
We might crudely divide philosophical writings on psychoanalysis and psychiatry into two categories. The first would be works which examine the theoretical formulations or ideological belief structures of the psyche practice in question, a set of works that we might further divide into a continental tradition – perhaps at its peak in the work of Derrida, or even Deleuze – and the Anglo-American tradition such as that of Adolph Grünbaum. The second group tends to focus on patterns of practice – *la clinique* in French – that are utilized by a certain professional group, generally critical. Michel Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* is certainly one of the most well known of these texts, but certainly a large grouping of these somewhat heterogeneous works is often brought together under the rubric of “anti-psychiatry,” though these are often perhaps less overtly philosophical in approach, whatever that would mean.

The rather cumbersomely titled *Phenomenology and Lacan on Schizophrenia, after the Decade of the Brain* by Alphonse De Waelhens and Wilfried Ver Eecke has components of both of these categories of approach, though my focus will represent mostly a response to issues associated with the latter, with issues associated with the practice of psychoanalysis in particular and so-called mental health in general. I have little to say about the philosophical issues involved, and the authors’ comments about the impact of psychoanalysis and Lacan on their profession (for both authors are philosophers). My one comment regarding the impact of Lacan on philosophy would be to direct the reader’s attention to the prolific work of Slavoj Zizek, whose most philosophically focused works are: *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* and *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*.1
Allow me first to outline this book, which has a somewhat curious structure. We can best understand the structure of the book with reference to its publication history. For, in fact, the core of the book, Chapters 2 through 7, was initially published (I believe in Belgium) in French in 1972 as *La Psychose* and was authored by De Waelhens alone. Subsequently, in 1978, Ver Eecke translated those chapters into English and published it as *Schizophrenia* (a distinction in title and also diagnosis of no small importance – schizophrenia is a psychiatric descriptive diagnostic category, while psychosis with Lacan represents one of the three fundamental psychic structures). This current book represents an expanded version, it seems, of *Schizophrenia*, with new contributions by Ver Eecke and more extended notes and references. The new contributions include an Introduction, situating the work of De Waelhens in the philosophical lineage of Sartre and Wittgenstein, and a large introductory chapter, itself divided into two main parts – a review of the psychiatric literature on schizophrenia which puts it in the context of the psychoanalysis-derived comments of De Waelhens and a second part which reviews some further developments in the mental health literature since the original publication of De Waelhens.

The core of the book remains De Waelhens’ reading of several critical texts of Lacan’s of the 1950’s, in particular the essay, “On a Question Prior to any Possible Treatment of Psychosis,” that Lacan prepared for publication in 1959 and the Seminar of Lacan on which that paper was largely based, a seminar titled simply, “The Psychoses.” Based on his rather extensive experience in clinical work with patients with psychosis (Lacan was a psychiatrist and, unlike most of his psychoanalyst colleagues, did not ignore the field of psychosis) and on his rereading of the famed autobiographical memoirs of the German judge Daniel Paul Schreber, Lacan expanded a heretofore minor dimension of Freudian theory to an organizing principle for the structure of psychosis. This is Freud’s notion of *Verwerfung*, translated into French as *la forclusion* and into English as foreclosure. Freud himself had less clinical experience with patients with psychosis (he, in fact, viewed psychosis as a contraindication to psychoanalysis, but throughout his work – especially in his own reading of the Schreber memoirs (which emphasized the dimension of repressed homosexual libido in the etiology of psychosis) and in a few short contributions late in his career – struggled with an attempt to explain the distinction between neurosis (and so-called normality) and psychosis. In contrast to Freud’s theory of repressed homosexual libido