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틈새 공간의 시학

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CHAPTER 16

The Madness of Measuring Madness: Revisiting
Foucault vs. Derrida on Descartes's Madmen

Kyoo Lee



The Stone of Folly by Teniers, 17th Century engraving.
An itinerant surgeon extracting stones from a grimacing patient's head symbolizes the extraction of "folly" (insanity).
(Source: Roy Porter, *Madness*)

1. Touching, Parting, Poking... Preliminary Thoughts on The Life of Uncertainty

Touching is a twofold event: it renders stable the unstable, and vice versa. Hugging or hitting, both involve a contact. Part meets part. A usurped partner proposes a partnership. In every part of the world, parting, *partager*, is going on: imparting, departing, reparteeing... A man parting his hair every morning is certainly not alien to us. Which way today? he may ask, dreaming of a different day to come - with some uncertainty. Surprisingly, that still is part of his world, of ours, bald ones included. Parting frames the life-world, particles in motion tickles the framed stasis.

Here we have a thinker who became famous for, *inter alia*, joking fun at himself: René Descartes the author of *Meditations* (1641), who asked "me, mad?" Is he? We will never know for sure. For one thing, he never said he was not. Then, could he? That, too, remains to be seen. Compared to his contemporary, Michel de Montaigne also tortured by the reflexive force of "moi-thinking" (Judovitz 1988: 8-38), Descartes is less verbose. He may not have had enough time to look at himself in the mirror, but evidently had time to look into himself; and that, daily, briefly. His evocative provocation of the realm of unthought, of that which remains to be thought, exemplifies a thought in vacation. The *Meditations* is a holiday diary, a scheduled reverie, as it were, with six-day entries crafted well over six years (Rée 1987: 20; 7-20). It was initially drafted, so we are told, during a winter break in Germany (1619), which the author took between his mundane duties as a French Army Officer longing to have some quality time with himself. Such an otherworldly, anti-social act of meditation, thus set apart, was still a part of his life, now part of *Philosophy* 101 reading list. Here we have a cocktail of "vocation and vacation" once dreamt up by Robert Frost.

drunk nowadays by the overworked salaried thinkers.
*|| Does the fun part still exist?
K11

2. A Cartesian Wave: The Ocean of Madness Inching Into the Land of Reason

I am going to explore the tactile potentiality of Cartesian cogitation, cogitative *agitation*: thinking¹⁾ as touching or being-in-touch; the irreducible, immeasurable dynamism of "a touch of madness," of the excess; of the hyperbolic, without which Descartes's thought-experiment might not have taken place at all, or at least would have been much duller.

I am interested in the hyperbolic *moment*, touch, of madness - cryptically inscribed in the inaugural part of the first part of *Meditations* which reads, in many ways, like a surrealist novella. The kind of touch I am sensing here is the *de facto* coextensivity²⁾ between the land and the ocean: the ocean, observes a poet,³⁾ "kisses every inch of the land"; every inch indeed! And what better word to describe that water-tight intimacy than "kissing"? What I am pointing to is the inseparable tie between the "objective reality" and the narrative world of Descartes's reflective reveries doubling the real: an intratextual play, reciprocal convertibility, between the two, between the as-is and the as-if. His allegorical virtuosity, most lavishly displayed in the *Meditations*, is such that we often see wayward musings turning, at his Midas touch, into philosophical puzzles, and logic into rhetoric; the categorical con-fusion, transference, is immediately mutual, almost imperceptible. This line of thinking requires me to bracket off all the static images of Descartes the evil double, of his evil genius, the Selfish Giant enclosing his Great Land of *Sum*: so I shall just look instead into his actual text, the textuali-

ty of his being.

More specifically, I am interested in naturalising, or de-artificialising, the boundaries between reason and madness – madness, by which I mean a sudden flash, blow, of hallucination, the unstable imagination constantly slipping through, for not being quite “synthetic,” the Kantian net of sensible understanding. My aim here is to make madness an indivisible part of reason and vice versa, rendering the two hyperlinkable; without strictly historicising or politicising, the borderline the way Michel Foucault does, whose thematic fixation on the Cartesian *exclusion* of madness, as I will show, is rigidly ritualistic; or without vaguely transcendentalising or impersonalising, the way Jacques Derrida does, whose *inclusive* gesture, idly speculative: That borderline, ego-reflexively proscribed as such, is an oppressive fiction, better perceived, and treated, as a mobile marker of the transdifferential in action. The task here is to understand, I repeat, the “kissing” fluidity of mad conjectures, staged in the Cartesian theatre of hyper-reflection. So I am less interested in rehearsing the fascinating non-dialogue, gap, between Foucault and Derrida on the historico-political status and metaphysical subjectivity of Descartes’s madmen; I am more interested in seeing why, and in what sense, such men are common.

But of course, the problem will persist: what is this madness, wanting to talk about the madness of measuring madness? What is this impulse? The immeasurable seems to be running deeper, deeper than its definition, the fever being not exactly the thermometer...: the silence of ellipsis being not exactly [...]...

1) rather than seeing.

2) rather than mirror-reciprocity.

3) Jorie Graham, a work-in-progress poem, Lyric Conference, Univ. of London, Nov. 2001.

The Madness of Measuring Madness: Revisiting Foucault vs. Derrida on Descartes’s Madmen

After all, Descartes speaks so little, and so briefly, about madness ...

Michel Foucault, “My Body, This Paper, This Fire”

This is how I will proceed. First, I briefly contextualise (Section 2) the debated passage from the *First Meditation* as a way of framing my argument which concentrates, as mentioned earlier, on the striking moment, punch, of hallucinatory madness, of the imaginary excess. In the second phase (Section 3), I juxtapose some of Foucault’s and Derrida’s key points of contention established in and exchanged through:

- i. *Madness and Civilization*⁴⁾ (Foucault 1961)
- ii. “Cogito and the History of Madness (Derrida 1967, hereafter *CH*),” a 46 page writing on a 3 page margin⁵⁾ in Foucault’s book
- iii. “My Body, This Paper and This Fire (Foucault 1971, hereafter *MT*),”⁶⁾ a point by point critique of Derrida’s⁷⁾ “Cartesian rationalism.”

The purpose of this brief exercise, evaluative rather than exegetical,

4) First two chapters, “Stultifera Navis” (hereafter *SN*) and “The Great Confinement” (Pages 56-9, introductory part of Ch 2, “The Great Confinement”, edited out in the translation).

5) Appendix to 2nd edition of *Histoire de la folie (Madness and Civilization)*.

6) In 1992, Derrida took an opportunity to reengage with Foucault, and this time, obliquely via Sigmund Freud whom he sees as Foucault’s virtual ancestor: “Encore juste avec Freud: L’histoire de la folie à l’age de la psychanalyse,” *Penser la folie. Essais sur Michel Foucault*. Paris, 1992; “To Do Justice to Freud: History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis” in *Critical Inquiry* 20: 227-266 (Winter 1994), reprinted in *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998, pp.70-118. For lack of space, I cannot discuss this material which lies outside the thematic scope of the present essay.

cal, is to illustrate the radical differences and weaknesses of their respective theoretical orientations: historical or structuralist determinism (Foucault) and quasi-transcendental indeterminism (Derrida). Those problems, thus exposed, should remain instructive to anyone interested in thinking about madness philosophically or in any interdisciplinary manners. What you will see is, therefore, not a straight forward discounting of their anatomical achievements: quite the contrary. What I will be questioning, without simply dismissing, is their excessive preoccupation with, or implicit privileging of, the image of division or separation—the discursive practice of differences (Foucault) and originary *différance* different from itself (Derrida)—which seems to disallow, rather systematically, a more fluid psychosomatic reading of the Cartesian experience of madness I wish to pursue further. My thoughts on difference still draw parasitically on their philosophical insights offered so richly, so exemplarily, through this academicpen-fight. The working hypothesis I shall be developing in what follows is, namely, that dividing is not merely possessing/excluding or digressing/diverging but, more curiously, more potently, *sharing* in both mechanical and ethico-political senses of the word. The theme of sharing—viz. appropriating, extracting, tracing, consuming, etc—does feature in their works, although in different ways and in different contexts: just to pick one from each, Foucault's groundbreaking analyses of the economy, macro- or micro-, of power *distribution*, and Derrida's performative thematisation of the *dissemination* of meaning, would be obvious examples. I am not trying to ignore all of these, but merely to see, further, whether and how the paths of the excluded, energetically appropriated in Foucault's work, of revenge, and the logic of com-*p*-lication, delicately staged by Derrida's work of mourning, can maintain their ties to the myths or ethos, of bio-topological thinking, which seem left unexplored in the debate, as if forgotten. The thought here is: something, some-

thing more lucid than "the borderline," is shared between reason and madness, between hypothesis and hyperbole, between hyperbole and hyperanxiety: a tide, fever, of hyper-reflexion? (Section 4)

1 Tear & Fear: from the start of the *Meditations*, those two seem to have gone missing. Seem, I say. For they remain invisible and silent, if not entirely absent. For meditation is an emotional event, too.

8 Something happened before *Meditations*, something sensational that tore apart Young René's fully-formed subjectivity. What is that threat from which he recoils⁸⁾ like a baked prawn? What is it that caused him to wrap himself up with the rationalistic trappings of "Cartesian" introspection, which the Husserl (1997: 1-3) of *Cartesian Meditations* will later convert into an "absolute poverty"⁹⁾ of thought? A shock:

Some years ago, I was struck (*ammindaverti, suis aperta*) by the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as true in my

8) Recall the "stove-heated room (*yoale, oven-room*)": "Descartes arrived at the minimal, fundamental truth of his existence curled up by himself in soliloquy in the corner of a warm room" (Balthus 1996: 308).

9) "First, anyone who seriously intends to become a philosopher must "once in his life" withdraw into himself and attempt, within himself, to overthrow and build anew all the sciences that, up to then, he has been accepting. Philosophy—wisdom (*sagesse*)—is the philosopher's quite personal affair. [...] I have decided to live with this as my aim. [...] I have thereby chosen to begin in absolute poverty, with an absolute lack of knowledge. [...] Accordingly, the Cartesian *Meditations* are not intended to be a merely private concern of the philosopher Descartes, to say nothing of their being merely an impressive literary form in which to present the foundations of his philosophy" (2, Section 1. Descartes's *Meditations* as the prototype of philosophical reflection). Husserl's trivialisation of the literary is curiously ambiguous: "merely impressive." As indicated from the start, the empirical egotism ("merely private") of Cartesian introspection will be "transformed" (6) into phenomenological transcendentalism. This reductive move

childhood [...]10) I realise that it was necessary, once in the course of my life, to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that was stable and likely to last. But the task looked an enormous one, and I began to wait until [...] (The first two sentences of *Med*, *emphasis added*).

"Struck" is an overtranslation but a faithful overreading. What it brings out, most acutely, is the virginal sense of surprise and danger of stupefaction, impregnated in the host text, easily missed by a mere "notice," a merely correct translation of "*animadverto*"11) or "*s'apercevoir que*."12) The force of striking reappears, as if in vengeance: dumbstruck, later Descartes decides to demolish everything for a change. "Through revenge, Descartes engineers a series of startling reversals" (Appelbaum 1995: 20).

Such a dialectical movement of thought, which will shape the

illustrates a rather complicated abnegation of the literariness of reflective imagination, namely, Cartesian hyperbole, together with its sensorial materiality. Husserl declares solemnly, again, at the very end (6) of section Section 2, end of introduction: "Seductive aberrations, into which Descartes and later thinkers strayed, will have to be clarified and avoided as we pursue our course." Our aim, akin to Husserl's, is only slightly perverted: to clarify, but not to avoid, the seductive aberrations of the merely impressive. Not avoiding is appropriating.

after all, the philosophical theft of the literary has already taken place in Descartes's text.

10) "and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice that I had subsequently based on them."

11) *animadverto* & - *vert* (to turn, to give the mind to), an animated turning-towards a sense still preserved in the words such as "animation" or "advertissement." A notable usage of *animadverto* is: to take note of a fault, so (1) to blame, censure or (2) punish with death (e.g. *res animadvertenda*)

12) to notice or realise, to become aware of (esp. error, omission, danger; or contradiction)

internal structure of the whole of *Meditations*, is vividly illustrated in the very first round of thinking, the four opening paragraphs (17-9/12-3) of the text, in the last of which the madmen in question make a brief appearance:

1st. the inaugural experience of dislocation: how shocking that
 was...
 2nd-3rd. a recuperative will: I shall not be deceived!
 4th. the first attempt at restoring the cool: let me try to bracket off my sensations:

Although the senses occasionally deceive us with respect to objects which are very small or in the distance, there are many other beliefs about which doubt is quite impossible, even though they are derived from the senses — for example, that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on. Again, how could it be denied that these hands or this whole body do not belong to me? Unless perhaps I were to liken myself to madmen (*insensé*), whose brains are so damaged by the persistent vapours of melancholia that they firmly maintain they are kings when they are paupers, or say they are dressed in purple when they are naked, or that their heads are made of earthenware, or that they are pumpkins, or made of glass. But such people are insane (*sens dément*), if I took anything from them as a model for myself13) (*minor revision in trans*).

And then? The madmen are suspended, i.e. introduced *and* left behind. As if "such people," supposedly out there, were inside the room, the I of "I would be thought no less extravagant" swiftly

drifts into the dream stage: "But as if I were not a man who sleeps at night [...]."¹⁴ The "blackhole" (Kolakowski 1988: 68) of Cartesian cogitation, into which the I of "I shall not be deceived" gets sucked, will not leave the sceptic unmolested:

The result is that I begin to feel astounded¹⁵ (*obstupescam, tout étonné*), and this very feeling of stupor¹⁶ (*stupor, non étonnement*) itself only reinforces the notion that I may be asleep. (19/13, *trans. revised*)

The last sentence of the 5th paragraph heralds yet another crisis of consciousness, the unfolding of the dreamer hypothesis: "Suppose, then, that I am dreaming [...]" with which the *First Meditation* (19-23/13 -5) ends.

So the fact is: the first round (1st-4th Paragraphs) of the *First Meditation* is framed by colossal stupidity, beginning with the I made stupid, ending with the I feeling stupid. Similarly, the fictional dreamer (5th -) becomes awakened in a twofold manner: if what causes him to become alert is the transgressive force of otherworldly thoughts, what makes him stay alert, the reflexive recognition of that force. If the first kind is encounter, the second, recognition – the interruption of mad-becoming,¹⁷ as Gilles Deleuze puts it: Now, the

13) Et comment est-ce que je pourrais nier que ces mains et ce corps-ci soient à moi? si ce n'est peut-être que je me compte à ces inensés de qui le-cerveau est tellement troublé et offusqué par les noires vapeurs de la bile qui lisassent constamment qu'ils sont des rois lorsqu'ils sont très pauvres; qu'ils sont vêtus d'or et de pourpre lorsqu'ils sont tout nus; ou s'imaginent être des criches ou avoir un corps de verre. Mais quoi? ce sont des fous, et je ne serais pas moins extravaigant si je me réglais sur leurs exemples (*emphases added*).

14) Toutefois j'ai ici à considérer que je suis homme [...]

15) "dazed" in the CSM translation

16) "of stupor" missing in the CSM translation

sleep sequence kept at bay, let us focus on the madness followed by stupidity.

Look at that originary stupefaction, original *stultitia*,¹⁸ of the cognitive subject: the hiccough, syncopated moment, of cogitation. Two missing links, put together, frames the first round of thinking: [Gap₁] the moment of striking remaining invisible, accessed through rippled memories of the panic-attack; and then, the silence of madness, the subtle evasion of "I would be thought no less extravagant if [...]. [Gap₂] But as if I were not a man who does not sleep [...]. The first syncopation: merely struck, the I of I think remains oblivious of the stone that first hit him, the event: he remains "ontically" secured in his own offended consciousness. The whole of the *Meditations*, seen from the stone's point of view, is a map of affects, drawn by recollection, traced by the textual representation of affected consciousness. But the map remains incomplete, for the second syncopation follows: the mediator's disjunctive silence about madness, both literal and allegorical. The virtual departure, in the text, of the *Stultifera Navis*, is strangely elusive. Literally it is forgotten, yet allegorically, resonant. The first syncopation is a blow to the dormant mind, and the second, the blow of a whistle. The terror of error persists throughout, softened initially by memory, further stultified by irony.¹⁹ The self-same intellect not only falsifies but fortifies. What is "laughable" after all—the last paragraph of the *Six Meditations*

17) Instructive to note is Deleuze's view (1968: 169 217/129 167, *L'Image de la pensée*) on a discursive function of the Platonic moment of recognition: in contrast to a mere "encounter (*rencontre*)" (182/139), "recognition [...] measures and limits the quality (of contrary perceptions) by relating it to something, thereby interrupting the mad becoming (*arrête le devenir-fou*)" (184/141). An affinity, both conceptual and psychic, seems to exist, as Deleuze observes, between Platonic recognition and Cartesian reflexivity which "interrupts," therefore, secures itself from the possibility of "becoming," if not being, "mad."

18) foolishness, silliness

points out, after all this philosophical show of schizo-paranoia—is exactly that, terrorised reason:

I should not have any further fears about the falsity of what my senses tell me every day; indeed, the exaggerated doubts of the last few days should be dismissed as laughable. This applies especially to the principal reason for doubt, i.e. my inability to distinguish between being asleep and being awake (89/61).

Note: madness is left out again, as if deliberately, as if that suspended sentence were an echo of the laughter of the madmen. Come! think of it, “the scholastic philosopher wouldn’t fret the way/the mediator does (Broughton 2002: 17: 26-30)” in the first place: ordinary folks wouldn’t be “struck” by a queen mistaken for a king, either;²⁰ but again, such a dementia, mini-or mega-, commonly, uncommon, strikes us frequently, ubiquitously. Besides, anyone who holds that obsessive doubting, paranoia, can be a useful method wouldn’t be too normal; but again, lying isn’t uncommon. But, Why should I bother? Stupidity is an emotional issue, too: a matter of affectivity.

My suggestion, in a word, is that the *Meditations* is a show:

19) “I would be thought no less extravagant than the madmen” is *not* the same as “I am not mad” but, more strangely, is at once open to the interpretation, “so I am mad.” Hence irony: an instantaneous occurrence of, or suspension between, two incompatible meanings. In fact, Cartesian irony resists being safely localised. Implications of his self-subversive gestures are far-reaching, as, most recently, Janet Broughton points out in a suitably convoluted manner: “If I am right in thinking that Descartes’s mediator does *not* find it ridiculous to say these (other-worldly) scenarios are unlikely to be correct, then it is ironic that Descartes’ own work in philosophy should have contributed so significantly—as I am sure it did—to the development of our contemporary convictions to the contrary” (2002: 90).

better read as an allegory of stupidity, of madness. What I have been trying to show is that the sudden invasion and evasion of as-if, characteristic of allegorical (saying-otherwise) mode of presentation, is the intellect’s way of relating to, masking,²¹ its scandalous predicament: lack of certainty, discovery of the essential void, irreducible to a mere mathematical fault. The pathological “vapour” of as-if, marked as such, remains part of the *Meditations* like a powerful shadow, neglected yet ineradicable. Paradoxically enough, it is such an allegory of confusion, if not the confusion itself, that safeguards the infinite potency of Cartesian cogitation, which overflows the Kantian boundaries of the normative, synthetic imagination. This “overflow” cannot be neatly channelled into the Romantic idiom of sublation or sublimation, Hegelian or otherwise, for, in Descartes, in the actual textuality of his being, of his life, the line between sceptical madness and sound judgement, between frivolity²² and gravity, which there is, remains excruciatingly, exquisitely thin (cf. Broughton 2002: 90-2). This renders his authorial ethos bilingually, healthily anti-Romantic, by comparison to, say, that of his Teutonic offshoots. Indeed, is not the “insulated sceptic a construction of the modern

²⁰ A run-of-the mill example I came across yesterday in the *Sunday Times*, April 07, 2002: Anthony Burgess the author of *Clockwork Orange*, emblematic of the aesthetics of violence, added a touch of reality to this work by representing it as a story written, quickly, in the wake of his wife’s rape. But a forthcoming biography provides substantial evidence against it: he “invented a fantasy life of lies.” I am not lying.

²¹ “The blind become upright by virtue of an ennobling practice. [...] Their embrace of security is prompted by a fear of the uncertainly masks. Fear, moreover, grants another mask. It is as near as the light switch. Turn off the lights. Bring sight to a stop, and attention is returned to another, forgotten movement. [...] Confusion habitually provokes reactive emotions, notably fear” (Appelbaum 1995: 20-1).

²² “Frivolity is a radical diet for weight reduction.” Milan Kundera, *Immortality* (1990, NY: Grove), p.121.

philosophical imagination dating from the eighteenth century, denying mainly from Kant? (2002: 91, Myles Burnyeat partly cited)

Let me summarise the key contention of this essay established so far. First, the Cartesian hyperbole induces, secures and reinforces mental agility, the mind's capacity to agitate,²³⁾ freshly and fully explored in *The Passions of the Soul* (1649) published a year before Descartes's predicted death – he was very ill. It is an artful, pragmatic use of the figure of the outside, of the improper, pragmatic not reductive, for the tactile elasticity of multi-faceted cogitation pluralizes any authorial "aim" or "intent." Second, what enables such a figural appropriation of the inadequate, as exemplified by Descartes's use of the figure of the madmen, is an unprecedented sensorial/con-tact re-membered as such – a shock. I said, of "it is as if the world had been a global deception all along," followed by the second, "as if I were a mad man," which is derivative from the initial philosophical trauma translated into subjective terms. The real blow of cogitation is, then, hidden in those [Gaps], that mobile vacuum later filled with the laughter, a tragi-comic fear, of the invisible, already felt. The story of the stupid may not be true; but the feeling is.

*The Very Subtle Mauer*²⁴⁾ We have... two, very different kinds of matter which can be said to be the first two elements of this visible universe. The first element is made up of matter which is so violently agitated that

when it meets other bodies it is divided into particles of indefinite smallness... The second is [...].

Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, article 52.

3) Foucault vs. Derrida: The Act of Force vs. The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude

Do they approach this void? this fearful asymmetry? – if so, how? if not, why not?

Do Foucault and Derrida approach this void? Yes and No. Let me begin by pointing to fear, first, as I did earlier. A wise man in Deyck Jarman's film, *Wittgenstein* (1993), says: "Where two principles meet, which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each calls the other a fool or a heretic. If people did not sometimes do silly things, nothing intelligent would ever get done." Replace "fool or heretic" with "Cartesian" (*CH* 59-60/36-7; *MT* 599/412). You get the picture. The Foucault-Derrida debate seems to be motivated by their mutual fears of being branded—rationalistic, self-assured, reactionary, good old—Cartesian.

This dread is far from private. Consider the highly institutional and adversarial context (cf. Melehy 1997: 37-43) in which the French master and the French-speaking disciple, both known for

23) My essay on Descartes the dreamer, "Poetics of Philosophical Somnambulism" (*Lagos and Mythos*: How to Regain a Love of Wisdom, Rodopi, forthcoming) offers an exegetical analysis of the tactility of mental "agitation" thematized in *Passions* which, for its explicit non-dualism, tends to be neglected oriche treated as a curious aberration in the standard Cartesian studies. In the present essay that concerns the textual traces of madness, I focus, instead, on Descartes's narrative use of moments of agitation, neural or spiritual.

24) Concerning the material which passes into the heart, it should be noted that the violent agitation of the heart which makes it expand not only causes some of the particles to move away and become separated, but also causes others to gather; these press and bump against one another and divide into many extremely small strands which stay so close to one another than only the very visible matter (which I called 'the first element' in my *Principles*) can occupy the spaces left around them" (*Descriptions of the Human Body*, AT VIII B 254-54CSM I 322).

their informed, sophisticated attacks on modern rationalism, problematise the status of the French institution "des Cartes" whom they ought to know by heart. Derrida's prefatorial dramatisation, internal to his strategy, of the interminable unhappiness of the academic subject acknowledging the interminable debt felt toward the leading master whose mirror he cannot yet "must break" (CH 5232)²⁵ shows quite realistically the powerful aporia of thinking against the grain of tradition which, as he notes resoundingly, may be, after all, absent—or, if so, may have to be *invented* as such, to use Robert Bernasconi's (1995) word mobilising his perceptive critique of Martin Heidegger's retroactive demarcation of "The West." True, the layered depths and paranoia-inducing density of "the Cartesian web (Melehy 1997)" of cogitation remain, for many post-Cartesians, an obstacle through which they must work out their positions.²⁵

I must say, however, with all due respect to M. des Cartes, that both Foucault and Derrida over-respect the authority of the Cartesian I, which they seem to have invented in the first place, in their own ways, in the name of the Father — of modern philosophy of the rational self: in the form, in Foucault's case, of the crushing presence of controlling reason; and in Derrida's, of the despairing absence of pure logos. My Descartes, by contrast, it should be clear by now, is fairly stupid and hospitable, hospitalisable even. And that is what I respect, if nothing else.

Problematic. I find, both in the debate and most of the subsequent commentaries, whether neutralised (e.g. Amico 1984; Ferry

25) "Between appropriation and donation," as Howard Caygill (1995), says in an engaging essay entitled "The Present of Tradition" which analyses "a present of time" underlining the works of Derrida and Giuseppe Ungaretti: "there is a complex and knotted tangle of routes, paths and journeys which are remembered, undergone, feared, hoped for and which have to be understood in their history" (293-4).

1990) or positioned (e.g. Boyne 1990²⁶; Melehy 1997²⁷), is the metaphysical blindness to the banality²⁸, everydayness, of hallucinatory madness. The glorified blindness is a price paid for the artificial, repressive doubling of the arbitrarily empowered boundaries between Madness and Reason. I am not trivialising engineering Reason's "*coup de force* (MT 585ff/396ff)²⁹ disclosed by Foucault's sobering analysis of its self-instituting violence. Nor am I discounting the reflective subtlety with which Derrida discerns, systematises and thereby salvages, within Reason, the "originary, strange complicity (CH 96-7/62-3)" between madness and historical reason, "madder than madness" in virtue of being "the wellspring of sense, however silent or murmuring." What I am questioning is the rhetoric of the Other, of the inadequate scale, structuring both arguments: both of them, in Foucault's own words used against Derrida, "enclose (*enfermer*) the alienated madness outside (*à l'extérieur du*) philosophical discourse" (598/411-2). This, one may argue further, is an instance of philosophical Romanticism turned back upon itself. In Descartes's silence on madness, Foucault reads a threat, an execution, a differentiation in action; Derrida, a double gesture of exclusion-inclusion, the

26) A Foucauldian critique: "Derrida's reason assures him that reason-in-general cannot be surpassed" (60).

27) A Derridian critique of Foucault's insidious bullying, his will to power: "Foucault's response to Derrida, reaffirming the hold of the cogito, takes recourse to the institution of filiation: his characterisation of Derrida's practice as a "little pedagogy" [...] infantilises Derrida, harshly silencing him" (40).

28) "Literary" approaches to this issue, focusing on the reciprocal relationship between the act of writing and madness identified as, re-nected by, the body of "that inscribes itself (Feilman 1985; Butler 2001: 263ff), seem close to mine if not for their de-abstracting impulses.

29) See, for example, the opening sentence of Chapter II "The Great Confinement," *Madness and Civilization*: "By a strange act of force, the Classical Age was to refuse to silence the madness whose voices the Renaissance had just liberated, about whose violence it had already tamed" (38).

auto-eroticism of originary *différance* "narrating itself" (88/57-8); and I, additionally, a sudden blink of the puzzled, a sharable laughter.

The end-game structure into which both Foucault's archaeological and Derrida's transcendental arguments become locked, thereby producing the inner comedy of the madness of measuring madness, is illustrated by their polemically aggressive use of Cartesian uncertainty. D accuses F of acting "as if he knew what madness means" (CH 66/41): F's thesis that the Classical Age forges its exclusive identity through a sudden, arbitrary, metaphorical equation between leprosy and madness (SM) is itself an example. F, read this way, is either hypocritical or naïve: *Madness and Civilisation, a de jure* archaeology of madness, is a *de facto* history, evidence of the author's own taxonomic, structuralist ambition: the archival drive of Foucault's project is either silencing pure madness further, or simply doubling the lack of irony. Now, F, in turn, interrogates D who "transcribes his feeling (of fear, MT 58/4/395) into his text, at the very moment at which he attempts to master madness" (602/410). D acts "as if he knew what logos means" in the broadest, most inclusive sense: reflexively reinforced by such a powerful ignorance, the "systematically" (602/416) disregards, or obscures, different and concrete senses—juridical, clinical, metaphysical(591/403)—of madness operative in the text, the dynamic co-operation of which turns the madness passage, conclusively in fact, into a qualifying exam. It remain qualified to think, and therefore I make my resolution (591/403ff). The madmen here are, then, used not merely pedagogically but politically. F's point is: (a) the madmen simply fail to join the world of doubling subjects;³⁰ (b) D, blinded by his own textual idealism, fails to see that point, that insidious politics of examination and confinement — D is already installed as, and speaking as, an insider of that "system(602/416)." D, read this way, resembles the psychiatric doctor F. Leuret whom F (1997) introduces as an exam-

ple of clinical thrill of measurement.³¹

The insights of each reading acknowledged, the problem I must still point to is: both Foucault and Derrida absolutise Descartes (his text) as if he (it) knew what he (it) is doing — "he," in the case of Foucault the thinker of subject-formation, of institutionalised discourse, and "it," for Derrida the thinker of textual traces, of originary hauntology. Too busy ironising each other into a closeted Cartesian, neither of them allow a room for self-irony the host text in question itself displays. The Cartesian touch of, or on, madness, I emphasise, is too lightweight to represent the territorial voice of reason (F); too aberrant to be folded into a "methodological" system of self-doubt as "a case"³² of thought (D).

But of course, my naturalising, narrativised reading of Descartes is only a case. And I am presenting it as a hybrid variation on the two, now-canonical readings: the contracted body in fear, which Foucault exposes beautifully,³³ I have been seeking to restage: a tex-

30) To my best knowledge, the issue of madmen was revisited explicitly, at least once, by Descartes himself, whose explanation seems to support Foucault's argument: "[...] (When it is a question of organising our life, it would, of course, be foolish not to trust the senses, and the sceptics who neglected human affairs to the point where friends had to stop them falling off precipices deserved to be jangled at. Hence I pointed out in one passage that no sane person ever seriously doubts such things. But when our enquiry concerns what can be known with complete certainty by the human intellect, it is quite unreasonable to refuse to reject these things in all seriousness as double and even as false" (*Fifth Replies*, AT VII 351/CSM II 243).

31) Leuret's "truth therapies": "That is not enough," replies the doctor. "You have already made me similar promises and you haven't kept them." And he turns on the cold shower above the patient's head. "Yes, yes! I am mad!" the patient cries. The shower is turned off; the interrogation resumed. "Yes, I recognise that I am mad," the patient repeats. "But," he adds, "I recognise it because you are forcing me to do so." Another shower. [...] The doctor wishes to obtain a precise act, the explicit affirmation: "I am mad" (175).

tual sensitivity accompanying my close reading of Descartes, I will not declare mine. My argument thus modified and generalised, put in the words of Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen (1988),³⁴⁾ is that: "Beyond the fact that insane thought—which knows neither reality nor negation, nor doubt, nor degree of certitude—is thought nonetheless,³⁵⁾

the fact remains that all these irreconcilable representations are indeed referred to a *single subject*, and that they coexist within a single subject. At its most naïve, the question "who?" directs questioning toward birth, toward a "beyond" of identity. To say *what* I am is relatively easy. But to say *who* I am—who thinks, who wishes, who fantasises in me—is no longer in my power. That question draws me immediately beyond myself, beyond my presentations, toward a point—the "point of otherness"—where I am another, the other who gives me my identity, that umbilical cord. (5-9, abridged)

"What then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that

32) "The *cogito* is valid even if I am mad. [...] Thought no longer fears madness (CH 85-6/55): The hyperbolic audacity of the Cartesian *Cogito*, its mad audacity [...] would consist in the return to an original point which no longer belongs to either a *determined* reason or a *determined* unreason, no longer belongs to them as opposition or alternative. Whether I am mad or not, *Cogito, sum*. Madness is, therefore, in every sense of the word, only one case of thought (*within* thought)" (86/56).

33) The pointed mast of the Ship of Fools, for instance (SV 22-4): the tree of knowledge "once planted in the heart of the earthly paradise, now uprooted": the "unerving images" of the inverted tree, thereby, embody "the forbidden limits of knowledge." They bring out, in man, "the animal that haunts his nightmares; his nights of privation," "the hidden, a secret, an inaccessible truth."

34) He, similarly, seeks to pluralise the monologic structure of the proto Freudian subject.

35) Here, Borch-Jacobsen quotes Derrida's "a case of thought" argument.

doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions" (2nd *Med*, 28/19) – this is indeed relatively easy. The point of otherness in me relates, rather, to that which *remains* true, whatever the case, i.e. "the fact that I exist" (28/19), whether as a sad man or as an insane woman. The point of otherness, is: the umbilical cord exists: *ergo*, it can be cut. I am, have been, alive; *ergo*, I feel death inching into me. Life precedes death even when, or rather because, death overwrites life. Here is, then, a thought on and of Cartesian madness taken as a case of the death, loss, of subjectivity: Sometimes I am mad, hopefully, sometimes not. Reality is part of me; madness, dream and death, as if real, touch me. That's "what my senses tell me every day" (89/61).

4. A Tide of Reflexology: The Ship Goes On Sailing

What corrects the error? The intellect?

Not at all; it is the sense of touch.

- Descartes, *Sixth Objections*

What else remains to be told?

"Quite remarkably, even the insane (*les insensés*), the *Discourse on the Method* observes, seem to possess language. For they are capable of arranging various words together and forming an utterance from them in order to make their thoughts understood" (AT VI 57/CSM I 140, trans. revised). What I have been trying to make you understand is the following point: madness is part of reason, and vice versa, what remains stupid is our inability to distinguish between the two. Our obsession, fascination, with the madman, if

nothing else, explains that. The touch of madness (Section 1) comes in the form of a wave (Section 2), a kissing interaction between-as-is and as-if, between the said and the unsaid; reason's acts, whether of force or measuring, come only after – the fact (Section 3). And the fact is, let me emphasise again, madness *flows* into the realm of reason before the power of reason gets distributed, before its meanings disseminated. The madness, of which Descartes speaks and does not speak, is not merely kept at bay the way Foucault sees it. Nor is it neatly inserted into an obscure entity, “pure logos undifferentiated from madness,” which Derrida designates, elevates, as the originating *semen*—of historical reason. The point to note is the weaving interpenetration of Madness and Reason; hence, the figure of the wave, not of the wall or wallet, as a fitting metaphor for the inseparability at issue.

Nature teaches me that I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit.

- Sixth Meditation

Stated differently, Cartesian thought is reflexological before being reflexive. It is agitated, shaped by a ticklish touch, an instantaneous *partager*, of the thin line between thought and unthought; between ratio and hyperbole³⁶ the immeasurable curvature of thought in

36) L., fr., Gk., *Hyperbole*: excess, hyperbola. fr. *hyperballain* to exceed (*ballain*, to throw – more at devil); extravagant exaggeration. And there is, of course, *hyperbola*: “a plane curve generated by a point so moving that the difference of the distances from two fixed points is a constant” (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary) – my emphasis is on “moving” rather than the equidistance thus measurable.

reaction: between a thesis and a hypothesis the persistent adherence to which can, surely, cost a life.³⁷ Descartes’s sceptical aggression is, on the one hand, the clinical rationalism of Doubling Thomas³⁸ turned inward, an image we are now over-familiar with. The human lust for self-assurance finds a solution in the ego-reflexive subjugation of the poked under the poking/poker: “this body near the fire,” “this hand holding this paper,” these ten fingers groping around the keyboards, these two dry eyeballs, all these, after all, belong to me, “a thinking thing,” do they not? But beware, poking is, on the other hand, a reminder of the outside: the madmen are out there, who are perhaps already inside me. Note the tactical coextensivity, interaction, between those “two hands,” acknowledgedly Derridian in its tropo-physiological origin. Such a mutual molestation, rubbing, between reflexive reason and visceral reflex (a contraction from the unknown, the unexpected) will continue to take place, as long as there remains anybody to be touched, a body of knowledge included.

37) When, in 1653, the Inquisition condemned Galileo’s heliocentrism, Descartes—the author of an esoteric science fiction, *The World, Le Monde de M. Descartes* or *le Traité de la Lumière*, the “table of a new imaginary world” (AT XI 31/CSM I:90)—whose obsessive fondness for anonymity partly reflects the turbulent climate of the early Modern period, said: “I have seen letters patent about Galileo’s condemnation [...] which contained the words ‘though he pretended he put forward his view only hypothetically’; thus they seem to forbid even the use of this hypothesis in astronomy. For this reason I do not dare to tell him any of my thoughts on the topic.” This is part of the famous letter to Mersenne of 21/April 1654, where the Ovidian maxim for quiet life is endorsed, performatively, by Descartes: “I am not so fond of my opinions as to want to use such quibbles to be able to maintain them. I desire to live in peace and to continue the life I have begun under the motto ‘to live well you must live unseen’. And so I am more happy to be delivered from the fear of my work’s making unwanted acquaintances than I am unhappy at having lost the time and trouble which I spent on its composition...” (AT I 286-8/CSM III 43-4).

38) See Caravaggio’s painting, *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*: www.ibiblio.org/wml/painl/audh/caravaggio/

The Cartesian “clarity” of thinking is, then, an after-effect: and the Cartesian act of introspection, a trap, that is, discriminating reason’s act of “self-entrapment” (Kofman 1991) — often ridiculed by *les enfants postmoderns* who are often no less self-reflexive. The thinking animal is no less reflexive than, say, a field mouse, insofar as both wince in the face of a threat: this view pursued, differences between phenomenological reflexivity and a reflex action, which there are, would be more normative or nominal than originary. How does speculative philosophy deal with its anxiety disorders, with its “other” that overwhelms it? Reflexive rationality seems to hold the key. A curious example, apart from the obvious,³⁹ is the “subjective experience of the sublime” that Immanuel Kant the rationalist seeks to measure in *The Critique of the Power of Judgement* (§23-9), with some ironic exactitude: true, is it not?, facing the “absolutely large,” we step back and see how far we should stand apart from it (§25-7, mathematical); facing “a power superior to great obstacles,” we step back and reflect on our fears aroused from within (§28-9, dynamical).

To apply this scheme to our case: the psychic distance thus secured is measurable, in the first instance, by the ruler that the “mad” scientists carry around in their pockets like a mobile god; in the second, by our collective reflex from a mad wo/man in the street, that aberrant — unnatural/supernatural — thing to stay away from. In both instances, a threat rules — before the ruler desists. The blow comes first; the retreat, stepping-back, of consciousness is a recuperative acknowledgement of defeat, performed by the subject,

39) Husserlian transcendental phenomenology, or more broadly, dialectical philosophies of consciousness, Habermasian philosophy of dialogue, insofar as its communicative ambience is restricted to the “court of reason,” could also easily fall into the category of what I refer, very loosely, to normative philosophy.

cognitive or emotive. The dialectics of knowledge, of desire or disgust, is the maddening force of metric thinking turned inward, a vital strategic need to make sense of this real hallucination called a human life. This need exists, if nothing else.

I am not trying to reduce a beautiful act to a bestial need. I am recasting the battered, negatively sublimated, postmodern condition of philosophical thinking into a versatile tool, pluralising it into transfigurational connections in and of the meditative mind. What I am, and have been, trying to explore is a way of shortening that Kantian distance into a point of contact; a way of inhabiting the borderline between discursive reason and aesthetic experience: a way of feeling, tracing and restaging that mental vibration more lucid than hallucination. This line of pursuit is not alien to that proto-Aristotelian sense of wonder with which, let us recall, philosophy begins: it begins with and after a fact — a fact that remains more than factual.

Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, the enduring aporia inaugurating the “post-modern” history of philosophy, so funny and not so funny, turns to M. Descartes, and queries: “My dear sir, it is improbable you are not mistaken. But why do you want the truth at all?” (1973: 46, article 16)

Yes, why?

I don’t know, one must (*il faut*) believe ...

Tears that see ... Do you believe? (*Vous croyez*)

(Derrida 1990: 130/129,⁴⁰ trans. revised)

May, do you feel the tears tickling my face?

40) Q & A order reversed

Abbreviations for the Key Texts

AT/CSM: Descartes, René. *Oeuvres de Descartes*. Ed. Ch. Adam and J.P. Tannery. Revised Edition. Paris: Vrin C.N.R.S. 1964-76/ Trans. Cottingham, John et al. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vols. I-III. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1985. (NB: References to *Meditations* Appear With Page Numbers Only)

CH: 'Cogito et Histoire de la Folie' in *L'écriture et la différence*. Collection Tel Quel. Paris: Seuil, 1967. Repr. Collection Points. Paris: Seuil, 1979/ Trans. 'Cogito and the History of Madness' in Trans. Alan Bass. *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1987.

MT: 'Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu' in appendix to 2nd edition. Foucault, Michel. *Histoire de la folie*, Paris: Pion, 1971/ Trans. 'My body, This Paper and This Fire' in *Aesthetics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*. Vol. 2. Ed. James D. Faubion. London: Penguin Books, 2000/

SN: 'Sulitiera Navis' in Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: The History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Trans. Richard Howard. London: Tavistock Publication, 1967.

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Abstract

The Poetics of Hybridity and In-Betweenness
in the Post-National Period: A Critical
Reading of Homi Bhabha

Yong-Gyu Kim

The article tries to perform a critical reading of the politics of hybridity and In-Betweenness in the post-national period. Today's cultural change seems to be more vehement and radical than that of the past. Its influences are so crucial and immediate that we have difficulties finding a way to cope with them. Facing them, national cultures have experienced serious crisis or been rapidly undermined. Even if national or ethnic cultures appear to arise as a plausible alternative, it is nothing more than a symptom of the crisis of national cultures.