Title:

Overwhelming: From pathological overload to the expansion of the lived world

« τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἡμῖν γίγνεται διὰ μανίας » [The greatest blessings come to us through madness (*mania*)]. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244a.

The onset of a mental disorder is often marked by a feeling of mental *overwhelming,* particularly during a delusional episode with manic features. However, an overwhelming experience can also refer to a moment of expansion of the mental world, for example in insights associated with emotion of *sublime*, and narratives following a manic episode often describe the initial overwhelming as revealing secret parts of oneself or the world, to the point of arousing attraction at the cost of relapse.
More generally, does not any mental decompensation stem from an overwhelming of the ordinary world? Isn't the mental life characterized by a *boundary extension*, the *horizon of a project*, and a *vertical impulse*, even at the cost of *Verstiegenheit* (Binswanger)? How can philosophical inquiry—itself linked to the capacity for wonder according to Plato and Aristotle—shed light on this power of extension at the heart of mental life and experience of "madness"? Drawing on accounts from experts by experience and on tools from cognitive science, we will clarify how mental systems constantly involve an *extension of presence* and take some steps to highlight the modes of alteration but also the psychic resources that this primary power of extension inherently involves.