

Artur Dobosz

Schizophrenia according to German mystics (Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, the Frankfurter)

Summary

The Neoplatonic current in medieval Christian theology was initiated in the 13th century by Saint Albert. His thought was developed mainly by his German disciples, among others Ulrich of Strasbourg (died in 1277) and Dietrich (Theodoric) of Freiberg (ab. 1250-1311). The most prominent representative of the Neoplatonic current in theology was Johannes Eckhart from Thuringia, called “Meister Eckhart” (1260-1327). He belonged to the Dominican Order of Preachers. He was both a knight and a teacher, among others at the University of Paris (1302, 1311). His main Neoplatonic mystical work, *Opus Tripartitum*, consists of sermons. The main followers of Meister Eckhart’s ideas were his disciples: Johannes Tauler of Strasbourg (1300-1360), author of over 80 sermons, and Henry Suso of Constance (1300-1365), both also from the Dominican Order. A particularly significant role in the development of the “Meister’s” ideas was played by an anonymous author of *German Theology* (*Deutsche Theologie*). This work is also known as *Theologia Deutsch* (from now on — *ThD*). Its anonymous author, known to have belonged to the Order of the Teutonic Knights of St. Mary’s Hospital in Jerusalem, was called “Der Frankfurter”. In *ThD* he explained in an accessible and comprehensible way the “Meister’s” main ideas, usually written down in a difficult and complicated language, strengthening their existential dimension. It was especially the field of ethics where he was more demanding towards the Catholics than Meister Eckhart himself so that they could aspire to eternal happiness after death (*visio beatifica*). The term “German mystics” refers to the theologians mentioned in the title of my book. I devote particular attention to the Frankfurter and his *ThD*. Yet, I leave out the works of Henry Suso, as he did not play a particularly important role in the creative continuation of the “Meister’s” thought.

SCHIZOPHRENIA ACCORDING TO GERMAN MYSTICS

German mysticism, especially in the Frankfurter's approach, represents a certain version of Neoplatonism. In this approach man is an outflow (emanation) of true existence, namely of God (*wesen* — in accordance with Eckhart's terminology, and *wessen* — in accordance with the Frankfurter's version; in my book I use Eckhart's term). Thus, man possesses no separate, autonomous existence as an entity situated beyond the only, all-embracing, real existence. However, he follows his own will, which is wrong because everything that happens according to his will is "contrary to the Eternal Will" (*ThD*, 50). In this way man establishes (apparently) his own existence, consequently (but, as a matter of fact, only seemingly) breaking out of real existence. Assuming the perspective of German mystics, it means that in accordance with his wrong assumptions man establishes himself as a conscious, autonomous "self". It is distinct from other "selves" and possesses a sense of individual identity, expressed by man in the words: "I am", or "I exist". This very "I" is both the "I" that recognizes "I" and manifests its own will, etc.

The very act in which man establishes his (as he thinks) real existence is — according to German mystics — the greatest sin he can commit. They cannot accept an illusory impression that real or true existence beyond *wesen*, in apparent accordance with man's will, is possible. That is why they regard self-establishment as an illusion, a false impression to which man has succumbed. "Behold! I, poor fool that I was, imagined it was I [who truly existed — A.D.], but behold! it is and was, of a truth, God!" (*ThD* 5)⁴⁴⁴ The idea of delusiveness, of unreality or of an illusory character of our existence, expressed by German mystics, constitutes their creative input into the Neoplatonic thought, as none of its representatives, even Plotinus, perceived our existence as illusory or delusional.

The self-establishment of man's existence (Adam was the first), namely the apparent breaking out of *wesen*, is performed due to the attributes he possesses, rendered by the words: *annemen* (the Frankfurter) or *eigenschaft* (Eckhart). In terms of axiology, German mystics classify them as unequivocally negative. It is so because existing (being) in the manner of *annemen* or in the manner of

⁴⁴⁴ English translation quoted after: *Theologia Germanica*, Which setteth forth many fair Lineaments of divine Truth, and saith very lofty and lovely things touching a perfect life. EDITED BY DR. PEIFFER FROM THE ONLY COMPLETE MANUSCRIPT YET KNOWN. Translated from the German by Susanna Winkworth with a Preface by the Rev. Charles Kingsley Rector of Eversley, and a Letter to the Translator by the Chevalier Bunsen, D.D., D.C.L., etc. First published as a volume of the Golden Treasury Series in 1874. New Edition 1893; Reprinted 1901, 1907; Scanned from the 1893 Golden Treasury Series edition by John H. Richards (jhr@elidor.demon.co.uk), March 1995. Introductory material scanned from the 1907 reprint by Harry Plantinga (hplantin@calvin.edu), 1996. This electronic text is in the public domain.

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eigenschaft is characterized by appropriation, usurpation and self-exaltation. Exalting ourselves, we have appropriated (usurped) our (seemingly) autonomous existence that is independent of *wesen* — the existence of an autonomous “self”. We claim that we are able to perform volitional, emotional or especially cognitive acts and to receive the effects of these acts in the shape of, as we think, true, solid knowledge that guarantees us efficient (usurping) action. In the first place, however, we appropriate the sense of our individual self-identity, distinct from that of other people. All these forms of appropriation are defined as “selfishness”.

The Frankfurter writes in his own, specific language:

“Now mark: when the creature claimeth for its own anything good, such as Substance, Life, Knowledge, Power, and in short whatever we should call good, as if it were that, or possessed that, or that were itself, or that proceeded from it ...” (*ThD* 2).

On the other hand, being in the manner of *annemen* is our everyday, somehow natural way of existence. Man possesses intuition that accompanies him through his whole life and the fact that he really exists, equipped with an unchangeable individual identity — with the same unchangeable “self” throughout his whole life — remains generally beyond the control of his consciousness. Life forces us to improve or at least to try to improve our social status, especially the material one. What helps us is, among others, newly acquired knowledge, which increases the effectiveness of our various actions. Thus, the above-mentioned mystics were well aware of the fact that “every-day reality” forces us to “appropriate” other people with increasing consequence and ruthlessness, to make them subordinated to us and thus to exalt ourselves to a greater and greater extent.

“Now, it beginneth on this wise: the Devil puffeth up the man, till he thinketh himself to have climbed the topmost pinnacle, and to have come so near to heaven, that he no longer needeth Scripture, nor teaching, nor this nor that, but is altogether raised above any need. Whereupon there ariseth a false peace and satisfaction with himself, and then it followeth that he saith or thinketh: ‘Yea, now I am above all other men, and know and understand more than anyone in the world; therefore it is certainly just and reasonable that I should be the lord and commander of all creatures, and that all creatures, and especially all men, should serve me and be subject unto me.’” (*ThD*, 25).

Of course, German mystics also realized that a radical (or rather drastic) change of existence through the abandonment of being/existing in the

manner of *annemen* and the destruction of “self” or selfishness would meet with strong resistance from the people absorbed with every-day reality and existing in this particular manner. It was especially the Frankfurter who was aware of this fact. Considering the consequences of transforming the previous way of existence into the way of *imitatio Christi*, namely into the mystical one, such resistance was quite understandable. What mystical existence ultimately required from us, living here and now, was an almost complete resignation from our “I”, our “me”, and our “mine” (cf. *ThD*, 2). Unlike the existence in the *annemen* manner, the existence in the mystical manner was unequivocally regarded by German mystics as axiologically positive. They saw the prototype and paradigm of mystical existence in Jesus Christ.

It is only with great help from God that man can undertake mystical existence. First of all, he has to get rid of his sense of individual identity to the greatest possible extent. Consequently, he has to destroy his own “self” (his own “I am”, “I exist”). He has to “shrink” in a way, to liberate himself from his own “I”, from his own self. The Frankfurter writes:

“... that a man should so stand free, being quit of himself, that is, of his I, and Me, and Self, and Mine, ... , than if he did not exist” (*ThD*, 15). ... it hath been said: the more the Self, the I, the Me, the Mine, that is, self-seeking and selfishness, abate in a man, the more doth God’s I, that is, God Himself, increase in him.” (*ThD* 16).

The motif of being free or liberated from oneself, of getting out of oneself, of being unattached (*ledig*) to oneself, etc. — appears very often in German mystics’ thought.

After these necessary introductory remarks I present the main hypotheses of my work.

Hypothesis (1): German mystics, with the Frankfurter in the first place, often describe — and thus anticipate — in their works the symptoms of an illness known today as “schizophrenia”. Doing so, they use their characteristic language and base on their knowledge with its whole conceptual apparatus. What I mainly mean here are the symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia, which have a diagnostic value. They allow the psychiatrists to evaluate whether a person they examine is very likely to suffer from paranoid schizophrenia or not. In most cases the description of the above-mentioned symptoms is formulated in a normative way. In my book I present it in a descriptive way, as this is the linguistic form used for paranoid schizophrenia symptoms in psychiatric literature.

In my book I demonstrate that many of these descriptions (after appropriate linguistic correction, especially in terms of style, yet without any change of sense) could be produced nowadays by the mentally ill who try

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to realize what is happening with their own “I” (with their self), especially when they experience certain psychiatric symptoms. I mean here people in the remission phase of the illness (i.e. temporary disappearance of symptoms) or in the phase of the worsening of symptoms, provided that they are able to describe their mental states.

What is noteworthy, these symptoms pertain not only to the mentally ill of today, but also to psychiatric cases that — as the majority of psychiatrists agree — already occurred before the term “schizophrenia” ever appeared in psychiatric dictionaries. Literature of the subject usually mentions at least three symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia which appeared in people healed by Christ. According to the knowledge of the time, however, these people were possessed by evil spirit or spirits, already described in the Old Testament. These are: a symptom called multiple personality, a number of symptoms called persecutory and (according to, among others, A. Kępiński — a Polish psychiatrist) schizophrenic autism.

Let us add that the term “schizophrenia” appears explicitly for the first time in the work of Eugen Bleuler from the year 1911, *Dementia Praecox oder Gruppe der Schizophrenien*, fundamental for the establishment of the above-mentioned medical discipline. Yet, it already functions implicitly in the work of Emil Kraepelin from 1889, *Psychiatrie für Studierende und Aerzte, III Band, Klinische Psychiatrie, IV Teil*. It was fundamental for the creation and establishment of psychiatry as an autonomous medical discipline, because it simplified and systematized the 19th century images (*Zustandbilder*) of the discussed illness, bringing to the fore its various clinical symptoms and describing them with different notions.

The presentation of consecutive hypotheses in my book is preceded by a number of important theoretical and methodological assumptions.

Firstly, I assumed that the first hypothesis was made probable to such an extent that its credibility seems very high and so I treated it as justified. As for the hypotheses (2) and (3), I considered the degree of their probability as similar to hypothesis (1) [hence the title of the book: *Schizophrenia according to German mystics (Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, the Frankfurter)*].

Secondly, in my presentation and at the same time representation of the concept formulated by German mystics, I followed their main theological and philosophical ideas (also called the “spirit” of the concept). I clarified the questions present implicitly in their works; I also showed and developed what they foresaw (anticipated) only intuitively (without any guarantee of the accuracy of their anticipations). Additionally, my knowledge of the illness known today as schizophrenia was much broader, richer and more precise than the knowledge possessed by the mystics (and formulated in a language unknown to them).

By representing the German mystics’ concept in my work/book I mean

assuming their perspective and point of view. It allowed me to formulate many interpretative hypotheses of axiological (evaluating) character, referring to concrete symptoms of schizophrenia. Interpretative strategies presented in the book were conducted in accordance with the “spirit” of German mysticism and they made use of its heuristic fertility. As a result, concepts and philosophical systems were divided in two groups, which will be developed below.

I am going now to explain how I understand the phenomenon foreseen (anticipated) intuitively by German mystics (to a limited extent, yet in quite a surprising way, I think). Thus, I will present an example pertaining to point (a).

With this aim, I am again going to quote a fragment of *ThD* referring to, in short, the “abatement of ‘self’”.

The Frankfurter writes: “[...] the more the Self, the I, the Me, the Mine, that is, self-seeking and selfishness, abate in a man, the more doth God’s I, that is, God Himself, increase in him” (*ThD*, 16). His intuition is right: one of the symptoms of schizophrenia known today as “multiple personality” is expressed through, as I will try to demonstrate, a specific “abatement” of “self”, which results (as the Frankfurter implicitly says) in the appearance of a void or lack. This lack, in turn, will be filled with God’s “self” (God Himself will “grow” and “increase” in it). Yet, Frankfurter’s intuition does not enable him to specify (in his own language and with the use of his own conceptual apparatus) what exactly has left our “self” and selfishness, or has been removed from it, leaving a void to be filled with divine “self”. Trying to define this phenomenon in modern language, I will refer to certain psychological terms as well as elementary notions from the field of theoretical linguistics. I will also try to define particular ways of thinking that lead to the above-mentioned abandonment or removal.

It is noteworthy that Volker Leppin — an expert on Christian mysticism, especially German and Dutch — expresses an idea similar to the one mentioned by the Frankfurter in the above-quoted fragments of *ThD* (existence in the *mystical* way leads to the shrinking of our “self”, which is going to be filled with divine “self”). According to him, mystical existence is synonymous with the destruction of our “self” or — more broadly — selfishness. Thanks to such annihilation, almost complete, which can be rendered by similar, metaphorical expressions like “shrinking”, “tightening”, “drastic reduction”, etc., we can become more open and ready for divine presence filling our inner void. Thus, both the Frankfurter and Leppin spontaneously claim that the above-mentioned “shrinking” leaves us with an empty space or a certain loss, as it implicitly assumes the existence of something that disappeared from our “self”.

Now I am going to present hypothesis (2). It says that being (existing)

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in the *mystical* manner or, in other words, in the manner of *imitatio* Christi, is expressed (realized, executed) through certain symptoms of schizophrenia and with great intensity, characteristic for the illness (such an expression has, of course, nothing in common with a suggestion that Christ suffered from schizophrenia). Being (existing) in the manner of *annemen*, in turn, based on our individual identity, or — more broadly — selfishness, is expressed (realized, executed) in the similar way through some other symptoms of schizophrenia. Moreover, hypothesis (2) implies another hypothesis, namely hypothesis (3), which complements it. According to it, German mystics implicitly divide symptoms of schizophrenia into two opposite groups: symptoms (I), through which existence in the *mystical* manner manifests itself, and symptoms (II), through which existence in the manner of *annemen* manifests itself.

It is noteworthy that such a division of schizophrenic symptoms, implicitly proposed by German mystics, unexpectedly supports the conception of schizophrenia proposed by J. Mazurkiewicz, a Polish psychiatrist, in which we can also observe two opposite groups of symptoms of the mentioned illness. Pre-logical thinking is responsible for the appearance of the symptoms from one group, whereas logical or causal-logical thinking, pushed to the state of extreme tension, is responsible for the appearance of the symptoms from another group. The conception of schizophrenic symptoms proposed by the author of this book, which constitutes an explication and at the same time a certain modification of Mazurkiewicz's idea, receives analogical support in this context.

Let's return to the main line of reasoning. Symptoms (I) to a greater or lesser extent lead to the destruction of the patient's individual identity. In extreme cases they can even result in its almost entire or total annihilation for a shorter or longer time. Symptoms (I) comprise a symptom called multiple personality and a fugue. With the first symptom the patient feels the presence of another person or persons in himself. As for the fugue (to put it simply), the patient transforms himself for a longer or shorter period of time into another person, without remembering who he was before.

Symptoms (II), in turn, are all the symptoms with which the patient's sense of individual identity and his selfishness are exposed or put to the foreground. They sharpen the patient's perceptivity and attention. It can be said that they keep the patient's consciousness — and, consequently, his sense of individual identity — in the state of constant alert. Using the Frankfurter's words, it can be stated that what comes to the fore in the case of such symptoms is "his [the ill person's — A. D.] 'Self', and his 'I', and his 'Me', and his 'Mine'".

These symptoms comprise, among others, persecutory delusions, which will be thoroughly discussed in my book. Kępiński describes them as "lower" (remaining in opposition to "higher" delusions, i.e. hyperquantivalent ones,

which will be also discussed here). I am going now to characterize a “lower” delusion according to Kępiński and then to quote a long fragment of *ThD*, referring to a man whose soul has to descend into hell just as Jesus Christ’s soul did. Thus, as Kępiński argues, the patient is convinced that he is the worst man in the world and he does not deserve anything good; what awaits him is only judgment and damnation.

Now the appropriate fragment of *ThD*:

“But mark ye in what manner this cometh to pass. When a man truly Perceiveth and considereth himself, who and what he is, and findeth himself utterly vile and wicked, and unworthy of all the comfort and kindness that he hath ever received from God, or from the creatures, he falleth into such a deep abasement and despising of himself, that he thinketh himself unworthy that the earth should bear him, and it seemeth to him reasonable that all creatures in heaven and earth should rise up against him and avenge their Creator on him, and should punish and torment him [...]. And it seemeth to him that he shall be eternally lost and damned [...]. [...]and he doth not grieve over his condemnation and sufferings; for they are right and just, and not contrary to God, but according to the will of God. Therefore they are right in his eyes, and he hath nothing to say against them. Nothing grieveth him but his own guilt and wickedness; for that is not right and is contrary to God, and for that cause he is grieved and troubled in spirit. This is what is meant by true repentance for sin. And he who in this Present time entereth into this hell, entereth afterward into the Kingdom of Heaven, and obtaineth a foretaste there [...]. But whilst a man is thus in hell, none may console him, neither God nor the creature, as it is written, ‘In hell there is no redemption.’” (*ThD*, 11).

At the beginning, let’s note that the description of the feelings of a person descending into hell and staying there can be treated as a broader or more detailed characteristics of someone who experiences persecutory delusions classified by Kępiński as “lower”. “True repentance for sin” (I will return to this term in details below), interpreted in accordance with point (b) as the experience of the above-mentioned delusion, is not enough to “feel” the foretaste of the kingdom of heaven in one’s lifetime and to enter it after death. This particular delusion, just like the above-mentioned hyperquantivalent delusions (“higher”) as well as other delusions and hallucinations that put to the fore our “self” and our selfishness, makes it difficult for man to turn to God. As the Frankfurter writes: “in all things, he [man — A.D.] should no more seek or regard himself, than if he did not exist, and should take as little account of himself as if he were not, and another had done all his works. Likewise he should count all the creatures for nothing. What is there then,

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which is, and which we may count for somewhat? I answer, nothing but that which we may call God" (*ThD*, 15). Thus, the above-mentioned delusions are preventing man — in contrast to what the Frankfurter postulates — from experiencing the foretaste of the kingdom of heaven "in this present time" as well as from entering it and living with God after death. They by no means weaken the sense of man's "self", but rather intensify it, keeping the "self", as I have already mentioned, in the state of constant alert, tension, readiness.

As for the second group of symptoms, these are all the delusions and hallucinations (multiple personality and fugue among them) which to a greater or lesser extent lead to the destruction or annihilation of the "self" of a man staying in hell. Only a person whose "self" or, more generally, selfishness is almost completely shrunk and remains in a reduced state is able to experience a foretaste of the mystical union, in other words the kingdom of heaven. These two opposing groups of symptoms remain in the state of fierce struggle for the integrity of individual identity of people staying in hell — a struggle that should finish with an almost complete (but not one hundred percent complete) victory of the second group.

Now, in accordance with point (b) and with reference to hypothesis (3) (which says that German mystics divide the symptoms of schizophrenia into two opposing groups), I would like to reach the meta-level of the discussed conception and to propose the following hypothesis: man's descent into hell should be interpreted as falling ill with schizophrenia, whereas his staying there — as a struggle of the above-mentioned opposite symptoms of this illness. The more one experiences delusions and hallucinations leading to the annihilation and "shrinking" of his "self" or selfishness, the deeper he plunges into hell and is devoured by it. But if one's "self" does not change too much as a result of the above-mentioned struggle and, in consequence, he loses the sense of his individual identity to a very little extent, it means that he is still at the very beginning of his way through hell or that he has just descended into it.

I would like to make my hypothesis more probable and also to complement it in some way. Thus, in order to keep my reasoning clear, I am again going to quote a larger part of the already-cited fragment of *ThD*, which I interpreted as an extended version of Kępiński's description of persecutory delusion, described by the Polish psychiatrist, as we know, as a "lower" one. According to the author of *Schizophrenia*, an ill person believes that he is the worst person in the world and does not deserve anything good; what awaits him is only judgment and damnation. Here is the appropriate fragment of *ThD*:

"Christ's soul must needs descend into hell, before it ascended into heaven. So

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must also the soul of man. But mark ye in what manner this cometh to pass. When a man truly Perceiveth and considereth himself, who and what he is, and findeth himself utterly vile and wicked, and unworthy of all the comfort and kindness that he hath ever received from God, or from the creatures, he falleth into such a deep abasement and despising of himself, that he thinketh himself unworthy that the earth should bear him, and it seemeth to him reasonable that all creatures in heaven and earth should rise up against him and avenge their Creator on him, and should punish and torment him; and that he were unworthy even of that. And it seemeth to him that he shall be eternally lost and damned, and a footstool to all the devils in hell, and that this is right and just and all too little compared to his sins which he so often and in so many ways hath committed against God his Creator. And therefore also he will not and dare not desire any consolation or release, either from God or from any creature that is in heaven or on earth; but he is willing to be unconsolated and unreleased, and he doth not grieve over his condemnation and sufferings; for they are right and just, and not contrary to God, but according to the will of God. Therefore they are right in his eyes, and he hath nothing to say against them. Nothing grieveth him but his own guilt and wickedness; for that is not right and is contrary to God, and for that cause he is grieved and troubled in spirit. This is what is meant by true repentance for sin. [...] But whilst a man is thus in hell, none may console him, neither God nor the creature, as it is written, 'In hell there is no redemption'" (*ThD*, 11).

Let's analyze the above quotation. I think that it makes the following hypothesis much more probable: descending into hell and staying there can be interpreted as falling ill with what is described today as schizophrenia. In what the Frankfurter calls "true repentance for sin" we can easily recognize the symptom defined by Kępiński as "lower" persecutory delusion, with which, by the way, the stay in hell begins. Moreover, the Frankfurter writes that as for a person staying there, "[n]othing grieveth him but his own guilt and wickedness; for that is not right and is contrary to God [...]". Descent into hell is "according to the will of God" and is "right in his eyes". Yet, the sinner grieves over "his own guilt and wickedness". How do they manifest themselves? According to my interpretation, the key fact is that the person in question did not reject his selfishness, his "self", his "I", his "me" or his "mine" (guilt), because the above-mentioned symptom exposes and puts to the fore his selfishness. That is why "true repentance for sin" (which the Frankfurter, as I think, says implicitly) becomes complemented by the greatest possible rejection of selfishness or "self". This, in turn, according to my interpretation, is synonymous with the appearance of the symptoms of schizophrenia, which, as the Frankfurter would say, lead to the "abatement" of the patient's "self".

One important remark should be made with reference to the above

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hypothesis. At first glance it seems that it should undergo some correction. Using the terminology from the dictionary of the methodology of science, we should limit its range of application and exclude the cases of possessed people healed by Christ. What is the point here? Christ met ill people on his way, also the possessed ones; today we would say that he met people with schizophrenia and healed them. I mean here the cases of possession described in the Gospel of Mark (5.1 and 5.13). The case of a person described in 5.1 seems especially interesting. Asked by Christ: “What is your name?,” he answered: “My name is Legion, for we are many.” It is highly probable that a modern psychiatrist would treat these words as a symptom of paranoid schizophrenia called multiple personality. Yet, I cannot agree that mad persons (schizophrenic, as we would say nowadays) were already staying in hell in the moment of being healed by Christ, whereas the Saviour still waited for His descent to happen. That seems unacceptable for a few reasons. Firstly, it would disagree with the conception of German mystics, which I should honestly analyze in my book. They regarded Jesus Christ as a sign-post, a guide whom we should follow to hell. Secondly, I cannot regard possessed persons as staying in hell because it would question one of apostolic symbols of faith (*Symbolum Apostolorum* or *Symbolum Apostolicum*), namely the most important confessions of faith of the Catholic Church, accepted also by German mystics. This is a symbol referring to the martyrdom of Christ, according to which “He was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hades. On the third day He rose again from the dead [...]” Of course, this symbol excludes the possibility of any mortal descending into hell before Christ. Thirdly, if I assumed that the possessed descended into hell before Christ, I would remain in stark disagreement with one of the fundamental ideas of Christian faith, supported also by German mystics.

The above-presented interpretation of descent and stay in hell as falling ill with what is known today as schizophrenia may raise certain controversies. It can be assumed that in many cases people diagnosed nowadays as schizophrenic would be probably “diagnosed” in medieval times as possessed by evil spirit or spirits and the very fact of possession would be perceived as the work of devil. Thus, a doubt arises. Descent into hell and a “journey” through it should finally allow the mortals to experience the foretaste of real existence — in other words, the foretaste of mystical union — and to participate in this union after death; to be in the state of eternal happiness and to participate in God’s kingdom. Can such a phenomenon have anything in common with devil, then? I think that such doubts can disappear when we take into consideration how German mystics, especially the Frankfurter, define the relation: man — devil. The Frankfurter writes: “[...] men have more likeness to the Evil Spirit than to God. For the Self, the I, the Me and the like, all belong to the Evil Spirit,

and therefore it is, that he is an Evil Spirit” (*ThD*, 22). As I understand it, in the quoted fragment of *ThD* man is a devil because of the fact that following his own (wrong) will he established his own “self”, (apparently) independent of God, or — more generally — his selfishness. But the more man reduces his “self” or selfishness and destroys his individual identity as well as the ability to perform various acts, especially volitional ones — the less he will resemble the devil. Therefore, I think that these remarks allow me to formulate an affirmative answer to the above question.

Let’s notice that the relation man — devil as if justifies my suggestion that hypothesis (4) at first (I should add: misleading) glance should undergo appropriate correction. Yet, I think that it does not require correction due to the fact that healing the possessed, namely driving a demon or demons away from them, Christ still left them entirely similar to devil, i.e. following their own will and having a sense of their (apparently) real “self”. In other words, he left them in a state from before their descending into hell.

At the end of my presentation of the interpretative hypotheses and remarks concerning the conception supported by German mystics, I would like to propose the following, already announced, interpretative thesis (T) of predominantly axiological character, implied by the above three hypotheses and formulated on the meta-level of this conception. Namely, in some aspect or dimension this conception can be, I think, interpreted as a specific praise of schizophrenia and as the ennoblement of people suffering from this illness. At the same time, I consider it to be one of the most inhuman theological-philosophical conceptions ever created by man.

I will try to present arguments that justify the negative axiological evaluation of the second part of the thesis (T); it will be done in a more detailed way in one of the chapters of my book. Let’s note at the beginning that the above-mentioned foretaste and ennoblement (“guaranteed”, in a sense, by German mystics’ ideas) have their serious consequences. Quite often the patients with schizophrenia have to pay very high price for the (probable) sense of foretaste of mystical union in their lifetime and for the feeling of eternal happiness after death (although their sense of identity or, as Augustyniak says, their being themselves is totally different after death than in their lifetime and difficult to imagine for the mortals). By the price to pay I mean suffering caused by various symptoms of the illness, which leads to smaller or greater destruction of their sense of “self” (I am, I exist) or, in the cases most appreciated or “recommended” by German mystics, to almost complete annihilation of this sense. A question comes to one’s mind: is not this price too high? I think so and I try to justify this opinion in one of the chapters of my book. Moreover, the inhuman character of the discussed conception manifests itself in the fact which I will also try to demonstrate in one of the

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chapters of my book and which has already been mentioned above — that patients with schizophrenia who try, with the help of their psychiatrists and probably also psychologists, to bring their “self” to the state from before their illness and to reintegrate it, are classified by German mystics as axiologically negative. Thus, not only are they forced to suffer mentally and physically, but also all actions that could help them in their ordeal are treated as ethically wrong.

* * *

What seems particularly interesting or even surprising (at least for the author of this book), exposing a considerable heuristic potential of the discussed conception, is the fact that the idea of existing in the manner of *annemen* as well as in the *mystical* manner can also be found in the field of philosophy, namely in many philosophical concepts and systems, or simply — philosophies. In particular, it is related to — which is rather obvious — a specific phenomenon of appropriation and self-exaltation, different than the one usually observed in various aspects or dimensions of human life, both individual and social. In an intuitive and surprisingly anticipatory way, German mystics divide philosophical systems, especially modern ones, in two groups:

1. Philosophies as if created to fiercely argue with one of their most important theses, according to which our (real) existence, expressed in the words “I am” or “I exist” should be treated as delusion or illusion.
2. Philosophies as if created to agree with the above-mentioned thesis formulated by German mystics and to perform, one feels tempted to say, “philosophical” annihilation, namely — the reduction of our (seemingly) true and real existence, of our psychologically understood “self”, of our sense of individual identity. What is more, the discussed systems try to offer a philosophical counterpart of real existence (*wesen*) and of mystical union (*unio mystica*), due to which we exist with a sense of “self” diametrically opposite to the one we possess when — as E. Husserl would say — living in the “natural attitude”. Such counterpart is constructed with the help of an appropriate conceptual apparatus, more or less adequate to the “mystical” original.

Additionally, I have two remarks. Firstly, I have suggested above that certain philosophies were created as if to argue or agree with the thesis proposed by German mystics, who claim that our (seemingly) real existence as ego is *de facto* a delusion or illusion. To be more precise, the words “as if” refer to the motivation that led to the creation of those philosophies and

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to their particular factual content. Yet, it does not mean that the motivation or the content had anything to do with the particular concept proposed by German mystics. In fact, it was probably quite unknown to the philosophers whose ideas I am going to present and interpret. In other words, it can be said that the discussed thesis, perceived from the appropriate perspective, allows us to look at large parts of the history of philosophy, at least modern European one, in an original, previously unknown way.

Secondly, German mystics probably realized more or less clearly that their thesis, philosophically very radical, would meet with negative reactions from the majority of theologians of their time as well as from theologians and philosophers from the future. Yet, they probably took into account the fact that some theologians or philosophers would support their thesis — and this supposition is not counterfactual.

My idea is to call the (1) of the above-mentioned philosophies (and — consequently — ways of philosophizing) the “annemen” philosophy and the (2) — the “mystical” philosophy. The first way of philosophizing obviously leads to the establishment of philosophical systems characterized by “annemen”, whereas the second one — to the creation of philosophical systems of the “mystical” character.

As regards group (1), I am going to interpret the philosophy of Descartes, Immanuel Kant and Georg W.F. Hegel. As for group (2) — the philosophy of David Hume and Edmund Husserl. Although in Hume’s philosophy only some elements or traces of the “mystical” way of philosophizing can be found, I place his philosophical system within the field of philosophy group (2). Additionally, the remarks that I formulate with reference to Hume’s philosophy can be also — to a certain extent — related to the philosophy of Avenarius and Mach, called the second positivism or empirio-criticism.

The chosen philosophical systems from group (2) have already been presented above. Now I proceed to characterize philosophy (1). The philosophers who created systems (1) try to argue — in a variety of ways, especially with the use of different conceptual apparatuses and philosophical strategies — that we really exist (in a real world), equipped with a psychologically understood sense of individual identity, the sense of our “self” (I am, I exist). In some cases they formulate a stronger thesis, according to which the mentioned existence is not only unquestionably real, but also necessary (although they say so at the cost of a huge modification of the understanding of our “self”). This is, among others, the case of Immanuel Kant. As regards Hegel and Schelling, in turn, as well as Plotinus himself (although, as I have already suggested, I am not going to interpret these philosophical systems in my book), the above-mentioned modification is so extensive that it guarantees not only the unquestionability, certainty and

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necessity of our existence, but even its integrity.

Before I proceed to present the chosen philosophies, I have to make one crucial remark concerning Hegel's philosophy. Speaking of philosophizing in the manner of "annemen", I assumed that the representatives of this option try to argue in various ways that our existence is unquestionably real. In some philosophical systems of this kind it is also said to be necessary, in others — integral.

What seems important in this context are the words: "our existence", namely the existence of every man, each of us. We have to consider the fact that, for instance, Descartes's statement *Cogito ergo sum* refers not only to Descartes, but to each of us. On the basis of the fact that we think (doubt), each of us can assume that he/she (really) exists. Similarly, each of us, not only Kant, is — apart from being a psychological subject — also the transcendental "I". Analogically, each of us, not only Husserl, can perform transcendental reduction, resigning consequently from living in the natural attitude. In the case of Hegel, however, things look different (the same applies to, among others, Schelling and Plotinus; yet, except for a few necessary remarks, I am not going to describe their philosophies in this book). As we will see, Hegel claims the right (and executes it) to be the only alter ego of *pure being* (pure thought), which assumes the form of absolute idea or absolute spirit (Hegel's Absolute) at the final stage of its development. Similar "diagnosis" can be formulated with reference to Plotinus, who claims the right (and executes it) to be the only alter ego of the *One-Being*. The first emanation of *the One*, which flows out or "emerges" from it, is the metaphysical *nous*, in other words the self-contemplating *One*. The next emanation of *the One* is the sphere of the upper soul, from which the sphere of the lower soul, comprising the souls of individual people, especially Plotinus's soul, emerges. The last form of the emanations of *the One* is matter (multiplicity), in other words — the *non-being*. The aim of individual human souls is to return to *the One-Being* through unification with it — in the sense of identification, a specific "dissolution". It seems evident that Plotinus's philosophy is based on the following model: departure — return (*emanation — remanatio*). This model also appears under various forms in Neoplatonic philosophies, theological conceptions or philosophies related to a greater or lesser extent with the Neoplatonic thought, like for instance the philosophy of Hegel.

One of such philosophers is also Friedrich W. J. Schelling. He claims the right (and executes it) to be the only alter ego of the absolute identity of "I" and "Not-I" (absolute identity of a real and ideal being). This identity, which itself remains in an unaltered state (i.e. without any loss, analogically to the Plotinian *One-Being*), manifests itself through consecutive emanations until it assumes the form of empirical world, especially of the empirically

(psychologically) understood selves. One of such selves is also Schelling. Yet, both in Plotinus's and Schelling's case the arguments justifying the above "diagnoses" are analogical to the "diagnosis" according to which Hegel claims the right to be the alter ego of *pure being* (pure thought).

A question comes to one's mind: how is it in Meister Eckhart's case? Does he also claim the right to be the alter ego of real existence (*wesen*), namely of God Himself? The answer to this question, which also applies to other German mystics, seems to be negative for the following reason: the autonomous existence of Eckhart endowed with (seemingly) autonomous identity, for instance when he delivered his sermons, was an illusion. In other words — existing in the way of *annemen*, Eckhart existed in an illusory way. Thus, a person whose existence is an illusion cannot for obvious reasons be anybody's alter ego, especially an alter ego, a substitute, a closest confidant or a trustee of God (Himself). In this way Meister Eckhart (and other German mystics) avoid (probably unintentionally) one of the most blatant forms of self-exaltation.

Translated from Polish by Anna Popiel

