

**Too Mad to be True III  
Paradoxes of Madness**

**Third edition of the international conference on the  
philosophy of madness and the madness of  
philosophy**

**Gent, October 30-31, 2024**

**Museum Dr.Guislain  
Jozef Guislainstraat 43B  
Gent -Belgium**

**All speakers  
Abstracts and short biographies**

**Rosie Alexander** - *Invitation to bridge the paradoxical gap*

How to get your autopathographical story taken seriously when it is perceived as a spoof? How to even speak of it when you are struck dumb by the shame of your own craziness? I describe an extreme psychotic transference undergone during psychotherapy; my reasons for writing about the experience; difficulties in getting my writing (book, articles, chapters in edited books) published; and the various reactions. I also recount my engagement with support groups and my correspondence on the topic with health professionals. All this documentation is now archived with the Wellcome Library in London. There is a disconnect in the study of psychiatric illness narratives. We generally have the patient's account, then, quite separately, an academic's account of the patient's account. The author's and academic's versions often diverge. Whose version can we trust? To redress this imbalance, I propose to give researchers access to my archived material, along with the opportunity to correspond with me so that together we can better elucidate the issues in question. Areas of focus will include the problems associated with memoir writing identified by Professor Angela Woods in her speech at TMTBT 2023, eg: narrative selection, retrospection, aesthetics, censorship, elitism. Questions, suggestions, brainstorming welcome.

*Rosie Alexander wrote Folie à deux: an experience of one-to-one therapy (1995) and various other articles and chapters in edited books*

**Roxana Baiasu** - *Transformative paradoxes of meaning-making*

I draw on a paper Lorna Collins and I are co-writing which is concerned with transformative meaning-making. I would like to propose an extension of our approach in the paper which is related to psychotic experiences to explore its application to mental health vulnerability in a more general sense. Mental health vulnerability involves an openness to being wounded and suffering in ways which close off meaning and potentially generate a chasm of meaninglessness. But it can be argued that at the core of our being there is something like a paradoxical possibility of our existence, a power which can potentially generate meaning from within a chasm of meaninglessness. I propose we call this power 'existential resilience'. In my talk, I further explore this paradox of the chiasm of sense and non-sense in terms of what Lorna and I call 'Mad sense'.

*Dr. Roxana Baiasu is Assistant Professor, University of Birmingham, Institute for Mental Health, School of Psychology; Fellow in Philosophy, Stanford University in Oxford and Associate Faculty Member, University of Oxford. She is the Programme Director for the Online MSc Mental Health at the University of Birmingham. Roxana's academic interests include the philosophy of mental health and psychiatry and, more specifically, phenomenological and ethical approaches to mental health, resilience, well-being and vulnerability. She has written articles on these topics in prestigious journals and in edited volumes. She is currently writing a textbook commissioned by Wiley.*

**Rick Bellaar** - *The Paradox of Delusion*

From the 19th century, up until current day's fifth edition of the DSM, the received view of the nature of delusion has been one where delusions are characterized as irrational beliefs (e.g. Berrios 1991). Despite recurring criticism (e.g. Jaspers 1963; Feyaerts et al 2021), this view has remained the dominant conception of delusion - leading David (1999) to call it an 'accepted' rather than 'acceptable' definition. The situation can therefore be diagnosed as a persisting temptation to misunderstand delusion. In this talk, I will offer a brief summary of the objections against the view of delusions as wrong beliefs. More so, however, I offer a 'therapeutic intervention' to our temptation to misunderstand delusion, attempting to explain at once both the appeal of the doxastic conception as well as its objections. Specifically, I propose that delusions are characterized by a paradox or seeming contradiction: delusions are characterized by the use of an 'I know' that cannot convey knowledge. As a consequence, I argue that the phenomenon of delusion urges us to reconsider contemporary mainstream epistemology.

*Rick Bellaar: I got my BA in philosophy and my MSc. in logic at the University of Amsterdam. Afterwards I won*

*the second prize of the 2020 Van Helsdingen essay competition. I am currently an external PhD student at Ghent University under supervision of Dr. Jasper Feyaerts. My project is a Wittgensteinian 'grammatical investigation' of delusion.*

**Sarah Bögle** - *How the use of psychiatric medication impacts belonging: medication-mediated, altered ways of relating*

This paper discusses the findings of a doctoral study that explored how the use of psychiatric medication in the treatment of early psychosis impacts belonging in regard to the self, other people and the world. This study took an existential-hermeneutic phenomenological approach and utilised visual methods. Eleven participants took part in idiographic, in-depth interviews about their experiences. The data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis and framework analysis. Psychiatric medication use was found to radically alter a person's place in the world by creating experiences of bodily unhomeliness, self-alienation, profound loneliness and social estrangement. The medicated body ceased to be the participants' home in the world, which led to a sense of profound alienation from the self and from other people. Some participants experienced a split between body and self, which was reported to be excruciatingly painful. Participants felt further alienation from significant others and the world around them through emotional disconnect and a loss of affective attunement. The profound loss of belonging participants in this study experienced while taking psychiatric medication highlights the importance of psychosocial and trauma-sensitive approaches to treating psychosis. More holistic and embodied approaches to treating psychosis, including no medication and minimal medication use, are warranted.

*Dr. Sarah Bögle: I am a psychologist in private practice, independent researcher and mindfulness meditation teacher with a PhD in psychology from London South Bank University. My research interests include the embodied, relational and subjective experiences of mental distress and well-being. My research is predominantly informed by existential-hermeneutic phenomenology, particularly Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of embodiment. I am interested in themes such as care, belonging, sociality, embodiment and temporality.*

**Alan Bristow** - *Paranoid Knowledge: Paradoxes of (non)-Meaning in Psychosis. Lacan, Psychoanalysis and Madness Written*

This paper utilises a set of interrelated Lacanian/psychoanalytic concepts to explore how narratives of madness can be illustrative of both pathology and normality, sanity and madness, knowledge and non-sense simultaneously. By adopting a reading strategy derived from Lacan's engagement with paranoid psychosis, I demonstrate how various written accounts of madness have been co-opted to advance both clinical knowledge on 'symptomology' (Freud, 1911/Lacan, 1955-56) and, at one and the same time, much broader socio-historical critiques (Sass, 1994/ Santner, 1996/ Kittler, 1981). I set these concerns in and against developments within Mad studies which take umbrage at master disciplines like psychoanalysis 'overwriting' subjective experience in favour of complex, arcane theoretical speculations. By taking the mad writing of Daniel Paul Schreber as the paradigmatic example of the way in which 'delusional/paranoid' texts has been interpreted, analysed, (manipulated?) to extrapolate any number of, at times, conflicting themes, I draw attention to other 'mad texts' whereby similar reading strategies can be employed to unearth both psychiatric or psychoanalytic symptomology as well as profound cultural, political, and philosophical insights. I map this paradox in and against Lacan's own theorisation of paradoxical models for human subjectivity (e.g. the mobius strip) as well as established philosophical enquiries into madness's enigmatic relation to knowledge, reason and the cogito (Foucault, 1961/Derrida, 1963).

*Alan Bristow: A Psychiatric Social Worker by profession, I have been working in statutory mental health services for near two decades in London, UK. I completed my PhD on 'Mad Writing', Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory in 2020. Forthcoming book entitled Paranoid Knowledge: Psychosis and the Interpretation of Mad Writing where I examine the worth of Lacanian theory to debates emanating from within mad studies about how one positions, interprets or 'reads' psychotic texts.*

**Elke van Buggenhout** – *Rhythmicizomenon - A musical event*

Rhythm, so wrote French philosopher Henry Maldiney at the end of the 1960s, is mostly confused with cadence, in other words with metre and measure. Maldiney, by contrast, relates rhythm to what he calls l'Ouvert: the vitalising force in life, or the heart of Life itself. His concept of rhythm strongly influenced Gilles Deleuze, Maldiney's colleague and friend in the time the two worked in Lyon. Both philosophers – who were also engaged in the world of psychiatry – return to the reminder of ancient Greek poet Archilochos: “Appreciate, what rhythm holds men”; an advice which is highly expedient in times which strongly neglect this basic rhythmicity. Elke van Buggenhout and Adriaan Severins join in with such thoughts in a musical event. What happens there involves a play with the unforeseen, whereby the dynamic structure offers a rhythmic and sonic dancefloor for the encounter with the other as other. This play does not play the familiar song; generally known coordinates are breached. Time and identity are unsettled as for intensity, frequency, tempo and mass. The improvisation entails a musical bid to difference relating to difference. This way one can end up in the sphere of the *natura musicans*: the musical dynamic force of nature which generates new life and change, which moves us and makes us move-towards the wholesome regions of The Open, a rhythmic openness that in the end (or at the start) carries and vitalises us, but for which today we mostly don't seem to care much. Afterwards Sonia de Jager will get in conversation with Elke and Adriaan, joined by Bert van den Bergh, who is working with Elke on an essay on these musical and salutary possibilities.

*Elke Van Buggenhout obtained a master in musictheory/writing, is active as musician in the field of contemporary and experimental music, and works as music therapist at UPC KU-Leuven.*

*Adriaan Severins works as audio artist and theatre maker; he runs (together with Elena Peeters) production house SLAK and also manages wadi, a platform for circular music.*

*Bert van den Bergh is philosopher and psychologist, works as lecturer at The Hague University of Applied Sciences and published among other things *The Shadow of the Black Dog: Depression as symptom of our times* (in Dutch).*

*Sonia de Jager is a PhD student at the Erasmus School of Philosophy. Besides a dissertation, de Jager works on *Patient Analyses* (long-duration composition), *Regenerative Feedback* (music and philosophy conference), and is a member of the Noise Research Union. More information at [n-o.000.nl](http://n-o.000.nl).*

**Marc Calmeyn and Nev Jones** - *The phenomenological paradoxes of DSM-5*

The international colloquium ‘DSM-5 ten years later. And now?’ (organized by Patrick Landman (Paris) and Marc Calmeyn (Bruges), held in Paris on December 15 and 16 2023 in Paris aimed at a discussion of the DSM-5 in the field of psychiatry and mental health and a dialogue on alternative approaches. Marc Calmeyn provides the highlights of the colloquium. Key themes, viewed phenomenologically, were content, connectedness and contact. Secondly, the colloquium emphasized the critical role of structural contribution from persons with lived experience and their family and discuss lived experience involvement. It's along the lines of integrating first and third perspective. Nev Jones (University of Pittsburgh) expands on her colloquium presentation, emphasizing the biopsychological reductionism inherent in the DSM to which, apart from individual-level diagnosis, the conceptual framework has come to shape the training of clinicians across different fields. Arguing for the importance of bottom-up emic meaning-making, she describes alternative approaches to attuning trainees and clinicians with the breadth and depth of experiences falling under the psychosis umbrella. In combination, the presenters stress the need to re-envision the hermeneutics of psychiatric experiences, especially lived experience, phenomenological approaches and the goal of hermeneutic justice.

*Marc Calmeyn is a psychiatrist psychoanalyst. He has been working in two psychiatric hospitals (Ghent and Bruges). Private practice 'Lelieveld' in Loppem (Belgium). Baccalaureate in philosophy. Member of the section philosophy and psychiatry of the Flemish Association of Psychiatry. Member of the section philosophy of the WPA. In 2021 publication of 'Depressie is menselijk', 'Depression is humane'.*

*Nev Jones: Assistant Professor, University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work. Mental health services researcher and community psychologist focused on the sociocultural determinants of mental health, psychosis-focused services, health equity and disability justice. Strongly invested in increasing peer/service user involvement and leadership in research and policy and in tackling health-related structural inequalities.*

**Sidney Carls-Diamante and Dominika Glogowski - *Two Episodes of Lithium: Conversations on Energy, Speculation, and the Future***

This performance presentation interweaves philosophical and artistic narratives centred around two major contexts in which lithium arises: bipolar disorder and resource extraction for energy transition. These narratives in dialogue discuss the paradox of speculation and future-directedness, which we demonstrate generate mirroring behaviour on meta-levels. Bipolar disorder has long been associated with creativity, particularly during high-energy manic periods. It is widely treated with lithium, a mood stabiliser, which sometimes dampens creativity. As a set of epistemic strategies for exploring new ideas, creativity is in effect speculation about the future. Paradoxically, lithium can engender two futures for an individual: while its mood-stabilising effects may help lead to a mentally healthier future, it can also restrict future-directed speculation. On the other hand, lithium is subject to intense financial speculation about humans' environmental future. Market explosive behaviour causes extreme uncertainty that is corrected and stabilized by funds, which function as buffers for those episodes. Risk is engraved in the creative mode of capital production. Paradoxically, hope for prosperity and despair correlate in the regions affected by extractive speculation. The performative dialogue format of the presentation opens spaces for predictive conjectures about speculation's paradox in the real world of lithium's medical and socio-environmental relevance.

*Sidney Carls-Diamante is interested in underexplored topics about the mind. One of the first philosophers to study consciousness in octopuses, she has expanded her research to the philosophical issues surrounding bipolar disorder, particularly its relationship with creativity and suicidality. Until recently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Konstanz, she is preparing to move to the University of Lisbon.*

*Dominika Glogowski's professional background is in the arts and art theory. She devises and supervises cross-sectoral projects on socio-environmental connectedness, resource extraction and the energy transition. Dominika collaborated with research institutions in i.a. Brazil, Austria, and the UK. Verging on theory and praxis, she bridges silos through relational thinking and embodied experiences, employing performative dialogue formats and deep speech listening.*

**Max Casey - *'Indestructible life': Madness, Self-harm and Drive in In My Skin***

This paper argues that an analysis of *In My Skin* can proffer an understanding of madness' relation to practices of self-harm and the nature of drives. While madness has traditionally been associated with the vicissitudes of schizophrenia, this paper will consider self-harm's 'embodied emotional work' (Gurung) within the rubric of mad studies. *In My Skin* is a 2002 semi-autobiographical film about a woman, Esther, who begins to mutilate herself and eat and preserve pieces of her own body, with little explanation given for why she does this. In this paper, I want to position Esther's desire for self-mutilation as an experience of the death drive, figured in Lacanian psychoanalysis as a form of 'indestructible life' – a drive that seeks not death but a form of stasis within pain and minimal life. In *In My Skin* I argue develops this understanding of drive by tying its (in)animacy to the stifling nature of Esther's work and consumerism, where self-harm acts as a paradoxical way of harmonizing Esther to flows of capitalist production. By analyzing the film in this way, I hope to show how it not only reflects but helps us develop a theory of madness that captures the ambivalences of self-harm.

*Max Casey is a PhD candidate at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Their research explores mental illness and futurity from a multi-media perspective, having written on literature, film as well as digital media. Their research primarily attempts to bring medical humanities research into conversation with developments in mad studies, queer and trans studies and life writing scholarship.*

**Robert Chapman** - *Mad Pride and Revolutionary England: The Case of the Ranters*

This talk will consider the Ranters, a radical religious movement in 17th Century England active around the time of the English revolution. The Ranters were pantheists who saw God in everything and everyone. They reasoned from this that private property should be abolished, including the ownership of people through marriage or slavery. Because of this, the Ranters have previously been identified by historians as forming a kind of proto-communist and proto-sexual liberation movement. However, what has been less noticed is that Ranters also began to reclaim the concept of Madness, after being called mad or lunatics by their critics. I argue that viewing the Ranters as expressing a kind of proto-Mad Pride helps us both understand the significance of the Ranters' political efforts, and also to view at least some forms of Mad Pride as part of a longer tradition of radical left politics than has so far been recognised. The paradox is that we can see this only following the theorizing of Mad Pride in recent decades.

*Robert Chapman is an Assistant Professor in Critical Neurodiversity Studies at the Institute for Medical Humanities at Durham University. They are the author of *Empire of Normality: Neurodiversity and Capitalism* and have published widely on neurodiversity, madness, and disability.*

**Lorna Collins** (keynote speaker) - *Being psychotic: madness as vulnerability, creativity and power*

The visions I bring to the world of "Too Mad To Be True" are based on my lived experiences of having 'organic psychosis'. This is a medical condition, which leads me to have continuous hallucinations. In this performative presentation, I offer my 'mad' visions, which take the form of a mobius strip. From one perspective on this mobius strip, we see how I am defined by a medical diagnostic system, which makes it very risky to describe my experiences because if I say anything at all, I run the risk of being detained. This has happened in the past. However, expression is what enables me to carry on and manage life. I fold the moebius strip over onto the other side. Here we see my infinite creativity, which allows me to cope and live within this system. I will show remnants from film, artworks and performance which illustrate this fact. We also see how they open up a parallel layer of reality, which endorses novel senses of identity, meaning, innovation and productivity. My hallucinations certainly enable rather than disable me, even when they are violent and destructive. This viewpoint is perhaps controversial, perhaps empowering. I will be asking questions such as: Can we ever get out of the medical model (and do we really want to)? When do hallucinations cease to be creative experiences, and become clinical symptoms, an aetiology, or signs of 'illness'? Who decides this? How can the two sides of the mobius strip be resolved? I will show how and where to fold and cross the borders of the mobius strip, until there is no difference between them, but a pure threshold of expression and creativity. Opening discourse and conversations – such as we have at this event – frees up the system. Let us kickstart, experiment and evolve with new practice.

*Dr. Lorna Collins is an artist, filmmaker, writer and researcher in creative health, based in South-East England. She writes about art, philosophy and mental health, in books such as *Making Sense: Art Practice and Transformative Therapeutics*. She also writes fiction and poetry. Her creative oeuvre engages with her lived experience of traumatic brain injury and consequent condition of organic psychosis. She is currently working on a documentary film about this theme, and an Arts Council-funded research project ("A Creative Transformation") about the brain, trauma, mental health and creativity. <https://lornacollins.com> @sensinglorna*

**Willem Daub** – *Strata in thinking*

How do we enter the deeper layers of our consciousness? How many layers are there? Where do we experience the collective unconscious described by Jung? I defend the view, that the (two-stratified) mind-body problem cannot be solved, because at least some forms of cognitive phenomenology lead to the insight, that our consciousness is four-stratified. In each (idealized) thinking process we descend and ascend lightning swift through these strata into our collective unconscious, bringing up new insights in statu nascendi, what Petimengin calls a Felt Meaning. I will let you perform two slightly different explorative experiments in thinking. By observing the phenomenal contrast between the two, some of you may notice slightly different thought movements, thereby entering fully consciously into the regions from where the ‘mad’, dyslectics and people with Gilles de la Tourette receive their enchanting and often inspiring, but sometimes overpowering insights. To give weight to my words, I will report to you the rare moment, that this experiment gratified me with the moveable feast of a well-known archetype. Then I will describe the phenomenal contrast between ‘freedom from’, ‘autonomy’ and ‘freedom to’, and bring a dozen A3 posters of their inner phenomena, in enhanced colors.

*Willem Daub:*

1. *I read a history of philosophy when I was 17, which I understood. Then I started reading Kritik der reinen Vernunft, which I didn't understand.*
2. *I studied physics, a bachelor, then philosophy, a bachelor.*
3. *I worked as a teacher of physics, mathematics, astronomy, religion, bookbinding and architecture in a Waldorf School, upper grades.*
4. *Then I went back to university and obtained a Master Degree in Philosophy of Science in 2012.*
5. *Author of Beyond Wittgenstein, Beyond Mindfulness (academia.edu).*
6. *Co-author of Changing Ground: Handling Tensions between Production Ethics and Environmental Ethics of Agricultural Soils (Sustainability).*
7. *(under review) Unveiling The Hard Problem With Cognitive Phenomenology.*
8. *I have been giving courses in Observing One's Thinking in Holland, Finland, Scotland, Wales, Switzerland and Odessa.*
9. *I am considering a dissertation.*

**Natalie Depraz** (keyote speaker) - *A tentative microphenomenology of some schizophrenic disorders. The account of a psychiatrist*

Schizophrenia has been studied in numerous scientific articles, which tried without relevant results to identify this mental disorder thanks to an analysis of the brain areas (e.g. Christopher Frith). Psychiatry in turn has been endeavoring for decades to describe the properties of this disorder (e.g. Ludwig Binwanger, Wolfgang Blankenburg, Henry Grivois), with the goal of helping people with schizophrenia. First-person testimonies parallelly document with direct access the lived experience of such persons (e.g. Marguerite Sechehaye, Polo Tonka). In this talk, I would like to show the relevance of the method of the microphenomenological interview in order to get a finer experiential and descriptive access and understanding of this disorder. Such a methodology (P. Vermersch) indeed offers a more subtle quality of experience and a refined description of its multilayered features, so as to allow to complement and even hopefully to renew the available approaches, be they third person (neuronal) or second person (psychiatric), and it combines happily with first-person testimonies. Firstly, I will present some interpretative difficulties we face when we wish to access schizophrenic lived experiences; then I will rely on an interview I led with a psychiatrist in order to show how the micro-phenomenological approach as combined with a semi-directive interview offers fruitful resources to refine our understanding of this lived experience; to conclude, I will sketch the methodological and theoretical framework (the current research program „The life of the heart: phenomenology of body and emotions“) from which I plan this fall to lead microphenomenological interviews with persons with schizophrenic disorders in a hospital in Bucharest.

*Natalie Depraz (born 1964) is a French philosopher. She is a specialist in German philosophy, phenomenology, and, more specifically, Edmund Husserl. She is a professor at the University of Rouen Normandy and an academic member of the Husserl Archives at the École normale supérieure (ENS/CNRS). She has worked extensively on the link between phenomenology and neuroscience and, inspired by both Husserl and Varela, she has elaborated a theory and practice of microphenomenology. She has translated, edited, and published*

numerous books and articles, in French and English, e.g., *On becoming aware. A pragmatics of experiencing*, 2003 and *Attention et vigilance, à la croisée de la phénoménologie et des sciences cognitives*, 2014.

### **Ricky Derisz** - *Transrationality The Paradoxes of Divine Madness*

*“The light that illuminates the madman is an earthly light, but I do not believe it is a projection, an emanation from his mundane ego. He is irradiated by a light that is more than he. It may burn him out.”* — R.D Laing. From a rational perspective, psychosis is nonsensical. From an irrational perspective, psychosis is inherently meaningful. From the mystical perspective, all madness may be viewed divine. From the materialist perspective, mystical experiences and madness may be grouped together and pathologized. My journey of madness has taught me that synthesizing paradoxes is crucial to comprehend the experience in its fullness. Reconciling rationality and irrationality, the figurative with the literal, the poetic with the pragmatic, the divine with the psychological, is required for a fuller picture to come into view. Madness, I will argue, can transpire when one aspect of the mandala of interpretation is off balance. Immersion in psychic symbols without healthy detachment can cause people to get lost. An influx of symbols without poetic interpretation is overwhelming, terrifying, or ego-inflating. Irrationality without rationality makes functioning in the world impossible. I will suggest that holistic madness, a context that doesn't pathologize or spiritualize, creates an inclusive, transrational, transpersonal, and transsubjective understanding of madness that integrates, synthesizes and includes various modes of understanding, cohesion, and intelligence. Full circle, this leads to a fundamental paradox: is madness required to cultivate what R.D Laing calls “true sanity”?

*Ricky Derisz is an author, podcast host, and the creator of MindThatEgo, home to an expansive view of mental illness and spirituality. Inspired by a fusion of psychology, spirituality, philosophy, science, and personal experience, Ricky's quest is to understand mental illness in the context of spiritual awakening.*

### **Thibault Desmet** - *Space's hospitality for contradiction: Fernand Deligny and the autistic body*

The work of French pedagogue Fernand Deligny is inevitable in exploring the internal drive of autism, away from negative, always normative, descriptions. For him, autism is characterised by a strong permeability to the circumstances, without embedding this receptivity in a symbolic structure: autism is situated in space rather than in language. For thirty years (1967-1996), Deligny and a team of so-called ‘close presences’ lived with severely autistic people in the countryside of the French Cévennes. They did this mainly outdoors, where they had to constantly read and shape the space so that it was hospitable for them to live in. Deligny's discourse on autism as living in the Real, beyond language and without ego, contradicts psychoanalysis's claim that autism, however mute at times, lives in the symbolic order but egocentrically refuses to participate. Deligny acknowledges autism's inner drive as having ‘a sixth sense of spatiality’, so his primary concern is (spatial) practice rather than (linguistic) theory. My contribution would argue that his focus on living in each other's proximity in outside space, while having to read and shape it, is hospitable to otherness and thus to contradicting theories. Located outside of language, autism and space go beyond contradiction.

*Thibault Desmet works as a doctoral researcher in architecture at Sint-Lucas, Brussels (KU Leuven). His research focuses on the concept of space in philosophy, (anti-/post-)psychoanalysis and anthropology in the recent present. Using the work of Fernand Deligny around autism, Thibault shows how body and space interact. Architecture is seen as a companion, that helps to be outside: sheltered and exposed.*

<https://arch.kuleuven.be/team/desmet-thibault>. <https://arp-researchgroup.be/thibault-desmet/>

### **Michael Dickson** - *Living with the ‘Paradox of Delusion’*

A paradox (in the philosophical sense) is (understood here as) an ‘absurdity’ that takes the form of an apparent contradiction, the opposing terms of which both seem reasonable. Philosophers have dealt with paradoxes in various ways. Sometimes a paradox is shown to rest on a false assumption.

Sometimes the absurdity is dissolved by demonstrating that one of the contradictory statements is false, or by demonstrating that the contradiction is merely apparent (for example, due to an equivocation). This talk will frame certain 'delusions' as generating paradox, arguing that those who experience delusions can have good reasons to hold them, while they may simultaneously have good reasons to accept evidence against the delusion. It will be argued, further, that the resulting paradox might not be resolvable in any of the manners mentioned above. Instead, one must live with the paradox. How? One possibility is to take on a theory of truth that is tolerant of contradictions. This talk will explore a different possibility, based on a robust version of 'intellectual humility' that can ground the possibility of rationally accepting the delusion and its denial, and thus philosophically ground the well known practice of so-called 'double-bookkeeping'.

*Michael Dickson is a philosopher who previously specialized in the philosophy of quantum theory and currently works mainly in philosophy of music. Based on his own experience of living for over thirty years with an ongoing diagnosis of 'schizoaffective disorder', among other things, he has also recently begun writing and speaking about philosophical aspects of mental illness, especially schizophrenia.*

### **Roy Dings** - *Who am I? The paradoxical state of self-self ambiguity in personality disorder*

Most people engage in trait- or behavior management: an introverted person may act extrovertedly in order to fit in, and a cautious person may decide to do something careless in order to impress their new romantic partner. Neurodiverse individuals may engage in various 'camouflaging' techniques, for various reasons (e.g. to also fit in, or to avoid bullying or stigma). In this talk, I will zoom in on trait- and behavior management in personality disorder (PD). Increasingly, PDs are conceptualized in terms of trait maladaptivity, which is a gradual and dimensional concept that involves different aspects: the temporality of the maladaptiveness, the severity of consequences of the maladaptive trait, and people's attitude towards their maladaptive trait. By comparing trait maladaptivity in PDs with other cases of trait maladaptivity, I show that there are similarities between different types of trait maladaptivity. However, trait management in PD is distinct in that it may involve a distancing or disidentification with maladaptive traits, which sometimes leads to the development of a subsidiary (or 'as if') self. Subsequently, people with PD may start to experience a somewhat paradoxical state which I call 'self-self-ambiguity', in which they struggle to determine whether a particular action is part of their default or subsidiary self.

*Dr. Roy Dings is a postdoctoral researcher at Radboud University Nijmegen and Scientific Coordinator at the Lemontree Center for Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Philosophy at AmsterdamUMC. His research focuses on how mental illness may affect (i) who one is and (ii) what one knows. More concretely, Roy investigates the phenomena of (i) self-illness ambiguity and (ii) experiential knowledge and expertise.*

### **Cynthia Dorrestijn** - *Smell and psychosis*

Starting from my own experience, this talk is about disgust and enjoyment of smell in psychosis. Could the loss of decorum in psychotic condition be related to a weird odor perception, a lack of disgust? In my case, lack of enjoyment also played a role, but rather during recovery after psychosis. No longer hindered by hallucinations, I looked into the future, but I lacked signs for direction. Regaining a sense of direction was an essential to recovery. Through the experience of pleasant smells, I regained a smellscape and a shared world. Most of the existing research on smell deals with dysfunctional olfactory processes in a biomedical perspective. However, this does not give us insight into shifting experiences of smell. I try to find logic and functionality in such shifts. It appears to be a logic that leaves behind the common object-oriented view of reality. In this presentation I discuss some personal experiences with smell and psychosis. The objective is to contribute to understanding psychosis, and perhaps even shed some light on ordinary life.

*Cynthia Dorrestijn MSc graduated in 'Design for Interaction' in 2008. After a stint in the rat race, a third full recovery of psychosis gave her the opportunity to rethink her purpose. She currently teaches dance. An urge to*

*reframe previously experienced extreme states of consciousness let her to contribute to TMTBT II and to ISPS conferences.*

**Angelos Evangelou** - *From 'Madness' to 'Mental Illness' to 'Madness': Or, the Paradox of the Return of Madness in the Age of Medical Science*

Michel Foucault's *Histoire de la folie à l'âge Classique* (1961) has traced the gradual transformation of 'madness' to 'mental illness', a terminological shift which reflects not only the constructedness of madness by the bearer of rationality but also the pathologization of an experience. It is now almost impossible to talk about madness in the way Foucault perceived it, namely as the tragic thing of the Middle Ages, without relying on psychiatric terms and discourses related to symptomatology and treatment. Drawing on Rachel Earl's bildungsroman *My Fat, Mad Teenager Diary* (2007) and Esmé Weijun Wang's collection of essays *The Collected Schizophrenias* (2019), I analyse the emergence of a growing demand for a more positive or more optimistic representations of mental illness. Despite the fact that this demand is often healing-oriented, confirming thus these texts' embeddedness into the dominant apparatus of psychiatry, 21st-century literary narratives, I argue, re-engage with Foucault's reading of madness as an experience of both fascination and fear, which enacts man's confrontation "with the dark powers of the world". In this talk I will investigate the implications of this paradox both in terms of re-imagining Foucault as well as of the actual experience represented.

*Angelos Evangelou is Assistant Professor in English Literature and Theory at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. His research focuses on Madness Studies and Cultural Border Studies, specifically the representation of madness and mental illness in 20th- and 21st-century British and Anglophone literature as well as of the border in the Literatures and Cinemas of Cyprus, Palestine and Israel. He is the author of *Philosophizing Madness from Nietzsche to Derrida* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).*

**Meredith Evans** - *Prescribing/Proscribing Madness: Psychedelics, psychosis, and clinical care*

Psychosis is often assumed to be an inherently distressing experience that must be suppressed with clinical biomedical care. Antipsychotics—licit psychotropics that suppress altered states of consciousness—are the standard treatment for psychoses yet are critiqued by patients and clinicians alike for their inefficacies and debilitating side effects. Meanwhile, psychedelics—illicit psychotropics that induce altered states of consciousness—are being praised as 'miracle' low-risk treatments for non-psychotic mental health disorders (e.g., anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress, addiction, anorexia). Psychedelic and psychotic experiences share phenomenological similarities; both can induce magical thinking and mystical encounters, as well as paranoia, anxiety, existential struggles, depersonalization, and derealization. Yet only psychedelic experiences are being clinically explored for therapeutic benefits. This paper is propelled by a recent invitation for anthropologists to 'lose their minds' and rethink concepts like the 'normal' mind and human subject in relation to atypical and psychotic ways of being. As an anthropologist who has twice 'lost' my mind, I understand madness as a paradoxical experience that can be simultaneously distressing and therapeutic, harmful and healing. By drawing on auto-ethnography, I question what social contexts and relations of power inform how madness is afforded pathological limitations and therapeutic capacities in biomedical care.

*Meredith Evans: I am a medical anthropologist, Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Health and Society at the University of Toronto Scarborough, and a Visiting Scholar in Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh. My work uses clinical ethnography to examine the aesthetics and affective politics of care.*

**Istvan Fazakas** - *Self in Recovery: a phenomenological journey in schizophrenic experiences*

This panel proposes to discuss the lived experience of recovery in schizophrenia from a phenomenological perspective. The phenomenological current in psychiatry has recently produced a significant effort in the understanding of this disorder based on analyses of the experience of the self,

the minimal self and their disorders. Empirical studies have provided consistent support for these descriptions. However, we still do not know what happens to the minimal self when the person recovers. Several testimonies and a few qualitative studies point to the importance of rebuilding a sense of self, a readjustment of identity and the role of narrativity. However, these scattered elements have not yet been considered within a theoretical framework that would enable them to be analysed across the board. The Self in Recovery panel will bring together academic and experiential experts to begin to map out a phenomenological theory of recovery. Beyond the rigorous description of experiences, the challenge will be to identify the major phenomenological pathways of the recovery journey and the layers of experience involved. To this end, emphasis will be placed on genetic and generative phenomenological approaches aimed at understanding the dynamics of experience and the material conditions of their genesis.

*István Fazakas is a theoretical philosopher, member of the Institut für Transzendentalphilosophie und Phänomenologie and the Marc Richir Archiv at the University of Wuppertal. Team members: Cassandre Bois, Tudi Gozé, Thelke Scholz, Samuel Thoma.*

### **Andrew Field** - Presenting five cartoons from a short unpublished book called *Schizology*

I plan on presenting five cartoons from a short unpublished book called *Schizology: Graphic Essays*. Here are the titles of the cartoons, some themes in each of the cartoons, a summary of the cartoon, and how it might fit into the themes and sub-themes of the conference:

1. "Rooms." Amnesia, art brut, spirituality, delusions, hallucinations. The cartoon is a narrative about becoming psychotic, while also reflecting on the difficulty of tapping into the psychotic world once one is no longer psychotic. It could fit into the self and/or non-self sub-theme.
2. "Explanandum #1." Phenomenology of delusions, projection, solipsism. The cartoon is an "explanandum," where it tries to explain, through phenomenology and the cartoon form, what a delusion is like, or how and why it works. This could fit into the theme of the paradoxes of delusion.
3. "Symptomatology #1." Hallucinations, synesthesia. This cartoon describes an experience of hallucinatory synesthesia. It fits into the freedom and/or necessity sub-theme.
4. "Explanandum #2." Ipseity, insight, minimal self. This cartoon is a mini-talk about the relationship between insight, ipseity, and madness, in the context of schizoaffective disorder. It fits into a few of the sub-themes.
5. "Dissonance." Cognitive dissonance. This cartoon is a narrative about being psychotic and experiencing cognitive dissonance between the psychotic world and the social world. It fits into a few of the sub-themes.

*Andrew Field is a mostly cartoonist and sometime singer-songwriter who writes and draws about mental health. He also lives with schizoaffective disorder. He has a masters in Library and Information Science from Kent State University, and a masters in English from the University of Toledo. He had a chapbook of poetry, *All I Want*, published in 2016 by Red Flag Poetry, and more recently a serialized cartoon published by The Wellcome Collection. He's also released four albums of music, three of which he wrote and performed while mad, and one of which was totally improvised. His website is [www.andrewfield48.com](http://www.andrewfield48.com), and instagram @andrewfield48*

### **Sidney Carls-Diamante** - Suicidality: Paradoxes of self-destruction and self-preservation

Suicidality, or thoughts and actions pertaining to ending one's own life, raises two paradoxes. First, suicidality—an extreme form of self-destructiveness—runs counter to self-preservation, which some believe is an ingrained biological tendency. Second, suicidality may be a set of strategies to restore homeostasis (i.e., psychologically/physiologically stable conditions). Drawing on the theory of active inference, this presentation argues that suicidality is a manifestation of uncertainty reduction processes. According to active inference, exposure to uncertain states can have adverse consequences, including disrupting homeostasis, as an individual's ability to respond adaptively may be compromised. The individual must thus undertake courses of action to avoid uncertain states, in the process restoring homeostasis. The causality of suicidality involves intense cognitive states such as

hopelessness, feelings of entrapment, thwarted belongingness, perceived burdensomeness, and mental pain. In addition to distress, these states generate uncertainty about 1) whether they will continue into the future, 2) whether they will ever improve, and 3) when they will change. In contrast, death is a high-certainty state wherein it is believed all hardship will cease. Suicidal ideation and actions therefore arise as attempts to bring the individual out of a high-uncertainty state and thus restore homeostasis.

*Sidney Carls-Diamante is interested in underexplored topics about the mind. One of the first philosophers to study consciousness in octopuses, she has expanded her research to the philosophical issues surrounding bipolar disorder, particularly its relationship with creativity and suicidality. Until recently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Konstanz, she is preparing to move to the University of Lisbon*

**Will Hall** - *Where is madness located? R.D. Laing, Star Trek, and the end of the world*

Neoliberalism locates madness within the body of the other. An individualized body defers consideration of the broader political economic status quo, while the "othered" body reinforces authority over it. Against this territorialization of the body as outsider, there is another approach, which asks, How does the psyche study the psyche without studying itself? Reflexive discourse, as exemplified by such theorists as Bateson, Jung, and Laing, considers the body as the entire ecological fabric of living experience, and the other as reflection and constitution of self. Located in this way, madness cannot defer the neoliberal status quo from scrutiny. Instead, the immediacy of the world crisis, as a totalizing collapse of ecological and symbolic orders, becomes inescapable. This collapse, or the "end of the world," is the proper domain of madness. Considering Laing's 1967 paper *The Obvious from the Dialectics of Liberation* Congress, my contribution takes my encounter diagnosed as schizophrenia in a first psychotic break, and my preoccupation from that experience, the *Star Trek* original series episode *The City on the Edge of Forever*, to consider the ethical question at the core of madness at the end of the world: how do we save it.

*Will Hall, MA, DiplPW, is a schizophrenia diagnosis survivor, Jungian therapist, and psychiatric survivor movement organizer. He is a PhD Candidate at Maastricht University School for Mental Health and Neuroscience, He recently co-created Mad Camp, a summer camp for survivors. [www.willhall.net](http://www.willhall.net) [www.madnessradio.net](http://www.madnessradio.net) [www.outsidementalhealth.com](http://www.outsidementalhealth.com)*

**Goedele Hermans** - *Sick of it all: A philosophical exploration of the hypochondriacal complaint*

Increased hypervigilance about health does not decrease the risk of death. And yet hypochondria has survived the test of time. In this presentation I will explore the functionality and the form of the hypochondriacal complaint. Within psychoanalysis it might be understood as the last line of defense against an acute psychotic episode. Within literature studies, hypochondria might be interpreted as a "discourse of resistance", where bodily complaints protest overwrought societal and cultural expectations (Lang, 2007). Philosopher Rebecca Comay (2016) notes how the suffering of the hypochondriac is undeniable, even as his condition is uniquely unverifiable. Psychoanalysis, literature and philosophy combined might shed some light on this perplexing phenomenon.

*Goedele Hermans is PhD student at the department of psychoanalysis & clinical consulting (Ghent University). Working as a clinical psychotherapist. Master of Arts in History and Philosophy, with a special interest in phenomenology and psychoanalysis.*

**Sonia de Jager** - *Phenomenology of sick spirit: A neuroendocrinologically-informed, philosophical account of allostasis under the influence of corticosteroids* + **Shanna Dobson**: *p-Adic Hyperphantasia*

Allostatic overload, a.k.a., stress, prompts a neuroendocrine response, primarily the release of cortisol.

Despite decades of research on corticosteroids' effects on psychiatric symptoms, understanding their impact on the intricacies of self-perception and social coordination has remained elusive. In adrenal insufficiency, where cortisol deficiency occurs, the 'normal' functioning of the HPA axis is bypassed by the purely cognitive regulation of stress, resulting in paradoxical outcomes. In this context, stress regulation and energy management don't occur as silent, subconscious processes but are subject to conscious scrutiny, as patients can dose corticosteroids based on perceived necessity. The conceptualization of stress thus redefines preferred health states in adrenal insufficiency, presenting a paradoxical situation where the patient's concept of stress becomes a crucial parameter in the body's allostatic adaptation. The argument explored is that given the sociocultural embedding of concepts, communication with others about the 'nature' and definitions of stress now factor into allostatic (self-)regulation, resulting in the preservation of entirely different preferred health-states than the ones neuroendocrinologically given by the body's own HPA axis. The author will narrate aspects of their own self-prediction when living with adrenal insufficiency, and this account will be theoretically informed by an allostatic account of active inference and state-of-the-art neuroendocrinology. Philosophical introspection will ensue, in every sense of the expression.

*Sonia de Jager (Buenos Aires, 1988) is a PhD researcher at the Erasmus School of Philosophy, Rotterdam. Her interests span predictive processing philosophy, natural language processing and computational semantics, as well as critical, radical traditions which unsettle the objectivist frameworks maladaptively constraining contemporary cognition and computation. De Jager is a member of the Noise Research Union and organizes the sound philosophy conference Regenerative Feedback.*

**Sofia Jeppsson** (keynote speaker) - *Sane fears and paradoxical madness*

The word "paradoxical" can be used both in a looser colloquial sense – about things like inherent tensions, or unexpected results – and a strict philosophical sense. It is vital to keep these different meanings apart in philosophical discussions. Nevertheless, philosophers of psychiatry often fail to do so when they argue that some experiences that madpeople describe are too paradoxical to exist. Why do otherwise smart philosophers argue so badly about madness? I believe they are often driven by fear. They find it frightening to contemplate that people might experience radically different realities. To quote a psychiatrist I know: We are so used to sharing a single consensus reality, but psychosis patients make holes in it. Philosophers (and clinicians, other researchers and scholars) who insist that no one actually have such experiences, must explain why madpeople nevertheless claim that they do. Two radically different approaches come up in the literature: Some argue that madpeople probably have fairly ordinary experiences, but talk in a confused and highly misleading manner. Others dismiss both madpeople and their experiences as fundamentally incomprehensible – we should not even try to understand them, there is no point. Both approaches can alleviate sane fears; either by presenting madpeople and their experiences as reassuringly similar to the sane, or by keeping them far away at a comforting distance. I have previously shown that many allegedly impossible mad experiences are not, after all, paradoxical in the strict philosophical sense. If philosophers find such experiences inconceivable, it is due to their own mental limitations, not due to these experiences' inherent paradoxicality. But what if some madpeople do claim to have experienced philosophical paradoxes? There are at least two possible interpretations. First, we could say that these people merely talk in a confused and misleading way. Second, we could accept the possibility that madpeople not only poke holes in consensus reality, but sometimes in logic itself.

*Sofia Jeppsson is associate professor of philosophy at Umeå University in northern Sweden. She started her philosophical career writing on free will, moral responsibility and topics in applied ethics. In 2018, when she gained her current position with stability and job security, she fully came out of the madness closet, and has since then published primarily on topics concerned with madness and psychiatry.*

**Evangelos Kalfopoulos** - *Paradox of the Tragic: on Deleuze and Hölderlin*

There appears to be an incompatibility between the tragic and the thought of Deleuze, since he

dismisses it, alongside irony, for the new value of humor (Deleuze, 1969). On the other hand, Deleuze is inspired by Hölderlin's notion of the tragic 'caesura' for the empty form of time (Deleuze, 1968), and continues to view the German poet under positive light also in the *Anti-Oedipus* (1972). For Hölderlin, tragedy is more easily understood in the form of a paradox, especially a paradox expressed in terms of power and weakness (Szondi, 1978), which can be translated into Deleuzian intensities. In this paper I would like to posit the thesis that Hölderlin's madness can be a way of reconciling the paradox of the tragic and irony with the concept of Deleuzian humor. In particular, I will examine the position that the paradox of tragedy can be flattened out in small humorous paradoxes that might be more easily accommodated in the Deleuzian notion of the schizophrenic, as sketched in the *Anti-Oedipus*.

*Evangelos Kalfopoulos: I hold a bachelor's degree in classics, master's degree in Cognitive Science and a PhD in Philosophy, with a thesis titled "Philosophical irony: a metaphilosophical study". Currently I am a postdoctoral researcher on philosophy of medicine in Sofia University and a member of the Institute of Philosophy, University of Coimbra, Portugal.*

### **Azra Khan - My Fragmented Self: The Ballistic Power and Bleak Surrender**

This presentation will be a creative first-person monologue detailing elements of what I perceive to be some paradoxes of my own and other people's madness. I will speak about the paradox of self and what is deemed 'sane' and 'mad' and how these perceptions manifest in day-to-day life. Sanity is a question of performing, of complying, of smiling blithely at systems which oppress, of swallowing down consciousness. Madness is a critique, rebellion, chaos, a deep and keening sense of injustice that erodes the type of functionality widely deemed 'correct'. What is the authentic self? Are my responses 'disordered' and 'broken'? How can I navigate these questions without slipping further into a state of being which alarms so many and condemns me back into a psychiatric unit? Is this my mad awakening?

*Azra Khan is a mad activist, writer and artist based in Edinburgh. She is also the group leader of the 'Oor Mad History' Collective Advocacy project and is currently finishing her Masters in Mad Studies. Currently, her work focuses on exploring how intersectionality and the dominant patriarchal paradigm influences forms of madness.*

### **Anna Kint en Niel Van Cleynenbreugel – Presentation Coconuts Magazine**

I will ask you an important question. The answer has the potential to change your entire life. It will rewrite your existence. Consider it a last chance; after this, there is no turning back. A chance for more, a chance for enlightenment, a chance to escape. Like everyone, you were born into slavery, born into a prison you cannot smell, taste, or touch. Mental captivity. I ask you to make a choice between two pills. If you take the blue pill, the story ends here, and you wake up in your bed believing whatever you want to believe. You discover nothing new, and you can continue to enjoy what you were doing. The world you know, as you know it, remains for you. If you take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I will show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. Together, we will take a closer look at Coconuts and explore what we learned after 2 years on the border of mental health, the creative sector, and the social enterprise world. We hope to search for the revolution towards the evolution of recovery together with you. Inspire and be inspired.

*Coconuts is a creative place, in Leuven (Belgium) for young adults with a psychotic experience. We offer space to find place in society (again) and to (re)connect with enthusiasm for life through art, design and social entrepreneurship.*

### **Velebita Koričančić - Metaphors of Madness: Psychotic Language through Stella do Patrocínio's**

## *Spoken Word Performances*

This study explores how metaphors in psychosis act both as an expression and as cognitive filters for managing interpretative complexities. It has dual objectives. First, it explores theoretical perspectives on the use of metaphors in psychosis, drawing from Bent Rosenbaum's *The Language of Psychosis* and supplemented by insights on coherence from Branca Telles Ribeiro; the interplay between metaphorical and metonymical processes by Dana Amir; the cathartic function of language in schizophrenia by Antonio Bucca; and Wouter Kusters' concept of 'delanguization.' These perspectives coincide in the understanding that psychotic language often diverges from standardized patterns of pragmatic linguistic usage, yet is governed by its own operational logics. The analysis then focuses on the *falatórios*, or spoken word performances, of Stella do Patrocínio, a schizophrenic Afro-Brazilian poet and long-term psychiatric inpatient. In her collection *The Kingdom of Animals and Beasts is My Name*, which includes poems transcribed from her recorded live performances, delirious metaphors—evident from the very title—reflect her internal world and institutional experiences, illustrating the chaotic and uninhibited psyche shaped by institutionalization. According to this research, Patrocínio's metaphorical language not only serves as a poetic tool for navigating her psychosis but also opens up discussions on madness and its communicative aspects.

*Velebita Koričančić, Ph.D. (Anahuac University Mexico / National Autonomous University of Mexico), from Zagreb, Croatia, is a professor, researcher, and literary translator, based in Mexico City. She co-organized the 1st International Meeting on Art Brut/Outsider Art in Mexico City in 2023. Her current research focuses on Latin American Outsider Arts, which intersects with the Mad Studies conceptual and experiential framework.*

## **Matko Krce-Ivančić - *Eternal Sunshine of the Academic Mind***

Emil Cioran has left us a rather productive distinction: 'There exists, I grant you, a clinical depression, upon which certain remedies occasionally have an effect; but there exists another kind, a melancholy underlying our very outbursts of gaiety and accompanying us everywhere, without leaving us alone for a single moment. And there is nothing that can rid us of this lethal omnipresence: the self forever confronting itself.' Contemporary academia, however, shows next to zero interest in exploring the states that underly our existence; it much rather prefers acting as if policy recommendations, resulting from research projects, help us to resolve our existence. Eternal sunshine of the academic mind is not in the slightest disturbed by the fact that life is not yet another exercise in problem-solving reasoning. What cannot be constrained into a research problem is excluded from the university – in the academic mind, it presents the threat of madness. Making it apparent that the academic mind still has very much to do with the ideology of the Enlightenment, the paper examines the hostility of today's academia towards expressing our existence that results in the curious conflation of what cannot be resolved and madness.

*Matko Krce-Ivančić has a PhD in Sociology from the University of Manchester, United Kingdom. His research focuses on exploring the relation of subjectivity and society. For example of his work, see Krce-Ivančić's article 'In the aftermath of the radical empiricist onslaught', examining the place of the radical empiricist discourse in contemporary academia, published at *Critical Horizons* (2021).*

## **Ananda Krishnan - *Paradoxical Attitudes Toward Mental Health Problems in India***

Mental health problems, based on Western conceptualization, are largely stigmatized in contemporary India. On the contrary, indigenous understanding of mental health problems is associated with paradoxical attitudes. For instance, in the traditional healing systems, insanity is both a disease and a metaphysical entity. Accordingly, mental health problems are both demonized and deified in India's cultural landscape. Such attitudes shape the landscape of mental health care in India. This paper begins the inquiry into these paradoxical attitudes with the Indian concept of the mind. The mind is understood as a subtle, quasi-material aspect of human beings that is not confined to the body. Rather, the body is considered an extension of the mind. Therefore, extrapolating medicalization to the mind

has unique socio-cultural and political implications. The present paper seeks to explore the evolution of the paradoxical ideas about mental health problems in the Indian context and their influence on help-seeking and care. The paradoxical ideas are corroborated using historical and mythical evidence and scientific literature. Insights from this discussion have implications for future research, practice, and policy.

*Ananda Krishnan is a research scholar at the Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad, India. His primary areas of interest include mental health, help-seeking for mental health problems, and resilience. He completed his master's in applied psychology from Pondicherry University. His other areas of interest include positive psychology, men's mental health, and interpersonal relationships. He has presented papers at national and international conferences.*

### **Fabian Lo Monte - Depression and paradoxes**

There are numerous ways and reasons to talk about paradoxes when depression is at issue. First, while depressivity is considered as a constitutive trait of human subjectivity (Klein, 1934 ; Winnicott, 1963 ; Férida, 2001), and as such, as an 'existential' or an anthropological, universal capacity, pointing the heterogeneity of depressions in psychopathology has also become a commonplace. Second, a particular element of pathological depressions, i.e. suicide attempts, reveal a paradoxical ability to act in people which manifest a fundamental inability to do so (Tatossian, 1983, 1991). Third, when listening to, and interacting with depressed people, clinicians also face some paradoxes – such as the one in which we are when listening to deathly moves whereas the very mission of our profession is to take care of life – or are led to use some paradoxical methods, such as the one proposed by the upholders of the strategic approach in systemic psychology (Delroeux, 2008 ; Watzlawick et al., 1975) and according to which it can be useful to be more pessimistic than the depressed patient himself. In this contribution, we will explore how our clinical stance towards depressed people can be moved when depression is regarded in light of the notion of paradox.

*Fabian Lo Monte: I work as a clinical psychologist in the Medical House « Le Cadran », in Liège. I am a PhD Student in Université Paris Cité (Ecole Doctorale 450), where I also teach in the Psychoanalytic Studies Department, and in Université Libre de Bruxelles. Depression is the object of my thesis, which is supervised by Thomas Lepoutre and Jérôme Englebert and in which I combine psychoanalytical and phenomenological views.*

### **Rita Sousa Lobo - Double bookkeeping and paradoxical multiple selves**

This article presents a clinical contribution within the realm of phenomenological psychopathology, highlighting the significance of comprehending disordered human experiences beyond mere assessment and categorization. When examining the intricate and varied nature of individuals' encounters with mental anguish in the field of human psychology, it becomes evident that disturbances within the self are accountable for the disorder of subjectivity, particularly evident in instances of psychotic conditions characterized by delusions. The fragmentation or loss of cohesion within the self gives rise to the perception of multiple viewpoints coexisting, although potentially paradoxical. It is contended that emotions have a significant impact on the emergence of multiplied selves and on the hypothesis of multiple realities (MR). We maintain that delusions are fundamentally based on experiences. This indicates that delusions are not merely intellectual constructs but are deeply embedded in the personal experiences of the individual. Building on this idea, this research will specifically explore the social emotions of shame, guilt, and hate through clinical illustrations. We affirm that social emotions play a vital role in the maintenance of the double bookkeeping phenomenon as a multiplication of selves inhabiting parallel realities.

*Rita Sousa Lobo: I have my own Clinic in Lisboa and I have been working as a psychotherapist for 18 years. Subjectivity, the self, consciousness, as well as human interaction with others and technology are themes that I am passionate about. I am currently investigating the nature of the self from a Philosophy of Mind perspective.*

**Mark Losoncz** (keynote speaker) - *Tender subversion, or how to believe beyond paradoxes?*

I will start my presentation from the question of paradoxes –do they exist at all? I will examine Hegelian synthetic dialectics, Adorno's negative dialectics and a philosophy of mysticism in order to throw a light on the possible connection between madness and paradoxicality. I will conclude that madness is paradoxical, both mundane and banal, as well as transpersonally “cosmical”.

My lecture will have the form of a participatory dialogue, in which I will let me guide by the following ten principles:

1. Conceptualization should be happening almost everywhere. As Diogenes, Umberto Eco and Slavoj Žižek say: even on the toilet. That is to say, we should be open toward the inherent conceptuality of almost everything. To be open toward "whatever singularities".
2. Philosophy is not free at all today. Unfortunately, today's dominant academic philosophy made peace with the System. For instance, philosophy was earlier much more free regarding form. Lucretius wrote a philosophical poem about nature and Nietzsche wrote Zarathustra
3. Philosophy should not remain narcissistically focussed on an alleged originality of "scientific papers". Instead, we should do philosophy with others. In the beach, in social media, while watching an art-work.
4. Accordingly, post-philosophy should be communalistic: commons cannot be consumed and destroyed – there is only common usage within the communities. When commons are used, their value is not minimalized, but even multiplied further.
5. We think and write and read to much. We should not leave all these unnecessary archives to next generations – these burdens. Instead, we should return to pre-Socratic fragments.
6. Humility, poverty and chastity are the Spinozan philosophical virtues. I would add tenderness.
7. Philosophy is free, it does not have to presuppose anything, not even nothingness or emptiness. Philosophy is philosophy precisely because it can be entirely radical, be without premises. However, we have so much pain because of not being empty enough of premises.
8. Let us always imagine how we could falsify, counter-argue ourselves -- in order to serve our ecstasy, that is, leaving space-time, our flesh, this body, this little boy and girl, ourselves, our Central Prison, the ego. But also to keep in tenderly.
9. We should always take into consideration the quadrants (Ken Wilber): nature, community, culture, psycho-spirituality. And even what is transcending all the categories: the One.
10. Despite all our pain and tragedies and vulnerability, we belong to a wonderful world that we must leave tenderly. Let every being be free and happy.

*Mark Losoncz (1987) defended his PhD thesis at the University of Novi Sad (Serbia) with the title *The Concept of Time in Bergson's and Husserl's Philosophy*. He accomplished part of his doctoral research at *École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS)* in Paris. As a postdoctoral researcher, he was the guest of the *Institute of Ethics at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich*. He is a researcher at the *University of Belgrade (Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory)* since 2011. His research interests include: *consciousness studies, theories of sense of reality, philosophy of love of and philosophy of death, philosophy & spirituality, and philosophy & psychiatry*. He has published several works on the *Hungarian minority community in Serbia*. He is the (co-)author and/or (co-)editor of *fifteen books*. His works are published in *English, French, German, Serbian/Croatian, Romanian, Slovenian and Hungarian*. He received the award for the *best philosophical book in Hungarian in 2024*.*

**Kathleen Lowenstein** - *Thinking Terminality: Palliative Care for Anorexia and Framing of Autonomy*

Recent work within bioethics has engaged with the question of palliative care for mental illness. In particular, recent arguments for palliative care for anorexia nervosa make the argument that recognition of individuals' ability to make determinations about care can extend to giving individuals the option to choose palliative care in the face of long-standing, treatment-refractory anorexia nervosa. While arguments within bioethics have engaged with the question of autonomy, perspectives from Mad Studies have been noticeably absent from this discourse. This presentation will interrogate the question of autonomy and palliative care from the perspective of Mad Studies, asking how framing

and understanding of determinations of futile care, as well as arguments for offering palliative care as a way of respecting agency, change when lived experience perspectives are centered. In so doing, it will argue that these perspectives offer vital, and previously uninterrogated, points of consideration.

*Kathleen Lowenstein is a doctoral candidate at Michigan State University whose research focuses on the ethics of mental health and illness. She is particularly interested in integrating critical perspectives into conceptualizations of ethical responses to madness and distress.*

### **Julia Macintosh** - *From “and/or” to “both/and” - learning to love madreality*

In this presentation I will explore the power of *both/and* thinking whereby different concepts and approaches are held simultaneously as transcontextual information (what Nora Bateson terms Warm Data.) By holding contexts together we create madreality, that is we exercise our innate but underappreciated capacity to comprehend complexity, to tolerate the tension generated by diverse ideas bumping against each other, and to thrive within the realm of paradox. My talk will draw on the following elements:

- personal lived experience of psychosis and the aftermath of living with what I learned while mad;
- a series of written dialogues that took place during 2017-18 between myself and co-editor of *Unpsychology Magazine* Steve Thorp, on the healing aspect of paradox;
- Nora Bateson's work around Warm Data;
- the role of mad activism and how systemic change occurs within paradox.

*Julia Macintosh:*

- associate student in MSc Mad Studies course at *Queen Margaret University*
- co-editor of *Unpsychology Magazine* since 2017
- joined the Editorial Board of *International Mad Studies Journal* in 2024
- founding member of the *Mad Insight* consortium <http://madinsight.org>
- writes at <https://juliamacintosh.substack.com>
- more information about Julia at <https://madreality.online>
- lives in Edinburgh, Scotland

### **Helene Cæcilie Mørck** - *Choreography, dance and the transformative potentials of madness*

I've worked as a choreographer most of my life, while simultaneously grappling with schizophrenia as my constant companion. In this talk, I explore the relationship between schizophrenia and artistic creativity, drawing from my firsthand experiences as a dancer and choreographer. Central to my argument is the symbiotic alliance between chaos and creativity, wherein the artist must navigate the unpredictable depths of the unknown to unearth creative expression. Through a first-person perspective, I illustrate with examples from my choreographies the dual nature of chaos—simultaneously daunting and exhilarating—within the creative process. Furthermore, I look into the role of altered states induced by schizophrenia as powerful agents of creativity within my choreographic practice. I have used my delusions as active tools in my choreographic work. Contrary to prevailing stigmas, I argue that delusions, often condemned as symptoms of madness, have emerged as indispensable tools, offering clarity and depth to my artistic vision. Through the lens of choreography, I demonstrate how embracing schizophrenia as an intrinsic aspect of my creative identity has not only enriched my artistic practice but also provided a unique perspective on the transformative potential of madness in the creative process.

*Helene Cæcilie Mørck: BA in Eng. SDU in DK, and MA in Lit. & Cult. from UOB in GB. Trained at The Danish National School of Performing Arts & the VCA in Melbourne, she has 20+ exp. in film, theater, and Dance. She shares her exp. wth. schizophrenia thr. articles. Upc. book My Mind is Thin as Paper (Oct. 2024)*

**Alastair Morgan** - *To the Planetarium: Walter Benjamin and a dialectical image of madness*

In his book “*A Philosophy of Madness*”, Wouter Kusters defines madness as “. . .the socially awkward expression of a desire for infinity in a world that defines itself as finite.” In this talk I will consider the complexities of such a “desire for infinity” by reading Walter Benjamin’s short piece “To the Planetarium”. Benjamin holds together both the possibilities of a relinquishing of subjectivity in a cosmic experience and the very present historical dangers of such a relinquishing. Writing in 1928, Benjamin looks back to the disaster of the first world war and forwards to the catastrophes to come. However, he still holds out the hope for a new kind of experience, a new nature that does lie, to some extent, in an opening to a cosmic experience. Such an opening though needs to be thought historically and grasped as a revolutionary act. I will use Benjamin’s piece to try and think about the contradictory experience of the mad “desire for infinity” and as part of some initial thoughts around a project on madness as dialectical image.

*Alastair Morgan is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Manchester, UK. His most recent book is Continental Philosophy of Psychiatry. The Lure of Madness, published with Palgrave MacMillan in 2022. More information can be found here: [Alastair Morgan — Research Explorer The University of Manchester](#). X: @morgan\_alastair*

**Janko Nešić** - *Meaningful affordances in autism*

Autism spectrum disorder is characterized by social interaction deficits, communication challenges, repetitive behaviors, and sensory processing differences. Skilled Intentionality, a framework combining enactive and ecological perspectives with the Free Energy Principle and Predictive Processing, offers a holistic view of autism (Nešić, 2023). It distinguishes between a landscape of affordances (sociomaterial possibilities) and a field of affordances (individual possibilities in a situation). Autistic differences stem from abnormal precision estimation, resulting in a narrow field of affordances. Criticism has been raised regarding the concept of affordance in psychopathology. Dings (2020, 2021) argued for a distinction between "merely relevant" and "meaningful" affordances. This distinction applies to actions from low-level ('how') to high-level ('why') identification of affordances. Applying Dings' concepts to autism can enhance our understanding. I will argue that the ecological-enactive approach to autism, couched in the Skilled Intentionality Framework, can be improved with these new notions, though I also highlight the limitations. By focusing on higher-level affordances, we may better grasp autistic phenomenology and their being-in-the-world.

*Janko Nešić, PhD, Institute of Social Sciences. He works on topics from the philosophy of mind, phenomenology, and philosophy of psychiatry, focusing on integrative approaches to psychiatry that combine enactive, ecological and phenomenological perspectives. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3897-5703>*

**Tehseen Noorani** - *Psychedelic Liberalism and Mad Trust: On Varieties of Willing and the Paradox of Willful Submission*

The vexed ‘psychotomimetic model’ of psychedelics claims to offer insights into both psychedelic experiences and madness by placing these sets of experiences into conversation. A standard opposition to the model claims that psychedelic experiences are voluntary or ‘willed’, while madness is an affliction to be endured. This opposition undergirds the project to sanitise, medicalize, and create professional and ethical boundaries around psychedelic therapy. I draw on mad studies, phenomenological psychiatry, philosophical anthropology, and ethnographic data from a decade-long study of emerging psychedelic therapeutics, to destabilize this opposition. I consider the central role accorded to trust and curiosity in modes of engaging with extreme experiences, whether pathologized or otherwise. We end with three paradoxes: first, a formulation of psychedelic therapy as ‘willful submission’; second, the implication that it is incompatible with liberal image of a self-generating (or ‘autogenic’) subject; and third, that this brings psychedelic therapy into uncomfortable proximity with the very boundary violations psychedelic medicalizers are seeking to legislate away.

*Tehseen Noorani studies the co-evolving epistemics, therapeutics & economics of extreme experiences. He is an interdisciplinary social scientist based in the School of Pharmacy at the University of Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Over the past decade he has traced the renewed scientific and therapeutic interest in psychedelic experiences, exploring implications for theories of psychopathology and approaches to mental healthcare.*

**Miguel Núñez de Prado, Virginia Ballesteros and Víctor Fernández Castro** - *It doesn't feel like myself: a mindshaping view on self-illness ambiguity*

After being involuntarily hospitalized, Mad Pride activist Pete Shaughnessy says: “The freedom I had found for six short weeks was now over. Everything I had felt, loved, over that time was, I was told, “all a delusion.” Time to conform.” (Shaughnessy, 2000, p. 20). This example illustrates the phenomenon of self-illness ambiguity (Sadler 2007), concerning whether an agent’s actions and experiences should be attributed to some psychiatric condition or to their “authentic self” -or both. The phenomenon has attracted increasing attention in the last years following a renewed interest in the impact of psychiatric experiences and diagnoses on self-understanding and self-regulation in mental healthcare (Dings & Glas 2020). Different views of self-illness ambiguity range from realism about the self-illness divide, which views it as a pre-existing border to be discovered, to constructivism, whereby we decide, to some extent, where to draw the boundaries (Jeppsson 2022). Both face important problems; the former related to the undue reification of self and illness, the latter to the risk of deriving into a subjectivist account of the distinction that neglects how second- and third-personal perspectives may impose “reality constraints” (Dings & De Bruin 2023) to our self-narrative possibilities (Tekin 2022). Our contribution explores how mindshaping approaches to social cognition (McGeer 2021; Zawadzki 2013) offer key conceptual resources to retain the best of both views. Specifically, this view understands mental concepts and narratives as strongly dependent on social norms and dynamics that, while contestable, cannot be changed at will. The resulting picture agrees with constructivists that the self-illness distinction does not capture pre-existing facts independent from our interpretive practices; at the same time, it retains the realist intuition that not “anything goes” when distinguishing self from illness.

*Miguel Núñez de Prado is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Philosophy I (University of Granada). Previously he was a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies (Utrecht University). His work as a researcher has a marked interdisciplinary character, standing at the intersection of philosophy of mind, philosophy of psychiatry and clinical psychology.*

*Virginia Ballesteros is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Philosophy (University of Valencia). Previously she was a Margarita Salas Postdoctoral Researcher working between this and the Department of Philosophy I (University of Granada). Her research interests lie at the intersection of the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of psychiatry, with a particular interest in the philosophy of psychedelics.*

*Víctor Fernández Castro is an Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy I (University of Granada). Previously he was a postdoctoral researcher at the LAAS-CNRS (University of Toulouse, CNRS) and the Institut Jean Nicod, (DEC, ENS, PSL Research University). His main areas of interest are theoretical philosophy of mind and psychology and its applications in areas such as social robotics, psychiatry, or social philosophy.*

**Marcia van Oploo** - *Mind in spacetime*

Psychiatric practice is the result of evidence-based research, with attention to causes and consequences. It has a medical perspective and bases diagnoses mainly on symptoms, lacking an analytical model. Psychiatry could do more justice to the experiences of patients and find fundamental explanations for exposed behavior, with a different paradigm about reality. I would like to present the YMCK+ model, which describes the mind as a dynamic system within the realm of reality. It takes biopsychosocial elements into account and links them to the fundamentals of physics. This model describes human interaction in terms of energy through spacetime. With thinking and feeling we

literally connect experiences from the past and future. The core element of this model is a conceptual building block for consciousness: the perpetuum anime. This is a self-organizing process of energy through spacetime, a quantum entanglement with a feedback loop, creating a gravitational field. The perpetuum anime can experience itself at all times, and adapts based on incoming information. I will argue that conceptualization of the self is about rewriting reality. I show how psychotherapeutic methods can be described by the laws of physics, and how this paradigm could transform mental health care.

*Marcia van Oploo MSc MA (1981) graduated in both Philosophy of Cognitive Science and Artificial Intelligence, with a special interest in the mind-body problem, epistemology, embodied cognition and conceptualization. Marcia worked as a policy researcher in the field of healthcare and education, and as a Semantic Data expert. In 2019 she was diagnosed with a severe anxiety disorder. Marcia is author of Zinnen met Spelen (2022) and MeVersum (2023) and works as a visual artist ([www.mvop.nl](http://www.mvop.nl)).*

**Guillermo Ruiz-Perez** - *Ortega y Gasset's concept of Belief for the Phenomenology of Delusions: loss of belief, paradox and doubt, and the future as problem.*

From our perspective, both the doxastic approach and the prediction error signaling model interact on numerous points; however, we do not find a proposal that combines them under the same phenomenological paradigm of the concept of belief (doxa). On the one hand, it is of great importance to consider the tradition of the view of delusion as belief and, in its most general and important sense, of the relationship between psychosis and belief. On the other hand, such a definition of belief must be applicable to understanding not only delusions but also the primary basal state that exists prior to them. Finally, it must also account for the predictive error model, in order to be able, first, to provide a phenomenological philosophical understanding of it and, second, to unify under a coherent phenomenological proposal, both the doxastic views of delusion and the theory of deficient processing of predictive errors. Our proposal is to carry out such a task in light of Ortega y Gasset's philosophy. To do this, we start by understanding him from the phenomenological paradigm. Through Ortega's concept of belief, we intend to propose a phenomenological theory that allows us to combine from the philosophical point of view both the doxastic approach to delusions and on this basis the experience of paradox.

*Guillermo Ruiz-Perez (Sevilla, 1994) studied philosophy (UNED, Madrid) and medicine (University of Sevilla, Sevilla). He Works as a trainee in Psychiatry in Immanuel Klinik Rüdersdorf and as a researcher at the Brandenburg Medical Scholl (MHB) in Germany. He currently writes his dissertations in Medicine and in Philosophy. His research topics encompass the philosophy of psychiatry, and peer support work in mental health and reduction and withdrawal from antipsychotics.*

**Ewa Potepa** - *Paradoxes of Time Experience*

The presentation focuses on a comparative phenomenological perspective of time experience in depression and bipolar disorder. Unipolar depression and bipolar disorder are often discussed as opposites, but based on first-person reports of lived time, structural similarities can be found. Sufferers of both experience the inability to transcend the present moment, feelings of repetition, eternity, desynchronisation and looming death. The evaluation of these experiences is usually conflicting. In bipolar, the feeling of eternity is beautiful and empowering, whereas in depression, it is a torturous trap. In the former, eternity represents endless possibilities, in the latter the disappearance of any possibilities. The first paradox—how can these “same but different” experiences be reconciled, especially in those with bipolar who are prone to experiencing both versions of this experience at different points in time or at once during mixed states? The second paradox: evaluations of the same phenomena reported by the sufferers of the same disorder are contradictory, such as the inability to forget coupled with excessive forgetfulness in depression. This challenges the universal validity of diagnostic criteria and highlights the need to conceptualise mental disorders beyond the medical paradigm. Phenomenology, with its focus on unique individual experience, offers a promising

framework.

*Ewa Potępa is a PhD candidate in Philosophy at the Institute for Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences. Her research interests include philosophy of psychiatry, critical mental health studies and medical anthropology. She is currently a researcher in the Quantitative Phenomenology of Disordered Temporalities grant project under dr hab. Marcin Moskalewicz (2021/42/E/HS1/00106).*

**Alan Ralston** (keynote speaker) – *Hunting the Snark: understanding the unknowable*

The project of psychiatry seems to involve a paradox in the way it attempts to professionally and scientifically understand and explain that which is defined, at least in part, as unreason. Throughout its history psychiatry has been challenged as to its legitimacy based on the discrepancies between its scientific ambitions and theories, and its failure to establish a singular view on the nature and causes of mental disorder. Histories of psychiatry vary from the triumphant (Lieberman), the critical (Scull) to the skeptical (Whooley). In philosophy of psychiatry this is reflected in the recurring debate on defining mental disorder, which has led to a number of varying approaches, but no viewpoint so far has triumphed. One question raised by this supposed failure is how necessary it is to define mental disorder in a singular manner. Epistemic and ontological essentialism are seductive positions, just for these reasons: they (potentially) offer clarity, coherence, and unity of purpose. Both from a philosophical and a practice perspective, essentialism referring, broadly speaking, to the biological, psychological and social domains are readily recognizable. Often these positions involve cartesian borders between the domains. However, taking cues from embodied/enactive approaches, and noncartesian epistemology exemplified by actor-network theory, a nonessentialist and pluralist approach seems to offer an alternative. In this lecture a pluralist and nonessentialist approach to understanding mental disorder will be explored. The work is partially based on qualitative research on the philosophy of psychiatrists in practice. Strengths and weaknesses of such an approach will be discussed.

*Alan Ralston: Ph.D, psychiatrist High Intensive Care Parnassia North-Holland, the Netherlands. Chair of the Foundation for Psychiatry and Philosophy in the Netherlands.*

**Eddo Rats** - *Zen and the art of dealing with the paradox of madness*

Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance has a record of being the best selling philosophical novel ever and April 2024 we celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. It was written by philosopher Robert M. Pirsig who I recognize as the first expert by experience in mental health. He did the groundwork for a general understandable way out of a mental health crisis. What I have in common with Robert Pirsig is that through his novels I recognize we both managed to find a cure to madness through deep ontological understanding of the problem. Both being scientist wannabee's, he as a BSc in chemistry me as a BSc in electronics. So we both had the necessary training in applied mathematics to solve problems by recognizing abstract patterns and using them as intellectual thinking tools to understand problems. We differ in the way we ended up in our mental health crisis. He as a result of the research quest into the meaning of quality. Me in my quest to get my academic master degree in engineering. But we have in common that in both our quests we ended up being squashed by the social institutions that we needed for our social recognition. The paradox of madness: Being squashed by the system you like to heal. Being turned down by the problem you try to solve.

*Eduard R. J. Rats is an electrical engineer, sea sailor, guitarist, freethinker, radio amateur, performer, Pirate. He is also an experience expert and has completely recovered from long-term psychosis sensitivity since 2013. Employed at the Regenboog Groep in Amsterdam, SCIP department. He is also active in the association ISPS Netwerk Nederland-Vlaanderen, part of ISPS International and the association plusminus for people with a bipolar disorder. Living in the Netherlands.*

### **Beatrice Salamena - *Performing Madness***

What if the experience of madness comes to be perceived as creative power? A creative power which can take new forms of speech, unusual thoughts, ideas, behaviours and more. The power of creativity in madness is generally perceived as frightening because outsiders cannot perceive it as such. Creative forms of expression during madness are most often labelled as irrational and assessed by pathological frameworks. I offer a perspective of psychotic experience as deeply connected to the emotions of individuals thriving for expression. Emotions that are influenced and stand in relations to (and tension with) social and cultural frames. I am promoting a critical reflection on how biomedical categorizations of sick and healthy in the context of so-called psychotic episodes may ultimately result in experienced distress by patients who are split in separate parts of sick and healthy (cf. Van Dongen, 2004). I argue that this obstruction of embracing the perceived inner emotions and the hindering of living through them by performing creative impulses may impede recovery. Imagine offering safe spaces in which people who undergo psychotic episodes are allowed to perform and manifest the perceived emotions without being symptomized, without fear of rejection in order to live through a potentially harmful and painful experience. How would a talking of emotional development affect healing?

*Beatrice Bianca Salamena is a researcher at the Research Institute Social Cohesion (RISC) in Germany and a PhD candidate at the University of Konstanz working on the project " Incorporation Through Labour? An ethnographic study of workplace practices in Germany". She graduated in Multilingual Communication from the University of Applied Science Cologne and in Social and Cultural Anthropology from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her research interests lie at the interface between social and cultural anthropology and phenomenology.*

### **Rob Sips – *Zijn geweest (Having been)***

In this presentation, I will pick up the tread where I left it at TMTB II. There, I promised to introduce the audience to conceptualizing psychosis as a process of existential detemporalisation, which unfortunately due to time constraints, I was unable to in fact explain. In this talk, I will try again. To do so, I will hermeneutically present a songtext I wrote to express existential feelings of solipsism, which where part of the process of a psychotic crisis and the effects on subjective experiences and subjectivity as such afterwards. The song is called “Zijn Geweest”, or “Having Been”. Underlying this talk will be a Bergsonian take on temporality, combined with a Heideggerian take, where relations between “having-been-ness”, “solipsism”, subjectivity and “intersubjectivity” will be examined and hermeneutically unpacked in relation to the songs’ solipsistic genesis and intersubjective evolution. This talk will also be a correction to Descartes “I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am”, in turning it to “I doubt, therefor I think, therefore I must have been”. The aim is that the listeners will come away with a felt notion of “existential detemporalisation”, and what this means for understanding psychosis, in the spirit of “truth is subjectivity”. If I’m brave enough, I might play the song as well.

<https://gomg.be/teksten/zijngeweest.html>

*Rob Sips is a philosopher and lecturer in medical ethics at the faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences at the University of Maastricht. The past years, he has focussed on the study of relations between language, perception, intersubjectivity, subjectivity and temporality in relation to psychosis. He obtained a PhD at the Center for Contextual Psychiatry with a qualitative study on experiences of psychosis.*

### **Adnan Sivić - *Psychosis as a transformation of the flesh: Some Merleau-Pontian musings on paradox***

The presentation will explore a central question concerning psychosis: what is affected by it and how? What changes to make one psychotic? At first glance, there seem to be two mutually incompatible answers, namely that of the (reductionistic) psychiatrist, who would situate the change in the subject’s faulty ‘wiring,’ and that of the patient, who would likely claim that it’s rather the world itself that has changed (or revealed a hitherto unknown meaning, thus transforming its discoverer in the process).

Viewed through the lens of phenomenology, however, both the ‘objective’ and the ‘subjective’ answers are insufficient. Instead, I will propose that one fruitful way of approaching the question would be through Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of the flesh. If our starting point is neither the subject nor the object, but rather the chiasm or intertwining of the two, then many of the paradoxes of madness (oneness and fragmentation, hyper- and hyporealism, profuseness of meaning and delanguization etc.) can be understood through the lens of the paradoxes or dialectics inherent in this chiasm itself. In thus relating madness back to the source of all cognition—mad or not—we gain a better phenomenological foothold for exploring it, while still steering clear of any attempts to reduce or exhaustively explain it.

*Adnan Sivić is a junior researcher at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, where he is currently working on his Ph.D. thesis under the supervision of Dr. Sebastjan Vörös. His primary research interests include phenomenology, philosophy of religion, Buddhist philosophy, perennialism, and enactivism.*

**Lotte Soffers** - *Frantz Fanon and Jacques Lacan and the concept of alienation in the context of madness and psychiatric care*

Our goal is to explore the contributions of two authors—Frantz Fanon and Jacques Lacan—regarding the concept of alienation in the context of madness and psychiatric care. Given that also in historic and contemporary discussions various authors propose different interpretations of the relation between alienation and madness, we aim to navigate these perspectives and contribute to the ongoing discussion on this complex subject. The concept of alienation is frequently employed in psychiatric and philosophical literature to describe various aspects of madness, often with divergent or even paradoxical interpretations. Some argue that psychosis represents an alienated state of mind, wherein the subject is deprived of their ordinary mental liberty and capacities. In contrast, others contend that individuals experiencing psychosis are more authentic and liberated from the constraints imposed by social norms and conventions. Additionally, case studies and personal accounts highlight the complex relationship between the presence of psychotic symptoms and their appraisal (Lammerant, 2022; Longdon, 2013). These sources suggest that people experiencing psychosis do not always or necessarily think of it as a form of alienation. In this contribution, we will focus on Fanon (1951/2018) and Lacan (1946/2006), as they explicitly addressed this question in their writings and their writings hold particular value as they allow us to develop a nuanced understanding of these contradictory meanings and implications of alienation in relation to madness.

*Lotte Soffers is an assistant at the department of Psychoanalysis and Clinical Consulting of Ghent University. She is working on a Phd concerning psychosis and alienation.*

**Arthur Sollie** - *Paradoxes in the real*

In phenomenological psychopathology, there is a significant emphasis on individual experience, particularly on what is personally perceived as 'strange', suggesting a degree of individual responsibility for 'estranging' one's own experiences. These hypotheses tend towards idealism, implying that these 'paradoxes' hold no relevance beyond one's individual consciousness. However, what if the opposite were true? What if at these moments of estrangement, one encounters a peculiar core feature within the 'objective' social framework, a feature that one's experience only 'catches up' with, for which one is not subjectively responsible but rather makes one responsible, exceeding mere private significance (how only I experience what I am doing)? This reflects the materialist stance of psychoanalysis. If this feature is not 'madness' but rather a feature preceding and constituting oneself as subject, known in psychoanalysis as the “unconscious”, it challenges the hypothesis of schizophrenia as overly broad and unspecific, echoing Freud's critique of Bleuler's terminology. This leads to a secondary question: how can one differentiate 'madness' or 'psychosis' from other pathologies and normalities if one starts from the constitutive precedence of that paradoxical feature? How to distinguish madness not merely by stressing the manifestation of a paradox, but rather distinguishing the specific response it elicits?

*Arthur Sollie is a PhD student at the University of Ghent. He works on the limits of psychosis and the limits of*

*models of psychosis.*

### **Hel Spandler** - *Paradoxical Truths and Mental Health Politics*

Contemporary mental health politics are often characterised by acutely polarised debates, particularly when it comes to highly contentious issues, such as psychiatric diagnosis and medication. This often de-contextualises mental health care by disregarding situational nuances and oversimplifying complexities. This presentation will explore the importance of attending to ‘paradoxical truths’ in relation to the politics of mental health care, where seemingly contradictory claims can both be true. I attempt to show how embracing ambivalence as a productive resource helps ensure that activism re-contextualises mental health politics and does justice to the complex, diverse and contested nature of mental health challenges and debates. It will sketch how I have been trying to offer a ‘paradoxical space’ for ambivalent mental health politics through *Asylum* magazine. *Asylum* encourages the publication of concurrent, and even contradictory, positions in an attempt to transcend false dichotomies and oppositional dualisms, and subsequently subvert either/or ways of understanding mental health issues. This, I suggest, could help make mental health activism more democratic and rooted in the needs of people with lived experience of madness and distress.

*Hel Spandler (they/them) is Professor of Mental Health Studies at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK. They are Managing editor of ‘Asylum: the radical mental health magazine’, and one of the lead editors of the ‘International Journal of Mad Studies’. They are also the Principal Investigator of a research project about radical mental health zines (or Madzines) (funded by Wellcome)*

### **Anna Sterna and Marcin Moskalewicz** - *Stuck or lost in time? Temporal aspects of one’s selfhood across Personality Disorders*

Research on Personality Disorders often emphasizes an objective, data-driven approach, neglecting the subjective experiences inevitable for its comprehension. Despite adhering to EBM standards, this approach overlooks the nuanced and inherently subjective nature of PD symptoms. In this way subjectivity is aimed to be explored paradoxically and ineffectively, from the third-person, “objective” angle. On the other hand phenomenological insights are criticized for its prevaillingly theoretical nature. Till now, phenomenological studies have specifically focused on Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), exploring temporal dimensions like immediacy and instantaneity, which highlight how individuals with BPD experience a fragmented sense of identity, feeling detached from past and future, become set in the contradiction of “stable instability”. Recent findings confirm these temporal characteristics are not only relevant to BPD but may extend to other PDs (Sterna, Moskalewicz, 2023). This shift invites broader exploration into how temporal dynamics influence PD symptoms beyond BPD, suggesting that a disrupted sense of futurity may cause individuals with various PDs to feel stuck in time, unable to self-transform. Our research, investigates these temporal, felt qualities across different PDs to better understand the foundation and nature of selfhood. This approach integrates phenomenological insights and empirical data, including phenomenological interviews with PD individuals, to elucidate the temporal structure underlying altered sense of self. In this way lived-experience may be enhanced with “objective” grounding and reliability, which may be a solution for impasse of neglected subjectivity.

*Anna Sterna, PhD student, holds a Master's degree in Psychology. Currently, she is pursuing a Doctoral degree in Philosophy and Mental Health Unit, Department of Social Sciences at Poznan University of Medical Sciences, Poland. Her research interests are primarily focused on the first-person experience of Personality Disorders, with a particular emphasis on exploring the lived-experience of self, temporality, and adjustment to the diagnosis of Personality Disorders. Specifically, she is now endeavoring to deepen the understanding of the lived-experience of self impairment in individuals with Personality Disorders. She is an integrative psychotherapist who works with patients diagnosed with Personality Disorders in both inpatient and outpatient contexts of treatment.*

*Marcin Moskalewicz, PhD, DSc, specializes in transdisciplinary research at the intersection of philosophy and health sciences, his most recent work concerns lived experience of time in mental disorders and in cancer, and clinical judgment of schizophrenia (the Praecox Feeling). Moskalewicz is currently a Humboldt Fellow at the Psychiatric Clinic, Heidelberg University (Germany), Head of the Philosophy of Mental Health Unit, Department of Social Sciences, Poznan University of Medical Sciences (Poland); Conve ner of the Phenomenology and Mental Health Network, The Collaborating Centre for Values-based Practice in Health and Social Care, St. Catherine's College, Oxford, and Associate Professor at the Institute of Philosophy, Marie Curie- Skłodowska University in Lublin (Poland).*

**Robert Swier** - *Infinite Holism, a proposal*

Most people will deal with personal paradoxes or contradictions by taking a particular position, and by doubting, denying, or even combatting that position's paradoxical counterpart. If not within the person himself, then it is projected onto another person, animal or thing. At the deepest level this position must be axiomatic. If that were not the case, it would of course not be the deepest ground. The establishment of axioms is therefore done on questionable grounds. Perhaps a solution to this conflict can be found by admitting both concepts that lead to paradoxes; to take the paradox as the starting position of individual existence, entirely in accordance with homo paradoxalis, about which I spoke at the second edition of TMTBT. As far as there could be a system that would incorporate this, it would have to be holism. However, holism, as usually expressed, is still too limited to allow the integration of both positions of paradoxes. I therefore prefer to speak of Strong or Infinite Holism. To support my proposal for the introduction of Infinite Holism, I will outline how the scientific third-person perspective of the ultimate magnitude, i.e. the entire universe, ultimately implies a paradoxical view by the individual human being. It will turn out that hard material physics can be reconciled with ultimate mystical states of mind.

*Robert Swier works as an Operations Manager of an Industrial Automation company in Groningen, the Netherlands, specialized in optimizing (production) processes. In addition, he has gone through three existential experiences, conveniently called psychoses. In addition to his regular job, he works on a voluntary basis in various settings related to psychiatry, psychoses, recovery and recovery support.*

**Catalin Teoharie** - *Depression as an argument for the Dark room problem - a paradox of the Free Energy Principle*

In this talk I will start by introducing the Dark room problem as a paradoxical consequence of the Free Energy Principle. Next, I will tackle the solutions offered to it by Karl Friston, Andy Clark and others, under the Free Energy Principle framework, essentially denying that agents tend to inhabit Dark rooms. I will then propose my own solution to the Dark room problem, showing that agents do tend to inhabit Dark rooms in many occasions, depression and repetitive actions being manifestations of such behavior, and this is an effective solution to the problem of reducing free energy. This goes against the usual opinion of Free Energy Principle proponents. Treatment of depression using standard psychotherapy or Virtual Reality therapy will prove to be effective by either changing internal models or by forcing a change in active inference. Embracing the Dark room problem instead of denying it, will require and explanation over why agents don't remain in Dark rooms like depression. I will argue that the reason rests with agents following better ways of reducing free energy, like engaging in social environments.

*Catalin Teoharie: PhD Student, 1st year, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Theoretical Philosophy, thesis covering "Free Energy Principle and the Bayesian brain theories" MA Cognitive Science, University of Bucharest, 2021-2023. Teaching at Faculty of Psychology and Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest.*

## **Berry Vorstenbosch** - *Psychosis, Contextualization and Disinhibition*

Disinhibition plays an important role in the understanding of psychosis on a neurobiological level. The object of my presentation is to link some ideas from the neurobiological account of disinhibition to experiential disinhibition. As for neurobiology my most important source will be: Iain McGilchrist's *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (2009).

McGilchrist is well-informed about neurobiology, philosophy and cultural history. As for neurobiology, his focus is on the differences between the left and the right hemisphere, and what role inhibition and disinhibition play in making these hemispheres (not) work together. In his vision we are living in a world that is over-controlled by the left hemisphere which hosts language and analytic faculties, undermining the right hemisphere which is important for wholeness and context. As to psychopathology, one of the most important sources for McGilchrist is Louis A. Sass. I will critically discuss McGilchrist notions of disinhibition and contextualization, making use of my own descriptions of context assignment during a state of psychosis as I did in *De overtocht* (The Crossing) (2021).

*In 2021 my book De Overtocht: Filosofische blik op een psychose was published. It describes, alternating between autobiography and philosophy, the psychosis I went through during adolescence and an ensuing religious conversion in early adulthood. It was awarded the Van Helsdingenprijs of 2022. Together with Joachim Duyndam and Michael Elias I gave a presentation on [Madness, Religion and Mimetic Theory](#) at the COV&R Conference in Paris 2023.*

## **Sabina Wantoch** - The Ouroboros of mad experience and the neoliberal university

A performative presentation, combining story-telling and poetry to explore the paradoxes within my experience of writing a PhD on madness, whilst trained in and in constant struggle with analytic philosophy, at the neoliberal university. This presentation considers 'fighting contradictions' and 'accepting contradictions', charting the experience of distress and terror that may come from fighting them, linking this to the 'feeling' of analytic philosophy. Considering experience of madness and mysticism, and the non-linear lessons of holding contradictions together, inspired by the feminist philosophy of Anzaldúa and Lugones. I relate to this through the Vedic mythos of Rahu and Ketu; the head and tail of the dragon of existence, of birth and death, who chase each other, balancing contradictions but keeping existence moving. Their motion evokes the ouroboros. On the other hand, analytic philosophy's obsession with meaning making and Truth as a journey of disembodied reason is a fight against paradox. Here we frantically grasp onto meaning, fighting the terror that there may really be nothing. Both is not an option. The site of analytic philosophy is the neoliberal university, which is full of contradictions, including the paradox of 'lived experience' yet its structural inability to facilitate genuine coproduction. Its abstraction from experience reifies concepts into vehicles of neoliberal production, yet universalities can genuinely help understanding. To what extent do they elucidate or constrain experiences, enlightening us or taking us away from ourselves in an effort to discover truth as something that must be named? Neoliberalism fuels the terror of nothingness through individualism, hierarchy, and scarcity of resources in its reification of concepts. Again, this brings us to the ouroboros... Is it possible to ride the ouroboros of paradox with skill? Can madness be a teacher?

*Dr Sabina Wantoch completed their PhD at University of Sheffield on the phenomenology of anomalous experiences, and how their social framings may affect their very ontology. They are interested in the way that non-ordinary experience is conceptualised and navigated in the world, how it feels, and how these interrelate. They are also a multi-disciplinary artist, and currently are synthesising their creative and academic work.*

## **Alke Wisselink** - *Con (tra) tact: being in and out of touch in / with psychosis*

"I am Roy and you are subordinate to me", Roy said to Brian, a supportive housing worker. "Have you come here from an institution, or as a person?", Roy asked me. According to Wouter Kusters' (2020) most concise definition, psychosis is a (socially clumsy) expression of a desire for freedom and

infinity in a world that defines itself as finite, e.g., the people close to the mad person. I find '(socially clumsy)' a gentle yet euphemistic wording, in the sense that it may downplay the profound difficulties in making and maintaining contact with (some) people in psychosis, especially when the psychotic state perseveres over time. In my presentation I discuss the situation of having contact as/ with Roy, drawing on expressions and impressions gathered during prolonged interlocution in anthropological fieldwork (2020-2023). For Roy, his care workers, and myself, contact was both really important (connection, confidence – trust, and convivial aspects), and hindered in many ways. Interestingly, psychosis both enhanced and hindered contact. I'll hope to offer a lively interplay of perspectives, including my own reflections, which will also concern the paradox of 'personal or system' care.

*Alke Wisselink is a cultural scientist and a Social Work lecturer, who experienced psychosis in 2016. As a PhD student at the University Medical Centre Groningen (UMCG) she studies 'the good life' of people with psychosis in supportive housing contexts.*

### **Pawel Zagodzón - Harmful dysfunction of some religious beliefs**

The interrelationship between a mental health and spiritual growth dates to ancient times. In the Hebrew Bible, the evil spirit was allowed by God to harass King Saul, "The Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him." (1 Sam 16:14). Currently, the prevailing view among psychiatrists is that when people with mental problems express their symptoms in religious terms, the depression or psychosis is more severe. If descriptions of demonic influence on the patient are not just an idiom or vocabulary in which patients express their symptoms, then clinicians are more likely to consider the presence of delusions. In the literature describing the relationship between health and religion, much more emphasis is placed on the positive aspects of religiosity that promote health maintenance than on the factors associated with religion that are detrimental to health. The purpose of this paper is to review the concept of harmful dysfunction based on epidemiological data that identify those characteristics of religiosity that are associated with adverse outcomes in both physical and mental health. The paper will try to explain how can a religious belief be a pathological in this harmful dysfunction sense.

*Professor Pawel Zagodzón is a researcher at the Medical University of Gdansk, Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, and a clinical psychiatrist. He has conducted multiple observational studies, including national surveys of mental health in Poland, research using clinical databases, drug registries, and large cohort studies of unemployment and mortality in different populations to understand the risks of mental disorders.*