



Three Kinds of Madness

By **Serge Beddington-Behrens, Ph.D.**

For me, there are three main kinds of madness (I won't here elaborate on the many different, subtle strands of each). I call them 'cuckoo madness', 'divine madness' – these two sometimes link up together – and 'normal madness'. And the most dangerous and the most toxic of all is normal madness. Why? Because all those millions of us who suffer from this debility operate out of the illusion that we are utterly sane and that those who see the world differently from us are insane. So let me say a few words about each.

Cuckoo Madness

Cuckoo madness is the rather silly term I use for psychosis, which is actually a very serious and debilitating state, especially if one does not possess either the wherewithal to stand back and understand it and, as it were, learn to 'ride its storms', or conversely, have access to the right kind of medication to control it. When under the grip of a serious psychosis, much of life becomes distorted, and we can experience great terror where, for example, we may believe certain people are out to murder us. In her fascinating new book *Into the Woods and Out Again*, which is about her journey into psychosis, Dina Glouberman tells us that:

We go mad when the personal unconscious floods the conscious mind. Mad states have a paranoid quality when you believe some people are okay and some are not, or that you personally have a heroic role to save the world. This period of my own madness was one of the most magnificent, intense, illuminating experiences I have ever had...., I was in hell but I was also blessed. Not only did I not die of it, but I moved through from neurosis into psychosis, that state of mind otherwise called insanity or madness, and back into a kind of health that I had not known before....

Experiencing psychotic states, therefore, far from being 'bad', would seem to be an integral part of our journey into becoming more fully human. I had a similar if short-lived journey into this realm in the summer of 1975, when I was living in California training in Transpersonal Psychology and exploring Shamanic states of consciousness through sacred mushrooms. By mistake, I gave myself a 20-hour intensive 'free seminar' on psychosis when I grossly OD'd, and went into an utterly suicidal and despairing state from which I thought I would never recover. Luckily, I did.

Basically, what had occurred was that huge amounts of shadow material stored away in my unconscious suddenly found doors of perception in my psyche temporarily opening up, and so felt liberated to rush through them, utterly overwhelming my conscious mind in the process. And in those days, I in no way possessed the wherewithal to protect myself from this onslaught from my nether worlds. It was a terrible and painful excursion into utter madness, but I am happy to say that I recovered, and the experience was in essence a gift, as I not only learned about how certain dimensions of our psyche can operate in certain instances, but also how to work with other people in similar states.

Divine Madness

Divine madness exists at the complete other end of the spectrum. Here, our internal doors of perception are also opened, but this time into our 'higher unconscious', into the more elevated domains of our psyche. It has been beautifully written about by Plato in *Phaedrus*:

The greatest blessings come by way of madness, indeed of madness that is heaven sent. It was when they were mad that the prophetess at Delphi and the priestess at Dodona achieved so much for which states and individuals in Greece are thankful; when sane (that is, when they were in a 'normal state') they did little or nothing.... Madness is a divine gift when due to divine dispensation.

I fully agree, and I regard divine madness as the highest form of sanity, and to be aspired to by all of us; for when we touch these dimensions inside ourselves, we link up with our deeper humanity; we start realising our sacred interconnectedness and our belongingness with the cosmos, and as such we have access to a much deeper knowing and a much deeper love, joy, wisdom and truth. Divine madness leaves us yearning for justice in the world. We want wars to end and evil to dissolve.

Above all, we touch into that domain which 'normal man' is most terrified of and defended against – namely, ecstasy! In my own personal quest for ecstasy, I have constantly sought the company of divinely mad people, as they inspire me and their presence lifts me. It is so wonderfully refreshing to be with people who are fully and wholly themselves, who are divinely inspired, and who are not remotely interested in pleasing you or letting you know how rich or clever or important or superior to you they are.

But beware, dear readers. Divine madness can be dangerous. If politicians were to get afflicted, they might dedicate their lives to working for peace and give up serving their own personal interests. If multi-millionaires get struck down – and I've observed this happen – they can feel moved to give up their yachts and share their resources with the poor. But this I say to you: Even if you're not a politician or a multi-millionaire, take the risk and go looking for this madness, and in so doing you might discover that it may also be stalking you!

I think this quest is the sanest thing any of us can be embarking upon in these times of such crises in the world. There are many areas inside ourselves where gateways into divine madness exist, and also many catalysts out in the external world – and I suggest you go looking for them. It's more fun than hunting fame or fortune, and the rewards will be much greater.

So if this affliction ever finds you, I ask you fully to surrender to it. If you like singing, then sing it; if you like politics, then take it into your political life; if you like dancing, then dance it. If you like loving, then share it with all those you love, as the beautiful thing about this madness is that it is highly contagious.

A small footnote. Sometimes our inner doors of perception can open to many worlds at different levels at the same time. This was certainly Dina Gloubrman's experience, and it is currently the experience of an old friend of mine who, though institutionalized and kept on strong anti-psychotic drugs, tells me he is able to channel the spirit of William Blake; and as a great aficionado of Blake's poetry, I never doubt his genius.

Normal Madness

We now come to the truly dangerous and perilously insane realm – one that far too many of us are far too addicted to, and where we insist on seeing anyone or anything that does not abide by its beliefs and constructs, as 'barking'! And this is the domain of 'normal man', whom humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow once described (rather over politely, I think) as 'living in a state of mild and chronic psychopathology and crippling immaturity'.

It is this madness, dear friends, that, if our planet is to have a hope in hell of surviving, you and me are challenged to move away from, and to let go our attachments to. I say this as normal, 'conventional' reality is truly a toxic reality, one that far too many of us have become far too embedded in, convincing ourselves that it is sane and that we are sane. Yet it is not only full of lies, but also lies behind every serious problem we face in the world. Our dear Donald Trump is currently its High Priest, and we need to be grateful to him for consenting daily to embodying this madness for us in its most extreme and distorted forms. So thank you, Donald, for your unceasing displays of daily psychopathology where you continue to model for us all that is worst about us. We need you as our reflector, for unless things become extreme, we tend not to learn from them!

To the extent, then, that we only operate out of 'normal reality', we exist in a very closed-off world, walled off from all that is best and most fully human about us – and, at the same time, also denying and projecting outside of ourselves what is worst, and consequently only utilizing the most minute part of our true potential. People thus afflicted, hover constantly on the borderline between stupidity, unconsciousness and downright

evil.

One of normal man's maddest attributes is that we always think we're right, and that those who disagree with us are wrong. For example, to this day Tony Blair still defends his going into the Iraq war, and still abides by his terror operation 'Shock and Awe', despite the fact that nearly half a million Iraqis lost their lives as a result; in fact, he says he'd do the same thing again! This is the kind of pathology that can take us over when we live with a closed heart, and only bow to the gods of reason and logic, leading us to create an economy that, in its current form, would fall apart were we overnight to stop manufacturing weapons of mass destruction. From this mad mindset, poverty, war and scarcity are seen as inevitable, and there's no chance that inequality could ever not exist.

I promise you that if, suddenly, a legion of divinely mad people took over the governing of our countries, even if they had never received any training, we would probably have a system that, after a time, would start to work for all. And what for me is very, very exciting is that I see a whole new legion of divinely mad people beginning to emerge out of the woodwork in countries all over the world: people who love celebration and ecstasy, and who at the same time are well grounded in true common sense which has nothing remotely to do with the kind of ersatz 'common sense' we associate with normal reality. These divinely mad people believe, along with Krishnamurti, that 'it is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society', and that a new and healthier society needs to be brought into expression.

So, dear friends, just for a moment, stop and ask yourselves: what would it take for you to decide to start being truly sane? And what might you accomplish for your society in the process?

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Serge writes:

'I have a week-long spiritual retreat coming up which is being held in a beautiful retreat centre in Mallorca. Beginning on 23rd March, it is called LIVING THE ABUNDANT LIFE.

Living an abundant life is both a choice and an art. It is connected with attitude, what we choose to give value to and relates to our having an open heart, how connected we are with soul and our willingness to celebrate life's depths with gratitude.

Mornings will start with a meditation and then we will explore the many tentacles of abundance and confront our resistances. Afternoons will often be out attuning to nature, and there will be

much time spent celebrating our companionship and creativity. Participants will leave feeling healed and refreshed with techniques to help them continue what they learned in the week.'

For more information, please go to www.spiritual-activism.com/living-abundantly/

The Art of Living Abundantly:
A spiritual retreat in Mallorca
23–30 March 2019
With **Serge Beddington-Behrens**

Travel details

La Serrania is situated in a remote location near the town of Pollensa, about 45 kilometres from Palma, Mallorca. We can arrange for a taxi or transfer (costs not included) to pick you up, or, better, you rent a car for the week.

Diet

La Serrania prides itself on its abundant and delicious Mediterranean cuisine. Lunch is always vegetarian but there is fish, lamb or chicken on some evenings. All meals are included. Please inform us in advance of any dietary requirements.

Cost

All rooms have en-suite bathrooms and private terraces. Price per person in a double room is £890; single room £1150. Down-payment £300 (refundable only in emergency). Some scholarships may be available to those who have worked with me a lot.

To enrol, please contact Serge infosergebb@gmail.com