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Note to the Reader on 'Psychopathology and Dialectical Materialism'

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Note to the Reader on 'Psychopathology and Dialectical Materialism'

SOPHIE LESAGE

An unsigned introductory note (revised by François Tosquelles) accompanies the typescript of this talk, titled 'Psychopathology in Light of Dialectical Materialism':

This text has never been published.

It is the second lecture in a series on 'Methods in Knowledge of the Human in Neurology and Psychiatry Today' organized at and by the École

* Editors' and translator's note: Sophie Lesage (née Legrain) is the founder and principal editor of Éditions d'une, an independent publishing platform that emerged in 2014 from the work on the publication of the GTPSI proceedings (Groupe de travail de psychothérapie et de sociothérapie institutionnelles — which in English translates as Working Group for Institutional Psychotherapy and Sociotherapy). She is the editor of the original French publication of 'Psychopathology and Dialectical Materialism'. This introduction accompanied the publication of Tosquelles's text.

normale supérieure in 1947. Of course, Minkowski, Lacan, Follin,¹ and others developed their perspectives on this occasion. The paradox that the organizers embraced involved suggesting the development of what one might call 'psychopathology in light of dialectical materialism' to someone who was not a member of the Communist Party — some of whose active members may have expressed views not always aligned with the stated ideology.

With the help of Tosquelles's accent, a lively debate between Zazzo and others divided various speakers, not without confusion, about the use of tests in 'scientific psychology'.² Without dismissing the value of statistical work, Tosquelles accentuated the value of the complex and concrete dynamics of the emerging event, linking the prejudices of the tester and the fears or hopes of the tested: 'The relationship is not symmetrical, as one might expect from certain imaginary or real twins, or from mirror effects, those of a double'; 'Wallon denounced this type of imaginary fascination, or what he calls the psychology of motor images (sic)'.³

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- 1 Translator's note: Eugène Minkowski (1885–1972) was a French psychiatrist known for his work in phenomenological psychiatry and contributions to the understanding of schizophrenia, emphasizing patients' subjective experience, for example through his influential concept of 'lived time'. Sven Follin (1911–1997) was a French psychiatrist noted for his active involvement in the Communist resistance during World War II. He contributed significantly to the reform and humanization of psychiatric practices in France.
 - 2 Translator's note: René Zazzo (1910–1995) was a French psychologist who contributed to developmental and child psychology. As a student of Henri Wallon, Zazzo brought a Marxist perspective to his research. He is noted for his studies on twins, which he conducted not only in the laboratory, but in real-life environments.
 - 3 Translator's note: Henri Wallon (1879–1962) was a French Marxist psychologist noted for applying dialectical materialism to developmental and child psychology. His research focused on the interplay between the child's cognitive development and social, cultural, collective, and individual historical contexts.

Regardless, this lecture — which they admitted to having ‘misunderstood’ — led to two incidental listeners deciding to leave Paris to work at Saint-Alban: these were Robert Millon and his friend Jean Oury.⁴ It is therefore worth revisiting here, especially as Tosquelles has sometimes said, perhaps misleadingly in shorthand, that institutional psychotherapy has always walked on two legs: that of Freudian theory and that of Marxist theory. Here, Tosquelles articulates what he believes to be the Marxist dimension, quite far from what is often expected.

This is the second talk, dated 5 February 1947, in a series of lectures organized by Georges Gusdorf and Georges Daumézon on ‘Methods in Knowledge of the Human in Neurology and Psychiatry Today.’⁵ It followed the third Bonneval meeting (September 1946).⁶

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- 4 Translator’s note: Robert Millon (1923–2009) was a French psychiatrist associated with institutional psychotherapy and a close friend of Jean Oury. He was an initial member of GTPSI. After working at Saint-Alban (1947–49, as an intern at the same time as Oury; then 1952–55 as medical director), he practised in Grenoble, where he was involved in the MFPF (French Movement for Family Planning).
- 5 Translator’s note: Held as a prisoner of war by the Germans from 1940 to 1945, French philosopher Georges Gusdorf (1912–2000) worked as head tutor (*caïman*) at the École normale supérieure after the war ended. Interested in psychology and psychopathology, he wanted to introduce his students (among them Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault) to psychiatry. With the help of his friend, French psychiatrist Georges Daumézon, Gusdorf organized not only the 1947 lecture series, but also visitations of patients at Sainte-Anne hospital and annual excursions to the psychiatric hospital of Fleury-les-Aubrais in the Loiret department. Under the auspices of Daumézon as medical director, many activities and methods associated with institutional psychotherapy had been implemented in this hospital. See Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 41.
- 6 The proceedings of these meetings have been published: *Le Problème de la psychogenèse des névroses et des psychoses*, ed. by Henri Ey (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1950; repr. Paris: Tchou, 2004). See also [note 13](#) on p. 44. [Translator’s note: *Journées de Bonneval* were a series of

Despite my efforts, I was unable to fully bring to light the content of these sessions, which are significant for the historiography of psychiatry in the immediate post-war period.⁷ I have nevertheless put together a certain number of clues. In addition to the participants mentioned above, Jean Oury also details the participation in these lectures of [Julián de] Ajuriaguerra, [Pierre] Naville, and [Lucien] Bonnafé.⁸ It can be assumed that Bonnafé's lecture was

conferences hosted by Henri Ey in Bonneval in the Eure-et-Loir department, where Ey was director of the psychiatric hospital from 1933 on. For the third of these meetings, titled 'Causalité psychique des troubles mentaux' (Psychic Causality of Mental Disorders) held in September 1946, he invited psychoanalysts and psychiatrists to discuss the topic of psychogenesis. The participants seized this occasion to challenge Ey's position, known as 'organo-dynamism'. In particular, Lacan criticized Ey's doctrine as being organicist 'because it cannot relate the genesis of mental problems as such [...] to anything but the play of systems constituted in the material substance [*l'étendue*] located within the body's integument' (Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. by Bruce Fink in collaboration with Héroïse Fink and Russell Grigg (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), p. 124). Tosquelles recalls preparing the 1946 Bonneval conference and Oury mentions him attending it (*Recherches*, 17 (1975), p. 109). The published proceedings of these meetings include a contribution by Sven Follin and Lucien Bonnafé that Tosquelles refers to (see Tosquelles, 'Psychopathology and Dialectical Materialism', p. 66). Thus, the lecture series at the École normale supérieure and Tosquelles's talk can be seen as a continuation of the third Bonneval conference.]

7 Archives may still exist at the École normale supérieure at Rue d'Ulm.

8 See Jean Oury, *L'Aliénation* (Paris: Galilée, 1992), pp. 20–21. [Translator's note: Julián de Ajuriaguerra (1911–1993) was a Basque-French neuropsychiatrist and neurologist who would later become professor at Collège de France. He was an active member of the Batia group (see also note 13 on p. 44). Pierre Naville (1904–1993) was a French sociologist, writer, and politician. A prominent figure in the French Surrealist movement during its early stage, he later became known for his work in the sociology of work and his contributions to Marxist theory. Lucien Bonnafé (1912–2003) was a French psychiatrist who played a key role in the early development of institutional psychotherapy during the Occupation and in the sectorization of psychiatry in France. Bonnafé stayed at Saint-Alban from 1942 to 1946 and it was due to him that figures like Paul Éluard and Georges Canguilhem found a temporary hiding place in the isolated hospital in the Lozère department.]

revised and published at the end of the following year.⁹ In his own talk, Tosquelles also mentions having heard [Sven] Follin describe the drama of the 'domestic torturers' a few days earlier, thereby revisiting an earlier work with [Jean] Dublineau.¹⁰ And it might be his own contribution that [Jacques] Lacan refers to in a letter of 1963: 'Our ties are old, Althusser. You surely remember that lecture I gave at Normale [École normale supérieure] after the war, a crude rudiment for an obscure moment (yet one of the actors in my present drama found his path there)'¹¹ ...

Obscure indeed is this moment in history and in psychiatry, which Tosquelles, echoing others ([Paul] Balvet, Daumézou, and [Henri] Ey in particular), describes as 'in crisis'.¹² In the subsequent debates on the relation-

9 Lucien Bonnafé, 'Interprétation du fait psychiatrique selon la méthode historique de K. Marx et F. Engels', *L'Évolution psychiatrique*, [13].4 (1948), pp. 75–105.

10 Jean Dublineau and Sven Follin, 'Examen clinique d'un "bureau domestique". Rôle des interactions conjugales', *Annales médico-psychologiques*, 100.1 (1942), pp. 326–29. [Translator's note: Jean Dublineau (1900–1975) was a French physician and psychiatrist with a focus on child psychiatry. During his training he came into close contact with Georges Heuyer. Dublineau initiated Sven Follin and Lucien Bonnafé in child psychiatry.]

11 Letter reproduced in *Magazine littéraire*, 304 (1992), p. 49. It is known that a lecture given by Lacan at the Ecole normale supérieure at Rue d'Ulm was decisive for Jean Oury, who remained in contact with Lacan until the latter's death.

12 At the same time that Tosquelles was speaking, Paul Balvet wrote: 'Psychiatrists are criticized for their lack of initiative and their isolation: in turn, they challenge outdated legislation, antiquated facilities, and routine administration. The lack of serenity of some of these explanations, their aggressiveness, already makes them suspect [...]. It seems that a collective guilty conscience seeks to justify itself among some and others; either by hiding the miserable situation of the alienated person, or by proving that one has done what one could and that it did not depend on oneself that things would turn out this way' ('De l'autonomie de la profession psychiatrique', in *Au-delà de l'asile d'aliénés et de l'hôpital psychiatrique*, Documents de L'Information psychiatrique (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946), pp. 11–18). For other analyses, see

ship between neurology and psychiatry,¹³ the questioning of Marxism and psychology mobilizes both philosophers and psychiatrists; Tosquelles focuses on the nature and meaning that the confrontation between dialectical materialism and psychopathology can have, thereby linking social alienation and mental alienation from the field of *culture*: ‘Dialectical materialism has to be posited on a cultural level, which is not to say that this possibility is unrelated to the “battle of nations and classes”’¹⁴

To situate these works ‘in their development’¹⁵ may indeed require a work of cultivation; upholding the con-

also Tosquelles, ‘Psychopathology and Dialectical Materialism’, p. 67, n. 38.

- 13 Note the existence at this time of the Batia group (led by Julián de Ajuriaguerra in particular), which initiated the publication of the debate at the *Journées de Bonneval* in 1943; see the preface of *Les Rapports de la neurologie et de la psychiatrie*, ed. by Henri Ey, Julián de Ajuriaguerra, and Henry Hécaen (Paris: Hermann, 1947), not included in the 1998 reprint. [Translator’s note: Batia (or Batea, which is Basque for ‘ensemble’ (together) according to Bonnafé) was a working group of psychiatrists and psychoanalysts formed around the time of the Liberation of France in 1944–45, with meetings often taking place at the residence of Ajuriaguerra. Other prominent members included Lacan, Bonnafé, Tosquelles, Daumézon, Follin, Louis Le Guillant, Henri Duchêne, Henry Hécaen, Julien Rouart, and Serge Lebovici. Drawing inspiration from the Bourbaki group of mathematicians at École normale supérieure, according to Daumézon, the group mainly discussed theoretical questions. Parallel to this and with overlapping personnel, the newly founded Syndicat des médecins des hôpitaux psychiatriques tackled the initiation of practical reforms in psychiatric hospitals. In addition to the publication of the proceedings of the second *Journées de Bonneval* held in 1943, the group prepared the 1946 *Journées de Bonneval* (see note 6 on pp. 41–42). In 1947, the Communist Party’s condemnation of psychoanalysis exacerbated already existing internal conflicts, eventually leading to the dissolution of the group. For more detailed information on the Batia group see the testimonies of some of the participants in *Recherches*, 17 (1975), esp. pp. 107–10; 116–18; 551.]
- 14 Tosquelles, ‘Psychopathology and Dialectical Materialism’, p. 51.
- 15 See the section on ‘Dialectical Materialism According to its Development’, *ibid.*, pp. 52–57.

tinuity of dialectical materialism with the experimental science conceptualized by Claude Bernard, Tosquelles rejects any *a priori* systematizing of the psychiatric *praxis* in order to better discern its ‘object’,¹⁶ which is mobile by nature. It would therefore be inappropriate to see the following as merely a textual commentary aimed at applying Marxist knowledge to psychiatry.¹⁷

Quite the contrary, this text, at the cutting edge of the critical method embodied by Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, proves inexhaustible in the usual explanatory mode — to the point of subverting it.¹⁸ It certainly offers a set of very interesting references and ideas to be thematized. But the feat of this talk can only be grasped in its ‘baroque’ dressing in the Tosquellian sense — the dexterity of the discourse aiming to draw attention to these very formations. From ‘gesture’ to ‘gestation’, the active therapy advocated by Tosquelles relies, through metaphor and metonymy, on an aesthetic work [*travail esthétique*] in the primary sense of the term: an active reading.

In their work, human beings invent — at the
mercy of the winds — the sails of their ship.

16 See *ibid.*, pp. 65–66.

17 See *ibid.*, pp. 84–85. On the other hand, it can be seen as a continuation of the Politzerian endeavour; see *ibid.*, pp. 74–75, n. 48 and Olivier Apprill, ‘Tosquelles et la psychiatrie concrète’, in *François Tosquelles et le travail*, ed. by Pascale Molinier (Paris: Éditions d’une, 2018), pp. 159–80.

18 The preparation of this text also led me to question the way in which the 1844 *Manuscripts* had been edited and then translated: this resulted in the translation (and forthcoming publication at Éditions d’une) of Margaret Fay’s research writings on this question [Translator’s note: ‘The 1844 Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of Karl Marx: A Critical Commentary and Interpretation’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1979)], which have been little known in France until now, and therefore not taken into account in the editions and commentaries.

They transfer values there and trade them in every port where they anchor: the interplay of metaphors and metonymies articulates the impossible reproduction of gesture and gestation with other humans... Through this, however, the articulatory chain of the verb in action binds them.¹⁹

His talk aims to convey not abstract representations, but an *activation* of the same kind as he contracted on the occasion of his own encounter with Marx's works — his 'POUMist'²⁰ views only partially aligned with the intellectual context of his audience. What will it be like today?

In its form, this text is unparalleled in the subsequent works of Tosquelles. Seventy years on, this first edition will allow us to appreciate its content in all its freshness — and even its relevance.

We don't say that our actings [*agirs*] follow us, while we do say: our acts [*actes*] follow us. This is very important, and once again it raises the problem of repetition, of memory, and so on. The acting may follow us or may not, whereas our acts follow us, that's absolutely certain.²¹

TRANSLATED BY CHRISTIAN SCHEERHORN

19 François Tosquelles, *Psychiatrie, psychanalyse et politique* (Paris: Éditions d'une, forthcoming).

20 On this subject, see Francesc Tosquelles. *Psychiatre, catalan, marxiste*, ed. by Jacques Tosquellas (Paris: Éditions d'une, 2019). [Translator's note: POUM refers to Partit Obrer d'Unificació Marxista (The Workers' Party of Marxist Unification), an anti-Stalinist communist movement. It was established in 1935 through the merger of the Bloc Obrer i Camperol (BOC: Workers and Peasants' Bloc) and the Izquierda Comunista de España (ICE: Communist Left of Spain), with Tosquelles being one of its founding members.]

21 Remark by François Tosquelles on 31 January 1968 as part of Jacques Lacan's seminar on 'The Psychoanalytic Act'.

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