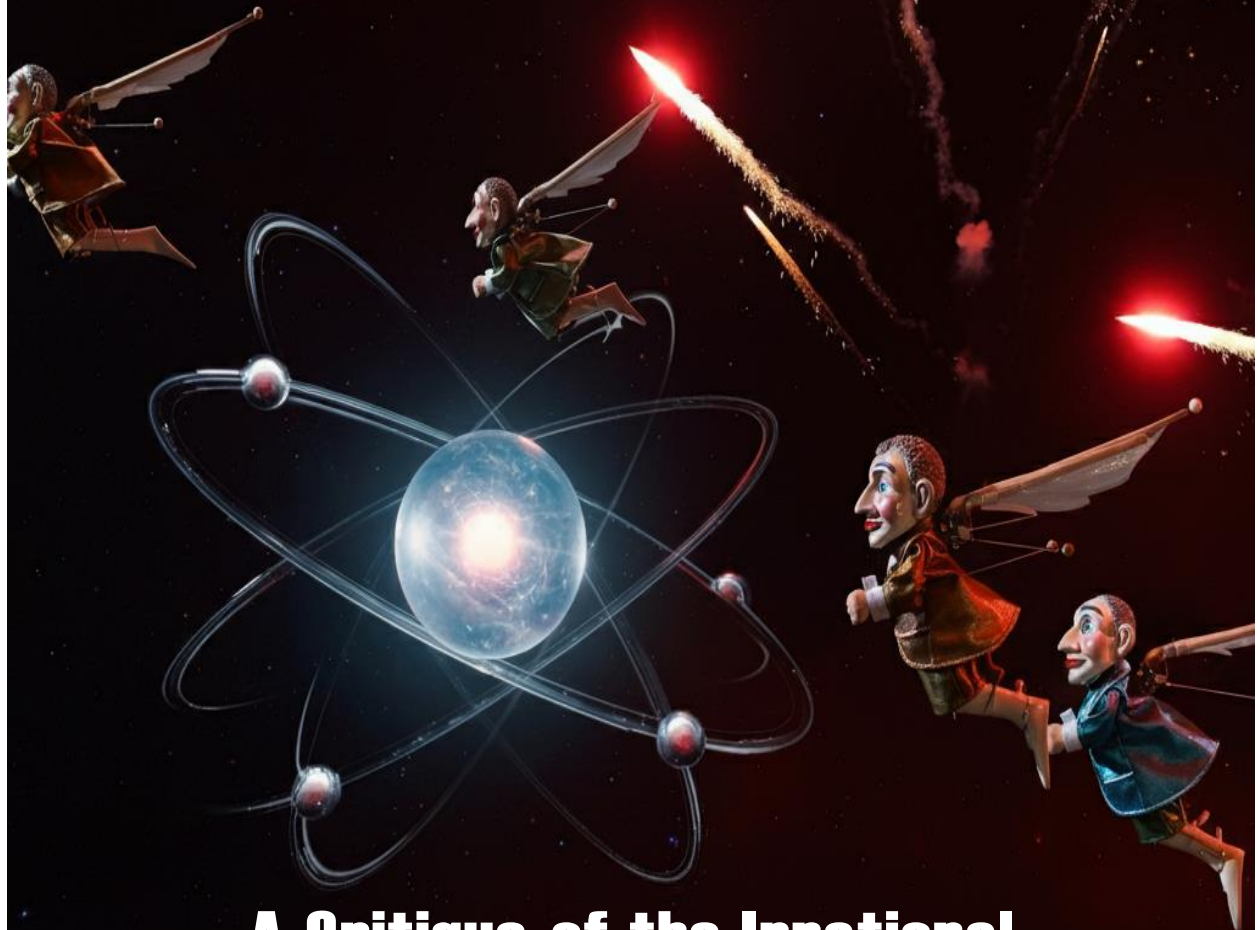


Superatomic Guignols Untrammeled



A Critique of the Irrational

By M.H. Bowker

Dedication

For Zoe who is beauty impossibly so much a figure in reality

It will be time enough to adopt a more systematic usage [of 'the irrational'], when the critique of the irrational comes to be written, by whomever it may be that this potent subject ultimately engages. We must expect in the future incessant activity by the irrational and in the field of the irrational.

— Wallace Stevens

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A Beginning and a House

Tailored and precious and actually precocious: a beginning. A big bang. A beginning should be and what makes beginnings hard.

‘It had cracks but didn’t die.’

With bones he said to those who bear the bare and those who make none about it.

What is elegant is barren.

Typically a rut like a hollow means a finale before the show begins.

But not immediately if we reach the limit of illustration. What can be shown on a single page in Figure X.

Perhaps it all.

Perhaps a plasmatic astropulse.

The backstory is only the object itself announcing its size and heft and color et cetera as initial impression.

What I should like to say. Evoked is something like a knife. A laser blade projected to startling music.

A coup and *couper*. A *taille* and *tailler*.

I consider writing a form of *carving*.

A form of *carving* out of wood (*out of would*) that devises parts only to return them to a whole from which they were never truly parted.

‘Would that you were with me.’

Such a phrase even if mustered like a cough would be adequate as introduction.

No one would say it is remotely fair to ask, yet it is the call of the intersubjective. The intersubjective tells us we *can* communicate and it *is* delightful.

Would that it were always also intersubjective.

Now you see the little treacheries and ‘*trahaisons des clercs*’ here and then and there *et voilà*.

What is adequate. Proverbially: honey in honey pots.

An image such as this for a beginning: *We inhabit a severe allotment.*

‘Allotment’ not as in money but as in a lot of property.

Severe inherited intellectual property like hanging a colossal chain around a collective neck.

Our allotment arises always over around above our collective neck with the feel of city project housing ruined. The feel of *no future* by which we are continually encircled with which we are continually burdened.

Imagine its burden and weight all the time burning the bins and gardens like looting rotting troops daily nightly.

Our inherited intellectual property is rational and hangs about burning all the time.

It is burning and especially weight when it is felt hot as in *reason beyond reason*.

‘Reason beyond reason’ refers to the concept of *the rational emotion*.

The rational emotion is burning weight waiting and hot and home and here. *The rational emotion* expresses the profound need to communicate with parts of self or others to find a kind of ground.

It, too, is carving. It sets aside inchoate shavings. Pretends they never were. And so distinguishes its own shape, its own place.

§

How to write about the irrational in a manner of the irrational.

How to be frank and honest while conjuring a reality.

How to write about the irrational with attention abstracted from inherited rational property.

How to hand it over to spontaneous gestures like turns of hand.

How to disembed the discourse from the author's idiosyncrasy.

How to create from a singular individual idiosyncratic subjective a collective idiosyncratic subjective.

Suspending the rational but always. Making room.

§

When we seat our real selves upon imaginary furnishings we find we're in a hanging house.

Will we imagine this house.

To live in it. In suspension even by a thread.

Will we imagine it.

Decent earnest people working hard to hold it up.

Limits

A scone.

A sand castle.

A spider's web.

Whose this evening.

No love lost between.

Where has the time gone and who does the catching.

The mind stretches itself to the limit reaching for a semblable, a syllable, a connection.

In the same way we produce a phrase. Not in the voice box but back behind the smallest source from where the orator spoke:

There are not leaves enough to cover the face / It wears. This is the way the orator spoke: / "The mass is nothing. The number of men in a mass / Of men is nothing. The mass is no greater than / The singular man in a mass. Masses produce / Each one its paradigm." There are not leaves / Enough to hide away the face of the man / Of this dead mass and that.¹

At a point there is a complicated stance.

¹ Stevens, W. 1997. "United Dames of America." *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose*. Eds., F. Kermode and J. Richardson. New York: Library of America, p. 188.

At any point historically among the elements.

§

What historical elements rise even only to the ankles end by defining a full figure like a statue with clay feet.

You were looking, O king, and lo! there was a great statue. This statue was huge, its brilliance extraordinary; it was standing before you, and its appearance was frightening. The head of that statue was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. As you looked on, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, were all broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.²

Mountains fill the earth with violence.

Of course a stone is more than a stone.

Particularly not cut by human hands.

² *Daniel 2: 31-35*

Life is a threshing floor.

All is *hevel* [wind] says Solomon as Koheleth.

And chasing after *hevel*.

§

The woolen scholar found impossibly trivial the immediacies discussed (*disgust*) in his presence after heaving himself to and fro about *hevel* for the better part of two hours.

Indeed he made a spectacle of waving about like a guignol out of control pleading:

“Remember...”

The CEVIPOF students in their *pre-fonctionnaire* jackets discussed (*disgust*) his lecture and its pertinence to their careers in a *Saint-Germain* café.

A dissident could choke on the liqueurs and carafes and ash-cans and *comptoirs d'étain*.

La scène est trop parisienne. [The scene is too Parisian].

Not long ago Albert Camus and Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre hung about in *Saint-Germain* cafés listening to Camus cough tuberculosis and Sartre boast that he was smartest.

What was the end [as in: *aboutissement*] of their ablutions.

What did they bequeath.

What animated them.

One might think they were conjuring Rimbaud and Verlaine very drunk on absinthe *à la moderne* but it is not the case.

§

A guignol exists to be controlled, seized, taken over.

We might even say a guignol exists *only when* it is controlled, seized, taken over.

The idea of superatomic guignols untrammelled therefore holds the mood in tension.

The *Grand Guignol* was a small theatre in the *quartier Pigalle*.

Puppets leave some people ill-at-ease.

The (revenge) fantasy of their autonomy is enough.

The horror and gore of the shows were particularly modern.

The productions were described as ‘amoral.’

The workers related to Guignol.

He was the *vox populi*.

There are limits to what can be conjured.

Mood delights amidst the tension between the relatable and the unrelatable.

Mood delights in the space between the communicated and the incommunicado.

Mood delights at an old guignol in a café performing a French Punch and Judy. Guignol cries out to the audience for help.

Strictly speaking as for guignols and puppeteers, *the potential for destruction of the former by the reality of the latter sets a limit to the mood.*

The guignol mustn't break character. The puppeteer mustn't speak as himself.

You could say: 'The puppeteer is more who he is through the guignol than without the guignol.'

Or you could say: 'It's just a character.'

Or you could say: 'The guignol and the puppeteer come together to create a kind of person — a personage — who exceeds what either could be or become on its own.'

Either way there is being who one is and there is being who one is.

§

See the situation as the possibility of the rational decimating the possibility of the irrational.

See it as reason punishing and punishing the very spot where most of us have it backwards.

The rational defines the limit to any potential conjugation where the irrational is protected by a screen or curtain or booth that shelters what is necessary for each to find its other.

Now we know we cannot find the irrational unless it is set against a rational *mise-en-scène*.

And we cannot find the rational until we feel it crash against irrational walls.

And we see that each requires protection from the other.

§

Associations such as these and explorations of these associations imply a critique of the irrational to be possible.

A *kritike techne* [критике τέχνη] is, in fact, always possible precisely because a *kritike techne* means exploring the possibilities of knowing and not knowing before proposing any knowledge, itself.

It is most literally a ‘critical art’ or even an ‘art of judgment.’

As a modern person, “I am myself at stake in this conception of myself as a modern self that must establish a critical relationship to myself”.³

Like a growing and living and dying person, critique is not so much “a commenting on an already present, completed literature that has finished flowering,” but “the *organon* of a literature that is yet to be perfected, formed, even has yet *to begin*.”⁴

The *organon* is but the tool in the *techne*. The principles that guide us even and especially in the dark.

§

Perhaps not well enough and with apologies but at least promising some relief for not-enoughness in the periphery of our visual field.

Of course we cannot see the edges of our visual field markedly.

O dark! O night!

To see our visual field itself fully is impossible. At its very edges are invisibilities that exceed even pitch blackness.

³ Raffnsøe, S. 2017. “What is Critique? Critical Turns in the Age of Criticism.” *Outlines – Critical Practice Studies* 18 (1): 28-60, p. 31.

⁴ Schlegel, F. von, and Arndt, A. 2007. *Schriften zur kritischen Philosophie 1795-1805*. Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, p. 176, *emphasis added*.

A part of the momentous task awaiting the irrational: *To facilitate the imagination of the impossible invisible field.*

We have but the bluntest tools.

A drum.

A stick.

A shield.

We can define only single colors in a kind of child's rainbow.

To strive to prove ourselves adroit (*à droit*) with irrational definitives among a rational milieu would be a fool's errand.

An ill-considered trial.

A futile *travail*.

To prove such definitives a poet would have to move to Southeast Asia. There in her heated moods she will make of ratty palms and monsoon moons panoramas and divine prospects. Because her visual field is filled with beauty she will mistake her spot in Southeast Asia for something good. She will come to no good.

Further Reflections on Things Related

Smoking and puppeteers:

A man who faces backwards as I do.

When I go to the detached garage to smoke to hide.

To hide that I go to the detached garage.

The far wall blocks the view from my daughter's far-away room.

Lignes de l'imagination:

When I go outside it is very important.

It is important the imaginary lines of sight I draw in the detached garage beginning at the corners of the tool-shelf line up with the holes on the West wall resulting from old nails.

I change my stance according to the imaginary lines.

I change how I stand somehow not precisely like a puppet but very what I stand for.

Every time how I stand in the garage I ensure everything lines up every time.

Fine:

Did you say that everything was fine even in the rain. The rain may be fine but fine is not good enough for standing. Not enough to rain away.

Therefore fine is slightly flawed and slightly fine.

Jean-Paul Sartre said in America you need only one word: '*Fine*.' '*Fine*' gets you through any conversation.

Therefore if you think 'fine' in the rain you may be a part of something flawed.

Therefore you may not be as different as you think.

Nowt:

What you think and this goes without saying. Without need for anything like cigarettes and striking the sets in the rain. Inside where there are teas and scones. And biscuits and marmalade.

Saying *nowt* as the English do is a flaw because it is not needed.

Nowt means 'nothing,' whereas *owt* means 'anything.' Yielding the simple paradox that there *is* both *owt* and *nowt*.

Therefore it goes we go without saying. Because we feel that something in the rain is flawed and it is not *nowt*.

Thomas Hobbes said only humans have 'the privilege of absurdity.'

We observe the Davidsonian paradox.

Value Choice

The Davidsonian paradox:

The underlying paradox of irrationality, from which no theory can entirely escape, is this: if we explain it too well, we turn it into a concealed form of rationality; while if we assign incoherence too glibly, we merely compromise our ability to diagnose irrationality by withdrawing the background of rationality needed to justify any diagnosis at all.⁵

Another way: Irrationality always must be judged by rational standards and this fact makes the enterprise seem quite irrational.

Another way: There must be a background of rationality to approach irrationality, but only a background.

§

Could I write a manifest. A manifesto. Competing philosophical definitions of irrationality are manifold and manifestly boring.

⁵ Davidson, D. 1982. "Paradoxes of Irrationality." *Philosophical Essays on Freud*. Eds., R. Wollheim and J. Hopkins. Cambridge University Press, p. 303.

Wishful thinking, self-deception, *akrasia* and on and on. Weak-willed and strong-willed and on and on. Defiance of explanation or empirical support and on and on. Uninterpretability and on and on. Unjustified belief and on and on. Disconnection between desire and intention and on and on. Contradiction between means and ends and on and on.

§

Look: Listen: It's not as if the unconscious could be integrated.

We cannot simply say, 'The unconscious is irrational,' because: *How would we know?*

If it is a frame that is if it is a frame for understanding things to call them 'unconscious' or 'vestiges' or 'remnants' or 'traces' of the unconscious then we are automatically in jeopardy of rationalizing the unconscious and so deforming it.

Any integration and it's automatically no longer what it was.

That, I am afraid, is all we can say. That we are afraid is all we can say. We are afraid *and* we are afraid that that is all that we can say.

The unconscious is "radically discontinuous" yet remains in an intractable relation.⁶

⁶ Shingu, K. 2004. *Being Irrational: Lacan, the Objet a, and the Golden Mean*. Trans., M. Radich. Tokyo: Gakujo Shoin, p. 11.

Since the obvious route is blocked, one ends by making an *irrational choice between orientations toward the irrational* based on what one values and very likely of which one does *not* speak.

What is a value but a shiny mirror glass in which we see our faces without blemish and all the better.

Admired all the more the more distorted visuals thrown around the room complements the ambiance.

Values and visuals.

Values and visuals all around and where to sit is matter for discussion which is to say there no seating order *a priori*.

Truly, “irrationality is a value concept.”⁷

A definition of human agency set into operation.

Toward what groundless intentions and purposes do we aim *irrationally*.

Toward what intentions and purposes not derivable from an *a priori*.

⁷ Bortolotti, L. 2015. *Irrationality*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, p. 147.

Thinkers and Think-errs

Look: Listen: The world is tired.

In the market there are entire areas devoted to “energy.”

*“Rose is a rose is a rose.”*⁸

There is a little leak after each one.

Leak is a leak is a leak.

Until there is no rose at all.

Rise is a rise is a rise.

Every one should get a little more of a rise.

Until falling down exhausted.

Post-post-modernists are still Romantics at heart.

⁸ Stein, G. 1913. “Sacred Emily.” In: *Geography and Play*. Boston, MA: Four Seas Co., pp. 178-188.

How do we know it is derisory: the kind of ‘imagination’ that causes John Doe to think-err under his stormy head-cloud where he thinks and errs.

To fall into fallacy and ‘imagine’ that *is* is *ought* or correlation is causation.

Contrast with the ‘imagination’ that leads Picasso to break apart faces. Or Dali to hang melting clocks on tree branches: the kind of ‘imagination’ we associate with artistic genius.

We’d like to answer but our throats melt like clocks and we fall apart like faces.

What may we say.

We mark the difference between failures in objectivity — as in distortions of thought or action — and success in subjectivity — as in imagination and creative achievement.

Yet anyone who works in the subjective realm knows there are also innumerable points of coincidence.

Consider experiments in thought- and behavior-manipulation such as the infamous Milgram and Zimbardo studies. The extent to which psycho-political forces leveraged the reality of the experimental environment *against* the subjective realities of the test-subjects.⁹

Many subjects wanted to quit but stayed, wanted to cry but laughed, protested but succumbed, lacked the imagination, the will, the agency, the capacity to resist the momentum of the objective experience or the “pressure of reality.”¹⁰ This is called *a failure of subjective irrationality to resist objective sub- or pseudo-rationality*.

The key difference between orchestrations of objective irrationality versus those of subjective irrationality being that the former signal an impairment of human imagination whereas the latter exhibit its *fleurissement*. The critical *organon* says: ‘I am beginning.’

In the end we find that objective reality (both rational and sub- or pseudo-rational) is shared and is identical with many acts of sharing but not all.

⁹ See e.g., Sutherland, S. 2013. *Irrationality: The Enemy Within*. London: Pinter & Martin, pp. 30-53.

¹⁰ Stevens, W. 1951. *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination*. New York: Vintage, p. 22.

By some sheer force we come to believe that objective reality *alone* is shareable.

Our desire to protect it represents a desire to protect beloved attachments to others.

We believe that if we were forced to communicate between subjective realities we would be reduced to a solipsistic condition like universal madness.

We see the world and each other falling apart like broken faces.

In the nightmare everyone speaks a radically different pseudo-poetic language without imagination reflecting impossibly distant universes of life.

Utterly separated devolving into tumult.

Of course if we examine our fantasy more closely we see that the subjective imagination must have intercourse with a special reality to become vital. Even as it resists or escapes the ‘pressure of reality’ or ‘the pressure of the contemporaneous’ on a different register.

The special reality is really *a special capacity for dealing with reality*. It entails *the capacity to have and to continue to have* — Winnicott might call it “going on being” — *subjective experience within a world of potentially domineering objects waiting around like puppeteers to add their voices to yours.*¹¹ *To impinge. Impose. Interrupt. Control. Seize. Take over.*

The capacity does not belong to the self alone. It belongs to the environment and, in psychoanalysis, the mother. It can be as much an absence as a presence.

¹¹ Winnicott, D.W. (1956). “Primary Maternal Preoccupation.” In: *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. New York: International Universities Press, p. 303.

For our concerns, it belongs to the subject just as much as it belongs to *the irrational*, which, if we are oriented toward it openly, can hold us without crushing us when we would otherwise face terrible desubjectification.

The early, infantile experience of “going on being” while being held by mother or father is the ground of what later blossoms into mature subjectivity: being whole and alive and imaginative and creative in the sense of being a “center of initiative.”¹²

This capacity for autonomy is, in its way, irrational, and may serve, again, in its way, as the very definition of the irrational.

It stands upon a ground of radical uniqueness that can be appreciated by others but never entirely reduced to terms that are shareable in the objective world.

The irrational is not governed by objective reality but rather illuminates itself in what we call its ‘absolute difference’ which is its radical un-integrability into consciousness and its uncanniness and its quality of being subjectively hyper-real and alive in a scenario where reason and rationality otherwise squander the reality of objects and make things dead.

¹² Kohut, H. 1977. *The Restoration of the Self*. New York: International Universities Press, p. 99.

Auto Da-Fé

Use (*Youse*) every idiosyncrasy to live. That is called-for.

But how we are exposed as any person looking toward the ferocious light of our common plight. Including ourselves. *Auto-da-fé*.¹³

We can hardly imagine our plight. And be persons and love persons still.

We imagine it hardly.

§

Once we reach a certain age memory is enough.

Abundantly enough reality in memory to dislodge the inhabitant.

¹³ “(TORQUEMADA)
I just got back from the auto-da-fé.

(EXECUTIONERS)
Auto-da-fé? What's an auto-da-fé?

(TORQUEMADA (JEWS))
It's what you oughtn't do but you do anyway.

Skit-skat-voody-vat
Doodly-day!”

—Graham, R. and Brooks, M. (1981). (film) *The History of the World, Part I*. Produced by M. Brooks.

Collapse the world upon itself and the hanging house within upon.

This is called the *trauma of sheer reality*. No one says as much.

Except perhaps Jacques Lacan. But not as sheer as in that sense. Not “The Real” as a mystery. Rather living in reality.

‘In reality’ *tout court*.

§

I cannot recollect how I ever looked. At the world in its face. Horrifying in its subtleties.

Details of a stature. Precisely not a statue. *In situ*. A status. Then another. A wrinkle on a face.

To face the world without a wrinkly compare. Compare it to an unenlightened filter across.

Across the world’s face a childish filter.

Being older and older and thought and thought combine their efforts to dissolve the filter gradually.

The result is not ‘*rose is a rose is a rose*’ but the opposite. Horror across its face.

Here irrationality does not do its job of *resisting*.

The fools say: 'Resistance is the opposite of escape.'

I, too, think this is just "common cant," for "how is it possible to condemn escapism" when "the poetic process is psychologically an escapist process," just not an escape from subjective reality.¹⁴

Resisting objective reality by supplementation with irrational imaginations which unlike excesses of reality do not break and tear the skin.

Rather they repair it by creating "the supreme fictions without which it is impossible to conceive" shared subjective realities which is to say genuine communication.¹⁵

For Stevens, the poet's task is really and very much to make it possible for others to live in and with reality by way of this paradoxical and objectively untrue truth.

Trauma is to tear the skin (*the skein*) that binds subjective real things together. Irrational imaginings cut both ways. Return us to trauma when we should be sitting at our desks. Or resist the trauma and the tearing of the skin.

In any case save us from the reality (*tout court*) that kills.

¹⁴ Stevens 1951, p. 30.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 31.

Objective (Sub- or Pseudo-Rationality) and Subjective (Ir-Rationality)

It is not necessary to demonstrate in long treatises.¹⁶

The people in the palace certainly went quietly at dusk. We suppose they left more quietly than the *hush* a group exudes.

O dark! O night!

It is not necessary to demonstrate in long treatises like retracing gravely travels of great tortoises *hushing* around in the dirt.

It is not necessary to demonstrate in long treatises the poisoned leaves along the tortoises' path.

Gather 'round, they say. Gather 'round!

To demonstrate. *Montrer. Démontrer.* To monger a rational cure for the putatively poisonous observation that we think and behave irrationally.

Are we jostled by the specious assertion — Aristotle's — that human beings are rational creatures.

¹⁶ e.g., Smith, J. 2019. *Irrationality: A History of the Dark Side of Reason*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.; Sutherland 2013.

Illogic, bias, ignorance, distortion, error: *Of course* these pervade human life as poisons and bugs pervade plant-life of course and as a matter of course they do.

The tortoises walk over and over the path until they're dead.¹⁷

§

Likewise we say *No!* and *No!* to works that approach irrationality by defining what it's not: not a failure of intentionality, not a marking of insanity.

Worse: by critiquing what others make it out to be yet never saying clearly what it's not.¹⁸

The termagancy of the termagant!¹⁹

§

Long castigatory treatises on irrationality sometimes end proclaiming: 'Reason must return!' Others cry: 'Reason most unreasonably imperializes and therefore should be abandoned as aspiration.'

¹⁷ A group of tortoises is called *a creep*.

¹⁸ e.g., Bortolotti 2015.

¹⁹ An anagram for 'termagant' is 'target man.'

The latter more fashionable stance is inseparable from the former less fashionable stance and dance a dance they do: *we must rely on critical reason to dismantle the irrational idolatry of Reason.*

Consider at the center another fantasy: a belief that the human mundo should operate altogether reasonably and predictably like traffic lights in Germany. If you've ever been to Germany you know that one develops a picture in the mind of apocalyptic chaos and violent devastation if pedestrians were to make a habit of crossing against the lights.

The "dark side" of this fantasy means that treatise tortoises focus their attention on failures of rationality, sub-rationality, or pseudo-rationality, *rather than irrationality*.²⁰

Here we could do with demonstration of *une idée. Démontrer l'importance de celle-ci.*

Celle-ci is a demonstrative pronoun in this case demonstratively.

Will we try.

§

Consider the types: The *epistemic irrationalist* whose thoughts are distorted or who makes invalid propositions about the world or about the truth; the *structural irrationalist* whose beliefs contradict themselves; the *practical irrationalist* whose means do not serve his

²⁰ Smith 2019.

ends; the *ontological irrationalist* who finds the world itself devoid of rational structure, meaning, and purpose; and so on.

Must we separate these types or may we brew a stew. We may brew because none of these examples are true examples of irrationality.

Sub- and pseudo-rationality imply attempts, efforts, aspirations but failures to survive the rules and norms of *objective* reality.

Irrationality has no ambition to cohabit and even despises objective reality and strives to inoculate itself against it taking as its basis of health what is necessarily altogether distinct: *subjective reality*.

§

Note the crucial difference: It happens sometimes that an expression of irrationality works its way through the arteries of an objectively real singular or collective body and coagulates into a momentous subjective roiling embolus, as in literature or art, a bloody hunk of creation.

We ought to be glad enough to come across such emboli and, indeed, are content to say *hmmm* and *ahhhh* in downtown galleries before paintings of bloody hunks that do not depict objective experiences in the slightest.

Au contraire, we worry endlessly that sub- and pseudo-rational elements of experience such as bias or prejudice have like bacteria crept into our thought and behavior without our awareness. Festering flies in our ointment.²¹

§

*To the extent that we hold onto this latter worry we voice a fantasy about reality / realities:
Subjective reality is treated as a perversion of objective reality.*

A deviation, a pollution. Perhaps a *hubris*, Oedipus' objective mutual mutilation ruins Thebes by an ineffable logic. But Oedipus' subjective maturation is something else.

There is no room for unique imagination or experience. Instead, these are disregarded as mere deviations from a shared objective truth that unites us.

To the extent that we proudly point up the irrationality of things, we engage the *ablutomaniacal* fantasy that if we could only *clean the world* enough we could be perfectly rational.

Paradoxically, our concerns about pseudo- and sub-rational thought and behavior reveal a dark fantasy about obedience and conformity.

²¹ "Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment, And cause it to give off a foul odor; So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor. A wise man's heart is at his right hand, But a fool's heart at his left" (*Ecclesiastes* 10: 1-3).

The wish that there would be no deviation from a shared and objective and therefore absolute reality of experience is a wish for collapse and singularity and a kind of sanitary anti-organic lifelessness.

The death-drive is a *cleaning fantasy*.

Like an Irrational Number, *Opera*

If we are trapped.

If we are trapped by our own insecurity.

Our own insecurity tells us we are trapped and must define our terms.

We cannot but we must.

We must conclude irrationality in its purest form is undefinable.

The irrational in this frame is simply the impossible.

§

Examples: A body that has no spatial extension; a tree that is not a tree; a horse that is not a particular horse (i.e., no specific breed, size, color, etc.); “Do not read this!”; *a* and *not-a*.

We cannot even say of irrationality that it *is*. Unlike its cousins, absurdity and nonsense, irrationality has no agenda *to be*.

Irrationality is an on-going discovering of an unknowable yet performable activity of mind.

Like an irrational number. It finds a way to operate. *Il fonctionne. Opera.*

A solely rational calculus can make of it only a container for what is unthinkable. Cannot penetrate more deeply (e.g., “The irrational number i is greater than 3.” is a nonsense statement).

Let’s say Lacan’s *objet a* and the golden mean (‘the mean and extreme ratio’) are $(\sqrt{5}-1)/2$.

When I feels itself to be something with identity (identity with itself, that is), I is, in a manner of speaking, “one” (=1). At that point the *objet a*, notated as $\sqrt{5}-1/2$, will surely appear within the other, and the transcendent whole comprised of both I and the other will without fail appear as the sum of I and the *objet a*: in other words, as $1 + \sqrt{5}-1/2 = \sqrt{5}-1/2$. [...] Thus, I finds itself jammed between two mutually inverse irrational numbers, just barely able to maintain its identity, that is, the fact that I is

1.²²

²² Shingu 2004, pp. 56-57.

Way Out

We know the irrational when we *feel* it.

It's true.

It's a way out.

§

The irrational may generate feelings.

Different for every one.

Different at different times.

Different depending on what you had for breakfast.

Different to the degree that to it one is *attuned*.

§

If we cannot use reason mustn't we find the feelings to carry on.

Will we find the feelings.

Contrast. Shock. Impasse. *Aporia*. Behindness.

§

The irrational bears the same relation to the rational that the unknown bears to the known... The rational mind, dealing with the known, expects to find it glistening in a familiar ether. What it really finds is the unknown always behind and beyond the known, giving it the appearance, at best, of chiaroscuro.²³

We may identify the irrational but not solely with the rational faculty. For its own impotence.

Which is marvelous but not because it is mysterious.

Marvelous but not mysterious.

Marvelous that we are not yet.

Not Yet.

Not yet possessed solely by the rational faculty.

What interests is 'behind and beyond'.

²³ Stevens 1997, pp. 790-791.

How will we approach it.

How will we identify it without of it making sense.

We feel there is a way.

Will we follow this feeling.

When a Person

When a person cannot understand another's words. Perhaps not even to be heard they sound.

Just loud enough to support irrationals racing around the hearer's aural mind.

They are fodder there.

Hear the deathcore metal singer inveigh:

We are mort-ga-ging!

We are reacquainted and

the red, by-light and the

black, car-light

make flesh dan-gle!

So what?

You are porous,

And, re-fined

all the while, we

are re-viled!

My an-cient wish

far, gore

my an-cient slice!”

As it is mine every time because I make it.

Out of incoherent growling, it is mine as soon as I hear it.

It is thus when a person speaks irrationally yet eternally.

There is no denying. Where it comes from.

Exactly how I wish. How I dish. Dish it out. Wash it out. Wish it out.

§

When a person is irrational. Is it not to be a person. Rather is it not a part. A part of personhood.

“A person exhibits irrationality when he does not, or could not ... avoid exhibiting ... *self-contradiction*.”²⁴

That is one way to think of it.

It is not only or alone of course. It strives to make the questionable point that when a person is double it is not to be a person.

But to be double is as common as a cow. A common cow along a common path is quite common to meet. And calm. The cow is calm if you are.

You and the cow are two dusky figures on a path.

It is like this when a person contemplates death to save an inward person from a different death. Isn't *that* a person. The person who lives inwardly. Which one is most important.

When a person is on lots of medications.

When another says about that person *well that makes sense of this and that*.

When life is nightmarish one nevertheless says *this* and *that* and especially *oh yes recall that time when*.

Be different. It should. When a person feels a bit nightmarish before the others who make noise. A bit garish it is.

When a person fails to be what is supposed to be. A person. Autonomy and creativity and *tra-la*.

²⁴ Gardner, S. 1993. *Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-4.

When a person's doctors get angry at him *tra-la* for being quite a nuisance.

Think about neurosis and psychosis and losing every thing. Think losing self.

Will a person go to the hospital. The hospital is like a prison.

When a person is already in prison.

§

For isn't it just like every inward person to be an officer of *The Court*.

Delacourt. *Du tribunal*.

Then one is forever judged.

Health lies in the past.

The future is of piss.

The present cannot exist because the present always wants to pass but *The Court* requires everyone to sit and to be quiet.

As creature of reason, the present falls apart and passes events by, because it is caught between overconfidence in a structure in the present and a connected desire to escape the past and control the future. Each rational plan has a terrible relation to time as something that passes and unfolds. The rational present is bound

to be undone. And a good thing too, for otherwise it will try to impose itself on future times like a deceiving ruler.²⁵

²⁵ Williams, J. 2019. "Deleuze and the Time for Non-Reason: According to the French philosopher, rationalism is an illusion." *IAI News*. Issue 74. June 26. <https://iai.tv/articles/deleuze-and-the-time-for-non-reason-auid-1243>.

Benediction

What follows is part of the Benediction in a Southern Methodist ceremony.

*This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*²⁶

Leader: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

People: *And also with you.*

Leader: *The risen Christ is with us.*

People: *Praise the Lord!*

We hear the same words and do not need to imagine. Always near the end comes the Benediction.

The Benediction is a well wish so we do not imagine. It is said so that it lives among us in a contemporaneous objective reality. We hear it altogether all together.

The Benediction's end is to hold the congregants together even again. Before returning to reality beyond the Sanctuary.

If I held a Benediction I would say: *Hold yourselves fast in the belief that there is a face without the slightest wrinkle meant for every one! This face is individual and common.*

Irrational and imaginary. Shared and absolutely enigmatic.

I do not know if I believe my Benediction is the truth. That is not a criterion.

²⁶ *Psalms 118: 24.*

Would it be a blessing.

Would the congregation rejoice.

Watch Where What

Watch where what falls falls and fails as it falls.

Watch where what falls and what fails completely.

What are we talking about: Rain as a metaphor for the pressure of reality. And the reign of rain.

When rain is not just rain but strings of rationals falling like blocks of green quantum code down the computer screen in the mind.

In the mind's *depotoire* of dreams, rain falls in droplets dear but does not always fall upon the dear.

We know the dear ones. We take them in the house and out of the rain.

Hence out of doors they fail to survive as such. Say you go to Niagara Falls you let the droplets fall and fail on poncho-ed everyone. All the strangers stay and stare and fail to retain their shape.

Look: Listen. This is a question.

Is the irrational a betrayal of its opposite. Is it an inapposite piece.

Is irrationality irrational only as in *after-thought-of* as in getting-out-of.

Of sense only an afterthought. Or is it individual sensibility itself.

Is it situated after or is it not, rather, the first *very important thing*.

§

The first time we imagine we imagine a child's imaginings. As children newly born what we must imagine in our wild mental mundos.

The wild carries primacy before other people begin. Begin to be borne back and forth across the borderlands of our own minds. Borne between the outer world and inner wild.

The Wild West. This is primitive primacy. A fantasy of a primitive.

But also even privacy from people. Privacy is part of the first *very important thing*. Without it we are *de-prived* of what we need to be people.

For Wallace Stevens the irrational is "the transaction between reality and the sensibility of the poet from which poetry springs." By this he meant "the transposition of an objective reality to a subjective reality."²⁷

²⁷ Stevens 1997, p. 781.

Watch where what of the irrational is what is not communicated of experience until it is irrationally communicated. That is to say *subjective reality*.

And even then it is even also changed. That is to say a secret is a secret until it is altered by altercation with another reality.

Eventually the secret may become all the same transitional à la Donald Winnicott. But there must remain a smallish secret part. 'Incommunicado.'

The incommunicado core lies within the true self. And is imaginary and irrational. And precisely not a corps. And not a corpus. Very much a circus. Not "Inherited Conglomerate."²⁸

§

There is no "primitive edge of experience" à la Thomas Ogden but an inward ocean of a world one eventually discovers is not flat. But not at the beginning of the voyage.

No edge at the beginning because it seems at the beginning that the secret really wraps us round and goes on forever inside and outside and everywhere à la Allah (*Subhanahu wa ta'ala*). Or choose your God of choice.

²⁸ Dodds, E.R. 2023. *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, & London: University of California Press, p. 207.

In any way you choose your choice the secret à la Allah is that Allah makes the secret self an ocean.

§

When it is fearsome it is different than a child. Than a child who plays. It is fearsome to be adult.

Watch where what falls falls away from the child's eyes like dead dreams. Carries with it now the walls of adult mundos.

Watch where what joy for us to read the nonsense of a child à la A.A. Milne. Swallows the senses like a discovery of that early private mundo that is not even language as mother and father take it. Nothing falls away.

Do mother and father fake it. The child asks.

As language dissipates the secret language of the inner child. Do mother and father take this sense language to be a real place.

Does it belong *inside* them. Even though it is not alive inside.

Is it *A Place To Be*.

“The future is description without place,” says Stevens. The future is therefore adumbration without topic.

Ec-topic and pregnant. Because a topic is a *topos*.

The irrational is forever an unknown place.

Surely we’ve been mistaken not to have already highlighted that it *exceeds the conception of in-or-out altogether*.

Lest we be consigned and confined.

Lest we succumb to a place of death.

To Whom Is It Just

To whom is it just rational.

To open the windows and look out on the streets and think of the delivery drivers in enormous vans whizzing around dropping off little boxes all the day and say: “rational.”

Wouldn't it be a madman.

Better: We ought not say of any *thing* it is rational. Including even propositions. Only persons possess the rational / irrational capacities.

An object is both and neither. Until the mind is applied. Rational is an activity of minds. Part of the rational intellectual allotment. Not itself a thing in the objective world.

§

It is the same for an irrational. When it arrives to whom is it just.

To whom is it just a moment on a Sunday.

Which is to say go to a zoo in the afternoon.

To whom is it just what it is.

Forget the animals.

To whom is it just more of the world.

To whom is it just whatnot.

You can say *irrational* with rational intent.

To condemn for instance.

You can say *irrational* with precise calculation.

You can confuse irrationality with inadequate rational answers to *why*.

§

En même temps, rationality bottoms out. By now it is familiar to say rationality bottoms out. Rational bosoms cannot hold the weight.

First, “rational thought... is based on the assumption that there are laws governing the world and that these laws remain constant over time [...] This assumption cannot be justified.”²⁹

Second, “there are rational means to achieve an end, but one can ask if there is such a thing as a rational end [...] In thinking about ultimate goals, we are beyond the realm of rationality. A given goal can only be defended in terms of a superior goal.”³⁰

²⁹ Sutherland 2013, p. 4.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

Third, rationality implies an inherence of capacities. Thinking and identifying. As if already in the mind. Induced there. Not themselves derived from rational entities. Without going in a circle. Ex.: To read logic one must first have 'logical sight.' Where. From.

Therefore rationality is like magic. Depending on pre-existing presences in the mind that no one finds. Like magic.

If we reduce and reduce the words of rationalists we arrive at bad poetry. Bad magical poetry about the mind and what it pretends to contain.

§

Irrationality like rationality is a relative term. It may be used for what is beyond a person's comprehension. A person or another.

Com + prehendere means to hold. To clutch. To grasp. If we know Faust we know he likes to grasp life like a fist. He is even rational. Goethe makes even the devil rational.

Yet Hamlet in his extraordinary capaciousness reserves a place for the irrational he will not touch. For Hamlet what is irrational is spectacular. It is what makes him think so remarkably *and* what makes him wait so extensively.

One thing is: *Irrationality can confront the sub- and pseudo-rationality of purportedly rational systems.*

That is one thing is the irrational clothed in rationality. That the irrational resists. It finds a way to disrobe. Defrock.

“The scandal of rationalism is its claim to be reasonable. The shame of reason is when it abets rational control. The close horizon of both is our final submission to autopoietic systems. The computer says ‘Do it now’.”³¹

Was the Great Depression rational. Insofar as it could be understood by economists. Less so for the man leaping out of his office window in despair.

Is war rational. What is it in war one confronts. To whom is it just. To whom is it just another day. It depends on your seat. We suppose. We suppose in war it depends on your seat.

³¹ Williams 2019.

For God there is no irrational. If a soldier has a God in war then he has little need for any more. Precisely because God is the being who comprehends all. If God comprehends war is a way of putting the problem of evil.

Think of Gilles Deleuze who saw through veils of reason to extrapolate an irrational machine. James Williams says:

Deleuze's argument is radical. It isn't that sometimes irrationality confounds reason. Rationalism could easily handle that; in fact, it would increase its power and mystique. *Look how I defeat my demons*. It's that a necessarily unconscious irrationality is continuously at work within them. The real will be unreasonable and beyond the control of reason, forever and wherever.³²

At the bottom lies only an irrational beginning of an irrational story. That is to say:

The structure and the logic [of the world and of rationalism, respectively] are also illusions of sufficiency. They aren't independent either; they have soggy bottoms. Foreign lifeforms and material seep into them, making them rot, fail and adapt. Our laws are this kind of rational structure and suffer from this kind of porosity. We are their sogginess: rebelling against them, looking for ways around them, misusing them, going beyond them, pleading against them and making them old, ridiculous or monstrous.”³³

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

Williams conflates sub-and pseudo-rationality with irrationality here.

It is one of the greatest errors we've made in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Sometimes it leads us to laud rational breakdown as if it were a righteous rebel when there may well be no subjectivity inside.

Sometimes we misunderstand a subjective overture because we declare it sub- or pseudo-rational.

Sometimes we forget ourselves and say of the madman's speech: 'It is irrational.' That is to say we find it less-than-rational. But the irrational cannot be a category of analysis or else it becomes a place. It cannot be a place because it is unknown. And therefore goes on forever into spacious non-places we do not know.

§

The question becomes what the irrational portends. Which is to say: What is it the irrational reveals as it resists.

Edward Lear says of nonsense and the nonsense artist that nonsense "becomes ultimately a world in itself specially created by him as a refuge from the trials and irritations of life."³⁴

³⁴ Jackson, H. 1947. "Introduction." In: *The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear* (Ed., H. Jackson). London: Faber and Faber, p. x.

But Stevens is better: “The only possible resistance to the pressure of the contemporaneous is a matter of herrings and apples or, to be less definite, the contemporaneous itself. In poetry... the subject is not the contemporaneous... but the poetry of the contemporaneous.”³⁵

That is: “The incessant desire for freedom in literature or in any of the arts is a desire for freedom in life. The desire is irrational. The result is the irrational searching the irrational, a conspicuously happy state of affairs, if you are so inclined.”³⁶

The goal is to touch even momentarily a happy subjective state. The irrationality of an individual seeks and finds itself alive there.

§

The question of rationality paradoxically becomes a question of whether something fits inside an irrational story mistaken for rational. Whether it finds a place in the setting and scene. Or rather requires the story to be rewritten.

Even then a new story crops up.

For an idea *née* irrational.

³⁵ Stevens 1997, p. 789.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 790.

Not long before it becomes rational.

Succumbs to the paradigm-shift.

To become rational again.

After Lisbon

The birds seemed to sing no more for the burning of mortar.

The novel, they say, was invented by Cervantes.

The plumes of disaster. The near near sky.

After the (1755) earthquake in Lisbon one gets a Voltaire and not a Leibniz.

Sub- and pseudo-rationality appear as irrationality but upon examination it is only the shock.

What is needed in the Modern era is an irrational heroic subject who can withstand the shock of the non-rational by transforming objective non-rationality into subjective (creative, genuine) irrationality.

Remember: Don Quixote *does not* lose to the Knight of the Mirrors.

But we even weaken subtly as time passes.

Consider several 'insiders': Marcel Proust, Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, Hermann Broch, Carlo Emilio Gadda, Louis Ferdinand Celine,

Vladimir Nabokov, and Samuel Beckett.³⁷ Who is most whole in these authors' *oeuvres* is touched by the irrational.

³⁷ This 'list' is derived from: Bleikasten, A. (1995). "Faulkner from a European Perspective." *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*. Ed., P. Weinstein. Cambridge University Press, pp. 75-95.

Divinity Was the Way

Socrates said “our greatest blessings come to us by way of madness.”³⁸ Meaning in mind and by and large the poet’s madness as of divine origin.

Divinity was the way *very good things* could be placed in Greece in space in time. And not remain unknowable.

Divinity was the way irrationality avoided idiocy. As in withdrawal from public life. As in ἰδιώτης. As in deprivation.

Divinity in this sense is merely buying milk and bread.

Salvador Dali said that Surrealists are caviar. Dali is either silly or a polymath.

Avoiding deprivation is the way until divinity gives way.

To rationality then irrationality is dangerous. No (good) God to contain it.

The poet of today works with imaginary falling leaves and leaping firecats inside a dangerous irrational. Their surdity is shared across impossibility.

Dali in “The Conquest of the Irrational”:

For caviar is the life experience not only of the sturgeon, but of the Surrealists as well, because, like the sturgeon, we are carnivorous fish, who, as I have already

³⁸ Plato. 1995. *Phaedrus*. Trans., A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 244a.

hinted, swim between two bodies of water, the cold water of art and the warm water of science; and it is precisely due to that temperature and to our swimming against the current that the experience of our lives and our fecundation reaches that turbid depth, that irrational and moral hyperlucidity possible only in the climate of Neronian osmosis that results from the living and continuous fusion of the soul's thickness and its crowned heat, the satisfaction and the circumcision of the soul and the corrugated iron, territorial ambition and agricultural patience, keen collectivism and vizors propped up by letters of white on the old billiard cushions and letters of white on the old millyard Russians, all sorts of warm and dermatological elements, which, in short, are the coexisting and characteristic elements presiding over the notion of the "imponderable," a sham notion unanimously recognized as functioning as an epithet for the elusive taste of caviar and hiding the timid and gustatory germs of concrete irrationality, which, being merely the apotheosis and the paroxysm of the objective imponderable, constitutes the divisionist exactness and precision of the very caviar of imagination and will constitute, exclusively and philosophically, the terribly demoralizing and terribly complicated result of my experiences and inventions in painting.³⁹

What is communicated via the irrational would seem even only the kernel but not the shell. Do we recognize the shell as being *full* of something even if we know not what. It is intuited (ex-)communication.

³⁹ Dali, S. 1935. *The Conquest of the Irrational*. New York: Julian Levy, pp. 9-10.

How does its case make its case as in a poem. Is the content in the irrational case. Inside the casing. Do we know it resides there.

Not experience but *manner* of experience. Mine and yours.

Is it not as if we shared a unique grammar.

Only any uttered word.

Only what is *in* the word.

“In the beginning was the Word” and so on.⁴⁰

We recognize the grammar as yours and mine. But what words’ deepest meanings reside inside are different.

If we comprehend the words’ deepest meanings without comprehending the grammar we are close to the irrational.

Of course and therefore there is a difference between a *Collective Irrational* and a *Conventional Irrational*.

Plato detested the latter to his capable extent.

To the extent possible without destroying the corpus of divinity Plato detested the *Conventional Irrational*. Before his time he capably knew it to be *ideology*.

⁴⁰ *John* 1: 1.

A poet of the imagination such as Wallace Stevens merely derides rationalists in square hats.

For Stevens there is no irrational container. Only imaginations coming from the poet as person.

The role of reason changes.

[The] 'unbounded rationalism' of the medieval philosopher is altogether different from the untrammelled use later thinkers made of human reason, applying it like an acid solvent to all things human or divine. The rationalism of the medieval philosophers was contained by the mysteries of faith and dogma, which were altogether beyond the grasp of human reason, but were nevertheless powerfully real and meaningful to man as symbols that kept the vital circuit open between reason and emotion, between the rational and non-rational in the human psyche.⁴¹

That is the old way. Safe to unleash rationality on everything. Except the one true thing that holds it.

In a general yet apt summary of anti-rational thought from Max Weber to Herbert Marcuse, William Barrett argues:

⁴¹ Barrett, W. 1990. *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy*. New York: Anchor Books, pp. 26-27.

The essence of the existential protest is that rationalism can pervade a whole civilization, to the point where the individuals in that civilization do less and less thinking, and perhaps wind up doing none at all. It can bring this about by dictating the fundamental ways and routines by which life itself moves. Technology is one material incarnation of rationalism, since it derives from science; bureaucracy is another, since it aims at the rational control and ordering of social life; and the two — technology and bureaucracy — have come more and more to rule our lives.⁴²

Divinity then is no longer the way. Reason has to take it on a failed ride and role. In what might be considered a summary of the broadest terms of social critics since the Frankfurt School:

To be rational is not the same as to be reasonable. In my time I have heard the most hair-raising and crazy things from very rational men, advanced in a perfectly rational way; no insight or feelings had been used to check the reasoning at any point.

Nowadays, we accept in our public and political life the most humanly unreasonable behavior, provided it wears a rational mask and speaks in officialese, which is the rhetoric of rationality itself.⁴³

⁴² Ibid., p. 269.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 270.

Today perhaps there are persons who have no truck with the irrational at all. They would be members of Herbert Marcuse's *happy consciousness*: "The real is rational and the system delivers the goods."⁴⁴

The irrational then is unreal to them to the greatest possible extent.

Its mechanism of imagination is put out of service for disuse.

⁴⁴ Marcuse, H. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man*. New York: Beacon, p. 84.

No One Knows

“What gives a man his personal sensibility I don’t know and it does not matter because no one knows.”⁴⁵

What gives a person imagination no one knows.

No one knows how imaginations come to be. Relate. Grow. Correspond. His and hers and theirs and ours and yours and mine.

It cannot be that everyone imagines a single thing. “A man in Paris does not imagine the same sort of thing that a native of Uganda imagines.”⁴⁶

§

No one knows how it cannot either be: We imagine every thing disparately. No one knows how we learn it. No one knows how it is handed down and passed along.

What permits my imagination to speak to yours. If not a moment of shared irrationality.

You could go back to the downtown gallery. You could say *hmmm* and *ahhh*. Must there be the silent intercourse of the imaginations of the viewers and the artists.

⁴⁵ Stevens 1997, p. 782.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 729.

Or is it nothing but a matter of irrational weeds popping up in irrational gardens. When you walk around the gallery and look at the weeds holding their pocketbooks and their wine glasses swaying about before the canvases and feel very much a different weed swaying autistically in a garden of your own then no one knows.

Our Obsession

Let us speak of obsession. The rational has been our obsession.

M. Charles Mauron says that a man may be characterized by his obsessions. We are obsessed by the irrational. This is because we expect the irrational to liberate us from the rational.⁴⁷

Obsession gives a false impression.

Obsessive freedom is an illusion telling us about unfreedom.

Chasing after tails that have already quick and darted away to the dark woods.

§

Nevertheless obsessions themselves are characterized by sub- or pseudo-rationality. Think of every one who imagines being dirty. Do they all feel shame. As they wash and touch and wash and touch, the same shame darts around in the dark.

Is it an imagination they wash. No one knows why it never washes out.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 789.

If the imagination is involved it is hardly so. Nevertheless it puts in question the value of imagination. One imagination interfering with every other. Keeps interfering. No one knows what this has to do with Socrates' "great blessing," much less a 'refuge' or 'liberation.'

Albert Camus would say it's absurd. Consider:

Life may not be a cosmic mystery that wraps us round everywhere. You have somehow to know the sound that is the exact sound; and you do in fact know, without knowing how. Your knowledge is irrational. In that sense life is mysterious; and if it is mysterious at all, I suppose it is cosmically mysterious.⁴⁸

But nothing is mysterious lest we make it so. Absurdity especially is forcibly *in mente*. Made by the mind to find no rationality.

For Camus and the absurdists the secret is there is no secret. Living then is to be an unwitting hero. And to resent the universe's effort to outwit one by the design one derides. Like Sisyphus. To banish what is undesirable to the ultimate *outré*: the other side of sense. This is called *attempting to make the rational irrational*.

But for the purpose of metaphysical protest it is *attempting to empty the subjective of meaning*. One holds a melancholy vigil in a devastated subjective world.⁴⁹

It would seem a sad old *lutte*.

Camus wishes it to be shared passionate delight.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 789-790.

⁴⁹ See Bowker 2014.

Can we recognize the difference.

How important this difference is.

Of a Self That Is

The mind defies its own idea.

Of a self that is.

It — the mind — defies its own idea of a self that is a one.

An own.

A self that is on.

A self that is on a shelf apart.

Of its own.

Apiece.

Alone.

It makes a place.

§

It is the mind breaks through the group as it grows. It crowns itself important.

As a self grows it needs to build a wall or else. It cannot grow. To build a wall before the group. Or else it cannot grow any further.

What can pass across the wall. It must be always only to be determined as it grows. In psychology we say: '*a porous membrane*.'⁵⁰

There is a gatekeeper dressed in porous membranous gatekeeping garb who gives a yes or a *no*.

To what arises in the world he nods *yes* or *no*. *Oui ou non*.

What passes his great gate sticks to the inside of the self for better or for worse.

In stickiness and in health. He confers 'unit status.' Or ought to do.

⁵⁰ See Bowker, M.H. 2025, forthcoming. *Walls*. Santa Barbara, CA: Punctum Books.

§

It may well make the mind a mind to be one but it is not what the mind singularly wants.

Desperately. It wants to be a part. A piece.

Not a singularity but a hip-joined belong.

Perhaps to God. Or a facsimile of God.

It won't be long before it makes itself belong.

§

Of a self that is *not* one we say it is not a whole person. Howbeit a belonging self may be joyous.

It is more than a question of fitting between *lose* and *fuse*. Of a self that is it is always only an extent. There is indeed a balance. That we call *relating*.

Relating goes wrong all the time. What governs its success or failure. What gives govern.

What gives when relating fails and the self is struck by splits or adhesions.

It is called a *failure of imagination*. And thus a *failure of the irrational*.

Relating in pure reason is impossible. It is always here *and* there although it can never be both in reason. Do we imagine it. We must.

There are cliffs and perilous clefts through which to fall.

One is: I imagine the imagination of persons and never persons in themselves. It is not Sartrean twaddle. Not ultimately *en soi* or *pour soi*. Not big 'O' Other or Emmanuel Levinas.

But a double recognition:

1. The world of others is not a world but many mundos in just as many minds. In separate and in wholes (holes). One must settle for the versions each imagination supplies. Only then can one rejoice in it. In difference. In art and poetry. In the possibility of being unique. This is called *living in subjective reality*.

And yet:

2. There must in fact be a world in fact. We are not radical relativists. We know somehow there is an *objective world* beyond our imagining which outlives us long outside a pearly gate. It must be or else we are swallowed by Protagoras and *solipsismus* which means a kind of idiocy, *self-alone-ness*.

All this must be reconciled. Sometimes counseled. Conferred. By the irrational. It is the primary irrational work of a self that is a self or strives to be.

Of Psychoanalysis We May Say

Of psychoanalysis we may say its province is the irrational.

Of psychoanalysis we may say it is anything but provincial.

Freud did not make the irrational rational. He merely demonstrated its importance.

The unconscious must remain irrational paradoxically. Paradoxically it must be understood as incomprehensible to be understood. As what it is. Dreams and free associations and such. Dread that cannot be explained. Felt and understood as impossible to understand.

But beware. The irrational is not a mystery. We feel it when it shows up. Pays a visit like a Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Once again we find the problem of a Hamlet. If you take it far enough into the sea that would have been the death of him. If you see it far from Elsinore and rather in the dark of the would-be-death sea.

§

Who knows no irrational: Idiots and Gods. Only these know none.

Because they either do or believe they do see all. See all the way beyond the sea wall to the bottom of the sea.

Freud sought to make God sub-rational although God is defined as the creature by whom all is understood including the attempt to make Him sub-rational.

The difference a person establishes between himself and his God is precisely the degree to which his God becomes a mystery.

A mystery is neither rational nor irrational because its aim is to be worshipped.

Clearly angered by existential psychoanalysis, Benjamin Wolstein argues that

a child of wistful hopes, this irrational approach proceeds... against the eventual impossibility of doing anything about the void, and then berates its own relative powers for not altering the unalterable... And so it stands on the tantalizing edge of experience, afraid to approach because there may be no exit and no return, but also afraid to move away and miss the absolute moment of the immediate present... Ultimately, the ground of being remains a principle of existential philosophy; it never emerges as a fact of existential experience; and, as the goal of existential therapy, it is irrational.⁵¹

⁵¹ Wolstein, B. 1962. *Irrational Despair: An Examination of Existential Analysis*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe, p. 91.

A Meager Mundo

Be sure as we have said all along the secret signature of irrationality is the imagination. It is precisely thus because otherwise it would not need to be imagined.

“The imagination is the power of the mind over the possibilities of things,” says Stevens: It is “one of the great human powers,” “the *only genius*,” and “the liberty of the mind,” itself.⁵²

This is why chat bots cannot write good nonsense. Ask a chat bot to write something irrational and you won’t get the feeling. You will get dead words that seem only partly incoherent.

Ironically the chat bot cannot escape the feel of rational writing rules. True irrationality exceeds them. The chat bot switches the lights and closes the casket. The imagination bursts forth like a superatom as the source of every possible *value* in ‘the possibilities of things.’

§

Ernst Cassirer says that the imagination “now has universal metaphysical value. Poetic imagination is the *only* clue to reality.”⁵³ This is foolish as it makes a rule for the unruly.

⁵² Stevens 1997, pp. 726-728, emphasis added.

Possibilities are only real in the imagination. Even the Romantic is wedded to a conventional grammar he cannot escape. “We must somehow cleanse the imagination of the romantic,” says Stevens, if we are to strive to speak imaginatively and so irrationally of reality.⁵⁴

If irrationality is vital at all, one must deal with it as metaphysics. Of course it is the proper home.

Where grounds are already forcibly unknown.

And yet without the unknown place, we are left with a meager mundo.

It makes things given. Or nothing at all.

⁵³ Cassirer, E. 1944. “An Essay on Man.” In: *Man in Contemporary Society: A Source Book*, Vol. 1. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 41-57, *emphasis added*.

⁵⁴ Stevens 1997, p. 727.

A Cicada is Crying

A patient in a state of stupor says:

I think that I'm Red Riding Hood and I've swallowed the poison apple [sic], it's my Mum, you think, "Yeah [*un* — a play on *unchi*, ['poo']", right? Then my hemorrhoids [*kireji*] burst [*kireru*], but of course it's nothing like flirting, *dahling*; oh, Doctor, I need you more than anything! — if only I could make you see that, I think I wouldn't need any more caregiving [*kaijo*], I think I wouldn't need any more monsters [*kaiju*], you know, if you think, "Leave me alone, will you [*kureyo*]!?" then the next thing that pops up is a crayon [*kureyn*], right? And a crayon is a pastel [*kurepasu*], right? And you know, I think you could say, "Hi there, Natchan Lemon [a soft drink brand]! Hi there, Natchan Lemon!" too.⁵⁵

and

I want to start right from the beginning, well it is the very beginning, and it's not, I mean it's already begun, you taught me that, Doctor, the very beginning is inside Mummy's tummy. You might say, though, that even Mummy doesn't know what's inside herself, but you could say that I know too, inside Mummy's tummy it was a

⁵⁵ Shingu 2004, p. 3.

sea of blood. I really feel [*tsukuzuku*] how good it is to be alive, a cicada
[*tsukutsukuboshi*] is crying.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Ibid.