Memoirs of My Nervous Illness

DANIEL PAUL SCHREBER

Translated and edited by
IDA MACALPINE
and
RICHARD A. HUNTER

With a new introduction by
SAMUEL M. WEBER

Harvard University Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England
1968

Denkwürdigkeiten

eines

Nervenkranken

nebst Nachträgen

und einem Anhang über die Frage:
„Unter welchen Voraussetzungen darf eine für geisteskrank erachtete Person gegen ihren erklärten Willen in einer Heilanstalt festgehalten werden?“

von

Dr. jur. Daniel Paul Schreber,
Senatspräsident beim Kgl. Oberlandgericht Dresden a. D.

Düsseldorf, Mige in Leipzig.

1908.
NOTES ON THE CREATION OF A BI-LINGUAL EDITION OF

SCHREBER’S MEMOIRS OF MY MENTAL ILLNESS/

DENKWÜRDIGKEITEN EINES NERVENKRANKEN

My intro
The bilingual text of Jacques Lacan’s introduction to the French translation of Schreber
The map of this text and the map of Schreber’s Germany
The bilingual version of Schreber’s text
The bilingual of the newly published texts of Schreber
The complete konkordanz to the McAlpine translation of Schreber’s text

Hooray for Dr. Schreber,
Der echte deutscherAufheber
Did someone say “gehakte Leber”?
Ei Weh! Ei Weh! Ei Weh!

This little song came to me as an inspiration and should be sung to the tune of “Hooray for Captain Spaulding” from the Marx brothers’ film, Animal Crackers.

I have used the 1988 Harvard paper back edition of Schreber’s memoirs for two reasons. It contains the introduction by Samuel Weber and it has the notation of the page numbers from the original 1903 German edition in the margins which numerous scholars use in referring to this text. It is interesting to note that only in the margins of 1955 edition (Dawson) and the 1988 reprint of 1955 edition(Harvard), are the page numbers of the original German edition of Schreber’s Memoirs in German. These page numbers of the original 1903 edition are referred to as “Schreber page numbers” by McAlpine and Hunter. So these two books in English, the 1955 Dawson and the 1988 reprint(Harvard) have two sets of page numbers. Page 37 of the Dawson/Harvard edition has a table of contents which refer only to the Schreber page numbers in the margins, that is, to the original page numbers of the original 1903 German edition. Incidentally, neither of the two recent German editions(1973,1995) of Schreber’s Memoirs (Denk würdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken) that I used to create this bilingual had these Schreber page numbers in the margin.

What I find a little bit strange is that the new Harvard paper back edition of January 2001 of Schreber’s memoirs has excluded (one could almost say “foreclosed”) the excellent introduction by Samuel Weber as well as those page numbers in the margin, to which most writers, such as Lacan in his Seminar III On Psychoses refer.
Another use that these Schreber page numbers have, is that by noticing any gaps in the order of these Schreber page numbers that are in the margins, one can spot the page numbers that were censored by the Schreber family. One might say that this Schreber page number system is the translator’s own Aufschreibsystem.

The German text that I have used is Daniel Paul Schreber’s Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken published by Kadmos Verlag in Berlin, in 1995 which unfortunately did not contain the Appendix, (pages 361-516 of the original book in German) which contain the various official documents from the legal proceedings of Schreber’s appeal for release from the sanitorium. For that, I have used the 1973 Focus Verlag edition, entitled Bürgerliche Wahnwelt um Neunzehnhundert.

I have added at the beginning of this bi-lingual text in English and German, another bi-lingual text which is in English and French. It is the text of Jacques Lacan’s introduction to the French translation and edition of Schreber’s Memoirs. I thought that this would be informative and fitting, and to show that my reason for producing this text is generated by my interest in Jacques Lacan who has given an entire seminar on the topic of this book, that is. Seminar III, The Psychoses, 1955-1956. In the text itself, I have inserted copies of the five plates which were in the original 1955 English edition published by Dawson, as well as the ‘Acknowledgements’ and the page with the quote from Goethe.


At the very end of this bilingual, I have added a concordance which I hope the reader will find useful. This concordance is the result of Janet Lucas’s research (she has put the entire English translation of Schreber’s Memoirs on line) and my suggestion to her to sort this file and prepare a concordance of this entire work.

It is also interesting to consider that the original text of Schreber in German was probably published in the old Gothic script, judging from the reproduction of the title page. Compare this to the writings of Freud in German. To the best of knowledge, there is not one work of Freud that was originally published in German in the old Gothic script.
In understanding the significance of this book, I have found that several books and articles in addition to Freud’s paper, Psycho-Analytic Notes on An Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides), and Lacan’s Seminar III, On Psychoses and his article in his Écrits, On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis, are very helpful. They are:

Dr. Zvi Lothane’s In Defense of Schreber
Eric Santner’s Schreber’s Own Private Germany
Russell Grigg’s From the Mechanism of Psychoanalysis to the Universal Condition of the Symptom: On Foreclosure, from Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis edited by Dany Nobus
David B. Allison’s Psychosis and Sexual Identity
The various articles of Janet Lucas which can be found on the internet at her website, http://www.yorku.ca/lucas/.

This particular project is something that I had wanted to do for over two years, and after having completed a few other projects, I have finally brought this project to a successful end.

The reader will find hundreds of expressions in German that were translated rather strangely by McAlpine into English as well as some paragraphs that appear to be much shorter in English! (some of the paragraphs on pages 139, 165, 185 for instance) And on Schreber page number 487, is only one example where the English translation does not conform to the paragraph breaks in the German text. Here, the English translation does not have a paragraph break where one exists in the German original.
And for those of us that are interested in Yiddish, it is an amazing coincidence that on paged 302 the expression “Putz oder Schmuck” appears, although they mean something entirely different in the two languages of German and Yiddish.

In the foot-note on page 181, the Greek word for fantasy or imagination, in the McAlpine English translation is rendered as φαντασία and in the German translation as φαντασία (Schreber page number 234). I wonder which one was in the original 1903 edition in German.

Having seen quite a few texts of what I would consider to be of lesser importance published in a bilingual form, I am quite surprised that this text has not until now been made available in this more useful form.

Richard G. Klein
August 2005
New York City
MAP OF THE MCAFALPINE EDITION OF SCHREBER’S MEMOIRS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>PAGE # IN MCAFALPINE 1955 Dawson &amp; Sons Ltd. Ed. &amp; 1988 Harvard Univ. Press Ed.</th>
<th>PAGE # IN ORIGINI1903 GERMAN EDITION referred to by MCAFALPINE as “Schreber page”</th>
<th>DATE referred to in the text</th>
<th>Place or explanation of the date referred to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title page: Memoirs of my Nervous Illness</td>
<td>lv (pg lvi is blank)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translators’ Introduction</td>
<td>1-28</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schreber’s Memoirs Title Pages</td>
<td>29-30</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>31-32</td>
<td>iii-iv</td>
<td>Dec 1902</td>
<td>Sonnenstein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Letter to Prof. Flechsig</td>
<td>33-36</td>
<td>vii-xii</td>
<td>Mar 1903</td>
<td>Dresden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>37-39</td>
<td>(pg 40 is blank)</td>
<td>xiii-xiv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>41-43</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap I God &amp; Immortality</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>6-21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap II Crisis in God’s Realms? Soul Murder</td>
<td>54-61</td>
<td>22-32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap III (Not Printed)</td>
<td>61 (2 paragraphs)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>“Unfit for publication”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap IV Personal Experiences during the first &amp; the beginning of the second nervous illness</td>
<td>61-69</td>
<td>34-45</td>
<td>01 Oct 1893</td>
<td>Took office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>09 Nov 1893</td>
<td>Entered Flechsig’s Asylum Leipzig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap VII</td>
<td>Personal Experiences continued; peculiar manifestations of illness. Visions</td>
<td>91-101</td>
<td>81-97</td>
<td>Jun 1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap VIII</td>
<td>Personal Experiences while in Dr. Pierson's Asylum. &quot;Tested Souls&quot;</td>
<td>101-113</td>
<td>98-116</td>
<td>15 Jun 1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap IX</td>
<td>Transfer to Sonnenstein. Changes in the contact with rays. &quot;The writing-down-system&quot;; &quot;Tying-to-celestial-bodies&quot;</td>
<td>113-123</td>
<td>117-134; (133 is 1 sentence)</td>
<td>29 Jun 1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap X</td>
<td>Personal Experiences at Sonnenstein. &quot;Interferences&quot; accompanying contact with the rays. &quot;Creating of a false feeling&quot;</td>
<td>123-131</td>
<td>135-147</td>
<td>Jul 1894 or Aug 1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>Bodily Integrity damaged by miracles</td>
<td>131-139</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII</td>
<td>Content of the voices' talk. &quot;Soul-conception&quot; Soul-Language. Continuation of personal experiences.</td>
<td>139-147</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII</td>
<td>The soul's state of Blessedness as a factor in attraction. Consequences thereof</td>
<td>147-156</td>
<td>Nov 1895 Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV</td>
<td>&quot;Tested Souls&quot; their fate. Personal experiences continued</td>
<td>157-163</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>202-215</td>
<td>Beg.1896 Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 Mar 1896 He sees a children's procession</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI</td>
<td>Compulsive Thinking. Its Effects and Manifestations</td>
<td>171-178</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVII</td>
<td>Continuation of the above; &quot;Picturing in the sense of the soul-language</td>
<td>178-183</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII</td>
<td>God and the process of creation; spontaneous generation; insects created by miracles. &quot;Direction of the gaze.&quot; System-of-examination</td>
<td>183-191</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap XIX</td>
<td>Continuation of the above, God’s omnipotence and man’s freedom of will</td>
<td>191-196</td>
<td>251-261</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap XX</td>
<td>Egocentricity of the rays regarding my person: Further developments of personal affairs</td>
<td>197-203</td>
<td>262-272</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap XXI</td>
<td>Blessedness &amp; Voluptuousness in their mutual relation. Consequences of this relation for personal behavior</td>
<td>203-211</td>
<td>273-286</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap XXII</td>
<td>Final consideration. Future prospects</td>
<td>211-215 (pg 216 is blank)</td>
<td>287-294</td>
<td>13 Mar 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postscripts to the “Memoirs”</td>
<td></td>
<td>217 (pg 218 is blank)</td>
<td>295 (pg 296 is missing/blank)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postscripts, Series First</td>
<td></td>
<td>219</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>Oct 1900-Jun 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Miracles</td>
<td></td>
<td>219-220</td>
<td>297-299</td>
<td>Oct 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Relation of divine &amp; human intelligence</td>
<td></td>
<td>220-221</td>
<td>300-301</td>
<td>11 Oct 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Play-with-human-beings</td>
<td></td>
<td>221-223</td>
<td>302-305</td>
<td>Jan 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Hallucinations</td>
<td></td>
<td>223-229</td>
<td>306-317</td>
<td>Feb 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V The nature of God manifested through nerve-contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>229-239</td>
<td>318-334</td>
<td>Mar 1901-Apr 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI Final considerations. Miscellaneous</td>
<td></td>
<td>239-243</td>
<td>335-343</td>
<td>Apr 1901-May 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Venue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII Cremation</td>
<td>244-246</td>
<td>May 1901</td>
<td>Sonnenstein</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postscripts, Second Series</td>
<td>246-252</td>
<td>Oct 1902</td>
<td>Sonnenstein</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>20 Dec 1902</td>
<td>Released</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>From this point on the German text is from the Focus Verlag 1973 ed.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay: In What Circumstances Can a Person Considered Insane be Detained in an Asylum Against his declared Will Written by, Dr. Daniel Paul Schreber:</td>
<td>255-263</td>
<td>Early 1900</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addenda (Official Documents from the Proceedings Regarding Rescission of Tutelage)</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>377 (pg 378 is missing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Medical Expert’s Report to the Court (Signed) Dr. Weber</td>
<td>267-274</td>
<td>09 Dec 1895</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Asylum &amp; District Medical Officer’s Report Dr. Weber</td>
<td>275-283 (pg 284 us blank)</td>
<td>390-403 (pgs 404-439 are missing)</td>
<td>28 Nov 1900</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Grounds of Appeal Dr. Schreber, Senatspräsident (retired)</td>
<td>285-313</td>
<td>23 Jul 1901</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Dr. Weber’s Expert Report of 5th Apr 1902 (signed: Dr. Weber)</td>
<td>315-327, 452-472</td>
<td>05 Apr 1902</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Judgement of the Royal Superior Court Dresden Signed: Hardraht, Vogel, Dr. Steinmetz, Nicolai, Dr. Paul.</td>
<td>329-356, 473-516</td>
<td>14 Jul 1902</td>
<td>Sonnenstein Dresden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes by Ida McAlpine &amp; Richard A. Hunter Footnotes to pgs 4-325 of the orig. German ed. = “Schreiber page”</td>
<td>357-367</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translators’ Analysis of the Case</td>
<td>369-411</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postscript(author’s)</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>413-416</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1861 November. Father died, aged 53.
1877 Elder brother (3 years his senior) died, aged 38.
1878 Married.

First Illness

1884 Autumn. Stood as candidate for the Reichstag.
1884 October. For some weeks in Sonnenstein Asylum.
1885 December 8. Leipzig Psychiatric Clinic.
1885 June 1. Discharged.
1886 January 1. Took up appointment in Leipzig Landgericht.

Second Illness

1893 June. Informed of approaching appointment to Appeal Court. (Dresden)
1893 October 1. Took up appointment as Presiding Judge.
1894 June 14. Transferred to Lindenhof Asylum. (Pirna)
1894 June 29. Transferred to Sonnenstein Asylum. (Pirna)
1900-1902. Wrote Memoirs and took legal action for his discharge.
1902 December 20. Discharged.
1903 Memoirs published.

Third Illness

1907 May. Mother died, aged 92.
1907 November 14. Wife had stroke. Fell ill immediately afterwards.
1907 November 27. Admitted to Asylum at Leipzig-Dösen.
1911 April 14. Died.
1912 May. Wife died, aged 54.

A note on the three mental hospitals referred to in various ways in the text may also be of help.
(1) Psychiatric Clinic (in-patient department) of the University of Leipzig. Director: Professor Flechsig.
(2) Schloss Sonnenstein. Saxon State Asylum at Pirna on the Elbe, 10 miles above Dresden. Director: Dr. G. Weber.
Daniel Paul Schreber (1842–1911)
Présentation des Mémoires du président Schreber en traduction française

Ces circonstances expliquant que M. Paul Duquenne avait entrepris la traduction des Mémoires du président Schreber, j'en obtins la publication, en feuilleton, dans la revue du Cercle d'épistémologie de l'École normale supérieure, les Cahiers pour l'analyse ; je demandai à Jacques Lacan pour la présentation, qui parut dans le numéro 5, nov-déc. 1966. Le texte complet, relu par Mme Nicole Sels, est paru en 1975, dans la collection le Champ freudien (Seuil).

J.-A. M.

Cette traduction était attendue. Exactement depuis notre séminaire de l'année 1955-1956. Nous nous souvenons d'avoir à son annonce vu se dresser l'oreille de Madame Ida Macalpine qui en hâta sans doute celle qu'alors, avec l'aide de son fils, elle donna en anglais : on constate qu'elle eût pu prendre son temps.

Peut-être un retard si peu motivé mérite-t-il qu'on le retienne plus longtemps sous l'attention, ou qu'on y revienne.

Quoi qu'il en soit, ce séminaire, cinquième de notre enseignement et le troisième du toit de Sainte-Anne, nous montre, comme il nous arrive quand nous nous reportons à ces textes enregistrés, bien des thèmes non nécessaires alors à l'élargissement des catégories reçues dans notre auditoire, mais pour certains d'entre ces thèmes, la date d'où ils devaient


Presentation of the Memoirs of president Schreber in French translation

This translation has been long awaited. To be exact, since our seminar of the year 1955-56. We remember having seen Mrs Ida Macalpine prick up her ears, who no doubt hastened the one she, with the help of her son, was doing in English: it is clear that she could have taken her time.

Perhaps a delay so scarcely justified warrants one's keeping it under scrutiny for longer, or else coming back to it.

Be that as it may, this seminar, as happens when you refer back to these recorded texts, the fifth in our teaching and the third from Saint Anne, demonstrates to us themes not necessary to the broadening of received categories, but some of these themes, dating from when

* The present translation is based on the text published in Ornicar?, revue du Champ freudien, n° 38, 1986, p. 5-9. It is published with the authorisation of Jacques-Alain Miller.
poursuivre la carrière qui les fait maintenant courir les revues, entendons
elles du bel air, ou si l'on veut, du bel esprit.

S'il en est qui viennent dans ces courts mots d'introduction dont nous
accompagnerons la suite de ce que donnera ici notre ami le docteur
Duquenne, ce ne sera que de s'éclairer de la lumière du texte ici produit.

Car ne l'oubliions pas, du « cas Schreber » Freud n'a connu rien d'autre
que ce texte. Et c'est ce texte qui porte en lui tout ce qu'il a su tirer de
révélateur en ce cas.

C'est pourquoi ce séminaire qui s'intitulait de la quatrième des dites
cinq grandes psychoanalyses de Freud, ne pouvait mieux étendre son
assiette qu'à l'appuyer sur le texte même qui lui servit d'objet. Ce qu'à
notre su, nous fûmes le premier à faire avec cette ampleur.

Non pas, bien sûr, que Madame Ida Macalpine ne présente en pré-
puis en postface une psychoanalyse de ce texte qui se veut correctrice
de Freud. Mais elle ne vint que pour qu'en nos deux derniers séminaires
de l'an (27 juin-4 juillet) nous fussions rentrer Freud dans ses droits, y
revenant dans l'article où seulement deux ans après nous avons resserré,
en une construction très décisive pour la suite, à peu près les deux tiers
de la matière couverte dans l'année. Il s'agit de l'article auquel on peut
se reporter sur la « Question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de
la psychose ».

Disons que le texte de Schreber est un grand texte freudien, au sens
où, plutôt que ce soit Freud qui l'éclaire, il met en lumière la pertinence
des catégories que Freud a forgées, pour d'autres objets sans doute, et
d'un point pour la définition duquel il ne suffit pas d'y invoquer le génie,
a moins que l'on n'entende par là une longue aisance gardée à l'endroit
du savoir.

Certes Freud ne repudierait pas la mise à son compte de ce texte,
quand c'est dans l'article où il le promeut au rang de cas qu'il déclare qu'il
ne voit ni indignité, ni même risque, à se laisser guider par un texte aussi
éclatant, dût-il s'exposer au reproche de délirer avec le malade, qui ne
semble guère l'émuvoir.

L'aide que Freud se donne ici, c'est simplement celle, décisive en la
matière, d'y introduire le sujet comme tel, ce qui veut dire ne pas jauger
le fou en termes de déficit et de dissociation des fonctions. Alors que la
simple lecture du texte montre avec évidence qu'il n'est rien de pareil
en ce cas.

C'est bien là pourtant que le génie, s'il est cette aise, ne suffit pas

they would follow the career that nowadays sees them circulating in the
journals, the ones read by those of finer graces (bel air), or, if you like, of refined
intellect (bel esprit).

If some of these themes appear in these short words of introduction with
which we will accompany what follows, provided by our friend Doctor
Duquenne, it is only because they are illuminated by the light this text produces.
For do not forget that Freud knew nothing of the “Schreber case” other than this
text. And it is this text which carries with it everything revelatory that he was
able to draw from this case.

This is why this seminar which takes its title from the fourth of the said five
great psychoanalyses of Freud, could not better enlarge its base than to stress the
very text which served as its object. To our knowledge, we were the first to do
this to such an extent.

Not of course that Mrs Ida Macalpine does not present in pre- and then in
post-face a psychoanalysis of this text which aims at correcting Freud. But it
only appeared in the final two seminars of the year (27th June - 4th July) that I
could restore Freud to his rightful place, returning to this issue just two years
later in an article where, in a construction which proved very decisive for what
followed, we condensed close to two thirds of the material covered in that year.
I refer you to the article: “On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of
psychosis”.

Let's say that Schreber's text is a great Freudian text, in the sense that, rather
than it being Freud who throws light on it, the text itself illuminates the
relevance of categories that Freud has forged, undoubtedly for other objects, and
from a point for the definition of which it does not suffice to invoke genius,
unless one understands by this an extensive facility with respect to knowledge.

Certainly Freud would not repudiate this text's being placed on his ledger,
when it is in the article where he promotes it to the rank of a case that he
declares that he thinks it neither unworthy, nor even risky, to let himself be
guided by such a radiant text; even if he should be exposing himself to the
reproach of sharing the sick man's delusion, which scarcely seems to disturb
him.

The facility of Freud here is simply to make the decisive step of introducing
the subject as such, which means that the mad are no longer sized up in terms of
deficits and dissociative functions. So simply reading the text clearly shows that
in this case there is nothing of that sort.

It is, nevertheless, certainly there that genius, if it comes with such facility,
still does not suffice.

encore. Car pour construire le sujet comme il convient à partir de l'inconscient, c'est de logique qu'il s'agit, comme il suffit d'entrouvrir un livre de Freud pour s'en apercevoir, et dont il ne reste pas moins que nous soyons le premier à en avoir fait la remarque.

Faire crédit au psychotique ne serait rien de plus en ce cas, que ce qui restera de tout autre, aussi librement traité: enfoncer une porte ouverte, n'est absolument pas savoir sur quel espace elle ouvre.

Quand nous lisons plus loin sous la plume de Schreber que c'est à ce que Dieu ou l'Autre jouisse de son être passivisé, qu'il donne lui-même support, tant qu'il s'abandonne au rien-penser pour que Dieu, cet Autre fait d'un discours infini, se dérobe, et que de ce texte déchiré que lui-même devient, s'élève le hurlement qu'il qualifie de miraculé comme pour témoigner que la détresse qu'il traînait n'a plus avec aucun sujet rien à faire, — ne trouve-t-on pas là suggestion à s'orienter des seuls termes précis que fournir le discours de Lacan sur Freud?

La thématique que nous mesurons à la patience qu’exige le terrain où nous avons à la faire entendre, dans la polarité, la plus récente à s’y promouvoir, du sujet de la jouissance au sujet que représente le signifiant pour un signifiant toujours autre, n’est-ce pas ce qui va nous permettre une définition plus précise de la paranoïa comme identifiant la jouissance dans ce lieu de l’Autre comme tel.

Voilà-t-il pas que le texte de Schreber s’avère un texte à inscrire dans le discours lacanien, il faut le dire après un long détour où c’est d’ailleurs que ce discours a rassemblé ses termes. Mais la confirmation en est du même aloi que celle qu’en reçoit le discours de Freud, ce qui n’est guère surprenant, puisque c’est le même discours.

A vrai dire, cette traduction vient éclairer ce discours le plus récent, exactement comme il en fut pour le discours premier de Freud.

Elle nous permettra quant à nous, peut-être de reprendre le fil qui nous a conduit à l’aventure freudienne. Soit cette tranchée ouverte avec notre thèse, ce cas Aimée que nous n’inscrivons pas dans le recueil qui paraît de nos Écrits.

On remarquera peut-être en effet, mentionnée en quelques points de ce recueil, cette phase de notre réflexion qui fut d’abord celle d’un psychiatre, laquelle s’armait du thème de la connaissance paranoïaque. A nous aider en cette collation, quelqu’un a déjà noté que nous n’éclairons guère cette notion dont il reste fort peu de traces.

Quelle belle carrière d’essayiste nous eussions pu nous faire avec ce thème favorable à toutes les modulations de l’esthétique! Qu’on se rappelle seulement ce que savait en dérouler notre ami Dali.

Presentation of the Memoirs of president Schreber

For to construct the subject by taking the unconscious as a point of departure is a matter of logic, as a glance at one of Freud’s books is enough to make clear—and it remains no less true that I am the first to have made the remark.

To give credit to the psychotic, in this case, would be nothing more than that which will remain for any other, treated just as liberally: to break down an unlocked door is to have absolutely no idea of what space it opens onto.

When one reads in what follows in Schreber’s hand that he himself gives support to God or the Other enjoying his passified being (être passivisé), so long as he abandons himself to the thinking-of-nothing so that God, this Other consisting of an infinite discourse, withdraws and that from this lacerated (déchiré) text that he becomes, there rises the bellowing that he qualifies as miraculous, as if testifying that the distress that it reveals no longer has anything to do with any subject—does one not find there a suggestion to orient oneself with the precise terms that alone Lacan’s discourse on Freud provides.

The theme that we measure by the patience which such terrain demands where we have to make it understood, in the polarity, the most recent to be promoted there, between the subject of jouissance and the subject that the signifier represents for an always other signifier, is not this what will enable us to move towards a more precise definition of paranoia as identifying jouissance in this place of the Other as such.

Does not Schreber’s text turn out to be a text to be inscribed in the Lacanian discourse, this must be said, after a long detour during which it was from elsewhere that this discourse assembled its terms. But the confirmation of this comes from the same mould as the one that Freud’s discourse receives from it, which is hardly surprising, since it is the same discourse.

In actual fact this translation clarifies this most recent discourse, precisely as it did Freud’s initial discourse.

Perhaps this will allow us to take up again the thread which leads us to the Freudian venture. That is, this pathway (tranchée) which opens with my thesis, the case of Aimée, which I did not include in the collection of my Écrits.

Perhaps one will note, mentioned at several points in this collection, this phase of our reflection, which was firstly that of a psychiatrist, which armed itself with the theme of paranoïac knowledge (connaissance paranoïaque). To aid us in this collation, someone has already noted that we hardly clarified this notion which has left very few traces.

What a beautiful career as an essayist I could have made for myself with this theme so favorable to all the modulations of aesthetics. One need only recall the way our friend Dali knew how to unravel it.
Certainly paranoiac knowledge is of everything that parades as knowledge, the least obscene, but this is not to diminish its obtuseness.

Following a rhythm which we have become accustomed to, after ten years our thesis began to be read in such avant-garde places as the asylum of Saint-Albans, and of course the Clinique de la Faculté de Paris (1932-1942).

The inadequacy of psychoanalytic teaching had to be publicly exposed for me to become engaged in the task. 1956-1966 marks the same interval. Two years still remained before the “question preliminary” was given its complete sequel.

What does this mean except that we are not interested in anything other than in the training of subjects capable of entering into a certain experience that we have learnt to centre where it is.

Where it is—as constituted by the true structure of the subject—which as such is not complete, but divided, and lets fall an irreducible residue, the logical analysis of which is in process.

Now it is easy to introduce thought to this structure, as it is easy to introduce a child, at a relatively early age (in school development, if not in analytic phases) to the study of mathematics through set theory.

It is at the level of mathematics as it is being developed that the treatment begins.

This can give us an idea of the resistance that is encountered, amongst psychoanalysts, by the theory on which their training itself depends.

Apart from the fact that this is where the psychoanalysing function gives the subject's constitution its greatest anxiety-provoking employment.

A type of bungled action (actes manqués)—perhaps they are the only ones worthy of their name because in neurosis they are successful acts—a type of ‘bungled on purpose’ act, stands out very prominently in the midst of the theoretical transmission that the training of psychoanalysts implies.

This is, as one can imagine, the domain in which proof is at its most difficult, but how can we fail to see one in this unlikely indifference to the text of President Schreber's Mémoires - which meant that it was published in English by an outsider (Mrs Ida Macalpine, as a student of Edward Glover's, who adhered too strongly to the requirements of science, has not been made a member, unless recently, of the London Society), that in France it is in a particularly sensitive zone, but on the fringe in relation to a group (the one that my teaching sustains), a zone represented by the
les Cahiers pour l'Analyse, que viennent au jour enfin les Mémoires auxquels nous avons consacré tant de soins.

Puissent-ils rappeler à ceux qui peuvent aller jusqu'à entendre ce que nous avons dit de l'implication dans le symptôme du sujet supposé savoir, à la veille d'une journée sur la clinique, comme le fait que la conception du trouble psychiatrice est affaire du clinicien, — ce qu'impose le seul abord de ce texte poignant.

C'est que le dit clinicien doit s'accommoder à une conception du sujet, d'où il ressort que comme sujet il n'est pas étranger au lien qui le met pour Schreber, sous le nom de Flechsig, en position d'objet d'une sorte d'érotomanie mortifiance, et que la place où il se tient dans la photographie sensationnelle dont s'ouvre le livre d'Ida Macalpine, soit devant l'image murale géante d'un cerveau, a en l'affaire un sens.

Il ne s'agit là de nul accès à une ascèse mystique, non plus que d'aucune ouverture effusive au vécu du malade, mais d'une position à quoi seule introduit la logique de la cure.


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our major indebtedness is to Victor Kreitner, Doctor of Law. He played an important part at all stages of the translation, and was untiring in helping us unravel obscure passages and guiding us through the maze of legal terms and technicalities.

Emily Cutler gave invaluable assistance in the preparation of the manuscript and proof-reading.

We thank Mr. Marley of Wm. Dawson & Sons for his efficiency and courtesy at all times.

Finally we thank: Dr. Raymond Gosselin, editor of the Psychoanalytic Quarterly, New York, for permission to reprint our paper, "The Schreber Case", which appeared in July, 1953, enlarged and adapted for the book; the Trustees of the British Museum, London, for permission to reproduce the painting by Pradilla; Messrs. C. Marhold of Halle, for permission to reproduce plates II, III, and IV of Sonnenstein Asylum, from "Deutsche Heil- und Pflegeanstalten für Psychischkranker" (1910); and Messrs. S. Karger of Berlin, publishers of "Monatschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie", for permission to reproduce plate I of Professor Flechsig.
MEMOIRS OF MY NERVOUS ILLNESS
DANIEL PAUL SCHREBER

Translated and edited by
IDA MACALPINE
RICHARD A. HUNTER
With a new introduction by
SAMUEL M. WEBER

Daniel Paul Schreber
Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken
Memoirs of My Nervous Illness

DANIEL PAUL SCHREBER

Translated and edited by
IDA MACALPINE
and
RICHARD A. HUNTER

With a new introduction by
SAMUEL M. WEBER

Harvard University Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England
1988
Copyright © 1955, and Introduction to the 1988 Edition
© 1988, by the President and Fellows of Harvard College
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The Introduction to the 1988 Edition was originally
published in German as the introduction to Daniel Paul
Schreber, Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken, © 1973 by
Verlag Ullstein, Berlin.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Schreber, Daniel Paul, 1842–1911.
Memories of my nervous illness.
Translation of: Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken.
Bibliography: p.
2. Paranoia—Patients—Germany—Biography. 3. Paranoia
—Case studies. I. Title.
RC520.S33A313 1988 616.89'7'00924 [B] 87-25133
ISBN 0-674-36515-0 (cloth)
ISBN 0-674-36516-9 (paper)
Bürgerliche Wahnwelt um Neunzehnhundert

Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken
von
Daniel Paul Schreber

Mit Aufsätzen von Franz Baumayer, einem Vorwort, einem Materialanhang und sechs Abbildungen herausgegeben von Peter Heiligenthal und Reinhard Volk

Graphik Design: Dieter u. Ursula Gielnik, Wiesbaden
Bei der Gestaltung des Umschlags wurde die Fotografie von Prof. Claude aus André Bretons „Nadja“, Paris 1928 verwendet.

1. Auflage 1973
© dieser Ausgabe by Focus-Verlag Wiesbaden 1972
Alle Rechte vorbehalten.
Druck: Poeschel & Schulz-Schomburg Eschwege

FOCUS-VERLAG
Torquato Tasso:

Und wenn der Mensch in seiner Qual verstummt,
Gab mir ein Gott zu sagen, was ich leide.

Act 5, Scene 5.

And if tormented and in anguish man is mute,
God granted me to tell of what I suffer.

CONTENTS

Introduction to the 1988 Edition          vii
Translators' Introduction              1
Daniel Paul Schreber: Memoirs of My Nervous Illness  29
   Schreber's Table of Contents         37
Notes                                    357
Translators' Analysis of the Case       369
References                               413

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

Introduction                                1
Daniel Paul Schreber: Memoirs of My Nervous Illness       29
   Schreber's Table of Contents                     37
Notes                                             357
Discussion                                       369
   Freud's Analysis—Outline of Schreber's Illness—  372
   Psychopathology of Psychosis                     372
References                                      413
INTRODUCTION TO THE 1988 EDITION

Samuel M. Weber
Translated by Benjamin Gregg

"Who's Ever Heard of Dr. Schreber?"

On 28 October 1884 elections to the German Reichstag were held. In the Saxon city of Chemnitz the candidate of the National Liberal Party suffered a crushing defeat. A local newspaper carried an article on this unsuccessful candidacy, headlined: "Who's ever heard of Dr. Schreber?"

For the hapless Doctor of Jurisprudence Daniel Paul Schreber, at the time Landgerichtsdirektor (chairman of the state court) in Chemnitz, the election returns marked the end of a political career even before it had started. The unsuccessful candidate sought to recover from the strains of the election campaign by taking the waters. But, again, the desired success never materialized: on 8 December 1884 the unknown Dr. Schreber was admitted to the Psychiatric Clinic at the University of Leipzig. There he remained for half a year before being discharged, apparently cured, at the beginning of June 1885, whereupon he resumed his work as a judge. His first and only attempt to establish himself in German politics had failed ingloriously, yet a different kind of "politics" and a different kind of glory was still in store for him.

Who's ever heard of Dr. Schreber? For the second son of the famous physician, orthopedist, and pedagogue Daniel Gottlieb Moritz Schreber, this was scarcely a pleasant question. His father— to this day revered by many as the inventor of the Schrebergarten (a small, private allotment garden within an urban area)—was in his time a leading proponent of German orthopedic gymnastics and was anything but unknown. His books numbered among the bestsellers of the nineteenth century; the most successful of his publications—Medical Indoor Gymnastics; or, A System of Hygienic Exercises for Home Use To Be Practiced Anywhere without Apparatus or Assistance by Young and Old of
Either Sex, for the Preservation of Health and General Activity—had reached by 1909 its thirty-second edition and a total of 205,000 copies printed. The Biographical Lexicon of Outstanding Physicians of All Times and Peoples (edited by Dr. August Hirsch) remarks that Dr. Schreber's achievements in orthopedics and remedial gymnastics “contributed greatly to the development and popularization of active, so-called German remedial gymnastics, based on scientific physical training, in distinction to passive, so-called Swedish remedial gymnastics.””

Because the titles of his works distinctly characterize the interests and endeavors of their author, several deserve to be mentioned, beginning with one which suggests that the family's political activism did not begin with Daniel Paul: Practical Training from a Medical Standpoint, also a Matter of State. Other books by the elder Schreber include: Detrimental Carriage and Habits of the Child, Callipedes or Rearing unto Beauty through the Natural and Uniform Promotion of Normal Bodily Development, Anthropos, the Structural Wonder of the Human Organism, The Pangymnastikon; or, the Complete System of Gymnastics Using Only One Piece of Equipment, and—last but not least—The Family Friend as Educator and Conductor to Domestic Happiness, to Popular Health and to the Refinement of Man, for the Fathers and Mothers of the German People.

Thus Dr. Schreber senior was no simple orthopedist but rather a reformer filled with missionary zeal. The subtitle of one of his books expresses his goal most clearly: A Doctrine of Happiness for the Physical Life of Man. Not for a moment did he ever doubt that his efforts to raise the gymnastics movement to the level of a science would be of epoch-making significance for the German people. Accordingly, the Pangymnastikon begins with the proclamation: “We salute German gymnastics as a sign of the revivification of the robust German popular spirit in a perfected and ennobled form corresponding to the level of general cultural development.”

This development, according to D. G. M. Schreber, reaches its zenith in the gymnastics movement:

For centuries the vital German popular spirit wrestled in silent, open battle with the dark powers of medieval popery and jesuitism, without ever permitting them to smother its vigor . . . Until 1618, and despite many earlier tests, this vigor managed to preserve itself in many essential aspects of spiritual and physical life . . . Of these beautiful blossoms of popular German national life, the monstrosity of the Thirty Years' War destroyed nearly all traces . . . It took many, many years before the still glorious embers of the German popular spirit, mired deep in the ruins and ashes left behind, could again burst forth in individual flames. Yet even these various figures, the great spirits of a German nation now regenerating itself, were merely heralds of a better age which they, despite their valiant work, were never themselves to know. Two whole centuries were to pass before the era of rejuvenation could begin for the life of the German people and for its vital forces. Praise be to God! We, the generations now living, have entered this era, have crossed its threshold . . . Gymnastics is thus no passing fashion, but the young and ennobled instinct of the old but still healthy root of Germanic national life.3

“Silent, open battles” against “dark powers”; “beautiful blossoms” destroyed by a “monstrosity”; “ruins and ashes” following the devastation; and, above all, the inextinguishable flames “still shining forth,” impatiently awaiting a better age: these set the stage for the scene that would be fully performed only by Daniel Paul Schreber. His father's contribution to this development can be summed up by the epigraph to his Pangymnastikon: “The prevailing institution of gymnastics suffers in general from a random plurality of different forms of exercise. What we need is a system.”

Accordingly, Moritz Schreber saw his mission as that of bestowing scientific cultivation upon the “young and ennobled instinct of the . . . still healthy root of Germanic national life.” Long before he invented the garden that was to immortalize his name, he was convinced that his historical mission could only be that of gardener to the German spirit and body. As an educator he strove to separate, even in children, the “noble” from the “base spores”; as a physician he was convinced that moral improvement is inseparable from the body's condition. For the epigraph to his first book—The Book of Health—he chose a quotation by Rückert: “Bear in mind that a god resides in your body and that the temple at all times must be spared desecration.” For his son, too, a god was to reside in the body, but the temple was not to escape desecration.

Indeed, not even Dr. Schreber senior was spared. In 1851, during his daily gymnastic exercises, a heavy iron ladder fell on his head, inducing a chronic headache that affected him until his death in 1861. During this period of declining health the elder
Dr. Schreber is supposed to have experienced "hallucinations with a pathological urge to murder" (according to the medical history written by his son).  

The family friend of the German people, a man who aspired to lead its fathers and mothers to domestic happiness, to contribute to popular health and to the ennoblement of man, left behind a wife, two sons, and three daughters. The oldest son, Daniel Gustav, became a lawyer, as his brother, Daniel Paul, did soon after him. Whether Daniel Gustav ever achieved his father's goals, we do not know; we know only that he was named Gerichtsrat (judge) in 1877 and that, several weeks later, he took his life with a gun. He was thirty-eight years old, his brother thirty-four.  

What, then, do we know about Dr. Schreber? Up to his electoral defeat, not very much. We are, however, able to make several conjectures about his childhood and upbringing, since his father had very definite ideas about child rearing. The following passage from his Book of Health demonstrates his philosophy quite clearly:  

The tempers of the small child, making themselves known by the child’s screaming and crying for no apparent reason, . . . expressing nothing more than whim, the first emergence of obstinacy, . . . must be confronted in a positive manner . . . by quickly diverting the child’s attention, through stern admonitions or, if all else fails . . . by repeated, physically perceptible admonitions . . . In this way—and only in this way—the child becomes conscious of its dependence on the external world and learns . . . submission . . . This kind of procedure is necessary but once, or at most twice—and one will have become master of the child forever.  

That the author of these lines became “master” of his child—indeed, “forever”—is just as certain as the fact that one of these children, Daniel Paul, never, for the rest of his life, ceased to cry out against this authority.  

Other than that, most of what we know about the life of Daniel Paul Schreber derives from what he wrote about himself and from the descriptions contained in the medical records of the various asylums where he spent twelve years of his life. According to one such report Schreber "was quite gifted and had always been an excellent pupil. He is described as being of good-natured and sociable character. In his later life he demonstrated great talent and climbed the rungs of the career ladder relatively quickly. His last position was that of Senatspräsident [president of a panel of judges] at the Superior Court [court of appeal] at Dresden. He led, as far as we know, a thoroughly respectable life.”  

The single event that might have cast a faint shadow on this thoroughly respectable life—prior to his illness—was his marriage to Sabine Behr, daughter of a senior director at the Municipal Theater in Leipzig, hence a match the Schreber family hardly considered suitable. Not only did Schreber have a famous father; for three hundred years the family itself had been prominent for its outstanding lawyers and scholars. Daniel Paul’s great-grandfather, Daniel Godefredus Schreberus (as he called himself with his latinized name), was the first Schreber to attain literary renown, through works that reveal a clear affinity to the pursuits of descendents such as Daniel Gottlieb Moritz Schreber. We find for example that the grandfather of the man who invented the Schrebergarten was himself concerned with agricultural problems as impediments to human progress. One might mention his Report on the Caterpillars Which in 1751 and in the Current Year Caused Great Devastation to the Harvest in Thuringia and Adjoining Areas of Saxony, as well as his Instructions on Stabilizing Quicksand and Making Arid Fields into Meadows, published in Leipzig in 1764. A family tradition like this can hardly have been without consequence for the little known Dr. Daniel Paul Schreber, especially following his unsuccessful candidacy for the Reichstag. Shortly thereafter, he was afflicted with hypochondria, in particular, with the notion that he was becoming emaciated. Finally, it became necessary to commit Dr. Schreber to the Psychiatric Clinic at the University of Leipzig, in a "very unstable state of mind" according to the hospital records, and concerned that he would "die any moment of a heart attack."  

Again, we know very little about this first sojourn in the Leipzig clinic, which lasted six months. The extant medical records mention speech impediments, two suicide attempts, hypersensitivity to noise and a "weepy disposition." Schreber himself writes only about certain difficulties in using the scales, whose construction was unfamiliar to him, and whose accuracy he was therefore unable to verify. He nonetheless allows that these "are only minor points on which I place little importance," (M, p. 62). His weight remained a primary cause of concern for him, however: he was still claiming at the time of his discharge to
have lost thirty to forty pounds (“gained 2 lbs.”, a report states laconically). In the Leipzig clinic Schreber met for the first time Dr. Paul Emil Flechsig, the clinic director who treated him and whose photograph stood for many years on the desk of Schreber’s wife.

After being discharged in 1885, Schreber resumed his work as a judge and “spent eight happy years with my wife, on the whole quite happy ones, rich also in outward honors and marred only from time to time by the repeated disappointment of our hope of being blessed with children” (M, p. 63). The high point of these years was Schreber’s appointment as Senatspräsident at the Dresden Superior State Court. In the period immediately preceding his official appointment, when he had already been informed of it, he dreamed that his “earlier neuroses had returned.” Stranger still is the following incident: “One morning while still in bed (whether still half asleep or already awake I cannot remember), I had a feeling which, thinking about it later when fully awake, struck me as highly peculiar. It was the idea that it really must be rather pleasant to be a woman succumbing to intercourse. This idea was so foreign to my whole nature that I may say I would have rejected it with indignation if fully awake” (M, p. 63).

Following worsening insomnia and states of anxiety, he placed himself—shortly after assuming his new office—once again under the care of Dr. Flechsig. The initial session was encouraging: Flechsig displayed “a remarkable eloquence which affected me deeply” (M, p. 65), Schreber recalled; but his condition declined rapidly despite Flechsig’s eloquence and that of his assistant, Dr. Täuscher—“I cannot deny him also my recognition [Anerkennung] of the excellent way he spoke to me on that occasion” (M, p. 67). Yet Schreber was soon to be occupied with voices and discourses of a much different nature—indeed, ceaselessly for the next eight years in which he was institutionalized, until his discharge in 1902 (and no doubt even after that). He recorded the history of these years in a book which brought the fame that had eluded him in politics. Memoirs of My Nervous Illness, published in 1903, made its author the “most frequently quoted patient in psychiatry,” according to Macalpine and Hunter (M, p. 8), as he became “the Schreber case.”

Although the Memoirs went through only one edition, a large part of which was bought up and destroyed by horrified family members, the book was quickly declared a textbook by the psychiatric community, and Schreber was celebrated as a perfect example of paranoia. Whether these developments were known to Schreber himself is not certain, but in any case they fulfilled a wish he formulates at the end of his book: “And so I believe I am not mistaken in expecting that a very special palm of victory will eventually be mine. I cannot say with any certainty what form it will take. As possibilities I would mention . . . that great fame will be attached to my name surpassing that of thousands of other people much better mentally endowed!” (M, p. 214).

Eight years after the Memoirs appeared, Freud published his “Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoïdes)” and transformed the Schreber case from a psychiatric case into a psychoanalytic one whose renown, while limited, has been tenacious. In the same year that Freud’s essay appeared (1911), when that “special palm of victory” was finally his, Daniel Paul Schreber died in the Leipzig asylum where since 1907—for the third time—he had been hospitalized. For the final portion of his life we are again dependent upon medical records. The important events in the period following his discharge in 1903 are the death of his mother, with whom he had then lived for a time, as well as his wife’s stroke shortly before the third onset of his own illness. His years of institutionalization are marked both by increasing isolation and by repeated efforts to communicate nonetheless. The author of the Memoirs often tried to “express his wishes in undecipherable written characters.” Again and again, he is said to have called out, in a tormented voice, “Ha—ha!”

Who, then, has ever heard of Dr. Schreber? Other than the psychiatrists and the psychoanalysts, who knew him only as a “case,” few people indeed. Walter Benjamin counted Memoirs among his collection of books authored by the mentally ill. Elias Canetti devotes two chapters of Crowds and Power to Schreber, again as a “case,” though not as a purely psychological one; he treats Schreber as a paragon of the “ruler.” And today in France “Le Président Schreber” belongs to the canon of the often mentioned but rarely read. Will we ever learn who he was?

The Schreber Case: Reason on Trial

Perhaps the question seems unnecessary: after all, we have Schreber right here, in our very hands, before our eyes; we need only read the book to become acquainted with it—and with...
him. But what do we mean by “know” and by “read”? It may not be entirely unwarranted, before turning to the text itself, to linger a moment on this question. For “knowing” can mean many things, as Hegel’s well-known distinction, between the “well-known” and “knowing well” (between bekannt and erkannt) reminds us:

The well-known, just because it is familiar, is not known well. The commonest way in which we deceive either ourselves or others about knowledge is by assuming it to be familiar, and accepting it on that account; with all its pros and cons, such knowing never gets anywhere, and it knows not why. Subject and Object, God, Nature, Understanding, sense experience and so on, are uncritically taken for granted as familiar, established as valid, and made into fixed points of departure and return. While these remain unmoved, the knowing activity goes back and forth between them, thus moving only on their surface.

Even the most cursory look at how Schreber’s Memoirs has been received to date reveals a discrepancy between the “fixed points” of the text and the interpretation by its readers, mainly psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, who generally seek in it the familiar and the long-known, and who—mirabile dictu—find it there. What Freud asserted critically, of the “interest felt by the practical psychiatrist in such delusional formations as these,” namely that “marvelling is not the beginning of understanding,” also holds for such readers. What is at issue here is whether this text is to be read solely as a case, and if so, then as what kind. Schreber himself was convinced that his was “a quite remarkable case, unique in the field of psychiatric experience” (M, p. 292): an exemplar, perhaps, but a unique and therefore notable one. His physician, Geheimrat (Privy Councillor) Dr. Weber, saw the matter quite differently:

But however varied and differently coloured the individual cases of mental illness may be, however characteristic and singular an individual case may appear to careful observation, yet... one cannot deny that... certain groupings emerge, certain complexes of pathological manifestations, which in their development, course and outcome, in the involvement of single psychic functions are more or less demarcated from each other [and]... have led to the delineation of a certain number of different disease forms. As colourful and inexhaustible the individual variations of cases of mental illness may be, as constant are the main outlines, and apart from the arabesques of the individual case the basic characteristics of the forms of illness are repeated with almost surprising, monotonous regularity. (M, p. 317)

The case is—so to speak—clear as daylight. As “colourful and inexhaustible” the individual characteristics that depart from the norm may be, the “main outlines” are nonetheless “constant”—and repeat themselves with the same monotonous regularity as Dr. Weber’s rolling sentences. The individual case may well be “varied and differently coloured,” but this is the coloring of an arabesque, a variation that celebrates the individual detail without ever questioning its membership within a larger whole. One immediately knows of what the exemplar is an example; only a madman or the ignorant layperson would ever place it into question: “Considered from this scientifically established point of view [Dr. Schreber’s] mental illness and its peculiarities, far from not being known to psychiatry, clearly belong to a well-known and well-characterized form of mental illness, paranoia, and shows all its important distinguishing features” (M, p. 317).

Dr. Weber’s exposition demonstrates clearly what for traditional psychiatry (yet not for it alone) an exemplar or case is: subsumption under the well-known, “paranoia,” by identifying “all its important distinguishing features.” If psychiatrists celebrated the Schreber case, then, they did so because they saw it not as something unique, but rather as a particular example, replete with “all [the] important distinguishing features”—symptoms—of paranoia.

We find that psychiatrists essentially knew Schreber long before they ever met him either in person or through his writing. They valued his writing but only as a particular case in which they thought they found what they had already always known: that cluster of characteristics which they termed “paranoia.” As an individual case Schreber mirrored their knowledge, and the persons thus reflected were delighted. In this individual instance of the pathology of paranoia, psychiatry discovered its own image and thought it had thereby recognized Dr. Schreber as well.

That the consequences of this attitude are not merely academic is shown by the following example: during the lawsuit, in which Schreber challenged his being placed under tutelage for reasons of mental illness, Dr. Weber in several court-ordered opinions
expresses his view that the proposed publication of Memoirs was only further evidence of the author’s mental derangement. That Schreber “felt the urge to describe the history of his latter years” might, Dr. Weber allows, still be “understandable”:

But the patient harbours the urgent desire to have his “Memoirs” . . . printed and made available to the widest circles and he is therefore negotiating with a publisher—until now of course without success. When one looks at the content of his writings, and takes into consideration the abundance of indiscretions relating to himself and others contained in them, the unembarrassed detailing of the most doubtful and aesthetically impossible situations and events, the use of the most offensive vulgar words, etc., one finds it quite incomprehensible that a man otherwise tactful and of fine feeling could propose an action which would compromise him so severely in the eyes of the public, were not his whole attitude to life pathological, and he unable to see things in their proper perspective, and if the tremendous overvaluation of his own person caused by lack of insight into his illness had not clouded his appreciation of the limitations imposed on man by society. (M, pp. 282–283)

Of Dr. Weber’s argument—whose significance cannot be underestimated in a lawsuit concerning nothing less than the individual’s right to determine the course of his own life—Freud remarks: “Surely we can hardly expect that a case history which sets out to give a picture of deranged humanity and of its struggles to rehabilitate itself should exhibit ‘discretion’ and ‘aesthetic’ charm.”

No doubt about it: the contrast apparent here between the traditional psychiatrist and the founder of psychoanalysis marks a change, from a concept of science characterized by a narcissistic self-satisfaction with the well-known, to an effort to bring these “fixed points” into motion and to pose questions which might lead to new knowledge. And yet—or perhaps, therefore—the question of the structure and goal of this knowledge becomes unavoidable. Even though Freud’s reading is incomparably more differentiated and productive than a traditional psychiatrist’s was or ever could be, for Freud, too—and even more so for his epigones—Schreber’s text remained a description of a particular instance or case, a medical record. Not the least of Freud’s interests in the Schreber case was to confirm psychoanalytic theory in an area where it was less at home: psychosis. In his interpretation of the case Freud attempts to demonstrate that the conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis is legitimate. The goal, he writes, is to find with the aid of psychoanalysis “a translation of the paranoid mode of expression into the normal one,” the “normal” mode being none other than the language of psychoanalysis. In a certain sense, then, and like traditional psychiatry, Freud’s discourse preserves the “fixed points of departure and return” criticized by Hegel. With his own peculiar mixture of tact and purposiveness, Freud explores Schreber’s proliferating phantasms, drawing them ever closer to a fixed point within his theory in order finally to be able to assert in an unmistakably triumphant tone: “Thus in the case of Schreber we find ourselves once again on the familiar ground of the father-complex.” Yet the translation from a paranoid mode of expression (Schreber’s) to a normal one (the psychoanalytic) succeeds almost two well, and Freud feels compelled to refer to the independence of the theory: “These and many other details of Schreber’s delusional structure sound almost like endopsychic perceptions of the processes whose existence I have assumed in these pages as the basis of our explanation of paranoia. I can nevertheless call a friend and fellow-specialist to witness that I had developed my theory of paranoia before I became acquainted with the contents of Schreber’s book.”

Freud did not, he asserts, plagiarize Schreber, although the similarity of their views leads him to ask, “whether there is more delusion in my theory than I should like to admit, or whether there is more truth in Schreber’s delusion than other people are as yet prepared to believe.”

This remark is not mere coquetry on Freud’s part; rather, it indicates what is essentially new in a theory that, unlike traditional psychiatry, no longer unquestioningly presupposes a boundary between madness and truth, between the pathological and the normal, between irrationality and reason. Hence the special structure of psychoanalytic “translation”: it is no longer merely a procedure of subsumption but now also a practice of reading and interpretation:

[Schreber] himself not infrequently presses the key into our hands, by adding a gloss, a quotation or an example to some delusional proposition in an apparently incidental manner, or even by expressly denying some parallel to it
that has arisen in his own mind. For when this happens, we have only to follow our usual psycho-analytic technique—to strip his sentence of its negative form, to take his example as being the actual thing, or his quotation or gloss as being the original source—and we find ourselves in possession of what we are looking for, namely a translation of the paranoid mode of expression into the normal one.22

Freud’s method of reading no longer consists merely in collecting, describing and uncritically evaluating characteristic traits (Merkmale); on the contrary, it focuses on what might be called the text’s “stains” or “marks” (Male), on that which is incidental, which has been added, that which is considered unimportant and has been denied: not Merkmale, but Male are sought after and noted down, as the carriers of a meaning expres- sible only through disguise and distortion.

Psychoanalysis, then, at least in Freud’s version, is not a theory of Merkmale, which takes the subject’s statements merely as the neutral expression of a content; rather, it attempts to understand forms of articulation as if they themselves were the contents, as in dreams, jokes, and slips of various kinds. Freud’s approach to dreams considers a dream not as the formation of meanings but as the deformation of wishes, not as Darstellung but as Entstellung. The distinction is crucial. Whereas an expressivist theory neglects the conditions under which the expressed aro- se in favor of its meaning, Freud tries to work out just these condi- tions. His concept of the unconscious works less with definite contents than with mechanisms of articulation like “condensation,” “displacement,” and a “concern with the ability of something to be expressed” (Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit), the goal of which is not the expression or communication of meaning, but its distortion in the service of censorship.

This theory of unconscious articulation as distortion allows Freud to question the uniqueness of the Schreber case from the very start of his study. The key question is whether “a printed case history can take the place of personal acquaintance with the patient.”23 Freud’s answer derives from the peculiar nature of paranoia. Paranoics possess “the peculiarity of betraying... precisely those things which other neurotics keep hidden as a secret.” Furthermore, as Freud explains, this betrayal always takes place “in a distorted form.” But this interpretation only establishes the possibility of examining paranoid persons psychoanalytically; the problem of a text as a substitute for the bodily presence of the analysand requires additional grounding.

This Freud finds in the peculiar mode of the paranoid form of expression: paranoics “say only what they choose to say.” It is a question of paranoid speech as a pure discourse of the will: “Since paranoics cannot be compelled to overcome their internal resist- ances,” they are not willing to enter into the dialogue of analysis and therefore can be examined using their written expressions just as if they were personally present. They say only what they want to say—and yet in so doing they say (or write) something else: for they betray themselves, indeed even more so than the neurotic, precisely because they say only what they want to say—“in a distorted form,” to be sure. But what can “distortion” mean in this context?

In one of his last essays Freud treats this issue in the context of the biblical presentation and distortion of the story of Moses. Freud argues for a twofold understanding of the word “distortion”: “We might well lend the word Entstellung [distortion] the double meaning to which it has a claim but of which today it makes no use. It should mean not only ‘to change the appearance of something’ but also ‘to put something in another place, to displace.’”24

Freud’s description of the biblical text as distortion is equally valid for the paranoid’s text, and in particular for Memoirs of My Nervous Illness:

Thus almost everywhere noticeable gaps, disturbing repeti- tions and obvious contradictions have come about—indications which reveal things to us which [the text] was not intended to communicate. In its implications the distortion of a text resembles a murder: the difficulty is not in perpetrating the deed, but in getting rid of its traces... Accordingly, in many instances of textual distortion, we may nevertheless count upon finding what has been suppressed and disavowed, hidden away somewhere else, though changed and torn from its context. Only it will not always be easy to recognize it.25

Distortion, according to Freud, is to be understood not only as the deformation of something originally undistorted, but as a change of location, or a displacement, as well. Yet this word “displacement” also denotes a mechanism of unconscious articulation: the displacement of psychic intensities—called “cathexis” or “occupation”—from one representation to another, along a
chain of associations. The distortion of a text mirrors in this way the dislocation of the subject, which is a necessary effect of the unconscious. The subject of the unconscious—according to Freud, the subject itself—is no longer constituted by the identity and transparency of self-consciousness, no longer the Cartesian cogito or the Hegelian Begriff, no longer the subject of knowledge and the will alone, but also and above all, that of unconscious desire: that is, the subject of the unconscious is mediated by an irreducible heterogeneity, a foreignness—by a dislocation that no dialectic can overcome or transcend.

Hence, a different kind of reading is required to unravel the discourse of a will that says only what it wants to say and thus always, as distortion (and this is especially clear in the case of paranoia), is already displaced, relocated, moved somewhere else, recorded in a text of desire that, like desire itself, is articulated through gaps, repetitions, contradictions: in short, it is expression through the contours of a conflict. Consequently, what till now we have called “knowing,” displaces and distorts itself. Insofar as the objects of unconscious knowledge are constituted by a conflict of desire, they resist being grasped conceptually; as with dreams, an untranslatable, idiosyncratic, singular residue always remains. It persists, however, not as the arabesque of a unique occurrence, but as the necessary, if idiosyncratic, materialization and localization of a process of articulation. Although such a process includes logical thought and makes reason possible, it itself is not governed by reason. The unconscious articulates a “case” (der Fall) of reason; it lures reason into a trap (die Falle) and shrugs it there. It is in this sense, perhaps, that the case of Schreber lives up to its title and becomes “worthy of thought”: denkwürdig, and not merely “memorable.”

The History of an Illness: Body, Soul, and Nerves

However one reads it, Schreber’s text Memoirs is not an easy one. It operates alternately on three levels, all different yet closely connected: the first recounts the history of Schreber’s illness, his life in asylums, his efforts to have the order placing him under tutelage rescinded; the second is devoted to his “personal experiences,” as he calls them; the third deals with that all-encompassing context, the “cosmic order” (Weltordnung) and its crises—a context which provides the meaning of all that appears and all that is experienced. For the sake of simplicity, let us begin with the external history of Schreber’s illness—that is, with his case—so that we can subsequently enter with him into his own trap.

The period of his second hospitalization lasted from November 1903, when he was admitted to the Leipzig clinic, until his discharge at his own request (following his successful lawsuit against his tutelage) from the State Asylum Sonnenstein in Pirna (near Dresden) on 20 December 1902. The extant medical bulletins describe his initial condition as follows:

At first more hypochondriacal complaints, that he suffers from a “softening of the brain, will soon die,” etc., at the same time mixed with delusions of persecution, that “he has now been made happy insane.” Also hallucinations now and then, which gave him quite a fright... He thinks he is dead and has begun to rot, that he is no longer in a condition “fit for burial”; that he is “plague-stricken,” probably as a result of olfactory hallucinations; that his penis was twisted off by means of a “nerve probe”; he thinks he is a woman, but also often claims he must repulse energetically “the homosexual love of certain persons.” All of these things tormented him greatly so that he wished for death; he tried to drown himself in the bathtub and for many weeks demanded daily “the glass of cyanide destined for him.” The auditory and visual hallucinations sometimes became so strong that he spent hours at a time in a chair or in bed completely inaccessible, squinting his eyes. The delusions of his senses apparently were of ever-changing content, referring in the more recent period of his stay at the Leipzig clinic to his belief that he was being tortured to death in a ghastly manner. He then lost himself more and more in a mystic-religious dimension, maintaining that God spoke openly to him, that vampires and devils make game of him. He said he wanted to convert to the Roman Catholic Church in order to avoid being persecuted. He then saw apparitions, heard sacred music and, finally, apparently thought he was in another world. At least he considered everything around him to be spirits, taking his environment to be a world of illusions... At that time Flechsig considered him dangerous to himself and to others.

This description, which coincides in part with what I quoted from the Memoirs above, has the advantage of bringing into bold
relief two aspects that will prove decisive in Schreber's case: first, his body as the favored object of his imaginings (at first in a mostly negative sense: he claims to suffer from a softening of the brain, to feel himself to be dead, to have begun to decay, to be plague-stricken, to have had his penis twisted off, and so on); and second, the aspect of language, in the form of verbal hallucinations ("God spoke openly to him"). The homosexual aspect also appears ("he thinks he is a woman"), and this in connection both with fantasies of castration and with illusions of persecution (that he had to repulse the "homosexual love of certain persons")—a complex that Freud places at the very center of his interpretation.

Above all, a reading of the medical bulletin, as well as the memoirs themselves, reveals the increasing significance of linguistic phenomena for Schreber. Even his initial inaccessibility seems to have actually been a form of listening: "He was in a state of great psychic excitement, at the outset inaccessible, sullen, almost gloomy. He was uncomfortable with any and all conversation. His hallucinated intensely, showed little interest in his surroundings, but stood around in the same position with a frightened look on his face, staring out into the distance. It was observed in the garden how he placed his hands on his ears, listening intensely."

If at first he refused all communication with physicians and nurses, one of his "reasons," it appears, was his concern with other "communications": "At times obviously harassed by voices, never spoke to anyone about this." Later, in his memoirs, Schreber argues that he did not articulate his visions and experiences because their complexity exceeded the capacity of oral communication—as anyone who reads the memoirs will agree.

On the surface Schreber remains, for a period, passive ("is never occupied with anything, does not read anything," the medical record remarks). Yet already in November 1894 there are signs of a turn toward activity, toward behavior that will be of the greatest significance for his later development. "On the whole somewhat more lively, writes shorthand and draws figures on paper": Schreber begins to write.

From this point on writing assumes an increasingly important role in his life, in addition to the hallucinatory transformations of his body. A description of his condition in June 1895 reads: "Completely under the influence of delusions. Maintains that his body is completely changed, that one of his lungs has almost completely disappeared, that everything that he sees around him is merely appearance. That the world has perished... Calm again for periods. Writes many letters, also in Italian, signed himself once 'Paul Höllnfürst' [literally, "Prince of Hell"]. He addressed one letter to 'Mr. Ormuzid in coelo.'"

Thus, Schreber not only listens, he writes. Shortly thereafter he adds a new component: he not only writes, he screams. The "bellowing miracle" appears on the scene. What he screams about is not without interest: "Often screams out the window at night, always the same terms of abuse, or 'I am Senatspräsident Schreber.'" These terms of abuse may well have been intended for that other Schreber, who recommended that one make oneself master of his child forever. The abuse, and the bellowing of his name and high official title, all point to Schreber's struggle for his own identity, a battle to be waged within language and by means of language.

In 1896, as his interest in his immediate environment slowly begins to reawaken, Schreber's body is subjected to a new form of alteration. Whereas previously it has been mainly an object of decomposition and destruction, it is now increasingly affected by a more positive change: "Has let himself go in his appearance, inadequately dressed, shows the physician his naked upper body, claiming that 'he now has almost female breasts.' The only real changes are greater fat deposits, given that the patient has gained greatly in weight." With the onset of what in the Memoirs is called "unmanning" or "transformation into a woman," his body assumes a new function: it becomes an object to be looked at, gazed upon, thus Schreber's willingness to show the doctor his exposed upper body.

"Seems quite preoccupied with sexual notions, likes very much to look up nudes in illustrated magazines, evidently draws them as well. In a letter to his wife—in Italian—writes that the nights are very pleasant because he always has 'un pou die volupte feminine' [sic]." This mingling of the sexes not only takes place in Schreber's body, but applies as well to a divine interlocutor: "Continues to bellow, often quite offensive terms of abuse: 'The sun is a whore' or 'God is a whore.'" Already at an earlier time Schreber had been greatly preoccupied with the sun, and he had been observed standing "for a long time in one place, emotionless, looking into the sun and all the while making the most bizarre faces." At the conclusion of his book he maintains
that the sun pales before his very gaze. In any case, seeing and being seen gain in significance.

He now becomes ever more “talkative and accessible, reads more.” In 1897 he conducts a “lively correspondence with wife and relatives, written in a polite and proper manner, the letters betraying not the slightest sign of illness. Talks about his sickness apparently with complete insight.” Only the old “bellowing sessions and face-making” continue, joined by several new forms of coquetry: “Adorns himself with colorful ribbons, now and then engages in quite trivial dalliances.” “Often naked in his room, laughing and yelling in front of a mirror, adorned with colorful ribbons.”

At the beginning of 1899 he speaks for the first time about the content of his experiences, in a “detailed letter to his wife... The lucidity and logical acuity with which he develops his system is striking.” From this period onward he is increasingly occupied with the question of his tutelage, which as early as 1895—and without his knowledge—had been declared temporarily, and later in March 1900 was upheld as permanent. Schreber contested this ruling at about the time he was writing his Memoirs. The major portion was written between February and September of 1900, too early to play a role in the initial appeal proceedings, which ended in 1901 in Schreber’s favor. The text, enlarged by several “postscripts” as well as by an appendix (“In What Circumstances Can a Person Considered Insane Be Detained in an Asylum against His Declared Will?”), was submitted as testimony in the appeal proceedings, which on 14 July 1902 lead to the recision of Schreber’s tutelage by the Royal State Superior Court.

The court’s argumentation is of interest even today. Its verdict found that the plaintiff was unquestionably mentally ill; whereas Schreber himself maintained that, although he was nervously ill, he was not mentally ill, in other words, that his experience was of an objective nature. Despite this disagreement, the court did accept Schreber’s view that the decisive issue was not his mental state but, rather, whether he was capable of taking care of his own affairs and defending his own interests. The court agreed with the plaintiff that he was indeed entirely capable of doing this. Remarkable however is the court’s assessment of the Memoirs. Recall that for Gehinrat Dr. Weber, director of the asylum, well-known court psychiatrist, and Schreber’s physician, the intention to publish the text was in itself proof of Schreber’s mental illness. The court firmly rejected this opinion, arguing first that such intent does not violate the author’s objective interests (that is, it did him no financial harm); and second that:

One also cannot maintain that the contents of the “Memoirs” are such as to compromise [the] plaintiff himself. The manuscript is the product of a morbid imagination and nobody reading it would for a moment lose the feeling that its author is mentally deranged. But this could not possibly lower the patient in the respect of his fellow men, particularly as no one can miss the seriousness of purpose and striving after truth which fill every chapter. As Dr. Schreber remarks correctly, the worst that could happen to him would be that one consider him mad, and this one does in any case. (M, p. 354)

This opinion manifests a liberality that surprisingly—although perhaps not entirely uninfluenced by its authors’ collegial relation to the plaintiff, as well as by his high position—belongs to an Enlightenment tradition whose influence on German jurisprudence was surely not overwhelming at the time. Yet we should not overlook the precondition for such tolerance: fools, like poets, enjoy greater freedom than average citizens, precisely because they are fools. There is a further component to be noted here, one to which we will return: the court’s recognition of Schreber’s “seriousness of purpose and striving after truth, which fill each chapter.” However much it may otherwise have erred, the court nonetheless acknowledged that Schreber was only trying to be more rational than reason itself. Hence all the more surprising is the court’s argument in making allowances for Schreber’s style of discourse, which Dr. Weber had strongly censured: “One cannot be offended by the strong language in the book. It is not [the] plaintiff’s; he only repeats what the voices of spirits spoke into him in earlier years when he was most severely hallucinated” (M, p. 355).

To appreciate adequately the significance of this concession, one need only juxtapose it to the opinion of Dr. Weber, concerning the relationship of Schreber’s madness to his other views: “It is true that every delusional system,” Dr. Weber writes, “must somehow influence all the patient’s ideas because its bearer is an ‘individual,’ that is, indivisible...” (M, p. 318). By contrast, the court seems prepared to place this principle of
the indivisible individual into doubt: it considers Schreber's text (whether dictated to him or composed by him) as a different language, one foreign to him ("merely a reproduction of phantom voices"). The Royal State Superior Court at Dresden thus accepts that an author is not necessarily—at least de jure—responsible for "his" text.

*The Cosmic Order; or, The Gap in the Vosges*

Having familiarized ourselves with the case history of Daniel Paul Schreber, we should now turn to the remarkable history of his *nervous illness*—however distorted or abridged this account may be. Schreber himself starts with an explication of the "Cosmic Order," that is, with a world that has not yet fallen into disorder. This world—like its divine creator—consists mainly of nerves: God is "from the very beginning... only nerve," and he creates the world when his nerves transform themselves into "rays," which can then become anything at all. Humans are likewise nerve, in the sense that their souls are contained in nerve.

Let us dwell on these nerves for a moment, since they form the fundamental elements of Schreber's universe. In terms of their composition they are very strange things indeed. They evidently unite the highest interiority and immanence, on the one hand, with the greatest externality and heteronomy, on the other. The nerves—"nerves of understanding," as they are called—are like monads, inasmuch as every single mental nerve "represents the entire mental individuality of a human being": in such the number of nerves a person has influences the *duration* of his identity, but not his *identity* itself. To this extent the nerves represent that which is internal and identical in a person. Yet as parts of the body—they are essentially corporeal in that they occupy space and are material—the nerves are necessarily dependent on external impressions and impulses in order to be "jarred into vibration."

The nerve, as the inner essence of humans, requires the external and the foreign in order to function. The relationship between internal and external, between the identical and the heterogeneous, is governed by identity, insofar as the original and lawful conditions which constitute the Cosmic Order obtain. God externalizes Himself as rays which transform themselves into the Creation; this Creation stands in a relation of otherness to God, it is His Other, until death, when the nerves of the human—or, more precisely, of the human corpse—slowly, in a process of purification, re-ascend into the heavenly fields, there to be taken into God and to dissolve within Him. As long as the Cosmic Order prevails, it is governed by what Georges Bataille has called a "restricted economy": an economy of identity where nothing is lost, where every externalization is dialectically reappropriated, where every expenditure yields a return. The Cosmic Order, the World-as-yet-still-in-Order, follows reason and its laws, which are concentrated in one of the messages Schreber "receives," and which might very well have served as a motto for his entire work: "All nonsense cancels itself out" (*Aller Unsinn hebt sich auf; M*, pp. 151, 226).

But there is a hitch in this system or structure: the reason and cause, the beginning and end of this Cosmic Order, God, is likewise "to begin with... only nerve." Hence the aspect of the heteronomical and the nonidentical, which characterizes every nerve, characterizes God as well. Accordingly, Schreber's God is different from His more orthodox predecessors: He is corporeal—material and localized—subject (at least in part) to the laws of time and space. Moreover, heavenly existence consists in a "state of blessedness" which Schreber describes as "uninterrupted enjoyment" (*M*, p. 51). And this propensity for hedonism, rooted in the neural nature of God and of the souls that return to Him, is not without certain risks for God Himself. As a nerve, God depends upon others, on the nerves of humans, for instance. This is not a problem as long as He approaches their corpses to suck out the nerves (for which death is merely a form of sleep) and to draw them heavenward. Difficulties arise only in those exceptional cases where God, perhaps out of ignorance (for He knows the human only externally, as a cadaver), approaches the living human and—as Schreber describes it—"attaches" Himself to the human, forming a "nerve attachment." As long as it is the exception, for example, in the case of "highly gifted people (poets, etc.)," the nerve attachment does not cause any problems. However, "such nerve attachment" was not allowed to become the rule, as already mentioned, because for reasons which cannot be further elucidated, the nerves of living human beings, particularly when in a state of *high-grade excitation*, have such power of attraction for the nerves of God that He would not be able to free Himself from them again, and would thus endanger His own existence" (*M*, p. 48).
would be completely reversed, with fatal consequences. Before
these consequences, which form the Memoirs' real point of de-
parture, can be discussed, several other characteristics of the
Cosmic Order should be mentioned, if briefly; first, that it con-
sists of beings who are not only corporeal, only nerve to start
with, but who are equally determined by their language. As
Schreber writes, "it seems to lie in the nature of rays that they
must speak as soon as they are in motion; the relevant law was
expressed in the phrase 'do not forget that rays must speak,' and
this was spoken into my nerves innumerable times, particularly
early on" (M, p. 121).

Here we confront a further peculiarity of Schreber's text: the
objects he discusses are no less language than he himself is—a
slightly disjointed, slightly twisted language, "the so-called
'bascic-language,' a somewhat antiquated but nevertheless pow-
erful German, characterized particularly by a wealth of euphe-
missims" (M, pp. 49–50). Everything that Schreber says about
the Cosmic Order is based on communications he receives that
utilize the "basic-language," characterized not only by shifts of
meaning (though not always euphemistic ones), but also by a
tendency not to finish sentences: "The souls were in the habit—even
before the conditions contrary to the Cosmic Order had started—of
giving their thoughts (when communicating with one another),
grammatically incomplete expression; that is to say they omitted
certain words which were not essential for the sense" (M, p. 70).
It is as if the tendency of souls (or rays) not to complete their
sentences was bound up with their character as transitional beings:
they are aspects of an externalizing movement that emanates from
a divine being and leads back to it. Blessedness, understood
as the final goal of nerves returning to God, corresponds to
meaning, understood as the final goal of a basic-language expression:
both are intended and approximated, yet never quite attained.

It becomes increasingly clear that in this kind of Cosmic Or-
der, crises and disruptions are, as it were, programmed, prior to
all intervention from without. A God who is Himself all nerve
and therefore dependent on external stimulation, who knows
the human being only externally (as a cadaver), who now and
then engages in a nerve attachment despite the risks involved;
a language whose words have inverted meaning, whose sentences
are begun but never finished, trusting in a meaning that is never
more than approximate; above all, the entire, apparently stable,

restricted economy, including God, subject to the "unfathom-
able law" of the "power of attraction," "according to which
rays and nerves mutually attract one another," in a reciprocity
that "harbors a kernel of danger for the realms of God" (M, p.
59): all of this points to catastrophe as an immanent possibility of
this order itself.

When it does take place, the catastrophe assumes the remark-
able form of a rip or tear: "This 'miraculous structure' [the
Cosmic Order] has recently suffered a rent, intimately con-
ected with my personal fate" (M, p. 54)—thus begins Schreber's
description of the misfortune which has befallen the Cosmic
Order like a pestilence, wrenching it out of joint. The
extra-ordinary nature of this tear in the wondrous structure has
already been alluded to: it originates externally, as it were out of
nothing, and it not only sunder, it joins, or is joined to Schreber's
personal fate. A peculiarity of this special tear is that it sundered in
that it joins. As Schreber writes:

It is impossible even for me to present the deeper connec-
tions in a way which human understanding can fully grasp.
My personal experiences enable me to lift the veil only
partially; the rest is intuition and conjecture. I want to say
by way of introduction that the leading roles in the genesis
of this development, the first beginnings of which go back
perhaps as far as the eighteenth century, were played on the
one hand by the names of Flechsig and Schreber (probably
not specifying any individual member of these families),
and on the other by the concept of soul murder. (M, p. 54)

At the beginning stands the joining of two names—Flechsig
and Schreber, at first independent of their individual carriers—as
well as the dark concept of "soul murder." According to
Schreber, the latter seems to consist in one person's somehow
taking 'possession of another person's soul' (M, p. 55). This, he
asserts, actually took place in the course of a feud between the
Schreber and Flechsig families, both of which "belonged, it was
said, to the highest nobility of heaven" (M, p. 55). Families
that had had a falling out when the Flechsig family "had been
outstripped in some way or other by members of the Schreber
family" (M, p. 57). A certain "Daniel Fürchtegott Flechsig"
(who, like the other Flechsigs named by Schreber, bears the
names of his own ancestors) actually managed to lure God into
a nerve attachment, never to release him: "He resisted breaking
off the attachment into which divine rays had directly or indirectly entered with him, or made it dependent on conditions which could not be denied him, considering the souls' natural weakness of character compared with that of living men, and in any case it was not thought possible to keep up permanent nerve attachment with a single human being" (M, p. 57). "The Flechsig family thus attained an incredible power, which it used against the Schrebers: "One can imagine that in this way something like a conspiracy may have arisen between such a person and the elements of the anterior realms of God [the purified souls returning to God] to the detriment of the Schreber race [Geschlecht], perhaps in the direction of denying them offspring or possibly only of denying them choice of those professions which would lead to closer relations with God such as that of a nerve specialist" (M, p. 57).

The obscurity of these events is rendered still more obscure by the censor, to whom the Memoirs' third chapter—dealing with "some events concerning other members of my family, which may possibly in some way be related to the presumed soul murder" (M, p. 61)—fell victim. Yet it becomes increasingly apparent to Schreber that his encounter with Paul Emil Flechsig in the Leipzig University Psychiatric Clinic was no mere coincidence, but rather the result of considerable planning. Even though the plot was initiated by the Flechsig family, God's complicity seems even more certain to Schreber: "It occurred to me only much later, in fact only while writing this essay did it become quite clear to me, that God Himself must have known of the plan, if indeed He was not the instigator, to commit soul murder on me, and to hand over my body in the manner of a female harlot (M, p. 77).

On the one hand this description clearly shows that soul murder concerns not only the "surrender of a soul to another person" or the appropriation of "his mental powers" (M, p. 58; my emphasis); it also concerns the body, and this could hardly be otherwise since, in Schreber's Cosmic Order, soul and mind are bound to the body's nerves. On the other hand, it becomes clear that the composition of the Memoirs is not simply a report; rather, it is part of, and participant in, the experience it recounts.

This explanation also sheds light on the peculiar goal of the conspiracy against Schreber, which was initiated by soul murder: his body is to be surrendered to Professor Paul Emil Flechsig, as a "female prostitute" for purposes of sexual pleasure.

This implies the "unmanning" of Daniel Paul Schreber, his "transformation into a woman" for purposes that contravene the Cosmic Order. Subsequently all sorts of "miracles" are directed at his body with the intention both of transforming him into a woman and also of destroying his physical "integrity" (see especially chapter 12). His limbs are wounded and lamed; his internal organs destroyed, removed from his body and replaced with new ones. Not only is his body attacked, but his mind is as well, at first through the body. One description of these attacks may serve for many:

These concerned firstly my head; secondly . . . also the spinal cord, which next to the head was considered as the seat of reason. One therefore attempted to pump the spinal cord out, which was done by so-called "little men" placed in my feet . . . . The effect of the pumping out was that the spinal cord left my mouth in considerable quantity in the form of little clouds, particularly when I was walking in the garden . . . . The miracles directed against my head and the nerves of my head happened in manifold ways. One attempted to pull the nerves out of my head, for a time even (during the nights) to transplant them into the head of M. who slept in the next room . . . . Serious devastation was caused in my head by the so-called "flights of rays," . . . the effect of which was that my skull was repeatedly sawn asunder in various directions. (M, pp. 135–136)

These attacks on the integrity of his body and mind produce just the opposite of what was intended: the more he is assaulted, the more attractive his sorely tested nerves become, the greater the number of souls entering into and dissolving within him, the greater the danger to, and temptation of, God Himself (in His two forms of the lower God, Ariman, and the higher, Ormuzd). For the conspirators had overlooked and misconstrued the laws of the Cosmic Order: all the damage done by the "impure rays" (unpurified souls, called "tested souls" in the "basic language") can be reversed by "pure rays." The conspirators misunderstand above all the nature of emasculation. As Schreber slowly learns, emasculation is "connected with the basic plan on which the Cosmic Order seems to rest" (M, p. 72), a plan that, in the case of catastrophes, makes possible the survival of the human race through divine insemination. After initial resistance, Schreber thus consents to the plan for his unmanning so as to ensure this.
survival against all eventualities. It would seem that the Cosmic Order's restricted economy, despite all the violations of it, will once again be able to defend and maintain itself, at least in the opinion of Daniel Paul Schreber, who places himself—his body, his mind, and his work—at the service of truth and science. Schreber's emasculating the heightening of his nerves' attraction and the saturation of his body with "female nerves of lust" (weibliche Wollustnerven), influencing in turn souls, rays, and ultimately the lower God Himself, implies not so much the possibility of impregnation as the certainty of demise: in the seductive power of the nerves, lust and death are mixed. But since souls "were used to uninterrupted enjoyment, and were therefore not or only little capable of temporary sacrifice or temporary denial of pleasure in order to procure permanent advantages in the future, a quality which is peculiar to human beings" (M, p. 75), they are all the more vulnerable to this danger. For the dissolution in my body of the rays (which are separated from the totality of God's nerves) due to my power of attraction amounts to the end of their independent existence, like death is to man. It was therefore a matter of course that God should make all attempts to avoid the fate of having to perish in my body with more and more parts of His totality, and indeed one was not very particular in choosing the means of prevention. But the attraction lost all its terror for these nerves, if and to the extent they met a feeling of soul-voluptuousness in my body in which they also participated. They then regained in my body a more or less adequate substitute for the lost heavenly Blessedness which itself consisted in enjoyment similar to voluptuousness. (M, pp. 149-150)

The whole plot of his Memoirs is played out as repetitions and variations of this scenario: the divine assault, at first with Flechsig and then without him, on the integrity of Schreber's body and mind; Schreber's counterattack, together with World-Order elements (pure rays), which leads to an increase in his power of attraction; and, consequently, the danger to God, in turn calling forth the next heavenly assault, and so on.

These assaults are directed not only at the body, but also—once it became obvious that this body is inviolable, even for God—increasingly at his mind, with the goal of driving Schreber "mad," or at least making him appear so, thereby diminishing his power of attraction. Schreber, however, leaves no doubt as to which of two adversaries is closer to insanity: for the divine plan overlooks the simple fact "that the nerves, even of a demented human being, would, in a state of highly pathological excitement retain their power of attraction" (M, pp. 120-121).

Mainly linguistic means are employed in these assaults on Schreber. I shall examine two of them more closely: the "system of notation" (Aufschreibsystem) and "compulsive thinking" (Denkzwang). Schreber describes a system of notation in which "books or other notes are kept in which...have been written-down all my thoughts, all my phrases, all my necessities, all the articles in my possession or around me"—in short, anything at all having to do with Schreber. The writing is done by random, thoughtless souls, "bound" to some distant celestial bodies (an invention of Flechsig's to protect the souls from Schreber's power of attraction): "Their hands are led automatically, as it were, by passing rays for the purpose of making them write down" (M, p. 119).

The purpose of the notes made in this way is, on the one hand, to exhaust Schreber's store of thoughts—"this of course is quite absurd, because human thinking is inexhaustible," Schreber remarks—and, on the other hand, to provide material for the rays, which must talk continuously, "to fill in these pauses." Moreover, by means of this system of notation the rays, "in a manner hard to describe," are supposed to be "made unpreceptive to the power of attraction of such a thought" (M, p. 122).

The system of notation reveals the entwinedness of language and body, of desire and defense, that characterizes Schreber's text. The system is supposed to exhaust Schreber by establishing a complete inventory of his discourse; any and all of his linguistic expressions are to be fixed, that is, they are to be written down and removed from his control so as to neutralize, if not eliminate, his nerves' power of attraction. But, despite the "mental torture" caused him by the rays' know-it-all attitude—any thought or expression of Schreber's is met with: "We have this already" (already "written down" or "recorded")—he overcomes the system of notation, indeed not least of all by himself becoming a note taker: he writes his Memoirs. Only when writing is Schreber free from the power of his persecutors: "For all miracles are powerless to prevent the expression of ideas in writing" (M, p. 298).
I will return to the significance of Schreber’s writing. But first let us examine the second attempt to destroy his mind by linguistic means: compulsive thinking. As the term suggests, this consists in “a human being having to think incessantly” (M, p. 70), as a result either of direct questioning (“What are you thinking about now?”) or of those unfinished phrases that characterize the basic language as such, and that practically force the listener to complete them. The compulsion to introduce what has been omitted has to do with the “nature of nerves”: “that if unconnected words or started phrases are thrown into them, they automatically attempt to complete them to finished thoughts satisfactory to the human mind.” (M, p. 172).

The nerves are thus driven by a kind of horror vacui to complete the meaning still outstanding, regardless of the intentions of their subject (Schreber). The completion usually consists in nothing more than the repetition of often-heard phrases, hence it requires no special mental effort. If, for instance, Schreber hears the words, “It will be,” then his nerves complete the phrase in a nonarbitrary way: “. . . done now, the joint of pork,” whereby Schreber knows full well that “joint of pork” here signifies—in keeping with the basic language’s twisted logic—nothing other than himself. “It was meant to express that I was done, i.e. that my power of resistance against the attacks on my reason by the rays must by now be exhausted” (M, p. 173). That Schreber should be called, of all things, a joint of pork becomes somewhat more understandable when we read why the voices resist finishing their sentences. Their goal is not only to force Schreber to expend his powers, thereby reducing his power of attraction, but also to prevent a development more dangerous still. As Schreber writes, “Whenever expressed in a grammatically complete sentence, the rays would be led straight to me, and entering my body . . . temporarily increase its soul-voluptuousness. Not-finishing—a-sentence has apparently the effect that the rays are, as it were, held up halfway, and could therefore withdraw before having added to the soul-voluptuousness in my body” (M, p. 173).

Earlier it was not Schreber who, as a joint of pork, had to fear the mouths of others; rather, the situation was reversed: “While conditions prevailed which were at least somehow in consonance with the Cosmic Order, that is being to rays and receiving to celestial-bodies was started . . . a momentary uniform feeling was enough to make the freely suspended souls jump down from the sky into my mouth, thus ending their independent existence” (M, p. 173).

As the Cosmic Order was to some extent still intact, hence before the tear in its texture occurred or widened, saying a sentence to the point of its meaningful completion meant destroying the speaking rays in Schreber’s mouth. This again confirms the entwining of speech and lust, of meaning and death. Thus it comes as no surprise that God and the rays (the voices) attempt everything to prevent this fatal completion: writing things down, tying (distant planets) to Earth, using sentences left incomplete, and using speech that has been slowed and distended in the extreme. No wonder they attempt—through “wonders”—to make incompetent (ent-mündigen) Schreber’s mouth (Mund), to expropriate his linguistic expressions and communicative competence by means of compulsive thinking (which, as we have seen, implies compulsive speech as well); or more directly through a system of “misrepresentations,” compelling Schreber’s nerves to give answers he had not intended, which are foreign to him; or, more directly still, by means of the “bellowing miracle,” forcing Schreber to bellow whether he wants to or not.

To Schreber, all this seems an abominable disregard for the Cosmic Order, resulting from its critical fissure. Still, he gives us good reason to mistrust such an easy explanation. The simple model of an undamaged, unwounded earlier state, torn or ripped by the intrusion of some calamity—or “apparition” (Gesicht), in the antiquating basic language—is difficult to reconcile with the peculiar structure of the nerves. Their “inherent” dependence on the external and the foreign, on stimulation and on unmitigated pleasure—this, their exogenic, exotic lust principle, destroys all order, all identity, and every restricted economy of expenditure—without loss. At least for the nerves of Schreber’s Cosmic Order before and after the crisis, lust means loss. As long as God Himself, although participating in this process, could nonetheless be deemed to stand above it, as the beginning and the end, it seemed possible to amortize the loss of lust expended through a gain in identity. But when God Himself is drawn into the vortex of attraction—through a nerve attachment—this illusion can no longer be sustained. “Voluptuousness has become ‘God-fearing’” (M, p. 210), say the voices, yet they express themselves here, as so often, euphemistically: it is not lust that has become God-fearing (beginning
with Daniel Fürchtegott [literally, “God-fearing”], Flechsig and Schreber’s nerve contact), but God who has learned to fear lust. And not without reason. For He is no longer involved with mere cadavers—like the physician who views a body mainly as a muscular mechanism; now He is engaged with fresh, living, excited nerves, nerves that have as their target nothing less than His existence and identity. And since God’s identity, together with His economy of expenditure and reappraisal, represent here nothing other than a fantasy of reason (or, better, reason’s nightmare), this struggle of identity with lust, this crisis of identity, acquires a more than merely “pathological” interest.

As much as one may attempt to distinguish the Before and After of the Cosmic Order, Schreber’s text shows how they in fact overlap, how the After and the Exterior have always been present in the Interior of the Order of the World, as nerve. I have already mentioned a peculiarity of the voices, which was characteristic of them even before the crisis set in: their tendency not to finish sentences. Nonetheless one could still imagine that the act of speaking would guarantee the purity of identity and of the internal against everything foreign and external. It is spoken language in which Schreber (precisely in his struggles) places so much trust as that form of articulation which can most powerfully protect the subject’s identity and property—“the human language (spoken aloud) . . . is the ultimate ratio for preserving the sanctity of my house.” It is spoken language that can protect identity and property above all in Schreber’s tormented head, the walls of which offer no protection against the ray-voices. Again and again he describes how the voices’ “original” language, which continued to give “expression to genuine feeling,” increasingly degenerates into rote phrases, “drummed” into “speaking birds,” created by miracle (M, p. 85) to torment Schreber with their nonsense. How does Schreber describe this original language in his own text?

The language of souls and rays, God’s basic language, is, we recall, a “language of nerves.” According to Schreber, this can best be imagined “when one thinks of the processes by which a person tries to imprint certain words in his memory in a definite order, as for instance a child learning a poem by heart which he is going to recite at school, or a priest a sermon he is going to deliver in church. The words are repeated silently . . . that is to say a human being causes his nerves to vibrate in the way which corresponds to the use of the words concerned, but the real organs of speech . . . are either not set in motion at all or only coincidentally” (M, p. 69).

Because of its very structure, this nerve language is anything but an expression of “genuine feeling”: it is much less an expression than an impression, something remembered, not the expression of something inward but the emergence in the interior of something outward (Auszwendiges), something “learned by rote” (auswendig gelernt), a system of assertions not much different from the much derided system of notation that is employed just as thoughtlessly. Schreber’s language (or bellowing), expropriated in part by the rays, differs from the nerve language in one respect: that of control or disposition over speech. In “normal” circumstances (those which correspond to the Cosmic Order), the use of a particular nerve “depends only on the will of the person whose nerves are concerned,” in keeping with “man’s natural right to be master of his own nerves” (M, pp. 69–70). We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that the language of the nerves is, in and of itself, foreign to the subject, owing to the constitution of his own nerves (as mentioned above). Whether it wants to or not, as nerve the subject does not speak, it is spoken. Although Schreber does not say this in so many words, he writes it; or, perhaps more precisely, it writes him.

There would be much more to say about this silent contradiction between what Schreber wants to say out loud, and what, in a sense, writes itself between the lines, about this other showplace of unconscious distortion, where the entwining of meaning, lust and death, the inversion of internal and external, of that which is one’s own and that which is foreign appears in a new and fateful manner: much could be said about the place where the subject is no longer master of “his” language, but rather is subjected to it. But instead of discussing these matters, we will have to content ourselves with this brief mention in order to continue the retelling of Schreber’s story.

From the time he begins writing there is for this author no question as to how his story is to end. All human and divine assaults on him are frustrated by the Cosmic Order’s laws and by the power of his nerves: their power of attraction steadily increases, his body swells up, stuffed full of souls and rays, filled with nerves of female lust, and in his mind—steeled by compulsive thinking, which has taught him to seek the cause and the purpose, the reason and the essence of things and not to dwell on
their simple appearance—there can be no doubt as to the outcome. The book closes with Schreber's brilliant and unquestionable victory on all fronts. With the cultivation of femininity "inscribed . . . on my banner" (M, p. 149), Schreber marches ever closer to his goal, that of being unmanned and impregnated by God; he proceeds less in a military goose-step than in a seductive goosed-step, the meandering step of lust, in order thus to complete his seduction of God, thereby destroying his final resistance: "The experience of years has confirmed me in this view; indeed I believe that God would never attempt to withdraw (which always impairs my bodily well-being considerably) but would follow my attraction without resistance permanently and uninterruptedly, if only I could always be playing the woman's part in sexual embrace with myself, always rest my gaze on female beings, always look at female pictures, etc." (M, p. 210).

Schreber's main goal is to be God's own spectacle, continuously looking at women but more important, as the perfect woman in coitus with herself, being looked at. For God, however—that is, for the higher God, Örmuzd, who in distinction to His lower part, Ariman, has not yet succumbed entirely to Schreber's charms—matters appear somewhat differently. "Definitively tied" (M, p. 209) to Schreber's nerves, to his body, with a desire for continual pleasure and for unceasing passion, this God sees nothing in the world except Schreber. The diagnosis of a delusional relationship, Schreber remarks (M, pp. 251–252), applies less to him than to God, for whom he has become "the sole human being," and "the center of His interest." God has eyes for Schreber only: he stares, fixed, at him—and here a remarkable comparison occurs to Schreber—as "one used to say for many years after the 1870 war about the foreign policy of the French, that they stared at the gap in the Vosges as if hypnotized" (M, p. 232).

God stares at Schreber like . . . Gott in Frankreich. Yet surely God can hope for no more from this welcome sight than the French could from the gap in the Vosges. Is God perhaps pleased because he can observe the woman "in sexual embrace with [herself]?" Can it be that the spectacle helps him to forget, at least momentarily, that wretched and previous hole?

Returning to Freud: Lacan

To answer these and other questions raised by a reading of the Memoirs, it is useful, if not indispensable, to return to the interpretation given by orthodox, mainstream Freudian psychoanalysis. It has generally limited itself to confirming Freud's reading, while at the same time reducing that reading to its most problematic and schematic aspect: the thesis of denied or rejected homosexuality as the core of paranoia and a fortiori of Schreber's case. The psychoanalytic studies that have followed Freud have indeed discovered information about the Schreber case, some of it significant—the works of Baumeyer, and Niederland, are particularly noteworthy. 38 Yet, with few exceptions, they have neglected to question either Freud's premises or their influence on his reading of the case. In what follows I shall briefly discuss two exceptions. But first to Freud himself.

Freud's central intention is expressed in the very title of his treatise: that of developing, by means of the Schreber case, a psychoanalytic theory of paranoia in general. At the heart of Freud's interpretation is the subject's defense against his own homosexual desires, which have been repressed, and which, owing to some external cause, reinstate themselves upon consciousness with renewed force. Insofar as the subject cannot or will not accept these wishes consciously (at the time of the Schreber treatise Freud had not yet conceptualized the superself), he must take recourse in various forms of defense, so as to make his own wishes unrecognizable as wishes. Freud describes these forms of defense as transformations of the sentence, "I [a man] love him": the various possible transpositions of subject, verb, and object generate the various forms of paranoia: delusions of persecution, erotomania, delusions of jealousy, and megalomania. 39

Applied to Schreber, the theory implies a fixation on the father and older brother, which is later transferred to Flechsig and to God. Of Schreber's two main fantasies, the first, transformation into a woman, is primarily (whereas the second, saving mankind through divine impregnation, is only secondarily) a rationalization or a compromise, designed to justify the (desired) sacrifice of masculinity.

"We find ourselves," says Freud, "on the familiar ground of the father-complex," or more precisely on that of the so-called negative Oedipus. The reasons for this negation are decisive, yet Freud mentions them only incidentally, as if in passing. Homosexual fixation, in his view, is not so much the cause of a psychic process as its result: an effect of an Oedipal conflict. Under threat of castration by the father, the child abandons the mother
as an object of love, but only in order to identify with her and assume her role. This, however, leaves the problem of castration largely unresolved, and indeed urgent, insofar as such identification with the mother—the archetype of being transformed into a woman—is, without castration, utterly unthinkable. Hence, whereas the threat of castration is repulsed by homosexuality—although not, of course, by homosexuality alone—at the same time it is also recognized, confirmed, and continually repeated. This process is what Freud elsewhere, in his essay on fetishism, calls “disavowal” (Verleugnung). 40

Various objections have been made to this reading of Freud, which reduces his essay on Schreber to a schematic statement and, as we shall see, in no way exhausts it. Ferenczi very cautiously raised the first objections; although he agreed with Freud that a relationship obtains between paranoia and homosexuality, he did not find this an adequate explanation. Ferenczi then remarked that this aspect failed to account sufficiently for the specificity of paranoia vis-à-vis homosexuality. The question remained: “What conditions have to be fulfilled for infantile bi- or ambisexual imagery to develop into either homosexual or paranoia?” 41

This question has been addressed by two of the few authors who have sought to adhere to psychoanalytic theory while still attempting to examine critically Freud’s Schreber interpretation: Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, who appended to their translation of the Memoirs into English their own thoughtful analysis. They turn the Freudian thesis around, asserting that what is primary is the fantasy not ofemasculations but of the redeemer, a mythological-arcaic (so-called heliolithic) fantasy of begetting that derives not from the Oedipus complex or from pre-Oedipal fixations, nor indeed from any sexual-genital source at all, but rather from an inborn, deeply felt wish to bring forth life and thereby overcome the limits of mortality. The weakness of such an interpretation—which owes more to Jung than to Freud—are, for Schreber’s text at least, self-evident and require no further discussion. Yet the “somatic hallucinations,” to which Macalpine and Hunter rightly call attention, are no better explained by being referred to a procreation fantasy than to a castration complex (in the strict sense). Even more serious is the fact that Macalpine and Hunter, no less than Schreber’s other psychoanalytic commentators, completely ignore the aspect of paranoid discourse emphasized by Freud: its tendency to disseminate and distort. Thus, they base their arguments against the causality of castration, homosexuality, and so on, and in favor of the begetting fantasies, on a most unreliable witness: on Schreber himself or, rather, on his explicit statements, on what he wants to say (in distinction to what he actually describes). In their discussion we often read: “Schreber himself considered . . .,” and “Schreber makes this point clear . . .” (M, p. 398); such appeals to authority only make clear how little Freud’s successors, whether orthodox or not, understand about the distorting intention of unconscious articulation, which, as in dreams, does not want to be understood and which betrays itself only as distortion.

Despite the shortcomings of an interpretation that would replace Freud’s thesis with one even less adequate—one which can explain psychic conflict only in terms of the frustration of childlessness—Macalpine and Hunter are able to point out weaknesses in the Freudian and above all post-Freudian readings insofar as they invoke the Oedipal relation too schematically. Macalpine and Hunter emphasize that in clinical practice with paranoiaics, as well as in Schreber’s case, the decisive point is not homosexuality as such but rather insecurity or confusion about one’s sexual identity. The sun, God’s main organ or instrument, is not simply a father, as Freud would have us believe, but equally “a whore” (“the sun is a whore,” Schreber bellows), 42 and also “God”: “O damn, it is extremely hard to say that God allows himself to be f. . . .” (M, p. 159), the voices say, Macalpine and Hunter point to Schreber’s multiple interest in questions of origin, genealogy, and creation. Finally, they focus attention on his body fantasies (largely neglected by Freud) as a decisive element in Schreber’s delusional system.

There can be no doubt that such aspects must be included in any satisfactory interpretation of the Memoirs. It is equally clear that neither the thesis of repulsed homosexuality nor that of “heliolithic” fantasies of begetting is sufficient to do justice to the dynamics of Schreber’s text. The fact that Schreber’s most significant fantasies concern the body on the one hand, and language on the other, that body and language stand in the closest possible relation to each other; and, not least of all, that Schreber writes, that we are dealing here with a text which does not stand apart from what it describes, but which itself is included in it: none of this is taken into account, either by Freud or by Macalpine and Hunter. Only the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan
has made such questions the center of his interpretation. He was the first to redefine boldly Freud’s conceptual apparatus as being of an inherently linguistic nature. Inasmuch as Lacan’s reading of Schreber’s Memoirs presupposes a certain familiarity with the linguistic Freud interpretation, we need to consider a basic outline of the latter before going any further.

In his “return to Freud” Lacan starts with the notion that the structure of Freud’s concept of the unconscious—its radical heterogeneity—is determined by the structure of language. Lacan understands language in terms of the semiotics of the Genevan linguist and founder of “structuralist” linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure’s fundamental insight is that language, like any system of symbols, can function only on the basis of differences. Thus in order to denote something, it is essential first of all that the carriers of meaning, called “signifiers,” differ from each other: only insofar as they are disparate can they refer to a positive content, what Saussure calls the “signified.”

Lacan uses this differential or “diacritical” theory of linguistic articulation to conceptualize the symbolization process of unconscious desire. Hence desire—which for Lacan as for Freud is essentially unconscious, whether as wish, drive, or “libido”—is characterized by the fact that its objects are not real objects, not “signifieds” (to use Saussure’s terminology) identical with themselves, but rather “signifiers,” that is, elements which refer to something else, not through their internal constitution but through their differential relations to other elements, which are equally “signifiers.” On this view reality in the ordinary sense of the word is accessible to the subject only as an aftereffect of a symbolization process: disturbances in the process affect its relationship to reality. And this is precisely the case with Schreber. But how should this disturbance be thought of, and what are its consequences?

Certainly it should not be thought of in terms of the simple concept of projection: even Freud, who often uses the concept in his Schreber essay, corrects himself in the end: “It was incorrect to say that the perception which was suppressed internally is projected outwards; the truth is rather, as we now see, that what was abolished internally [das innerliche Aufgehobene] returns from without.” But what is that is abolished, only to return from without, as reality? Freud’s answer is unambiguous: “His father’s most dreaded threat, castration, actually provided the material for his wishful phantasy (at first resisted but later accepted) of being transformed into a woman.”

According to Freud, castration—at least initially—forms the core of what has been “abolished internally” and “returns from without.” Important is how one understands this castration: whether as a real fact of a real development, or as an aspect of a structure that manifests itself within the development, yet whose function transcends the development and organizes it. These two styles of thought—the genetic and the structural—are both found in Freud and are related to each other in some what the same manner as are the manifest and latent content of a dream. Against the tendency of many psychoanalysts to read Freud only genetically, and thereby to assimilate his thought to ego psychology (for the temporality and conceptual apparatus of the genetic perspective are inseparably linked to the primacy of the ego), Lacan tries to elaborate the primacy of the structural aspects in Freud.

One can particularize this issue in terms of Macalpine and Hunter’s criticism of Freud’s interpretation of Schreber’s case. Freud, they claim, grasps the case exclusively in terms of the Oedipal complex, as a sexual problematic. Yet Macalpine and Hunter tacitly follow the psychoanalytic establishment they so severely criticize, insofar as they construe the Oedipal aspect to be a genetic category, from which the “Oedipal = genital = sexual” equation derives. Castration, they agree, is tied to a specific Oedipal = genital phase of development, whereas in Schreber’s case much earlier and more archaic phases are decisive, phases in which castration and Oedipus have no place. Freud’s procedure, however, militates in and of itself against any such schematization; he always approaches linear phenomena from a structural standpoint. Thus, in Schreber’s case he considers the “fixation” on the phase of early (pregenital) narcissism to be motivated by the rejection of castration. Lacan argues that for Freud the Oedipal relation is never limited to a purely genetic phase, but rather determines the subject’s entire development by providing the minimal symbolic structure that constitutes unconscious desire from the start. How does this structure then come to prevail in the subject?

Lacan’s answer is: by means of the “phallic,” and of the “castration” that mediates it. Castration names the confrontation of the subject with the symbolic structure of its desire. As Freud
shows, the discovery that the mother lacks a penis marks the
decisive moment when castration begins to affect the child: this
discovery brings with it the certainty that something like not
having a penis is possible as a permanent condition. More im-
portant, since the child assumes that everyone has a penis, he
interprets the absence of the organ as implying the reality of
castration. Castration is thereby regarded as a real possibility.
Castration thereby transforms the object of desire into that
which it has always already tended to be, although the subject
only gradually develops an organ for it into a signifier. For the
phallus is neither something (the penis of the mother), nor is it
simply nothing (the castration of the mother); rather, it marks the
differential relationship making possible, and structuring, the ar-
ticulation of gender identity. The phallus—for Lacan, the sign-
ifier of desire as such—signifies something that neither is, nor is
not: it signifies a difference. Hence, what until now has appeared
to be either real or purely psychic—castration, the phallus, and
the Oedipal structure—reveals itself to be eminently linguistic
within the individual subject’s economy and history. Castration
marks the subject’s access to the differential-symbolic structure
of articulated desire.

Yet the extent of this access depends, says Lacan, on another
linguistic relationship: that of the subject to the “Name-of-the-
Father” (Nom-du-Père). That castration and the father are con-
ected is, of course, nothing new to psychoanalysis; new and
significant is the attempt to understand this connection as an
essentially symbolic one, that is, in the differential-diacritical
sense (in sharp contrast to the traditional notion of symbol). The
Name-of-the-Father can be no normal name: it was Saussure
who emphasized that the function of language as a system of
signification is to be distinguished from the operation of naming.
46 To the extent that the name emphasizes the identity with
the named, Lacan’s concept of the symbolic as a movement of
differences generating identity (the signified) as its aftereffect has
little to do with it. According to Lacan, what the Name-of-the-
Father signifies is nothing other than the dead father, for only
insofar as he is dead, can the father have an effect as a symbol.
Lacan refers in this context to Freud’s Totem and Taboo, which he
considers to be a mythical reconstruction not of actual primal
history but of symbolic necessity, a reconstruction that cannot
be understood in terms of traditional logic: for the function of
the father has a psychic effect precisely because a name can dis-
tinguish itself from the named and can therefore develop its
symbolic power independently of the person who bears it.

According to Lacan, Schreber rejects or “forecloses” the
Name-of-the-Father. In contrast to the normal process of re-
pression—which on the one hand implies a kind of recognition
or acknowledgment of the repressed as its precondition, and, on
the other hand entails the continual presence of the repressed as
an unconscious cathexis—Lacan’s concept of “foreclosure” (a
translation of Freud’s Verwerfung) seems to entail the “Aufhe-
bung” Freud speaks of, the exclusion of something that returns
from without, as reality. This Aufhebung as Verwerfung differs
from repression in that it leaves no traces from which future
symbolization could be structured, but simply a hole, a gap in
the symbolic or, more precisely, a rent in the Symbolical.

Here I break off the discussion of Lacan without any excessive
apologies for its distortions, which result both from the frag-
mentary, highly elliptical character of Lacan’s discourse, as well
as from the fact that a comprehensive description of Lacan’s
thought in this context is simply not possible.47 Presupposing
Lacanian theory as a working hypothesis, I shall in closing bring
together certain aspects of the Memoirs having to do with the
decisive relation between language and body. In this way I
would like to indicate a direction for interpreting—in other
words, a manner of reading—Schreber’s text.

The Wondrous Wound; or, A Man Called Schneider

Schreber employs a simple “example” both to characterize
compulsive thinking and to show how it not only misses its goal
of destroying his mind, but brings about the exact opposite: “I
meet a person I know by the name of Schneider. Seeing him the
thought automatically arises ‘This man’s name is Schneider’ or
‘This is Mr. Schneider.’ With it ‘But why’ or ‘Why because’ also
resounds in my nerves” (M, pp. 179–180).

Normally, Schreber continues, one would consider such
questions to be absurd and reject them with justified indig-
nation: “What a silly question, the man’s name is simply
Schneider.” Yet, “my nerves were unable or almost unable to
behave like this . . . This very peculiar question ‘why’ occupies
my nerves automatically—particularly if the question is repeated
several times—until their thinking is diverted in another direc-
tion” (M, p. 180).

It is important to observe very carefully the nature of this
"diversion" of thought: "My nerves perhaps answer first: Well, the man’s name is Schneider because the father was also called Schneider." But this answer, which traces the name’s origin back to the father, is unsatisfactory: "This trivial answer does not really pacify my nerves. Another chain of thought starts about why giving of names was introduced at all among people, its various forms among different peoples at different times... Thus an extremely simple observation under the pressure of compulsive thinking becomes the starting point of a very considerable mental task, usually not without bearing fruit" (M, p. 180).

One must not underestimate the significance of this "considerable mental task," generated as a by-product of compulsive thinking: it ultimately made possible Schreber’s reconstruction of the Cosmic Order and of its crisis, as well as his composition of the Memoirs. The example alluded to is important not least of all for this reason. That it is not merely an arbitrary example—if such a thing is even possible—can be shown on a number of grounds. First, Schreber’s concern with names is a very old one: his interest in "etymological questions" is, he says, stimulated particularly by compulsive thinking, which "has interested me in earlier days of health" (M, p. 179). Second, the names of his ancestors as well as those of the Flechsig play a decisive role in his fantasy of soul murder: one notes formulations like "I presume that at one time a bearer of the name Flechsig—a human being carrying that name—succeeded in..." (M, p. 56); or that "the names of Flechsig and Schreber (probably not specifying any individual member of these families) played "leading roles" (M, p. 54) in the soul murder. Even the theological implications of the Name-of-the-Father are present in Schreber’s delirious genealogy (Paul Theodor Flechsig, Abraham Fürchtegott Flechsig, and so on). Finally, the entire Cosmic Order is constructed by means of (and is constituted as) a series of names that, to Schreber, prove the objectivity of his own experience, since he did not earlier know these names "themselves."

All this would suggest that Schreber’s example of naming was no mere fortuitous idea. Let us therefore examine it somewhat more closely. Unfortunately Schreber does not elaborate on the "considerable mental task" involved in his thoughts on naming. We are provided with only two details: first, the man Schreber meets is already known to him; second, his name is "Schneider." Yet there is a third detail as well, if only a negative one, one that has been disavowed: identifying the father as the origin of the name is, Schreber thinks, "trivial" and it does not "calm" his nerves, which search for the true "reason" that surely lies elsewhere. These are the elements of the example.

The fact that in our culture family names generally come from the father is something that Schreber considers trivial, something that hardly puts him at ease. The name itself suggests why this should be the case: the man named Schneider is so named not only because it was his father’s name, or his grandfather’s, or his great-grandfather’s, but perhaps because an ancestor actually was a Schneider (a tailor). Or are we perhaps falling prey to the kind of compulsive thinking Schreber described?

Perhaps—except that a reading of the Memoirs reveals that tailors are at work everywhere: this is suggested first of all by the tear or rip in the Cosmic Order, but also by sentences that are only begun (angeschnitten, literally, cut into); by souls that are cut off (abgeschnitten, literally, cut up or away) from the total mass of divine nerves; by organs that are cut out (herausgeschnitten) and limbs that are dissected (zerschnitten). But above all, we are interested here in a different kind of cut, one discussed in the first postscript to the Memoirs, which concerns "miracles." Again, this is a "minor example" chosen by Schreber to "serve as proof" for the divine miracles being directed against him: "On 5th October 1900 while being shaved I received a small cut, which had quite frequently happened before. Walking through the garden afterwards I met the Government Assessor M.; he noted at once the inconspicuous little piece of sponge covering my cut (of about this size 0) and asked me about it; I told him truthfully, that the barber had cut me" (M, p. 219).

This is but a minor incident, certainly, yet for Schreber (and hence for us as well) "extremely interesting and instructive." What actually took place? Schreber is nicked by the barber, whom he takes to be merely a tool of God, who "acted on the muscles of the barber’s hand to give it a rapid movement," causing the cut. Schreber attempts to protect and hide the wound with a small piece of sponge, which he also illustrates, life-size, in the text. But this attempt at concealment is in turn thwarted, again by God, and this immediately draws the attention of the Government Assessor M. to the small mark; the hidden wound is discovered and becomes the object of a conversation initiated by the question, "What is that on your mouth?" The conversation, Schreber continues, satisfies the vanity of the
rays, which—not unlike humans—are especially flattered when “recognition of their achievement or industry . . . is remarked on” (M, p. 219). Not much happens in this minor example, yet it may well be that the essential elements of Schreber’s phantasm are collected here. What are these elements, and what is their phantasmic structure?

First, there is God, the “cutter” (Schneider), who wounds Schreber. Second, Schreber attempts not only to protect the wound but, more important, to hide it with a small piece of sponge, which is then seen in place of the wound. This insignificant piece of sponge is seen by God and becomes the object of a conversation that pleases the rays, since they (or their works) are thus observed and respected. On the one hand the wound is protected and hidden, on the other it is seen and talked about as something that is hidden. It is seen and talked about, however, not only by the Government Assessor M., but also—and this is the crucial point—by Schreber himself, who makes this minor incident into the subject of his first postscript. He describes the scene and reveals its true meaning: he gives the wound its true name—which comprehends its apparent name, “wound” (Wunde)—and at the same time sublates it. For, as the voices proclaim in recognition of Schreber’s victory over God, “all nonsense cancels itself out.” Yet here nonsense signifies “wound,” and its sublation (Wunder) signifies “wonder” or “miracle.” Like the small circle that Schreber draws in his text—not entirely trusting in the power of words, of verbal description—by means of his explanation the wound is supposed to close and at the same time to heal itself, as a wonder.

In this (phantasmic) light, the question of the Government Assessor M. implies a kind of Having that in fact entails a violation of the very thing to be possessed, namely, the body (“What is that on your mouth?”), but that, as a miracle, indicates a real possession. For Schreber has those rays—that is, God himself—in his body, as female nerves of lust radiating an irresistible attraction.

If it is thus the nature of miracles to destroy the body’s integrity—be it Schreber’s body or an inorganic one—then this integrity can be reestablished through a text that names all Wunden to Wunder and reduces the latter to their cause, a text that ultimately consists in their absorption in Schreber’s body.

For this reason, the body constitutes the ultimate goal of the Memoirs’ composition and publication. This “essay, which seems to be growing to the size of a scientific work” (M, p. 123), will be published solely in the belief that it “would be of value both for science and the knowledge of religious truths” (M, p. 31); this scientific work has no other goal than to proffer its author’s body—in its altered form, saturated with female nerves of lust—as an object of viewing: “I can do no more than offer my person as object of scientific observation for the judgment of experts. My main motive in publishing this book is to invite this” (M, p. 251).

Should this observation and judgment not be possible within his lifetime, Schreber hopes “that at some future time such peculiarities of my nervous system will be discovered by dissection of my body, which will provide stringent proof” (M, p. 251).

What Schreber would like to see established is the fact that he holds God within his body, that the Wunde of castration—which is not, and yet which is not nothing, insofar as it allows gender difference to articulate itself—has corporeal existence as a Wunder. Schreber’s text attempts to control this difference, which structures both language and the subject (as a sexual being), by making the difference visible, so as to repeat and reverse the moment—the “apparition,” as the voices say—when castration was discovered. Whereas as a woman Schreber is unmanned, he nonetheless has it in him: and like a woman, he can hope to be what he (no longer) has.

This is not only represented, it is linguistically distorted. The canceling out of nonsense—of that difference which, according to Saussure, makes possible language as well as the meaning it signifies—is followed by the return of the names, from without, announced by voices which still carry within them that rejected or foreclosed difference. Thus the cut leaves its traces in the “overlapping” (Überschneidung, literally, “over-cutting”) of wound and wonder; and in Schreber’s firm belief (Überzeugung, literally, “over-begetting”) in a divine “spontaneous generation,” one without difference and prior to all distinction (prior to all castration); and in many other examples whose play can only be considered exemplary.

But since his language seeks to dissolve into something seen, into an “apparition,” I will close with an image that perhaps describes most clearly the movement and aspiration of the Memoirs. In the postscript concerning “hallucinations,” Schreber renders the rays as he “can see them only with my mind’s eye” (M, p. 227): “The filaments aiming at my head and apparently originating from the sun or other distant stars do not come to-
wards me in a straight line but in a kind of circle or parabola, similar perhaps to the way the chariots in the games of the old Romans drove round the meta, or a special variety of skittles where the ball fastened to a string is first thrown around a post before it strikes the ninepins" (M., p. 228).

The rays, instead of coming at him directly, take a detour, just as, during the tournament, the Roman chariots of war drove around the meta. The meta were columns at the upper and lower end of the Roman circus around which the racers had to drive seven times. Schreber's Memoirs are the parable of this parabola whose course runs seven times around a divided middle before disappearing into it.

NOTES

3. Ibid., p. 4.
4. Ibid., p. vi.
7. Quoted in William G. Niederland, “Schrebers ‘angewunderte’ Kindheitswelt,” Psyche 22, no. 3 (1969): 200; trans. Benjamin Gregg. Niederland’s analyses of D. G. M. Schreber’s writings reveal the extent to which the father’s text furnished the material for the son’s delusional ideas. The voices’ language is derived often literally from that of the father, while the orthopedic apparatus invented by the father recur in the son’s book as a “head-compression machine” or as the “compression-of-the-cheek miracle.”
9. See, however, Han Israels, Schreber, Father and Son (Amsterdam: Han Israels, 1981), for the most complete biographical study to date of the two Schrebers.
11. See also his translation from the French: Abhandlung von dem wahren Sitz des Rotzes [Treatise on the True Seat of Nasal Mucus] (Leipzig, n.d.). Perhaps the following reference will suffice to indicate Daniel Paul Schreber’s heartfelt if strained relationship to his ancestors: to demonstrate the senselessness of the divine “miracle,” Schreber mentions “miracles . . . used to create anew lower animals” and insects, but adds: “all to no purpose whatsoever, as . . . the newly created insects belong to a species which in any case already exists in vast numbers, so that there is no need to call them into life afresh” (M., p. 156). Novae Species Insectorum by Johann Christian Daniel Schreber (a great uncle) appeared in 1759.
13. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 37, n. 1.
20. Ibid., p. 35.
21. Ibid., p. 79.
22. Ibid., p. 35.
23. Ibid., p. 9.
25. Ibid., p. 43.
27. This and all subsequent quotations in this section are from Baumann, "Der Fall Schreber," pp. 515–518.
29. *Verstandesnerven*, translated by Macalpine and Hunter as "nerves of intellect" (M, p. 45)—Gregg's note.
30. See Georges Bataille, *La part maudite* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967). On the concept of "restricted economy," see also Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy," in *Writings and Difference*, pp. 251–277. Here an interpretation remains to be made which would reveal the social mediation of Schreber's delusional system not only in the sense of shared notions, but as a structuring factor. One would have to investigate especially the heightened problematic of identity of a (double) God who appears on the one hand as a transcendent Creator, and on the other as a limited subject, the phantasmal presentation of the bourgeois individual.
31. *Nervenanhang*, translated by Macalpine and Hunter as "nerve-contact."
32. Compare this formulation with the subtitle of a book by Schreber's father: *Anthropos: The Structural Wonder of the Human Organism*. No wonder, then, that Schreber remarks in a footnote that, once again, this is "an expression which I did not invent. I would have ["hätte," translated by Macalpine and Hunter as "had"—Gregg's note] spoken," he continues, "of [a] miraculous organization . . ." (M, p. 54).
35. *Widersetze*, translated by Macalpine and Hunter as "may have resisted"—Gregg's note.
36. And, according to Freud and Bataille, not for Schreber's nerves!
37. M, p. 175, n. 96. The function of spoken language in the constitution and preservation of identity becomes quite clear here: it is no accident that in Schreber's book, that which is heterogeneous and foreign to the ego makes use of written language—the system of notation—as an instrument (which is dead, automatic, and mindless) against the desire and power of Schreber's nerves. On the general problematic of the priority of phonetic language in Western thought, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).
42. M, p. 270. It should be noted that Schreber does not himself record these (his own) expressions; they are mentioned solely in Dr. Weber's court-ordered medical opinion.
44. Ibid., p. 56.
45. In this context one should refer to Melanie Klein, who thought she had traced the beginnings of the triadic,


49. See M, p. 191: "In the previous chapter I expressed my opinion that spontaneous generation (parentless generation) does actually occur"; that Schreber would very much have liked to have stood above all begetting on the strength of his convictions can at least be surmised.
MEMOIRS OF MY NERVOUS ILLNESS

Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken
TRANSLATORS' INTRODUCTION

Family History

Daniel Paul Schreber came of a distinguished family. His father, Daniel Gottlob Moritz Schreber, of Leipzig (15th October 1808–11th November 1861), the son of an advocate, was a physician and lecturer at Leipzig University where he founded an Institute of Orthopaedics. He was also an educationalist and social reformer with an apostle-like mission to bring health, happiness and bliss to the masses through physical culture. He advocated gymnastics in the treatment of disease, and organized outdoor games and playing fields for the young. In German-speaking countries small allotment gardens are called Schrebergärten after him. He published a number of books of which the titles alone, quite apart from their text, show that he was eccentric, not to say a crank.

Chapter III of Schreber’s Memoirs originally dealt with “other members of my family”. Unfortunately it was considered unfit for publication in the German edition. However, in other places Schreber mentions his mother who was still alive, an older and a younger sister, a brother-in-law and sister-in-law, and the memory of my brother.

Schreber says he knew his family tree, of which he was very proud, “extremely well”. He refers several times to events affecting members of the Schreber family in the eighteenth century. The voices said that the Schrebers “belonged to the highest heavenly nobility”, to which he explains only persons of outstanding achievement were raised. The following famous Schrebers were ancestors; all shared the Christian name Daniel.

* For instance, one of his books is called Glückseligkeitsträume für das Physische Leben des Menschen (perhaps best translated as HOW TO ACHIEVE HAPPINESS AND BLISS BY PHYSICAL CULTURE.) His most widely known work is Medical Indoor Gymnastics which reached eight editions in the first six years and between thirty and forty in all, was translated into seven languages, into English from the 3rd edition in 1856 and from the 26th in 1912. It starts as follows “Man is so to speak a double being consisting of a miraculous intimate union of a mental with a bodily nature.” This is an example of the philosophical speculations about the origin of man and the nature of the human soul, coupled with high-flung zeal to improve mankind, which pervades all his publications. Certain passages in the Memoirs bring home how much our author was a chip off the old block.
Daniel Gottfried Schreber (1737–1777), Professor of Agriculture and Economics, was a prolific writer on many subjects, including mineralogy, economics, history, etc. Of his many books, seventeen are preserved in the British Museum, London. His son, Schreber’s great uncle, Johann Christian Daniel von Schreber (1739–1816) was the most famous. He was active in many fields of science, Professor of Medicine and Superintendent of the Botanical Garden at the University of Erlangen, ennobled in 1791, and among many other honours elected Fellow of the Royal Society of London. He participated in a work on public administration and finance (Cameral–Statistik) with his father. Thirty-two of his works are preserved in the British Museum, London, including Novae Species Insectorum*, a “work of prime importance as it contains the first description of twelve insects, with illustrations, and the author makes use of the Linnean nomenclature, now universally adopted” (Griffin, 1939). Many of his books are on botany, and he published an Atlas of the Mammalia.

**Personal History**

Little is known of the author of the Memoirs†, probably because the family did not wish to publicize any details about him. It is even said that they bought up and destroyed most copies of the Memoirs. Freud (1911), from private information supplied by a physician in Dresden, gave Schreber’s age as 51 at the beginning of his second illness in 1893, making the year of his birth 1842. From the Memoirs we know that he was happily married, except that the couple were “repeatedly disappointed in our hope of being blessed with children”. Baumeyer (1951) claimed to have found mental hospital records showing that Schreber was admitted to an Asylum for the third time in 1907 following the death of his wife, and died there in 1921. It has, however, not been possible to confirm this.

Schreber followed the legal profession and in 1893 was promoted to the high office of Senatspräsident, i.e. President of a panel of Judges at the Court of Appeal (the Superior Country Court) at Dresden, at a comparatively early age. This was the Supreme Court of the Kingdom of Saxony, which at that time had a population of between 4 and 5 millions. Only the Imperial German High Court in Leipzig was superior to it.

Some light is thrown on Schreber’s personality by the subjects which interested him and by some of the books he says he “read repeatedly in the ten years preceding my illness”. Apart from his profession these included natural history, particularly the doctrine of evolution, the natural sciences, astronomy and philosophy. From other parts of the book it appears he was widely read in the history of religion and literature, interested in etymology, and fond of music. His Greek was fluent: the voices talked in Greek “when I read a Greek book”. His candidature for the Reichstag in 1884 bespeaks his interest in public affairs and politics. Dr. Weber, Superintendent of Sonnenstein Asylum, testified in Court that Schreber had wide and varied cultural interests, and was well informed on all matters of art, history, public welfare, administration—in fact on all general topics. He also stressed Schreber’s unimpeachable honesty and outstanding intelligence, with which the Judges agreed.

**History of Illness**

Schreber suffered twice from a “nervous illness”. The first illness started in the autumn of 1884 and was described as “severe hypochondrias without any incidents bordering on the supernatural”. At the beginning of December 1884 he was admitted to the Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Leipzig as a patient of its Director, Professor Paul Emil Flechsig.† He was discharged early in June the following year, and had fully recovered by the end of 1885 when he resumed his post as Judge at the Country Court in Leipzig, one of five Governmental Districts into which Saxony was divided.

The second illness, the subject proper of the Memoirs, started in October 1893 and “still persists”. In the middle of November 1893, that is six weeks after taking up office as Senatspräsident to which he had been raised, he was admitted to the same Clinic, again under Flechsig. In June 1894 he was sent from Flechsig’s Clinic to Lindenhof, Dr. Pierson’s Private Asylum in Coswig near Dresden.† After a fortnight there he was transferred to Sonnenstein Asylum in Pirna, near Dresden, the first German Public Mental Hospital, situated in the Kingdom of Saxony.‡ Schreber

* Curiously, newly created insects played a large part in Schreber’s delusions! (Cf. Memoirs, Chapter VIII).
† During our search for more information about Schreber, particularly the period following publication of the Memoirs, we came into possession of information relating to his parents and collateral. None of it unfortunately has a direct bearing on the understanding of his psychosis, and we have therefore not included it.
† A Private Asylum for about 95 patients of both sexes.
‡ See plates 2, 3 and 4.
was puzzled why his transfer to Sonnenstein was interrupted by a short stay at Lindenhof. He wondered whether it was designed to break the journey, whether his rooms at Sonnenstein were not ready; possibly it was a question of expense. Schreber himself mentions that he was more severely hallucinated and out of contact at Dr. Pierson's Asylum, the "Devil's Kitchen", as he called it, than he had been before: he may therefore have become too dangerous to keep in a small private asylum.

He remained at Sonnenstein Asylum for almost nine years, and there wrote his Memoirs. In the Preface to the book dated December 1902, he stated his intention to leave the Asylum early in 1903. He had succeeded in having his tutelage* rescinded in the Court of Appeal in September 1902 and from then on was free to discharge himself. The "Open Letter" to Professor Flechsig which also prefaces the Memoirs was written from Dresden in March 1903, which means he must have left the Asylum by then. There are no subsequent reliable data about him.

The "Memoirs"

The Memoirs were not originally planned as a book. During the years of his illness Schreber kept notes in shorthand, at first on little scraps of paper; later he made entries in diaries and notebooks, which he called his "Little Studies". When in 1899, after seven years in asylums, he had recovered sufficiently to strive for independence and restoration of his legal capacity, he started to write the Memoirs from these notes and jottings in anticipation of his release, in order to give his wife and others who would then be around him "at least an approximate idea of my religious conceptions so that they may have some understanding of the necessity which forces me to various oddities of behaviour". The oddities refer to his habit of wearing cheap jewellery, ribbons, or other feminine ornaments for several hours a day, and to attacks of compulsive bellowing which set in when the process of transformation into a woman was impeded. Only in the process of writing did the work grow "into a scientific treatise", and with it Schreber intended to make available to a wider public a full account of his experiences, observations and reflections while "suffering from a nervous illness". The book's purpose was now to invite qualified men of science to investigate and examine his body, and observe future developments on him to verify "what other people think are delusions and hallucinations", namely that his body was gradually being transformed into a female body, a process he called "unmanning". Schreber believed that he was unique in such a transformation and that it had never previously been observed on a human being: if confirmed and established as a fact by men of science, new evidence would be provided about divine creative power and the nature of God, and proof furnished of the continuance of life after death and of the existence of a living God, which would lead to a new conception of religious truths. Believing himself the sole object of these divine miracles, Schreber felt it was his duty to spread this knowledge which would "in the highest degree act fruitfully and as a blessing to mankind".

Schreber's Memoirs, then, were not prompted by litigious intent, nor by a desire to place blame on doctors, institutions and other public authorities, nor published for the sake of sensationalism or personal gain; this in itself sets the Memoirs far above other self-descriptions of mental patients.

Appendix to the Memoirs

The Appendix to the Memoirs is made up of documents from the files of the Court about Schreber's tutelage, that is the Court orders depriving him of the management of his affairs and legally detaining him in the Asylum, and their later suspension. He had entered the Psychiatric Clinic in Leipzig voluntarily in November 1893; when he "learned some years later", apparently in 1899, that he had been placed under temporary tutelage as early as 1895, "I approached the authorities demanding a decision as to whether the temporary tutelage was to be made permanent or whether it could be rescinded". Contrary to his expectation, a formal order for his tutelage was made by the District Court, Dresden, in March 1900. Because Schreber considered "the grounds for the decision unsubstantiated" he contested this order in the Country Court of Dresden. To his surprise it was confirmed by the Court in April 1901. He then took the matter to the Superior Country Court in Dresden, the highest Appeal Court of Saxony, playing an active part himself in conducting his case and in the pleadings in Court; especially in formulating the legally excellent grounds for his appeal. He succeeded in having his tutelage rescinded by this Court in September 1902, although obviously still mentally ill. He was thus free again to manage himself and his affairs, and at liberty to leave the Asylum.
Appended to the Memoirs are: Schreber's grounds for his appeal, three extensive expert reports on his mental state and the development of his illness by Dr. G. Weber, a well-known medico-legal expert and Superintendent of Sonnenstein, under whose care Schreber had been since 1894; also the Superior Court's Judgment in full. In them the involved psychiatric and legal questions raised by insanity are fully discussed, the case being very carefully tried because of Schreber's social position. They give to Schreber's own story a framework of objectivity which still allows full clinical evaluation of 'the Schreber case' today. Even by themselves they are of great interest: the relation of insanity to legal responsibility, the question of partial or total disturbance, whether insight precludes insanity in law, and the fundamental issue whether insanity is a disturbance of emotions or intellect or both, are discussed in exactly the same way in Courts today as they were over fifty years ago.

Reviews of the Memoirs

The book was favourably reviewed when it appeared. "Dr. Schreber's Memoirs stand sky-high above publications of other mental patients... Written without malicious intent, they contain the story of his mental illness from his point of view and are of the greatest interest... The great clinical value of this book is further enhanced by the inclusion of Court documents and medical reports... The Memoirs deserve the closest study." (Pelman, 1903). Another reviewer said "Never before have the symptoms of paranoia been offered in such detail and so completely... because of his high intelligence and logical training, Schreber's presentation must be called perfect by the well-informed physician. The book is therefore recommended to all psychiatrists" (Windscheid, 1904). Pfeiffer (1904) stressed the book's value from the legal point of view as well as its clinical descriptions. Dr. Weber considered "the Memoirs... not only valuable from the scientific medical point of view... but they also afford ample support of practical value for understanding the patient's behaviour" because they "deal in the most detailed manner with the history of his illness of many years' duration, both in its external relations and in its inner development".

What makes the Memoirs an "invaluable book" (Freud, 1923) for the understanding of mental illness in general: In short, it is that despite the severity of his psychosis, Schreber's superior intelligence and legal training enabled him "to make sense of it", that is to systematize it, as it abated. In other words, Schreber was able to speak and formulate feelings and ideas in words, where other psychotics are overwhelmed and therefore mute. Further, had he not kept notes during his illness, it is extremely doubtful, as Schreber himself says, whether he could have remembered so much of it, nor told it in so faithful and consecutive a fashion.

Such a complicated narrative would have been impossible to present in speech: the situation of an interview itself colours a patient's utterances and determines their choice, as he is bound to be influenced by the listener. Dr. Weber stated in Court that "These writings are to be given all the more weight because in general the patient is little inclined to reveal his pathological ideas to other people, and further because these ideas are elaborated in so complicated and subtle a manner, that he himself admits that rendering them by word of mouth is difficult". This is true of all seriously ill patients: even did they wish to reveal the trends and inner connections of their fantasies and thoughts, the content of their hallucinations and delusions—in fact what their illness is about—they could not do so, least of all in coherent form in conversation.

To write such a frank autobiographical account required Judge Schreber's intellect, his determination to grapple with his madness, his training in logical thinking, his inborn quest for truth, his integrity, absolute frankness, and finally admirable courage in laying his innermost thoughts and feelings bare before other people, knowing that they thought him mad.

Symptomatology

Schreber describes what happened to him and in him from the beginning of his illness, including two years during which he was so violent and noisy that—to his great indignation—he had to be confined in a padded cell at night, be accompanied by three attendants in the Asylum's yard, and forcibly fed; when he was negativistic, withdrawn, mute and immobile for long periods, impulsive, repeatedly attempted suicide, massively hallucinated and deluded about his own body and his surroundings, suffered from unbearable insomnia, tortured by compulsive acting and obscure thinking. We follow the intense struggle with his delusions, his first glimpses of insight and how he slowly resumed contact with "the outside world". Finally we see a transvestite emerge from this state of "acute hallucinatory insanity", with a complicated system of delusions side by side with unimpaired capacity for clear
and logical reasoning, which allowed him to play a decisive part in having his tutelage rescinded. With great acuity and keen logic he "argued right from wrong premises" (Locke, 1690), so that as Dr. Weber said in Court, "little would be noticeable" of his insanity "to an observer not informed of his total state".

So manifold were the symptoms he displayed at one time or another that almost the whole symptomatology of the entire field of psychiatric abnormality is described. Comparison with the items listed in a recent textbook on psychiatry (Henderson and Gillespie, 1951) in the chapter on 'Symptomatology', allowed us to tick off nearly all as touched on in the Memoirs.

Schreber enters Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis

Schreber is now the most frequently quoted patient in psychiatry; how did he enter it? Extensive self-descriptions have occasionally been published, a not dissimilar case for instance by Haslam (1810). But they are forgotten. Their value being merely narrative and descriptive, they added little to knowledge of the psychotic mind; in part this was because they were read without gain by psychiatrists as one could not discern meaning or sense in them. Thus they had more literary and anecdotal than psychiatric value. Although it was widely recognized in the second half of last century that psychotic products were indicative of a "second personality" or "second mind", and stemmed from "unconscious mentation" or "unconscious cerebration"*, this could not be utilized in clinical psychiatry for lack of a technique of investigating the "unconscious" and its mechanisms; and therefore nothing was known of its connections with conscious mind. In brief, reading the story of one psychotic did not help to understand another.

It was left to Freud to discover the technique of investigating and tracing out the unconscious, of discovering its mechanisms and its relation to conscious mind. Thus Freud for the first time made the content of mental symptoms understandable, his historic contribution to mental science. When he discovered the phenomena of transference, free association, dreams as "the royal road to the unconscious", the importance of sexuality, the mechanisms of repression, condensation, projection, sublimation, of symbolism, slips, etc., he demonstrated that mental symptoms are not haphazard products of the mind, but are determined, have a meaning, and can be traced to their unconscious origin and connections and hence sense made of them.* Only since Freud replaced philosophical and psychological speculation by providing a new technique for investigating the unconscious mind, has it been possible to speak of a pathology of the mind, psychopathology, to assess the significance of symptoms and search for the mental mechanisms of psychiatric symptom formation.

The impact of Freud's discoveries on psychiatry is put succinctly by Bleuler, one of his earliest supporters, in the introduction to his classic DEMENTIA Praecox OR THE GROUP OF SCHIZOPHRENIA (written 1908, published 1911, but not translated till 1950): "The whole conception of dementia praecox originates with Kraepelin; we owe to him alone the grouping and descriptions of individual symptoms... A major part of attempting to enlarge the pathology further is nothing but the application to dementia praecox of Freud's ideas" (Bleuler's italics). In this book Bleuler moved away from the sterile classificatory exercises based on a descriptive nosology of the previous century, to an attempted psychopathology of mental disease made possible by Freud's work. In this way he cut across the rigid Kraepelinian diagnostic entities, particularly the division of psychoses into two supposedly fundamentally different types: dementia praecox and manic-depressive insanity.† At one time there was also a third, paranoia. Bleuler quotes repeatedly from Schreber's Memoirs, utilizing the insight to be gained from them. It may therefore be said that it was Bleuler who, stimulated by Freud's work, introduced Schreber into psychiatry, as he did the mind into dementia praecox. Meyer also attempted to understand the psychoses in their mental develop-

* There was even controversy about priority in the use of this term: referring to Carpenter's (1837) "Voluntary and Instinctive Actions of Living Beings", Tuke (1890) says "With his name has been associated the phrase 'unconscious cerebration', and although, I think, it must be admitted that in the regrettable contention for priority which occurred between Dr. Carpenter and Professor Laycock, the latter's claims are well founded, Dr. Carpenter's exposition of mental automatism was able, and on the whole formed a valuable contribution to psychology".

† In the history of psychiatry classificatory zeal has always varied inversely with psychological understanding.
ment and stood out for the psychogenesis of dementia praecox. He also frequently referred to Schreber, at first in connection with Bleuler’s remarks, later to Freud’s study as well.

Yet Schreber really came into his own only when Freud seized the opportunity provided by the Memoirs to apply his method for the first time to the case material of a mental hospital patient. In 1911 he published “Psychoanalytic Notes upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoidea)”, now known as the Schreber case.† Freud interpreted Schreber’s illness as the outcome of conflict over unconscious homosexuality: an upsurge of unconscious homosexuality was unacceptable to Schreber’s personality because of its implied castration threat, and the ensuing struggle led to his mental illness and withdrawal from reality. Bleuler (1912), reviewing Freud’s analysis of the Schreber case as a clinical psychiatrist friendly to psychoanalysis, was guarded about Freud’s interpretation and the construction he put upon the illness. He doubted whether unconscious homosexuality, though obviously playing a part in the symptomatology of the case, could account aetologically or phenomenologically for Schreber’s illness, paranoid schizophrenia.

Psychoanalysis and the Psychoses

But by psychoanalysts, Freud’s thesis was immediately and generally accepted as forming the basis of ‘paranoia’. Thenceforth paranoid symptom formation was considered as explained by conflict over unconscious homosexuality and established as identical with the old entity paranoia. Despite Freud’s statement that in his study he had not attempted to cover the “much wider concept of dementia praecox”, his theoretical formulations arising from it were nevertheless imperceptibly extended in psychoanalysis to schizophrenia and the psychoses in general; as such they entered psychiatric literature as “the psychoanalytic theory of psychosis.” Psychoanalytic studies of the psychoses are based on what came to be regarded as fundamental tenets, despite terminological confusion and “obvious logical fallacies” (Menninger, 1942). “Perhaps no psychoanalytic theory of a psychosis rests on firmer foundations or has been less frequently attacked” than Freud’s brilliant analysis of the Schreber case (Knight, 1940).

According to Redlich (1952) “Most of the...psychological propositions about schizophrenia...may be traced back to...Freud’s ingenious discussion of the Schreber case”. Zilboog (1941) says that “Freud’s views on schizophrenia...were based on...the Schreber case...later clinical studies corroborated Freud’s views that certain aspects of unconscious homosexuality are the determining factor in the development of schizophrenia”. Fenichel (1945) gives a long list of confirmatory publications.

More than half a century has passed since the publication of the Memoirs: today Schreber is mentioned in almost all textbooks of psychiatry, usually under the heading of paranoia or schizophrenia, and almost invariably in connection with Freud’s name, whether in confirmation or rejection of his thesis. But the Memoirs themselves seem not to have been consulted again: psychiatric and psychoanalytic texts quote only those passages extracted by Freud in support of his interpretation. Schreber’s Memoirs are quoted as interpreted by Freud, but they are not read: “Freud’s study of Dr. Schreber” is accepted as one of “the best real-life descriptions of schizophrenics” (Gillies, 1950). Clearly a kind of myth has developed around this almost legendary name: it seems as if to be quoted but not read is the hallmark of the literary and scientific classic. As a result Freud’s analysis had never been re-evaluated by investigation of the original Memoirs until recently (Macalpine and Hunter, 1953). Perhaps this was partly due to the book having long been very scarce and never before translated.

Historically seen, an interesting development has taken place: Freud selected from the vast symptomatology of Schreber’s psychosis the elements of persecution, and concentrated his attention on material which seemed to lend weight to his thesis that unconscious homosexuality was the aetiological factor in the illness. This had
important and far reaching consequences. First, tracing Schreber’s illness back—like the psychoneuroses—to the Oedipus-complex, Freud treated it as if it were a neurosis, while at the same time maintaining a distinction between neurosis and psychosis (Freud, 1924).* In this way a confusion of terminology arose which continues to beset much of psychoanalytic theory, practice and writing. Second, “paranoid” symptoms became synonymous with persecutory fears or delusions and in this sense were elevated to the signal symptom, and indeed hallmark of psychosis. This led to neglect of other, often much earlier, disturbances of emotion, feeling, association, bodily sensations, etc., not in relation to other people but primarily in the patient’s relation to himself, his mind and his body, which almost invariably precede the development of a psychosis.

Classification

The third consequence of the general acceptance of Freud’s analysis of the Schreber case concerns psychiatric classification. Freud who himself did not profess to be a psychiatrist, used psychiatric terminology freely and without regard. He accepted Kraepelin’s dementia praecox concept, and also Bleuler’s group of schizophrasias, assuming them to be identical though objecting to their names. At the same time he thought it “essential...that paranoia should be maintained as an independent clinical type however frequently the picture it presents may be complicated by the presence of schizophrenic features” (F. 463).† Yet he tried vaguely to combine dementia praecox, paranoia, and schizophrenia, by reintroducing Kahlbaum’s old term paraphrenia for Schreber’s illness: “It would seem to me the most convenient plan to give dementia praecox the name of paraphrenia.” This term has no special connotation, and it would serve to indicate a relationship with paranoia (a term which may be regarded as fixed) and would further recall hebephrenia, an entity which is now merged in dementia praecox. It is true that the name has already been proposed for other purposes; but this need not concern us, since the alternative applications have not passed into general use” (F. 463).

Further he admitted that “it is not at all likely that homosexual impulses, which are so frequently (perhaps invariably) to be found in paranoia, play an equally important part in the aetiology of that far more comprehensive disorder, dementia praecox...one of the great distinctions between dementia praecox and paranoia is that paranoia makes use of projection,” whereas the sufferer from “that far more comprehensive disorder, dementia praecox...employs a hallucinatory (hysterical) mechanism” (F. 464).

But worse confusion of terms is to follow: “we can understand how a clinical picture such as Schreber’s can come about, and merit the name of a paranoid dementia, from the fact that its production of a wish-fantasy and of hallucinations it shows paraphrenic traits, while in its exciting cause, in its use of the mechanism of projection, and in its final issue it exhibits a paranoid character” (F. 464).

Paranoia

These passages clearly “show up the old principles of disease classification with bitter irony” (Bleuler, 1911), and the impossibility of coming “to any common understanding on the basis of the old diagnostic labels...Thus, not even the masters of science can make themselves understood on the basis of the old concepts” (Bleuler, loc. cit.). Even in 1892, Tuke spoke of the “lamentable amount of confusion and obscurity” introduced by bringing back paranoia* into psychiatric nomenclature.

Paranoia—An historical digression

Paranoia, from Greek meaning wrong or faulty knowledge or reasoning, “antedates Hippocrates” (Cameron, 1944) when “it was most frequently used in a very general sense...as the equivalent of our popular current term insanity.” It was resurrected by Vogel in 1772 and further extended by Heinroth in 1818. Its application was then gradually restricted to partial insanity or monomania until Ziehen (1894) and Cramer (1895) “Throw together all the primary disorders of reasoning...including the acute and chronic forms and even all the delirious disorders of no matter what

* “The Greek etymology does not render us any assistance in the endeavour to comprehend the particular class of case to which it is applied” (Tuke, loc. cit.).
by adding up presenting symptoms. For instance, depression, tension states, stress diseases, anxiety states, hysteria and psychopathy, are sufficiently vague to apply to almost any but the most severely disturbed patients. The division of mental diseases into neuroses and psychoses has resulted in new names such as ambulatory or latent schizophrenia, or presyn thesis for the multitude of patients who appear to fall between the two stools.

It is instructive that Schreber was diagnosed in his first illness as suffering from severe hypochondriasis; his second illness commenced as an ‘anxiety neurosis’ with attacks of panic, then hypochondriacal delusions and suicidal depression; later cata tonic excitement alternating with stupor. From then on he might well have been diagnosed variously as suffering from cata tonic schizophrenia, paranoid schizophrenia, dementia paranoide, dementia praecox, monomania, chronic mania, involutional melancholia, paranoia paraphrenia, obsessional neurosis, anxiety hysteria, tension state, transvestitism, psychopathy, etc.

"Naturally a name which only designates and nothing more is in itself a very innocent thing. But among the old and new terminologies which have been suggested and even used among us for psychic illnesses, are some which are more ambitious. Attempts were made to give to this kind of illness a name which implies a description of what, in the opinion of the originator of the name, psychic illness is, even of what its very nature consists. Such names are then no longer innocent: they are intended to direct opinion, and therefore may of course misdirect it. It is for this reason that it is very much worth while considering them closely” (Nasse, 1818).

**Neurosis and Psychosis—An historical digression**

Freud perpetuated terms and divisions of psychiatric disease which the tendency of modern psychiatry has been increasingly to abandon: paranoia and dementia praecox, now more commonly called schizophrenia though the terms by no means cover the same ground, are uniformly acknowledged as indistinguishable and indeed one and the same disease process. Freud further accentuated and at the same time confused an artificial division of psychiatric diseases into neuroses and psychoses by suggesting different psychopathology for each, a "distinction...at times convenient, but without substance" (Lewis, 1959). This has had far reaching effects, discussed below, which in turn impeded progress.

The terms ‘neurosis’ and ‘psychosis’ can only be appreciated in their historical setting. Neurosis, much the older term, derives from...
Greek, meaning nerve, tendon or sinew, structures which were not differentiated. In our time neurasthenia, nerve weakness, nerve strain, and of course treatment by nerve tonics, show their origin in this old anatomical confusion. In 1661 a ‘neuritic’ was a substance having an action on the nervous system, particularly a bracing one; a book dealing with these more recently was entitled “The Old Vegetable Neurotics” (1869). In 1777 Cullen applied the name ‘neurosis’ to all diseases of the nervous system not accompanied by fever (all pyrexial diseases being grouped together irrespective of site or cause), the vesicae or mental diseases forming a subgroup.

‘Psychosis’ was introduced by Feuchtersleben in 1845, to give expression to his belief that mental diseases were not diseases of brain but of soul or mind. For him brain was the organ of mind, the corporeal seat of mind, but not mind itself.

With advances in neuropathy in the 19th century definite neurological diseases with recognizable pathology were increasingly identified. Following Cullen, Romberg (1840–46), in the first systematic textbook written on neurology, still classed all diseases of the nervous system and mental diseases together as Neuroses. But by the turn of this century neurological diseases with recognizable neuropathology had been split off from this group, and neurosis was then applied only to “functional” diseases of the nervous system, although as Gillespie (1938) said, it is “very hard to conceive what a functional disorder of nerve can be.” The belief that mental diseases were diseases of the nervous system allowed hysteria and hypochondriasis to be grouped with epilepsy, tetany, chorea, as functional diseases of the nervous system whose pathology had not been elucidated. This confusion is well shown in Charcot’s term hystero-epilepsy.

Freud demonstrated that the so-called neuroses were in reality diseases of the mind, or psychoses in Feuchtersleben’s original sense.* At the same time Kraepelin grouped dementia praecox, the major mental as opposed to neurological illness (which under a different name had led Feuchtersleben to introduce the term psychosis) with thyroid diseases and general paralysis of the insane, as a metabolic or degenerative disease of the nervous system: hence dementia.

Neurosis and psychosis were also used in various combinations, depending on whether the author considered the psychic or the neurological factor played a greater part in the production of the disease: neuro-psychosis when the nervous system played the greater role due to disease or supposed degeneration, psycho-neurosis (introduced by Stothard in 1865) when the mental factor was more important in causing abnormality in the nervous system. Thus for Clouston (1904) “Psychoneurosis” was the “insane temperament” which “consists of the potentialities of psychosis.” Freud (1896) “In a short paper published in 1894... included hysteria, obsessions and certain cases of acute hallucinatory confusion under one heading as ‘Defence Neuro-Psychoses’” to which he added “Chronic Paranoia” in the 1896 paper from which the above quotation is taken. Griesinger (1861) called “violent toothache” and “spinal affections” neuroses; Hoffmann (1889) called the form of muscular atrophy now known by his name “neuritic”. For Hofmeister (1894) cases of diabetes which commenced with a psychic trauma, were “psychotic”.

Treatment

Today the wheel has turned full circle: neuroses, the erstwhile diseases of nerves and tendons, are, following Freud, largely treated by psychotherapy and their origin in the mind generally accepted. Psychoses on the other hand, Feuchtersleben’s diseases of the mind or soul as opposed to brain, are still often considered to originate from yet undiscovered brain pathology, the mental symptoms being merely incidental and without significance. The mirage created by general paralysis of the insane continues to spur on a psychiatry without psychology to find physical pathology for mental diseases.

We will return to the “actual-neuroses” in the Discussion, because Schreber’s first illness consisted entirely of hypochondriasis, his second illness was ushered in by the same symptoms; and during the whole of his psychosis, preoccupation with his body played a major role, as indeed it does in most psychotic patients.

* A neurological disease with symptoms prominent in the psychic sphere and long confused with mental diseases proper. When first clearly distinguished by Bayle (1823), many cases of “insanity” became understandable in terms of definite brain pathology.
Despite unremitting efforts by biochemists, endocrinologists, neuropathologists, neurophysiologists and others, no evidence has been found to substantiate the hope of finding an organic basis for the group of schizophrenias. Indeed we are “still as far as ever from mounting a delusion in Canada balsam or from detecting despondency in a test tube” (Crichton Browne, 1875). Even the anticipation of and belief in an organic basis for the psychoses can hardly provide a rationale for the present empirical “anti-psychoses” (Tuke, 1882).* Nevertheless, the psychoses are at present widely treated by coma hypoglycaemia, electrically induced convulsions, and surgical destruction of the brain, “tho’ it may seem almost heretical to impeach their antinamiacal virtues”, as Battie (1758) said of the methods of the “lewd empirics” of his time, who “vomited, purged and bled” their “lunatics”. Kraepelin himself in later years stated “Purely medical treatment of the mentally ill cannot satisfy thinking psychiatrists in the long run. As the spirited Reil exclaims ‘It is a revolting spectacle to see how the confirmed empiric sets about his insane patients’” (Kraepelin, 1918). Lewis (loc. cit.) says that the present-day “Three methods...of ‘shock-therapy’...have little more in common than that they are crude empirical methods”, which Critchley (1943) finds “crude, dangerous and repellent to anyone who holds the central nervous system in respect”.

Reverting to our patient Schreber, today he would certainly have qualified for electroshock, insulin hypoglycaemia and leucotomy. One wonders what would have happened to the author of the Memoirs had his brain been submitted to such procedures. It is certain that the Memoirs could not have been written; whether he would have recovered as much as he did spontaneously is doubtful.

Psychotherapy and Classification

Today the neuroses or psychoneuroses, the milder forms of mental illness, are considered to be understood in psychoanalytic theory.

* “Shock therapy has a strong appeal to the therapist—like any mechanical and indirect method—in that its use protects him from exercising certain skills. By avoiding a technique requiring considerable personal interaction with the patient, there is less tendency for the therapist to consider himself to blame for the failure of the patient to recover. His own skill, his own efforts are never thereby put to the test. His own self-esteem is never seriously threatened and he is able to avoid prolonged interviews... if the treatment is successful... he can esteem himself highly... if unsuccessful, he can assume the patient was un-treatable. If the patient has a relapse, it can be regarded as inevitable by reason of his having a psychosis. He can feel... he is following a widely endorsed method” (Gottschalk, 1947).

Originally Freud made no distinction between neuroses and psychoses: one of his earliest psychiatric papers was entitled “The Defence Neuro-Psychoses” (1894). When severely disturbed patients were found to be inaccessible to the psycho-analytic couch-free association technique, this was explained (Abraham, 1908) by the patient’s supposed inability to form a classical sexual (libidinal) transference to the analyst, because his libido was concentrated on himself; hence the term narcissistic neuroses for the psychoses. Freud followed Abraham in his paper “On Narcissism” (1914), “his chief theoretical contribution to the aetiology of psychoses” (Hendrick, 1939). In this “he concluded that the primary process of psychosis is an incapacity for normal emotional interest in other people and things” (Hendrick, loc. cit.). Thus Freud made the presence or absence of the classical libidinal transference to the analyst the criterion of distinction between hysteria and dementia praecox, that is between neuroses and psychoses, or in psychoanalytic terms, between transference neuroses and narcissistic neuroses.

Transference—An historical digression

In this way an entirely new moment was introduced into the classification of mental diseases. This was the patient’s response to psychoanalytic technique, and his capacity to form a libidinal transference has imperceptibly entered psychiatry as proof of a fundamental division into neuroses and psychoses. It is therefore necessary to study this yardstick in detail.

Freud looked upon transference as the cornerstone of psychoanalysis. In “Psychotherapy of Hysteria” in 1895 he first reported that the patient had “made a false connection” to the person of the doctor. In 1905 he discussed this phenomenon further; “What”, he asked, “are transferences?” Since then the identical question has been raised innumerable times and attempts at answering it have been made equally often. Even today the phenomenon of transference is not clearly understood: there is no unanimity as to what it is, why it is, or who exhibits it. This is of fundamental importance, because psychoanalytic theory was built up on observations of transference in analysis. It is still held that the classical technique is absolutely passive, the patient’s actions and thoughts spontaneous, and that the analyst is merely a mirror. Transference manifestations during analysis are assessed as “a new edition of the patient’s neurosis”, hence the term “transference neurosis”. When Freud to his amazement first
encountered this "strange phenomenon of transference", he attributed it to the patient's neurosis and stressed repeatedly and emphatically that these demonstrations of love and hate emanated from patients unaided, that they appeared not only without the analyst's endeavour, but indeed in spite of him, and that nothing would prevent their occurrence.

The natural endeavour to differentiate the new technique of analysis from hypnosis, led to similarities being overlooked. The analyst's passivity became the hallmark of the new technique, its handling by mastery of the counter transference the very centre of analytic training. In contrast to the hypnotist, the analyst's passivity was established as the focal point and essence of psychoanalytic practice; erroneously however it was taken to apply to the whole of psychoanalytic technique, which was looked upon as essentially non-interfering. From this myth of the passivity of the classical technique arose the unproven and indeed untenable notion that transference manifestations unfold spontaneously, the technique only isolating and bringing the neurotic material to light. The ability to form transferences was considered a characteristic of the neurotic. But as has been shown in detail elsewhere (Macalpine, 1930), very active pressure is brought to bear on the patient throughout the analytic treatment; the patient has no choice but to adapt by regression to the denial of object world and object relations in the analytic hour. Indeed one might define analytic transference as a person's induced adaptation by regression to the infantile analytic milieu.

Recognition of the fact that the classical technique does not simply mirror the patient's material, but that his transferences are the product of interacting forces in the analytic setting, must perforce lead to re-evaluation of psychoanalytic tenets and theory. At this point the concept of analytic transference and analytic theory merge. Transference is not only the centre of the practice of psychoanalysis, but on it Freud built his theory of psychoneurotic symptom formation. It provided his first inspiration and later continual confirmation that the psychoneuroses were ultimately traceable to a disturbance in the sexual life. In 1914 Freud stated that "The fact of the transference appearing, although not desired nor induced by either physician or patient, in every neurotic who comes under treatment... has always seemed to me... proof that the source of the propelling forces of neurosis lie in the sexual life". This shows clearly how transference became intrinsically linked with the theory of psychoanalysis, according to which sexual strivings towards other people, and conflict over them, underlie neurotic illness. This may appear an oversimplification as it leaves out of account the pregenital stages of libidinal development and the later death instinct. But even when these are taken into account, it still holds good that the Oedipus complex is considered the core of the psychoneuroses. The point we wish to bring out clearly is that psychoneurotic illness is considered a disturbance of relatively mature interpersonal relations, traceable to the child's early relation to the parent of either sex. This has even led some to bring the Oedipus complex forward to the first year of life, thereby showing how deep-rooted the conviction is that mental illness must arise in interpersonal disturbances. Summarizing: first transference was thought to be a new edition of early interpersonal relations arising spontaneously in analytic therapy. This was taken as evidence that neurotic illness was due to such disturbances of early interpersonal relations. The cause of the psychoneuroses was therefore attributed to libidinal conflict. This model of disturbance of early interpersonal relations was then hypothetically extended to normal development on the one hand and the psychopathology of the psychoses on the other. It was postulated that in psychotics, conflict with other persons is either so early or so severe that they withdraw their libidinal interest from the outside world and direct it narcissistically towards themselves. Hence the undue stress placed on schizophrenics withdrawing from a world unbearable to them, and the faulty notion that renunciation of reality is the hallmark of psychosis.

Although the discovery of transference opened unlimited vistas into patients' inner lives and fantasies, interest was then focussed on, and by over-emphasis almost restricted to interpersonal aspects. The early and inseparable combination of transference manifestations with the libidó theory—which in fact grew out of transference experiences—prevented other aspects from being investigated.

It was necessary to trace the development of analytic concepts in order to understand our present-day ideas of mental disease. Even the basic approach of investigators far removed from psychoanalysis proper is subject to the fashions and heritage of our day, which it fell largely to Freud to determine. The term transference itself has spread far beyond the confines of psychoanalysis, and it is often loosely and wrongly applied. The view is even held that if pursued long enough it is bound to lead to the pathogenic core. This is shown clearly by the ever increasing length of psychoanalyses. The salient point is, that our whole mental theory seems unwittingly
and imperceptibly to have accepted the view that mental illness is
in the last resort based on disturbances of interpersonal relations; in
other words that unconscious conflict over libidinal drives is the
cause and basis of mental illness. Indeed this is the very reason
which at present seems to impede and obstruct progress in psychi-
atriic insight, and limit psychotherapy (Macalpine and Hunter,
1954 a).

From our studies of psychosomatic and psychotic illnesses we
believe that the primary disturbance is not interpersonal but
intrapersonal, that is to say they originate in disturbances of internal
reality, in the patient's relation to himself, his mind and his body
(Macalpine and Hunter, 1954 b). Such intrapersonal disturbances
may secondarily affect interpersonal relations and lead to an altered
relation to external reality.

Today "We may be keeping up the division between neurosis
and psychosis in order to persuade ourselves that we understand
the psychopathology of the neuroses" (Hunter, 1954). Thus
psychoanalysis which has done so much to introduce the mind into
psychiatry, has paradoxically also tended to help pave the way for
yet another era of an organic, neurological, i.e. non-psychological
"brain mythology" of the psychoses. Perhaps because of
deficiencies and obscurities in the theory of psychoanalytic technique,
centred on the concept of transference, psychoanalysis was not
able to stem the advancing tide of empirical "brain-destructive"
(Brody and Redlich, 1952) therapies in psychiatry, and through its
own development contributed to it.*

We have spread our net so wide in this introduction, because it is
our conviction that mental illness is disease of the mind and not of the
brain. This implies an obligation to strive for psychodynamic
understanding as a basis for successful psychotherapy. Psycho-
analytic concepts provide the only starting point for such endeavour.
This led us to examine the relation of psychoanalysis to psychiatry
and the psychoses in detail. For it is widely held that if no results

can be achieved by psychoanalysis, the illness is beyond psycho-
therapy.

We have given in historical outline some factors responsible for
the contemporary belief in an organic origin of mental disease,
which engenders empirical physical procedures in therapy, relegating
the mind to a subordinate or incidental role. Summarizing there
are four main reasons:

1. Symptomatological classification with therapies directed at
removal of symptoms, whatever the means and whatever the price.

2. Artificial division of mental diseases into neuroses and
psychoses, sponsored alike by psychiatrists and psychoanalysts.

3. The widespread belief that psychoanalysis is the be-all and end
-all of psychotherapy, with the implication that because the psycho-
analytic technique is not applicable to psychotics, psychoses are
beyond the pale of psychotherapy.

4. The myth surrounding the nature of transference, its central
position in the technique of psychoanalysis and the theory of
mental illness based on it.

Psychoanalytic Theory of Psychosis

When in our hospital practice we found that psychotherapeutic
results were disappointing if our approach was based on the
psychoanalytic theory of the pathogenicity of unconscious homo-
sexual wishes and attendant castration anxieties, we proceeded to
scrutinize the theory itself. The problems involved are outlined
above. We then checked the therapeutic successes of psycho-
analysts and found to our surprise that it is common experience,
frequently admitted and often implied, that not only are
"paranoid" patients not improved by homosexual interpretations,
but even made worse.

Knight (1940) also noted that interpretation of "homosexual
wishes...cautiously and tactfully" given "not only does not
relieve the patient but often makes him more paranoid than ever".
He therefore raised the important question "Why does the
developing paranoid react so frantically to the dimly perceived
homosexual drive in himself? Is the homosexual wish so much
more intense in him than it is in other men who successfully
repress it...or is...this need to deny so terrifically strong?"
The self-same doubt exercised Ferenczi’s (1911) mind: “in paranoia it is mainly a question of recathexis with unsublimated libido of homosexual love objects which the ego wards off by projection. This statement, however, leads us to the bigger problem of choice of neurosis, i.e., under what conditions does infantile bisexuality, ambisexuality, lead respectively to normal heterosexuality, to homosexual perversion or to paranoia.” Nunberg (1938) implied a similar note of reservation: “The question why it is that out of the same fundamental situation a paranoia develops in one instance and in another does not, must remain unanswered for the present.”

One may therefore conclude that neither in theory nor in therapy is projection of and conflict over unconscious homosexuality as firmly established as the cause of paranoid illness, i.e. schizophrenia, as is generally believed and stated.

This made us turn to Freud’s (1911) paper on which all subsequent psychoanalytic studies of the psychoses are based. We found that Freud himself described it as “more or less speculative” and “only a fragment of a larger whole” (F. 466). He added that “much more material remains to be gathered from the symbolic content of the fantasies and delusions of this gifted paranoid”. The same applies to schizophrenia: doubt and uncertainty in sex identity*, which is of course implied in ideas of change of sex accompanied by ancient procreation fantasies.

If such confusion about sex identity is termed homosexuality then of course schizophrenic “homosexuality” is of a different order, and should be clearly differentiated from passive homosexual wishes towards members of the same sex, as is implied in Freud’s use of the term. This last presupposes certainty in one’s sex identity which Schreber had so obviously lost from the beginning of his illness and which he still clearly displayed when leaving the mental hospital by the wearing of feminine articles such as ribbons and cheap jewellery.

**Conclusion**

We eventually decided to translate the book, because the clinical material it contains exemplifies and elucidates the difficulties which beset the theory, classification and psychotherapy of the psychoses at the present time. For all students of psychiatry, Schreber, its most famous patient, offers unique insight into the mind of a schizophrenic, his thinking, language, behaviour, delusions and hallucinations, and into the inner development, course and outcome of the illness. His autobiography has the advantage of being complete to an extent no case history taken by a physician can ever be: its material is not selected or subject to elaboration or omission by an intermediary between the patient and his psychosis, and between both and the reader. Every student therefore has access to the totality of the patient’s products. Indeed the Memoirs may be called the best text on psychiatry written for psychiatrists by a patient. Schreber’s psychosis is minutely and expertly described, but its content is—as Dr. Weber explained to the Court—fundamentally the same and has the same features as that of other mental patients. Schreber’s name is legion.

We ourselves have learnt from it things which neither textbooks we read, nor lectures we attended could teach us. It helped us understand the actions and speech of chronic psychotics, enabling us to make contact with them, and in this way lessen their alienation. In milder patients, particularly hypochondriacs and early schizophrenics, we could help them understand their concern and preoccupation with body and body functions, or vague anxiety

---

* M. Bleuler (1935) in a personal communication stated that E. Bleuler would have agreed that “schizophrenics are almost invariably, if not indeed invariably, in doubt about the sex to which they belong.”
in terms of fantasies and budding delusions about their physical and mental identity. We have talked and listened to many Schrebers since we studied the Memoirs.

Finally, as the Memoirs are the source material on which Freud based his most famous clinical study, fascinating opportunity is provided of observing Freud's mind actually at work on a case history.

Translation

We thought at first the book was untranslatable because of the circumstantial, complicated and cumbersome presentation of psychotic trends of thought. The involved and endless sentences contain clauses within clauses, particularly when Schreber sets out to describe, explain and develop his delusional ideas and hallucinatory sensations. "Things are dealt with which cannot be expressed in human language; they exceed human understanding," says Schreber himself. The more psychotic the material, the more the former Judge attempts to reason his way out and the more idiosyncratic his mode of expression. Hence his style is a unique combination of exact, exacting diction, and naive directness, even touching simplicity. Concreteness of thought and expression, neologisms, puns, and the insertion of innumerable qualifying adverbs and particles, seemed to make a faithful and yet readable translation almost impossible. However, when we settled down to the arduous task we found to our surprise that the translation makes easier reading than the original. This may be due to the translator being forced to understand every phrase and passage before he can render its meaning succinctly. Even when at first reading a phrase appeared beyond understanding, some train of thought could eventually be unravelled.

We proceeded with the translation by first making a rough draft of the whole book. We then attempted to make this draft readable and understandable. Our third stage was to compare it with the original German text so as to keep as close to it as possible, and in particular to make sure that, following Schreber, we were using the same terms throughout the book. This should facilitate following Schreber's often very tortuous associations. We endeavoured to be as faithful as possible and omitted only the many particles common in German and abundantly used by Schreber, which often cannot be translated at all and do not add to the sense, such as "in part", "on the other hand", "so to speak", "up to a point", "in a way", etc.

We have not attempted to translate most of the titles, for instance Geheimrat, Justizrat and Regierungssassessor, as they cannot be rendered in English and are of no relevance. Schreber's own title, Senatspräsident, we have retained in German; it cannot be accurately translated because it applies to a legal office which has no equivalent in English law.

All terms in inverted commas in the original text which are either neologisms or used by Schreber with a specific meaning, and therefore open to interpretation, are given in the original German version in the notes following the text, together with reasons for our choice of translation. The original contains a fair number of printing errors and wrong cross-references; these we have checked, corrected, and where necessary commented on. To facilitate finding references to the original Memoirs, we have run Schreber's original page numbers alongside the text.

Our translation is almost throughout at variance with quotations from Schreber's Memoirs in the official translation of Freud's study. Even the title of the Memoirs we felt was not accurately rendered by "Memoirs of a Neurotic Patient". Schreber himself did not wish to describe himself as suffering from 'neurosis' in the modern sense of the term; in fact his protest that he suffered from 'diseased nerves' and not from a mental illness runs like a red thread through the whole of the Memoirs. We have been in touch with the Editor and Translator of Freud's works, Mr. James Strachey, who states that in the Standard Edition of Freud's works in preparation, the translation, particularly of quotations from Schreber's Memoirs, will be extensively revised.

Although it was our aim to make the Memoirs readable, we left unchanged passages in which Schreber changes the tense because they reveal his confusion about past and present. The same applies to sentences in which, for instance, he speaks of "one felt that I . . . ; it was said that I . . .", etc. Such passages may strike the reader as slapdash translation, but they show Schreber's confusion about himself. These oblique expressions are frequently used when he describes 'unconscious processes'; they show an awareness of something of which he is only half aware. In the same way as he hears his own thoughts as voices speaking to him from outside, he projects himself into others. These uncertainties are mirrored in his style. Apparently confused passages are intermingled with clearer and simple ones: this leads to an unevenness which we have retained in translation, so as to remain as close as possible to the original. This, coupled with
passages in which Schreber tries to give an account of ideas and feelings literally not expressible in human language, makes some passages appear clumsy. It was often not possible to simplify long and complicated sentences, indeed we felt that the total picture so presented would add to the likeness of Schreber's Memoirs. In conclusion, we hope that the difficulties which we experienced may not be apparent in the result of our labours.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our major indebtedness is to Victor Kreitner, Doctor of Law. He played an important part at all stages of the translation, and was untiring in helping us unravel obscure passages and guiding us through the maze of legal terms and technicalities.

Emily Cuttler gave invaluable assistance in the preparation of the manuscript and proof-reading.

We thank Mr. Marley of Wm. Dawson & Sons for his efficiency and courtesy at all times.

Finally we thank: Dr. Raymond Gosselin, editor of the Psychoanalytic Quarterly, New York, for permission to reprint our paper, "The Schreber Case", which appeared in July, 1953, enlarged and adapted for the book; the Trustees of the British Museum, London, for permission to reproduce the painting by Pradilla; Messrs. C. Marhold of Halle, for permission to reproduce plates II, III, and IV of Sonnenstein Asylum, from "Deutsche Heil- und Pflegeanstalten für Psychisch Kranke" (1910); and Messrs. S. Karger of Berlin, publishers of "Monatschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie", for permission to reproduce plate I of Professor Flechsig.
Denkwürdigkeiten

eines

Nervenkranken

nebst Nachträgen

und einem Anhang über die Frage:

„Unter welchen Voraussetzungen darf eine für geisteskrank erachtete Person gegen ihren erklärten Willen in einer Heilanstalt festgehalten werden?“

von

Dr. jur. Daniel Paul Schreber,
Senatpräsident beim Lgl. Oberlandesgericht Dresden a. D.

Döwald Müse in Leipzig.
1903.
PREFACE

I started this work without having publication in mind. The idea only occurred to me as I progressed with it; however, I did not conceal from myself doubts which seemed to stand in the way of publication: mainly consideration for certain persons still living. Yet I believe that expert examination of my body and observation of my personal fate during my lifetime would be of value both for science and the knowledge of religious truths. In the face of such considerations all personal issues must recede.

Of the whole work the following were written:
The Memoirs themselves (Chapters I-XXII) in the period February to September 1900.
Postscripts I-VII in the period October 1900 to June 1901.
Postscripts second series at the end of 1902.

The outward circumstances of my life have materially changed since the early beginnings of this work. While at the beginning I was living in almost prison-like isolation, separated from contact with educated people, excluded even from the family table of the Director (to which so-called boarders of the Asylum were admitted), never able to get outside the walls of the Asylum, etc., I have gradually been granted increasing freedom of movement, and contact with educated people has been made increasingly possible. Finally I was completely successful in winning the proceedings against my tutelage (albeit in the Second Instance) as mentioned in Chapter XX, inasmuch as the decree of 17th March 1900 placing me under tutelage issued by the District Court, Dresden, was rescinded by the final judgment of the Superior Country Court, Dresden, of 14th July 1902. My legal capacity was thereby acknowledged and free disposal of my properties restored to me. With regard to my stay in the Asylum, for months I have been in possession of a written declaration from the Asylum Authorities that there was now no opposition in principle to my discharge; I am planning therefore to return to my house and home probably early next year.

All these changes have afforded me the opportunity of considerably widening the range of my personal observations. Accordingly some of my earlier opinions need revision: in particular I can no

Vorwort


Von der ganzen Arbeit sind niedergeschrieben:
Die Denkwürdigkeiten selbst (Kap. IXXII) in der Zeit vom Februar bis September 1900.
Die Nachträge unter I-VII in der Zeit vom Oktober 1900 bis Juni 1901.
Die zweite Folge der Nachträge Ende 1902.


Durch alle diese Veränderungen ist mir Gelegenheit gegeben gewesen, den Kreis meiner persönlichen Beobachtungen wesentlich zu erweitern. Manche meiner früher dargelegten Ansichten müssen danach eine gewisse Berichtigung erfahren; ich kann
longer doubt that the so-called "play-with-human-beings" (the effect of miracles) is limited to myself and to whatever constitutes my immediate environment at the time. I might perhaps have formulated some passages of my Memoirs differently now. Nevertheless I have left them mainly in the form in which they were written originally. To change certain points now would only prejudice the freshness of the original descriptions. It is also in my opinion of little importance whether, in view of the relationship contrary to the Order of the World which arose between God and myself, ideas which I formed at the time were more or less faulty. A more general interest can in any case be claimed only for those conclusions which I arrived at in consequence of my impressions and experiences about the lasting conditions, about the essence and attributes of God, the immortality of the soul, etc. In this respect I have no reason whatever, even after my subsequent personal experiences, to make the very slightest alteration in the basic ideas set out particularly in chapters I, II, XVIII and XIX of the Memoirs.

Sonnenstein Asylum, near Pirna, December 1902.

The Author.

Heilanstalt Sonnenstein bei Pirna, im December 1902. Der Verfasser.
OPEN LETTER TO PROFESSOR FLECHSIG

Dear Professor,

I take the liberty of enclosing a copy of "Memoirs of a Patient Suffering from a Nervous Illness", which I have written, and beg you to examine it in a kindly spirit.

You will find your name mentioned frequently, particularly in the first chapter, partly in connection with circumstances which might be painful to you. I very much regret this but unfortunately cannot make any changes without from the very outset precluding making myself understood. In any case it is far from me to attack your honour, as indeed I do not harbour any personal grievance against any person. My aim is solely to further knowledge of truth in a vital field, that of religion.

I am absolutely certain that in this regard I command experiences which—when generally acknowledged as valid—will act fruitfully to the highest possible degree among the rest of mankind. Equally I have no doubt that your name plays an essential role in the genetic development of the circumstances in question, in that certain nerves taken from your nervous system became "tested souls" in the sense described in Chapter I of the "Memoirs", and in this capacity achieved supernatural power by means of which they have for years exerted a damaging influence on me and still do to this day. You like other people may be inclined at first to see nothing but a pathological offspring of my imagination in this; but I have an almost overwhelming amount of proof of its correctness, details of which you will find in the content of my "Memoirs". I still feel daily and hourly the damaging influence of the miracles of those "tested souls"; the voices that speak to me even now shout your name again and again at me hundreds of times every day in this context, in particular as the instigator of those injuries; and this despite the fact that the personal relations which existed between us for some time have long since receded into the background for me; I could hardly therefore have any reason to keep on thinking of you, especially with any sense of grievance.

Offener Brief an Herrn Geh. Rath Prof. Dr. Flechsig.

Hochverehrter Herr Geh. Rath!

In der Anlage gestatte ich mir, Ihnen ein Exemplar der von mir verfaßten "Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken" zu überreichen mit der Bitte, dieselben einer wohlwollenden Prüfung zu unterwerfen.

Sie werden finden, daß in meiner Arbeit, namentlich in den ersten Kapiteln, Ihr Name des Öfteren genannt worden ist, zum Theil in Zusammenhängen, die geeignet sein könnten, Ihre Empfindlichkeit zu berühren. Ich bedauere dies selbst auf das Lebhafteste, vermag aber leider Nichts daran zu ändern, wenn ich nicht die Möglichkeit eines Verständnisses meiner Arbeit von vornherein ausschließen will. Jedenfalls liegt mir die Absicht eines Angriffs auf Ihre Ehre durchaus fern, wie ich denn überhaupt gegen keinen Menschen irgend einen persönlichen Groll habe, sondern mit meiner Arbeit nur den Zweck verfolge, die Erkenntnis der Wahrheit auf einem hochwichtigen, dem religiösen Gebiete, zu fördern.

For years I have pondered how to reconcile these facts with my respect for your person, whose integrity and moral worth I have not the least right to doubt. Only quite recently however, just before the publication of my book, I had a new idea which might possibly lead to the correct solution of the problem. As remarked at the end of Chapter IV and the beginning of Chapter V of the "Memoirs", I have not the least doubt that the first impetus to what my doctors always considered mere "hallucinations" but which to me signified communication with supernatural powers, consisted of influences on my nervous system emanating from your nervous system. How could this be explained? I think it is possible that you—at first as I am quite prepared to believe only for therapeutic purposes—carried on some hypnotic, suggestive, or whatever else one could call it, contact with my nerves, even while we were separated in space. During this contact you might suddenly have realized that other voices were speaking to me as well, pointing to a supernatural origin. Following this surprising realization you might have continued this contact with me for a time out of scientific interest, until you yourself felt as it were uneasy about it, and therefore decided to break it off. But it is possible that in this process a part of your own nerves—probably unknown to yourself—was removed from your body, a process p.x explicable only in a supernatural manner, and ascended to heaven as a "tested soul" and there achieved some supernatural power. This "tested soul" still endowed with human faults like all impure souls—in accordance with the character of souls which I have come to know with certainty—then simply allowed itself to be driven by the impulse of ruthless self-determination and lust for power, without any restraint by something comparable to the moral will power of man, exactly in the same way as another "tested soul", that of von W., as recorded in my "Memoirs". It is therefore possible that all those things which in earlier years I erroneously thought I had to blame you for—particularly the definite damaging effects on my body—are to be blamed only on that "tested soul". There would then be no need to cast any shadow upon your person and only the mild reproach would perhaps remain that you, like so many doctors, could not completely resist the temptation of using a patient in your care as an object for scientific experiments apart from the real purpose of cure, when by chance matters of the highest scientific interest arose. One might even raise the question whether perhaps all the talk of voices about somebody having committed soul murder can be

explained by the souls (rays) deeming it impermissible that a person’s nervous system should be influenced by another’s to the extent of imprisoning his will power, such as occurs during hypnosis; in order to stress forcefully that this was a malpractice p. xi it was called “soul murder”, the souls for lack of a better term, using a term already in current usage, and because of their innate tendency to express themselves hyperbolically.

I need hardly mention of what immeasurable importance it would be if you could in any way confirm the surmises I have sketched above, all the more if they could be substantiated in recollections of earlier years retained in your memory. The rest of my thesis would thereby gain universal credence and would immediately be regarded as a serious scientific problem to be investigated in every possible way.

I beg you therefore, my dear Sir—I might almost say: I implore you—to state without reservation:

1. Whether during my stay in your Asylum you maintained a hypnotic or similar contact with me in such a way that even when separated in space, you exerted an influence on my nervous system;

2. Whether you thus witnessed in any way communications from voices originating elsewhere, indicating supernatural origin; finally

3. Whether during my time in your Asylum you yourself also received visions or vision-like impressions particularly in p. xii dreams, which dealt amongst others with the almighty power of God and human freedom of will, unmanning, loss of states of Blessedness, my relations and my friends, as well as yours, particularly Daniel Fürchtegott Flechsig named in Chapter VI, and many other matters mentioned in my “Memoirs”.

I hasten to add that from the numerous communications I received from the voices that talked to me at that time, I have the most weighty indications that you yourself had similar visions.

In appealing to your scientific interest I may be permitted to trust that you will have the courage of truth, even if you had to admit some trife which could never seriously affect your prestige or authority in the eyes of any sensible person.
In case you want to send me a written communication you may rest assured that I would publish it only with your permission and in a form which you yourself may choose.

In view of the wide interest which the content of this letter may claim, I have thought fit to have it printed in the form of an "open letter" prefaces my "Memoirs".

Dresden, March 1903.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Schreber, Senatspräsident
(retired).

Sollten Sie mir eine schriftliche Mitteilung zukommen lassen wollen, so dürfen Sie sich versichert halten, dass ich dieselbe nur mit Ihrer Genehmigung und in denjenigen Formen, die Sie Selbst vorschreiben für gut finden, veröffentlichen würde.

Bei dem allgemeinen Interesse, das der Inhalte dieses Briefes zukommt, dürfte, habe ich es für angemessen erachtet, denselben als "Offenen Brief" meinen "Denkwürdigkeiten" vordrucken zu lassen.

Dresden, im März 1903.

In vorzüglicher Hochachtung
Dr. Schreber, Senatspräsident a. D.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface ........................................ iii
Open letter to Professor Flechsig ........ vii
Table of Contents .............................. xiii

Memoirs
Introduction .................................. iii
Chapter I God and Immortality .......... 1
II Crisis in God’s realms: Soul murder .. 6
III (Not printed) .............................. 33
IV Personal experiences during the first and the beginning of the second nervous illness .... 34
VI Personal experiences continued. Visions. “Seer of spirits” .................. 63
VII Personal experiences continued; peculiar manifestations of illness. Visions ........ 81
VIII Personal experiences while in Dr. Pierson’s Asylum. “Tested souls” ...... 98
X Personal experiences at Sonnestein. “Interferences” accompanying contact with the rays. “Creation of a false feeling” .......... 135
XI Bodily integrity damaged by miracles .. 148
XII Content of the voices’ talk. “Soul-conception.” Soul-language. Continuation of personal experiences .......... 162
Chapter XIII  The soul’s state of Blessedness as a factor in attraction. Consequences thereof

XIV  “Tested souls”; their fate. Personal experiences continued

XV  “Play-with-human-beings” and “Miracles”. Cries of help. Talking birds

XVI  Compulsive thinking. Its effects and manifestation

XVII  Continuation of the above; “Picturing” in the sense of the soul-language

XVIII  God and the processes of creation; spontaneous generation; insects created by miracles. “Direction of gaze.” System-of-examination

XIX  Continuation of the above. God’s omnipotence and man’s freedom of will

XX  Egocentricity of the rays regarding my person. Further developments of personal affairs

XXI  Blessedness and voluptuousness in their mutual relation. Consequences of this relation for personal behaviour

XXII  Final considerations. Future prospects

Postscripts

Postscripts, First Series

I  Miracles

II  Relation of divine and human intelligence

III  Play-with-human-beings

IV  Hallucinations

V  The nature of God manifested through nerve-contact

VI  Final considerations; Miscellaneous

VII  Cremation

Postscripts, Second Series

13. Kapitel  Seelenwollust als Faktor der Anziehung. Folgeerscheinungen


15. Kapitel  »Menschen- und Wunderspieler«. Hilfe- und sprechende Vögel


18. Kapitel  Gott und die Schöpfungsvorgänge; Urzeugung; gewundene Insekten. »Blickrichtungs. Examinationssystem


20. Kapitel  Egozentrische Auffassung der Strahlen in Betreff meiner Person. Weitere Gestaltung der persönlichen Verhältnisse


22. Kapitel  Schlußbetrachtungen. Ausblick in die Zukunft

Nachträge, erste Folge

I. Wunder betreffend

II. Verhältnis der göttlichen zur menschlichen Intelligenz betreffend

III. Menschenspieler betreffend

IV. Halluzinationen betreffend

V. Die Gottesnatur betreffend

VI. Betrachtung hinsichtlich der Zukunft: Vermischtes

VII. Feuerbestattung betreffend

Nachträge, zweite Folge

Nachwort von Martin Burckhardt

Editorisches Nachwort

XII
Appendix

Essay: “In what circumstances can a person considered insane be detained in an Asylum against his declared will?” 363

Postscript ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 374
Second Postscript ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 375

Addenda

(Document from the Court Proceedings placing me under tutelage)

A. Medical expert’s report to the Court of 9th December 1899 by Dr. Weber ... ... ... ... ... ... 379
B. Dr. Weber’s report as County and Asylum Medical Officer of 28th November 1900 ... ... ... ... ... 390
C. Grounds of appeal ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 404
D. Dr. Weber’s expert report of 5th April 1902 ... ... ... 452
E. Judgment of the Royal Superior Country Court of Dresden of 14th July 1902 ... ... ... 473

39
INTRODUCTION

I have decided to apply for my release from the Asylum in the near future in order to live once again among civilised people and at home with my wife. It is therefore necessary to give those persons who will then constitute the circle of my acquaintances, an approximate idea at least of my religious conceptions, so that they may have some understanding of the necessity which forces me to various oddities of behaviour, even if they do not fully understand these apparent oddities.*

This is the purpose of this manuscript; in it I shall try to give an at least partly comprehensible exposition of supernatural matters, knowledge of which has been revealed to me for almost six years. I cannot of course count upon being fully understood because p. 2 things are dealt with which cannot be expressed in human language; they exceed human understanding. Nor can I maintain that everything is irrefutably certain even for me: much remains only presumption and probability. After all I too am only a human being and therefore limited by the confines of human understanding; but one thing I am certain of, namely that I have come infinitely closer to the truth than human beings who have not received divine revelation.

To make myself at least somewhat comprehensible I shall have to speak much in images and similes, which may at times perhaps be only approximately correct; for the only way a human being can make supernatural matters, which in their essence must always remain incomprehensible, understandable to a certain degree is by comparing them with known facts of human experience. Where intellectual understanding ends, the domain of belief begins; man must reconcile himself to the fact that things exist which are true although he cannot understand them.

* Prefatory Remark.

During the course of writing the present essay it occurred to me that it could perhaps be of interest to a wider circle. Nevertheless I have left the preamble because it was my original motive to acquaint my wife with my personal experiences and religious ideas. This explains why I have frequently thought it right to give circumstantial explanations for facts already known, to translate foreign words, etc., which would really have been unnecessary for the scientifically trained reader.

Einleitung

Da ich den Entschluß gefaßt habe, in absehbarer Zukunft meine Entlassung aus der Anstalt zu beantragen, um wieder unter gesitteten Menschen und in häuslicher Gemeinschaft mit meiner Frau zu leben, so wird es notwendig sein, denjenigen Personen, die dann meine Umgebung bilden werden, wenigstens einen ungefähren Begriff von meinen religiösen Vorstellungen zu geben, damit sie die manchen scheinbaren Absonderlichkeiten meines Verhaltens wenn auch nichtvollständig begreifen, so doch mindestens von der Notwendigkeit, die mit diesen Absonderlichkeiten auftritt, eine Ahnung erhalten.*


Um eingermaßen verständlich zu werden, werde ich viel in Bildern und Gleichnissen reden müssen, die vielleicht zuweilen nur annähernd das Richtige treffen; denn die Vergleichung mit bekannten menschlichen Erfahrungsstatsachen ist der einzige Weg, auf dem sich die Mensch die ihm in ihrem innersten Wesen doch immer unbegreiflich bleibenden übermännlichen Dinge wenigstens bis zu einem gewissen Grade verständlich zu machen vermag. Wo das verständnismößige Begreifen aufhört, fängt eben das Gebiet des Glaubens an; der Mensch muß sich daran gewöhnen, daß es Dinge giebt, die wahr sind, obwohl er sie nicht begreifen kann.*

An obvious example is that the concept of eternity is beyond man's grasp. Man cannot really understand that something can exist which has neither beginning nor end, that there can be a cause which cannot itself be traced to a previous cause. And yet eternity is one of God's attributes, which with all religiously-minded people I feel I must accept. Man will always be inclined to ask: If God created the world, how then did God Himself come to be? This question will for ever remain unanswered. The same applies to the concept of divine creation. Man can only imagine that new matter is created through the influence of forces on matter already in existence, and yet I believe—and I hope to prove in what follows by means of definite examples—that divine creation is a creation out of the void. Even in the dogmas of our positive religion there are certain matters which escape full understanding by the intellect. The Christian teaching that Jesus Christ was the Son of God can be meant only in a mystical sense which but approximates the human sense of these words, because nobody would maintain that God, as a Being endowed with human sexual organs, had intercourse with the woman from whose womb Jesus Christ came forth. The same applies to the doctrine of the Trinity, the Resurrection of the Flesh, and other Christian dogmas. By this I do not in any way wish to imply that I acknowledge as true all Christian dogmas in the sense of our orthodox theology. On the contrary, I have good reason to think that some of them are definitely untrue or true only to a very limited extent. This applies, for instance, to the Resurrection of the Flesh, which could only lay claim to being relatively and temporarily true in the form of transmigration of souls (not representing the ultimate goal of the process), and also to eternal damnation to which some people are supposed to have succumbed. The concept of eternal damnation—which will always remain abhorrent to human feeling notwithstanding the exposition, based on what I consider sophisms by which Luthardt for instance, tried to make it acceptable in his Apologies—does not correspond to the truth, as indeed the whole (human) notion of punishment—as an expeditious weapon for attaining certain purposes within human society—must in the main be eliminated from our ideas of the life beyond. This, however, can only be examined more closely later.¹

¹ On the other hand, on the basis of what I have myself experienced, I am able to give a more detailed explanation of some Christian dogmas and how such things can come about through divine miracles. Something like the conception of Jesus Christ by an Immaculate Virgin—i.e. one who never had intercourse with a man—

Before I proceed with the account of how, owing to my illness, I entered into peculiar relations with God—which I hasten to add were in themselves contrary to the Order of the World—I must begin with a few remarks about the nature of God and of the human soul; these can for the time being only be put up as axioms—tenets not requiring proof—and their proof as far as is at all possible can only be attempted later in the book.

I have reached a fairly clear idea of how the Resurrection of Jesus Christ may have come about; during the latter part of my stay in Flechsig's Asylum and the beginning of my stay here, I have witnessed not once but hundreds of times how human shapes were set down for a short time by divine miracles only to be dissolved again or vanish. The voices talking to me designated these visions the so-called "fleeting-improvised-men"—some were even persons long ago deceased, as for instance Dr. Rudolph J., with whom I had seen in Pienso's Asylum—so-called—in Coburg; there were others also, who had apparently passed through a transmigration of souls, as for instance the Senior Public Prosecutor B., Counsel of the Country Court Drs. N. and W., the Privy Councillor Dr. W., the lawyer W., my father-in-law and others; all of them were leading a so-called dream life, i.e. they did not give the impression of being capable of holding a sensible conversation, just as I myself was at that time also little inclined to talk, mainly because I thought that I was faced not by real people but by miraculously created puppets. On the basis of these experiences I am inclined to think that Jesus Christ also, who as a real human being died a real death, was subsequently by divine miracle "set down" anew for a short time as a "fleeting-improvised-man", in order to strengthen the faith of his followers and thereby securely establish the idea of immortality among mankind; but he subsequently succumbed to the natural dissolution of the "fleeting-improvised-men", so that it is not impossible according to what will be said below that his nerves entered into the state of eternal blessedness. From this conception it follows that the Dogma of the Ascension of Christ is a mere fable by which His disciples tried to explain the fact that after His death they repeatedly saw His person in the flesh amongst them.

Else ich zu der Darlegung übergehe, wie ich in Folge meiner Krankheit besondere und, wie ich gleich hinzufügen will, der Weltordnung an sich widersprechende Beziehungen zu Gott getreten bin, muß ich zunächst einige Bemerkungen über die Natur Gottes und die menschliche Seele vorausschicken, die vorläufig nur als Axiome — des Beweises nicht bedürftige Satz — hingestellt werden können und rücksichtlich ihrer eine Begründung, so weit dieselbe überhaupt möglich ist, erst im weiteren Verlaufe versucht werden kann.


43
The human soul is contained in the nerves of the body; about p. 6 their physical nature 1, as a layman, cannot say more than that they are extraordinarily delicate structures—comparable to the finest filaments—and that the total mental life of a human being rests on their excitability by external impressions. Vibrations are thereby caused in the nerves which produce the sensations of pleasure and pain in a manner which cannot be further explained; they are able to retain the memory of impressions received (the human memory) and have also the power of moving the muscles of the body which they inhabit in any manifest activity by exertion of their will power. From the most tender beginnings (as the fruit of the womb—as a child’s soul) they develop to a complex system which embraces the most widespread regions of human knowledge (the soul of mature man). Part of the nerves is adapted solely for receiving sensory impressions (nerves of sight, hearing, taste and voluptuousness, etc., which are therefore only capable of the sensation of light, sound, heat and cold, of the feeling of hunger, voluptuousness and pain, etc.); other nerves (the nerves of intellect) receive and retain mental impressions and as the organs of will, give to the whole human organism the impulse p. 7 to manifest those of its powers designed to act on the outside world. Circumstances seem to be such that every single nerve of intellect represents the total mental individuality of a human being, that the sum total of recollections is as it were inscribed on each single nerve of intellect 2; the greater or lesser number of nerves of intellect only influences the length of time for which recollections can be retained. While man is alive he is body and soul together; the nerves (the soul of man) are nourished and kept in living

If this assumption is correct, then the problem of heredity and variability is also solved, i.e. the fact that children resemble their parents and grandparents in some ways and deviate from them in others. The male seed contains a paternal nerve and combines with a nerve taken from the mother’s body to form a newly created entity. This new entity—the child to be—thus recreates anew the father and the mother, perhaps more the former or the latter, in turn receives new impressions in its lifetime and then transmits this newly acquired individuality to its descendents. The idea of the existence of a particular nerve of determination representing the mental unity of a person, which I understand forms the basis of du Prel’s work of the same name, would accordingly be without substance.


1 Ist diese Annahme richtig, so löst sich damit zugleich das Problem von der Vererbung und Variabilität; d.h. der Thatsache, daß Kinder ihren Eltern und Voesternen in gewissen Beziehungen gleichen und in gewissen anderen Beziehungen von ihnen abweichen: Das männliche Samen enthält einen Nerv des Vaters und vereinigt sich mit einem aus dem Leib der Mutter entnommenen Nerv zu einer neu entstehenden Einheit. Diese neue Einheit – das spätere Kind – bringt also den Vater und die Mutter, nach Befinden vorwiegend den ersten oder die letztere, von Neuem zur Erscheinung, empfängt dann ihre seit ihrem Lebens neue Eindrücke und überträgt die auf diese Weise neu erworbene Eigentümlichkeit wiederum auf ihre Nachkommen.

2 Die Vorstellung von einem der geistige Einheit des Menschen darstellenden besondere Verstandesnerven, wie sie meines Wissens den gleichnamigen du Prel’schen Werke zu Grunde liegt, dürfte demnach in Nichts zerfallen.
motion by the body whose function is essentially similar to that of the higher animals. Should the body lose its vitality then the state of unconsciousness, which we call death and which is presaged in sleep, supervenes for the nerves. This, however, does not imply that the soul is really extinguished; rather the impressions received remain attached to the nerves. The soul, as it were, only goes into hibernation as some lower animals do and can be re-awakened to a new life in a manner to be described below.

p. 8  
God to start with is only nerve, not body, and akin therefore to the human soul. But unlike the human body, where nerves are present only in limited numbers, the nerves of God are infinite and eternal. They possess the same qualities as human nerves but in a degree surpassing all human understanding. They have in particular the faculty of transforming themselves into all things of the created world; in this capacity they are called rays; and herein lies the essence of divine creation. An intimate relation exists between God and the starry sky. I dare not decide whether one can simply say that God and the heavenly bodies are one and the same, or whether one has to think of the totality of God’s nerves as being above and behind the stars, so that the stars themselves and particularly our sun would only represent stations, through which God’s miraculous creative power travels to our earth (and perhaps to other inhabited planets).

Equally I dare not say whether the celestial bodies themselves (fixed stars, planets, etc.) were created by God, or whether divine creation is limited to the organic world; in which case there would be room for the Nebular Hypothesis of Kant–Laplace side by side with the existence of a living God whose existence has become absolute certainty for me. Perhaps the full truth lies (by way of a fourth dimension) in a combination or resultant of both trends of thought impossible for man to grasp. In any case the light and warmth-giving power of the sun, which makes her the origin of all organic life on earth, is only to be regarded as an indirect manifestation of the living God; hence the veneration of the sun as divine by so many peoples since antiquity contains a highly important core of truth even if it does not embrace the whole truth.

The teaching of present-day astronomy about the movements, the distances and the physical properties of the celestial bodies, etc., may in the main be correct. My own personal experiences leave me in doubt however whether even the astronomy of today has

p. 9  

such things are also known to our poets “Far above the starry sky, surely dwells a kindly father”, etc.

Ebensowenig ge-
traue ich mir zu sagen, ob auch die Weltkörper selbst (Fixsterne, Planeten u.ä.) von Gott geschaffen worden sind, oder das göttliche Schaffen sich nur auf die organische Welt bezieht, und demnach neben der für mich un-
mittelbar gewisser gewordenen Existenz eines lebendigen Gottes doch noch Raum bliebe für die Nebularhypothese von Kant–Laplace. Die volle Wahrheit liegt vielleicht (nach Art der vierten Dimension) in einer für Men-

schen nicht faßbaren Diagonale beider Vorstellungsrichtungen. Jedenaufs die Licht- und wärmespendende Kraft der Sonne, vermöge deren die Ursache alles organischen Lebens auf der Erde ist, nur als eine mittelbare Lebenserschaffung Gottes anzusehen, weshalb denn auch die der Sonne von Alters her bei so vielen Völkern gesollte göttliche Verehrung zwar nicht die volle Wahrheit in sich schließt, aber doch einen hochbedeutsamen, von der Wahrheit selbst sich nicht allzuweit entferndenden Kern derselben enthält.

Die Lehren unserer Astronomie hinsichtlich der Bewegungen, der Ent-
fernung und der physischen Beschaffenheit der Himmelskörper u.ä. mögen im Allgemeinen richtig sein. Allein, soviel ist mir auf Grund meiner inneren Erfahrungen unzuverlässig, daß auch unsere Astronomie hin-

3 Von alle dem haben auch unsere Dichter eine Ahnung „Dreben übern Sternenheit muß ein guter Vater wohnen u.ä.“
grasped the whole truth about the light-and warmth-giving power of the stars and particularly of our sun; perhaps one has to consider her directly or indirectly only as that part of God's miraculous creative power which is directed to the earth. As proof of this statement I will at present only mention the fact that the sun has for years spoken with me in human words and thereby reveals herself as a living being or as the organ of a still higher being behind her. God also regulates the weather; as a rule this is done automatically, so to speak, by the greater or lesser amount of heat emanating from the sun, but He can regulate it in certain ways in pursuit of His own purposes. For instance I have received fairly definite indications that the severe winter of 1870-71 was decided on by God in order to turn the fortunes of war in favour of the Germans; and the proud words on the destruction of Phillip II’s Spanish Armada in the year 1588 “Deus affavit et dissipati sunt” (God blew the wind and they were scattered) most probably also contains a historical truth. In this connection I refer to the sun only as that instrument of God’s will power which lies nearest to the earth; in reality the condition of the weather is affected by the sum total of the other stars as well. Winds or storms in particular arise when God moves further away from the earth. In the circumstances contrary to the Order of the World which have now arisen this relation has changed—and I wish to mention this at the outset—the weather is now to a certain extent dependent on my actions and thoughts; as soon as I indulge in thinking nothing, or in other words stop an activity which proves the existence of the human mind such as playing chess in the garden the wind arises at once. To anybody who is inclined to doubt such a fantastic statement, I could almost daily give the opportunity of convincing him of its correctness, as in fact I have recently convinced various people about the so-called attacks of bellowing (the doctor, my wife, my sister, etc.). The reason for this is simply that as soon as I indulge in thinking nothing God, presuming that I am demented, thinks he can withdraw from me.

Through the light emanating from the sun and the other stars, God is able to perceive (man would say: to see) everything that happens on earth and possibly on other inhabited planets; in this sense one can speak figuratively of the sun and light of the stars as the eye of God. All He sees He enjoys as the fruits of His creative power, much as a human being is pleased with what he has created with his hands or with his mind. Yet things were so


Vermöge des von der Sonne und den übrigen Gestirnen ausgehenden Lichtes hat Gott die Fähigkeit, Alles was auf der Erde (und etwaigen anderen bewohnten Planeten) vorgeht, wahrzunehmen, der Mensch würde sagen: zu sehen; insofern kann man bildlich von der Sonne und dem Sternenlichte als dem Auge Gottes reden: Er hat Freude an Allem, was er sieht, als Erzeugnissen seiner Schöpfkraft, ähnlich wie der Mensch sich über seiner Hände Arbeit oder über das von seinem Geist Geschaffene freut. Da
ordered—up to the crisis to be described later—that by and large God left the world which He had created and the organic life upon it (plants, animals, human beings) to their own devices and only provided continuous warmth of the sun to enable them to maintain themselves and reproduce, etc. As a rule God did not interfere directly in the fate of peoples or individuals—I call this the state of affairs in accordance with the Order of the World. It could however occur now and then as an exception, but neither did nor could happen too frequently because to draw close to living mankind was connected with certain dangers even for God Himself—for reasons developed further below. For instance a particularly fervent prayer might in a special case induce God to give help by intervening with a miracle or to shape the fate of whole nations (in war, etc.) by means of miracles. He was also able to get into contact (to form “nerve-contact with them” as the voices that speak to me call this process) with highly gifted people (poets, etc.), in order to bless them (particularly in dreams) with some fertilizing thoughts and ideas about the beyond. But such “nerve-contact” was not allowed to become the rule, as already mentioned, because for reasons which cannot be further elucidated, the nerves of living human beings particularly when in a state of high-grade excitation, have such power of attraction for the nerves of God that He would not be able to free Himself from them again, and would thus endanger His own existence.  

Regular contact between God and human souls occurred in the Order of the World only after death. There was no danger for God in approaching corpses in order to draw their nerves, in which self-awareness was not extinct but quiescent, out of their bodies and up to Himself by the power of the rays, thereby awakening them to new heavenly life; self-awareness returned through the

4 I have on innumerable occasions experienced in my own body and continue to do so daily even now that God has, for instance, the power to remove from the human body any germ of illness by sending forth a few pure rays.

4 (Added November 1902). The idea of a force of attraction emanating from individual human bodies or—in my case—from one single human body, acting at such vast distances, must in itself appear absurd if one thinks in terms of natural forces acting purely mechanically. Nevertheless, that an attracting force is at work is for me a fact beyond dispute. This phenomenon will perhaps be somewhat comprehensible and brought nearer human understanding if one remembers that the rays are living beings and therefore the power of attraction is not purely a mechanically acting force, but something like a psychological motive power: the rays too find that “attractive” which is of interest to them. The relationship therefore appears to be similar to that expressed by Goethe in his “Fisherman”: “partly he dragged him down, partly he sank.”


5 (Zusatz vom November 1902): Die Verstellung einer auf so unerhörte Entfernungen wirkenden, von einzelnen menschlichen Körpern oder — in meinem-Falle — von einem einzigen menschlichen Körper ausgehenden Anziehungskraft, möchte, an und für sich betrachtet, d.h. wenn man dabei nach Art der uns sonst bekannten Natürkräfte an ein biologisch mechatanisch wirksames Agens denken wollte, geradezu absurd erscheinen. Gleichwohl ist das Wirkung der Anziehungskraft als Thatsache für mich vollkommen irrtumsfrei. Einigermassen begreiflich und dem menschlichen Verstand näher gesetzt wird vielleicht die Erkenntnis, wenn man sich vergegenwärtigt, daß die Strahlen-besessene Wissen sind und daß es sich daher bei der Anziehungskraft nicht um eine rein mechanisch wirkende Kraft, sondern um etwas den psychologischen Triebfedern Ähnliches handelt. "Anziehung" ist eben auch für Strahlen Daseiniges, was interessant. Das Verhältnis scheint also ähnlich zu liegen, wie dasjenige, von dem Goethe in seinem "Fischer" singt: "Halt setz sie hin, halb sank er hin..."
influence of the rays. The new life beyond is the state of Blessedness to which the human soul could be raised. But this did not occur without prior purification and sifting of the human nerves which required, according to the variable condition of the respective human souls, a shorter or longer time of preparation, and perhaps even certain intermediate stages. Only pure human nerves were of use to God—or if one prefers, in heaven—because it was their destiny to be attached to God Himself and ultimately to become in a sense part of Him as "forecourts of heaven". The nerves of morally depraved men are blackened; morally pure men have white nerves; the higher a man's moral standard in life, the more his nerves become completely white or pure, an intrinsic property of God's nerves. A greater part of the nerves of morally depraved men is probably useless; this determines the various grades of states of Blessedness to which a human being can attain, and probably also the length of time for which self-awareness in the life beyond can be maintained. Nerves probably always have to undergo purification first, because it would be very difficult to find a human being completely free from sin, that is to say one whose nerves were never defiled by immoral behaviour in his earlier life. Not even I can give an exact description of the process of purification; but I have received several valuable indications about it. It appears that the process of purification was connected with a feeling of an unpleasant task? for the souls, or perhaps of an uncomfortable sojourn in the underworld, which was necessary to purify them gradually.

It may be justifiable to designate this in a sense as "punishment"; but it has to be distinguished from the human idea of punishment in that its purpose is not to do harm, but to provide a necessary preliminary for purification. The ideas of hell, hellfire, etc., current in most religions can be explained in this way, but must be qualified in part. The souls to be purified learnt during purification the language spoken by God Himself, the so-called "basic

4 I did not invent the expression "forecourts of heaven", but like all other expressions which are in inverted commas in this essay (for instance "fleeting-improvised men", "dream life", etc.), it only repeats the words which the voices that speak to me always applied to the processes concerned. These are expressions which would never have occurred to me, which I have never heard from human beings; they are in part of a scientific, and particularly medical nature, and I do not even know whether they are in current use in the human science concerned. I will draw attention to this extraordinary state of affairs again in some particularly noteworthy instances.

5 For instance, there was once talk of Fleischig's soul having to perform "drayman's work".

zurück. Das neue jenseitige Leben ist die Seligkeit, zu der die Menschenseele erhoben werden konnte. Allerdings konnte dies nicht ohne vorgängige Läuterung und Sichtung der Menschenerven geschehen, die je nach der verschiedenen Beschaffenheit der Menschenerven kürzerer oder längerer Zeit und nach Befinden noch gewisser Mittelstufen als Vorbereitung bedurfte. Für Gott—or wenn man diesen Ausdruck vorzieht, im Himmel—waren nur reine Menschenerven zu gebrauchen, weil es ihre Bestimmung war, Gott selbst angegliedert zu werden und schließlich als "Vorhöfe des Himmels" gewissermaßen Bestandtheile Gottes selbst zu werden. Nerven sichlich verkommen Menschen sind geschwärzt, sittlich reinen Menschen haben weiße Nerven; je höher ein Mensch sittlich in seinem Leben gestanden hat, desto mehr wird die Beschaffenheit seiner Nerven der vollkommenen Weiße oder Reinheit sich nähern, die den Gotteserven von vornherein eigen ist. Bei sittlich ganz tiefgehenden Menschen ist vielleicht ein großer Theil der Nerven überhaupt nicht brauchbar, danach bestimmten sich die verschiedenen Grade der Seligkeit, zu der ein Mensch aufsteigen kann und wahrscheinlich auch die Zeitdauer, während deren ein Selbstbewusstsein im jenseitigen Leben sich aufrecht erhalten läßt. Ganz ohne vorgängige Läuterung der Nerven wird es kaum jemals abgehen, da schließlich ein Mensch zu finden sein wird, der ganz von Sünde frei wäre, dessen Nerven nicht also irgend einmal in seinem vergangenen Leben durch unsiel stes Verhalten verunreinigt worden wären. Eine ganz genaue Beschreibung des Läuterungs vorgangs zu liefern, ist auch für mich nicht möglich; immerhin habe ich verschiedene wertvolle Anleitungen darüber erhalten. Es scheint, daß das Läuterungsverfahren mit einer für die Seele das Gefühl der Unlust erzeugenden Arbeitsleistung oder einem mit Unbehagen verknüpften vielleicht unterirdischen Aufenthalt verbunden war, dessen es bedurfte, um sie nach und nach der Reinigung zuzuführen.

Wer hierauf den Ausdruck "Strafe" anwenden will, mag ja in gewissem Sinne Recht haben; nur ist im Unterschied von dem menschlichen Strafbegriff daran zu erinnern, daß der Zweck nicht in der Zufügung eines Ubel, sondern nur in der Beschaffung einer notwendigen Vorbedingung für die Reinigung bestand. Hiermit erklären sich, müssen aber zum Theil auch be richtet werden, die den meisten Religionen geläufigen Vorstellungen von Hölle, Fegefeuer u. a. die zu reinigenden Seele lennten während der Reinigung die von Gott selbst gesprochene Sprache, die sog. "Grund-


7 Im Betreff der Fleischigen Seele war z. B. einmal von einem "Kärmerdienstes die Rede, den dieselbe habe leisten müssen.
language

language", a somewhat antiquated but nevertheless powerful German, characterized particularly by a wealth of euphemisms (for instance, reward in the reverse sense for punishment, poison for food, juice for venom, unholy for holy, etc. God Himself was called "concerning Him Who is and shall be"—meaning eternity—and was addressed as "Your Majesty's obedient servant"). Purification was called "testing"; souls which had not yet undergone the process of purification were not, as one would expect, called "non-tested souls", but the exact reverse, namely "tested souls", in accordance with the tendency to use euphemisms. The souls still undergoing the process of purification were variously graded as "Satans", "Devils", "Assistant Devils", "Senior Devils", and "Basic Devils"; the latter expression particularly seems to point to an abode in the underworld. The "Devils", etc., when set down as "fleeting-improvised-men", had a peculiar colour (perhaps carrot-red) and a peculiar offensive odour, which I experienced a number of times in the so-called Pierson Asylum in Coswig (which I heard called the Devil's Kitchen). For instance I saw Mr. v. W. and a Mr. von O., whom we had met in the East Coast resort Warnemünde, as Devils with peculiar red faces and red hands, and Mr. W. as a Senior Devil.

I learnt that Judas Iscariot had been a Basic Devil for his betrayal of Jesus Christ. But one must not imagine these Devils as powers imitable to God in the ideas of the Christian religion, for almost without exception they had already become thoroughly Godfearing, although they were still undergoing the process of purification. The above statement that God used the German language in the form of the so-called "basic language", is not to be understood as though the state of Blessedness was reserved only for Germans. Nevertheless the Germans were in modern times (possibly since the Reformation, perhaps ever since the migration of nations) God's chosen people whose language God preferred to use. In this sense God's chosen peoples in history—as the most moral at a given time—were in order the old Jews, the old Persians (these in an outstanding degree, about whom more will be said below), the "Greco-Romans" (perhaps in ancient Greece and Rome, perhaps also as the "Franks" at the time of the Crusades) and lastly the Germans. God readily understood the languages of all nations by contact with their nerves.¹

¹ In this way all the souls who are in contact with my nerves understand all languages I understand, for the very reason that they partake of my thoughts, for instance they understand Greek when I read a Greek book, etc.


¹ In ähnlicher Weise verstehen auch alle Seelen, die mit mir im Nervenaufhang stehen, ebenda wie der Gedanken, die ich den mir verständlichen Sprachen, verschieben z.B. Griechisch, wenn ich ein griechisches Buch les. u.w.
The transmigration of souls also seems to have served the purpose of purifying human souls and was widespread, as a number of experiences lead me to believe. In this process the human souls concerned were called to a new human life on other planets, presumably by being born in the manner of a human being, perhaps retaining some dim memory of their earlier existence. I dare not say anything more definite about this, nor whether the transmigration of souls served only the purposes of purification or other purposes as well (the populating of other planets). From the voices that speak to me, as well as in other ways, I learnt of a number of persons to whom in after life a much lower station was allotted than they had held in the previous one, perhaps as a kind of punishment.

Particularly noteworthy was the case of Mr. v. W., whose soul for a long time profoundly influenced my relation with God and therefore my personal fate, as Flechsig’s soul does to this very day.

During my stay in Pierson’s Asylum (the “Devil’s Kitchen”), von W. held there the position of senior attendant—not as a real human being but, as I thought then and think still, as a “fleeting-improvised-man”, that is to say as a soul temporarily given human shape by divine miracle. He was said to have already led a second life as the “Insurance Agent Marx” on some other planet during the process of transmigration of souls.

Souls completely cleansed by the process of purification ascended to heaven and so gained the state of Blessedness. This consisted of uninterrupted enjoyment combined with the contemplation of God. The idea of perpetual idleness is unbearable for a human being, because man is accustomed to work and, as the proverb says, it is only work which makes life sweet for him. But one must remember that souls are different from human beings and therefore it is not permissible to gauge their feelings by human

1 At first glance it may appear contradictory that I mention people here as in footnote 1 above who are still among the living, and speak at the same time of a transmigration of souls which they are said to have undergone. This is in fact even for me a riddle which I can only partially solve, and which would be quite insoluble by purely human notions. Nevertheless several instances particularly of von W.’s soul and Flechsig’s soul are established fact for me, because for years I have felt the direct influence of these souls on my body, and still feel daily and hourly Flechsig’s soul or possibly part of Flechsig’s soul. I will try to give a more detailed explanation of these matters below when I come to speak of the so-called “play-with-human-beings”. Here it suffices to point to the possibility of a paritition of soul which would make it possible for certain nerves of mind belonging to a person still living (which would, as mentioned above, retain the full knowledge of his personal identity if only for a short time) to play some different role when outside his body.


Die Läuterungsprozesse vollkommen gereinigten Seele stiegen zum Himmel empor und gelangten dadurch zur Seligkeit. Die Seligkeit bestand in einem Zustande ununterbrochenen Genießens, verbunden mit der Anschauung Gottes. Für den Menschen würde die Vorstellung eines ewigen Nichtsmons etwas Untragbares bedeuten, da der Mensch nun einmal an die Arbeit gewöhnt und für ihn, wie das Sprichwort besagt, erst die Arbeit den Leben stößt macht. Allein man darf nicht vergessen, daß die Seele etwas Anderes sind, als der Mensch, und daß es daher unzulässig sein, an die Empfindungen der Seele den menschlichen Maßstab


51
Soul's greatest happiness lies in continual revelling in pleasure combined with recollections of their human past. They were able to exchange their recollections and by means of divine rays—borrowed for this purpose, so to speak—obtain knowledge about the conditions of persons still living on earth in whom they were interested, their relatives, friends, etc., and probably even help raise them up after death to attain to the state of Blessedness. But the soul's own happiness was not clouded by learning of their relatives' unhappy state on earth. For although the souls could retain the memory of their own human past, they could not for any length of time retain new impressions which they received as souls. This natural tendency of souls to forget would soon have erased any new adverse impressions. There were gradations within the state of Blessedness according to the staying power which nerves concerned had achieved in their human life, and probably also according to the number of nerves which were deemed worthy of being raised to heaven.

The male state of Blessedness was superior to the female state; the latter seems to have consisted mainly in an uninterrupted feeling of voluptuousness. Further, the soul of a Goethe, a Bismarck, etc., is likely to have retained its self-consciousness (knowledge of its own identity) for centuries, while the soul of a child which died young, might only have preserved it for the same number of years as it had lived. It was granted to no human soul to remain aware for all eternity of having been this or that human being. It was rather the ultimate destiny of all souls to merge with other souls, and integrate into higher entities, remaining aware only of being part of God ("forecourts of heaven"). This shows that they did not perish—as far as this goes—souls were granted eternal existence—it was a continued life but with a different awareness. Only a narrow-minded person would find this an imperfection in the state of Blessedness—compared with personal immortality in the sense of the Christian religion. What purpose could it have served the soul to remember the name it once bore among men and its earlier personal relationships, when not only its children and grandchildren had long since gone to eternal rest, but numerous other generations had gone to their graves as well?

10 Richard Wagner for instance, as if with some insight into these things, makes Tanhäuser say in the ecstasy of love: "Alas your love overpowers me: perpetual enjoyment is only for Gods, I a mortal am subject to change." One finds many such almost prophetic visions in our poets which confirm my belief that they had received divine inspiration by way of nerve-contact (especially in dreams).
and perhaps even the nation to which it once belonged had been
struck off the roll of living nations. Thus while still in Flechsig's
Asylum I became acquainted with rays—that is to say complexes
of blessed human souls merged into higher entities—belonging to
the old Judaism ("Jehovah rays"), the old Persians ("Zoroaster
rays") and the old Germans ("Thor and Odin rays") among
which certainly not a single soul remained with any awareness
of the name under which it had belonged to one or other of these
peoples thousands of years ago.11

God Himself dwelt above the "forecourts of heaven"; He was
also called the "posterior realms of God" in contradistinction to
these "anterior realms of God". The posterior realms of God
were (and still are) subject to a peculiar division, a lower God
(Ariman) and upper God (Ormuzd) being distinguished. I know
nothing more about the further significance of this partition,12
except that the lower God (Ariman) seems to have felt attracted
to nations of originally sanguine race (the Semites) and the upper
God to nations of originally blue race (the Aryan peoples).
It is significant that a hint of this division is found in the religious
notions of many peoples. Identical with Ormuzd are Balder of the
Germans, Bielebo (the white God) or Swantevit of the
Slavs, Poseidon of the Greeks and Neptune of the Romans;
identical with Ariman are Wodan (Odin) of the Germans,
Czernobog (the black God) of the Slavs, Zeus of the Greeks and
Jupiter of the Romans. I first heard of the lower and the upper
God as Ariman and Ormuzd from the voices that talk to me at
the beginning of July 1894 (perhaps at the end of my first week
in this Asylum); since then I have heard these names daily.13
This date coincided with the depletion of the anterior realms of

11 This exposition about the "forecourts of heaven" may give an indication of the
eternal cycle of things which is the basis of the Order of the World. In creating
something, God in a sense divests Himself of part of Himself or gives different form
to part of His nerves. This apparent loss is restored when after hundreds or
thousands of years the nerves of departed human beings who, in their lifetime had
been nourished by other created things and had strained to the state of Blesedness,
return to Him as the "forecourts of heaven".

12 Apart from what is said below concerning "unmanning".

13 One of my main reasons for believing that the old Persians (naturally before their
later decay) were pre-eminently the "chosen people of God", in other words that
they must have been a nation of quite remarkable moral virtue, was that the names
of the corresponding Persian divinities had been retained for the lower and upper
sides. This belief is supported by the strength which I noticed at one time in the
"Zoroaster rays". The name Ariman occurs by the way also in Lord Byron's
Manfred in connection with a soul murder.
God with which I had previously been in contact (perhaps from the middle of March 1894).

The above picture of the nature of God and the continued existence of the human soul after death differs markedly in some respects from the Christian views on these matters. It seems to me that a comparison between the two can only favour the former. God was not omnipotent and omnipresent in the sense that He continuously saw inside every individual living person, perceived every feeling of his nerves, that is to say, at all times “tried his heart and reins”. But there was no need for this because after death the nerves of human beings with all the impressions they had received during life lay bare before God’s eye, so that an unfaillingly just judgment could be reached as to whether they were worthy of being received into the realms of heaven. In any case it was always possible for God to get to know the inner person through nerve-contact, whenever the need arose. On the other hand the picture I have drawn lacks any of the features of severity, of purposeless cruelty imprinted on some of the notions of the Christian and in a still greater degree on those of other religions. The whole Order of the World therefore appears as a “miraculous structure”, the sublimity of which surpasses in my opinion all conceptions which in the course of history men and peoples have developed about their relation to God.

p. 21

This “miraculous structure” has recently suffered a rent, intimately connected with my personal fate. But it is impossible even for me to present the deeper connections in a way which human understanding can fully grasp. My personal experiences enable me to lift the veil only partially; the rest is intuition and conjecture. I want to say by way of introduction that the leading roles in the genesis of this development, the first beginnings of which go back perhaps as far as the eighteenth century, were played on the one hand by the names of Fleischig and Schreber (probably not specifying any individual member of these families), and on the other by the concept of soul murder.

p. 22


p. 22

To start with the latter: the idea is widespread in the folk-lore and poetry of all peoples that it is somehow possible to take possession of another person’s soul in order to prolong one’s life at another soul’s expense, or to secure some other advantages which outlast death. One has only to think for example of Goethe’s Faust, Lord Byron’s Manfred, Weber’s Frieschütz, etc. Commonly, however, the main role is supposed to be played by the Devil, who entices a human being into selling his soul to him by means of a drop of blood, etc. for some worldly advantages; yet it is difficult to see what the Devil was to do with a soul so caught, if one is not to assume that torturing a soul as an end in itself gave the Devil special pleasure.

Although the latter idea must be relegated to the realm of fable because the Devil as a power inimical to God does not exist at all according to the above, yet the wide dissemination of the legend motif of soul murder or soul theft gives food for thought; it is hardly likely that such ideas could have been formed by so many peoples without any basis in fact. The voices which talk to me have daily stressed ever since the beginning of my contact with God (mid-March 1894) the fact that the crisis that broke upon the realms of God was caused by somebody having committed soul murder; at first Flechsig was named as the instigator of soul murder but of recent times in an attempt to reverse the facts I myself have been “represented” as the one who had committed soul murder. I therefore concluded that at one time something had happened between perhaps earlier generations of the Flechsig and Schreber families which amounted to soul murder; in the same way as through further developments, at the time when my nervous illness seemed almost incurable, I gained the conviction that soul murder had been attempted on me by somebody, albeit unsuccessfully.

L’appetit vient en mangeant: it is therefore quite possible that after the first, more soul murders were committed on the souls of other people. I will leave open the question whether the first soul murder was really the moral responsibility of a human being; much of this remains mysterious. Originally perhaps it was a battle arising out of jealousy between souls already departed from life. Both the Flechsig’s and the Schreber families belonged, it was said, to “the highest nobility of heaven”; the Schrebers had the particular title “Margraves of Tuscany and Tasmania”, according to the souls’ habit of adorning themselves with high-sounding worldly titles from a kind of personal vanity. Several names of...
both families are concerned: of the Flechsigis particularly Abraham Fürchtegott Flechsig, Professor Paul Theodor Flechsig, and a Daniel Fürchtegott Flechsig; the latter lived towards the end of the eighteenth century and was said to have been an "Assistant Devil" because of something that had happened in the nature of a soul murder. However that may be, it is certain that I was in contact for some time with the nerves of Professor Paul Theodor Flechsig and of Daniel Fürchtegott Flechsig (whether with the former also in his quality as a soul) and had parts of their souls in my body. The soul of Daniel Fürchtegott Flechsig vanished years ago (fitted away); part at least of Professor Paul Theodor Flechsig's soul (i.e. a certain number of nerves originally with the consciousness of Professor Paul Theodor Flechsig's identity, which however in the meantime had become much reduced) still exists as a "tested soul" in heaven. The only knowledge I possess of the Flechsig family tree comes from what was said by the voices that talk to me; it would therefore be interesting to find out whether there had actually been a Daniel Fürchtegott Flechsig and an Abraham Fürchtegott Flechsig among the forbears of the present Professor Flechsig.

P. 25 I presume that at one time a bearer of the name Flechsig—a human being carrying that name—succeeded in abusing nerve-contact granted him for the purpose of divine inspiration or some other reasons, in order to retain his hold on the divine rays. This is naturally only an hypothesis, but as in scientific research it has to be adhered to until a better explanation for the events under investigation is found. It seems very probable that contact with divine nerves was granted to a person who specialized in nervous illnesses, partly because he would be expected to be a highly intellectual person, partly because everything concerning human nerves must be of particular interest to God, starting with His instinctive knowledge that an increase of nervousness among men could endanger His realms. Asylums for the mentally ill were therefore called in the basic language "God's Nerve-Institutes". If the above-mentioned Daniel Fürchtegott Flechsig was the first to offend against the Order of the World by abusing contact with divine nerves, this would not be contradicted absolutely by the same man being called a Country Clergyman by the voices that talk to me, because at the time when Daniel Fürchtegott Flechsig was supposed to have lived—in the eighteenth century about the time


of Frederick the Great—public Asylums for the insane were not yet in existence.

One would therefore have to imagine that such a person, engaged in the practice of nervous diseases—having perhaps another profession besides—believed he had at some time seen miraculous visions in a dream and experienced miraculous things, which he felt an urge to investigate further, either out of ordinary human curiosity or keen scientific interest. He need not necessarily have known at the outset that he was in direct or indirect contact with God. He may have tried to recall these dream visions in subsequent nights and so have discovered that they really did return during sleep in the same or perhaps slightly different form supplementing the earlier information. Naturally interest was heightened particularly as the dreamer may have learnt that these communications came from his own forbears, who lately had been outstripped in some way or other by members of the Schreber family. He may then have tried to influence the nerves of his contemporaries by exerting his will power after the fashion of thought readers—such as Cumberland etc.—and he may thus have found that this was possible to a certain extent. He may have resisted breaking off the contact into which divine rays had directly or indirectly entered with him, or made it dependent on conditions which could not be denied him, considering the souls’ natural weakness of character compared with that of living men, and in any case it was not thought possible to keep up permanent nerve-contact with a single human being. One can imagine that in this way something like a conspiracy may have arisen between such a person and the elements of the anterior realms of God to the detriment of the Schreber race, perhaps in the direction of denying them offspring or possibly only of denying them choice of those professions which would lead to closer relations with God such as that of a nerve specialist. In view of what was said above about the constitution of the realms of God and the (limited) omnipresence of God, such events need not necessarily have come to the knowledge of the posterior realms of God immediately. The conspirators—to retain this expression—perhaps succeeded in

81 I gather this from a conversation which I had in a later contact with Daniel Fuhrtegott Flechsig’s nerves about Frederick the Great, whom he still remembered, as he was probably the most important living person of his time. On the other hand he knew nothing for instance of railways and it was therefore interesting for me to try to give a deceased soul by way of conversation kept up by nerve-contact an idea of what railways are and what great changes this invention has brought about in human communications.

89 Friederichs des Großen. — öffentliche Heilanstalten für Geisteskrankene noch nicht existent.

silencing possible scruples about allowing nerve-contact to be made with members of the Schreber family in an unguarded moment such as occurs sometime in everybody's life, in order also to convince the next higher instance of the hierarchy of God's realms that one Schreber soul more or less did not matter in the face of danger threatening the very existence of the realms of God. In this way it may have come about that one did not immediately and resolutely oppose efforts inspired by ambition and lust for power, which could possibly lead to soul murder—if such a thing exist—that is to say to the surrender of a soul to another person perhaps for prolonging earthly life, for appropriating his mental powers, for attaining a kind of personal immunity or some other advantage. On the other hand one may have underrated the danger even for the realms of God which this entailed. One felt so possessed of immense power that the possibility of one single human being ever becoming a danger to God Himself was not taken into consideration. I have in fact not the least doubt from what I later learned and experienced of God's miraculous power that God—provided that conditions in accordance with the Order of the World prevailed—would at any time have been able to annihilate an embarrassing human being by sending him a fatal illness or striking him with lightning.

Perhaps one did not think it necessary to proceed immediately with the most drastic measures against the presumed soul murderer, while his trespass consisted at first only of abuse of contact with divine nerves, and the eventualty of soul murder seemed remote, and if the person's merit and moral conduct were such that it seemed unlikely that it would come to such an extremity. Apart from these hints I cannot enlarge on the essential nature of soul murder or, so to speak, its technique. One might only add (the passage which follows is unfit for publication). I am sure that the person, whether it was the present Professor Flechsig or one of his forbears, who must take the blame for being the original instigator of "soul murders", must have had some notion of the supernatural matters which I have now come to know, although he certainly did not penetrate to a deeper knowledge of God and the Order of the World. It is inconceivable that anybody who has
dadurch zu beschwichten – daß man bei Angehörigen der Familie Schreber in unbewachten Momenten, wie sie wohl jeder Mensch in seinem Leben einmal hat, Nervenanhang nehmen ließ, um auch der nächsthöheren Instanz in der Hierarchie der Gottesreiche die Ueberzeugung beizubringen, daß es auf eine Schrebersseele nicht ankommen könne, wenn es sich darum handle, irgend eine Gefahr für den Bestand der Gottesreiche abzuwenden.


Zu diesen schärfsten Mitteln glaubte man aber vielleicht dem vorausgesetzten Seelenmörder gegenüber nicht gleich schreiten zu müssen, wenn dessen Vorgehen zunächst nur in dem Mißbrauch eines göttlichen Nervenanhangs bestand, der die Perspektive auf einen daraus hervorgehenden Seelenmord nur von ferne zu eröffnen schien und wenn sonstige persönliche Verdienste und sonstiges sittliches Verhalten desselben nicht erwarten ließen, daß es zu einem solchen Auseinandersetzen kommen werde. Worin das eigentliche Wesen des Seelenmords und sonussagen die Technik desselben besteht, vermag ich außer dem im Obigen Angedeuteten nicht zu sagen. Hinzuzufügen wäre nur noch etwas (folgt eine Stelle, die sich zur Veröffentlichung nicht eignet). Soweit im Urgenomen demjetzigen Geh. Rath Prof. Flechsig oder einem seiner Vorfahren wirklich die Urheberschaft an »Seelenmorden« zur Last zu legen sein sollte, ist für mich das Eine weniger unzweifelhaft, daß der Betreffende von den mir inzwischen bekannt gewordenen überraschenden Dingen zwar eine Ahrne erlangt haben müsse, aber sicher nicht bis zu einer tieferen Erkenntnis Gottes und der Weltordnung durchgedrungen war. Denn wer auf diese Weise zu einem festen Gottes-

---

16 It is in this connection that during my stay in Flechsig’s Asylum I heard more than once the expression “Merely a Schreber soul” from the voices that talked to me. I have some reasons for thinking that contact was made with my nerves intentionally at moments when I might have appeared in a morally less favourable light; but it would lead too far afield to enlarge on this here.
glau been a profound faith in God and the certainty that in any case he is definitely guaranteed a state of Blessedness commensurate with the purity of his nerves should think of violating other people's souls. It is equally unlikely that this should have happened in the case of a person who could be called religious if only in the sense of our positive religion. I do not know what the present Professor Fleck's attitude to religious matters was or is. Should he be or have been, a doubting, as so many others are today, he could not be blamed, least of all by myself who, I must confess, belonged to that category myself until divine revelation taught me better.

Whoever has taken the trouble of reading the above attentively may spontaneously have thought that God Himself must have been or be in a precarious position, if the conduct of a single human being could endanger Him in any way and if even He Himself, if only in lower instances, could be enticed into a kind of conspiracy against human beings who are fundamentally innocent. Such an objection may not be altogether unjustified but I must not omit to add that my own faith in the grandeur and sublimity of God and the Order of the World was not shaken. Not even God Himself is or was a being of such absolute perfection as most religious attribute to Him. The power of attraction, this even to me unfathomable law, according to which rays and nerves mutually attract one another, harbours a kernel of danger for the realms of God; this forms perhaps the basis of the Germanic saga of the Twilight of the Gods. Growing nervousness among mankind could and can increase these dangers considerably. God, as already mentioned, saw living human beings only from without; as a rule His omni-

19 The expression "instances" (which is mine) as well as "hierarchy" above, seem to me to furnish an approximately accurate picture of the constitution of the realm of God. As long as I was in contact with the anterior realms of God (the forecourts of Heaven) (March to early July 1874) every "leader of rays" (according to one expression I heard "antior column leaders") used to behave as if he were "God's omnipotence". He knew that superior ones came behind him but not who these superior ones were, nor how high they went. The posterior realms of God (Arman and Ormund) themselves appeared on the scene (beginning of July 1874) with such overwhelming brilliance at first that even v. W's and Fleck's souls, which were at that time still "tested souls" could not help being impressed; they even temporarily gave up their customary sarcastic opposition to God's omnipotence. I will explain later why these phenomena of light did not persist around me. Among them I saw Arman at night, not in a dream but while awake and Ormund on several successive days while I was in the garden. At the time I was accompanied only by the attendant M. I am forced to assume that the latter was at that time not a real human being but a fleeting-improved-man, because he would otherwise have been so dazzled by the light phenomena which he must have seen (they occupied almost a 1/6th to an 1/8th part of the sky), that he would have expressed astonishment in some way.

p. 29

p. 30

p. 30

p. 31

[Footnotes 17 and 18 fehlen in der Originalausgabe von 1903, Anm.: der Herausgeber]

presence and omniscience did not extend within living man. Even God's eternal love existed only for creation as a whole. As soon as there is a clash of interests with individual human beings or nations (Sodom and Gomorrah for instance!) perhaps even with the whole population of a planet (through an increase of nervousness or immorality), the instinct of self-preservation must be aroused in God as in every other living being. Ultimately that of course is perfect which serves its own particular purpose, even if human imagination could picture a still more ideal condition.20 This purpose was nevertheless achieved: for God eternal joy at His creation, for human beings the joy of life during their earthly existence, and after death the greatest happiness, the state of Blessedness. It is quite unthinkable that God would have denied any single human being his share in the state of Blessedness as every increase of the "forecourts of heaven" could only serve to increase His own power and strengthen His defences against the dangers of His approaching mankind. No clash of interests between God and individual human beings could arise as long as the latter behaved according to the Order of the World. If despite this such a clash of interests arose in my case because of supposed soul murder, this can only be due to such a marvellous concatenation of events21 as probably never before happened in the history of the world, and I hope will never happen again. Even in such an extraordinary case the Order of the World carries its own remedies for healing the wounds inflicted upon it; the remedy is Eternity. Whilst I had earlier (for about two years) believed I had to assume and was forced by my experiences to assume, that if God were permanently tied to my person, all creation on earth would have to perish with the exception of some play-with-miracles in my immediate surroundings, I have had reason lately to modify this idea considerably.

Some people were made very unhappy; I may say that I myself lived through cruel times and endured bitter sufferings. On the other hand six years of uninterrupted influx of God's nerves into my body has led to the total loss of all the states of Blessedness which had accumulated until then and made it impossible for the time being to renew them; the state of Blessedness is so to speak suspended and all human beings who have since died or will die

20 No one would wish to deny that the human organism is one of high perfection. Yet perhaps most people have at one time thought how nice it would be if man could also fly like the birds.
21 More of this later.
can for the time being not attain to it. For God's nerves also it is unpleasant and against their will to enter into my body, shown by the continual cries for help which I daily hear in the sky from those parts of the nerves which have become separated from the total mass of nerves. All these losses can however be made good again insofar as an Eternity exists, even though total restoration of the previous state may take thousands of years.

III

The content of Chapters I and II was a necessary preliminary to what follows. What could so far only partially be put up as axiomatic, will now be proved as far as at all possible.
I will first consider some events concerning other members of my family, which may possibly in some way be related to the presumed soul murder; these are all more or less mysterious, and can hardly be explained in the light of usual human experience.
(The further content of this chapter is omitted as unfit for publication.)

IV

I come now to my personal fortunes during the two nervous illnesses which I have suffered. I have twice had a nervous illness, each time in consequence of mental overstrain; the first (while Chairman of the County Court of Chemnitz) was occasioned by my candidature for parliament, the second by the extraordinary

61
burden of work on taking up office as President of the Senate of a Court of Appeal in Dresden, to which I had been newly appointed.

The first of the two illnesses commenced in the autumn of 1884 and was fully cured at the end of 1885, so that I was able to resume work as Chairman of the County Court at Leipzig to which I had in the meantime been transferred on 1st January 1886. The second nervous illness began in October 1893 and still continues. I spent the greater part of both illnesses at the Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Leipzig under the Directorship of Professor Flechsig, the first time from early December 1884 to the beginning of June 1885, the second time from about the middle of November 1893 till about the middle of June 1894. In each case when first I entered the Asylum I had not the faintest idea of an antagonism existing between the Schreber and Flechsig families, nor of the supernatural matters of which I have treated in the preceding chapters.

The first illness passed without any occurrences bordering on the supernatural, and while it lasted I had on the whole only favourable impressions of Professor Flechsig’s methods of treatment. Some mistakes may have been made. Even in the course of that illness I was and still am of the opinion that white lies, which a nervous specialist may perhaps not be able to dispense with altogether in the case of some mental patients, but which he must nevertheless employ only with the greatest circumspection, were hardly ever appropriate in my case, for he must soon have realized that in me he was dealing with a human being of high intellect, of uncommon keenness of understanding and acute powers of observation. Yet I could only consider it a white lie when, for instance, Professor Flechsig wanted to put down my illness solely to poisoning with potassium bromide, for which Dr. R. in S., in whose care I had been before, was to be blamed. I believe I could have been more rapidly cured of certain hypochondriacal ideas with which I was preoccupied at the time, particularly concern over loss of weight, if I had been allowed to operate the scales which served to weigh patients a few times myself; the scales used in the University Clinic at the time were of a peculiar construction unfamiliar to me. All the same these are only minor points on which I place little importance; perhaps it is unreasonable to expect the Director of a big Asylum with hundreds of patients to concern himself in such detail with the mental state of a single patient. The main point was that I was eventually cured (after a prolonged convalescence),

ungewöhnlichen Arbeitslast, die ich beim Antritt des mir neu übertragenen Amtes eines Senatorspräsidenten beim Oberlandesgericht Dresden vorfand.


and therefore I had at the time no reason to be other than most grateful to Professor Flechsig; I gave this special expression by a subsequent visit and in my opinion an adequate honorarium. My wife felt even more sincere gratitude and worshipped Professor Flechsig as the man who had restored her husband to her; for this reason she kept his picture on her desk for many years.

After recovering from my first illness I spent eight years with my wife, on the whole quite happy ones, rich also in outward honours and marred only from time to time by the repeated disappointment of our hope of being blessed with children. In June 1893 I was informed (in the first place by the Minister of Justice, Dr. Schurig in person) of my impending appointment as Senatspräsident to the Superior Court in Dresden.

During this time I had several dreams to which I did not then attribute any particular significance, and which I would even today disregard as the proverb says "Dreams are mere shadows", had my experience in the meantime not made me think of the possibility at least of their being connected with the contact which had been made with me by divine nerves. I dreamt several times that my former nervous illness had returned; naturally I was as unhappy about this in the dream, as I felt happy on waking that it had only been a dream. Furthermore, one morning while still in bed (whether still half asleep or already awake I cannot remember), I had a feeling which, thinking about it later when fully awake, struck me as highly peculiar. It was the idea that it really must be rather pleasant to be a woman succumbing to intercourse. This idea was so foreign to my whole nature that I may say I would have rejected it with indignation if fully awake; from what I have experienced since I cannot exclude the possibility that some external influences were at work to implant this idea in me.

On the 1st of October 1893 I took up office as Senatspräsident to the Superior Court in Dresden. I have already mentioned the heavy burden of work I found there. I was driven, maybe by personal ambition, but certainly also in the interests of the office, to achieve first of all the necessary respect among my colleagues and others concerned with the Court (barristers, etc.) by unquestionable efficiency. The task was all the heavier and demanded all the more tact in my personal dealings with the members of the panel of five Judges over which I had to preside, as almost all of them were much senior to me (up to twenty years), and anyway they were much more intimately acquainted with the
procedure of the Court, to which I was a newcomer. It thus
happened that after a few weeks I had already overtaxed myself
mentally. I started to sleep badly at the very moment when I was
able to feel that I had largely mastered the difficulties of settling
down in my new office and in my new residence, etc. I started
taking sodium bromide. There was almost no opportunity for
social distraction which would certainly have been very much
better for me—this became evident to me when I slept considerably
better after the only occasion on which we had been asked to a
dinner party—but we hardly knew anybody in Dresden. The
first really bad, that is to say almost sleepless nights, occurred in
the last days of October or the first days of November. It was then
that an extraordinary event occurred. During several nights when
I could not get to sleep, a recurrent crackling noise in the wall of
our bedroom became noticeable at shorter or longer intervals;
time and again it woke me as I was about to go to sleep. Naturally
we thought of a mouse although it was very extraordinary that a
mouse should have found its way to the first floor of such a solidly
built house. But having heard similar noises innumerable times
since then, and still hearing them around me every day in daytime
and at night, I have come to recognize them as undoubted divine
miracles—they are called "interferences" by the voices talking to
me—and I must at least suspect, without being too definite about
it, that even then it was already a matter of such a miracle; in other
words that right from the beginning the more or less definite intention
existed to prevent my sleep and later my recovery from the illness
resulting from the insomnia for a purpose which cannot at this stage be
further specified.

My illness now began to assume a menacing character; already
on the 8th or 9th of November Doctor Ö., whom I had consulted,
made me take a week's sick leave, which we were going to use to
consult Professor Fleischig, in whom we placed all our faith since
his successful treatment of my first illness. Because it was a Sunday
and Professor Fleischig would not be available, we (my wife and I)
travelled via Chemnitz and spent the night from Sunday to Monday
with my brother-in-law. That evening I was given an injection
of morphine, and for the first time choral during the night—

88 I must not omit to add that it amounted to nothing more than a _dolus indeterminatus_
carried to the extreme—if a legal expression be permitted—an attribute of the character
of the souls which I have in the meantime got to know; that is to say intentions
which were very frequently followed by a change of mind and mood as soon as
close reflection brought the conviction that the person concerned was really worthy
of a better fate.

Praxis des Gerichtshofs, in den ich neu eintrat, immerhin in gewisser Bestehung vertrauter waren. So ge-
schah es, daß ich mich schon nach zwei Wochen Geistig übernommen
hatte. Der Schlaf fing an zu versagen und zwar gerade etwa in dem Zeit-
punkte, als ich mir sagen konnte, die Schwierigkeiten der Einrichtung in
das neue Amt, in die neuen Wohnungsmittel etc. seien in der Haupt-
sache überwunden. Ich fing an Bromatium zu nehmen. Gelegenheit zu
geselliger Zerstreuung, die mir jedenfalls viel wohlgerathen haben würde
— wie ich daraus entnahm, daß ich nach dem einzigen Male, wo wir zu
einer Abendgesellschaft eingeladen waren, erheblich besser schlief— gab es
bei unserer Unbekanntheit in Dresden fast gar nicht. Die ersten ganz
schlechten h.d.h. nahezu völlig schlaflosen Nächte fielen in die letzten Tage
des Monats Oktober oder in die ersten Tage des Monats November. Hier-
bei ereignete sich ein merkswürdiges Vorkommniss. In mehreren Nächten,
in denen ich keinen Schlaf zu finden vermochte, machte sich in meinem
Schlafzimmer ein in kürzern oder längeren Pausen wiederkehrendes Knist-
ern in der Wand bemerkbar, welches mich jedesmal, wenn ich im Einschlaufen begriffen war, aus dem Schlaf wieder erweckte. Wir dachten da-
mal natürlicher an eine Maus, obwohl es immerhin ziemlich auffällig
erscheinen mußte, daß eine Maus sich in dem ersten Stockwerk eines
durchaus massiv gebauten Hauses eingeschlichen haben sollte. Nachdem
ich aber ähnliche Geräusche inzwischen unzählige Male gehört habe und
jetzt tagtäglich bei Tag und bei Nacht in meiner Nähe hörte, die ich nicht
mehr unwesenshafter als göttliche Wunder erkannt habe—sumal auch, da
sie mir redenden Stimmen sie als solche, als sogen. Störungen bezeich-
nen— kann ich, ohne eine ganz bestimmte Behauptung darüber aufstellen
duzen, wenigstens den Verdacht nicht abweisen, daß auch damals schon
ein solches Wunder in Frage gewesen sei, d.h. daß von Anfang an die mehr
oder minder bestimmte Absicht gelegen habe, meinen Schlaf und später meine
Genesung von der aus der Schlaflosigkeit hervorgegangenen Krankheit zu einem
vollständig noch nicht näher zu bezeichnenden Zwecke zu verhindern.

Meine Krankheit nahm nun bald einen bedrohlichen Charakter an; bereits am 8. oder 9.
November war ich auf Anrathen des von mir konsul-
tierten Dr. ö. genötigten, einen zunächst dringlichen Urlaub zu nehmen,
den wir benutzen wollten, um den Prof. Fleischig zu befragen, auf den wir
ja nach seinen Heilerfolgen bei der letzten Krankheit unser ganzes Vertrauen
setzten. Wir (meine Frau und ich) reisten, da es ein Sonntag war, wo
man nicht erwartet konnte, dem Prof. Fleischig anzutreffen, über Chemnitz
und brachten die Nacht vom Sonntag zum Montag bei meinem dortigen
Schwager K. zu. Hier wurde noch am selben Abend eine Morphininjektion
gemacht und in der Nacht zum ersten Male Chloral gegeben— durch einen

88 Dabei will ich nicht unterlassen hinzuzufügen, daß es sich dabei, dem Inzwischen von
mir erkannten Seitencharakter gemäß, nur in einem in hohem Maße ausgebildeten
_Dolus indeterminatus_— man gerät mit diesen juristischen Ausdrücken zu gebrauchen—
geschah. d.h. um Vorsicht, denen sehr häufigwieder ein Oesinungs- und
Stimmungswechsel folgte, sobald man sich bei näherem Zusehen überzeugte, daß der
Betreffende dann doch wohl eines besseren Schicksals würdig sei.
perhaps accidentally not in the dosage ordered right away; the previous evening I suffered as severely from palpitation as in my first illness, so that walking up only a moderate incline caused attacks of anxiety. The night in Chemnitz was also bad. Early the following day (Monday) we travelled to Leipzig and from the Bavarian Station by cab direct to Professor Flechsig at the University Clinic, having advised him of our visit the day before by telegram. A long interview followed in which I must say Professor Flechsig developed a remarkable eloquence which affected me deeply. He spoke of the advances made in psychiatry since my first illness, of newly discovered sleeping drugs, etc., and gave me hope of delivering me of the whole illness through one prolific sleep, which was to start if possible at three o’clock in the afternoon and last to the following day.

My mood thereupon became steadier, also perhaps because travelling through the fresh morning air for several hours and the time of day (morning) might have strengthened my nerves a little. We went right away to the chemist to fetch the sleeping drug prescribed, then had a meal with my mother at her house, and I spent the rest of the day quite bearably, going for a little walk amongst other things. Naturally I did not get to bed (in my mother’s house) as early as 3 o’clock, but (possibly according to some secret instruction which my wife had received) it was delayed until the 9th hour. More serious symptoms developed again immediately before going to bed. Unfortunately the bed was cold because it had been aired too long, with the result that I was immediately seized by a severe rigor and was already in a state of great excitement when I took the sleeping drug. Because of this the sleeping drug failed almost entirely in its effect, and after one or more hours my wife also gave me the chloral hydrate which was kept at hand in reserve. Despite this I spent the night almost without sleep, and once again left the bed in an attack of anxiety in order to make preparations for a kind of suicidal attempt by means of a towel or suchlike; this woke my wife who stopped me. The next morning my nerves were badly shattered; the blood had gone from my extremities to the heart, my mood was gloomy in the extreme and Professor Flechsig, who had been sent for early in the morning, therefore advised my admission into his Asylum, for which I set out immediately by cab accompanied by him.

After a warm bath I was at once put to bed, which I did not leave again for the next 4 or 5 days. A certain R... was assigned to me as attendant. My illness progressed rapidly during the following


days; the nights passed mostly without sleep because the weaker sleeping drugs (camphor, etc.) which were tried first so as to avoid the permanent use of chloral hydrate from the beginning, failed to act. I could not occupy myself in any way; nor did I see anybody of my family. I passed the days therefore in endless melancholy; my mind was occupied almost exclusively with thoughts of death. It seems to me in retrospect that Professor Fleischig’s plan of curing me consisted in intensifying my nervous depression as far as possible, in order to bring about a cure at once by a sudden change of mood. At least this is the only way I can explain the following event, which I could otherwise only attribute to malicious intent.23

About the fourth or fifth night after my admission to the Asylum, I was pulled out of bed by two attendants in the middle of the night and taken to a cell fitted out for demented (maniaics) to sleep in. I was already in a highly excited state, in a fever delirium so to speak, and was naturally terrified in the extreme by this event, the reasons for which I did not know. The way led through the billiard room; there, because I had no idea what one intended to do with me and therefore thought I had to resist, a fight started between myself clad only in a shirt, and the two attendants, during which I tried to hold fast to the billiard table, but was eventually overpowered and removed to the above-mentioned cell. There I was left to my fate; I spent the rest of the night mostly sleepless in this cell, furnished only with an iron bedstead and some bedding. Regarding myself as totally lost, I made a naturally unsuccessful attempt during the night to hang myself from the bedstead with the sheet. I was completely ruled by the idea that there was nothing left for a human being for whom sleep could no longer be procured by all the means of medical art, but to take his life. I knew that this was not permitted in asylums, but I laboured under the delusion that when all attempts at cure had been exhausted, one would be discharged—solely for the purpose of making an end to one’s life either in one’s own home or somewhere else.

I was therefore greatly surprised when on the following morning

23 I must mention that during a later conversation Professor Fleischig denied the whole occurrence in the billiard room and all connected with it, and tried to make out that it was only a figment of my imagination—this by the way was one of the circumstances which from then on made me somewhat distrustful of Professor Fleischig. But that it really happened and that there could be no question of my senses being deceived is certain, because it cannot be denied that in the morning after the night in question I found myself in the padded cell and was visited there by Dr. Täusch.
the doctor still came to see me. Professor Flechsig's Assistant Physician, Dr. Tauscher appeared, and told me that there was no intention whatsoever of giving up treatment; this, coupled with the manner in which he tried to raise my spirits again—I cannot deny him also my appreciation of the excellent way he spoke to me on that occasion—had the effect of a very favourable change in my mood. I was led back to the room I had previously occupied and spent the best day of the whole of my (second) stay in Flechsig's Asylum, that is to say the only day on which I was enlivened by a joyful spirit of hope. Even the attendant R. behaved most tactfully and skillfully in his whole conservation, so that in retrospect I sometimes asked myself whether he also had received higher inspirations (in the same way as Dr. Tauscher). In the morning I even played billiards with him, had a hot bath in the afternoon and maintained my better mood until the evening. They were going to see whether I could sleep entirely without sleeping drugs. Indeed I went to bed relatively calm, but could not get to sleep. After a few hours I could no longer remain calm; the rush of blood to my heart again caused attacks of anxiety. After the change-over of attendants—an attendant sat constantly by my bed and was relieved by another in the middle of the night—something to make me sleep was eventually given—'Nekrin,' or some such name—and I must have fallen asleep for a short while, which however no longer strengthened my nerves in any way. On the contrary my nerves were shattered again the following morning, indeed so badly that I vomited the breakfast. A particularly terrifying impression was created in me by the totally distorted features which I thought I could see on the p. 43 attendant R. when I awoke.

From then on I was regularly given chloral hydrate every night, and the following weeks were at least outwardly a little calmer, because in this way moderate sleep was usually procured. My wife visited me regularly and in the last two weeks before Christmas I spent part of every day at my mother's house. But the hyperexcitability of my nerves remained and got worse rather than better. In the weeks after Christmas I went for a drive every day with my wife and the attendant. But I was so weak that when I got out of the carriage (in Rosenthal or in Scheibenholz) every little distance of a few hundred paces seemed a hazard on which I could not decide without inner anxiety. In other respects too my whole nervous system was in a state of utter laxity. I could hardly, if at all, manage any intellectual occupation such as reading.