

## **Scrutinizing Social out- of- placers: Euripides, Madness and Jaspersian Psychopathology**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A great number of analyses have already been devoted to the study of the concept of madness but few have ever used Karl Jaspers' psychopathological notion of insanity as a touchstone to examine prominent literary works. The present investigation aims to portray the manifestation of madness in Euripides' *The Bacchae*. Applying the eclectic perspective of Karl Jaspers which bridges the gap between empirical and interpretive psychiatry, this research examines the justification of the divinely-induced madness in 407 BC Greece. Jaspers' book, *General Psychopathology* includes a tentative classification of mental disorders which will be used to look at this particular work of art from his perspective, offering a standpoint which is equally person-centered and science-based. Out of the eight provisional categories of psychic abnormalities suggested by Jaspers in his book, the women of Thebes seem to be having problems with a disturbance in three of them, namely the awareness of objects, awareness of the self and the phenomena of self-reflection.

*Keywords:* Euripides, *General Psychopathology*, Karl Jaspers, madness, psychopathology, *The Bacchae*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Madness is too broad a term to be defined as its characterization is a matter of context in terms of place, time and many various factors but generally, humans have either consciously or unconsciously established certain codes of behavior that delineate 'normality'. Any deviation from them would lead to isolation from the better normal half, stigmatizing the out of placers. That is why

many of us equalize the distinction between reason and unreason with the socially constructed dichotomy of the normal and the abnormal. Inspired by Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*, Mills (2003) explained how "any instances of seemingly aberrant behavior can be labeled as an instance of mental illness" (p. 103).

Porter (2002), as well as Cooper and Sartorius (2013) asserted that while some renowned psychiatrists like Michel Foucault and Thomas Szasz took 'mental illness' to be only a fabrication of the mind to serve some other interests concerning power and control, there were still a great number of intellectuals who believed by heeding the relatively stable psychiatric symptoms over time, we were capable of even classifying the mental disorders into categories like ICD-10 and DSM-IV, disregarding the limitations they might entail.

Griesinger, Kraepelin and Freud each represented their own novel ideas at the end of the nineteenth century which paved the way for the emergence of a figure who was going to lay the foundation of psychopathology at the dawn of the twentieth century. Karl Jaspers, a German-Swiss psychiatrist and philosopher was born in 1883 in Germany. He is mostly remembered as a major proponent of existentialism since the theme of individual freedom pervades many of his works. He became one of the few people who tried to bridge the gap between empirical and interpretive psychiatry known today as "the biologic" and "the dynamic" (Jaspers, 1959/1997, p. 45).

Opposing the advancement of biological reductionism in the realm of mental illness led by Wilhelm Griesinger, Jaspers (1959/1997) emphasized the timeless, inseparable unity of soma and psyche in favor of eclecticism in the choice of research methods. There were two standpoints that social scientists were adhering to at the time and Jaspers decided to make them available to psychiatry.

Taking the terminology from Wilhelm Dilthey, Jaspers (1959/1997) distinguished between the two methods of "explanation" and "understanding". Explanation is to act impersonally to discern nature's laws through drawing causal connections. Understanding, on the other hand, aims for finding meaningful connections when discussing mental disorders by analyzing the individual's experiences and unfulfilled desires. This process has to be done empathically. Kraepelin's method which is called Explanation by Jaspers, represents the first group and Freud's interpretive method called Understanding represents the latter.

As mentioned earlier, Jaspers' research methodology is eclectic, meaning he benefits from multiple theories and ideas to gain complementary insights into psychology. The transformation of eclecticism as a conceptual approach will not be discussed here separately. The focus of this research is to show how Jaspers' eclectic perspective distinguishes him from other psychiatrists and how it might help us gain a better understanding of mental disorders.

Psychopathology or the study of mental disorders dates back to 1913 when this

scientific discipline was first introduced in Jaspers' book, *General Psychopathology*. Written in 1913, this book highlights the fact that neither Explanation nor Understanding gives us an all-inclusive perspective of mental life and limitations of both views must at all times be taken into account. Jaspers realized that psychiatry should be equally person-centered and science-based and this is where philosophy offered its assistance. The goal of the present study is to glance at the intriguing manifestation of the concept of madness reflected in the masterfully-written work of art, *The Bacchae*, with a Jaspersian view.

*The Bacchae*, written by the Athenian playwright Euripides in 407 BC, is the story of Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility going back to his birthplace, Thebes, to punish those who would not worship him. Pentheus, the king of Thebes, refuses to honor the god despite his grandfather Cadmus's efforts and is doomed to die in the hands of his own mother, Agave, and other Theban women. They were participating in Bacchic rites in a state of divine frenzy in Cithaeron Mountains. The play culminates with Cadmus and all the Theban women being banished from their homeland as further punishment for their insolence.

Dionysus is generally known as the god of wine and fertility but he's also called, the Mainomenos, Zagreus and Lysios which are closely related to our discussion of insanity in 407 BCE Greece. Astrachan (2009) explains that Mainomenos comes from the Greek word mania which means madness and Dionysus was actually 'the mad god'

or 'the raving one'. He was the Zagreus or 'great hunter' who was the reason for a person's intoxication after setting his soul free. That is why he was also named Lysios, the 'loosener' or 'liberator'. Many believe his home was located somewhere in Asia in ancient Lydia or Phrygia, in western Turkey where he was raised, loved and followed by a female group of nymphs called the Maenads or 'the mad women' followers of Dionysus. Bacchantes or the Bacchae which means 'the initiated ones' was another name attributed to these worshippers which explains why the mad god was also known as Bacchus.

Astrachan (2009) pointed out that states of ecstasy and enthusiasm were believed to be two spiritual Dionysiac gifts to all. The former is from the Greek word ek-stasis which means 'standing outside' one's self and one's ordinary life. We celebrate our physicality and experience a unison with the rest of the world and eventually the god through liberating activities which mostly involve music, drinking wine and dancing. Enthusiasm or en-theos in Greek means being 'filled by the god' in which our subjectivity is disrupted as we are called out of ourselves. It is believed that analysis, art, tragedy and dreams are some of the means associated with appearances of Dionysos. They both present and produce mania or madness.

Madness is used frequently by Greek tragedians as a major theme and Euripides is no exception. In addition to *The Bacchae*, he depicts insanity as an external factor induced by the gods in both *Herakles* and

*Orestes*. A study done by Hartigan (1987) explicates how in Herakles, the main character does not seem to even possess a tragic flaw and yet he is doomed to kill his own wife and children in a fit of madness. *Orestes*, on the other hand is an example of deus ex machina. The main character is suffering from madness as the consequence of a matricide that was committed at a divine command. Orestes and his sister were on the verge of being executed when the god Apollo appeared and brought back the peace by putting everything in order. Although Euripides was illustrating madness to be divinely generated in his dramas, he seemed skeptical about this long-held belief and represented vengeance or patriarchal beliefs as the hidden motivations of crimes.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Before examining Karl Jaspers' Psychopathological standpoint and discussing the methodology used in this paper, we should take a look at the investigations that had already been done regarding the issue of mental illness in Ancient Greece and the nature of insanity in Euripides' work. By having a more comprehensive knowledge about the researches that had been conducted on these subjects, we would be able to see clearly what more a Jaspersian reading of *The Bacchae* can offer. The first issue is the stark contrast between the literary and philosophical texts and the medical ones regarding their attitude towards the definition of mental illness in Ancient Greece.

In an article entitled *Mental Illness in the Greco-Roman era*, the authors demonstrate how from the 5th century BC, physicians firmly believed psychoses to have biological causes while literary texts abound with cases of frenzy contrived by divine entities. In Plato's philosophical writings, four different types of divine madness are illustrated: "those of the poet, the prophet, the Bacchanalian rites, and love" (Cilliers & Retief, 2009, p. 132).

However, this traditional view of the supernatural origin of madness was beginning to fade away when the humoral theory started to be used as a criterion to form the very first divisions of mental illness. The overall wellbeing and mental balance of a person were believed to be based on the harmony among the four humors of black bile, the yellow bile, blood and phlegm. While the accumulation of black bile caused melancholia accompanied by depression, insomnia and suicidal thoughts, having more than enough amount of yellow bile led to phrenitis which was characterized by fever and delirium (confusion). Either of these two groups of mental illnesses could also involve delusions and hallucinations but there was still no word of schizophrenia or bipolar (manic- depressive) psychosis. Mania which may still be used as a general term for insanity was another kind of mental illness caused by excessive drinking and sexual activity, emotional crisis and many other factors (Cilliers & Retief, 2009).

These contrasting views towards the definition and the origin of mental illness were also applied to women of Ancient

Greece. Tradition and medicine used to offer various complicated points of view in terms of female madness. In a paper called *Female Madness in Greek Tradition and Medicine*, Connelly (2017) explained while the former deemed it as an external threat, the latter viewed it as an attack from the inside. Dionysian (associated with maenads) and desire-induced madness (associated with Aphrodite or Eros) belong in the first category. Whereas the Dionysian madness provokes women to abandon the male society, the desire-induced madness as well as the medical perception (associated with Hippocratic Corpus and Plato) were believed to be caused because of avoiding men (Connelly, 2017).

A Jaspersian study of *The Bacchae* according to his psychopathological standpoint encourages one to probe the probable causes of insanity in Agave and the other women in Cithaeron Mountains. In an article named *Women in classical Greece*, the writer emphasizes the menial condition of women in the Classical period of Greek history compared to their male counterparts. With the exception of Sparta, Women lived in seclusion most of their lives where they had no freedom in terms of education, the right to vote or choice of marriage. Some dramatists played along and reinforced the stereotypes by representing women as both weak and dangerous who should be taken under control. Others including Euripides sympathized with the opposite sex by acknowledging the difficulties they face both in personal and public life (Steele, 1975).

Continuing with the discussion on mental illness and its various depictions in different texts in Ancient Greece, it is time to see how it is manifested in Euripides's drama. Two types of divinely-induced insanity can be observed in *The Bacchae*. Examining the madness of women in Euripides's play, Michael Lambert (2009) described when the frenzy bestowed by the gods was received with acceptance, the initiates only experience joy and ecstasy as a result of being united with divinity as well as nature. The bacchantes who have followed Dionysus from Asia and the members of the chorus belong to this category. However, those who boldly deny the authority of the gods and refuse to worship them are doomed to suffer in pain and panic while everything seems to happen against their will. The Theban women including the daughters of Cadmus as well as Pentheus are the victims of this punishment. Lambert also briefly points out to the limited view of Greeks towards women which can be evidently perceived in Pentheus's division of them into two groups of working wives or whores (Lambert, 2009).

Reading Euripides's play, *The Bacchae*, one cannot help but notice the author's challenging and philosophic perspective regarding human action and the conflicting spheres of gods and men. Although the Heraclitean themes of fate and necessity are present in his drama, the writer's skeptical attitude leads him to show Pentheus as both a fool and a madman for believing confidently that he knows the true nature of insanity. Euripides represents this level of

certainty as madness. It seems like Euripides is actually pointing to a need for a harmony between the opposite forces (Lloyd, 2008).

Coleridge's concept of the balance of opposites is applicable to Euripides' *Bacchae*. Arthur D. Epstein (1971) in his article explained how Coleridge made a sharp contrast between Athenian dramatists and Shakespeare in terms of handling the diversities, the former emphasizing the gap and the latter delighting in it. In his play, Euripides is apparently stressing the fact that neither side of these opposites is complete without the other and this deficiency is particularly evident in the Pentheus-Dionysus conflict. "Human-Superhuman, Old-New, Rational-Irrational, Force-Persuasion, Nature-Civilization, Conformity-Nonconformity, Sterility-Fertility, Acceptance-Rejection, Chaos-Order, Life-Death, Ecstasy-Horror, Reason-Madness, Physical-Metaphysical" are some of the dichotomies present in the play, showing the richness and inclusiveness of the writer's scope as he skillfully manifests the imperfection of each side of the dualities and the necessity of balance or harmony between them (Epstein, 1971).

The dichotomy of Apollonian restraint and Dionysian excess is best represented in the characters of Pentheus and Dionysus, the former as a prototype of law, order and rationality and the latter being the representative of ecstasy and madness. Euripides attempts to show the devastating consequences of repressing either of the two inseparable aspects of our being, the body and the soul. Duality can be even observed

in the character of Dionysus himself. He can appear as a symbol of fertility and sexual excitement in the form of a goat, a bull, and an ass in some stories. On the other hand, the same god is seen as savage and bloodthirsty as a lion, a panther, and a lynx in some other tales (Higgs, 2003). In an article entitled *The Primal Spirit: Sacred Frenzy in Euripides' Bacchae*, Lima (2005) claimed that the drama seemed to be a critique of both forces who favored extremism and the writer handled the task in the cleverest fashion.

After examining some of the studies already done on the subject of mental illness in Ancient Greece and the nature of insanity in Euripides' work, we can move to Jasper's psychopathological point of view which will be used in this paper as the methodology, guiding the research. Jaspers' agenda was to put psychiatry on secure philosophical foundations like what Bertrand Russell and Rene Descartes did before him in their own field of study but ironically, anti-foundationalists such as Kurt Gödel and Ludwig Wittgenstein proved them wrong by pointing to both practical and theoretical reasons why the idea of finding a starting point or an anchor was mostly an illusion (Stanghellini & Fuchs, 2013).

Nevertheless, Jaspers' psychopathological attempt to discover exact albeit provisional description and classification of mental disorders brought about its own merits and he owes it all to Edmund Husserl's philosophy. Husserl talked about the possibility of reaching the contents of the conscious mind for the very first time, calling it "descriptive psychology"



at the beginning and “phenomenology” later on (Stanghellini & Fuchs, 2013, p. xv-xxxix).

In Jaspers’ point of view, phenomenology forms the cornerstone of psychopathology. It describes psychic states as represented by the patients and then examines the relations between them as distinctly as possible. After building a rich collection of individual cases of phenomena while keeping an open mind, we can perhaps build up a tentative classification as a source of future reference. The eight categories of mental disorders suggested by Jaspers in *General Psychopathology* are as follows: Awareness of objects, Experience of space and time, Awareness of the body, Delusion and awareness of reality, Feelings and affective states, Urge drive and will, Awareness of the self, Phenomenon of self-reflection (Jaspers, 1959/1997).

In the awareness of objects, many abnormalities may appear that distort our usual way of perceiving the world. “Illusion is the term for perceptions which in fact are transpositions (or distortions) of real perceptions” (Jaspers, 1959/1997, pp. 64-65). Pareidolia is a type of illusion in which the imagination plays a huge part in creating false perceptions.

Following the discussion of false perceptions, Jaspers briefly points to another abnormality regarding the awareness of objects called abnormal imagery or false memory. A sudden realization of a supposed past experience that was forgotten comes to the patient’s mind but in actuality, nothing is really remembered. It is either a figment

of his or her imagination or a distortion of real events.

Patients who experience space in an abnormal manner see objects smaller, larger or crooked. They may claim how space seems infinite in their eyes, how they feel lost and abandoned in this limitlessness. Some schizophrenics have also reported of a second space in which everything looks engulfing, at a very great distance with dimmer colors (Jaspers, 1959/1997).

Jaspers stated that the experience of time was even more complicated than space. In order to delineate various abnormalities regarding the experience of time, Jaspers placed them in these four categories: momentary awareness of time, the awareness of the time-span of the immediate past, awareness of time-present in relation to time-past and future and the awareness of future.

The disturbances related to the awareness of the body are very complex and difficult to categorize. Patients have a problem locating an irritable place or any other part on their bodies or they may even fail to find the position of the left side of the body and distinguish it from the right. Patients might feel very heavy or light as a feather ready to fly. Some patients had reported that at some point, all their senses became one and they were able to see with their legs and hands (Jaspers, 1959/1997).

In the discussion of the awareness of reality, Jaspers maintained that delusion was a pathologically mistaken judgment made by the patient that was almost always accompanied by a change in the personality.

Their belief possesses a highly strict level of incorrigibility that is by no means altered no matter how much evidence is offered to the contrary. People with delusional awareness or perception sense that the world around them is undergoing a drastic transformation which generates the feelings of suspicion and bizarreness.

While feelings are different conditions of the self, sensations are components of bodily perception and environmental ones. It is worth mentioning that in cases like hunger or sexual excitation, the two concepts overlap and we can describe them as feeling-sensations. Jaspers (1959/1997) explained how sometimes, patients felt incompetent and insufficient without an actual reason. Apathy is another severe state in which the person experiences an absence of feeling.

It is necessary to distinguish the non-directional biological necessity called urge from drive which is an instinctual activity aiming at some target. We also need to differentiate them both from the volitional act that has a specific goal and includes the discussion on choice and making decisions. Impulsive acts, the loss of will or surprisingly an access of power are a few disorders in this category (Jaspers, 1959/1997).

Jaspers named four main characteristics of self-awareness and delineated how the lack of any one of them was a sign of a certain abnormality. These four features are: "(1) the feeling of activity- an awareness of being active; (2) an awareness of unity- I am aware at any given moment that I am a unity; (3) awareness of identity- I am aware

I have been the same person all the time; (4) awareness of the self as distinct from an outer world and all that is not the self" (Jaspers, 1959/1997, p. 121).

Development in an individual happens gradually in terms of biological-physical transformations in a passive manner. This also includes mental alterations which are the result of self-reflection as soon as the immediacy of the phenomena is gone. Compulsive phenomenon is a disturbance related to the experience of self-reflection. Psychic compulsions are inexplicable irremovable and unjustified desires where volitional control is present to some extent yet not powerful enough to prevent the individual from doing an action that is evidently incomprehensible (Jaspers, 1959/1997).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Examining the play according to Karl Jaspers' notion of madness using the eight tentative categorizations, it is evident that the women of Thebes were having problems with disturbances in three of them, namely the awareness of objects, awareness of the self and the phenomena of self-reflection. In the prologue, the god of wine explained why he was in Thebes to reclaim his authority and took full responsibility for driving women insane as a means of punishment. This section of the play was pointing to Dionysus being the *Mainomenos* and *Lysios*, the reason for a person's madness and liberation of the deepest parts of the psyche during Bacchic ecstasy.



As the tragedy goes on, we saw how Cadmus, Tiresias and also members of the chorus pointed their fingers at Pentheus, calling him insane for fighting against the gods' will. They warned him of the catastrophic consequences of challenging the divine. Pentheus mocked them as well, believing the whole idea of these ceremonies to be nothing but sheer perversion, endangering the order of the society and the health of people, especially women. Thus, he had Dionysus who was disguised as a mortal captured and brought to his palace where they had a lengthy discussion and no one was able to convince the other. Pentheus was left desperate when this stranger magically freed himself from the chains while an earthquake shook the ground and a fire appeared for a few minutes. As they were still arguing, a messenger arrived at the scene and gave a vivid report of the Theban women's preoccupation in Cithaeron Mountains. This was only a section of his description of the Bacchae in their divine frenzy:

. . . At the appointed time, the women started their Bacchic ritual. The entire mountain and its wild animals were, like them, in one Bacchic ecstasy. Agave, by chance, was dancing close to me. I jumped out, hoping to grab hold of her. But she screamed out, "Oh, men are hunting us. Come on, Armed with that thyrsus in your hand." We ran off, and so escaped being torn apart. But then those Bacchic women, all unarmed, went at the heifers, using their bare hands.

You should have seen one ripping a fat, young calf apart— others tearing cows in pieces with their hands. You could've seen ribs and cloven hooves tossed everywhere—some hung up in branches dripping blood and gore. And bulls, proud beasts till then, dragged down by the hands of a thousand girls. Hides covering their bodies were stripped off faster than you could wink your royal eye. Then, they went back to where they'd started from, those fountains which the god had made for them. They washed off the blood. Snakes licked their cheeks, cleansing their skin of every drop . . . (Euripides, 2003, pp. 14-15).

#### **Awareness of the Self**

Euripides pointed to a few supernatural actions carried out by the Bacchic participants in the aforementioned part of the play, namely the killing of animals as big as a cow and tearing them apart with bare hands or making milk and wine streams flowed by the touch of their fingertips and thyrsus. While their super strength was difficult to explain in psychological terms, their intimate relation and unification with natural surroundings and animals reminded us of a disturbance in self-awareness investigated by Jaspers (1959/1997). He introduced the distinction one normally made between herself and the outside world as the fourth feature of the awareness of the self. It seemed that this characteristic as well as the awareness of identity was disrupted as a result of Bacchic intoxication. Theban

mothers were seen feeding gazelles and wolf cubs with their breast milk while their children were left hungry at home.

The rest of the tale takes on a shocking turn as we observe that Pentheus's curiosity to see the Dionysiac rituals led him into the stranger's trap who in reality was the god of wine himself. Pentheus was apparently mesmerized by the god of madness, listening to his every word, dressing in women's costume specially designed to be worn in Bacchic ceremony. This change happened when not long ago, the stranger was his arch enemy and he viewed anything remotely related to worshipping the gods with the utmost contempt. Afterwards, this much-changed version of Pentheus who was now even able to see Dionysus in his true form as a bull left for Cithaeron Mountains. He was led by the stranger through deserted streets to go and spy on the Bacchic initiates. Then, the songs of the chorus foreshadowed the gruesome event ahead while a soldier suddenly entered the palace and started giving a detailed report of what he was unfortunate to witness.

### **Phenomena of Self-reflection**

The researchers who had already examined the madness of the Bacchae emphasized the fact that they were suffering from hysteria since they experienced partial amnesia and were eager to be the center of attention due to being repressed by the patriarchal society. Hysteria is an instance of mental illness almost primarily associated with women

beginning in 1900 B.C. It was recognized as the result of the movement or wandering of the womb (Cilliers & Retief, 2009).

If we run the risk of explaining mental derangements depicted in literary works according to the current categorizations of mental problems, it is fair to assume that the Theban women and the maenads in Euripides's *Bacchae* were suffering from mass hysteria, known today as Mass psychogenic illness (MPI). It later on, adopted lycanthropy as its variation in which the participants acted like wild animals (Cilliers & Retief, 2009).

Pistone (2012) in her article also traced the medical and psychological manifestation of madness in Euripides. She argued that while epileptic symptoms were most common among his characters, the seemingly divinely-induced insanity could be interpreted "in terms of unmet or unbalanced psychological elements" (Pistone, 2012, p. 1).

However, Jaspers (1959/1997) viewed hysteria in a different light, quite distinct from previous investigations. In his *General Psychopathology*, he claimed that hysteria was an unconscious imitation of illness as a result of ungratified wishes and cravings. Therefore, the person displayed signs of a real illness while there seemed to be no physiological disturbance in either the body or the brain, causing the suffering. Jaspers believed that the conversion of repression into symptoms was necessarily accompanied by dissociation and it could

never be compared to normal repressions we might experience every day.

Thus, the Maenads in Euripides' *Bacchae* were most probably undergoing a disturbance related to the experience of self-reflection. Jaspers called it compulsive phenomena in which the patient had some inexplicable unjustified desire and though the power of will was present to some extent, it was not enough to prevent the person from doing an incomprehensible action. He believed that these baffling acts could range from moving the objects around or saying curse words to extremely severe cases in which the person committed suicide or killed his own children.

In Euripides' *Bacchae*, while there are certain epileptic signs such as foaming at the mouth or eyes rolling in their sockets, the climax of the tragedy is Pentheus being killed by the hands of his own mother due to some unexplainable reason. Patriarchal pressure on Theban women might be a possible motivation.

After the slaughter was over, Agave returned to the palace, still intoxicated by the Bacchic frenzy to show off to his father the head of the beast she had hunted. In reality, it was her beloved son's head she was still mistaking for a lion's. Here, we observe a most meticulously conducted scene of psychotherapy performed by Cadmus in order to help his daughter return to the world of reality. He started from drawing her attention to the objective world and then moving on to subjective realities including identity.

### Awareness of Objects

Imagining Pentheus's head as a lion reminds us of Jaspers' notion of illusion. A type of disturbance related to the awareness of objects, illusions are distortions of our perceptions and this case is a good example of pareidolia. In pareidolia, imagination plays a major role and the illusion lasts as long as the person feeds it with her power of fantasy. The following lines are the manifestation of the illusory nature of Agave's perceptions:

AGAVE: *Bacchae*... [displaying the head] From the mountains I've brought home this ivy tendril freshly cut. We've had a blessed hunt. I caught this young lion without a trap, as you can see. The honor of the first blow goes to me. In the dancing I'm called blessed Agave. His other children laid hands on the beast, but after me—only after I did first. We've had good hunting. So come, share our feast. (Euripides, 2003, p. 22)

Abnormal imagery or false memory is another psychic abnormality Jaspers (1959/1997) had clarified which could be observed in Euripides' drama. Agave felt extremely proud to have killed a wild beast and presented its head to Cadmus triumphantly. Slaughtering his son, Pentheus, suddenly came to her mind where her imagination helped to distort the real events. Agave firmly believed she was passively used by someone else in a hypnotic state and the gods were to be blamed for the act of murder. Moreover, seeing the

sky “brighter...more translucent than it was before” by Agave manifested another disruption in her ability to experience the objects around as she had her perception intensified.

The play ended by Dionysus’s reappearance and reiteration of the fact that worshipping and obeying god’s will was the best action while Cadmus and all the Theban women were banished from their homeland as a further punishment for their insolence. Attributing the temporary frenzy and the dreadful murder to the gods helped Agave to cope with the devastating reality that was killing her own child and the chorus defended the divinely-induced madness as a form of retribution.

## CONCLUSION

The aforementioned investigation of Euripides’ tragedy has demonstrated how the people of ancient Greece (around 407 BC) were obsessed with the idea of divinely-induced madness, overlooking all the other factors that work hand in hand affecting an individual’s mental condition. While the ancient Greeks ascribed all kinds of mental disorders to the wrath of the gods, applying Karl Jaspers’ psychopathological notions to *Bacchae* uniquely helps us gain a more accurate understanding of the nature of insanity reflected in Euripides’ drama. A disturbance in the awareness of the self, phenomena of self-reflection as well as the awareness of objects can be observed in Bacchic women especially Agave. Although the Dionysian myth dominates the whole tale, the playwright’s detailed description

of the characters’ seemingly divine frenzy cannot help but sound questionable to the contemporary reader.

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