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CURRENT CONTROVERSIES IN THE TREATMENT
OF AUTISM IN FRANCE

What is at Stake for Psychoanalysis

The French Situation

A very real problem exists: the suffering, the anxiety and the violence to which an autistic person sadly bears witness and the turmoil experienced by certain families as they attempt to deal with the emotional and educational problems of their family member as well as the attendant economic burdens. The distress of all those concerned is only magnified by the insufficiency—at least in France (which is what concerns us here)—of treatment centers and dedicated treatment programs, compounded by social stigmatization, the instrumentalization of autism for ideological or commercial ends, and, now, a polemic from which the main characters are essentially absent, despite the involvement of associations, many of which can be suspected of bias because of their collusion with various anti-psychoanalytic lobbies.¹

This article aims to highlight the reasons for the polemic concerning autism, in terms of the way in which the latter is generally understood and explained, and to draw out the content of the attack by those in the opposing camp: some (but not all) neurobiologists, behaviorists or other neuroscientists as well as the associations of families of autistic people who support and even participate in their studies. We will also examine why psychoanalysis is so often the target of their attacks, even if, as we shall see, psychoanalysts themselves do not feel that the allegations really apply to their work. We will conclude by clarifying what psychoanalysis actually does offer to these patients.

1. A Bit of History

Faced with the necessity of responding to the psychological consequences of the Second World War, in the wake of the provisional government of the French Republic (1944-1946), the state (in the form of the Fourth Republic) made Daniel Lagache responsible for training the nation's first clinical psychologists.² Whatever we might think of this initiative or of the man who ran it, the clinicians he trained did have a psychoanalytic orientation. The initial signs of the decline in psychopathological models, which were incapable of providing a general theory of mental illness, led psychiatrists to take up an individualized approach and a treatment adapted to it, which psychoanalysis seemed to promise them. Eventually, successive governments continued with this institutional effort, begun during the Occupation, by creating clinics and treatment plans that accepted many psychoanalytically-oriented practitioners (psychiatrists, psychologists, and educators). This was a project of both Pétain's collaborationist government and psychiatry itself. Thus, already during the war and especially after the Liberation, psychiatrists such as Georges Daumezon (the Fleury-les-Aubrais psychiatric hospital), Lucien Bonnafé (Sotteville-lès-Rouen) and François Tosquelles (Saint-Alban en Lozère) developed a new form of inpatient treatment that would come to be known as "institutional psychiatry."³

Initially, and as a consequence of the accusation in 1953 that psychologists and psychoanalysts were practicing medicine illegally (without a license), French law made clinical psychology subordinate to the therapeutic oversight of a physician; as a result, what had been known as "Psycho-Pedagogical Centers" (*Centres Psycho-Pédagogiques*, or CPP) became "Medico-Psycho-Pedagogical Centers" (*Centres Médico-Psycho-Pédagogiques* or CMPP). There was a *de facto* opposition in France to the Freudian idea of lay analysis (analysis by non-physicians), which was not, however, extended to forbidding it in private practice. At the same time, the first version of the *American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*⁴ which incorporated a psychoanalytic approach, arrived in France. A later moment would be characterized by the third version of the *DSM*,⁵ which was now resolutely a-theoretical, and from then on, all subsequent editions of the text have worked to get rid of what we would hardly dare to call "psychopathology" (given that there is so little of the "psyche" left), and of every last trace of psychoanalysis (exit "hysteria," "obsessional neurosis," etc.). There is a *de facto* contrast—one that is in the process of being dissolved—between, on the one hand, the new French psychiatry, first at the university and its research units, which is increasingly contaminated by the *DSM*, on the other, the traditional psychodynamic—or only psychopathological—orientation of French psychiatry, which endures in the psychiatric treatment centers. This is a quick overview of a situation that would benefit from further clarification in relation to the ideology of globalization and the parallel history of cognitive science (from the Macy conferences to their phagocytic absorption of psychopathology and psychiatry).⁶ This history serves as the

backdrop for a dispute that is internal to France, but it also gives us a clue regarding the transformation of knowledge that is involved in the “frontiers of globalization.”

In France, at least, this conflict has been taking shape for quite a while, fed by direct attacks on psychoanalysis (on Freud, Lacan and the rest), to which disagreements among psychoanalysts (Lacanian and non-Lacanian) have contributed and also by a questioning of the way in which psychoanalysts or psychoanalytically-oriented psychiatrists have been treating autism (and not only autism); this has been the case even when the practice that is under attack has nothing to do with psychoanalysis properly speaking (i.e., “packing,” a technique that involves enveloping the body with a damp sheet, which we will discuss later). We will examine the principal criticisms in part three of this article.

As an example here, we recall some of the steps in the development of the polemic: the various submissions to the national bioethics advisory board (*Comité consultatif national d'éthique* or CCNE) by the *Autisme France* association among others, which included allegations that psychoanalysts were failing in their duty to rescue;⁷ the succession of reports by INSERM (*Institut National de la santé et de la recherche médicale*), the public health board, first on the evaluation of different psychotherapeutic techniques (which disqualified psychoanalysis),⁸ then on behavior disturbances in children and adolescents (which favored biopsychosocial causations);⁹ a series of books including: *Mensonges freudiens [Freudian Lies]* by Jacques Bénesteau,¹⁰ *Le Livre noir de la psychanalyse [The Black Book of Psychoanalysis]* edited by Catherine Meyer,¹¹ Michel Onfray's *Le Crépuscule d'une idole [Twilight of an Idol]*,¹² not to forget the film *The Wall*, directed by Sophie Robert¹³ who was condemned in court for having misrepresented the analysts whom she interviewed.¹⁴

The current peak of this confrontation was reached with the double proposition of a right-wing member of the National Assembly, Daniel Fasquelle, who sought to prohibit not only the psychoanalytic treatment of autistic people but also the teaching and researching of psychoanalysis in the university, a proposition that has already been transmitted by the independent public health regulatory commission (*Haute autorité de santé* or HAS). In a forthcoming report, the latter writes: “The absence of data on their effectiveness and the divergence of opinions expressed do not allow us to reach a conclusion about the suitability of treatments based on psychoanalytic approaches or on institutional psychotherapy.” This report, quoted in the newspaper, *Libération*,¹⁵ would later be disavowed by the HAS (despite the protests of associations that are hostile to psychoanalysis) . . . although the HAS would go on to confirm its unfavorable opinion of psychoanalysis.¹⁶ Another summit in the struggle against psychoanalysis was the election, in the Psychology Section (16) of the National University Council [*Conseil national universitaire*]¹⁷—the section that oversees the teaching of and research into psychology in the French university—of researchers who, in the name of the (experimental) scientific clinic, had run on the platform of putting an end to the specificity of the (psychoanalytic) clinic.¹⁷

The real effectiveness of lobbying can be seen clearly in the modifications of the law in the direction of constituting a “State Psychology”:¹⁸ the various proposals for a mandatory minimum sentence law (which permits a person to be imprisoned not for what he or she has done, but for what he or she is; for example, a pedophile could remain incarcerated after serving his sentence, because of a fear of recidivism); the criminalization of adolescents (lowering the age of legal majority); the proscriptions specifically targeted at adolescents (limitations on the right to peaceful public assembly or on gathering in the lobbies of buildings); the double penalty inflicted on families of delinquent youths who face losing welfare benefits, etc., etc. This ad nauseam list could be topped off with several cherries: the elimination of 2,500 special education teaching assistants (*Réseaux d’aides spécialisées aux enfants en difficulté de l’éducation nationale* or RASED),¹⁹ the withdrawal of psychologists’ right to time for training and research (*Formation, information et recherche*)—time used for writing clinical notes, student supervision, and continuing education;²⁰ and the new regulation of the title “psychotherapist” so as to require the exclusive use of state-approved techniques. In the context of this extension of the legal and penal apparatus, it is easy to understand how different and increasingly aggressive associations end up taking child psychiatrists to court over their treatment methods, which is just what happened to Professor Delion (a proponent of packing, which is used in the children’s ward he directs) who was called before his local medical college board.²¹ Let us also not forget how the Council of Europe, which investigates human rights standards, has upheld the complaint brought by *Autisme France* to the effect that France has neglected to offer autistic individuals the educational opportunities that they need, and has therefore not respected the international responsibilities stated in the European Social Charter.²²

That autism has suddenly become an important national concern, which allows the government to show its preoccupation with the wishes of affected families—without also allocating any additional resources to them—makes one wonder whether this has not fundamentally been an electoral ploy. Yet not solely: perhaps it is also a fortuitous moment to take up the ideological anthropology by which the modern world invites each of us to conceptualize ourselves.

Very early on, a few keen observers began to notice the symptoms of disenchantment with psychoanalysis. When they tried to draw attention to this phenomenon and to account for it in terms of changes in the nature of the social bond itself, the majority of psychoanalysts were skeptical; according to the latter, since psychoanalysis had always provoked resistance and continued to do so, this was nothing new and no one should lose any sleep over it. The resistance to that which was being born with Freud is not, however, the same as the rejection of what he engendered: in Freud’s own terms, repression (*Verdrängung*) is not rejection (*Verwerfung*, i.e., foreclosure). In his own inimitable fashion, Lacan provided a key to this problem, by locating resistance on the side of the analyst, with whom the analysand talks through what he or she does not want to know. Insofar as analysts embody that which resists being known, they are a symptom—and surely not only in the context

of the treatment itself but also for the times in which they live. As long as there is some movement from resistance to the “psychoanalyst-symptom,” as understood in this way, it remains possible to explain things by stating that something of the psychoanalytic discourse still continues to manifest itself. Yet it is precisely the “psychoanalyst-symptom” that is being impinged upon by the ideological and political revisions of psychopathology by a State that can conceive of the psyche only in terms of “disorder” and “dysfunction.” Such revisionists can thus repeat their indictment of the “ineffectiveness” and “toxic” quality of psychoanalysis until they are blue in the face; there is no place for debate, and therefore there is no place within which to confront the psychoanalyst-symptom.

To give an exaggerated summary of the first point of this argument, we could say that the dispute comes down to an opposition between two heterogeneous conceptions of the symptom: for behaviorists, the symptom is the sign of illness as understood in terms of the model of organic medicine, whereas for psychoanalysts, the symptom also happens to be that which bears witness to a hidden (repressed) meaning that regulates psychic functioning. Now, as regards autism, this second point of view is quite far from being as evident as it is in conversion hysteria, for example—and this only adds to the criticism of those who reject it *a priori*.

2. Definition of terms

What is autism in this context? It is useful to distinguish several steps that have been involved in constructing the dominant notions of autism.

Step one is the best known: Bleuler’s use of the term²³ to designate a feature of schizophrenia; Kanner’s invention of it as a nosographic category;²⁴ Asperger’s extension of it to include “savants.”²⁵ With the help of the *DSM*, “specialists” observed actual children (or recorded the stories told by their families and other caretakers) which permitted them to list a series of problematic behaviors: impaired response to social stimuli, inability to maintain eye contact, mutism, anxiety, aggressive tantrums, stereotypies (stimming), echolalia, etc. No single individual could possess all the characteristics enumerated in such a list, which means that the latter does not provide a precise definition of the condition: each particular case of autism is potentially different, not only in terms of the abstract portrait painted by such a list, but also because each autistic person on which it is based is unique. This is where the notion of the “autism spectrum” comes into play, for it allows a series of types to be grouped together: profound autism or low functioning autism (Kanner), late-onset autism, autism with savant syndrome (Asperger) and atypical forms of autism (“pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified”).

Step two: what causes this “autism,” which, as a result of its early appearance, is presented as a developmental accident? Within the optics of behaviorism, cohort studies of groups of autistic individuals have already resulted in statistical correlations between the diagnosis of autism and various biological, social and psy-

chological factors. Lists of these factors have been established which, once again, involve so many items that it is impossible to find all of them in one autistic person. However, experts conclude (by virtue of the many attendant organic events), for example, that brain imaging has demonstrated that autism has an organic cause and that international medical literature supports the conclusion that the autism spectrum is caused by neuro-developmental disturbances.²⁶

Now, no one would deny that organic complications exist or that they can lead to psychological dysfunction. Yet unless we are going to diagnose autism in any child who has suffered any sort of biological problem that alters cognitive functioning, then the same organic causes will also be identified in other psychopathologies, and it is not certain that a particular cause has the same effect on everyone. From this observation, we ought to conclude that it is very important to ensure that treatment is tailored to the needs of each autistic patient. It also ought to lead us to acknowledge that we still have a lot to learn about what autism really is. The proliferation of implicated factors and behaviors attributed to autism reveals not only that there is an organic dimension to psychic functions, but also that there is also a margin of uncertainty between these causal determinations and their supposed “autism-producing” effect.

Nancy Andreasen²⁷ understood this as early as 1998, when she wrote, in regard to schizophrenia:

Fortunately, the Europeans still have a proud tradition of clinical research and descriptive psychopathology. Someday in the twenty-first century, after the human genome and the human brain have been mapped, someone may need to organize a reverse Marshall plan so that the Europeans can save American science by helping us figure out who really has schizophrenia or what schizophrenia really is. The fledgling American school of descriptive psychopathology will have become extinct. Yet we cannot apply the potentially great fruits of the Human Genome Project to complex mental illnesses if we no longer have clinical investigators who have devoted their research careers to conceptualizing the nature and definitions of symptoms, syndromes, diseases, or diagnoses.²⁸

This is what the clinic is about: not the observation of specific cases integrated into a statistical database that spits out a picture of some abstract entity with autism, but instead the taking into full consideration of each case. Here is our second divergence with behaviorists, following the conception of the symptom described earlier. It is only on this level that psychoanalysis can intervene as a treatment approach that is open to a subject called autistic. From that point forward, is it not rather unfair to appeal to a scientific clinic? In other words, could the quarrel over diagnosis be a red herring, insofar as science deals with the general while the clinic deals with the singular? At a minimum, it ought to be acknowledged that each of these approaches has its own relation to science.

This quarrel, however, keeps coming back, for those who hold to cognitive-behaviorist approaches use the pretext that autism is incurable and rely on observed developmental deficiencies—here again, the abstract entity—in order to set up educational programs that would serve the “general welfare” (the best known in France are TEACCH, ABA and a few others). We would be so bold as to suggest here that to take the singular into account is not the equivalent of wanting its good (welfare); to do so would imply that we already know what would be helpful, without having thought about it in the context of a clinical encounter. Each of us can legitimately wonder not only about the subjective effects of substituting an educational approach controlled by science for the relationships with the parents, but also about the effects of labelling a child as “autistic,” if the term is understood in this way.

3. The Content of the Polemic

Of what has psychoanalysis been accused, generally speaking (a detailed evaluation of all the specifics is beyond the scope²⁹ of this article)? The various reproaches can be divided into four groups: a) psychoanalysis supports a psychogenesis of autism rather than physiological causes (and evidence-based medicine, as well); b) psychoanalysis gives preference to the subject rather than to a unified biopsychosocial orientation; c) it sustains a notion of singularity in opposition to the prevailing, politically correct, humanistic scientism; d) psychoanalysis wants to retain therapeutic methods that are “inefficient and toxic” as opposed to educational methods.

3.1 “Delirious” Psychogenesis

A short piece from the newspaper, *Le Figaro*, published on February 8, 2012, says it all, summing up the grievances repeated in one article after another:

Why does the notion that the autistic child is imprisoned within him- or herself because of the mother, an idea espoused by the psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim in *The Empty Fortress*, published in 1967, remain popular only in France? The answer is to be found with the psychoanalysts, who stubbornly oppose any objective evaluation of their methods. Many of them have turned a deaf ear to the clear evidence that there is a very strong genetic component to the disorder, which, without solving the mystery of autism’s cause, discredits psychoanalytic models . . . In 2007, *The Lancet*, an international medical journal, noted with surprise that a technique like “packing” (which involves wrapping children in cold, damp sheets to give them a sense of the boundaries of their bodies) is still used in France, even though its effectiveness has never been studied. In France, and nowhere else! Other psychoanalysts continue to prescribe, and again this is only in France, that parents be kept away from the child (Perez and Mascaret).

Packing and residential treatment are presented, yet again, as psychoanalytic techniques that could be used to fill out the idea of a “French exceptionalism” attributed to institutions that provide mental health care.

The proponents of this so-called “French exceptionalism” (as if France were the only country in the world where psychoanalysts treat autism!) are accused of being willfully ignorant of the biological aetiology guaranteed by biologists such as Thomas Bourgeron,³⁰ for example, an official backer of Sophie Robert, who directed the film *The Wall*:

At present, on the international level, autism research brings together many disciplines such as psychiatry, neurobiology and genetics. This approach to autism, founded on scientific data, has allowed for significant advances, which we hope will improve the diagnosis, treatment and integration of people with autism.

Concerning genetics, recent results show: 1) that there are particular genes associated with autism, and 2) these genes are currently grouped into two large biological pathways that modulate the formation of neuronal connections (synapses).³¹

This aetiology itself is not, however, uncontroversial and other geneticists have drawn a more nuanced picture. Thus, in 2004, Jacqueline Nadel³² called for the founding of a multidisciplinary network, and while certainly confirming that the troubles characterizing autism are, in part, of genetic origin (“the result of cerebral abnormalities” that occurred prematurely), also specified two sentences further down, that,

The nature of these abnormalities is beginning to be understood, but their connection with the behavioral characteristics of autism is still far from having been identified. Furthermore, neither the biological markers of this syndrome nor the most effective modes of intervening have been elucidated.³³

We shall insist on the fact that, at this time, less than a quarter of the cases are considered to be linked to pathological factors that have been identified; these factors, by the way, are quite diverse.

What, then, is the use of accusing psychoanalysis of a determination to know nothing about organic aetiology? There are multiple uses. Doing so allows:

- all psychoanalysts, without any nuances, to be labelled as obscurantists;
- a deterministic hypothesis to be attributed to psychoanalysts; this hypothesis can be refuted, and is, of course, immediately refuted;
- parental guilt to be eliminated by blaming psychoanalysts for it; they are accused of having created it with their theory (the proof by Bettelheim);

- an attribution to psychoanalysts of a theory that would bring education into play (since, according to psychoanalysts, autism supposedly results from a bad positioning of the mother): their critics could then legitimately introduce new educational practices linked to science;
- psychoanalysts to be reproached for the ineffectiveness of their form of treatment, thereby invalidating any conception of psychoanalysis; by the same token, we cannot reproach our critics for their own lack of effectiveness, since they have adopted the thesis of an incurable biological aetiology;
- the critics of psychoanalysis to portray themselves as the champions of education and to corner the market on autism (institutions, public funds, learning-methods);
- these critics to pay no attention to psychoanalytic publications, as is shown by the criticism—which seeks to be radical, but which is, at best, ignorant—leveled at psychoanalysis by Bernadette Rogé: it is useless to put someone with autism on the couch.³⁴

3.2 Guilt and the Refusal of the Biopsychosocial Conception

Psychoanalysts, and they are not the only ones, have not seen any evidence that such a theory gets rid of guilt: according to the advocates of cognitive-behavioral therapy, autism is the fault of the Other—of the organism, of the psychic apparatus, of the environment (but never of the mother!). This conception enables them to demand that people with autism be recognized . . . as handicapped. Above all, it allows proponents of this approach to obtain money and research facilities in a field that is recognized scientifically by their peers.

There is no use in insisting on the fact that, from the perspective of psychoanalysis, guilt has very little to do with either a (moral) fault or an educational error; it is, instead, constitutive of the human as such. This guilt seeks only to find some reason to justify it, a reason that could include having transmitted a genetic “defect” or having been unable to protect one’s child from an organic accident. Knowing that, in objective terms, one is guilty of nothing does little to affect the situation.

Perhaps it is necessary to begin an inventory of psychoanalytic elaborations of autism, and to undertake a tenacious critique of theories that have brought problematic behavior in their wake. It is difficult, however, in this connection, not to remark that although autism was invented by Kanner and Asperger, it has been psychologists and psychoanalysts such as Melanie Klein (and her paranoid-schizoid position), Bruno Bettelheim (and his controversial conception of the “empty fortress”), Frances Tustin (and the different variations of childhood autism), to whom we are indebted for the interest that they took in children who had, until then, most often

been abandoned to their fate, despite their families' energetic efforts to get someone to work with them.

It should be noted that the rejection of the theory that blames mothers, attributed—not without a bit of caricature—to Bruno Bettelheim,³⁵ and the attempt to reduce autism to biological causes, thereby forbidding any accusations directed against the family, have not produced the effects that were sought: they have neither reduced the autistic person's anxiety nor the parents' feelings of guilt. Perhaps we could see in this fact the mark precisely of the subject (parent or child), which is not disposed to abandon its prerogatives in the face of any supposed cause, whatever might be said about it!

We shall not enter here into a discussion of the subjective position of a person diagnosed with autism: the question of whether autism is a separate category or is to be subsumed under that of psychosis. On this point, there is no unanimity, but numerous psychoanalysts have argued for its specificity; among many others, there are Geneviève Haag, Marie-Christine Laznik, Jean-Claude Maleval, Henri Rey-Flaud, etc.³⁶ Their disagreements concern whether autism is a category that would complete the Freudian trio (neurosis, psychosis, perversion) or whether it is a supplementary psychosis—one *becomes* autistic—that is to be located beside schizophrenia and paranoia³⁷

3.3 *Antihumanist Psychoanalysis*

Psychoanalysts are being accused of failing in their duty to rescue, because they supposedly refuse to allow people with autism access to special-needs education and training. Thus, the debate opposing behaviorists and psychoanalysts can usually be summed up by the following question: "Should the autistic child be stimulated with educational therapies, or should we wait for the child to express himself or herself?"³⁸ By opting for the second solution, psychoanalysts are supposedly not "caring about the welfare" of people with autism. However, critics of psychoanalysis never ask autistic patients for their own opinions on the question. Behaviorists and neuroscientists are prevented from asking these patients by their conception not only of what is good for them but also of what human nature is. They say they believe in free will, which means that they think that only people who are healthy in body and mind are responsible for their acts. Perhaps this is why more attention is paid to autism than to other problems—suicide, for example—which should deserve at least as much publicity and financial support. Indeed, autism provides the opportunity for a real-world test, as it were, of the biopsychosocial model of the individual on which the entire functioning of capitalism is based. It is an individual that can be reduced completely to the factors that determine it—a useful, effective, profitable, flexible, durable, economical machine that exists to process information; what has been subtracted from it is the capacity for judgment and the responsibility for both its choices and for the place by which it can "live together" with others.

In short (and in apparent contradiction with the neuroscientist's apparent belief in free will), it is an individual unable to make any real choices.³⁹

There is no wish to demonize the critics of psychoanalysis here; the debate has nothing to gain from that. It remains the case, however, that this biologically compatible conception of the subject is just what underlay both Nazi ideology and scientific materialism (in its Stalinist version). We know just what kinds of social organizations sought to organize the collectivity in such a "scientific" way. What makes us loathe to admit this knowledge? Many "scientific" journals refuse to publish the argument, despite the literature that has been referenced in its support. Even if what has just been said is nothing more than a caricature, the traits that are accentuated by it should give us pause. In any case, it is up to those who reduce the human to biological determinants to explain to us how their "biologism" can be distinguished from the terrible biologisms that stained the history of the twentieth century. Wouldn't anyone who refuses to engage these questions become an accomplice of the worst that could be done? We regard it as rather telling that people from both the most powerful right-wing party in France, the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) and from the far right figure among the proponents of biologist theories and defend behavioral theories of autism; their support may not suffice to disqualify these theories, but the proximity should also give us pause. Perhaps, then, the very least that a theory based on a "caricature" can do is to show the folly of setting up an opposition between educational and psychoanalytic methods and of presenting psychoanalysis, improperly, as an alternative to education; the life of autistic children does not stop at the door of the special-needs classroom nor at that of the psychoanalyst's office.

4. What Psychoanalysis Offers

In the context of the dispute that we have attempted to explain, how can we present what psychoanalysis has to offer without either giving up what is fundamental or continuing to act as if this disagreement were unreadable?

It seems that educational techniques do not really take the autistic person's opinion into account and neglect the anxious anguish that accompanies the condition (or they consider it only as a form of stress). For the psychoanalyst, however, this anxiety is a path to the real with which the subject called autistic is confronted. On this basis, psychoanalysis is justified in supposing that there is a subject in the full sense of the term, and thus in offering it the attention needed for the subject to manifest itself in its ownmost way; it is also justified in seeking to give the appropriate welcoming response to the subject's particularity (and this is the case whatever the psychoanalyst's orientation may be—we would need another article to discuss the differences). Further, psychoanalysis tries to accompany this subject in its effort to find or to construct an answer to its anxiety (as well as to its violence and hatred) and to give support for the inventions through which it already

inhabits the analytic relation and even, sometimes, a social bond that exceeds the boundaries of the treatment. When this kind of work is evaluated, this aspect of “living together” is often forgotten, or is reduced to (i.e., confused with) the cumulative effects of childcare, of educational therapies and of reductions in anxiety, aggressiveness and sexual difficulties. It even happens that time passed with the subject called autistic is itself held against psychoanalysis, due to its cost and the fact that it does not seem to teach new skills; such criticism occurs even if the child has had a good experience.

Critics of psychoanalysis and, consequently, of all post-war treatment centers (CMPP, day treatment programs, etc.) seem to have forgotten that education has always been an important part of autism services; there have always been educators on staff to support the children in their daily activities as well as during different learning activities and children are sent to school as soon as possible, whether within the treatment facility or in the public school system (in France, this has been in practice since the 1960s). Speech, occupational and physical therapists provide different kinds of treatment, as well. Opponents of psychoanalysis often do not take these forms of treatment into account, thereby automatically reaching the conclusion that only TEACCH or ABA methods are worthwhile for autism (justified, as usual, on the basis of so-called scientific expertise): it is thus not only psychoanalysts and child psychiatrists who are pilloried, but also all other professionals who work in centers where autistic children are treated, since there are many kinds of care given by a network of different disciplines.

The stubborn effort to restrict the treatment to a strict plan of skill learning and education, as a result of reducing autism to an ultimately incurable biological determinism, has the triple advantage of being integrated within scientific discourse, providing scientifically measurable evaluations of possible progress (or lack thereof) and being isomorphic with today’s scientific ideology. Is that really going to improve the response to the suffering of families of autistic children?

Basically, the psychoanalytic approach could come down to one very simple conclusion, from which one could allow oneself to be taught in each case: in contrast with what happens when everything is run according to scientific rules, the same causes (biological, psychological or social) do not produce the same effects, because one must count on the indeterminacy of the subject to which we leave the responsibility for its position—even if, in autism, this subject does not intend to use this responsibility or uses it only under certain conditions. This is, in the final analysis, the foundation of, and what is at stake in, the argument we are discussing. There is a particular exigency for the psychoanalyst who, in order to keep up with the requirements of scientific discourse, is seeking to explain what even an autistic person does with this indeterminacy. This exigency is a lesson that we believe to have been confirmed by the words of an autistic adolescent who was usually mute, and whose words were reported by one of her aides. Abandoning for a moment the educational method she had been introduced to, the adolescent reached out and

stroked the aide's hair, looked right at her, and exclaimed (thereby appropriating the well-known advertising slogan): "Because I'm worth it!"

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Notes

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6. *Introduction aux sciences cognitives*, ed. by Daniel Andler (Paris: Gallimard, 2004); Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Aux origines des sciences cognitives* (Paris: Éditions de la Découverte, 1994).
7. Comité consultatif national d'éthique pour les sciences de la vie et de la santé, *Avis sur la prise en charge des personnes autistes en France*, 10 January 1996. Retrieved from <<http://www.ccne-ethique.fr/docs/fr/avis047.pdf>>; Comité consultatif national d'éthique pour les sciences de la vie et de la santé, *Sur la situation en France des personnes, enfants et adultes, atteintes d'autisme*, 8 November 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.ccne-ethique.fr/docs/ccne-avisn102_autisme.pdf>.
8. Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale (France), *Psychothérapie: trois approches évaluées* (Paris: INSERM, 2004). Retrieved from <<http://www.inserm.fr:80/content/download/7356/56523/version/1/file/psychotherapie%5B1%5D.pdf>>.
9. Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale (France), *Trouble des conduites chez l'enfant et l'adolescent* (Paris: INSERM, 2005). Retrieved from <<http://www.inserm.fr/content/download/7154/55249/file/troubles+des+conduites.pdf>>.
10. Jacques Bénesteau, *Mensonges freudiens: histoire d'une désinformation séculaire* (Liège: Mardaga, 2002). As Élisabeth Roudinesco explains, in a letter published on the site of a

digital journal, *Les Cahiers de psychologie politique*, Bénesteau sued her for defamation when she wrote about the antisemitism of his book (which stated that Freud falsely portrayed himself as a victim and did not suffer any kind of professional discrimination from the rise of Nazism; he based these claims on the dubious grounds that “more than half of all doctors and lawyers were Jewish and that most of the banks and nearly all of the press were controlled by Jews”). Bénesteau was joined in the suit by the author of the book’s preface, Jacques Corraze, and by Henry de Lesquen, the president of the *Club de l’Horloge* and then, after an appeal by the *Club*, this ruling was confirmed on 1 March 2006 by the Court of Appeal of Paris. Then, finally, on 6 March 2007, the Court of Cassation rejected a final appeal by the *Club de l’Horloge*, thus confirming the two preceding judgments. It added that Roudinesco had engaged in a critical analysis, “which can be published freely, in which it is a matter of questioning the plaintiff’s intellectual attitudes, and which is therefore a part of the domain of ideas and not an imputation that relates to a precise tangible fact, which would be subject to proof.” See Élisabeth Roudinesco, “Réponse de Madame Élisabeth Roudinesco,” *Les Cahiers de psychologie politique*, 11 (2007). Retrieved from <<http://lodel.irevues.inist.fr/cahierspsychologiepolitique/index.php?id=625>>.

11. *Le livre noir de la psychanalyse: vivre, penser et aller mieux sans Freud*, ed. by Catherine Meyer (Paris: Éditions des Arènes, 2005). The subtitle of the book, Living, Thinking and Feeling Better Without Freud, is eloquent. “The Black Book” is the name that Ilya Ehrenburg gave in 1943 to the list of abuses committed against Jews during the Second World War; the list was compiled by the literary commission of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. In 1945, under the direction of Solomon Lozovsky, the committee published the list as two volumes: the first contained documentary evidence and the second was edited by Vasily Grossman and Ilya Ehrenburg. This second part has been criticized for according pride of place to “ignoble crimes committed by traitors to the homeland.” Yet it was published in part in Romania in 1946. See Philippe Burrin, “Le livre noir: textes et témoignages,” *La solution finale de la question juive: In memoriam, 2012*. Retrieved from <<http://shoah-solutionfinale.fr/livrenoir.htm>>. One really must wonder about the process of sanitization required to enable the title “Black Book” to become synonymous with what we French call a “*cahier de doléances*,” a book of grievances that highlights different problems, issues and concerns, or a kind of complaint report filed against a product, service or institution. By what kind of reversal of history has it come to designate an ideological revision that can be used to charge Marxism (with no regard for the Red Army’s liberation of the concentration camps) or a discipline, psychoanalysis, and its founder, whose works fed the Nazi auto-da-fés, and a part of whose family perished at Auschwitz?
12. Michel Onfray, *Le crépuscule d’une idole: l’affabulation freudienne* (Paris: Grasset, 2010). The English translation of the subtitle of Onfray’s book would be *The Freudian Confabulation*; it was followed a book whose title could be rendered in English as *Marginal Notes on the Twilight: For a Non-Freudian Psychoanalysis*, i.e., *Apostille au crépuscule: pour une psychanalyse non freudienne* (Paris: Grasset, 2010). Like the behavioral psychologist Bénesteau, on whose work he relies, Onfray thinks that psychoanalysis in its entirety ought to submit to an evaluation by experimental science, which operates only in terms of true and false, correct and incorrect. Viewed in that light, an entire series of practices—the life histories of the mentally ill, interpretations, the assumption that a “cure” consists in the way that a subject manages with its symptoms—are all judged to be nothing but “lies.” This notion that science itself is able to answer existential ques-

tions is what defines “scientism,” and this is what ignited the polemic around Onfray’s book.

13. Sophie Robert, *The Wall: Psychoanalysis Put to the Test for Autism*, 2012. Retrieved from <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRU-aojZFzs>>.
14. FTVi with AFP, “Un documentaire sur l’autisme interdit après des plaintes de psychanalystes,” *Francetv Info* (Internet, 26 January 2012), *Société* section. Retrieved from <http://www.francetv.fr/info/un-documentaire-sur-l-autisme-interdit-apres-des-plaintes-de-psychanalystes_55243.html>.
15. Eric Favereau, “Deux approches en guerre totale,” *Liberation.fr*, 13 February 2012, *Société* section. Retrieved from <<http://www.liberation.fr/societe/01012389571-deux-approches-en-guerre-totale>>.
16. APM, “Autisme: la HAS dément demander l’interdiction des méthodes psychanalytiques et du packing,” *APM International*, 13 February 2012, *Dépêche* section. Retrieved from <<http://www.apmnews.com/story.php?numero=222991>>.
17. “Clinique moderne et scientifique: profession de foi,” 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.galaxie.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/ensup/cnupf/A16_103748.pdf>. The statement concludes as follows: “Our pledge: In order to establish coherence within psychology, we commit ourselves to the defense of a modern, scientific clinical approach that will investigate and advance thanks to the same evaluative criteria adopted by other branches of psychology. Clinical psychology has no need for special treatment or for different evaluative criteria.” French university professors are involved in both teaching and research, and universities are home to both academic departments (*Unités de formation et de recherche*) and research laboratories such as the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) and the INSERM. They are governed by the “Liberties and Responsibilities of Universities” law of 2007 (LRU), which, in practice, institutes the Bologna process in France, and seeks to transform the university into a free enterprise in which knowledge, information and skills become commodities to be produced for the “new knowledge economy.” See Isabelle Bruno, Pierre Clément and Christian Laval, *La grande mutation: néolibéralisme et éducation en Europe* (Les Lilas: Institut de recherches de la FSU; Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 2010); Christian Laval, *L’école n’est pas une entreprise: le néo-libéralisme à l’assaut de l’enseignement public* (Paris: Éditions de la Découverte, 2004); Christian Laval and others, *La nouvelle école capitaliste* (Paris: Éditions de la Découverte, 2011).
18. Jean-Claude Maleval and Marie-Jean Sauret, “De la nouvelle «psychopathologie clinique» d’état,” *Séminaire Inter-Universitaire Européen d’Enseignement et de Recherche en Psychopathologie et Psychanalyse*, 2006. Retrieved from <<http://siueerpp.org/spip.php?article61>>.
19. LeMonde.fr with AFP, “Vers la suppression de 2 500 postes d’enseignants Rased en 2012,” *LeMonde.fr*, 25 January 2012, *Éducation* section. Retrieved from <http://www.lemonde.fr/education/article/2012/01/25/vers-la-suppression-de-2-500-postes-d-enseignants-rased-en-2012_1634346_1473685.html>.
20. Audrey Vucher, “Les Psychologues, espèce en voie de disparition?,” *Mediapart*, 28 January 2011. Retrieved from <<http://www.psychologuesenresistance.org/spip.php?article385>>.
21. LeMonde.fr, “Autisme: la technique du «packing», enjeu d’un violent conflit,” *LeMonde.fr*, 16 February 2012, *Actualité Société* section. Retrieved from <<http://www.lemonde.fr/>>

- cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1188839&xtmc=packing_autisme_enjeu&xtr=1>; Laura Spinney, "Therapy for autistic children causes outcry in France," *The Lancet*, 370 (2007): 645-646. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(07)61322-1
22. mag2, "Condamnations de la France," *OverBlog*, 2012. Retrieved from <<http://autisteenfrance.over-blog.com/article-condamnations-de-la-france-96092876.html>>. Delion and Golse had reason to worry. The lawsuit brought by psychoanalysts against the film *The Wall* was something altogether different: the psychoanalysts won, because the courts recognized that their interviews had been misrepresented.
 23. Eugen Bleuler, *Dementia Praecox [Dementia praecox oder Gruppe der Schizophrenien]* (New York: International Universities Press, 1950); Eugen Bleuler, *L'invention de l'autisme*, trans. by Yves Kaufmant (Paris: Navarin, 1988).
 24. Leo Kanner, "Autistic disturbances of affective contact," *Nervous Child*, 2 (1943): 217-250.
 25. Hans Asperger, "Das psychisch abnormale Kind [The psychically abnormal child]," *Wien Klin Wochenschr*, 51 (1938): 1314-7.
 26. "Several research teams in different countries, including the one directed by Thomas Bourgeron in France, have identified nearly 100 genes as implicated in this multifaceted illness; a certain number of the genes have been observed inducing alterations in neuronal transmission at the level of the central nervous system." See Martine Perez and Damien Mascret, "Autisme : la neurobiologie discrédite la psychanalyse," *LeFigaro.fr*, 8 February 2012, *Santé* section. Retrieved from <<http://sante.lefigaro.fr/actualite/2012/02/08/17243-autisme-neurobiologie-discredite-psychanalyse>>. This, effectively, is not the end: "One hundred and seventy-six scientists, from more than 60 research institutions in 11 different countries, presented results of the Phase 2 of the international consortium of genetic research in autism, the Autism Genome Project. This group of researchers, which includes French scientists, has discovered genetic mutations as well as new genes involved in autism. Their results were published in the journal *Nature* on 10 June 2010." See Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale (France), "Consortium sur l'autisme: Découverte de nouveaux gènes," *Inserm.fr*, 2010. Retrieved from <<http://www.inserm.fr/espace-journalistes/consortium-sur-l-autisme-decouverte-de-nouveaux-genes>>; Dalila Pinto and others, "Functional impact of global rare copy number variation in autism spectrum disorders," *Nature*, 466 (2010), 368-372. doi:10.1038/nature09146. See also Marie-Jean Sauret, "Autisme: de qui se moquent-on?," *Barca!*, 3 (1994), 171-178.
 27. Nancy Andreasen holds the Andrew H. Woods Chair of Psychiatry at the University of Iowa. In 2000, she was awarded the National Medal of Science. She is the past president of the American Psychopathological Association and of the Psychiatric Research Society and a former Editor-in-Chief of *The American Journal of Psychiatry*.
 28. Nancy Andreasen, "The Crisis in Clinical Research," *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 155 (1998), 455.
 29. For an overview, see Pierre Delion and Bernard Golse, *Autisme: état des lieux et horizons* (Toulouse: Érès, 2008).
 30. Thomas Bourgeron is a professor of genetics at the University of Paris 7 (Denis Diderot) and directs the "Human Genetics and Cognitive Functions" research team: "Our group aims to identify the genetic sequences involved in the elaboration of human cognitive functioning. To this end, we identify inter-individual differences linked to psychiatric

disturbances and evaluate the selective forces that act on the DNA sequences in the course of their evolution. This work has enabled us to characterize new candidate genes (FAM8A1, GRIK2, NLGNs) and to identify the first mutations associated with autism (neurologins NLGN3 et NLGN4).” See Thomas Bourgeron, “Rapport d’activité de l’unité Génétique humaine et Fonctions cognitives pour l’année 2004,” *Institut Pasteur*, 2005. Retrieved from <<http://www.pasteur.fr/recherche/RAR/RAR2004/Ghfc.html>>.

31. Thomas Bourgeron, “Soutiens: Pr. Thomas Bourgeron, Directeur du département de Neurosciences de l’Institut Pasteur,” *Soutenons Le Mur*, 2011. Retrieved from <<http://www.soutenonslemur.org/2011/12/16/reactions-pr-thomas-bourgeron/>>. It would be useful to take a closer look at this mechanism of hijacking, which is condemned when psychoanalysts use it, but praiseworthy when used to misrepresent psychoanalysis in favor of a “good cause.” Here, we will simply note our surprise at seeing Thomas Bourgeron’s collaboration with the “International Network of Freud Critics” (see the Internet site of the same name, as well as Bourgeron’s personal blog) along with both Bénesteau who, as we have seen, was found guilty for having accused Roudinesco of inventing the antisemitism that Freud experienced, and Corraze, who wrote the preface to this work, and who has close relations with the National Front. Bizarrely, the rulings condemning Bénesteau and Sophie Robert have been taken as proof that there exists a conspiracy of psychoanalysts! Is this factual data merely a matter of coincidence or does it indicate the proximity of biologism to reactionary ideologies, although of course all biologists do not identify with such ideologies and some biologists even actively oppose them, such as, for example, Jean-Jacques Kupiec and his theory of cellular Darwinism. See Jean-Jacques Kupiec, “The extension of Darwinian principles to embryogenesis,” *Speculations in Science and Technology*, 9 (1986): 19-22; Jean-Jacques Kupiec and Pierre Sonigo, *Ni Dieu ni gène: pour une autre théorie de l’hérédité* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2003). Many European authors have developed this theme. In *Malaise dans le capitalisme* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2009), Sauret provides a list of nearly one hundred publications from different disciplines, including anthropology, economics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, psychology and sociology (22-27). For example, see André Bellon and Anne-Cécile Robert, *Un totalitarisme tranquille: la démocratie confisquée* (Paris, France: Éditions Syllepse, 2001); Jean-Pierre Le Goff, *La barbarie douce: la modernisation aveugle des entreprises et de l’école* (Paris, France: La Découverte, 1999); Jean-Pierre Le Goff, *La démocratie post-totalitaire* (Paris, France: La Découverte, 2002); Marie-Jean Sauret, “Un écueil de la mémoire: la science nazie,” *Barca!*, 6 (1996): 77-117; Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?: Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (London: Verso, 2001); Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (The MIT Press, 1991). And, who does not recall Hannah Arendt’s severe critique of behavioral psychology in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Benediction Books, 2009) 347 and in *Qu’est-ce que la politique?*, ed. by Ursula Ludz, trans. by Sylvie Courtine-Denamy (Paris, France: Éditions du Seuil, 1995) 56-57? She thought that this psychological approach is on the same level as Nazi ideology, for it deprives the subject of its singularity and its symptom, homogenizes all subjects into a mass, and thus prepares them for totalitarianism.
32. Jacqueline Nadel is a research director at the CNRS (*Centre Emotion*, USR3246) and is the editor of the journal *Enfance*.
33. “Création d’un réseau national d’études interdisciplinaires de l’autisme : Autisme-science,” *Enfance*, 56 (2004): 323. doi:10.3917/enf.563.0323; Bertrand Jordan, *Autisme, le gène introuvable: De la science au business* (Paris: Seuil, 2012).

34. See Sophie Dufau, "Autisme: l'ABA trouble l'université de Lille," *Mediapart*, mai 2012. Retrieved from <<http://www.collectifpsychiatrie.fr/?p=3563>>. Here is a translation of the exact quotation: "The concrete dimension is very important for autistic individuals. Asking them to lie down on a couch is a meaningless idea if you know how these people function." Clearly, Bernadette Rogé has no idea what she is talking about as far as child psychoanalysis, and in particular psychoanalytic work with autistic children, is concerned
35. Along with Anna Freud, Bettelheim was delighted by the fact that "Fortunately, psychoanalysts are beginning to decry the haunting image of the rejecting mother"; for him, all mothers and all fathers display both destructive and loving intentions. That is the source of the following claim, which involves precisely the response of the subject: ". . . it is not the maternal attitude that produces autism, but the child's spontaneous reaction to it." See *The Empty Fortress: Infantile Autism and the Birth of the Self* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1972) 69.
36. See Geneviève Haag, "Clivages dans les premières organisations du moi: sensorialités, organisation perceptive et image du corps," in *Bébés-ados: crises et chuchotements*, ed. by Alain Braconnier and Bernard Golse (Èrès, 2008). Retrieved from <<http://www.genevievehaagpublications.fr/?p=860>>; Marie-Christine Laznik-Penot, *Vers la parole: trois enfants autistes en psychanalyse* (Paris, France: Denoël, 2003); Marie-Christine Laznik-Penot, "La prosodie avec les bébés à risque d'autisme: clinique et recherche," in *Langage, voix et parole dans l'autisme*, ed. by Bernard Touati, Fabien Joly and Marie-Christine Laznik-Penot (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2007), 181-215; Jean-Claude Maleval, *L'autiste et sa voix* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2009); Maleval, "Écoutez les autistes!"; Henri Rey-Flaud, *L'enfant qui s'est arrêté au seuil du langage: comprendre l'autisme* (Paris: Flammarion, 2010); Henri Rey-Flaud, *Les enfants de l'indicible peur: nouveau regard sur l'autisme* (Paris, France: Aubier, 2010).
37. See *Les paradoxes de l'autisme*, ed. by Jean-Daniel Causse and Henri Rey-Flaud (Toulouse: Èrès, 2011).
38. See Laure Daussy, "Autour des enfants autistes, une bataille de bac à sable," *Arrêt sur images*, 2012. Retrieved from <<http://www.arretsurlimages.net/contenu.php?id=4689>>.
39. See Marie-Jean Sauret, *Psychanalyse et politique: huit questions de la psychanalyse au politique* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2000); Marie-Jean Sauret, *L'effet révolutionnaire du symptôme* (Ramonville Saint-Agne: Èrès, 2008); Sauret, *Malaise dans le capitalisme*.