

**Interview with Paul-Laurent Assoun**  
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Do you think it is necessary to regulate the practice of psychotherapies?

The current plan is responding to the concern to make psychotherapeutic practices “safe” for the public. It is in reference to a certain ideology of wellness. Just as the idea of evaluating psychotherapies, as defended in recent reports, was responding to the concern to reduce the social cost of mental health. To pursue such a social ideology (which is legitimate in medicine) is to refuse to recognize the psychic suffering of the subject himself. The legislators have intervened as if there were suddenly need of regulation, and they don't seem to know that this question has troubled the field of clinical psychic practices for a very long time. The basic fact is, everyone knows that charlatans exist. Irrational therapies, with a New Age theme, or some kind of syncretism, are proliferating. These deceptive or harmful practices, to the extent they are so attractive, must be interrogated in the context of the “discontents of civilization.” It is logical to turn to the university diploma as guaranteeing a certain knowledge, but it leaves open the questions of clinical knowledge, and what is called “transference.”

Several psychoanalytic associations have stated that they do not see a problem with regulating psychotherapies as long as psychoanalysis is exempted. Is such a separation possible?

It is true that psychoanalysis has its autonomy, linked to its specificity, which the analytic associations are responsible to defend. But psychoanalysis cannot cut itself off from the consequences of a change in the law and a discussion in depth of the status of the psychotherapist. Besides, there is a possible trajectory of patients from psychotherapy to psychoanalysis. Beyond eclecticism, it is appropriate that psychoanalysis show evidence of its contribution to research in its “transdisciplinary” dimension. The analytic act cannot cut itself off from advances in knowledge.

What danger do you see in such a separation?

I have my doubts about this will to arrange disciplines in compartments. While claiming to reinforce technical expertise, it more or less ridicules taking the subject into account. There are plans in Europe to shorten the training of psychotherapeutic technicians when it comes to certain targeted symptoms like phobias, when in fact, the treatment of phobia is an occasion for a subject to bear witness to a conflict. This way of getting rid of the problem produces subjects who have been cauterized by a restricted therapy that will, in fact, only aggravate the subject's strangeness to himself, while functionally “readapting” him by erasing the symptom. In the background of the question of the status of psychotherapists or psychotherapy, there is a question of psychic treatment, posed by Freud at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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