, i.e. that they have something to say to us. The importance of another's perspective to us, through its difference to our own, is that attending to it might enable us to find that our own perspective can be expanded to encompass aspects that may at first seem to threaten that perspective. It is the constant need to recalibrate our own natural reactions to the reactions of others and thereby avoid isolation through our individuality that is necessary for the ongoing task of being a member of a community. And this requires that we can recognise something of ourselves in the other, namely a potential point of view which we could adopt. This is what we might call 'recognition' as Williams uses the term above. Recognition, it is commonly assumed in the literature, can be ruled out a priori in the case of those with delusions. Their perspective seems to be outside of any possible take on the world we could imagine; in fact, some people have questioned whether those with delusions can be considered to have a perspective at all (see Read 2001: 469).

However, reflection and humility might open up the prospect that what we take as self-evident, namely that we are directly responsive to the world in a way which they are not, is not so self-evident when we think of all the ways in which we rely on 'fictions' in orientating in the world. One obvious example was the idea until recently that someone somewhere understood and could predict what the economy would do over time. As was shown by the banking crisis, this was just a fiction that most of the population of the West was labouring under at the time. Many such similar 'fictions' help us make life more bearable. These 'false beliefs' are held in common with the people around us and may not even be explicitly formulated but form the background to our 'form of life'.[2] I would claim that such a reflection as this (that there is not such a gulf between the person suffering from delusions and ourselves) and the reflections on fantasy in Chapter 1 might allow what Cavell has called, 'a breaking up of one's sense of necessity, to discover truer necessities,' (1979: 21). This unsettling of some of our

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[2] 'Form of life' is used here in the sense pertaining to our particular community rather than the life of a human being in general.

assumptions is essential to keeping open a dialogue where we seem to come across the limit of recognition when faced by the other suffering from delusions.

The importance of an all-inclusive dialogue is that it is an essential prerequisite for maintaining freedom in a democracy in the sense that it is the condition for maintaining a future that is not dictated by the interests of one particular group in society. It is also key to enabling continued learning from the past, which means we can avoid destructive habits, by having different perspectives in critical engagement with each other (a way of putting this might be that 'representation allows for re-presentation'). One way of understanding the search for a voice is through what Cavell (1990: 6-7) calls an Emersonian Perfectionist understanding of the self as continually striving for an unattained but attainable state (of the self and the community; the forward movement of the former making possible the movement of the latter towards more fully instantiating justice) which is inherent in the present state of the self. Having a voice requires having someone to talk to who will listen and through friendly questioning draw out our potential to become more intelligible to ourselves and others. This moral picture of a progressive movement to further states of the self (and the need for a community which enables this) will guide my discussion of the ethics of the interpersonal aspect of relating to people with delusions. In what follows in this Chapter I will chart three assumptions that can prevent the delusional other from having a voice.

7.2 The Risks of Visibility in Dialogue

The first assumption I will examine that prevents dialogue with the person suffering from delusions is that there is a one-sided risk to the interlocutor in being open with the person suffering from delusions (the fear of the risks inherent in being visible to others was elaborated in Chapter 6). To start with, it is necessary to consider what is at stake in dialogue. The alternatives to dialogue are silence, pseudo-dialogue where what is discussed is not important to either participants (c.f. Heidegger 1962: 212) or an internal dialogue. Each of these cases maintains the self in its present condition. The state of silence (and also superficial talk) can be understood as maintaining a form of invisibility to others.[3] For the person with delusions, this condition can be a state of suffering and isolation, and so it is especially pertinent to look at what can be done to allow the person to transcend such a state of invisibility (which I will be exploring in more detail in Chapter 8). This section will look at how the assumptions about what people with delusions reveal in dialogue block the way to recognition of the risk to both parties in the dialogue. In this way, the invisibility of the delusional other is maintained by stopping any meaningful dialogue between them and others. The first issue to look at is what visibility means in terms of dialogue.

In looking at how dialogue or a lack of it can make someone (in)visible to others, it might be helpful to look at a quote by Bakhtin. He says:

> Dialogue…is not a means for revealing, for bringing to the surface
> the already ready-made character of a person; no in dialogue a
> person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the
> first time that which he is – and, we repeat, not only for others but
> for himself as well (Bakhtin 1984: 252).

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[3] The person reduced to a state of silence might be understood to be no longer delusional according to my definition of delusions as speech-acts. However, to silence someone may be to effectively stop the delusions, but certainly does not ameliorate the suffering, isolation and existential disorientation the person is going through. The approach I suggest in Chapter 8 is that giving someone the free reign to express their delusions in an open dialogue is better way to help them to return to the everyday. Helping the person find a voice draws them back into community, which has the potential to help them to regain their sensitivity to reason-giving norms and through this the possibility of leaving behind their delusions.

Here, Bakhtin stresses the idea of visibility (when he says that in dialogue a person 'shows himself outwardly') and claims that visibility to others is a form of making the self visible to itself and is, in fact, a form of self-constitution.[4] This claim can be seen as giving expression to the experience of how conversation often goes in unexpected directions and we find views becoming crystallised that we had never thought about before. Conversation is a form of thinking in action. This experience is given in the way that through the turns and associations fuelled by a conversation we can find out things about ourselves, our commitments and our feelings that were inchoate before or were part of the background to our experience (as discussed in Section 1.3). From this, we can see a further point about dialogue, namely that for dialogue to occur each speaker has to risk an aspect of their self in making themselves visible to the other. The risk is contained in the ever present threat that what we show to others might be rejected (Løgstrup 1997: 15). This fear can be understood as one of the motivating factors that leads to the maintenance of the other assumptions, which I will look at in the sections below, that act as barriers to dialogue with those suffering from delusions. The fear may be cashed out as the unwillingness to risk an exposition of our self in the face of someone whose identity, we believe, is made up of fantasy which may 'infect' our own sense of identity. This is because identities (understood as stories about our lives) can be fragile and having them rejected can disorientate us existentially. There is a heightened risk posed by the unpredictability of the responses of someone who suffers from delusions that could be taken as a rejection of the interlocutor's identity.

To counter such a fear, it would help the interlocutor to have a sense of how being understood as 'delusional' affects the sense of self of the person suffering from the delusions. The recognition of the risk the person with delusions accepts in expressing their delusions (which mirrors the risk the interlocutor takes in engaging in dialogue with the person) should allow a situation of equal risk where dialogue again becomes possible. The content of a delusion can play an important role in the life of the person who professes it, even though it is obviously different from the role of other beliefs they may have. As the Bakhtin quote highlights, a person's very sense of self is formed through dialogue, and so it would seem likely that delusions play a role in a person's

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[4] This relates to Cavell's claim about 'the dependence of reference upon expression in naming our states of consciousness' (Cavell 1979: 343). That is, it is in expressing ourselves that we come to know ourselves.

sense of identity. Bentall points out that all delusions 'seem to reflect preoccupations about the position of the self in the social universe' (Bentall 2003: 204). As well as this, being seen by others as 'psychotic' can cause social anxiety and withdrawal because of the perceived shame attached to this term (Birchwood *et al*. 2006: 1033), which makes the risk of visibility inherent in dialogue so much greater for the person with delusions than for their interlocutor.

One feature of some delusions is that the person holding it becomes in their own eyes – to different degrees – an 'important' person.[5] They become central to some sort of drama that is playing out in which they have a special destiny or role. The content of the delusion can be interpreted as being crucial to shoring up an identity that is unravelling in the face of the loss of the self-evidence of commonsense (Stanghellini and Ballerini 2007: 135). The destruction of the roots of the self in everyday familiarity requires that the person with delusions build up a narrative of the self that balances their feelings of alienation from others. Such a narrative tends to be hyperbolic; however, the degree of importance accorded to the person through the delusion can be seen as registering the extent of the loss of background familiarity they are experiencing. The form that delusions take is indeed important for diagnosing that they are in fact delusions, but the content of the delusions should be understood as a necessary construction for maintaining some sort of identity in the face of a collapse of the person's world. As such, it is necessary, in dialogue, to register the risk the person takes in expressing this content and only an awareness of this can avoid the rejection not just of the delusion, but also of the person's attempt to remain part of the community.

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[5] Stanghellini and Balerini calls this aspect of some delusions 'idionomia' which they describe as 'the feeling of radical uniqueness and exceptionality of one's being' (2007: 131).

7.3 Professional Distance

The second assumption that needs to be examined is the role of 'professional distance' taken up by mental-health care workers in relation to the person with delusions. A quote from Goffman from the context of an asylum gives a clue as to where this stance originates:

> One of the main accomplishments of total institutions is staging a difference between two constructed categories of persons − a difference in social quality and moral character, a difference in perceptions of self and other. Thus every social arrangement in a mental hospital seems to point to the profound difference between a staff doctor and a mental patient (Goffman 1961: 111).

The stance of the constructed identity of 'staff' in relation to 'patients' for the most part excludes the 'personal' stance of everyday dialogue. Taking the stance of professional distance is motivated by the assumption that it is inappropriate to engage with the sufferer on a personal level. The reason why interacting personally is thought of as inappropriate is based on the idea that this might encourage them in their delusion or might harm the dignity of the person by responding to them in the way they find them rather than recognising that the illness distorts their character and requires distance until they are better. Such an attitude is not only found in the setting of a hospital, but can also be prevalent among the friends and relatives of the sufferer. This may have been assimilated from the example of a psychiatrist or nurse, or simply may be a defensive stance taken up because the person finds the phenomenon of delusions frightening and therefore refuses take up a personal stance to the deluded person. Hem and Heggen (2004) have examined the way that this maintenance of professional distance in the case of a nurse dealing with a patient suffering from delusions resulted in what they call a 'rejection' of the patient. I will argue that this term 'rejection' can be cashed out as a form of misrecognition (in that the interlocutor refuses to see the patient's point of view as one they could potentially take up).

In one part of the case study that is examined, the patient, Ann, says 'I'm so influenced by everything and from everywhere. Everything is so chaotic! It's chaos inside me! I get lost! I might as well die! Shoot me!' (Hem and Heggen 2004: 58). Although these remarks are not themselves delusional but rather an apt description of Ann's inner life, the context of being in a hospital and being someone who has claimed before that they have a video camera in their brain means that the nurse, Elizabeth, can take up a stance of cold detachment to Ann. Ann's words can surely be taken as an expression of a need for acknowledgement on a personal level and shows that she is willing to attempt to open up a relation of trust. Elizabeth's response is described by the authors of the paper:

> Elizabeth uses 'we' and 'our' instead of 'I' and 'my' to refer to herself signalling by this that the relationship between her and the patient is not a personal one: 'but we don't experience things this way'. By this statement she creates a boundary between herself and the patient. The message is more or less that 'This is your reality; our reality is different' She withdraws from the patient's way of experiencing the world and in doing so implies negative conclusions about the patient's reality and avoids going more deeply into it. She behaves as an agent of the institution (Hem and Heggen 2004: 59).

The form of misrecognition here is found in the way the nurse 'withdraws from the patient's way of experiencing the world' not because the patient is talking nonsense, but because to treat her as a person would mean opening up to the possibility of communion with someone marked out as incompetent to make sense of their own world. Earlier on in the dialogue, Elizabeth says to Ann, 'We need more information about you. We don't think we know enough.' Even though Ann is willing to talk about her inner life, what Ann says about herself is discounted in favour of a behavioural-biomedical discourse about her that she has no way of joining. Instead of an exploration of the boundary of community between herself and others, her voice is effectively silenced, which amounts to closing down possibilities for finding community again (and maintains her in a form of invisibility). 'Professional distance' can be seen as a way of preventing the risk of rejection that is inherent in any dialogue. Although such a stance may be defended in terms of looking after the dignity of the sufferer, the motivations for

maintaining such a stance are likely to be mixed with self-defensive reasons of not wanting to risk oneself in an interaction with a delusional other. This motivation can be seen as having its roots in the stigma of being termed 'delusional' and the way that this breaks down mutual trust, which we will look at in the next section.

7.4 Stigma

The third assumption I will look at underlies the motivation for taking a detached stance to the deluded person. The assumption comes from the fact that not only does the person suffering the delusions lose trust in those around them, but these people will also see the person suffering from the delusion as having become untrustworthy. The change occurs because the term 'delusional' can slip from applying not only to certain utterances the sufferer makes, but also to the whole person. Their testimony is now seen as unreliable and their actions are then taken to be unpredictable. The term 'delusional' therefore inevitably comes with stigma attached. Stigma, as we have seen, means that the other will be, on the whole, unwilling to take up a personal stance to the person with the delusions. I will argue that this lack of trust on the part of those close to the person suffering the delusion and the resulting breakdown in dialogue has a part to play in the maintenance of delusions.

To start with, it is necessary to look at how a background environment that lacks social practices of trust (and therefore limits the potential to find community through dialogue) could have an impact on the formation of delusions. One important empirical finding is that the incidence of paranoid Odysseania is higher in some immigrant communities. In particular, there have been studies on Afro-Caribbean immigrants in Britain and these have ruled out any sort of biological factors or factors based on misdiagnosis (Bentall 2003: 475). As Bentall states 'exposure to racial tension, it seems, can drive people mad.' (ibid. 457). One finding is that non-white people living in white neighbourhoods are more likely to become psychotic than non-white people living in non-white neighbourhoods. It seems likely that the lack of an atmosphere of trust would play a major role in this. To live in a condition where racial prejudice is evident or is a pervasive feature of interpersonal relations is likely to erode the natural background attitude of trust. In such an atmosphere, it would take a close network of strong social bonds to avoid feeling vulnerable most of the time. Racism is one central way that dialogue between people can effectively be closed down. Here, the lack of shared practices of trust with the community around them would lower the threshold for someone to lose their anchor in a world-picture as such a world-picture is only shared by a part of the community and so its self-evidence is not so clear. Without dialogue

between communities, it becomes impossible to find a settled sense of community with the majority of others in their geographical location and therefore ground a sense of identity that has its roots in the everyday.

A further finding is that the greater proportion of childhood spent living in urban environments, the greater the risk of madness (Bentall 2003: 477). Again, this is in line with the thesis I have put forward. In cities, there tends to be less of a ready made community that would enable the generalisation and strengthening of the natural tendency of a child to trust. The anonymity of the city would tend to temper the child's natural inclination to trust those around them. The lack of a basis for being inducted into shared practices of trust would again lower the threshold for the general loss of trust found in delusions. The lack of trust can be seen in fear about engaging in dialogue with strangers and others who are different. Again, it is the closing down of dialogue in cases where there is a lack of background environment of trust that puts the self-evidence of commonsense practices on an unstable footing which makes the potential for the formation of delusions greater.

To turn to the stigmatising nature of applying the term 'delusional' and its role in maintaining delusions, the first thing to emphasize is that the term is not neutral. Having shown that a social environment that lacks reinforcing practices of trust has a role in making someone susceptible to delusions, it is likely that a diagnosis of someone as delusional itself would tend to create an environment where the person feels that they are not trusted. This may even occur before the person actually has delusions in the prodromal phases of Odysseania, for instance, when the person's behaviour becomes erratic. The erratic behaviour may lead to a breakdown in trust between the person and others (this was covered in Chapter 5). This lack of trust may be the trigger for the delusions as the person thinks that the people around them are no longer trustworthy and are trying to hide things from them. The breakdown in trust could come about through non-verbal ways of interacting. For instance, the person in the prodromal phase of schizophrenia may experience others as being evasive because they are wary of upsetting the person. Others may avoid the person or may show little affect when they are with the person because they are worried about them. This changes the atmosphere of trust the person is used to living in and may be experienced as a change in the world. The obvious factor here is how suspicions on both sides limit the extent to which they

are willing to risk their sense of self in dialogue with each other which becomes a spiral into silence.

When the person is actually diagnosed as delusional this may actually act as a barrier to recovery. The assumptions that accompany the term 'delusional' are that the person's testimony is not to be trusted and that they may be unpredictable. This immediately impairs any sort of authentic dialogue since what the person says is likely to be dismissed, or the interlocutor may make moves to withdraw from any extended discussion of the delusion. In such cases the person with the delusion will come to realise that they are not being acknowledged as an equal or respected partner in conversation. There is evidence that a person's awareness that they have been labelled as 'psychotic' leads to social anxiety and a reluctance to enter into social interactions (Birchwood *et al.* 2006: 1033). This impasse will mean that the person will be less willing to express their ideas (with the accompanying risk of rejection), and so the normal way that beliefs are changed over time through dialogue will not be open to them. Even if we take delusional beliefs as framework propositions expressing a new world-picture, it would be possible for this world-picture to change if trust was re-established and dialogue became a possibility. This, however, is precisely the problem with the present approach to delusions as irrational and incorrigible false beliefs. If delusions are simply seen as irrational false beliefs, there will be no reason to engage with the person's world-picture except to try and convince them that these beliefs are false, which is another way of refusing to risk oneself in dialogue. This inevitably leads to the closing down of the dialogue as the person suffering from delusions will withdraw as they realise they are not an equal partner in the conversation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to make a case for the claim that people with delusions are often denied community with others as a rejection of their claim to reason, implicit in expressing a delusion, is also a form of rejecting them as a partner in conversation. I have looked at the role of recognition as a necessary feature of dialogue and how assumptions about the deluded person operate to produce misrecognition which leads to a breakdown in dialogue. I have tried to show how fears about visibility in dialogue, professional distance and stigma all act to produce a silencing of the voice of the person

suffering from delusions, which in turn fixes them in a situation where authentic dialogue, and therefore the possibility of leaving behind their delusions, becomes impossible. In the next chapter, I will look at another way of characterising delusions which makes comparisons with the use of language in poetry and philosophy. I will then look at ethical considerations surrounding the strategy of rebuilding trust through listening to and trying to elaborate a delusional world as a means of showing solidarity with the sufferer.

Chapter 8

A Call for Irony:
Mood, the Ethical Demand and Indirect Communication

To start this final chapter, I will quote at length from Kierkegaard's argument for the use of what he calls the method of 'indirect communication' in his writing, as a way into the task of outlining an ethical approach to those suffering from delusions:

> Consider a person who is impassioned about something, granted that he actually is in the wrong. If you do not begin with him in such a way that it seems as if it is he who should teach you, and if you cannot do this in such a way that he, who impatiently refuses to listen to a word from you, is gratified to find in you a willing and attentive listener – if you cannot do this then you cannot help him either. Consider an infatuated person who became unhappy in love; assume that it is indefensible, sinful, and unchristian to surrender to his passion as he does. If you cannot begin in such a way with him that he finds genuine alleviation in speaking with you about his suffering, in such a way that you, in what you add concerning his suffering almost enrich him with a poetical view, you who still do not share the passion and specifically want to have him out of it – if you cannot do that you cannot help him either. He shuts himself off from you, shuts himself up in his innermost being – and then you merely preach to him. Perhaps by personal power you will be able to force him to confess to you that he is in the wrong. Ah, my dear fellow, the very next moment he sneaks around by another path, a secret path, to a rendezvous with the secret passion, for which he now longs

all the more; yes, he has almost become afraid that it would have lost some of its seductive fervour – for now by your power you have helped him to fall in love again, with his unhappy passion – and then you only preach! (Kierkegaard 2000: 460-461).

Here we can understand the situation of the person who is unhappy in love as having striking similarities to the situation of the person who is delusional. The delusion obviously has a strong attraction for the delusional person, which we can see in the feature of most delusions, that they are impervious to reasoning based on almost overwhelming evidence. As a direct approach of denying the delusion is almost bound to fail, because of this feature, it is important to explore what potential benefits there may be to other approaches. To illustrate the everyday problem found here, I would like to give an example from a quick internet search I did on Google with the search terms 'Talking to someone with delusions'. One of the first entries I came across was a question and response about how to interact with a 'delusional' person. The question came from someone who identified themselves with the tag 'Haxromana'. She asks:

> I work in a cafe with a lot of regular customers. One of my new regulars suffers from some sort of psychiatric disorder that causes delusions. She's extremely friendly and very willing to share...today when she came in, she was showing me pictures of her 'daughter' (Paris Hilton) in Teen Cosmo. In the past I've always talked to her as I would if I were talking to everyone else, without asking too many questions or indicating that what she says is obviously at variance with the truth. For instance, when she showed me the pictures of Paris, I told her that her daughter was very pretty. However, as this woman continues to talk to me, I am wondering if this is the wisest course of action. I am fine with the idea of maintaining a friendship of sorts with this woman, but I'm unsure what is the best (i.e. least harmful) way to respond to her stories. I don't think she has many (if any) good relationships in her life (even her family snickers when she talks about her delusions), and I don't want to make her life any more difficult than it undoubtedly already is (Haxromana 2007).

It is important to note that even from the superficial acquaintance that Haxromana has with the woman, she recognises the lack of close relationships in her life and the demeaning nature of laughing at the world of a person with delusions. The response to this question is from a psychiatrist (a Dr. Eisele) and illustrates the anxieties and the lack of trust that is propagated by at least some mental health professionals when advising how to engage with people who are obviously delusional:

> Dear Haxromana: This is an excellent question!! I think the best (i.e., safest for both you and she) way for you to interact with this woman is just the way you have been. However, be very, very careful not to get pulled into her delusion. For example, if she were to ask you if you believe her, you would want to find some way to avoid answering her question. You could suddenly remember a phone call you had forgotten to make, and then rush away. There is no right answer to such a question – if you say yes, then you open yourself up to helping her re-establish contact with her long, lost daughter. *If you say no, you will either anger her or alienate her.* The way to avoid the above scenario is to *keep your conversations short, and not overly friendly,* which may be difficult to pull off. On the other hand, it would not be at all useful to challenge her delusions. After all, her delusions are her reality. She believes them just like you believe you work in a cafe. *It can also be dangerous to challenge someone's delusions.* Bless you for showing empathy for this poor woman (Eisele 2007; italics added).

Here, the psychiatrist seems to be advocating that if the question of the veracity of the claims came up Haxromana should make an excuse and run away because challenging the view could be dangerous. Stating that challenging a delusion can be dangerous is unhelpful at best, as it propagates the idea that delusional people are in general dangerous. One alternative approach to a situation where the question of the veracity of the delusion came up would be to remain agnostic and turn the question back on the person by saying, for example, 'should I believe you?' (the position I will outline below would involve responding with questions that would get the person to elaborate the details of their 'world'). However, the woman with the delusions is unlikely to ask

Haxromana whether she believes her (because it is not a question that people do ask most of the time, especially of someone they only know as a casual acquaintance). The important aspect of what the psychiatrist said is that Haxromana should '*keep* [her] *conversation short and not overly friendly*' thereby making the interaction artificial for both parties (as we do not normally set a limit on how conversations should go prior to the dialogue).[1] If, as I argued in Chapter 5, a breakdown in basic trust is an underlying factor in the maintenance of delusions then such advice is a way of closing the possibility for meaningful dialogue that may help the woman.

The overt fear of the delusional person portrayed in this response by the psychiatrist, if we can take it as typical, means that the delusional person will be confined to very superficial relations with people she meets in everyday life. I will argue that denying delusions is not dangerous but rather, as Eisele admits, counterproductive, and instead put forward the necessity for an earnest irony from those who encounter the person with delusions. As people in general cannot be expected to act as psychotherapists the position I advocate below is for a way of taking the words of the person that does not necessarily mean engaging in particularly long and involved therapy with the person. However, it does mean not curtailing the conversation any quicker than the person would have done with someone who does not suffer from delusions. By joining the sufferer where they are (in taking their words as meaningful) we can open up access to the everyday for them through acknowledging their world.

To return to the quote from Kierkegaard, it highlights the major themes I would like to argue for in this chapter. Firstly, taking a lead from Kierkegaard's suggestion that the interlocutor in her approach to the person with the fixed belief 'almost enrich[es] him with a poetical view', I would like to explore the connections between delusions and other non-standard uses of language. The theme I want to develop is how similarities between delusions and the examples of poetry and philosophy can be used to outline a more sophisticated understanding of the language-games involved in delusions. I will explore both these connections and look at how the background framework of mood (understood in a Heideggerian way) can explain the similarities found here and can

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[1] Although a short and not overly friendly conversation might be the norm for the situation of an interaction in a café between someone working there and a customer, it is the idea that this should be a constraint set prior to the conversation that is objectionable. There is no reason why any conversation, in whatever situation, could not develop naturally into friendship over time.

deepen our understanding of what a delusion is. It will be argued that this understanding would suggest that poetry and fiction could possibly be used as a tool to allow the delusional person to recover their footing in the everyday. This would be done through encouraging them to give full reign to their existential situation through words.

Secondly, if we take Kierkegaard's 'indirect communication' as being possible through conversation then this will have implications for how we engage the delusional person in dialogue. I will look at the ethics of dialogue taking my lead from Løgstrup's *The Ethical Demand* (1997) which takes the trust involved in another person surrendering themselves to us in conversation as placing a demand on us to protect the part of the other's self that has been given into our care. Following this analysis I outline the criteria that must be balanced in any ethical approach to a person with delusions.

Finally, by taking on board insights from the preceding two sections, I will argue that there is a need to meet the person suffering from delusions where they are. Without a full acknowledgement of the world the person with delusions inhabits it is impossible for there to be a dialogue where both partners in conversation treat each other as equals. The quote from Kierkegaard highlights the problem of not 'hearing' the other and sketches a different approach of being willing to participate in reconstructing the sense of the other's world. Without joining the person in their 'city of words' (Cavell 1990: 7) there can be no re-establishment of trust and a sense of community. As Kierkegaard says, by denying the world of the person suffering from delusions directly, 'you only preach!' I will argue that the existential situation of the person with delusions can be described as being one of 'irony' (in the Kierkegaardian sense which I will explain in Section 8.3). If this is true, then it is not deceit to explore their world with them, but rather a way of matching the existential stance they find themselves in. Using words from Lear (2003), I will argue that, if this diagnosis is sound, then it requires that we make 'an earnest plea for irony' in how people approach those suffering from delusions.

8.1 Mood in Poetry, Metaphysics and Delusions

To start this section, I will quote an excerpt from a poem by Plath (1965) from her collection *Ariel.* The poem is called *Tulips*:

> The tulips are too red in the first place, they hurt me.
> Even through the gift paper I could hear them breathe
> Lightly, through their white swaddlings, like an awful baby.
> Their redness talks to my wound, it corresponds.
> They are subtle: they seem to float, though they weigh me down,
> Upsetting me with their sudden tongues and colour,
> A dozen red lead sinkers round my neck.
>
> Nobody watched me before, now I am watched.
> The tulips turn to me, and the window behind me
> Where once a day the light slowly widens and slowly thins,
> And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow
> Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips,
> And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself.
> The vivid tulips eat my oxygen (Plath 1965: 13).

The poem these lines are taken from is a very sad, beautiful evocation of a time Plath spent in hospital. However, if these lines are read under the aspect of a literal description of that time, they suddenly appear like the words of someone in the thrall of a paranoid delusion (e.g. that the tulips hurt her, the personification of the tulips as breathing, the references to the tulips watching her and the thought that she has no face). This could be compared with words from a woman who has experienced delusions called Esso Leete:[2]

> It was evening and I was walking along the beach near my college in
> Florida. Suddenly my perceptions shifted. The intensifying wind
> became an omen of something terrible. I could feel it becoming

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[2] This quote is taken from a book by Torrey called *Surviving Schizophrenia* (2001)

stronger and stronger; I was sure it was going to capture me and sweep me away with it. Nearby trees bent threateningly toward me and tumbleweed chased me. I became very frightened and began to run. However, though I knew I was running, I was making no progress. I seemed suspended in space and time (Torrey 2001: 39).

Here we can see a similar perception of the environment as animated. The obvious difference is that Plath is writing from an 'as if' stance (by which I mean she is writing 'as if' these the plants were watching her but is able to step back into commonsense after writing), whereas the delusion of Leete seems to be a literal apprehension of the world, in that it guides her behaviour and her emotional reaction to the situation. One possible way to understand poetical discourse is given by Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1962). To return to a sentence I quoted in Chapter 2:

In 'poetical' discourse, the communication of the existential possibilities of one's state-of-mind [Befindlichkeit] can become an aim in itself, and this amounts to a disclosing of existence (Heidegger 1962: 205).

As I claimed in Chapter 2, 'state-of-mind' is an unfortunate translation of Befindlichkeit as it suggests that he is referring to a private mental state which is what he wanted to avoid. 'Attunement' better emphasises that Heidegger is putting forward the idea that our mooded apprehension of the world underpins and gives sense to our cognition of the world. As I elaborated this area of Heidegger's understanding of attunement in Chapter 2, I will not go into detail here. To summarise his position, he argues that we are rooted and orientated in the world by the way it 'matters' to us (e.g. through moods (Heidegger 1962: 177)). Heidegger argues that the way the world matters to us is a basic framework within which cognition operates (Heidegger 1962: 177). One way of understanding this is by highlighting that moods provide the background on which anything can show up as significant and worthy of attention, which is the point at which cognition comes into play.

A more contentious claim that Heidegger can be understood to be making is that moods actually open up for us a way the world really is, rather than being merely a subjective

colouring to a scientifically-described, objective world.[3] This claim was also made by Wittgenstein when he wrote that, 'the world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man' (TLP 6.43). A possible way of cashing out this counterintuitive approach to affect is to say that the fact of the world as the place we inhabit (as creatures with certain drives and needs) is the ground on which all our other ways of making sense of it (e.g. through science) rest. In other words, the interpersonally constituted world, with its many and various layers of culture and meaning, is not a secondary or deficient mode of grasping the world to the way the world is understood through abstract contemplation in the form of science. If this is accepted then it can be argued that moods open this world up for our inhabitation both by attuning us with others and by constituting which objects in the environment appear salient to us. In this sense, our attunement to the world means that moods can be said to pick out aspects of the way the world really is, rather than just being 'inner' states.[4]

The point of this digression into Heideggerian ontology is to try to identify, with help from the quote given above, the aspect in which poetry can be seen as similar to delusions. Taking Heidegger's quote, alongside the elaboration of the idea of attunement, the link between poetry and delusions can be seen as the commonality of focus on the expression of an underlying mood that permeates the person's inhabitation of the world. A feature of art in trying to accurately express a mood is that (as is found by poets) only a certain ordering of words will do to express the particular mood. For both the poet and the delusional person only certain words will do in the same way that poems are un-paraphrasable. By this I am simply pointing out the fact that an exegesis of a poem cannot capture the aesthetic effect of the poem itself, but rather must explain what those particular words, in that particular, order do to the reader through the particular language used. I made this point in Chapter 2 (again using a Heideggerian concept) by saying that these words are 'ready-to-hand' for the delusional person. The idea here is that everyday orderings of words just do not capture the mood the person is trying to communicate (because the mood is completely 'out of the ordinary') and so new ways of talking about objects and situations are required. What is being attempted is an expression of the mood through which the person is inhabiting the world. In both

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[3] 'A mood assails us. It comes neither from 'outside' nor from 'inside' but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being' (Heidegger 1962: 176).
[4] A more detailed argument for this position is made by Cavell (1981: 125-129) and Mulhall (1997: 191-210). They call this idea an 'epistemology of moods'.

cases we could try and identify the mood the person is trying to capture for example we might say that in Plath's case, she is elaborating a despairing tranquillity and in Leete's case, an ominous foreboding. This would, however, precisely miss the point that only the particularity of the words they actually use really expresses the mood they inhabit.

The 'as if' stance of Plath can be seen as a sense in which she is aware of what she is attempting through words, whereas for Leete the mood is so basic and all-encompassing that there is no space between the sense she makes of the mood and her general orientation in the world. For Leete there is no recourse to the basic mood of trust from which she could contemplate the mood that underlies the delusion. Building on my arguments in Chapter 5, I would contend that it is the lack of the basic atmosphere of trust that would allow a contemplative stance (or what I have been calling the 'as if' stance in writing poetry) which is the element that separates the language-game of poetry from that of the delusional person's expression of a (mood inflected) world from which they are unable to escape. Trust can be taken as an underlying ground mood that allows us to fall into other moods without becoming completely lost in them.[5] In other words, in the case of a delusion there is no fall back position from which to extricate themselves from the all-encompassing mood of the delusion. In the case of poetry, the mood that is expressed can always be dispelled through a return to the everyday atmosphere of trust, which is still available to the person writing the poetry.

An example of mood playing a part in our 'wording of the world' (Cavell 1989: 58) can also be found in philosophy, most famously in the writing of Hume. He describes a particular reverie that he finds himself in when philosophising:

> I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself
> in the most deplorable condition imaginable, inviron'd with the
> deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member
> and faculty.

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[5] I am using the term 'ground mood' in the sense that Heidegger in *What is metaphysics?* (Heidegger 1993: 100) calls anxiety a 'grundstimmung'. That is, as a fundamental mood that provides an absolutely basic framework of meaningfulness through which a world can show up. Trust is a basic mood in the sense that, as I have argued in this thesis, it underlies our ability to orientate according to commonsense practices. Here I claim that someone experiencing psychosis is unable to return to this basic mood.

> Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of the senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hour's amusement, I wou'd return to these speculations, they appear so cold and strain'd and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them farther (Hume 1978: 269).

In this example Hume identifies a certain mood that goes with his philosophising, a melancholy or delirium that he dispels by returning to the social world. This illustrates the idea I put forward above that a ground mood of trust allows a person to return from a mood in which the world seems altered from the everyday commonsense world. The mood in this case could be labelled 'Sceptical' and it might be suggested that the product of trying to find words for such a mood can be found arrayed through much of the literature of modern philosophy starting with Descartes. I should emphasize that this claim is not saying that philosophy is merely bad poetry, rather, as I suggested above, it is helpful to understand attunement as opening up for us aspects of the world and certain aspects of reality that may only be available in the Sceptical mood. Descartes himself states that if he were to announce seriously that he is willing to doubt whether the hands before him are his own, as dictated by his sceptical method, then he would be taken for a madman (Descartes 1988: 77). This acknowledges that without the 'as if' stance the ideas of philosophers would often be taken for delusions. This is something Sass (1994) hints at when looking at the writings of Schreber through Wittgenstein's analysis of solipsism. Solipsism (as a philosophical position rather than an existential attitude as elaborated in Chapter 1) attested to without the 'as if' stance would undoubtedly be considered delusional, but as with scepticism it can seem the unavoidable conclusion of a philosophical meditation. It is a typical experience for a philosopher to sometimes feel that ordinary everyday ways of orientating in the world must be wrong and that thinking has lead them to some new revelation about how the world really is. This, of course, has obvious parallels with the onset of delusions with the exception that such a thought as solipsism can usually be forgotten through some

distraction found in everyday activities or socialising, because, as Hume says, the cure is in our natural habits.

To extend the analogy between philosophy and delusions, it might be helpful to look at Wittgenstein's claim that, 'philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*' (PI 38). By this, I think he means that philosophical problems arise when words are no longer being projected in their familiar everyday sense. The idea that language has left the everyday suggests, firstly, that it is not doing any 'work' but also that it has left home for a distant land. The first sense might reflect the idea that, as with poetry, philosophy tends to deal with matters detached from everyday practical concerns. The second sense could be taken to mean that there are realms that can only be charted from this self-imposed exile from the everyday. I do not think that the first sense is necessarily a damning criticism of such uses, for instance, one way of understanding 'holiday' is that of being in a mood of relaxed enjoyment and of course in contemporary society a holiday is taken to 'recharge the batteries', that is, to return to the everyday with a new appreciation of life. From this it could be said that philosophy happens when we take up a view on life from the perspective of a mood that differs from our normal practically concerned one and which enables us to return with a better sense of what is important. Although this may seem an unwarranted elaboration of a passing comment by Wittgenstein, it is arguable that language going on holiday is an apt way of describing delusions. It is perhaps Wittgenstein's sense of how close philosophising can be to insanity that encouraged him to use the idea of 'therapy' as a name for what he was trying to achieve in his own work. The warning that is inherent in Wittgenstein assertions in *Philosophical Investigations* is that if we do not remind ourselves of the primary projections of our words and their 'home' in the everyday we risk becoming entangled in the new pictures of reality we create. If, as I have argued, the everyday sense of the world requires an atmosphere of trust then this warning may capture the way the person suffering from delusions becomes lost in their words and may suggest a possible route home, that of being reminded of the everyday projections of words.

At this point it is necessary to contrast the position I have been developing with one that can seem markedly similar, namely Currie and Jureidini's theory (2001) that delusions are 'imaginings' that are mistakenly taken for beliefs by the person with the delusions.

The similarity of their theory to my account could be articulated as the way people suffering from delusions take what are merely flights of the imagination in poets, namely 'imaginings', to be beliefs. In other words, the 'as if' stance that contains 'imaginings' outside of the realm of actual belief, is not available for the delusional person to adopt and so there is no boundary between imaginings and beliefs. The attraction of their theory is that it explains not only the reason why the delusion is not questioned, but also why certain unusual experiences should give rise to what seem to be beliefs that contradict a lot of other beliefs the person has. The relevant traits of an imagining are that it is 'much more easily triggered by perception than is belief' (Currie & Jureidini 2001: 159) and 'it is surely quite common to imagine all sorts of wild hypothesis in response to an odd experience' (ibid 160). As well as this, with imaginings there is not the same pressure to resolve the tension with other beliefs. In other words, there is a natural 'suspension of disbelief' when imagining. Finally, they are not normally revised in the light of evidence as the main point of imaginings is that they deal with the non-actual.

The main problem with their theory comes when they try to account for why someone should mistake an imagining for a belief. They put this down to some, as yet unknown, 'sub-personal capacity' (ibid 162) that is damaged and thereby rule out the possibility of empathy. Empathy, they argue, is impossible because, in the same way as it would be impossible to empathise with someone who had lost the capacity to recognise people by their faces because of brain damage, it is impossible for us to imagine what it would be like to mistake a belief for an imagining because our sub-personal capacity is intact. The first problem with this is that as with other theories that I have looked at earlier in the thesis, it rules out a priori the possibility of empathising with the person suffering from delusions, which I have argued before in terms of the ethics of interaction, is a way of denying community with actual people without good reason. The need to acknowledge a person as an equal partner in conversation necessitates an attitude of taking the possibility of finding sense in a delusion as being an empirical matter to be explored through conversation. The second problem, is that this a priori claim is based on a hypothesis that there is some underlying damage to the brain that is as yet undiscovered. The contrast with my account using Heidegger's concept of attunement

is that my position does not require the positing of such damage and thereby keeps open the possibility of empathising with the person with delusions.[6]

If we ignore the claim about the mistaking of imaginings as beliefs as being due to damage to a sub-personal capacity and look at the phenomenological claims then their account seems to be on firmer ground. They claim that, 'the deluded person fails to monitor the self-generatedness of her imagining that P' (ibid. 160) and so the imagining can come to seem like it is generated by their contact with the world in the normal way that beliefs are. This idea that imaginings are taken for beliefs because of their changed phenomenology can be seen to fit with the picture of psychosis that I have been developing. Whereas I talk about an 'as-if' stance in poetry that can only be taken if there is an underlying mood of trust to return to (which is not possible in the case of delusions), they talk about imaginings having the same phenomenological character as beliefs. My account can encompass their claim by positing that delusions arise because the mood of trust is not available from which to discriminate imaginings as imaginings through a commonsense orientation to the world. In other words, imaginings and beliefs take on a similar phenomenological character because the person is engulfed in an all-encompassing mood. I believe that my account provides a richer phenomenological context that can show how their account is possible without needing to posit damage to a sub-personal capacity. To sum up what I have been saying, delusions can be seen as attempts to express a mode of attunement as a picture of the reality the person suffering from delusions inhabits (in the way I have argued poets and philosophers do), without being able to return to the everyday mood of basic trust from which to understand the expression from an 'as-if' stance.

The depiction of delusions as expressions of a mooded apprehension of the world (explored above) suggests avenues for both empathising with the delusional person and also possible ways for overcoming delusions. Central to this understanding of delusions is the way that a return to the everyday requires the return to an atmosphere of trust. In the arguments above I focussed on the way that mood influences the 'ready-to-hand' nature of particular words which are involved in creating new pictures of reality. However, the relation between mood and words is not a one way street and of course

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[6] My position would not be undermined if such damage to a sub-personal capacity were found and would in fact suggest the phenomenology of such damage for the person suffering from the delusion.

particular orderings of words can in their turn induce moods in the audience which is part of the attraction of reading poetry. As Heidegger states:

> Publicness, as the kind of Being which belongs to the 'they'…not only has in general its own way of having a mood, but needs moods and 'makes' them for itself. It is into such a mood and out of such a mood an orator speaks. He must understand the possibilities of moods in order to rouse them and guide them aright (Heidegger 1962: 178).

With this in mind, if we understand the words of the delusional person as coming from a particular mode of attunement, then careful attention to their words might allow the interlocutor to arrive at an intimation of the mode of attunement the delusional person inhabits. Here the quote from Kierkegaard at the start of the chapter seems relevant, in that any attempt to help the person will require re-establishing trust and this can only be done through an attempt to reconstruct how their present mood shapes their picture of reality. Without the proper acknowledgement of their situation, the person with the delusion will feel that he or she is not being understood and so is likely to withdraw from conversation. The ethics of joining the person in their world will be explored in more detail in the last section.

In terms of overcoming delusions, one particular study by Giannini (2001) seems relevant. Giannini talks about his use of fiction in getting adolescents to open up about fantasy worlds in which they may be thinking through real world social problems. The young adults he saw were not psychotic as they could distinguish these worlds from the real world. The therapy involved getting the young adults to read a book as a focal point for discussion which centred around the book's plot and characters:

> Gradually, connections and identifications developed between these patients and the fictional characters. The ever-mutable fantasies and fixtures of the patient's inner world were inexorably translocated to World of Tiers [the book series which Giannini instructed the patients to read]. Stable fantasies generated stable symbolisations, and the symbolic language through which we communicated finally

became comprehensible. With this common medium, misunderstanding decreased and mutual trust grew (Giannini 2001).

The relevance of this study to the situation of a person with delusions is that fiction and poetry provide a point of focus for a discussion where reality is bracketed and so enables, as Giannini says, a neutral context in which mutual trust can be established. Particularly pertinent to what has been argued in this chapter is that entering a fictional world through reading would possibly allow the delusional person to escape the all-encompassing nature of their own delusional mood and give them an alternative to their own picture of reality. Of course fiction is an excellent way of altering someone's mood. It would be useful if the person could relate their own situation to the characters in a book as a discussion of this could give an interlocutor a better understanding of the delusion. However, it is possible that the fiction itself may become part of the delusion, in that it might be taken to contain hidden messages and, of course, especially in Odysseania, people can have problems with focussing their attention. The problem with attention could be dealt with by watching a film instead, which could equally provide a context and a focus for discussion. The incorporation of the fictional content into a person's delusion could itself be discussed and used as a key for understanding the person and the way the delusion adapts in relation to what is going on in the person's environment.

Finally, the last point to be made in this section, is based on Wittgenstein's claim that his form of 'therapy' tries to, 'bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use' (PI 116). The method used by ordinary language philosophers involves overcoming scepticism by focussing on our actual use of language in everyday contexts. The way this could be applied to delusions might be to try to get the delusional person to write poetry about their delusion. In such a way it might be possible to re-establish an 'as if' stance to their delusions by allowing them to give their mood its full reign in an appropriate context. Again, the product of such writing may help others to understand the person, which would be an end in itself. Also, objectifying their delusion in a poem may enable the person suffering the delusion to obtain a distance from the delusion by having it independent of them in writing. This would be one way of drawing them out of the inchoate narrative that permeates their existential situation and leads to underdeveloped delusional speech-acts (as I argued in Section 1.3).

Support for this claim is given in a study by Bernard *et al.* (2006: 412) where people who had suffered from psychosis were asked to write about the most stressful aspects of their experience and treatment when psychotic. It was found that this helped reduce symptoms of trauma surrounding the psychosis in comparison with others who did not write about it. This would suggest that writing about the delusional experience (and especially given the freedom of form in writing a poem) could help the person to come to terms with the experience and come to an external viewpoint on their delusions themselves opening up space for them to let go of them. Pennebaker (1997: 162-165) provides evidence for both the general psychological (as well as health and intellectual) benefits that can accrue from the written disclosure of emotionally traumatic events. The reason for such effects is not well understood at present, but my arguments about the necessity of expressing a mooded apprehension of the world and crystallising inchoate feelings and understandings of the world might go some way towards providing a rationale. In the next section I will look at the ethical considerations surrounding engaging in dialogue with sufferers from delusions taking on board insights from the depiction of the obstacles to this elaborated in Chapter 7.

8.2 The Ethical Demand in Conversation

In this section I will be dealing with the ethics of entering a dialogue with a person suffering from delusions (in whatever context).   A starting point for this enquiry is set out in a quote from Cavell:

> Any theory must, I suppose, regard the moral creature as one that demands and recognizes the intelligibility of others to himself or herself, and of himself or herself to others… Here is also the importance to perfectionism of the friend, the figure, let us say, whose conviction in one's moral intelligibility draws one to discover it, to find words and deeds in which to express it, in which to enter the conversation of justice (Cavell 1990: xxxi-xxxii).

Here Cavell gives expression to the implicit demand we make of the other, when we engage in conversation, that the other make themselves intelligible to us in the same way as they demand that we attempt to make ourselves intelligible to them. This demand requires that we are responsive to the questioning of the other and can give reasons for our actions. This making oneself intelligible is a form of going beyond oneself and entering public space and happens through our engagement with the other. As Cavell points out, it is the conviction of the other that this can be achieved (our intelligibility to the other) that allows us to enter the conversation by drawing us into a search for this intelligibility through their empathetic questioning. To put it another way, a lack of conviction in the other's ability to make themselves intelligible means that the conversation cannot even get going and will remain on a superficial conventional level where there is no real encounter. This can be likened to a form of 'going through the motions' without opening up to the transformative potential of dialogue.[7]

To relate this to the person with delusions, it is possible to recognise that in communicating with them there is an implicit demand (as there is when we engage in conversation with anyone) on us to respond to the way they are laying themselves open

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[7] This could be likened to Heidegger's concept of 'idle talk' (Heidegger 1962: 212)

to us in addressing themselves to us. This address implies a trust that we will not harm what they are giving of themselves, for example, through a rejection of their words, which, it will be argued, would constitute a rejection of part of their self. This requires that we respond to them in light of a conviction that, persisting through the difficulties inherent in dialogue, there is a way for them to make themselves intelligible to us and to themselves. This implicit demand is termed by Løgstrup (1997) 'the ethical demand' and its implications for the ethics of dialogue with the delusional person will be the focus of this section.

It was acquaintance with Løgstrup's book *The Ethical Demand* (1997) that inspired the idea I developed in Chapter 5 about the centrality of trust to our being anchored in the commonsense world (and thereby that a breakdown of trust could lead to delusions). So it seems appropriate to examine what implications, for our engagement in conversation with people with delusions, come from the ethical framework he proposes in taking seriously the idea that trust underlies all our interactions with others. The possible objection to what I have said so far in this thesis, that I want to address here, is the attitude to people with delusions expressed in sentiments such as, 'why should I bother engaging with them, considering the obvious difficulties involved? Surely they need a doctor or a therapist.' I want to counter this attitude by arguing that peoplewith delusions, as much as anyone else, need to feel part of a wider community and there is an appropriate stance to take in a genuine interaction with them. Not only is this stance appropriate, but it is called for by the ever present implicit ethical demand that we place on others, in dialogue, which demands that we ourselves recognise it when other people open themselves to us.

To start with, we will look at Løgstrup's depiction of what is involved in conversation:

> In its basic sense trust is essential to every conversation. In
> conversation as such we deliver ourselves over into the hand of
> another. This is evident in the fact that in the very act of addressing
> a person we make a demand of him. This demand is not merely for a
> response to what we say. And the self-surrender is not essentially a
> matter of what is said: its content or even intimate character. What
> happens is simply in addressing the other, irrespective of the

importance of the content of what we say, *a certain note is struck through which we, as it were, step out of ourselves in order to exist in the speech relationship*. For this reason the point of the demand – though unarticulated – is that the speaker is accepted as the note struck by the speaker's address is accepted. For a person inadvertently or even intentionally not to hear the note in what we say, therefore, means that it is we ourselves who are being ignored, provided it is we ourselves who dared make the overture. That all speech takes place in such fundamental trust is evident in the fact that *the most casual comment takes on a false note if one believes it is not accepted in the sense that it is intended* (Løgstrup 1997: 14-15; italics added).

This quote sums up the central idea that Løgstrup elaborates in the rest of his book. The first thing to note from the quotation is the way that Løgstrup highlights how we put ourselves on the line in even the simplest act of addressing another, regardless of where the conversation goes beyond the opening address. The address is a way of entering public space and Løgstrup emphasises that the successful entrance to a shared world involves inviting the other to accept you as a person. Relating this to an interaction with a person suffering from delusions, it is crucial to note that in such a case the address happens in an asymmetric way in that the address to the person with the delusion might indeed be rejected by them depending on their mood at that particular moment. However, the very understanding that the other is in the midst of suffering should suffice to allow the interlocutor not to suffer a sense of rejection. On the other hand, an address from the person suffering from delusions is more intensely a gesture of vulnerability, in that they are willing to attempt to trust from a situation (as I argued in Chapter 5 that some cases of delusion are) permeated by an atmosphere of imminent threat. We might say that the ethical demand here is even more demanding of us that we protect this brave gesture of trust. And, of course, it is only if we accept the person through accepting the note in their address that we can reach them and thereby give them access to the possibility of returning to the everyday.

To move on to the second point, Løgstrup sees the necessity of taking the comments made by the person in the sense that they were intended as central to accepting the

person themselves. In the last section, I will look at how it may be possible to take the words of the delusional person in the sense they are intended through taking up an ironical stance matching their own existential stance and thereby avoiding the charge that could be made that this would involve being dishonest with the person. For now, the important point is to note the connection between the significance for the person, in order to feel accepted, of the note they strike when addressing another person and also the note struck by the intention of the speaker. The importance of being aware of the significance of these aspects of a conversation highlights that in conversation we are not merely passing information between ourselves but opening ourselves to the judgement of others on our whole person. In other words, the vulnerability inherent in the overture made through an address is maintained throughout the course of a conversation. What Løgstrup is trying to make clear is that conversation is a site of risk-taking with our very selves and the risk we are running is damage to our sense of ourselves as an equal member of the community. Of course, the potential for harm through conversation can be seen in the way many people with delusions are marginalised by society and do not even attempt to make overtures to those in the same geographical location as themselves. An example of the way that responding to an address can help in re-establishing a sense of community for people who suffer from delusions is found in a study by Beal (1999):

> The simple act of greeting others on a daily basis also developed a feeling of community. Mr. Eric said, 'I always say hello and even if they don't say it at first, after a while they will say it back to you.' Father K. also noted that to Ms. Kelly who went to mass twice daily, saying hello seemed to be important. 'She comes twice a day, and when I come down to open the door in the morning she's already there waiting. I try to say something in Spanish [the mother tongue of Ms. Kelly]. I don't know much Spanish, just a few words. I don't know much about her, but I always say hello.' Despite problems associated with rigidity of routine, such familiarity served as a basis for relationships. Thus a familiar setting can provide opportunities that can then be a basis for friendships (Beal 1999: 178-179).

Such a form of interaction obviously does not require any specialised knowledge of how to handle interactions with someone who is delusional. It forms the basis of a sense of community and can be crucial in the development of an atmosphere of trust for them.

Moving on from initial contact, the re-establishment of community will eventually require the formation of friendships. The role of the friend (as depicted in the quote above from Cavell) can be crucial in our progression from our present fixated state to a new unattained but attainable self (Cavell 1990: 8). This role involves the conviction on the part of the friend that we have the potential for intelligibility, which inspires in us the desire to search for and find the intelligibility in ourselves so as to be worthy of the attitude of the friend. One of the patients in the study by Beal, of people who suffer from delusions, expresses this in her own words:

> Ms. Frail: A friend is someone who always understands who stands by your side and gives you encouragement, who thinks for two when you can't think for yourself. That's the definition of a friend (Beal 1999: 179).

The key point here is the attribution to the friend of the ability to think for two when one's own powers of making sense of the world fail and this can only be done by someone who understands the person they are friends with i.e. is willing to enter their world. An example of this, in Beal's study, is found in the friendship Ms. Frail formed with another woman:

> Ms. Frail felt she had to tell the devil off and she shouted occasionally. Ms. Frail connected herself to her friend Ms. Felicity by asking her if she too was sometimes tempted by the devil. Ms. Felicity bent normality to include shouting at the devil: Ms. Frail will say 'The devil was trying to tempt me and I was just telling him where to go, does that happen to you?' And I say, 'Yes it does and I say a prayer inside.' 'Well, Felicity, I say it aloud.' I thought that because she was spiritual that maybe she was an ideal target for the devil (Beal 1999: 183).

Ms. Felicity's response to Ms. Frail's address is an apt illustration of acknowledging the world of the person with delusions. The reason she gives to the reader for Ms. Frail's shouting (that she is an ideal target for the devil) is a way of making her behaviour intelligible in terms that Ms. Frail would possibly accept. This 'bending of normality' allows the maintenance of the relationship possible. I will develop this point and discuss the strategy of not directly contradicting someone's delusions in the next section.

The final point I will touch on is how much intervention in the life of another is justified and what are the ethical considerations that should guide us in our approach, especially in the case of someone suffering with delusions. To do this, once again I will take a passage from Løgstrup in which he deals with this question from the framework of acknowledging an ethical demand in conversation:

> This much can be said: whatever a person may say or do out of concern for what he or she believes will best serve the other person's welfare, it is not his or her prerogative to control the other person's reactions to what he or she says or does. One is not to try to determine what use the other person makes of what is said or done. To this we have no right, be our intentions ever so good. The will to determine what is best for the other person – and to speak or remain silent, or to act in harmony with our insight into what we believe to be best for him or her – must be coupled with a willingness to let him or her remain sovereign in his or her own world. The demand to guard that part of the other person's life which has been delivered over to us, irrespective of the words and actions which the demand may indicate, is always at the same time a demand that the other person be given ample time and opportunity to make his or her own world as expansive as possible. The demand is always also a demand that we use the surrender out of which the demand has come in such a way as to free the other person from his or her confinement and to give his or her vision the widest possible horizon (Løgstrup 1999: 26-27).

From this passage, if it is agreed that the ethical demand is a real imperative in human relations, it follows that the ethics of how to approach someone with delusions must balance the three concerns of (1) allowing them to remain sovereign in their world while (2) trying to free them from their confinement (which could be thought of as an accurate description of what it is to live with a delusion) and (3) providing the opportunity to re-establish trust in others and a sense of community. In trying to find a solution that meets these three criteria, I will argue that what is called for is an ironic stance that meets the existential stance of the delusional person. I shall elaborate this approach in the next section.

8.3 Indirect Communication and Irony

The first problem to be addressed here is *how* it can be ethical to enter the world of the delusional person in order to meet them as an equal partner in dialogue. The barrier would seem to be that we can no longer make sense of their speech or behaviour according to the light of commonsense. Without this shared world-picture the person can seem quite alien. The problem revolves around finding points of contact with the other and ways of making sense of the other. This can involve filling in implicit parts of the picture they have of reality. Mulhall describes the task that we are called to in keeping open the possibility of the intelligibility of others:

> We must learn to know our way around with cultures as well as individuals; we have to find our feet with them, try to render what is initially enigmatic ultimately transparent – and we may, of course, fail (PI 223 f,g). Experience, familiarity and responsiveness to fine detail is required properly to understand an individual's thoughts and feelings; but the capacity to apply such concepts to any given person will presuppose the capacity to perceive human life as 'the same occurring again, but with variations' – that is, to see, to respond to, or regard new combinations of behaviour, utterance, and circumstance as a variation on one of the loose patterns (Mulhall 2001: 173).

In the attempt to 'find our feet' with other suffering from delusions, it is necessary to adopt a wider horizon in which to see their life as 'the same occurring again, but with variations'. To understand the variations, it is necessary to attentively listen to the person without judgement. Mulhall emphasizes that such understanding is only achieved through 'experience, familiarity and responsiveness to fine detail'. The importance of attentiveness to fine detail is the ability to see in the detail of the delusion an implicit awareness of their situation and expression of suffering which requires acknowledgement. We need to allow the person to express themselves. For this to be possible, it is necessary for the person to feel that they are being listened to and this involves, on the part of the listener, the ability to see the perspective of the person suffering from delusions as a potential perspective. As I argued in Chapter 3 and 4

making a judgement about the person (e.g. that they are unable to make sense of the world) only serves to close down conversation, which is the only arena through which the person can be reached and helped to reconstruct a basic trust with those around them.

However, one objection to Kierkegaard's strategy of indirect communication is that it would seem to be a form of deceit to go along with the person in their delusion when we really think that what they are saying is false or on the border of intelligibility. It could also seem to be a way of disrespecting the person or even entrenching their belief in their delusions by not correcting them. In addressing this point I will start by exploring the point of dialogue from the standpoint of ordinary language philosophy as laid out in a quote from Mulhall:

> This conjunction of self-knowledge and knowledge of others in politics is precisely analogous to the methodology of ordinary language philosophers; in both domains, claims drawing upon self-knowledge are made in the first-person plural mode, but the range of reference of the 'we' is a matter to be decided by the responses others make to our claims to speak for them, to speak their minds; in both, the self-knowledge concerned is worked out rather than simply assumed; and in both that working out is inseparable from the working out of the limit of one's agreement with others (Mulhall 1994: 65).

In trying to find or reinstate community with the person with delusions it is necessary to see whether we can speak for them through our familiarity with their delusion and follow their track of thought. Such a way of speaking for the other draws on our own first person experience. I have tried to argue throughout this thesis that the experience necessary to see the delusional other's experience as a potential perspective for us can be found in films, in literature, in poetry and even in philosophical problems. The ethics of trying to speak for the other suffering from delusions, revolves around seeing the speech of the person with delusions as trying to give voice to a particular mode of attunement and understanding their words as being used to elaborate this. Such a use of words can be described as being called for by the existential situation they find

themselves in and is their way of making sense out of their changed relation to the world and others. This changed relation means that the words used are projected in new ways that attempt to reconstruct an inhabitation out of what can, in most cases, be understood as a chaotic and fragmented mode of attunement.

The title of one of Cavell's book of essays is *Must We Mean What We Say?* (1976). This is a central question when listening to the words of the delusional other, with the prior question being can they mean what they say? If we reject the claim that the words are nonsense, as I have argued in Chapter 4, then the only answer to the question that respects the personhood of the delusional other is that they can and must mean what they say, only not necessarily in a literal, fact-stating way. If they are then taken as earnestly ironical, [8] – that is, that they are fighting to have their experience acknowledged by the community with the only tools they have to hand, namely everyday words in unusual (although sometimes clichéd) patterns – then the practice of matching the earnestly ironical stance they are taking is fully justified.

What do I mean by saying that the delusional person takes up an ironic stance? By this I mean that for the delusional person the world of commonsense has been thrown into doubt and this leaves them suspended between this world and a world of fantasy created through the particular mode of attunement that they find themselves in. The person must have at least some orientation in commonsense because otherwise any sort of action would become impossible. However, without the anchor of basic trust the person is alienated from the everyday and the attraction of the 'ready-to-hand' descriptions that fit the delusional mood seems unavoidable. It has been pointed out that people with delusions can act incongruously with the delusions they profess to believe. This phenomenon has been called 'double bookkeeping' and as Sass says, 'they often seem to live in two parallel but separate worlds' (Sass 1994: 21). An example of this would be claiming that the staff on a ward are trying to poison them and then happily eating the food the staff prepare. It would then seem that neither world is inhabited completely but rather the person pictures themselves in the one they feel attuned to while still

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[8] It is necessary to note the similarity of my use of the term 'ironic' with Rorty's (1989: 73) classification of certain philosophers as being 'private ironists'. There are interesting parallels here, especially in relation to the point I made about the similarities between moods in philosophy and delusions. However, the private ironist, according to Rorty, is self-consciously taking an ironical stance whereas the delusional person finds such a stance forced on them.

having a background implicit awareness of the commonsense world. And, of course, this makes sense as the commonsense world-picture has not been forgotten, but rather does not hold the usual attraction because of the new way the world seems through the lens of the delusional mode of attunement. We could perhaps surmise that the commonsense world picture is still expressed in bodily habits below the level of the person's conscious awareness. This is why the term 'ironic' seems appropriate here to express their alienation from the everyday while still having an awareness of it in the background.

In other words, commonsense has been put in brackets for the moment but occasionally makes its presence felt. In this case, an ethical way to join the delusional other in dialogue is also to bracket commonsense and try to get a sense of the mood of the delusion and the picture the person has formed to try and express it. By 'ironic' I do not mean that all the assertions the person makes about delusions are ironic statements in the familiar sense of the term, rather the whole existential situation of the person is an ironic stance to the world as described by Kierkegaard:

> Irony is a qualification of subjectivity. In irony, the subject is negatively free, since the actuality that is supposed to give the subject content is not there. He is free from the constraint in which the given actuality holds the subject, but he is negatively free and as such is suspended, because there is nothing that holds him. But this very freedom, this suspension gives the ironist a certain enthusiasm, because he becomes intoxicated, so to speak, in the infinity of possibilities, and if he needs any consolation for everything that is destroyed, he can have recourse to the enormous reserve fund of possibility (Kierkegaard 2000: 29).

This seems an apt description of the altered subjectivity of those suffering from delusions and hints at how we can join their world, at least temporarily, in order to re-establish a sense of community. As the Kierkegaard quote suggests, this would involve a bracketing of actuality so to explore the realms of possibility the delusional person inhabits. Exploration of this realm would take the form of indirect communication described by Kierkegaard in the quote at the beginning of this chapter. Another way of

referring to the delusion would be as a 'city of words' (Cavell 1990: 7) in order to highlight the ironic stance of the delusional person (and that taken by their interlocutor if they decide that such a stance is appropriate)

Through conversation and drawing on our own experience we may then find that we can speak for the delusional other and elaborate the nuances of their world with them. It is then not deceit to follow the person through their elaboration of a different reality, rather it is two people engaged in a conversation about a 'city of words' where the delusional person has taken up habitation for the present. Perhaps the 'city' is one that is more amenable than the one the rest of their community live in, or possibly in most cases filled with horrors, but by joining the person suffering from delusions in this conversation there is company for them on their difficult journey. This form of indirect communication respects both the person with delusions and the interlocutor and allows a form of community to be re-established. The form of community is in relation to a city of words that can then be compared with another, either a fictional world from a book or a film or the commonsense city of words that the interlocutor inhabits. In taking up the ironic stance, no judgement is made as to what the fact of the matter is, but our world and theirs are merely held up as pictures to be explored. Finally, it could perhaps be suggested to the person with delusions that they could try to imagine a further city, namely one that they would ideally like to live in. Such a conversation would serve to show the delusional other that they have a hand in the creation of these cities of words and that the one they inhabit now is not immutable. I am here not making any empirical claims here about the therapeutic efficacy of taking an earnestly ironical stance to the delusional other, but rather exploring an ethical approach that takes a different picture of what a delusion is from the DSM-IV definition and then tries to cash out what follows from taking that picture seriously.

The approach I have been sketching gains support from an approach to dementia that is documented in an article by James (2008). The article describes an approach to communicating with people suffering with dementia, called 'Specal' (Specialized Elderly Care for Alzheimer's), that helps to increase their well-being and contentment in the context of the difficulties for living created through dementia. The technique follows from the insight that the major disability for sufferers is that their short-term memory is defective and so they are unable to produce new memories. However, what

is intact is their long-term memory and they use this to make sense of the present. However, where this is not taken into account sufferers are sometimes thought to be delusional and are prescribed anti-psychotic medication with all the side-effects that come with these. The alternative approach developed by Penny Garner, using her experience of caring for her mother, is based around three simple rules: 'don't ask the person with dementia questions, never contradict them and learn to love their repetitiveness' (James 2008). James gives several examples of people whose quality of life has been radically improved by using this technique. I will just quote from one example that illustrates the wider benefits of this technique:

> Paddy was the perfect example of this… He had been a happy bunny because Garner had plugged into his old memories. She quickly discovered that he loved Irish jigs. They would spend all day talking about jigging, actually doing so and enjoying post-jig analysis.
>
> So long as no one disturbed the sense Paddy was making of who he was and where he was, based on old memories, he had well-being. Garner's brilliant discovery was that a whole care plan could be built around the person with dementia's past experiences of professional or social roles, or of enjoyable hobbies, enabling them to live a kind of happy Groundhog Day.
>
> Crucially, these past narratives also enabled carers to help the person with dementia carry out ordinary, vital functions of everyday life. It was not a case of consigning them to a la-la land of the past. If the person was comfortable in the old narrative, they were much more likely to see the necessity for eating, sleeping, going to the loo and all the other vital functions that are so often problematic for carers (James 2008).

What this example shows is that, at least in dementia, not challenging the sense that people make of the situation has an effect on improving the quality of life of the person and has the added benefit of allowing them to maintain a foot in the everyday rhythm of life. The question, however, is how the example of Specal care can be connected with the way someone with delusions should be treated. The differences between dementia and delusional disorders are obvious: Firstly, with dementia there is a much better

understanding of it as an organic condition and the way the person with dementia makes sense of the world can be clearly put down to an inability to form new memories. Secondly, dementia is a condition that a person will never recover from whereas the aim in dealing with delusions is to return the person to a commonsense grasp on the world. And finally, from the examples James gives, the memories that people with dementia use to make sense of the world seem to be pleasant for the most part, rather than the anxiety-inducing world of the person with paranoid delusions. It could be argued that the Specal approach would not work if the majority of the memories which the person with dementia relied on were unpleasant.

To deal with the last point first, the ethics of taking an ironical stance are based on the idea that, though the picture of reality found in a delusion may be unpleasant, it is always better to have company through this threatening world. Such company can only be found in someone that can acknowledge the way the world is for you in such a way that you can explore the terrain and problems found there together. In response to the second point, the aim of recovery, I have argued, has a much better chance of being achieved faster if some relation of trust is re-established and for this understanding and accepting the sense the delusional person makes of the world is a prerequisite. I mentioned above the possible strategies for redirecting attention to the commonsense 'city of words' that may aid in returning someone to sanity. To address the first point, it is true that the possible underlying organic conditions are not well understood in the spectrum of delusional disorders, however, in this thesis I have tried to elaborate a phenomenology that suggests that we need a more sophisticated conception of the role delusions play in the life of sufferers. Although we do not have one sole way to understand delusions, the growing literature on ways of understanding what delusions are provides us with a variety of keys that allow us to unlock the sense that the delusional person is making of the world. [9] My own approach to understanding delusions, which can be summed up as seeing them as the expression of an ironical stance, is merely one possible way of understanding delusions that requires an empirical exploration of how many types of delusion it covers (although there is no reason I can think of why it could not apply to all forms of delusion, but perhaps it best explains Odyssean delusions). I do believe that the method of indirect communication is

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[9] The literature I am referring to here can be found, for example, in the writings of Sass (1992 and 1994), Ratcliffe (2004) and Kapur (2003)

justified as a more humane way of communicating with people with delusions than the alternatives and is given some backing by the results I have reviewed from the approach found in Specal care.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to put forward an alternative understanding of delusions and of how to approach those suffering from them, from conceptions of delusions I have criticised earlier in the thesis. This alternative understanding is based, firstly, on a conception of the role of mood in poetry, philosophy and delusions and, secondly, on the ethical demand implicit in any engagement with another in dialogue. I then looked at how the concept of indirect communication can be cashed out in an approach to those with delusions. This involved exploring what follows from a depiction of delusions as the expression in words of how it is to inhabit the world from an ironic stance (in the sense elaborated by Kierkegaard, that is, as an existential stance). From this it follows that taking up an ironic stance is an appropriate way to interact with the delusional person and may be important in overcoming delusions.

Conclusion

Repairing the World:
Attending to Insanity

> 'The world is a dark place,' he [Walter Benjamin] said. 'It is always in disrepair. But we – you and I, Jose – we have a little chance, an opportunity. If we try very, very hard, we can imagine goodness. We can think of ways to repair the damage, piece by piece.' (Parini 1997: 244)

This quote from the novel *Benjamin's Crossing* is a poetic elaboration of the Jewish concept 'tikkun olam' which means 'repair of the world'. Philosophy sometimes begins when we sense that something about the world is in disrepair, is broken or is damaged in some way. It starts with a cessation of activity and attending to what the damage is (something about our selves, our neighbour, our society or our world). Heidegger gave the example of the broken piece of equipment lighting up the functional relations of the workplace (Heidegger 1962:102), but this is a very limited example; we can find disrepair in almost any area of life. The term 'disrepair' accurately captures the existential sense of the way the world disappoints our conceptions of it. Out of this depiction of our existential situation arises an unmistakeable ethical demand on us to 'mend' aspects of the world that seem in disrepair. Tikkun Olam (repair of the world) taken in the way it is normally meant by Jews indicates something like social justice work, but it is possible to understand a more mundane sense of repair. Unlike other ethical concepts the term 'repair' brings us back to the everyday, in that our task is not something superhuman that involves denying our weaknesses and leading perfect lives, but, instead, it seems to suggest a daily task of piecemeal action. It also acknowledges our physical, practical engagement with the world. Repair can be understood in terms of the way we try to maintain our bodies and our environment daily, in even the smallest of tasks of care towards ourselves, others and the environment. This is exemplified by, for example, eating, conversing and gardening. The importance of the

concept of repair of the world as an understanding of what is required of us, is found in the way it brings about a 'transfiguring of the ordinary' (i.e. it makes salient how our everyday activities can be seen as of integral value). As I elaborated in the Introduction, I associate this way of returning to and exalting the everyday with the strategy used by Wittgenstein in his 'therapeutic' method.

Disrepair

As the quote from Parini points out, repair is a piecemeal activity. The first move is not to work out how to repair the damage we see, but to really understand what the damage to our lives is and this requires us to attend to the damage. Only when we see how the fabric of our life together is knotted in a particular place can we set about unravelling and repairing that particular section. This thesis grows out of my sense that psychiatry is somehow still in 'the dark ages' and with it our relation to 'insanity' in everyday life. My hope is that this thesis may throw some light on the tangled threads that constitute the western attitude to madness and in particular the role of delusions in our lives. Repair flows out of a proper understanding of how the threads are tangled and how they are woven into the other parts of our lives together. In terms of psychiatry, the disrepair can be found in the poverty of pictures we have for thinking about irrationality. Without a proper understanding of irrationality as a necessary aspect of our 'normal' lives and the lives of those around us we will continue to view insanity, as depicted in images of the asylum, as something that terrifies us when we dare consider it.

Imagining Goodness

We can start to imagine goodness in psychiatry by redirecting attention from merely trying to contain those we consider too irrational to be allowed free range in society to working out how we can help the 'insane' back to the harbour of the everyday through caring for both their material and social needs. The first step here requires challenging the stigma surrounding 'insanity' that is but an expression of our fears about our own irrationality. Dropping the word 'schizophrenic' and replacing it with another word without the connotations it has (such as my suggestion that we call it 'the Odyssean condition') would be one thing we could do straight off. Further, letting go of the link

between irrationality and health would enable people with what I call 'mental struggle' issues (short for 'the mental struggle to keep one's feet in the everyday') to get away from the sense that they somehow have a 'broken brain'. Finally, it is necessary to allow the voice of the 'insane' to be heard in the academic discourse about irrationality, not just through biographical description (source material), but as phenomenological and philosophical explorers of the 'logic' of irrational experience and the phenomenological and social effects of anti-psychotic drugs on experience. Odysseans and other sufferers of psychosis should have a direct say over what types of drug they take and at what point in their recovery they take them to help themselves return to the everyday. These steps would be a good beginning.

Repairing the Damage, Piece by Piece

There has been much damage done, in the past, to those considered too irrational to be left to their own devices, sometimes in the name of science and medicine. Hopefully this thesis has charted at least some of the damage done to people through the pictures of those considered insane that have been propagated in the fields of medicine, philosophy and politics. I also hope this thesis will inspire others to examine further the damage done to people by our concepts of insanity and to go on to imagine how to mend piecemeal some of the broken ways of our being together as the irrational beings that we are.

The Self-Reflexive Dimension of the Thesis:
A Personal Comment

Here I would just like to highlight that the thesis has a self-reflexive moment because of my own personal situation. I have been diagnosed with Odysseania (as I stated in the Introduction) and so coming to an understanding of the meaning of delusions has been close to my heart. However, the point I want to get across is that the very writing of this thesis has been part of my own 'therapy', part of my own battle against the natural inclination, in the words of Iris Murdoch, to 'deform by fantasy' the reality we all share. Whenever I have sat down at my computer to write, the 'other worlds' of my delusions have seemed like stories which I would have to pick up later, but were quite removed from the present moment. Nevertheless, it would be against the tenor of this thesis if it was a one way street of adapting myself to the outside without trying to elicit acknowledgement of my 'worlds'; worlds as vivid as any fictional quest. Some of the examples used in the thesis were delusions I have experienced that, if read by some of those who know me, might allow a glimpse of what has been going on with me. (I should stress that not many of the delusions cited are mine, most come from case studies and other examples found in the literature).

This is my own way of bringing my words back to their 'original home' in an everyday language-game (c.f. PI 116). It is also a declaration of how I would like to be treated and an attempt to find community with my readers. If my own personal experience can be admitted into what must be the general analysis of delusions, then it is an illustration that the attention involved in the creative act of writing is a powerful tool in the struggle to remain part of the shared world, as I have argued in my thesis. To end with the words of Wittgenstein that would sum up the thesis as a whole: 'Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language' (PI 109).

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