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If Madness Could Speak. Reconstituting the Discourse of Madness and its Relation to Truth

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Abstract Many researchers in fields ranging from philosophy to psychology have tried to link current treatments and practices in mental healthcare to Plato's work on madness. Such attempts to historicize contemporary discourses about mental illness however assume a high level of equivalence between the way madness was understood by the Greeks and the current concept of mental illness – a conjecture that has been thoroughly criticized by many including Michel Foucault. In *Histoire de la folie*, Foucault presents the constitution of madness as mental illness as a contemporary invention, challenging the generalized attribution of Plato's theory of madness to the realm of medical discourse. In that context, this paper investigates the problematization of madness in divine rather than medical terms in the Greek context by offering a Foucaultian reading of the relation of truth to divine madness in Plato. In Plato's work, divine madness emerges as a totalizing experience bringing reason, care for the self, and truth together, with each of its forms involving specific practices of care for the self that transform one's commitment to truth into a mode of life. By investigating each of these forms, this paper attempts at reconstituting the practices and ideals of truth associated with divine madness and highlighting the profoundly irrational nature of one's commitment to truth in Greek philosophy. By reconstructing the necessary conditions for madness to be recognized as a discourse and practice of truth, this paper challenges current attempts to historically and discursively situate the medicalization of madness within broader intellectual histories.

Keywords: Madness, Mental Illness, Truth, Care for the Self, Plato

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0. Introduction

Many modern and contemporary investigations of mental illness have attempted to historicize madness as a somehow coherent concept throughout the history of Western psychology and philosophy. Ancient philosophy scholars such as George Grube and Anthony Kenny attribute the invention of the notion of mental illness to none other than Plato himself (Grube 1954, Kenny 1973), while a growing number of contemporary commentators are going back to Plato's work on madness to shed light on novel approaches to the study of severe mental illness and inform treatment in clinical settings (Ahonen 2014, Seeskin 2008). In relation to today's growing concerns with the development of more humane, recovery-oriented treatments in the field of

mental healthcare (Drake and Whitley 2010, 2014), such endeavors might seem not only appropriate, but also quite promising as novel multidisciplinary approaches to long-lasting problems – yet this perspective only seems to hold water insofar as one assumes that mental illness, through madness as its historical extension, existed for the Greeks in the same terms as it does today.

Nowadays, madness tends to be problematized in medical and forensic terms. Michel Foucault's historical account of the medicalization of madness in *Histoire de la folie* (1961) and the work of leading researchers in forensic psychiatry on the *forensication* of mental health patients (Jansman-Hart *et al.* 2011, Seto *et al.* 2001) are only few examples of the imposing body of work on the topic. These examples all testify of the reduction of madness to an object of discourse in the contemporary context, which differs quite strikingly from the unique form of knowledge and experience that madness instantiated for the Greeks. In that context, the juxtaposition of contemporary research in mental illness with ancient texts seem to do little but obscure key practices and ideals that were indistinguishable for the Greeks from the question of madness by assuming a certain equivalence between the historical concept of madness and the current notion of mental illness.

In the preface of the English translation of *Histoire de la folie*, Foucault problematizes the transition from the concept of madness to the notion of mental illness by arguing that «the constitution of madness as a mental illness […] affords the evidence of a broken dialogue […] between madness and reason» (1961, eng. transl.: ix-x). In a similar spirit, this paper will attempt at reconstituting the conditions that allowed madness to maintain such a privileged dialogue with reason by exploring the unique mode of being in relation to the self, discourse, and truth that madness represented for the Greeks and, more precisely, Platonism. To do so, this paper will analyze how madness is depicted in a selection of Platonic texts using Foucault's 'archeological' method. This approach developed by Foucault in *L'archéologie du savoir* (1967) is understood here as the study of the modes of problematization and the modes of being of discourse that are necessary for a type of discourse to be deemed meaningful in a specific setting (1967: 174). Through this lens, this paper will investigate the problematization of madness in divine rather than medical terms in the Greek context and explore the kind of relationship to the self and to truth that madness instantiated in Platonic philosophy.

1. Human Madness and the Corruption of the City

The theme of madness traverses the canon of Plato's works and is addressed in different texts tackling topics as diverse as the nature of the soul, the organization of the city, and the care for the self. In most instances, madness is closely linked or even equated to different forms of moral or intellectual failures, which are attributed to two main sources in *Timaeus* (T). On one hand, madness can have a bodily origin. A weak constitution and fragile health are portrayed as inhibiting one's ability to cultivate oneself, leading to a wide range of moral and intellectual weaknesses that inevitably fuel the development of a corrupted state of mind (T: 80a-86b). On the other hand, madness can be the product of poor personality traits or an unstable psyche. For instance, an excessive tendency for pleasure and self-indulgence can give rise to mindlessness and ignorance – two qualities that profoundly corrupt the soul and «drive [the afflicted person] mad» (T: 86c). In that sense, madness and immorality appear as indistinguishable from one another, with the latter being either the source or the equivalent of the former.

This first type of madness – human madness – is the most recurrent in Plato's texts, and yet offers an interesting twist to the general propensity of Platonism to reduce moral

failures to a matter of personal responsibility. Rather than blaming afflicted individuals for the moral failures that led to their condition, Plato attributes these defects of the soul and the body to the corruption of the city and the lacking education of those afflicted – «two quite involuntary causes» (T: 86d-87e) Plato writes. Raised without the necessary tools to develop a strong relationship to the self, most citizens can all too easily be corrupted by the rhetoric of self-serving politicians and develop the condition of ignorance and unreason that leads to madness. In that context, «[i]t is the begetters far more than the begotten, and the nurturers far more than the nurtured, that bear the blame for all this» (T: 87b), Plato declares, situating the source of madness not so much in individuals but in the systemic conditions that fuel the flaws that one acquired throughout one's inadequate upbringing.

Madness for Plato then appears not so much as an exceptional or pathological condition that affects the few, but as the normal state of those who grow in the city and later partake in its political life. Rather than being excluded from discourse and institutions, human madness is precisely what constitutes the ethos of the city. Madness emerges as the dominant mode of discourse that excludes other forms of discourse such as philosophy or reason. As explained by Plato in *Republic* (R), those who «keep company with philosophy» (R: 496b) relinquish their rights to partake in the life of the city precisely because they have «sufficiently [seen] the madness of the many» (R: 496c), and human madness therefore emerges as both the product of the corruption of the city and what maintains and even expands that corruption.

The problem of the ideal city and how a city can be organized around a shared commitment to truth is a recurrent philosophical problem throughout Plato's work, and madness, in that context, precisely appears as both the source and the consequence of the city's incapacity to develop a close relationship with truth. Yet, Plato, through Socrates, systematically engages with the figures of that madness. The point of these dialogues is not to extract specific truth claims from the mad – for Plato denies their very capacity to speak the truth. For instance, Plato categorically rejects discourses of human madness by excluding the mad – alongside those suffering from other forms of physical or mental defect – from participating in the city's affairs based on their incapacity to speak the truth (R: 405d–410a). Rather, these dialogues aim to lead the mad to become aware of the conditions of corruption that have given rise to their current state of mind. To do so, Plato systematically 'symptomizes' their statements as discourses of madness in order to shed light on the specific sources of corruption of the city that led to their false convictions and assumptions. This last element is explicitly staged in *Alcibiades* (A), where Socrates discusses with Alcibiades to emphasize the shaky foundations on which his political ambitions rely and deconstruct his ill-advised beliefs to uncover the systemic conditions that gave rise to them.

Philosophy's exclusion of madness from the city's affairs does not take the form of a categorical rejection however but of an opposition. In philosophy's quest for the ideal city, madness emerges as the mirror image of philosophy, since it is both the product and the source of the corruption that philosophy aims to alleviate. In that sense, discourses of madness, through their symptomatization, allow philosophy to access forms of knowledge about the city that cannot be accessed through reason alone. This exclusion stands as a constitutive moment for philosophy, as it establishes madness as the mirror image against which philosophy articulates its task. Just like philosophy, madness is a mediator between the organization of the city and truth, and even entertains a commitment to truth not so dissimilar from philosophy's own – for human madness' departure from truth always hints back to specific ideals and practices of truth to which philosophy can aspire to. Madness and philosophy then appear as one of the founding oppositions on which Plato's ideal city and theory of truth are anchored.

This symptomatization of discourses of madness combined with the fertile opposition between madness and philosophy might remind the contemporary reader of these texts of the relationship between disease and medicine or the pathological and the normal – yet, such analogies seem to obscure rather than highlight practices and ideals of truth that were fundamental for the Greeks by confusing them with contemporary systems of knowledge. In the context of this paper, symptomatization is used in a way that is closer to the sense that Foucault gives to that word than its habitual medical sense. In *L'archéologie du savoir*, Foucault performs a symptomatization of discourse similar to Plato's own symptomatization of discourses of madness by investigating not so much the content of specific statements as the conditions that are necessary for these statements to be considered meaningful and proliferate within specific contexts or milieus. Through the notion of '*a priori* historique', or historical *a priori*, Foucault explains that every context can be characterized by sets of rules and practices that govern discursive practices, leading specific discourses to be problematized in different terms depending on when, where, and how they are articulated (Foucault 1967: 174-5).

It is with this notion of historical *a priori* in mind that the aforementioned efforts to link Platonic psychology to current practices in the field of mental healthcare can be challenged and problematized. Madness for the Greeks was precisely what escaped and even exceeded the normative discourses of law, medicine, and even politics – three vectors through which mental illness is often problematized in today's context. In *Laws* (L), Plato dedicates a few sections to crimes committed by those afflicted by madness and, in all cases, perpetrators are exempted from any form of disciplinary punishment. They are solely required to financially compensate victims for their lost, and nothing more (L: 864d, 934d-e). At no point in the *Laws* are the mad even entitled to any form of medical treatment, and the only structure endowed with the responsibility to oversee the actions of the mad is the afflicted person's family – their only legal requirement being to keep the mad «in private houses by whatever means they can improvise» (L: 934c-d) in the case of a crisis.

The type of madness discussed in the *Laws* indeed seems to diverge from the madness of the many discussed earlier – for we can imagine that Plato's ideal city would engender forms of human madness that would differ if not qualitatively, at least quantitatively from the madness of those living in a corrupted state – but anyhow demonstrates the fundamental insolubility of madness in the city and in discourse alike. This irreducibility of madness to discourse radically contrasts with the current reduction of the mentally ill to an object of, rather than a subject in, discourse, which is presented as a key implication of the medicalization of madness by Foucault (1961: 406). In fact, both Platonic philosophy and contemporary accounts of madness seem to be constituted by the exclusion of madness, but in radically different ways: while the former establishes a privileged relationship between madness and truth, the latter situates madness as an object of discourse whose truth can only be defined externally.

It is with such elements in mind that one can now inquire into the nature of madness for the Greeks. By situating madness outside the realm of medicine and the law, Plato's account of madness emphasizes a specific framework through which madness can be recaptured: the work of the self on the self. Throughout key Socratic dialogues such as *Alcibiades* and *Phaedrus* (P) where Socrates engages with young men who are affected by the corruptive effect of the city, Socrates points them towards an image of philosophy that Foucault defines in *The Government of Self and Others* (1982-83) as «a set of practices through which the subject has a relationship to itself, elaborates itself, and works on itself» (Foucault 1982-83, eng. transl: 242). Only through the work of the self on the self can madness be channeled towards a positive relationship to truth, Plato affirms, which

gives rise to an image of madness that emphasizes its liminal position at the intersection of the self, truth, and reason.

2. Divine Madness and its Relation to Truth

While madness is generally discussed in terms of the 'negative' forms of human madness throughout Plato's texts, Plato offers in *Phaedrus* a positive reading of forms of madness whose nature is not human but divine. In this text, Socrates devotes a speech to the virtues of the non-lover in comparison to the divine madness of the lover and is visited by his *daimōn* – a figure that will be discussed a bit later – who admonishes his speech and offers him the opportunity to revise his position regarding divine madness (P: 244b-c). From there, Socrates offers a positive account of the main forms of divine madness – prophetic, poetic, ritualistic, and erotic madness – which endow their bearers with super-human capabilities that benefit humankind as a whole through their privileged relationships with truth (P: 244a-245a). The divine, in that context, seems to take a very specific sense. In *Alcibiades*, Socrates positions knowledge and the access to truth as functions of one's capacity to know oneself. Knowing oneself, he adds, corresponds to knowing the region of the soul that «resembles the divine and someone who looked at that and grasped everything divine […] would have the best grasp of himself as well» (A: 133c). The divine then appears as an extraterritorial component that is both fundamentally integral and external to the subject.

To disentangle and clarify the nature of that divine component of the self and of madness alike, an investigation of the different modes of relationship between the self and truth instantiated by each of the aforementioned forms of divine madness is required. In *The Government of Self and Others*, Foucault makes a similar analysis by investigating different modes of relation between the self and truth. More precisely, he explores different modes of truth-telling and reveals the discursive conditions, ideals of truth, and practices of the self that were necessary for these modes to exist and prevail in the Greek context. His investigation mostly focuses on one mode of truth-telling – *parrēsia* – which refers to a type of statement that involves a certain form of truth and requires its utterer to commit itself to that truth by speaking the truth in the face power (Foucault 1982-83, eng. transl: 66). The parrhesiast, in that sense, instantiates a mode of truth-telling through which the self constitutes itself through its commitment to truth. While *parrēsia* relies on human rationality and earthly affairs to be constituted and spoken, divine madness is framed by Plato as something that «is granted to us as a divine gift» (P: 244a). As a gift that connects the divine component of the soul to the truth it conveys, divine madness endows those afflicted with a privileged access to new modes of relationship to truth, opening up new modes and practices of constituting the self.

In *Phaedrus*, the first type of divine madness discussed by Socrates is prophecy. Socrates claims the superiority of this mode of truth-telling over other modes of forecasting such as sign-reading ("augury"), which rely on human rationality and are therefore limited to earthly forms of knowledge (P: 244c-d). Socrates further highlights the divide between human rationality and divine madness by explaining how oracles «have done Greece a lot of good […] in their madness, but little or nothing when they are in their right minds» (P: 244a-b), emphasizing the erasure of the self that is involved in prophecy. In this form of divine madness, no journey of the self into the self is involved: rather, prophecy seems to involve a journey over the world where the divine reason of the gods is given primacy over human reason, leading the oracle to be little but the mouthpiece of the cryptic knowledge of the gods. Socrates' invitation to Alcibiades to «trust in […] the Delphic inscription and 'know thyself'» (A: 124a-b) does not apply to prophecy, as it

is the very erasure of the self and of human reason itself that is at stake in the form of divine madness instantiated by prophecy.

Prophecy, however, is by definition incomplete, and it is precisely this lack that emerges as the privileged site where the care for the self can be performed. Oracles express themselves in enigmatic words, which often evade utterers and listeners alike. In *Apology* (Ap), Socrates relates an unusually straightforward prophecy that his friend Chaerephon received when he visited the oracle Pytian and «asked if any man was wiser than [Socrates], and the Pythian replied that no one was wiser» (Ap: 21a) – yet, Socrates remains skeptical of the true meaning of this claim and travels across Greece to find someone wiser than him. As a mode of truth-telling, prophecy does not require a work of the self on the self on behalf of the one who speaks, but rather on behalf of the one that is the witness of the truth that is being spoken. It is precisely by investigating this claim and interrogating other supposedly wise men that Socrates realizes that his advantage over them resides in the fact that he does not pretend to know what he does not know, crystallizing and heightening his own claim for wisdom (Ap: 21d-e). *Parrēsia*'s commitment to truth is displaced by a commitment to one's truth in the case of prophecy, which leads the witness of that truth to perform the necessary care for the self to turn that truth into a reality.

The second type of divine madness, poetry, is defined by Socrates as the madness coming from the Muses, as they «take hold of a delicate, virgin soul and stir it into a frenzy for composing lyric and other kinds of poetry» (P: 245a). This form of divine madness is, again, presented as superior to similar instances relying on human reason and skills alone, as anyone who «approaches the doors of poetic composition without the Muses' madness, in the conviction that skill alone will make him a competent poet, is cheated of his goal» (P: 245a). The cultivation of one's skills is therefore not the type of work of the self on the self that poetry requires; rather, a general receptivity and compliance to the influence of the Muses appears as the type of self-cultivation required by poetry. The Muses, in that context, appear as linking the divine nature of the soul to the divine nature of truth, which leads the poets to turn their gazes unto the self insofar as they can recognize the truth of the world into their own soul.

Also, through its celebratory dimension, this type of divine madness appears as a complementary image of prophecy. Foucault, via Georges Dumézil, argues that prophecy and poetry fulfil two complementary functions: the former being the voice through which the gods speak the truth to humanity, while the latter is the voice through which humanity addresses the gods (Foucault 1982-83, eng. transl: 121-2). In that sense, while prophecy instantiates a mode of relation to truth where the witness of truth cultivates his or her self by enacting the actualization of the truth given by the gods, poetry highlights a dynamic where the self performs the care for the self by investigating, revealing, and celebrating the divine nature of the self. One's commitment to truth is then performed through one's commitment to the divine nature of the soul, which becomes the privileged lens through which one can appreciate the divine nature of truth.

The third kind of divine madness discussed by Socrates is the ritualist one. Through specific purificatory rituals, individuals and families who are «afflicted by horrendous illnesses and suffering as a result of guilt incurred some time in the distant past» (P: 244d) can be freed from their affliction by letting themselves be inhabited by divine madness. This form of divine madness differs from the three others by the way it elevates pre-existing forms of human madness to the realm of the divine, since it does not so much release afflicted people from evils as ensure that they are «possessed in the right fashion from the evils that afflict them» (P: 244e).

Interestingly, this third form is also closely related to prophecy, as it requires «prophetic insight [to find] the necessary means of relief» (P: 244d). In that sense, ritualist madness shares prophecy's emphasis on the way truth obtained by divine means must be concretized through one's actions. Yet, ritualist madness does not share prophecies' commitment to the content of the truth that is communicated – for both the negative, human madness of affliction and the positive, ritualist madness of purification seem to share the same evils. Instead, it leads afflicted people to turn their gaze away from those who came before them and transfer their attention to themselves, in a movement that leads the self to re-discover the divine nature of their soul outside the corruption carried on from the past. The evils of the past remain, but they become the link between the self and the divine rather than between the self and others. Ritualist madness therefore leads its bearer to engage truth not through its content nor the specific actions it engages, but through the form that it gives to one's life. By shaping one's life around the forms and rituals of truth, the bearer of ritualist madness becomes the site where truth is enacted and given shape.

The fourth and last type of divine madness referred to by Socrates is the erotic madness of the lover. This form of madness is central to the *Phaedrus*, as Socrates' whole speech about divine madness gravitates around his overall discussion of the divine nature of the love of the cultivated man for the young boy. This kind of madness occurs «when someone sees beauty here on earth and is reminded of true beauty» (P: 249d), Socrates explains, and the word 'lover' therefore refers to the man who recognizes true beauty in the young boy (P: 249e) and «is maddened by love to secure the happiness of the object of his affection» (P: 253c). This beauty is not only physical or aesthetic, Socrates emphasizes, as the love of the man for the boy is fueled by the recognition of the latter's «potential to be a philosopher and a leader" and the man's commitment "to develop[ing] this potential in him» (P: 252e).

Erotic madness consists in a care for the self that goes through a care for the other. By cultivating the potential of the boy, recognizing the divine component of his soul, and teaching him how to take care of himself, the lover simultaneously learns self-control and restraint, as he must contain his erotic desire for the boy in order to mentor him properly. In that sense, the lover's desire for the boy must be channeled towards an appreciation of «the nature of true beauty» that the boy embodies – for only then can the lover perceives that beauty «on a holy pedestal, next to self-control» (P: 254b). If consumed by lust, this madness can only remain earthly and mundane; if directed towards the love of beauty and philosophy, it becomes a commitment to true forms that informs the life of the lover and of the loved one alike. In that sense, the commitment to truth of the lover leads him to look away from his own pleasure and desire, and turn his gaze towards the divine nature of the other's soul and, at the same time, his own. Through a set of practices through which the lover cultivates the divine component of the soul of the other, the lover enacts his commitment to truth and true forms.

What brings all these forms of divine madness together is the privileged access to the divine component of the soul that these types of madness give to their bearers while simultaneously linking them to a specific modality of truth. In the case of prophecy, this modality takes the form of an action, of a commitment to the realization of some truth; with poetry, this modality appears as a form, as a process through which one turns truth and the self into an aesthetic object; with rituals, as a form of life that shapes one's whole life; with love, as a relation through which truth is produced and enacted by an exchange, by a care for the other.

In all these cases, the divine component of these types of madness does not seem to refer to the conventional, religious or spiritual sense of the term. Despite its commitment to some transcendental truth, divine madness seems to take a rather

concrete, or analogical even, form as it leads its bearers to engage with different practices of the self anchored in modalities of truth rather than in its actual content. The divine then emerges as a source of authorization rather than a transcendental movement towards some abstract truth. It favors certain actions and prohibits others; it approves particular modes of care for the self in a way that both informs and enacts one's commitment to truth. Paul Veyne makes a similar argument in *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?* (1988) when he argues that the Greeks indeed «believe[d] in [their myths], but they use[d] them and cease[d] believing at the point where their interest in believing end[ed]» (Veyne 1983, eng. transl.: 84). Similarly, the divine component of madness appears as finding its reality in its capacity to inform and authorize specific practices of the self; consequently, madness appears to lose its divine dimension when it ceases to fuel its bearers' commitment to truth, as it is the case with human madness.

It is precisely as a mode of being with truth that the divine component of madness offers a novel perspective on the way truth was understood and problematized by the Greeks. For Foucault, each discourse of veridiction imposes a specific «mode of being […] on the subject who employs it» (Foucault 1982-83, eng. transl: 309-310). Accordingly, the mode of being associated with divine madness and its relation to truth seem to point towards an understanding of truth as a lived experience rather than a form of knowledge. Divine madness, in that sense, highlights a mode of being which gives primacy to forms, actions, and other modalities of truth over the content of truth *per se*. The object of truth is not so much specific modes of knowledge or even discourse as life itself. Truth for the Greeks is then established as a mode of life through which modes of being and practices of the self become indistinguishable with ideals and practices of truth.

3. Socrates' *daimōn*

In the canon of Plato's works, this understanding of truth as a mode of life culminates in the figure of Socrates himself. In different dialogues, Socrates is visited by his *daimōn*, which takes many forms and performs different actions. In *Euthyphro* (E), this *daimōn* remains under a symbolic form and is described as a «divine sign [that] keeps coming to [Socrates]» (E: 3b). In *Phaedrus*, it appears as a boy who is «always right by [Socrates'] side, whenever [he] want[s] him» (P: 243e). *Daimōns*, Socrates explains in *Cratylus* (C), are the spirits of good men who lived in accordance with wisdom. Now spirits, these cultivated people advise the wisest among the living and orient them in their quest for truth (C: 398b-c). As such, they emerge as liminal figures existing at the intersection of many realms. As wise men themselves, they embody the care for the self necessary to link the self to the divine component of the soul. As spirits, they link human experience to the realm of the transcendental. It is precisely as liminal figures – i.e., figures that exceed reason, human experience, and the self while expanding these qualities' reach – that *daimōns* offer a privileged entry point into the profoundly irrational, or mad even, nature of Socrates' commitment to truth.

In accordance with the previous discussion on truth being a mode of life for the Greeks, *daimōns* do not communicate specific forms of knowledge to their bearers. They can only prohibit certain actions or speeches when they go against their bearers' commitment for truth. In *Phaedrus*, Socrates' *daimōn* prevents him from leaving before he rectifies a speech he just made (P: 242b-c). In *Alcibiades*, Socrates relates how his *daimōn* stopped him from addressing Alcibiades before the latter reaches the age of partaking in the political life of the city (A: 103a). The truth communicated by *daimōns* does not take the form of specific truth claims but of guidelines that orient their hosts' practices of the self. Having themselves performed the necessary care for the self to achieve wisdom in

their lifetime, *daimōns* can orient their hosts towards the right ways to live with truth and shape their life around it. *Daimōns* cannot perform care for the self on behalf of their hosts – for doing so would defy the point – nor can they share with them specific forms of knowledge – for doing so would be pointless. Instead, they highlight and reprimand instances when their hosts' divine madness ceases to work in harmony with truth and becomes simply madness.

It is as an incarnation of divine madness that *daimōns* become interesting to consider – especially when they are presented as playing such a key role in the commitment to truth of a figure like Socrates, who has been presented by Friedrich Nietzsche and others as the embodiment of «rationality at any cost» (Nietzsche 1889, eng. transl.: 166). It is precisely by the way divine madness brings truth to an overwhelmingly embodied level that it seems to inform the Platonic philosophical project. In *Euthydemus* (Eu) for instance, Socrates is rooted to the spot by his *daimōn* when he tries to leave before the arrival of two opponents (Eu: 273a-b). In *Phaedrus*, he is «disturbed by a very uneasy feeling» (P: 242c) when he attempts to leave before having corrected his offense to the gods. Truth, in both contexts, takes the form of an intensification of experience, which leads the bearers of divine madness to feel overwhelmed and profoundly disturbed when they fail to live in accordance with truth. Such an intensification also takes place with other forms of divine madness: prophetic, poetic, ritualist, and erotic inspiration all involve an intensification of experience that informs and orients those affected towards a mode of life informed by truth. These instances of intensification all seem to embody a moment of re-orientation when their bearers are given the necessary practices of the self to re-shape the form of their life in accordance with truth.

The irrational, experiential nature of divine madness then seems to inform the practices of the self that reason needs to turn its commitment to truth into a form of life. Socrates' irrational commitment to truth, which situates Socrates' life rather than discourse or reason as the site of this endeavor, is especially telling coming from the founding figure of skepticism. Socrates systematically challenges others' convictions or assumptions about truth, yet blindly follows the modulations of experience that his *daimōn* gives rise to. Divine madness and its intensification of experience are then given primacy over skepticism and the absence of doubt as the privileged mode of veridiction through which truth is captured.

This nuance is key to later discussions on the possibility of excluding madness from thought itself – including René Descartes' rejection of that very possibility (Descartes 1641), as discussed by Jacques Derrida in *Cogito et histoire de la folie* (Derrida 1963: 475) – as it reframes the relationship between madness and reason from one based on discourse to one based on modes of life. While Foucault situates the exclusion of madness from discourses of reason as a defining feature of the classical age (Foucault 1961: 38), Derrida argues that the crisis between madness and reason has always been unfolding and is therefore 'classical' in the sense that it is fundamental and eternal (Derrida 1963: 493). In that context, divine madness – as an instance where madness is closer to truth than reason – emerges as the privileged mediator through which the divine, reason, human experience, and the care for the self come together to form a totality of experience that both testifies of one's commitment to truth and turns it into a form of life. By becoming the bearer of such a totalizing experience, the self becomes the site where truth arises and discloses itself.

5. Conclusion

To conclude – divine madness appears as a privileged medium through which the self, reason, human experience, and truth come together in the form of a totalizing

experience through which one turns his or her commitment to truth into a form of life informed by, and inseparable from, truth. Madness plays a double role in the context of Platonic thought: it both highlights the necessary conditions for the divine to be accessed independently from any religious or theological framework, and brings the divine back to the level of practice and experience by folding knowledge of the self and care for the truth together. Human madness indeed entertains a different relationship to truth, but nonetheless highlights the privileged connection that brings madness and truth together in the form of a totalizing experience.

Madness emerges as a privileged entry point into the question of truth as it was understood by the Greeks. For Foucault, Platonic philosophy – and philosophy in general, arguably – cannot be reduced to specific formula or forms of knowledge: rather, it is something that must inform one's mode of life, something that its practitioner must live with (Foucault 1982-83, eng. transl.: 247). Accordingly, madness appears as a privileged medium of such an experience of truth based on its capacity to bring everything that is exterior to it – truth, the divine, etc. – at the level of concrete practices of the self. Socrates' *daimōn* illustrates quite tellingly this dynamic by reorienting Socrates' efforts when his reason alone takes him on the wrong path. Socrates' *daimōn*, in that sense, emerges as the fundamental source of authorization around which Socrates enacts his commitment to truth and, by situating this *daimōn'* mad and maddening influence at the heart of Socrates' philosophical project, Plato highlights the profoundly irrational requirements that are necessary for one to recapture the divine not only as a set of practices of the self and of truth, but also as a mode of life.

Such ideals and practices of truth seem radically foreign and insoluble in today's context. The privileged dialogue between madness and reason, madness and truth – two of Greek thought's fundamental binaries – cannot take place in the systematic silencing of madness that characterizes current approaches to mental illness. The contemporary reader can therefore find little in Plato that could inform treatment or clinical practice, as pretending otherwise would be to overlook the fact that mental illness is a contemporary invention and is fundamentally incompatible with the way madness was conceived and understood by the Greeks. With this in mind, it becomes possible to better appreciate the historically-rooted, discursive conditions that have led to the silencing of madness as a discourse in its own rights. This realization most certainly represents a more promising perspective to orient future research than the current, generalized misattribution of Plato's theory of madness to the realm of medical discourse.

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