

# Against the exclusion of psychoanalysis for the diversity of research and care methods: A call for thought

An article called “Why psychoanalysts must be excluded from the courts” was published on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 in the French magazine *Nouvel Observateur*. It asked that psychoanalysis be banned from the public sphere, and that researchers and professors who make reference to psychoanalytic work should no longer be recruited by universities.

Deeply shocked by these remarks, the members of the European Inter-University Seminar on Teaching and Research in Psychopathology and Psychoanalysis (SIUEERPP) asked the *Nouvel Observateur* for the opportunity to reply, which was granted them on November 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. For the SIUEERPP, it was not a question of presenting a scientific argument (which had no place here, and was widely discussed elsewhere in ad hoc books and publications) or a point-by-point refutation of the article (there was insufficient space for such an exercise either). The goal was to respond to a discourse of excommunication from an opposing standpoint—calling for critical thinking, tolerance, plurality, and a scientific ethos that can make a distinction between opinion and reflection.

This issue goes far beyond the “disciplinary” framework of psychoanalysis alone.

The answer is transcribed below. It was initially signed by 11 members of the SIUEERPP Bureau, followed by 35 other colleagues of its members. In order to allow for wider support of this counter-argument, and to give it the space it deserves, we are opening this petition to the public.

“We” want to exclude psychoanalysis from the public sphere.

This wish is not new. It follows a method already used in 2004, when a report on the evaluation of psychotherapies was published that had been the basis for a similar request for the exclusion of psychoanalysis. We wish to point out, for those who are unaware of the fact, that the crude methodological biases of this report were immediately demonstrated and its conclusions—if indeed they could justify anything—were rejected long ago. This is corroborated by the most recent studies in the field.

Such methods of discourse are regularly used to ascribe inept speeches and positions to psychoanalysts (regarding autism, among other subjects)—positions that are definitely not theirs and that serve no other function than to stigmatise them.

Finally, this approach is used under the guise of a scientific authority that some believe to be exclusively theirs to hold, hence giving them the right to insult and show contempt (“obscurantism,” “sectarianism,” “their qualification—when they have one”) towards those whose work they have obviously ignored.

What answer should be given? That this kind of discourse and procedure that claims science as its ultimate guarantee is anything but scientific, since it does not seek debate. Rather, it seeks to instigate an ideological process with strong hints of inquisition. It simply seeks to condemn, to exclude and to obtain what must be labelled as some form of purification. Ultimately, these are only insults to thought and reason.

How is it that we have ended up finding ourselves in such a position? Is this a sign of the times, that we can now, with impunity, confound ideological statements with scientific rigour?

And what deep hatred is all this the mark of? This subject has already been explored countless times, let us not go back to it. Let us simply underline, instead, that each return of the discourse is also an indication of a specific issue. In this case, that of power games within the “psychology” section of the National Council of Universities (CNU). A scientific issue, then? No, unfortunately not. And, to be honest, not a political one either. It is quite simply a purely tactical issue.

This dimension is obviously not the right one. It is important not to be trapped in it, not to accept that essential social issues be reduced to mere power manoeuvres. Invoking moral duty, as was done in this forum on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, implies its corollary: that a certain code of ethics must be respected. In this case, not to call for a witch hunt in a context where modesty is essential and where diversity of knowledge and practices constitutes the best guarantee of care and expertise for everyone: patients, families, and loved ones.

If we wish to become the guardians of science and health, this implies in return that we do not ignore the duty to which we are bound, including the means of expression we use when discussing our professional views. Let us not be both judge and jury. And let us avoid preaching excommunication so lightly.

Signatories of the “counter-tribune”, SIUEERPP Office:

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