

BELIEF AND DELUSION: THEIR COMMON ORIGIN BUT DIFFERENT COURSE OF DEVELOPMENT

by *Hermann Lenz*

Abstract. Comparing the experiences of mystics and victims of delusion we find very similar states of conditions: an experience of abnormal significance, pseudohallucinations, the sense of mission, the suspension of time, extremes of mood, and the sudden and passive appearance. Only the subsequent course of life of those having the experiences makes it possible to distinguish between belief and delusion. The criteria are simple: we find hope and doubt only in relation to mystical experience whereas in delusion we find a paralyzed belief; human freedom increases in belief but is lost in delusion; and belief allows the interaction between the person and society while the person who is deluded has no effectiveness in society.

Belief means believing something to be true. According to the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, the thing in which a person believes is subjectively considered to be adequate and thus to be true. The thing believed in cannot be objectively proved by any other person, as in the case of scientific knowledge. It must therefore be presumed there is no difference between the belief of a healthy person and that of, for example, a person who is convinced of some delusory ideas. This has been pointed out often by psychiatrists. For example, K. Schneider says, "Belief, the only criterion of which is subjective certainty, cannot basically be distinguished psychologically from delusion."¹ He goes on to say that a mystical experience on the part of a healthy person has the same significance for the person in question as has a delusion for the mentally ill person.

In the first half of this essay I shall describe the similarities between belief and delusion by comparing short extracts from the autobiographies of two well-known mystics, similar statements by Zen Buddhists about *satori* experiences, and reports of artists speaking about their acts

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of creation with seven aspects of irrational experiences reported by a group of mentally ill patients examined by me in 1976. In all these groups the occurrence of the experience, its structure, and its meaning were to a great extent the same. Thus I shall suggest that it is impossible to distinguish phenomenologically mystical and delusionary experiences as they are originally reported. However, it is possible to make distinctions if one analyzes the subsequent course or life history of those having such experiences. In the second half of this paper I shall show there are significant differences between belief and delusion in terms of the kind of life led by people having religious or artistic creation experiences and by those suffering delusionary experiences.

THE EXPERIENCE OF WESTERN MYSTICS AND ZEN MASTERS

Theresa of Avila describes an experience of great significance for her in the ninth chapter of her autobiography written from 1563 to 1565. On gazing at an *ecce homo* picture in the oratorium she was struck down with grief and felt as if her heart were breaking, so she threw herself down in front of the picture weeping bitterly and begged for inner strength. This experience gave her a measureless feeling of clarity and truth—as she puts it—a truth above the knowledge of learned men. Again, she describes visions which she was able to recall in exact detail twenty-six years later. They had made such an impression on her that she says it was as if she necessarily had to see them, had to hear them regardless of her own volition or nonvolition.

She distinguishes very clearly between her experiences and illusions or hallucinations which she also knew existed; the deceptive character of such illusions is afterwards always known to the person in question. However, she also distinguishes her visions from intellectual visions, by which she appears to mean wishful thinking or autosuggestion. Her own visions she describes as follows, “an experience without images or words, which could be compared to knowing of the near presence of a second person in a pitch-dark cellar without being able to see, hear or touch him.”² The intellect is not active in this: it is always a passive experience of short duration. The experience is a grace, and Theresa is emphatic that it is of a compelling force. She describes her state of mind during such experiences stating that overwhelming pain and indescribably great joy are commingled. In the chapter dealing with union and temptation she describes a changed feeling of time and space, the impression that the senses seem not to be functioning, and a sense of lost individuality. She also says that there is a feeling of shame with regard to what has been experienced and that one would prefer to be alone. Finally, she stresses that after experiences of this kind, the memory and intellect are for a time “confused, as in madness.”

We can learn about similar experiences of a mystical nature in the account dictated many years later by Ignatius of Loyola to Gonzales de Camara.³ Here again we read about such experiences of significance now in three modes, as in the Holy Trinity. They appear with a great clarity; everything subsequently appears in a completely different light. His visions are described in a manner similar to Theresa's—for example, "it was like a snake with a great number of points, like eyes,"—not with a concrete sensual image because the experience could not be put into concrete terms, but instead with "it was like." Here again we are told of the two extremities of state of mind, the pessimistic even approaching the suicidal during such mystical experiences and also the great "joy." He later fulfilled the sense of mission involved in these experiences by writing his "Rule" founding the Jesuit Order. In his own time Saint Ignatius was on one occasion even thought to be mad.

G. Schüttler interviewed on the spot great masters of Zen Buddhism about their experiences of enlightenment or satori.⁴ Ten masters reported to him the different stages of their experiences which are very similar to the mystical events. Schüttler describes the preliminary stages, which are labelled as "piece of devilry" (*makyo*); hallucinations, levitations, itching sensation, and so on are experienced in these stages. They are similar to the stage of hallucination of Theresa of Avila. The Enlightenment occurs only in the last stage. Here the Zen master experiences spiritual relationships, inspiring him with great respect and new importance. The experience of great importance occurs suddenly, and the sense of time vanishes. The person changes into a new person characterized by inner harmony and peace; thus the master is highly blessed in a supernatural manner. The structure of the ego is not destroyed but is now open to the universe (god).

THE EXPERIENCE OF CREATIVITY IN ARTISTS

One can, however, also draw comparisons between these experiences and creative acts as they are described by artists or poets. For example, on 11 March 1829, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said to J. P. Eckermann: "Any productivity of the highest kind, any important *aperçu*, any invention, any great thought which bears fruit and has results, lies beyond the power of any man and is loftier than all earthly authority. In the same way man receives all his unhopèd for thoughts from above, these must be considered gifts of God pure and simple, to be accepted with grateful thanks and to be honoured. This experience is related to the demonic, which overpowers man as it likes, and to which he must surrender all unaware, while he thinks he is acting of his own free will."⁵ Hence suddenly something (for example, an idea) gains enor-

mous significance and, coming from outside a person, it inspires a sense of mission which cannot be shirked. The emotional tension between good and evil is also to be found here.

Another example appears in one of Wolfgang Mozart's letters, (quoted by O. Kankeleit):

While composing a particular idea my heart grows warm. When I am not disturbed the idea becomes ever greater, spreading ever wider and brighter. When the composition is almost finished in my imagination, even if it is long, I can see it all at one glance, as if it were a beautiful picture in my mind and I cannot leave any part to be filled in later but must at once transcribe all that I have heard in my imagination. . . . All the discovering and working out goes on in me like in a wonderfully vivid dream, but hearing everything together is still the best.⁶

Mozart described how his experience is one in which he is passive, one in which everything happens at once and thus is independent of time, one which obviously fills him with a deep happiness and at the same time inspires him with a mission he must fulfill.

Alfred Kubin describes creative acts of this sort as follows: I was still feeling very moved when I wandered through the town. I went into a music hall in the evening as I was looking for neutral and yet noisy surroundings to offset an inner pressure which became stronger and stronger. Something spiritually very remarkable and decisive for me happened there, something which I cannot quite understand to this day although I have thought about it a great deal. When the orchestra began playing, my whole surroundings suddenly became brighter and clearer as in another light. In the faces of the people around me I suddenly saw something strangely animal and yet human, every noise was strangely different, freed from its origin. I heard a totality of language, jeering, moaning, booming, which I could not understand but which clearly seemed to have a quite spectral inner meaning. I grew sad although a strange feeling of wellbeing came over me and I thought again of the Klinger drawings wondering how I was now going to work. Then suddenly I was overcome by a whole whirlwind of visions of black-and-white pictures—it is quite impossible to describe the unending variety of ideas which came to my mind. I quickly left the theatre as the music and the lights disturbed me now and I wandered aimlessly through the dark streets while I was continually overcome, literally violated by a dark power which conjured up strange animals, houses, landscapes, grotesque figures and terrible situations before my eyes. I felt myself indescribably at ease in the world I had created for myself, and when I had walked for so long that I was tired I went into a little tearoom. Here, too, everything was quite strange. The moment I went in, the waitresses appeared to me to be wax dolls, animated by God knows what mechanisms. And the few customers seemed totally unreal, like shadows surprised at devilish tricks. The whole background, with a mechanical organ and bar, was suspect. It looked to me like a facade hiding the actual mystery, which was in all probability a dimly lit stable-like blood-filled cave. I made brief sketches of everything I could remember of these images which, to my surprise, kept changing, while I stayed absolutely passive. This inner turmoil lasted till I was on my way home. The Auguststrasse seemed to shrink of its own accord and a

ring of mountains appeared to be growing up around our town. At home I sank as one dead onto my bed, and slept deep and dreamlessly until the evening of the next day.⁷

Here is a painter experiencing everything suddenly and unexpectedly in another clearer and brighter light, which made him happy but at the same time sad. He was completely passive; this experience broke over him like a hurricane and he felt he had to make a record of it. Everything had gained a new significance, another "face." The situation was "insubstantial," fabricated; it was no longer a representation of real life.

A CASE HISTORY OF DELUSION

In 1976 I described fifteen cases of patients who were the victims of delusion, adding to my own investigations two American cases and one Japanese case reported in psychiatric literature.⁸ Since then I have been able to observe seven further cases of this kind so that the following remarks are based on twenty-five cases. Certainly these cases do not form a major part of the whole range of psychiatric illness; earlier I estimated them to be about six percent. This figure corresponds well to an estimate by W. Blankenburg of 5.7 percent of 405 schizophrenic patients.⁹ I think it is feasible to make this comparison since Blankenburg was examining the frequency of introspection and speculation on philosophical matters in schizophrenic patients. It must not, however, be assumed that all seven symptoms of irrational thinking were to be found in all of my patients.

As a complete examination of all twenty-five cases would be far too comprehensive one case will be taken as a representative of all, and in conclusion some characteristic individual experiences of other cases will be added. Only then will the significance of the seven characteristic symptoms of delusion and their analogies to mysticism and satori be explored. In all probability mystics and people having delusions share the same basic experience. The personal accounts by artists of their creative activity also indicate an exactly similar basic experience.

Case history of U.Pr. She was the third child of an intact family with five children, her father being a graduate engineer. There was no particular evidence of a religious upbringing; however, her mother was rather strict. Once, as a small child, the patient refused to eat for a considerable length of time and was punished for this. At fifteen she became interested in Buddhism which was being studied in school. She reported having had periods of weakness at that time, and she experienced a disintegration of her feelings and believed herself to be in Nirvana. She only spoke about this years later; outwardly she merely made a somewhat dreamy impression. At sixteen, her schoolwork,

which had been good up to then, suddenly deteriorated. When (in March 1973) she then told her parents about a spiritual development that enabled her to move mountains and bring mankind to the true faith, she was brought to us for in-patient treatment. Her accounts at that time were very hesitant; it was only with difficulty that she could find words for what she had experienced. She was not able to say when exactly she had had these experiences, although they all must have occurred in the previous few months. She said that everything had "come over her," "all doors were now open," she had "awoken and was in another world," she "could see through everybody," and "the measure of everything was in her." Later she said that during this first stay with us the Virgin Mary had appeared to her, "she had to gaze quite fixedly," and she had a very powerful impression of light. However, she had not wanted to speak about it at the time.

While these experiences made her very happy, there were also negative feelings. In this connection she said she "had experienced complete freedom," a freedom in which she could even have killed people, and she had been very frightened by this. She felt herself to be divided in her inmost being and spoke about an inner battle. She felt herself to be evil, and there was some indication of suicidal intention. A few days previously, on reading the word "flower," she immediately imagined a whole garden full of wonderful flowers and glorious scents and thought she had found her true personality, but now this all had disappeared. She felt she had lost her feelings; she said she was dead, no longer real; she was "only living in theory, like a machine."

Then, however, a hurricane of feeling seemed to overwhelm her. She had found "the way to God." Her previous ego had been another person; God was her spiritual father, and her parents were only her physical parents. She had experienced God without having seen or heard him; she had been "born again and could now help other people to come to the true faith." She believed herself to be saved and to have eternal life. Soon afterwards, however, there was a reversal: her "conscience-ego" was "dead," she was living apart from her true ego, she felt herself to be "an ordinary person" again, she had missed the only important thing in life and had very strong guilt feelings on this account.

In the months that followed, phases of "grace," in which she felt herself "to be one with the whole creation," alternated with much longer periods of constant depression with ideas of suicide when she felt herself to be like a machine or as if dead. Under neuroleptic therapy a considerable improvement was achieved, so that she was able to pass her exit examination at school, even though later than normal. However, she remained completely unaware that she was mentally ill. She said over a year later that the beautiful had outweighed the un-

pleasant, and she would gladly experience it all again. Yet this was not possible because the experience was not something you could bring about yourself, "it came over you." A few months later there was a further relapse when "everything was especially clear," her thoughts were "involved in God," her "heart was burning." She later spoke of this as an experience of grace which consisted in knowing that "I am." By this she meant that through this experience she had been put in a position to receive God's thoughts and to transmit them to mankind. It seems as if, with this "I am," she wanted to proclaim her eternal being. She also said that during those months she was forced to lead a double life—a real one and a religious one. She said that her head no longer belonged to her heart and that she had lost parts of her ego. She said the same two years later during a further relapse, when she spoke of division and splintering.

In a follow-up examination four years later (early 1980), in a comparatively mentally healthy condition, she stated in connection with this that she had had the feeling in 1976 that something would remain with her that did not belong to her and yet, at the same time, she knew that, although it was something foreign to her, it was also a part of her own ego. She had been able to examine this element which was not her and yet belonged to her at close quarters and had suffered greatly. On being questioned further at this follow-up examination, she explained that her feelings, which she had transferred to her body, had burned out and her new, real ego had come from above but could not be united with her "inferior ego." Her new ego, however, had to support the other one, and so she "could not really live, only in theory." In the first two years of her psychosis she had a platonic relationship with a painter (an epilepsy sufferer, who seemed rather bigoted and made a somewhat slovenly impression). When the painter made his first shy advances, she broke off the relationship immediately and finally. Subsequently she said she was not able to reestablish a "harmony between body and soul," "nothing went deep any more," "I cannot behave naturally any more." She felt religious thoughts as a compulsion. "If I let myself go, I could kill someone," she said at that time, smiling. The inner division remained at first, and she said she felt "blows to the soul" which she thought often lasted half an hour. In 1976 she said she felt afraid, hypnotized, and believed herself to be the "founder of Mondays." She obviously was ashamed to explain this in detail.

At the time of her last follow-up examination in 1980, still under continual neuroleptic therapy, she had already passed some minor examinations in a school of theology at a university. She believed she could have an influence on other people through television and radio, and thought the media was using her language. She said the letters of the alphabet had a very special meaning for her when they were

connected with experiences of light. She only spoke about these things to me because I was the doctor in whom she had confidence; otherwise she made a relatively inconspicuous impression in everyday life.

This case history is a good example of how something gains very special significance, shuts out everything else, and transmits itself with unequalled clarity. An experience of this kind does not originate in normal sensual impressions or in wishful thinking; rather it is the interpretation of circumstances which may not be significant in themselves but which have a greater truth for the person experiencing them than what can be seen, heard, or touched. Experiences of this kind always include some feeling of vocation, a mission to be fulfilled. The patient described that she was in union with God, of whom all being was a part. She sometimes felt time was suspended for her, which she expressed in the words "I am," an expression which is reminiscent of Plotinus's concept of "is" and "always," in the meaning of eternity.¹⁰ The emotional state during an experience of this sort is marked by either a feeling of supernatural bliss or the deepest guilt and depression. The experience is always felt to be a passive one which comes and goes suddenly, the feeling of happiness especially lasting only a very short time. The state of mind caused by such experiences cannot be considered to be the result of logical thinking. Finally, the person in question often has a feeling of shame when thinking of such experiences.

Thus the seven irrational symptoms of certain forms of delusion have been enumerated, and can be summarized as follows: (1) the experience of abnormal significance, (2) illusions or pseudo-hallucinations, (3) the sense of mission, (4) the suspension of time and place, (5) the extremes of mood, (6) the passive and sudden nature of such experiences, and (7) the feeling of shame.¹¹

THE STRUCTURE OF DELUSION

Reflecting on autobiographies about mystically ecstatic states, satori experiences, and the act of creation in painting and poetry, one notices an amazing similarity between them and the seven symptoms of delusion in the case described above and the following case histories. Of course not all seven symptoms were present in all twenty-five cases of delusion examined. The following are individual, especially characteristic utterances of others of my patients on the subject of one or another of the symptoms.

THE EXPERIENCE OF ABNORMAL SIGNIFICANCE

3.An.: "A light has been lit for me, I am bearing a child, that is my inner voice." The patient said this about the Bible, which had never

interested him before, after a conversation with an uneducated man (a farmer). This patient was able to be almost totally cured.

Dr.Ko.: "He is the director of the Austrian and German television, he organizes the Salzburg Festival with my ideas; with my thoughts he wants to make decisions on world politics." A female patient said this about a university professor with whom she was obviously in love, without him having the faintest idea of this.

Sch.: "I am enlightened, the true Messiah, I possess supernatural powers." The patient came to this conclusion from harmless remarks made by people she knew, such as questions about what she thought of her colleagues or what the weather would be like the following day.

Gla.: When a mirror broke this was for him a sign from God that he had been guilty of some grievous sin.

Br.: "I am the cause of the evil in the world." "I am the cause of death." "I am the hub of the universe."

Fo.: "I am inspired wholly by God, and cannot express this state in words."

Sr.Le.: She believed she could take the sorrows of others onto herself, and thought she was a second Saint Theresa of Lisieux.

Huh.: "I am illuminated by thoughts of God. I was the greatest doubter, but I now know about everything."

Lo.: "I am the brother of Jesus."

PSEUDOHALLUCINATIONS (APPARITIONS)

Gla.: "I see myself as a sinner, God is always with me."

Ze.: "I have experienced being executed."

Ho.: "I see walls and chains everywhere."

Lo.: "I have the feeling that I have seen the devil." "You will possess a great kingdom one day." "The souls in torment have appeared to me."

These were never concrete sensual impressions, the words "seeing" and "hearing" were not to be taken literally. The patients mostly said they could not describe their experiences; it was "as if" they had had an experience with the above images and meaning. Furthermore, it is not always possible to make a sharp distinction between experiences of this sort and experiences with an abnormal significance.

THE SENSE OF MISSION

3.An.: "I am given orders which I must carry out."

Sch.: "I have been commanded to relieve the Pope of a part of the burden of overcoming the evil in the world."

Gla.: "I must go to the Pope in Rome to proclaim the salvation of the world." According to an inner vocation, he demanded from his superior that he "kiss the cross." In the same way he told his sister-in-law that she "must give away the million shillings she had been given," obviously according to an inner vocation to free oneself of material things.

Fu.: He felt within himself continual instructions from God to pray for nights on end kneeling beside his bed. He "was not allowed to eat," according to his sense of mission.

Lo.: "I have the vocation to become Saint Peter or Saint Paul."

The experiences of mission described here and the attempts to realize them were very frequently the reason for the admission into a hospital.

THE SUSPENSION OF TIME AND PLACE

3.An.: "Part of my body is dead, I am made of iron, my personality is empty and hollow." He also said that his mind was dead.

Gla.: He said he was "eternally damned," but then again "there is a wonderful eternity for everybody."

Br.: He said his mind was "on the moon."

Stö.: "Everything is unreal," and his own "feelings were dead."

Ze.: He experienced himself as dead and thought time had stood still; there was no longer past or future.

Gr.: "I live out of time."

Hukl.: He had no feeling for time any more, he believed himself sometimes in the future. He had a feeling of eternity. At that time he was looking for the Garden of Eden on the banks of the Danube river.

Ho.: He entered his own death in his diary and added, "Hallelujah, what a liberating feeling!"

Schi.: He has "lost himself," has had to keep saying to himself "I am I," because he felt he was losing himself in others. He always spoke of himself as well as of other people and things as being "in an amorphous state."

Meu.: "I am as if I were dead. Everything is empty, nothing is moving any more." "Life is put out." "My eyes are empty, my mouth is dead."

Lo.: "Time has stood still, it is the transition to eternal life."

These were experiences of the suspension of the feeling for time and space. Space can be thought of as a function of time, and these patients speak in the main of a changed and mostly suspended time, expressed in such words as eternal, dead, nonexistence, unreality, and disintegration. A manic-depressive patient said the following: "We are not real. The world around us consists only of stereotypes, we are not on one of the planets going round the sun and revolving on its own axis, we are living on a planet taken out of circulation."

THE EXTREMES OF MOOD

Sch.: "I can feel good and evil fighting in me. I am terribly happy, but then am plagued by terrible doubt."

Gla.: "I feel that the salvation of the world is here," but also "I feel Hell and the devil, I am damned forever."

Fo.: He weeps and is at the same time supremely happy, and addressing the voice of God within, "if only you knew how much I love you."

Gr.: She felt very happy through meditation and, for love, gave all her possessions away, but on the other hand she said that "it still burns in me," meaning terrible fear.

Sr.Le.: She said she felt she was holy but then again thought she was damned eternally.

Sei.: He was at times the devil, then again a saint.

It will be readily understandable that when patients suffered from such extremes of mood, there was frequent mention of suicide. They experienced supernatural happiness on the one hand but on the other terrible suffering which was often described as torments of hell.

THE SUDDEN AND PASSIVE NATURE OF SUCH EXPERIENCES

Stö.: "It came over me like lightning."

Ze.: "It was as if my body had been struck by lightning."

La.: "When the lightning struck," (it had in fact struck a nearby church tower) "I knew that I was Jesus."

Sr.Le.: "It came over me suddenly, I could not do anything else."

Lo.: "It came over me from outside myself."

These patients felt their experiences not only as sudden occurrences but also something which happened to them: they played no active part and much happened expressly against their will.

THE FEELING OF SHAME

Pr.: "I was ashamed of seeing Maria (mother of Jesu) and could not report about it."

Fo.: He was ashamed of his weakness to shove god away, because he did not do his duty (to pray and to fast) as was ordered by god.

In conclusion it must be mentioned that the patients sometimes could not express themselves in words for fear of being misunderstood. However, they undoubtedly were at first silent for some time out of a feeling of shame, because their experiences were for them something quite extraordinary, touching their innermost selves.

What has been said here by patients suffering from schizophrenia or schizo-affective psychoses—even if it has been quoted out of context of the relevant complete psychopathological picture—points very impressively to the irrational basis of experiences of delusion. I wanted to describe the irrational aspect of these experiences as clearly as possible from a phenomenological point of view so that they could be compared; there are common and ever-recurring aspects to be found in each of them. However, it is important to consider the experiences which occur mainly at the outset of the delusion. In these cases the analogy with what is experienced in mystical ecstasy is evident as we can see by comparing them with the autobiographies of saints and with satori experiences as they have been described by Zen masters.¹² There also are similarities with experiences reported by artists.

THE DIFFERENCE OF DEVELOPMENT

Because there are such striking phenomenological similarities between the reported, original experiences of western mystics, Zen masters, and artistic creators on the one hand and the experiences of some psychiatric patients on the other, it is practically impossible to distinguish belief and delusion in their initial phases. However, it is possible to discover the difference between belief and delusion if we look at the ensuing course or life history of the person affected by the mystical or delusionary experience.

To bring this difference to the fore in the second half of this paper, we need to develop further the concept of belief by contrasting religious belief with scientific knowledge. When something is of such overwhelming importance for a person that he believes in it without the

confirmation of other people and is convinced that it cannot be repeated at any time, then this experience cannot be considered a scientific fact. In science everything is founded on logic and causality; propositions are confirmable and observations can be repeated; things can be counted, measured, and weighed. Knowledge through belief—in the philosophical sense of “considered as true,” or “to gain a way of thinking”—is more than knowledge through scientific reason, it is knowledge on another level than that of logical-empirical thinking. This concept of belief, also valid for religion, contains two further concepts: faith and hope. Faith means trusting oneself to a higher power and feeling oneself to be part of this power, even if only a very small part. Faith also is always a risk: a child trusts its parents; adults trust friends and the community in which they live; the believer trusts in God. In this trust there is always the hope or expectancy of a desired state. Our whole life consists of a daily hoping for the future, a hoping for the realization of ourself and our work, whether it be through our own children, through what we create in a material or spiritual sphere, or through the perfection of the world.

Faith and hope are open to their opposite, to doubt. Faith and hope on the one hand and perpetual doubt on the other are to be found in the experience of the mystics as well as in the coming into being of great works of art which, as we know, sometimes are destroyed by their creators. To some extent each of us is familiar with this oscillation between faith and hope on the one hand and doubt on the other, with being pulled in both directions between these two poles.

We must now examine to what extent these brief deliberations on the philosophical and religious concepts of belief are also valid for delusion. Does the victim of delusion also have faith and hope in the object of his delusion as well as doubt? Faith and hope presuppose a becoming, a future; in the same way doubt also has a future, a becoming. In faith and hope there are possibilities but no certainties. Sometimes, at the beginning of his illness and also occasionally later, the victim of delusion is not quite sure of the truth of what he has experienced. Usually, however, the opposite is the case, that is, the victim of delusion believes absolutely unshakably in the object of his delusion and is not prepared to discuss it. He is convinced of the object of his delusion even when this appears to contradict logical thinking.

Delusory belief thus appears to be paralyzed belief, no longer open to faith and hope, incapable of any further growth. This is at least undeniably true of acute cases of delusion. Only in those cases in which, for example, deeply religious people become victims of delusion, can fragments of “hoping in God” survive, while trust in other people is more or less extinguished. Only when contact with a “thou” begins to

be reestablished, does hope and trust in the therapist show itself, as G. Benedetti reports about the psychotherapy of victims of delusion.¹³ Likewise, in neuroleptic therapy, the hope of being able to master everyday life begins to be evident as in the case of U.Pr. described above. It should not be supposed that the victim of delusion has hope in the usual sense: for the victim what is hoped for is certainty and freedom from doubt, thus once again a rigid belief. A framework of delusion can be developed in a systematic way, but it is nevertheless basically delusion. The object of delusion is an end in itself, something finished, which cannot basically be altered. Delusory belief thus lacks the characteristics of philosophical and religious belief—faith, hope, and doubt. The believer is aware of his or her self “remaining open” to becoming. This naturally also includes uncertainty. However, the victim of delusion knows neither this “being open” nor this uncertainty; everything is established, final, clear, and irrefutable.

It is possible that a stated belief cannot always and immediately be recognized as delusory belief. This is especially the case when a statement of this sort is observed only from a short-term, sectional view. A longer term observation of a person declaring a belief will almost always show to what extent it is a rigid belief or a belief which fully includes faith, hope, and doubt. Almost everyone of us has experienced events which had a particular significance at one time and were the reason for seeing the world from that moment on with different eyes. Such experiences involve long-lasting effects for the whole life of the person concerned and result in a maturing of the personality, as exemplified in experiences associated with puberty. For the healthy person those experiences where something gains a special significance and thus becomes a guideline for the thinking and action of this person in the future are belief experiences in the extended meaning of the word. They are inseparably bound up with faith and hope but also with doubt and for the person concerned represent an orientation but not an irrevocable commitment for the future. A measure of uncertainty is present and in this very fact there is the possibility of growth. This growth can be due to the person himself but is often also the result of influences from outside. The victim of delusion, however, rigidly describes his belief as an experience of extraordinary significance which allows for no other interpretation, revealing to him only one single exclusive truth. Flexibility in matters of belief is impossible.

In both delusion and belief, then, there is always an experience of significance, which at the outset is of irrational origin and which can be described in theological terms as suprarational or supramundane. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that experiences of this sort belong to the most profound events in a person's life, changing to a greater or

lesser degree the personality and its social environment. The power of these experiences and their superiority over logical thought processes has been observed often in history. This is the case in individual delusion as well as in intuitive inspiration in art and science or in religious experience. Art, science, and religion affect the whole of a particular human society or culture.

In trying to distinguish the belief of the healthy person from the belief of the victim of delusion, the following compelling conclusion must be arrived at: the belief which includes faith, hope, and doubt has at the same time a measure of uncertainty as to the future of the person concerned, this belief is open to being and becoming. Delusory belief, on the other hand, is rigid, complete, final, and conclusive; it offers only an apparent safety.

FREEDOM AND CONSTRAINT

Hope and doubt are present in belief but absent in delusion. This leads to a second possible way of distinguishing between belief and delusion—involving the freedom of the human being. The freedom of the personality can only exist in connection with a belief that also includes faith and a possibility of growth, where there are still openings for change. Insofar as the content of belief is concerned, the personality of the victim of delusion is no longer free. His belief allows for no other interpretation, so that an abnormally significant but delusionary experience will result in a loss of freedom for the personality of the victim of delusion. An entire or partial loss of freedom is thus a decisive factor in distinguishing belief in delusion and belief which contains faith, hope, and doubt. This loss of freedom is, just as the concept of freedom itself, an irrational experience which cannot be grasped by causal thinking. As H. Ey so rightly says, psychiatry is the pathology of freedom: "If there were no human freedom, there would be no insanity."¹⁴ The very fact of human existence implies insanity as the limitation of its freedom.

Sometimes such a loss of freedom is reported by the victim of delusion from his own experience, as in the following cases:

F.: stated that he had "a ring around my soul," "my will is limited," "I am unfree."

H.: said "There are walls and chains everywhere."

Schi.: declared he had the feeling that his will was no longer free.

Even when patients such as U.Pr. speak of the "limitless freedom" they have experienced, this shows in fact a loss of freedom—in her case a loss of action. She said that in her limitless freedom she could kill

anybody, and this frightened her. It is generally known how this loss of freedom is experienced by paranoids for they talk about being manipulated, hypnotized, limited, and influenced in their thinking and acting.

A limitation of freedom is known to exist in such states as pathological aggression and love sickness in the case of individuals, but it also exists in groups of people, for example, in psychic epidemics such as witch hunting. In delusion proper, this loss of freedom is, however, even greater and more far-reaching, because either it is not noticed by the person in question or it is accepted as inevitable. The loss of personal freedom in delusion was known as early as the classical period. In one of the many laws of the *Lex Cornelia*, we hear that a victim of furor is not to be considered a criminal and is not capable of conducting business. The victim of delusion is just not capable of taking advantage of the various possibilities for realizing himself, but is only aware of what he has experienced in his delusion. The ego is bogged down in its relationship to its surroundings, and every possibility of different emotional and intentional behavior is lacking. There is a rigidity not allowing for any other possibility, which one can compare with a mask having only one possible expression. The way "from being to meaning," says G. Huber, is closed to the victim of delusion because there is no longer a possibility of choice for him; the delusory belief prescribes the only apparent way.¹⁵ The loss of personal freedom also can be described as a loss of time for the person in question. In personal time lies the possibility of a "liberation from spatial localization and causal constraint," for "the freedom of the personality . . . has its roots in time and grows out of time."¹⁶

This paper cannot describe in detail how the freedom of the personality is not adversely affected in corresponding experiences of artistic acts of creation, in the inspiration of great thinkers and researchers, or in mystical experience. History in fact proves it is not limited as with the victims of delusion. A person active in a cultural field will, through his activity, not only become freer himself, but also he will convey greater freedom to other people through what he does. The finding of meaning in sorrow, which the Christian religion teaches, is an example of this.

EFFECTIVENESS IN OR ISOLATION FROM SOCIETY

The loss of freedom of the personality in delusion is only one difference between delusory belief and belief in the philosophical and religious sense. Another is the loss of the world on the part of the personality in delusion. L. Binswanger has pointed to the fact that the victim of delusion can no longer step outside his or her own circle of experience, his or her personal world cannot be compared to the world

of others, and communication is no longer possible with the outside world.¹⁷ The ill person in a paranoid state rejects the world even when he or she is in fact very dependent on it. His or her “other world” is no longer the real world of other people with their friends and enemies; it is an anonymous threatening power which cannot be grasped and which remains obscure. So the patient becomes isolated and adopts an autistic way of behavior. G. Benedetti and U. Rauchfleisch, for example, have indicated this limited pattern of social behavior.¹⁸ The impossibility of human community leads to a loss of naturalness and originality in the behavior of the ill person within society.¹⁹ G. Huber and G. Gross have created the expression, “*Wir-Krüppelhaftigkeit*” (the crippled relationship between the “I” and the “thou”) for this state of rupture of human contact.²⁰ In the Japanese attitude towards delusion, this changing in the personality and its surroundings is expressed in a slightly different way. B. Kimura demonstrated this very well etymologically by pointing to the Japanese word for schizophrenia, *Kichigai*, meaning nothing other than in a state of delusion it is relationships which are altered.²¹

So-called normal people behave quite differently in their creative acts and in their religious life. After days, weeks, or months of reflection and introversion, a normal person can return to the community without difficulty. The thou, the other person, is never what it is for the victim of delusion—a blurred, threatening power; rather the thou remains what it always was, and the normal person’s contact with the thou was only less intensive during the time of withdrawal. In fact, when he returns to the community, his relationship with it will be particularly strong. Only in this way can we explain how cultural achievements come about. The era of mysticism showed us the significance of the return to the world. Saint Theresa of Avila, along with Saint John of the Cross, reformed the order of the Carmelites and became one of the most important persons in Roman Catholic church reform.²² Saint Ignatius of Loyola founded the order of the Society of Jesus; his laws formed the basis of the rules of the order.²³ The Jesuits also became very important for the reformation of the Catholic church. It would be within the scope of a cultural anthropologist’s work to show the growth of these mystics and their reintegration into and impact on the society.

The above mystics are only two examples of the creative impact of mysticism on religion. Sidney S. Furst and his coauthors are of the opinion that Jesus and the apostles were the first Christian mystics.²⁴ Further, mysticism has been frequently the origin of renovation of belief in times of pronounced establishment of religious institutions and their officials not only in Christianity but also in other religions.

Like Jesus of Nazareth, Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, exemplifies the mystical origins of a religious reform movement that evolved into a great new world religion. Finally, even scientists testify regarding the creative impact of mysticism. For example, Albert Einstein says, "the most beautiful and far-reaching experience is [that of] the Mystic. It is a fundamental experience, which stand[s] at the beginning of all real art and science."²⁵ All this illustrates how mystics become and act in the society in a way that would be totally impossible for patients with delusions.

The efficaciousness of great cultural creations—and the work of mystics are cultural creations—is based on the fact that they are not the work of only *one* human being. This is supported by Teilhard de Chardin, who is of the opinion that with humanity evolution is finished and an involution has begun.²⁶ This involution is a spiritual reflexiveness and is the start of a common—not individual—unity among humans. The external characteristics of the new unity are speech and script. However this new unity, which survives many generations, is not just sounds or markings on paper. It is the information of human culture, what Sir Karl Popper calls "World 3" in contrast to the material substrates of "World 1" and the subjective states of consciousness of "World 2."²⁷ The culture includes permanent changes in the areas of social structure, art, science, and also belief. The changes are based on the interaction between important human beings and the rest of society. However, it can be supposed that the great significance of a particular person may not be recognizable in his or her lifetime. For the full impact of a person's creative work to occur, the interaction between the creative person and the rest of society requires a longer time than the short life of the individual person. As frequently happens, the great importance of mystics as well as of artists and scientists is recognized in later times. Creations in art, science, and religion do not remain the property of one person, not even when they have been created in solitude. They become what we call culture only when they come in contact with the thou, with other persons in the human community.

Let us return to our starting point, to the concept of belief and the different course this can take in human life. From what has been said above it can be seen that belief involves the experience of significance described by G. Hubner and G. Gross among other things as *Anmutungs-erlebnis* (the experience of being struck in a particular way).²⁸ In the imagination of the victim of delusion this event acquires the same significance as that of a mystical experience. However, the course taken by delusion is different, consisting in the loss of personal freedom and in a fundamental disturbance of human relationships, indeed in a loss of the surrounding world. The man with delusionary experi-

ences has no persistent significance for the human society or culture. The distinguishing feature of delusion therefore can be said to be a limitation and a paralysis which is experienced but of which the ill person is often not aware. This is the complete opposite of the breadth, depth, and height experienced in creative acts, which in effect do not convey an absolutely complete message and in which there is always a possibility of growth.

As a result of the changes described above, there is also a different course of development in the sense of mission. Artists or scientists return with what was created and offer it to the community. It will then be corrected or modified by society or by the creator. An act of creation of this sort consequently can contribute to a greater or lesser degree to the dominant culture. It is similar for the *homo religiosus* who returns to human society after a time of retreat in order to bring help and salvation to people in their spiritual needs or who is consulted by others hoping for help.

However, this return to human society and being accepted by it, as well as influencing society according to the directions received during the experience of mission is not possible for the victim of delusion. It might be thought that this is so because the ill person is not accepted by the community. However, a return to the community is primarily impossible because the natural relationship to the thou of the environment has been lost. The sick person can no longer understand his environment, can no longer put himself in another person's place; the world around him is no longer familiar. In addition, the changes in the personality as a result of the experiences of delusion more or less severely limit the effectiveness of this personality. The part emotions will play is just as affected as is logical thinking. The victim of delusion is incapable of plausibly transmitting his "new knowledge" or "observed truth" to his social environment.

CONCLUSION

This essay is based on the analysis of the psychopathological case histories of twenty-five victims of delusion juxtaposed with autobiographical statements of two mystics, reports of satori by Zen masters, and descriptions by three artists of their creative experience. It was shown that initially in all these groups there is the same kind of experience. In this type of experience the feeling for time and space can be suspended, and extreme oscillations of mood as well as the suddenness and passivity of the experience are likely. Also possible are feelings of shame. But most important, this is an experience of special significance that affects the person deeply and fills his or her life with a new purpose and a sense of mission.

What then is the difference between the experiences of the artist or the mystic on the one hand and those of the victim of delusion on the other? It is only its course of development which shows how these experiences are differently structured. In the creative or religious experience, faith and hope but also doubt are involved; various possibilities of growth thus remain open. In the experience of delusion, however, there is no faith and no doubt; the delusion is irrefutable and final. In other words, only in creative experiences is there a possibility of becoming, a state of being open to growth. This implies personal freedom, but in delusion there is a limitation of freedom. The delusion paralyzes the person in his belief; it is final. In this way, the victim of delusion is more or less robbed of personal freedom.

Every form of creative activity consists in building up a new relationship between one person and his or her peers, and in what he says about this new relationship. The ego of the victim of delusion is limited in its personal freedom and will be doubly handicapped in building up a relationship to a thou, or in other words, to another person. First, he will himself lack the capacity and necessary flexibility. Second, this thou will seem to the victim of delusion to be no longer familiar; in fact the thou will appear strangely unfamiliar, unreachable, often frightening. It is impossible for the mentally ill person to make use of what he or she has experienced. Finally, the sense of mission in delusion will be more or less impossible to realize. The change in the personality and the alienation from other people will make any far-reaching and lasting effectiveness impossible. All this is in direct contrast to those people who, as a result of creative experiences in the field of art, science and religion, have found an extension to their personal freedom and have been able to convey this through their works to a thou, to other people, to their surroundings. The creative person never loses contact with other people. He or she is more closely bound than before to them and their actions, which are in fact the result of this close relationship or union. It will be readily understood that the sense of mission which is related to the creative experience is also easier to realize and that works of art, important new ideas in science, and new movements in religion may thus well become a part of our human culture.

NOTES

1. Kurt Schneider, *Zur Einführung in die Religionspsychopathologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1975).
2. See Saint Theresa of Avila's account to Father Rodrigo Alvarez in the German translation by Father Aloisius Alkofer in *Leben der heiligen Theresia von Jesu*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (Munich: Kösel, 1960), pp. 251ff.
3. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Der Bericht des Pilgers*, in the German translation by R. Schneider, 2nd ed. (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1963).

4. Günter Schüttler, *Die Erleuchtung in Zen-Buddhismus* (Freiburg, Germany: K. Alber, 1975).
5. Johann P. Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, 11 March 1828 (Leipzig: Franz Deubel, 1908).
6. Otto Kankleit, *Das Unbewusste als Keimstätte des Schöpferischen* (Munich: Ernst Reinhardt, 1959), pp. 18-19.
7. Alfred Kubin, *Aus Meinem Leben*, quoted in Wolfgang K. Müller-Thalheim, *Erotik und Dämonie im Werke Alfred Kubins* (Wiesbaden: Fourier und Fertig, 1970), p. 75.
8. Hermann Lenz, *Wahnsinn, Das Irrationale im Wahngeschehen* (Vienna: Herder, 1976).
9. Walter Blankenburg, "Philosophie als Gegenstand der Psychiatrie," in *Psychiatrie der Gegenwart, Forschung und Praxis*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Springer, 1979).
10. Plotinus, *Über Ewigkeit und Zeit*, trans. W. Beierwalter (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967).
11. Hermann Lenz, "The Element of the Irrational at the Beginning and During the Course of Delusion," *Confinia Psychiatrica* 22 (1979): 183-90.
12. Schüttler.
13. Gaetano Benedetti, "Ausdruckspsychopathologie psychotischen Leidens im psychotherapeutischen Geschehen," presented at the International Kolloquium der Deutschsprachigen Gessellschaft für Psychopathologie des Ausdrucks, Cologne, Germany 2-4 October 1980.
14. Henry Ey, *Das Bewusstsein*, trans. from the French by K. P. Kisker (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967), pp. 196-199.
15. Gerd Huber, "Forschungsrichtungen und Lehrmeinungen in der Psychologie," in *Handbuch der forensischen Psychiatrie*, ed. H. Göppinger and H. Witter (Berlin: Springer, 1972), 1:633-751.
16. See Bernhard Pauleikhoff, *Person und Zeit* (Heidelberg: Hüthig, 1979), p. 147.
17. Ludwig Binswanger, *Wahn* (Pfullingen, Germany: Neske, 1965).
18. Gaetano Benedetti and Udo Rauchfleisch, *Der Schizophrene in unserer Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Thieme, 1975).
19. W. Blankenburg, "Ansätze zu einer Psychopathologie des commonsense," *Confinia Psychiatrica* 12 (1969): 144-63.
20. Gerd Huber and Gisela Gross, *Wahn* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1977).
21. Bin Kimura, "Schizophrenie als Geschehen des Zwischen-sein's," *Nervenarzt* 46 (1975): 434-39.
22. See n. 2 above.
23. See n. 3 above.
24. Sidney S. Furst, *Mysticism: Spiritual Quest or Psychic Disorder*, Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, vol. 9, no. 97 (New York: Mental Health Materials Center, 1976).
25. Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954).
26. Teilhard de Chardin, *Die Zukunft des Menschen*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg, Germany: Olten, 1966).
27. Karl R. Popper, cited in John C. Eccles, *The Human Mystery* (Edinburgh: Springer International, 1979), p. 98.
28. Huber and Gross.