

BRITISH PSYCHIATRY AND THE GROUP

BRITISH PSYCHIATRY AND THE WAR

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When I was in London in September 1945, the fireworks had just stopped falling on the City for the Day — V-Day — on which it celebrated its victory.

The war left me with a keen sense of that mode of unreality under which the whole of France had lived the war from beginning to end. I am not aiming here at those fairground ideologies which rocked us from the phantasmagorias of our grandeur — akin to the ramblings of senility or even the delirium that precedes death — to those compensatory fabrications proper to childhood. I would rather speak of the systematic misrecognition [*méconnaissance*] of the world by each individual, namely, those imaginary refuges that as a psychoanalyst I couldn't fail to identify in the group, prey as it was at that time to a truly panicked dissolution of its moral status, as being the self-same modes of defence that the individual makes use of against anxiety in neurosis, and with no less ambiguous a success, being just as paradoxically effective, and in the same way, alas, sealing a destiny which is transmitted to generations.

I thus thought of stepping out of the circle of this deleterious enchantment to enter another realm: one where it had been possible, after the crucial refusal of a compromise which would have spelt defeat, to lead the struggle, without letting go throughout the worst trials, to that triumphant conclusion which now makes that enormous wave which almost engulfed nations appear to them as nothing but an illusion of history, and even one whose spell was quickly broken.

From my first approach until the end of my five week stay, this expectation of finding a different atmosphere was not disappointed. And it is in the guise of psychological evidence that I was able to discover this truth: that the British victory is of a moral order, by which I mean that the intrepidity of its people rests upon a veridical relation to the real —

something that its utilitarian ideology does not easily convey. In particular, the term 'adaptation' absolutely betrays this veridical relation to the real, a relation for which even the beautiful word 'realism' is forbidden to us thanks to the infamous usage with which the '*clercs de la Trahison*'¹ have debased its virtue, through a profanation of the word which will for a long time deprive men of such offended values.

We must thus go on to speak of heroism and evoke its marks, such as they appeared from the moment I first set foot inside this City, pock-marked every two hundred yards by a vertical destruction, which having been neatly cleared thus rested uneasily with the term 'ruin'. The dismal prestige of this term, even when combined with the flattering intention to recall the grandeur of ancient Rome, was given a cool reception when it was extended in welcome yesterday by one of our most eminent envoys to a people who do not rest on their history.

Just as austere and with no more romanticism were other signs which, according to the progress of the visitor, were uncovered either by chance or by intention; starting with the depression which, thanks to one of those meetings of the road combined with the solidarity perpetuated by difficult times, was described to him in somnambulant metaphors by a young woman of the leisure class on her way to celebrate her liberation from the agricultural service for which as a single woman she had been drafted for four years; right up to the intimate exhaustion of creative forces that was revealed by doctors or men of science, painters or poets, scholars, even sinologists, who were his interlocutors, either by their own admission or in their countenance, through an effect as general as their forced labour in the cerebral services of modern warfare which took them to the limits of their energy: the organisation of production, scientific devices for detection or camouflage, political propaganda or secret services.

Whatever may have been the form taken by this reactive depression on a collective scale since, I can testify that at that time a tonic factor emanated from it, which I would not mention here for fear of being too subjective if it were not for the fact that its sense was revealed to me in the field of the British effort which I was qualified to assess.

We must circumscribe the field of what has been achieved by psychiatrists in Britain for the war and because of it, concerning first, the

use that British psychiatrists made of their science in the singular and of their techniques in the plural, and secondly, what was gained by the one and the others through the experience of the war. Such indeed is the meaning of the title of the book by Brigadier General Rees to which we will constantly refer: *The Shaping of Psychiatry by the War*.

It is clear that, on the basis of the principle of the total mobilisation of the forces of a nation demanded by modern warfare, the question of requisite numbers [*effectifs*] depends on the scale of the population. Thus, in a reduced group such as that of metropolitan Britain, it was necessary that all men and women be mobilised. This question is redoubled by that of efficiency, which requires, beyond the rigorous use made of each individual, the best possible circulation of the most daring conceptions of those in charge, and their transmission right down to the last man in the chain of command. No doubt, it is a problem about which psychological rationalisation will always have something to say, but the qualifications acquired in times of peace, the high political education of the British people and an already expert propaganda may well have proved sufficient.

It was a completely different matter to constitute an army on a national scale from scratch, in the manner of continental armies, in a country which until then only had a small professional army, for it obstinately opposed conscription right up to the eve of the conflict. One needs to take full account of the fact that a still very young psychological science was called upon to effect what one may call the synthetic creation of an army when this science had barely brought to the light of rational thought the notion of such a body, understood as a social group with an original structure.

It is indeed in the writings of Freud that both the question of leadership and that of morale were posed for the first time in the scientific terms of the relation of identification — I am referring here to this whole incantation designed to absorb the fears and anxieties of each individual in the solidarity of a group in life and in death, which until then had been the monopoly of the practitioners of military art — a conquest of reason which comes to integrate tradition itself by lightening it and raising it to a second power.

On the occasion of the two astounding victories of the Normandy landings and the crossing of the Rhine, we were able to see that with an equivalent standard of equipment and with the military tradition being all on

the side of the army which had elevated it to the highest degree that the world had ever known — a tradition further reinforced by the recent moral addition of a democratisation of hierarchical relations, the anguishing value of which had been indicated by us as a factor of superiority when we returned from the 1936 Olympics in Berlin — all the might of this tradition did not weigh an ounce against the superior conceptions of tactics and strategy, the products of the calculations of engineers and mongers.

It was no doubt in this way that the mystification attached to a military training of the order of caste and school, in which the officer retained the shadow of the sacred character which adorned the ancient warrior, was finally dissipated. Besides, we know, through the example of the other of the victors, that there is no other such constituted body to which one could take an axe with greater profit to a people. It is indeed on a scale of a fetishism which yields its ripest fruits in central Africa that one must evaluate the still flourishing use to which such a body is put with regard to providing a reserve for the nation's idols.

In any case, it is recognised that the traditional position of command does not favour intelligent initiative. This is no doubt why, in Britain, when events precipitated themselves at the start of 1939, the higher authorities could be seen to turn down a project, presented by the Health Service of the Army, which proposed to organise not only the physical but also the mental instruction of recruits. And yet, the principle of this project had been applied in the United States as early as the previous war through the impetus of Dr. Thomas W. Salmon.

This is why Britain only had a dozen specialists available under the command of Rees in London when war broke out in September, two consultants attached to the expeditionary body in France and two posted in India. In 1940, cases flooded hospitals under the headings of maladjustment, various delinquencies, psycho-neurotic reactions, and it is due to the pressure of this emergency that the action, the flexibility and scope of which we will now demonstrate, was organised with the help of some two hundred and fifty psychiatrists brought in through conscription. A kindling spirit had preceded them: Colonel Hargreaves, who set up an initial trial of eliminatory testing, adapted from the Spearman tests which

had already been used as an inspiration in Canada to give shape to the Penrose-Raven tests.

The system that has subsequently been adopted is that referred to as PULHEMS, already tested in the Canadian army, in which a scale from 1 to 5 is ascribed to each of the seven symbolic letters which correspond respectively to general Physical capacity, Upper limbs, Lower limbs, Hearing, Eyes, Mental capacity (namely, intelligence), and lastly, affective Stability. Two notations out of seven are thus of a psychological order.

A first selection is made from the recruits, which removes the inferior ten percent.²

Let us emphasise that this selection does not concern the critical and technical qualities which are required by the prevalence of the functions of transmission in modern warfare, nor the subordination of the combat group to the service of weapons that are no longer instruments but machines. What is at stake is to obtain in the group a certain homogeneity held to be an essential factor for its morale.

Indeed, any intellectual or physical deficit takes on an affective value for a subject within the group through the process of *horizontal* identification touched upon in the work of Freud evoked earlier, where it is however neglected in favour of the identification that one may call *vertical*: that to the leader.

The subjects affected by too strong a deficit must be isolated as *dullards*, for indeed they are slow-coaches at instruction, ravaged by the feeling of their inferiority, maladjusted and prone to delinquency, not so much through lack of understanding as through impulses of a compensatory order, and consequently are the favoured terrain of depressive or anxious *raptus*, or confusional states manifesting themselves under the emotional or physical shocks incurred on the front line, natural conductors to all forms of mental contagion. Our friend Dr. Turquet, with us today, has indicated the French equivalent of the term *dullard* to be *bourdaud* rather than *arriéré* [retarded], in other words it refers to what our colloquial vocabulary designates with the word *débilard*, which expresses less a mental level than an evaluation of personality.

All the same, as soon as they are grouped together, these subjects prove themselves to be infinitely more efficient through a liberation of their good will correlative to a sociability that is now well matched; even

the sexual motivation of their infractions diminishes as if to demonstrate that they do not so much depend upon a so-called prevalence of instincts as represent a compensation for their social isolation. At least this is what was evidenced in the utilisation in Britain of this residue that America could afford to do without. After having employed them for agricultural labour, such subjects later had to be employed as pioneers, although they were kept behind the front line.

The units which had been purified of their inferior elements in this way experienced a decrease in phenomena of shock and neurosis, and the effects of a collective softening of the will, in a proportion which one could call geometrical.

Major General Rees sees the application of this fundamental experience to a social problem of our civilisation as being immediately accessible to practice, without for all that acceding in any way to the scabrous theories of eugenics, being completely opposed, as one can see, to the anticipatory myth of Huxley's *Brave New World*.⁵

Here, several disciplines find the locus for their co-operation, disciplines with which all of us will have to become familiar, however theoretical some of us may consider them to be. For it is on this condition alone that we can and must justify the prominence which is ours wherever the psychological sciences are used on a collective scale. If, during the war experience, British psychiatrists have indeed made this recognised, and with a success which I will return to, it is due as we will see not only to the great number of psychoanalysts in their midst, but also to the fact that they have all been permeated by the diffusion of the concepts and *modus operandi* of psychoanalysis. For there are disciplines — such as the so-called *psychology of groups* — which, although they may have barely appeared upon our horizon, have reached a sufficient level of elaboration in the Anglo-Saxon world to be expressed, in the work of one Kurt Lewin, at the mathematical level of a vectorial analysis, no less.

Thus, in a long conversation I had with the two physicians I am about to introduce as pioneers of this revolution, a revolution which transports all our problems to the collective scale, I heard one of them explain to me coolly that as far as group psychology was concerned the Oedipus complex was the equivalent of what in Physics one calls the

problem of the three bodies, a problem for which, as is well known, a complete solution was never found.

But in our country it is considered good taste to smile at speculations of this sort, without for all that being any more cautious in dogmatism.

Thus, I am going to try to present these two men for you *au naturel*, men of whom it can be said that the flame of creation burns in them. In the first, this flame is as if frozen in a motionless and lunar mask accentuated by the thin commas of a black moustache, which no less than the high stature and swimmer's thorax which support him, give the lie to Kretschmerian formulations, since everything about him alerts us to the fact that we are in the presence of one of those beings who remain solitary even in the utmost commitment, as is confirmed in his case by his exploit in Flanders where he followed his assaulting tank with whip in hand and thus paradoxically forced the weft of destiny. In the other, this flame scintillates behind a lorgnette to the rhythm of a verb burning to return to action, in the man who, with a smile which makes his fawn brush bristle, likes to recall how he completed his experience as analyst with the management of men, tested in the fire at Petrograd, in October 1917. The former, Bion, and the latter, Rickman, have published together in the issue of 27th November 1943 of *The Lancet*, which is the equivalent both in its audience and its format to our *Presse médicale*, an article which, though amounting to only six newspaper columns, will mark a historic date in psychiatry.

Under the significant title *Intra-group Tensions in Therapy, Their Study as the Task of the Group*, the authors bring us a concrete example of their activities in a military hospital which, with the unadorned clarity it casts on both the occasion and the principles of the said activities and with perfect humility, I would add, takes on the value of a demonstration of method. I find in their work something of the miraculous feeling of the initial stages of the Freudian elaboration: that of finding in the very impasse of a situation the vital force of an intervention. Here we find Bion having to deal with some 400 'oddities' [*oiseaux*] in a service that goes under the banner of re-education.

The anarchical importunities of their occasional needs — requests for exceptional authorisations, chronic irregularities of their situation — are going to appear to him from the outset as destined to paralyse his

work by subtracting hours from his working time, already arithmetically insufficient to solve the structural problem posed by each case, if taken one by one. It is from this very difficulty that Bion will begin in order to cross the Rubicon of a methodical innovation.

Indeed, how are these men to be considered in their present situation if not as soldiers who cannot submit themselves to discipline, and who will thus remain closed to the positive therapeutic effects which depend upon it, for the reason that it is the very factor which brought them together here in the first place?

But what does it take to turn this aggregate of irreducible characters — what one calls a disciplinary company — into a functioning troop within a theatre of war? Two elements: the presence of the enemy which solders the group in the face of a common threat, and a leader, whose experience of men allows him to set as precisely as possible the margin to be allowed for their weaknesses, and who can maintain this margin through his authority, in other words, through the fact that everybody knows that once a responsibility is assumed, he does not ‘chicken out’ [*il ne se ‘dégonfle’ pas*].

The author is one such leader, for whom the respect of man is consciousness of self, and who is able to support anyone wherever he takes him.

As for the common danger, does it not rest in the very extravagances which undermine the rationale behind these men’s stay here, for indeed they oppose the primary conditions of their recovery? But it is necessary to make them aware of it.

And this is where the psychoanalyst’s spirit intervenes, the psychoanalyst who is going to deal with the sum of the obstacles opposing this awareness, like this resistance or systematic misrecognition [*méconnaissance*] he learnt to handle in the treatment of neurotic individuals. But here he is going to treat it at the level of the group.

In the prescribed situation, Bion has even more of a hold on the group than the psychoanalyst has on the individual, since by right at least, and then as leader, he is part of the group. But this is precisely what the group does not really realise. This is why the doctor will have to pass via

the feigned inertia of the analyst, and rely upon the only factual hold he is given, namely keeping the group within the reach of his words.

On this basis, he will undertake to organise the situation so as to force the group to become aware of the difficulties of its existence as a group, and then to render it more and more transparent to itself, to the point where each of its members may be able to judge adequately the progress of the whole — bearing in mind that the ideal of such an organisation for the doctor lies in its perfect legibility, such that he may be able to appreciate at any time the exit towards which each ‘case’ entrusted to his care is travelling, whether this be a return to his unit, release into civilian life, or persistence in neurosis.

Here is a brief account of the regulation he promulgates during an inaugural meeting of all the men: a certain number of groups will be formed, each defined by an object of occupation, but they will be left entirely to the initiative of the men, that is to say that not only will each individual aggregate to a group on his own accord but that he will also be able to promote a new group according to his own idea, with only this limitation that the object of the new group be itself new, in other words, that it should not serve the same function as that of another group. It is of course understood that it remains possible for each at any time to find rest in the *ad hoc* dormitory without any other obligation than to declare it to the head warden.

The examination of the progress of things established in this way will be the object of a general assembly which will take place every day at ten to twelve and will last for half an hour.

The article makes us follow, in a captivating progression: the first oscillation of men at the announcement of measures which, considering how things are usually conducted in such places, engender vertigo (and I can imagine the effect they would have produced in my former department at the *Val de Grâce* hospital); then the first shabby formations which present themselves rather as a means of putting the good faith of the doctor to the test; and soon the men take to the game, setting up a carpentry workshop, a preparatory course for liaison officers, a course in practical cartography, a vehicle maintenance workshop, and even a group devoted to the daily task of updating a clear diagram detailing the activities in progress and the

participation of each person. Reciprocally the doctor, taking the men to task as they themselves took him at his word, quickly enough finds the occasion for denouncing to them in their own acts this inefficiency which he incessantly hears them blaming on the functioning of the army — and suddenly the crystallisation of an auto-critique materialises in the group, marked among other things by the appearance of a voluntary chore which day after day changes the appearance of the rooms, from now on mopped and tidy, by the first calls made upon authority, the collective protestation against slackers, profiteers from the effort of others and indeed one can think of the indignation of this despoiled group (this episode is not in the article) the day that the leather scissors disappeared! But each time his intervention is called for, Bion, with the firm patience of the psychoanalyst sends the ball back to those concerned: no punishment, no replacement of scissors. Slackers are a problem put to the reflection of the group, as is that of the preservation of the scissors for work. Until such problems are solved, the more active ones will carry on working for the others, and the purchase of new scissors will be made at the expense of all.

In these conditions, Bion does not lack 'guts' and when a wise-guy proposes to institute a dance class, far from responding with a reminder of proprieties that without doubt the very promoter of the idea aimed to provoke, he knows how to bank on a more secret motivation which he discerns in the feeling of inferiority felt by any man denied the honour of fighting. Thus, oblivious to potential criticism, even scandal, he relies on it for social stimulation by deciding that the classes will be given in the evenings after work by female officers of the ATS of the hospital (these initials designate drafted women), and that these classes will be reserved for those who know nothing of dance and have yet to learn. And in effect the class, which takes place in the presence of the officer occupying the function of hospital director, achieves for these men an initiation into a style of behaviour which, thanks to its prestige, reawakens in them the feeling of their dignity.

Within a few weeks the service said to be that of re-education becomes the seat of a new spirit that the officers recognised in the men at the time of collective events, those of a musical order for example. During such events the officers entertained a more familiar relation with the men,

giving birth to the team-spirit characteristic of the department, and which impressed itself upon the newcomers who arrived on the departure of those it had marked with its good effects. The feeling that there were conditions specific to the existence of the group, maintained by the constant action of the animating doctor, is what held it together.

Here we find the principle of a group treatment grounded upon the testing and becoming aware of the factors required for there to be a good *group spirit*. This treatment takes on its original value in comparison to various other attempts made in Anglo-Saxon countries, in the same register but using different means.

Rickmann applies the same method in the observation room where he is dealing with a smaller number of patients, but also with a regrouping of less homogeneous cases. He must therefore combine it with individual interviews, but it is always from the same angle that the problems of the patients are approached. In this regard, he makes the following remark, which to some will seem striking, that if one can say that the neurotic is ego-centric and loathes any effort of co-operation, it is perhaps because he is rarely placed in an environment where every member would be on the same footing as himself when it comes to relating to one's counterpart [*semblable*].

I offer the formula to those of my auditors who contend that the condition of all rational treatment of mental disorders lies in the creation of a neo-society, in which the patient would maintain or restore a human exchange, the very disappearance of which alone redoubles the depreciating effects of the disorder.

If I have lingered upon the reproduction of the lively details of this experience, it is because they seem to me to be pregnant with a birth of sorts that is a new outlook opening upon the world. And if there are some who object to this in view of the specifically British nature of some traits, I will respond to them that this is one of the problems to be submitted to this new viewpoint: namely, how is the mobilisable share of the psychical effects of a group to be determined? And does its specific rate vary according to the cultural area? Once the mind has conceived a new register of determination it cannot escape from it so easily.

On the other hand, such a register gives a clearer sense to some of the observations that have expressed themselves with less success in the

systems of reference already in use: such is the formula that circulates without reservation in the discourse of my friend the psychoanalyst Turquet, when he tells me of the homosexual structure of the military profession in Britain and when he asks me whether this formula is applicable to the French army.

There should be nothing surprising in the realisation that any specialised social organism finds a favourable element in a specific deformation of the individual type, when all our experience of man indicates that it is the very insufficiencies of his physiology which support the greatest fecundity of his psychism.

Thus, by referring to the indications I was able to extract from a piecemeal experience, I respond to him that virile worth, expressed in the most extreme type of traditional officer training in our country, appeared to me on several occasions to be a compensation for what our ancestors would have called a certain weakness in pleasures [*faiblesse au déduit*].

This experience is undoubtedly less decisive than the one I had in 1940 of a molecular phenomenon played out on a national scale: I mean the macerating effect for man of a psychical predominance of familial satisfactions, and this unforgettable procession, in the specialised department to which I was attached, of subjects not quite awoken from the warmth of the skirts of mother and wife, who thanks to evasions which lead them more or less regularly to their periods of military instruction, without them being the object of any psychological selection, found themselves promoted to the ranks which are the nerves of the fight: from head of section to captain. My own rank did not allow me to have access in any other way than by hearsay to the samples we had of the inaptitude to war of the higher echelons. I will only indicate that there I found once more, on a collective scale, the degradation of the virile type that I had linked to the social decadence of the paternal *imago* in a publication on the family in 1938.

This is not a digression, for it is on the question of the recruitment of officers that psychiatric initiative has showed its most brilliant result in Britain. At the beginning of the war, an empirical recruitment based on rank turned out to be absurd, firstly because one realised very quickly that one is far from being able to make even a mediocre officer out of all the

excellent non-commissioned officers, far from it, and that when an excellent non-commissioned officer has demonstrated his failure as an officer-to-be, he returns to his corps as a bad non-commissioned officer. Furthermore, such a recruitment could not respond to the immensity of the demand for a national army to be created entirely *ex nihilo*. The question was solved satisfactorily thanks to an apparatus of psychological selection, of which it can be said that it is a wonder that it could immediately be equal to what was previously achieved only after years of training.

The major selection trial for officers was the first and the broadest; prior to any special instruction, it took place during a three-day stay in a centre where the candidates were accommodated. The familiar relations of a common life with the members of their jury meant that they offered themselves all the better to their observation.

Over these three days, they were to be subjected to a series of examinations which did not so much aim to ascertain their technical capacities or their Intelligence Quotient, nor more precisely what Spearman's analysis taught us to isolate with his famous G factor, the hinge of the intellectual function, as to circumscribe their personality, and particularly with regard to that equilibrium in the relation with others, which itself commands the very disposition of abilities, their useful proportion in the function of a leader and in the conditions of fight. All trials have thus been centred on the detection of factors of personality.

And first, written trials, which include a questionnaire regarding the personal and familial antecedents of the candidates, tests of verbal association, ordered for the examiner in a certain number of series defined by their emotional order — tests, designed by Murray, said to evaluate 'thematic apperception' and which have to do with the signification attributed by the subject to images which evoke in an ambiguous fashion scenarios and themes of intense affective tension (these images, now being circulated, are very expressive of a number of traits, specific to British and even more so to American psychology), and lastly by the drafting of two portraits of the subject such as he can imagine them to be produced by a friend and a severe detractor respectively.

Then comes a series of trials in which the subject is placed in quasi-real situations, the obstacles and difficulties of which vary according to the degree of inventiveness of the examiners, and which reveal his fundamental attitudes when tackling men and things.

I will mention, for its theoretical import, that trial said to be that of the *group without a leader* which, once again, we owe to the doctrinal reflections of Bion. Teams of about ten subjects are constituted, none of them being invested with a pre-established authority, and given a task which they must solve in collaboration, the gradual difficulties of which call for constructive imagination, a capacity for improvisation, qualities of foresight, and a sense of productivity — for example: the group must cross a river using a certain material requiring a maximum of ingenuity in its use, without neglecting to arrange for its recuperation etc... During the trial, some subjects will distinguish themselves through the quality of their initiative and the imperative gifts which will have allowed them to make the former prevail. But what the observer will note is not so much what appears of each subject's capacities as a leader, but the extent to which he is willing to subordinate the concern of looking good to the common objective pursued by the team in which it is to find its unity.

The marking associated with this trial is only retained for the first selection. When the procedure was first implemented, an interview with the psychiatrist, in the free and confidential manner proper to analysis, was offered to each of the candidates; later on and for time-saving reasons this interview was reserved for subjects who had drawn attention to themselves in the previous trials by questionable reactions.

Two points deserve to be retained: on the one hand, the sense of *fair-play* which, in candidates, responded to the postulate of authenticity that a psychoanalytic interview is supposed to make intervene in the last resort — the most commonly received testimony being that the trial concluded itself for those who underwent it with the feeling of having lived a most interesting experience, even when coming from those who had been judged unsuitable; on the other hand, the part played here by the psychiatrist, a part on which we will pause for a moment.

Even though the procedure was conceived, set up and perfected by psychiatrists, namely Wittkower, Rodger, Sutherland and Bion, in principle

the psychiatrist only has a single voice in the decisions of the jury. The president and vice-president are seasoned officers selected for their military experience. He is on an equal footing with the *psychologist* [*in English in the text*] — what we call here a psycho-technician — a specialist⁴ that one finds in much greater numbers in Anglo-Saxon countries due to the much broader use he is put to in the functions of public assistance, social enquiry, professional orientation, or even in privately instigated processes of selection, initiated with a view to industrial productivity. Even the sergeants, to whom the supervision and collation of the trials were entrusted, were involved in at least part of the deliberations.

To conclude, one can thus see that the assessment of a candidate seeks the guarantee of its objectivity more in terms of largely human motivations than on the basis of mechanical operations.

But the voice of the psychiatrist takes on such an authority in this concert that it demonstrates to him what social task his function imposes on him. This single discovery made by the interested parties, who all testify to it in a univocal fashion, and sometimes to their own surprise, forces those that only want to conceive this function from the limited angle defined until now by the word 'alienist' to recognise that they are in fact destined to a defence of man which promotes them, whether they want it or not, to an eminent function in society. The opposition to such a widening of their duties by psychiatrists themselves — a widening which, in our opinion, responds both to an authentic definition of psychiatry as science, and to its true position as human art —, is no less marked, believe me, in Britain than in France. Except that in Britain this opposition had to give way for all of those who participated in the activity of war, in the same way that the opposition to treating psychologists who were not qualified as doctors on an equal footing fell away. In the last analysis, we can see that the latter pertains to a *noli me tangere* that one finds more than frequently at the root of the medical vocation no less than in that of the man of God and the man of Law. Indeed, these are the three professions which assure a man that he will find himself in a position in which superiority over his interlocutor is guaranteed in advance. Fortunately, the formation brought to us by our practice may result in us being somewhat less likely to be easily offended, at least for those of us whose personal

debt is little enough to be able to draw profit from it for their own catharsis. The latter will gain access to this sensitivity to human depths which, no doubt, is not our privilege, but which must be our qualification.

Thus, not only will the psychiatrist hold an honourable and dominant position in advisory functions, such as those evoked above, but he also will see new pathways offering themselves to him, opened by experiences such as that of the *area psychiatrist* [in *English in the text*]. This function, which was also inaugurated in the British army, can be translated as follows: psychiatrist attached to a military region. He is released from any constraints of service and is only subordinated to the highest authorities; his function is to investigate, foresee and intervene in all that concerns the mental health of the drafted men in a determined district with regard to regulations and living conditions. It is in this way that one was able to define and control factors which cause certain psychical epidemics, mass neuroses, various forms of delinquency, desertions, suicides, and that a whole order of social prophylaxis seems possible for the future.

Such a function will no doubt find its place in the implementation of the *Beveridge* plan, which, let us note, recommends that the proportion of the space designated for the treatment of cases of neurosis should amount to five percent of general hospitalisation, a figure that goes way beyond all that has been planned so far for mental prophylaxis. Rees, in the book to which we constantly refer, sees the function of the *area psychiatrist* in times of peace as covering a region of between fifty and seventy-five thousand inhabitants. His competence would concern all that can be recognised as having an influence on the mental hygiene of such a population with regard to its conditions of subsistence and social relations. Indeed, can one still afford to be constantly splitting hairs over the psycho-genesis of mental disorders when statistics have once more demonstrated the striking phenomenon of reduction that occurs in a state of war in the number of cases of mental diseases, and this in the army as well as in civilian life? This phenomenon has been no less marked in Britain, thus giving the lie to the presumed effects of bombing on a civilian population. We know that the statistical correlates of the phenomenon do not allow even an inexperienced examination to relate this to any contingent cause such as

alcohol restriction, diet, or the effects, even psychological, of foreign occupation, etc...

On a different point, Rees' book offers an intriguing perspective on the palpably better prognosis for cases of psychoses when they are treated in the markedly less isolating conditions of the military world.⁵

To return to the contribution of psychiatry to the war effort, I will not dwell on the special selections carried out for commando troops, the armoured division, the RAF and the Royal Navy. Those which had been previously organised on the basis of measurements concerning sensorial acuteness and technical skills had to be supplemented by the qualifications regarding personality, the province of the psychiatrist. For, by way of example, when it comes to entrusting a pilot with a plane averaging one million pounds, typical reactions such as 'blindly rushing forward under fire' take on their full import with regard to the risks involved and indeed, the doctrinal exclusions implemented by the Germans did not prevent them, in order to ward off such reactions, from resorting to psychoanalytical investigations which had proved their worth.

In the same way, psychiatrists could be found on all fronts, in Burma, in Italy, with commando troops, at air and naval bases, and their critique was everywhere exercised on the significant knots revealed by symptoms and behaviour.

Episodes of collective depression appeared in a very eclectic way in commando units which had been the object of an insufficient process of selection; and I will only evoke that young psychiatrist who, in rejoining the parachuted troops which he was to follow to the Italian front, carried, in his small aviator's baggage, Melanie Klein's book which had introduced him to the notion of 'bad objects' introjected during the phase of excremental interests as well as during that even earlier period, that of oral sadism: a view which proved to be fruitful for understanding subjects already situated psychologically by their voluntary recruitment.

Psychoanalytical views were no less prominent once the war was over and were used for the task of reinserting war prisoners and overseas fighters in civilian life.

A certain number of special centres were designed for this task, one of which — set in the princely estates of *Hartfield*, then still the residence

of the Marquis of Salisbury and which had remained purer in its original architecture for not having left the hands of the Cecil family since its construction in the sixteenth century — was visited by me on one of those glorious days often offered by London in October, and with a particular generosity this year. I was allowed to wander freely for long enough to convince myself of the entire freedom enjoyed by those housed there, a freedom that proved compatible with the upkeep of ancient paintings in a room as big as the *Galerie des Glaces* and which was used as a dormitory, no less than with the respect of order in the refectory where, as a guest, I was able to witness that men and officers regrouped according to their taste in the shadow of an impressive guard of suits of armour.

I was able to converse with Major Doyle, to whom I first introduced myself, and also with his medical team. Regarding Major Doyle, I will relate only two of his statements: first, that the essential problem consisted in the reduction of the fantasies which had taken a predominant function in the psychism of the subject during their years of distance or reclusion; secondly, that the method of treatment animating the centre found its inspiration in the principles of Moreno's psychodrama — in other words of a therapeutics set up in America, and one which must be classified amongst group psychotherapies with analytical filiation. Here, let us simply indicate that *catharsis* in this method is obtained in the subjects, even and particularly for psychotics, by allowing them to abreact in a role they are made to play in a scenario partially left to their improvisation.

In the same way here, the path that will allow so many subjects to return from imaginary evasions of becoming a publican or some unbounded profession and to return to their previous employment will include the following: discussion meetings whether free or directed, all kind of trial workshops, absolute freedom in the use of their time (my first discovery of the place had allowed me to marvel that some would enjoy wandering amongst the chimneys and sharp angles of a roof worthy of the imagination of Gustave Doré), visits to factories, or discussions of contemporary social and technical problems. They will not be short of the qualified counsel of social workers and legal advisors in order to settle their familial and professional difficulties. To evaluate the importance of the work, suffice it to say that 80% of the men belonging to the above-

mentioned categories choose freely to go through this gradual reintegration process [*éclusage*] where their stay is on average six weeks, but which can be shortened or prolonged upon their demand.

At the end of my visit, the return of the director, Colonel Wilson, gave me the satisfaction of hearing statements which made me feel that on the social front, the war had not left Britain in the state mentioned by the Gospels as that of the divided Kingdom.

Thus, psychiatry served to forge the instrument thanks to which Britain won the war; conversely the war has transformed psychiatry in Britain. Here as in other domains, war proved itself to be the midwife of progress, in the essentially conflictual dialectics which, indeed, seem to be characteristic of our civilisation. My presentation stops on the point where the horizons that throw us into public life — even, God forbid, into politics — unveil themselves. No doubt we will find objects of interest there that will compensate us for all those fascinating pieces of work such as the 'dosage of products for ureic disintegration in fabricating paraphrenia', themselves the unquenchable products of the snobbery of a mock [*postiche*] science, a snobbery through which the prevailing feeling of inferiority, due to the prejudices of medicine towards a psychiatry already out of date, found its compensation.

Since the path of large scale social selection has been set, and that, ahead of public powers, powerful private organisations such as *Hawthorne Western Electric* in the United States have already implemented it to their benefit, how can one fail to see that the State will have to implement similar provisions for the benefit of all. And indeed, one can already estimate that the units on which the selection will have to bear will average 200,000 workers in order to achieve a fair distribution of the more perspicacious subjects as well as *dullards*.

How is it possible not to see that our association to the civil servant, the administrator and the psycho-technician is already inscribed in organisations such as those called *child guidance* in the United States and Britain?

Do not confuse our acceptance of this with a pseudo-realism always in quest of a qualitative degradation.

At no point of the achievements we put forward as example have we forgotten the high moral tradition that remains imprinted upon them. All

these achievements were governed by a spirit of sympathy towards people, which is not absent either from the segregation of the *dullards*, where no degradation of the respect owed to all men appears.

Let it be sufficient to recall that through the most constraining exigencies of a war vital for the group, and the very development of an apparatus for psychological intervention which constitutes in itself a temptation for power, the principle of conscientious objection has been maintained in Britain.

It must be said that the risks implied by such a respect for collective interests have appeared in experience to amount to infinitesimal proportions, for this war has I think sufficiently demonstrated that it is not from too great an indocility of individuals that the dangers for the future of humanity will come. It is now clear that the dark powers of the superego make alliances with the most cowardly abandonments of conscience, to lead men to a death accepted for the least human causes, and that all that appears as sacrifice is not, for all, that heroic.

On the other hand, the development of means of action on psychism⁶ that will increase in this century, a concerted handling of images and passions which has already been used successfully against our judgement, our resolution, our moral unity, will be the occasion of new abuses of the power.

It would seem to us worthy of French psychiatry that, through the very tasks proposed to it by a demoralised country, it should know how to formulate its duties in such terms as would safeguard the principles of truth.

Discussion

The President, Doctor Bonhomme, salutes our guests, Major Turquet of the British Army, posted with the French Army, and Doctor Bermann, Argentinean Delegate to the United Nations' Section for Medicine and Hygiene. He thanks Doctor Lacan for his brilliant lecture and opens the discussion.

— **Major Turquet:** It was in fact the Army doctors who, in their capacity as members of the Army Council in 1935, rejected a project of selection

for Recruitment. During the hostilities, we had to struggle in order to instate the psychiatrist as an assistant to the Command, a staff-officer. The role of the psychiatrist, as just presented to you, proved itself to be particularly efficient. In Burma, for example, one saw the psychiatrist, assistant to the Command at the level of the Division, give the advice not to make use of such or such battalion on the grounds that these reinforcement units demonstrated an insufficient psychological integration to the groups that were already engaged. It must be noted that political propaganda in the Army was also inspired as to its principle and driven by psychiatrists. Thanks to them, a bi-monthly information journal, dealing with the news of world politics, together with an idea of the ends of the war, came to give the soldier the feeling that he was fighting for a number of aims which he morally and politically condoned.

I must insist on the truly leading role of psychoanalysts in the work of research and decisions concerning the morale of the troops.

The psychiatrist is becoming ever more of a social doctor, and must apply himself to the study of political phenomena such as fascism. The work of Bion on the conflicts of the group and the individual, the concrete applications of the work of Melanie Klein, must be taken as models. We have attempted to establish a democratic army, where the leader represents a function itself defined by the needs of the group. One can say that his person is born from the group. This is why, back home, when the needs of the group change, we resort to different leaders. The Freudian analysis of the function of the leader as representing the need for a 'good father' responds to an unconscious relation which still prevails in the feelings of the military man. The stake is to be able to make use of this function within the framework of more elaborate intentions. A number of original perspectives, brought in by group psychology, have lent themselves to utilisation, particularly Kurt Lewin's orientations on the relations between the quality of intelligence and the conditions of the external world that one may call 'topographical'.

— **Professor Bermann:** I would like to draw attention to the contrast there is between the effacement of British psychiatry in the previous war and the prodigious development, the veritable renovation, its performance showed in this war. This renovation did not take its impulse either from

the neurologists, or the asylum doctors, or even, in most cases, official spheres, but from psycho-therapists and all of those who had an interest in psycho-genesis. My 1938 visit to Doctor Rees, then Director of the Tavistock Clinic, allowed me to appreciate the private nature of this clinic (a trait shared with most British hospitals until the reform produced by the war itself), and the very lively environment it constituted.

Psycho-genetic theory developed considerably under the pressure of events. Recall the remarkable studies on the topic of psycho-genetic ulcers. I remind you of the doctrinal interest of Dr. Costa's paper on 'the effort syndrome' during the American Civil War, of the reports published in the *Journal of Mental Science*, and of the discussion held at the *Royal Medical Association* on this syndrome: namely, the demonstration of Professor Lewis, of the Maudsley Hospital, of the psycho-genetic origin of this syndrome in over 90% of cases.

In my opinion, the indication of a sociological sense on which this new psychiatry is orienting itself should be developed as much as possible, for it is psychiatry's business to concern itself with the problem currently posed by the moral health of nations as it is presented in the preamble to the World Health Organisation, a section of the United Nations.

Lastly, allow me to mention, in passing, the value of some of the studies on Nazi mentality carried out by psychologists and psychoanalysts, such as that of Colonel Th. Wilson.

— **Doctor Borel:** I can but feel sympathetic towards the new orientation Psychiatry found in the war. I can but approve most of the theses which have been presented here, since, in my own hospital experience, the events have modified in a very noticeable proportion the number of psychoses, and even that of organic psychoses.

— **Doctor Henri Ey:** I have been extremely interested by all that the speaker taught me. I would perhaps have been even more so, had he been able to lead us somewhat more concretely in the field of group psychotherapy. I myself also follow with great interest all these psycho-technical studies conducted in the British Army under the direction of men such as Rees and Turquet. This being said, the image that outlines itself at the horizon of a certain social conception of psychiatry does not appeal to me very much. I am far from recognising in it the sign of a

progress for psychiatric science, and would rather be inclined to see there the signs of its dissolution — and I am weighing my words here — in lunacy and, in a certain sense, in normality. By extending indefinitely the object that it purports to embrace, psychiatry exposes itself to no longer being able to clasp the one that is proper to its nature. Psycho-sociology, and all its objects, individual interactions, the collective tension of a group, its organisation and variations, seems to me be compatible with the function of the psychiatrist only if the object of psychiatry were itself to be solely grounded upon the social nature of a 'mental disease'. And I inscribe myself as a detractor to such a conception.

This condition does not prevent me from recognising that, in the face of the lack of a veritable concrete spirit on the part of qualified psycho-sociologists, the task that should be theirs to assume by right does in fact fall upon us. But we must remain conscious of that fact. I have myself just lived through the experience of the part that a doctor, *a fortiori* a psychiatrist, can play in the life of a Unit. It is with this experience in mind that I emit some reservations as to the systematic elimination of psychopaths. I was most surprised indeed to see several men, even officers, who, however psychiatrically inadequate they may have appeared to me, behaved extremely usefully and admirably at the front.

Doctor Bonnaffe: I recognise with pleasure the convergence of the achievements just presented to us with the doctrinal perspectives and the plans of re-construction of which I, together with numerous colleagues from the psychiatric hospitals, have made myself the defender, relying on a social definition of the sick man, and advocating a radical reform of asylum treatment. Psychologists, carried along by the current maturation of their science, have reached the same point in their reflection thanks to an analogous experience, an experience of groups which, although very different in value and structure, have the following common trait: they realise social forms, simple and strong, with 'lively angles', a choice terrain thus for the experimentation of a collective psychology worthy of its name.

To respond to Mr. Ey's comments, I wish to emphasise that it has never been a question of bestowing the task of governing the world upon psychiatrists, but only of letting their advice be heard by those who govern. It is thus that Daumezon and I were able to offer our advice on

the project to reform the civil service, the various chapters of which could no doubt seem to exceed the field of our competence. As to the term of banality, which was employed earlier, there is no scientific discovery that did not find its root in a new way of considering banality. The reality of the asylum, when I think about it, does not seem to me to be that banal, at least if one is to consider it in the full relief of its social structure.

I am interested to the utmost in the peace-time extension of posts created in the war, in the civil equivalents which have been set up, and, lastly, in the incidences of collective psycho-therapy in civil hospital practice.

— **Doctor Minkowski:** Whatever the importance of social factors may be in mental disorders, the latter however prove to have their own morbid structure. And, even though I may pass for reactionary, I do think that psychiatry should be wary of going too far down the road of a pure sociology.

— **Doctor Cellier:** It seems obvious to me that the term 'psychiatry' does imply the notion of a disease.

— **Major Turquet:** A preventive orientation of medicine cannot afford to neglect either the problem of the normal or that of the social, nor should it misrecognise the psycho-genetic origin of mental disorders. In Britain, we have accomplished our task with the help of sociologists and psychologists, many of whom had little experience with patients.

— **Doctor Binois (guest):** In my dual capacity as academic psychologist and as a psychologist having carried out the specific functions of a psychiatrist, I feel somewhat inclined to criticise the training of the first for the benefit of the second. There should be two categories of psychiatrists applying themselves to different functions. What is at stake, no doubt, in the sector under study, is a field of experience which poses the problem of the normal. The psychiatrists are those who deciphered it; they brought the doctrine there, it is for them to implement it.

— **Doctor Sengés:** I believe, as was mentioned earlier, that the core of our mission is to study the psychopathology of patients, in so far as it differentiates itself from normal human behaviour.

— **Doctor Minkowski:** If I may bring a note of humour to this debate, and to echo the words of Mr. Binois, I will recall the story of the reply a number of psychological advisers received when, recently appointed, they got in touch with a University Professor of Psychology; for this is what he

told them: "I never have taught anything to my students which could have a practical application".

Professor Bermann: I wish to stress once more the positive nature of the new development of psychiatry. One may compare the position of traditional psychiatry with that of physiology before Laennec.

Doctor Schiff: It seems to me that it may be useful to evoke, in this discussion, the work of the Collective Psychology Society, founded in 1936 by Allendy, Bataille, A. Borel, Leiris and myself, as well as the existence in the United States of a journal dedicated to social psychology. I agree with Professor Bermann in so far as I find it impossible to accept that the data available to psychoanalysis be used to characterise certain political movements. Such perspectives lend themselves to abuse, and all parties have shown themselves to be generous with the latter in their dealings with their adversaries. Without lingering upon the reckless nature of most 'pathographies', be they by Flaubert or J.-J. Rousseau, and the manifest ill-adaptation of our psychiatric and characteriologic science to the man of genius, I cannot resist evoking some facts, such as the article by Professor Adalbert Gregor, published in the German Review of Mental Hygiene of 1936, in which we read that a communist had to be transferred to the psychiatric wing of the prison "for he had manifested this sure sign of madness of not understanding, despite all kinds of exhortations, the extent to which his opinions were incompatible with the new order of the Third Reich..."

— **Doctor Lacan:** I thank those who have volunteered their accord, as well as those who have been my contradictors in their remarks and objections. I wish to affirm once more my unitary conception in anthropology. To the objections of principle raised against the role of psychiatry during the war, I reply with '*E pur si muove*', declining that my *apostrophe* be given any other sense, or any other merit.

Translated by Philip Dravers and Véronique Voruz

1. '*Clercs de la Trahison*': French phrase referring to the collaboration of intellectuals [Transl. Note].
2. Let us note in passing that in Britain, just as it is the policeman who, as the representative of civil authority, heads any military parade on the public highway, it is the ministry of employment that fulfils the functions of our *conseil de révision* and decides which of the citizens will be army recruits.
3. It is thus that we are led upon a terrain where a thousand researches on small points rigorously bring to light all kinds of psycho-genetic correlation — thanks to the use of statistics which, it must be said, have nothing to do with what the physician designates under this name in his 'specific communications' — which are already interesting at the simplest of levels, such as the curve of increasing and continuing correlation of scabies and lice in relation to the decrease of mental capacity, but which take on a doctrinal importance when they allow us to establish a link between the inadequation of the subject to his function and a bad social positioning, a gastrointestinal infection that in their language one designates approximately as the 'dyspepsia of the re-enlisted soldier'.
4. These *Social Workers* as they are also called have a very definite social status in England and yet were less numerous than in the United States. Their multiplication in conditions of shortened formation imposed by the war must now pose the problem of their re-absorption.
5. In passing, I wish to draw attention to the statistics of two British practitioners, who are not psychiatrists, in which they demonstrated the correlation between peptic and duodenal ulcers and the zones of air bombardment.
6. There is a special issue of *Psychological Warfare* which in our opinion is not about to be published in the near future.

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