

Abstract

The work has basically three aims: 1st to map the wide range of various approaches in the current debate about madness, 2nd to formulate a specific theory of madness, 3rd to identify general philosophical problems the topic brings about, (a 4th aim is also outlined: to understand the presented theory in terms of therapeutic potential). The central thesis of this work is that insanity is an inherently ambiguous and elusive phenomenon and that trying to understand it we are using various metaphors borrowed from other areas, and consequently forget their metaphorical nature. The work is generally motivated by an effort to reconcile conflicting approaches, to understand them as complementary. It also wants to avoid creating an all-embracing synthesis on the one hand, and purely relativistic and pragmatic viewpoint on the other hand.

The first part identifies four levels on which particular approaches understand madness as a problem: the level of the individual, the level of the collective, the transpersonal level and the existential level. At the end of the part, I discuss the possibilities and risks of creating a theoretical framework that would enable to understand various contradictory approaches on a common basis.

In the second part, I develop my own analysis of madness. It is based on a combination of phenomenological psychology, analytical psychology, ecopsychology, and, based on these, a specific interpretation of archaic thinking. Madness is analyzed in the context of the relationship of the human and the world. I interpret it in terms of being-in-space metaphors (existential movement) and on metaphors based on the imagination of the four elements. I describe it as an escalation of man's inherently ambivalent relationship to the Earth, as an expulsion from the world of people and as being confronted with the forces of chaos. As such, madness is depicted here as referring to the boundaries of the human world.

In the third part, I reflect the the presented approach. Here, I include various approaches alternative to the standard psychiatric under the umbrella term "romantic psychiatry". Consequently, I identify it as a myth in a broader sense of the word, and confront it with the myth of standard psychiatry, which I label here as "realistic". I then discuss their incommensurability as well as the possibility and importance of keeping a dialog between them. Based on this, I consequently consider the more general problem of how to orient in the plurality of approaches. I discuss the possibilities and limits of ontological relativism and I combine it with a phenomenological perspective.