

From Wilhelm Waiblinger's essay:

"Friedrich Hölderlin's Life, Poetry and Madness" (1830)

Translated from the German by Scott J. Thompson.

Now if one were to step into this unfortunate man's house, he certainly would not expect to meet a poet who had merrily wandered along the Ilyssus with Plato; but the house is not ugly, it is the dwelling of a prosperous carpenter; a man who has an uncommon degree of culture for a man of his standing, and who speaks about Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Novalis, Tieck and others. One inquires after the room of Herr Librarian - for Hölderlin still enjoys being addressed by title - and then comes to a small door. Talking can already be heard inside, and one assumes that Hölderlin already has company, but is then told by the honest carpenter that H. is completely alone and talks to himself day and night.

One ponders, wondering whether or not to knock, and feels a sense of uneasiness. After finally knocking, a loud and forceful "Come in!" can be heard. Opening the door, one finds a haggard figure standing in the middle of the room, who bows as deeply as possible and will not stop bestowing compliments, and whose mannerisms would be very graceful were there not something convulsive about them. One admires the profile, the high forehead heavy with thought, the friendly, lovable eyes, extinguished but not soulless; one sees the devastating traces of the mental illness in the cheeks, the mouth, the nose, above the eyes where an oppressive and painful wrinkle has been etched. With regret and sadness, one observes the convulsive movement which sometimes spreads throughout the entire face, forcing his shoulders to jerk and his fingers to twitch. He wears a simple jacket and likes to keep his hands in his pockets. One says a few introductory words which are then received with the most courteous obeisance and a deluge of nonsensical words which confuse the visiting

stranger. Gracious as he was and, for the sake of appearance, still is, H. now feels obliged to say something friendly to the guest, to ask him a question. One comprehends a few words of his question, but most of these could not possibly be answered. Nor does Hölderlin in the least expect to be answered. On the contrary, he becomes extremely perplexed if the visitor attempts to follow up a train of thought. More about that later, when we discuss our conversations with him. For now, our concern is simply with the fleeting appearance. The visitor finds himself addressed as "Your Majesty", "Your Holiness", and "Merciful Herr Pater". Hölderlin, however, is extremely upset; he receives such visits with the greatest displeasure and is always more disturbed afterwards. For that reason it was always against my own will whenever someone requested me to lead them to Hölderlin. Yet, I would rather do this than let one visit him unaccompanied. The visit would be too upsetting for the lonely man, who is shut off from all associations with people, and the visitor would not know how to treat him. Hölderlin would soon begin to thank the visitor for the visit and would again bow, whereupon it would then be best for one not to tarry any longer.

Nor does anyone stay with him longer than this. Even his earlier acquaintances found such conversation too uncanny, too oppressive, too boring, too senseless, for the Librarian was at his most eccentric in his behavior toward them. Friedrich Haug, the epigrammatist who had known him for a long time, once came to visit. He, too, was addressed as "Your Royal Majesty" and "Herr Baron von Haug". Though the old friend assured H. that he had not been ennobled, H. positively would not cease bestowing him with distinguished titles. Toward complete strangers he speaks absolute nonsense. But first of all, we shall describe the outer appearance he presents of himself, and then we will consider this in greater detail.

He wrote a lot at first and filled every sheet of paper which was handed to him. There were letters in prose or in free Pindaric metrics addressed to his dear Diotima, others more frequently in alcaics. He had adopted a thoroughly peculiar style, the contents of which were: remembrance of the poet, struggle with God and celebration of the Greeks. As for his current train of thought, nothing has appeared yet.

At the beginning of his stay with the carpenter, he still broke out in attacks of madness and rage many times, which forced Zimmer, as a last resort, to strike the frenzied man with his sturdy fists. Hölderlin once chased the man and his whole family out of the house and locked the door.

He instantly became enraged and convulsive whenever he saw anyone from the clinic. Since he often wandered about at liberty, he was naturally exposed to the jeers of the dreadful people who can be found everywhere, and to whose bestial nature such a frightfully spirited unfortunate becomes an object of ignorant viciousness. Now when he realized this, he would become so wild that he would throw stones and dung at them; and one could be certain that he would still be furious the following day. With deepest regret we were forced to acknowledge that even university students were animalistic enough to taunt and enrage him. With regard to this subject, we can only say that of all the wicked traits which laziness engenders in the universities, this is certainly one of the most worthless.

The carpenter's wife or one of his sons or daughters often took the poor man into the garden or vineyard, whereupon Hölderlin would find a rock to sit on, waiting until they would go home. It is notable that persons in his company had to act as if they were with a child, if he were not to be made restless.

If he leaves the house, he must first be reminded to wash and tidy himself, as his hands are usually dirty from having spent half of the day tearing grass from the ground. Then, after he has dressed, he must be led, for he positively will not lead. He wears his hat pulled down to his eyes, and if he is not too deeply withdrawn into himself, he will raise it in greeting to a two-year-old child. It is both praise- and noteworthy that the people in the city who were familiar with him never made fun of him but quietly let him go his own way, while they often said to one another: Ach, how bright and educated this gentleman was, and now he's so crazy. But now he is not allowed to go out alone, except to wander around the bailey in front of the house.

In the beginning, he sometimes came to see the admirable Conz, recently deceased. This industrious and energetic friend of ancient literature had a garden in front of the Hirschauer Gate in Tübingen, whither it had been his daily custom for decades to direct his path one hour before noon. During a quarter of a century, he could be seen at this time propping up his heavy body and stopping right at the gate where the gatekeeper would light his pipe. Then the poet would walk quietly and slowly, stopping after a few hours in the open air or at the garden house. While he was translating Aeschylus, Hölderlin, who had more fire and energy at that time, came to see him. He would amuse himself by picking flowers, and after he had gathered a hearty bouquet, he would tear it apart and stuff it into his pocket. Sometimes Conz would also give him a book. Conz told me that Hölderlin once leaned over him and read aloud a few verses from Aeschylus, whereupon he then shrieked out in convulsive laughter: "I don't understand that. It's kamalatta language," for the coining of new words is one of Hölderlin's eccentricities.

These visits gradually ceased in time as he became weaker and duller-witted. It was sometimes necessary for me to prod him to take a stroll with me in Conz's garden. He had all sorts of excuses. He would say: "I do not have time, Your Holiness" - for I, too, received all kinds of titles - or "I must wait for a visitor," or he would use one of his highly peculiar phrases like "They have dictated they I wait here." Now and then, however, when it was nice and bright outside, I got him to dress and we went out. On one particular spring day, he was greatly overjoyed by the vibrant flowers and the fullness of the blossoms. He praised the garden's beauty in the most pleasing terms. Otherwise, however, he was more unreasonable than when I had him alone with me. Conz took pains to have him recall the past, but without any luck. Conz once said, "Herr Councillor Haug, who you'll still remember well, recently wrote a very beautiful poem." Hölderlin, who as usual was completely inattentive to what was said to him, replied, "Has he written one?" Conz burst out laughing. We then walked toward the house, and as we bid farewell, Hölderlin kissed Conz's hand most elegantly.

His day is extremely simple. In the morning, especially during the summer when he is generally much more disturbed and tormented, he arises either before or at sunrise and leaves the house at once to go for a walk in the bailey. This stroll, usually lasting four or five hours, tires him out. He likes to amuse himself by carrying a handkerchief to either swat against fence-posts or pull up grass with. Whatever he finds, whether it's only a piece of iron or leather, he sticks in the handkerchief and takes it with him. During all this, he continually talks to himself, asks himself questions, and answers himself, soon with yes, then no, frequently with both, for he enjoys saying no.

After that, he returns to the house and paces back and forth. His dinner is brought to his room and he eats with a hearty appetite. He also loves wine and would keep drinking it as long as it were given to him. When he has finished his meal, he cannot tolerate having the dishes and silverware in his room a second longer, and he places them on the floor in front of the door. He positively will have only those things inside his room which belong to him. The remaining part of the day elapses in monologues and pacing back and forth in his little room.

His Hyperion can occupy him all day long. Hundreds of times when I came to visit him, I could already hear him outside declaiming in a loud voice. His pathos is extravagant and Hyperion is almost always lying opened on his table; he often read aloud to me from it. And after he had read a passage, he would begin to exclaim with vigorous gestures, "O beautiful, beautiful Your Majesty!" Then he would read some more, suddenly adding, "You see there, Gracious Sir, a comma!" He also read aloud from other books which I put in his hands, but understood nothing because he's too distracted and can't even follow one of his own thoughts, let alone one foreign to him. Nonetheless, he would consequently praise the book excessively in his usual politeness.

The rest of his books consist of Klopstock's Odes, Gleim, Cronegk, and other older poets of this sort. He reads Klopstock's Odes often and does not hesitate to produce them.

I told him countless times that his Hyperion had been newly reprinted and that Uhland and Schwab had assembled a collection of his poetry, but I never received more of an answer than a deep bow and the words, "They are very gracious, Herr von Waiblinger! I am very indebted to you, Your Holiness!"

Whenever he cut my questions short in this manner, I often tried to forcefully press him for a reasonable answer, and without ceasing turned my words around, rephrasing the question with different expressions and only ceasing when he broke out in violent gesticulation and an incoherent, senseless torrent of words.

The carpenter was soon surprised to see that I could exert so powerful an influence over Hölderlin that he would go with me as soon as I so desired, and that he was also so concerned with me in my absence. But it was the pretty little garden house which I lived in on the Österberg which pleased Hölderlin the most. Wieland penned the first fruits of his muse in this same house. Here, one had a view overlooking friendly, fertile valleys, the city spread out on the Schlossberg, the bending of the Neckar, many enchanted little villages, and the chain of the Alps. It is now more than three years since I spent a pleasant summer here in the midst of the green with such a refreshing view, almost entirely in the open air. At that time, unfortunately, there was such an oppressive weight upon my spirit that even the delight of this friendly nature was not enough to strengthen and cheer me up. I was to write a novel here which I would soon consider worthy of being burned, and in which there was precious little which would not now shame me. But later came the "Song of Kalonasa" which at least won acclaim for the author from the most well-known judges and friends of poetry when it was published three years later. But it was to this spot where I led Hölderlin once each week. When he had reached the top and had set foot inside, he would bow each time, commending me for my good will and favor in the most cordial manner possible. He expresses his courtesy in flowery phrases wherever he goes and often it is actually as if he intentionally wished to keep everyone at arm's length from himself. If he has a reason, this is certainly it; but perhaps it is a bit too much to want to

attribute to each and every thing a meaning deeper than what is simply eccentric and curious.

Hölderlin would open the window, sit down next to it and begin to praise the view in quite understandable words. I noticed that, in general, it was better for him when he was out in the open air. He spoke to himself less, and in my opinion this is complete proof that he was more lucid, for I have become convinced that that incessant monologue is none other than the restlessness of his thought and his impotence in concentrating on an object. More about that later. I provided him with snuff and smoking tobacco, which he enjoyed quite a bit. I could completely cheer him up with a pinch, and when I filled up the pipe and lit it for him, he praised it and the tobacco most spiritedly and was completely contented. He stopped talking, and since he was then feeling his best, and it would not have been good to disturb him, I left him alone and read something.

Written in large Greek letters on the wall above his desk, the pantheistic One and All (Hen kai pan) had been one of his greatest concerns. He often spoke a long time to himself, always watching this mysterious sign of many meanings, and one time he said, "I have become orthodox now, Your Holiness! No, no! I'm presently studying the third volume of Herr Kant and am greatly involved with the new philosophy." I asked him if he remembered Schelling. He said, "Yes, he studied at the same time I did, Herr Baron!" I told him that Schelling was supposed to be in Erlangen and Hölderlin replied, "He was in Munich earlier." He asked me whether I had ever spoken to him and I said yes. . .

He recalled Matthisson, Schiller, Zollikofer, Lavater, Heinse, and many others, with the exception of Goethe, as I've mentioned earlier. His memory still shows power and endurance. Once, I found it surprising that he had a portrait of Frederick the Great hanging on the wall and therefore asked him about it. He answered, "You have made that remark about it before, Herr Baron." Then I remembered having indeed noticed it many months earlier. He also recognized everything which he had seen before. He has never forgotten that I am a poet and has asked me countless times what I have been working on and whether I have been industrious. But he can

immediately add, "I, my dear Sir, no longer bear the same name. Now I'm called Killalusimeno. Oui, Your Majesty, so they say, so they declare! Nothing's wrong with me."

Generally speaking, I heard this last comment from him often. It is as if this were his way of affirming and soothing himself; by keeping in mind, "there's nothing wrong with me."

I also gave him paper for writing. Then he would sit down at the desk and write a few verses, rhymed ones as well, though they were nonsensical, especially the last ones, however metrically correct they were. He would then rise and hand it to me with lavish compliments. He once signed one "Your most humble and obedient Hölderlin".

One day I told him that a concert would be held in the evening. I had been considering whether it would be possible to provide him with such a pleasure. In the end, it could not be risked. Perhaps the music would have been too overpowering for him, and then there was the incivility of the students to consider. Enough, I left the garden house with him. He was completely withdrawn and did not speak a single syllable. When we had reached the city, he suddenly looked at me as if he had just awakened and said, "Concert." No doubt he had been thinking about it the whole way.

For music had not yet abandoned him completely. He still played piano correctly, though in a highly eccentric style. Whenever he plays, he sits at the instrument all day long. He will follow a childishly simple notion, turn it around, and play it back hundreds of times all day until one can endure it no longer. And along with this come quick, spasmodic fits which force him to race like lightning across the keyboard with his long, overgrown fingernails clattering all the way. It is the greatest displeasure for him to have these trimmed, and he has to be tricked like a stubborn and capricious child into having it done. When he has played long enough to stir his soul, he suddenly closes his eyes, lifts his head and begins to sing as if he wanted to pine and waste away. As many times as I heard it, I could never figure out what language it was; but he sang with an excessive pathos, and it sent shivers through every nerve to see and hear him in this

way. Melancholy and sorrow were the spirit of his song, and one could tell that he had once been a good tenor.

He loves children very much, but they are afraid of him and run away. He has an uncommon fear of death and is very fearful in general. His terribly weakened nerves make him easily frightened and he is startled by the slightest sound. Whenever he is in motion or in a gloomy mood, his entire face twitches, his gestures are violent, he twists his fingers together in such knots it is as if he had no joints at all, and he shrieks loudly, raving at himself in vehement discourse. Unless he is left alone during such moments, one will be physically escorted to the door. When he becomes completely infuriated, he lies in bed and will not get up for days on end.

One day the idea of going to Frankfurt suddenly entered his mind. His boots were then taken away from him, and this infuriated the Herr Librarian so much that he stayed in bed for five days. In the summer, he is so plagued by restlessness that he paces back and forth in the house all night long.

I wanted to give him other books and thought that he would surely read Homer, who he would certainly remember. I brought him a translation, but he would not accept it. I left it with the carpenter and told him that Hölderlin should keep it, that it now belonged to him. Just the same, he would not accept it. The reason for this is not pride but rather fear of upsetting himself by getting involved with something unfamiliar. Only what was familiar kept him calm: Hyperion and his dusty, old poets. Homer had been a stranger to him for twenty years, and now everything new upset him.

Then I invited him to go with me to a garden where there was a tavern. The view from this place was very lovely and one felt completely unobserved there. Hölderlin drank like a real man. He liked the beer, too, and held his liquor better than one would have expected. I took care, however, that the appropriate limits were never exceeded. He felt completely at ease when he smoked a pipe in such a setting; he stopped talking and kept to himself.

He wrote to his mother, but always had to be reminded. These letters were not senseless; he took pains with thema and they were in fact clear, but only in the same way, including style, that a child writes - one who cannot yet think or write down a completed thought. One of them was actually pretty good, but then it ended, "I see that I must close." He had become confused at this point, had become conscious of his confusion, and abruptly stopped. One can best compare this state with the disturbance in thought which one experiences in illness, migraine headaches, extreme drowsiness, and hangovers after an evening of intemperate wine consumption.

My garden house became so dear to him that he still asked about it years after I was no longer living there, and whenever he went with the carpenter's wife into the nearby vineyard, he would climb up to the door and positively insist that Herr von Waiblinger lived there.

Nature, a good walk, the open sky always did him good. It is fortunate for him that from his little window he can savor the cheerful view of the Neckar which washes against his house and a lovely patch of meadow and mountain scenery. A multitude of clear, true images flow over from this view into the poems which he writes when the carpenter gives him paper.

It is remarkable that he could not be brought to speak of the things which had concerned him so much in former, better days. He does not say a single word about Frankfurt, Diotima, Greece, his poetry - things which had been so important to him. And if one asks pointblank, "But surely it has been a while since you were last in Frankfurt?", he simply answers with a bow, "Oui, Monsieur, so you maintain," and then comes a flood of half-French.

In the last few years a small sofa was finally put in his room, and this has been an uncommon source of delight to him. He announced it with childlike rapture when I came to visit him by kissing my hand and saying, "Ach, you see, Gracious Herr, now I have a sofa." I, too, was to take a seat right away, and for a long time after that Hölderlin sat on it whenever I came to visit.

During the time when I was his frequent visitor, I made many trips to Italy, Switzerland and the Tyrol. Whenever I would return, he always knew where I had been. He particularly liked reminiscing about Switzerland and praised the beautiful regions of Zürich and St. Gall, and he spoke of Lavater and Zollikofer. I once told him that I was on my way to Rome and soon would no longer be returning, and I jokingly invited him to come along as my traveling companion. He smiled in such a charmingly sensible way, as only a sage can smile, and said, "I must remain at home, I cannot travel anymore, Gracious Herr!"

Sometimes he gave answers which forced one to nearly break out in laughter, especially since he spoke them with a look as if he were really mocking. I once asked him how old he was and he replied smiling, "Seventeen, Herr Baron." But this is not jest, rather complete distraction. He never pays attention to what someone says to him because he is always withdrawn in himself, battling his incomplete and unclear thoughts. If one should suddenly want to roust him from his torpid brooding, one must be contented with the next word which passes his lips.

I was once walking with him across a meadow. I had let him walk next to me withdrawn in himself for a while, when I quickly drew his attention to a newly built house and said, "Herr Librarian, you certainly have not seen this building yet, have you?" Hölderlin suddenly woke up and said, as if the whole world depended on his reply, "Oui, Your Majesty."

In Germany I have amassed a great deal of his written works and the many things which he wrote during his sad life, and would gladly impart some of them were it only possible. I remember an ode in an alchaic metre which begins with the following beautiful lines:

An Diotima

Wenn aus der Ferne, da wir geschieden sind,
ich dir noch kennbar bin, dir Vergangenheit,
o du Teilhaber meiner Schmerzen,

einiges Gute bezeichnen dir kann . . . [1]

In the last line one can already see that he could no longer hold on to the thought, like a beginner or bad poet who cannot articulate what he wants to say, and who is not enough of a master to express himself as strongly as he feels.

The content throughout his letters is a struggling and grappling against God or Fate, as likes to call it. A passage in one of them reads, "Heavenly Godhead, what was it like beneath us when I won several battles from you and a few not insignificant victories!"

I found a terrible, mysterious passage among his papers. After many laudatory exclamations - the things he says about Greek heroes and the beauty of the ancient gods - he begins: "Now I only understand man when I am far away from him and living in solitude."

His perceptions of nature [Naturanschauungen] are still completely lucid. Even when the very world of thought has deteriorated into a wretched hodgepodge [Wirrwarr] and it is no longer within his means to follow the thread of something abstract, it is a great and elevating thought that holy, all-living, mother nature, who Hölderlin has celebrated in his healthiest, freshest, most stirring poetry, is still understood by him. His behavior in the open air is proof of that, as is the beneficial and calming influence which nature exerts upon him, especially the lovely images which he delights in plucking from her as he watches the arrival and departure of spring from his window. In a vividly homeric verse he has painted the image of sheep wandering over a footbridge. He often watched this from his window. And he has painted a sublime picture in his description of silver raindrops dripping from his roof.

But it would be pointless to look for coherence here. If he makes an effort to say something abstract, he gets confused, becomes enfeebled, and in the end is forced to express himself in unusual figures of speech.

The greatest mistake made by the passing observers of this confused psychological state is that they believe Hölderlin has the *idée fixe* that he is in the company of kings, popes and the nobility because he gives everyone, including the carpenter, some kind of noble title. This is false. Hölderlin has no dominating *idée fixe*. He is more in a state of infirmity than madness, and every one of his senseless utterances is the consequence of his spiritual and physical exhaustion. Let me clarify this point.

Hölderlin has become incapable of concentrating on a thought, clarifying it, following it up, drawing an analogy to it, and of connecting it in a regular sequence via intermediary terms to something seemingly remote. As we have seen, his life is an entirely inner one, and this is certainly one of the reasons why he has sunken into this state of apathy, the extrication from which has been rendered impossible by his physical sluggishness and unbelievably weakened nerves. Something strikes him, be it a recollection or perhaps an observation which draws his attention to an object in the world outside, and he begins to think. But then he lacks all the calm, all the continuity and firmity to grasp what inevitably remains hazy to him. He should develop the thought, but in his condition he lacks the power to analyze even a single concept. He wants to affirm, but since the truth is not a matter of great importance to him, for this can only be the product of healthy, ordered thought, he says no at the moment, for the aggregate world of spirits is appearance and fog to him, and his entire being has become a resolute, though awful, idealism. If, for example, he says to himself, "people are happy," he lacks the stability and clarity to ask himself how and why. He experiences a heavy resistance within himself, he retracts his statement and says, "people are unhappy," without worrying how or why they are this way. This distressing conflict which destroys his thoughts in their course could be seen any number of times because he usually thought aloud. And if he is actually able to concentrate on a concept, his mind betrays him almost at once, he becomes much more bewildered, a convulsive motion travels through his forehead, he shakes his head and shouts, "Nein! nein!" and to save himself from this inner swindel which distresses him so much, he falls into a delirium and says words without sense or meaning, as if his overly strained spirit were trying

to restore itself while the mouth were speaking totally unrelated words. This became clear later from his papers. It is still within his means to write a sentence with what will be a kind of theme which he wants to develop. This sentence is clear and correct, though it is no doubt but a memory most of the time. On his own, when he should think it through, work out the details, develop it, so that it is a point in demonstrating how capable he is of reflecting upon that persisting memory and generating the newly apprehended thoughts again, so to speak, it fails him at once. In place of the thread which should knit the strands together, they become entangled in themselves and lost in the middle of a muddled yarn, like a spider's web. He becomes exhausted at once. Touching upon this and that, in the end he has as much difficulty pronouncing his words as an inexperienced child who must struggle to explain himself in written form. But as we have just mentioned, there are still many sublime metaphysical thoughts in his head, and he still retains a certain sense of poetic elegance and original expressions. He expresses himself in a mysterious, adventurous way, however incapable he may be of holding on to the vaporous bubbles of thought or of expressing his memories in a new idiom. On the other hand, he takes pains to conceal his embarrassment with the unusual forms and manners of speech which remain within his control.

The compilation of his poetry contains a few poems which exemplify this. Although they display much of what is beautiful, fresh, clear, indeed with passages bright and sparkling, one still finds shallow spots here and there which look like shadowy flecks upon a smooth, sunny sheet of water. Hölderlin's mind had entangled itself at these points, for his sorrows were beginning at the time he wrote these poems, and he was no longer capable of completely mastering the material. It would have been better, therefore, if the editors Uhland and Schwab, who have otherwise been so painstaking and conscientious in their selection, had either omitted them or had provided notes for the benefit of those unaware of Hölderlin's condition. The sensitive editors hinder consideration of the poet who is still living and who otherwise shows absolutely no interest in the appearance of his poetry.

If he is not in a state of complete apathy, Hölderlin is forever preoccupied with himself. But when he encounters another person, the various reasons which make him unapproachable and incomprehensible appear. First of all, he is usually so withdrawn that he does not pay the least bit of attention to anything outside himself. There is an immeasurable gulf between him and the rest of humanity. He no longer has any connection to them other than through sheer memory, the mere habituation of desires and the never fully extinguished instincts. For example, he became extremely alarmed when he saw a child in a dangerous position by a window, quickly ran over to it and pulled it away. This apparently humane participation in humanity is a remnant of his once so sensitive and openly sympathetic nature; but it was nothing more than instinctual impulse. He would be completely indifferent were one to tell him that the Greeks had been wiped out to the last man or that they had completely triumphed and were now an independent nation; no, he would not absorb any of it because it is too far removed from him, too foreign, and it disturbs him too much. If he were told that I had died, he would exclaim with great affect, "Herr Jesus, did he die?" At first, though, he would have felt and thought nothing about it, and those apparently sympathetic words would have been bare form, which he would have enjoyed observing. Only later, if he had finally found a way through them, would he have spoken of my death. This is as far as it would go, for he is positively unable to tolerate anything more. This incessant distraction, this preoccupation with himself, this total lack of participation or interest in anything that occurs outside of himself, his disinclination and incapability of grasping, acknowledging, and admitting another individuality make any kind of accurate communication with him impossible.

Nor is it to be forgotten that he still retains a considerable vanity and a kind of pride and self-esteem. In his twenty years of solitude, he found only bare subsistence because he lived cut off from the world and grew accustomed to not needing it. Since there was no possibility of a cheerful contact with the world, he consoled and appeased himself with proud delusions. As in former days, when his activity had an impact upon the half-acknowledging world outside, now in his isolated life as well, where he alone is I and Not-I, individual and world, first and second person, he deems himself something

noble or the noblest of all. His high opinion of himself, however, is veiled by the lovable grace and unmistakable goodness of his nature. Education, a natural civility and sense for propriety, which due to his present absent-mindedness and distraction are indiscernable every now and then, and acquaintance with excellent men of all kinds, and with people of noble standing prevent this high opinion from manifesting itself, and Hölderlin has adopted a modest behavior which has won him many hearts. He is so accustomed to all these forms of courtesy and kindness that he still observes them with everyone. And just as he must come up with the absurdest things in a life so spiritually disturbed and isolated, he also exaggerates every custom and ceremony, and soon calls people Your Majesty, then Your Holiness, then Baron and Pater. It should not be forgotten that he was at court when his rage broke out violently and decisively, and that something of his pride could have come into play just like his conspicuous preference for holding everyone at an insurmountable distance. That he really believes himself to be in the company of royalty is out of the question, for as I have mentioned above, he is no fool, he has no *idée fixe*, but instead is suffering from a mental fatigue which his shattered nerves have turned into an incurable illness.

Just as he avoids whatever distresses him or confuses his mental functioning, he is also less inclined to recall those important objects of his earlier life which occasioned his illness. But when he does come upon them, he becomes horribly upset, he raves, he shouts, he paces through the night, becomes more nonsensical than usual, and he does not let up until his exhausted physical nature exerts its right to restore itself. If he becomes enraged and excited, as in the case of his notion of going to Frankfurt, he seeks out his little room in bitterness. He has reduced the whole world to this little space, as if this would make him more secure and unchallenged, and better equipped to endure the pain. Then he lies in bed.

The many nonsensical things which he says to himself are the consequence of his monologue style of conversation. He is alone, he gets bored, he must speak. He says something reasonable, he cannot develop it any further, something else comes into his head, and then that is repressed

and erased by a third and fourth thought, one right after the next. A terrible confusion then ensues, he becomes moody, he talks nonsense and chatters words without meaning as his mind subsides again. When he comes into contact with people, he believes that he must be gracious and sociable, so he asks questions, says something, but without any interest in either the stranger or what the stranger says to him. He becomes so tangled up in himself in the meantime that he annuls the second person and speaks to himself. If he finds himself in the embarrassing situation of having to answer, it is unlikely that he would think that he had not understood the question because he does not pay any attention at all, and so he cuts off the visitor with nonsense.

His countless foolish eccentricities are for the most part the easily explainable offspring of his reclusion. If from time to time, things which would barely be appropriate to an out-and-out fool occur to even so-called reasonable people, who withdraw for many years on end, especially when they are unable to have any effect, how much more so for an unfortunate man who, after a youth full of hope and joy, beauty and wealth, is forced by an unlucky combination of circumstances and an all-too-excitabile spiritual nature to live whole decades far removed from the world, possessing nothing more with which to pass the time than the shattered clockwork of his own thinking process.

Should we answer a question which irresistibly forces itself upon us when we observe the heartbreaking fate of this once so promising spirit, i.e., whether he will ever recover, whether he will regain consciousness and be able to resume complete use of his mental powers, then we must confess with the most painful regret that such a transformation of his psychic life, while certainly desirable, is not probable. Hölderlin's physical constitution is of such a kind that he would need a whole new set of nerves if he were to free his mind from its fetters. But we hope for and, after several experiences, believe in a momentary recovery for the unfortunate man shortly before the tie binding body and soul, which has become so terrible for him, is released. But this would certainly be only a moment, and it would be the last one. When I left Germany, Hölderlin had already declined

significantly. He was more fatigued than usual and also quieter. Six years ago, his eyes still had fire and sparkle and his face still had life and warmth. But at last, it too grew lustreless and devoid of life. It has been a long time now since I heard any more news of him. He has lived 57 years now, of which only the first three decades were not lost. No other soul deserves to be parted from the body which has hindered its activity, its beautiful energies, its more daring flights like this one, which was woven so delicately and sensitively. We hope, therefore, that our noble friend who has stepped out of our society will be granted that unique and final moment, and that the melancholy riddle of his past is still clear before his pilgrimage into another life, and that the hope of a future one for him lives anew!