

ISSA Proceedings 2014 - The Psychiatrization Of The Opponent In Polemical Context

Abstract: A variant of the ad hominem argument amounts to challenging the opponent's mental health. Semi-technical designations borrowed from psychiatric paradigms (such as autistic, paranoiac, hysterical) are thus appealed to in order to qualify the opponent. Based on three examples from polemical discussions on political issues, we investigate what kind of behaviour triggers such accusations, how they are justified, and how they are handled by the speaker to whom they are addressed.

Keywords: ad hominem argument, disqualifying strategies, mental pathologies.

1. Introduction

The present paper deals with the lexical dimension of some argumentative devices – more specifically, it focuses on the *ad hominem* use of terms like “paranoiac”, “schizophrenic”, “autistic”, “hysterical”, or “mythomaniac”. All these terms are originally issued from esoteric bodies of knowledge pertaining to psychiatry. In France, they have been disseminated, beyond their technical use in expert fields, to ordinary discourses, in the political domain as well as in everyday conversations.

In their technical use, these terms designate specific mental pathologies. As such, they should not convey any negative judgment[i]. When used in ordinary interactions, they nevertheless often serve as pejorative devices aiming at disqualifying a person. Some linguistic arguments support this claim. French language offers specific discursive patterns which may change almost any item into an insult. Thus, in “*espèce de X*” and “*sale X*”[ii], X has an offending dimension because of its insertion within such phrases, whatever its initial meaning. Even a neutral, descriptive word may work as an insult when obeying such a pattern. However, even if any word may be turned into an insult owing to such discursive patterns, the words that are intrinsically marked as pejorative are much more likely to be used that way.

If one uses a search engine like Google in order to investigate the frequency of

phrases like “espèce de parano” or “sale autiste”, it appears that they are quite common. Examples 1 and 2 illustrate such offending uses of these terms. In example 1, the administrator of a blog reacts to a participant accusing him of committing censorship unduly by calling him “espèce de parano”:

(1)

*On se calme le Bauju, pas la peine de monter sur tes grands chevaux, il n’y a pas de censure [...] Ton commentaire n’avait plus lieu d’être, espèce de parano, alors je l’ai scratché. Tu ne l’avais pas vu?***[iii]**

(Let’s calm down Bauju, there is no use getting on your high horse, there was no censorship [...] Your commentary was pointless, you paranoid, so I erased it. Didn’t you see that?)

In example 2, a teenager expresses his hatred for one of his teacher, calling her autistic:

(2)

*Il etait une fois , dans ce qu’on ose appeler un lycee , une prof de sciences economiques et sociales [...] qui etait bizarre....cette chos.. heu , femme (on va dire ca comme ca..) avait des petites manies : se mettre les doigts dans le nez , se les lecher , puis elle s’habille bizarement avec un petit bonnet bleu en laine [...]pi lorsqu’elle parle , elle doit reformuler sa phrase au moins 10 fois avant d’en sortir le bon exemplaire : C EST UNE PUTAIN D AUTISTE DE MERDE !!! [...] : SALE AUTISTE DE MES DEUX T’AS INTERET A ME METTRE 12 A MON DST SINON JE TE VOLE TON SAC A ROULETTE DE MERDE***[iv]**

(Once upon a time, in what they dare call a high school, an economics teacher [...] who was bizarre... this thing- ous, woman (let’s call her that way) had little manias: put her finger into her nose, leak them, she gets dressed in a strange way with a small blue woolly hat [...] and when she speaks she has to rephrase her claim at least ten times before getting a correct copy of it: she’s a fucking shitty autistic person! [...] you autistic you, you’d better give me 12 for my exam otherwise I will steal your rolling bag.)

In both cases, the use of the qualifications “paranoid” or “autistic” is supported by the mention of behaviours (hastily interpreting an action as censorship, wearing a blue woolly hat) presented as characteristic of the corresponding pathologies. In these sequences “paranoid” and “autistic” obey an offending objective. However,

in what follows, we will examine examples where these terms are not to be analysed as mere insults but as having an argumentative dimension, and more specifically, as part of an *ad hominem* argument. We will first indicate what we mean by “*ad hominem* argument”, and justify our categorizing the examples we will account for as pertaining to this argument scheme. We then will identify the specific argumentative functions that may be achieved by the adjectives “hysterical”, “paranoid” and “autistic” in polemical contexts. We will conclude on what such argumentative uses of terms labelling mental pathologies tell us about the perception of mental disease in our society.

2. *Ad hominem* argument

First and foremost, an *ad hominem* argument is... an argument. In the examples that we will analyse, calling the opponent “hysterical”, “paranoid” or “autistic” does not necessarily support any explicit conclusion. But even when no reasoning of the type:

X claims that *p*.

X is schizophrenic / autistic / hysterical

Hence, *p* should not be accepted.

is made explicit, we consider that the disqualification of the opponent that these adjectives achieve has an argumentative function because of contextual reasons.

The three examples we will examine pertain to political discourse. They appear within what Christian Plantin (2010) would call an “argumentative situation”. According to Plantin, an argumentative situation is governed by an argumentative question (“should the government implement Measure M?”, for instance) which may receive opposing answers, each of them being supported by arguments (“I’m for M because arg.1, arg.2...”), or (“I’m against M because arg.3, arg.4...”). In an argumentative situation, any statement should be understood as part of an answer to the argumentative question which structures the discussion, whether it is presented as such or not. The question, writes Plantin, should be seen as an interpretative magnet which polarizes all the contributions that fall into its attraction field (2010: 33; translation is ours). In this perspective, the three adjectives which appear in the examples we will focus on are to be interpreted as personal attacks aiming at disqualifying, beyond the person of the opponent, the thesis that he supports. Hence they embody abusive *ad hominem* arguments.

We consider the use of terms issued from psychiatry, like “hysterical”, “schizophrenic”, “autistic”, as a subtype of a more general type of ad hominem arguments aiming at presenting the opponent as belonging to a debased fraction of humanity. Of course we do not assume that this fraction really is debased, but rather that the use of such qualifications as personal attacks suggests that for the arguer, in some way, it is. Other variants of this general scheme consist in some cases in designating the adversary as an animal[v], as a female (when addressing a man[vi]), as or a child or a teenager (when addressing an adult[vii]).

Example 3 displays simultaneously some of these disqualifying strategies. It is drawn from a French political newsgroup, and it combines the psychiatric and the animalistic variants of the ad hominem disqualifying strategy:

(3)

Ce forum est essentiellement un exutoire pour une poignée d'autistes qui y déversent leurs délires d'illuminés, leurs élucubrations psychotiques ou leurs éructations de primates[viii].

(This newsgroup is mainly an outlet for a handful of autistic individuals who pour therein their cranks' deliriums, their psychotic pipe dreams or their primates' eructations.)

3. *Hysterical*

The first term originally issued from psychiatry we will examine in this paper is the adjective “hysterical”. “Hysterical” is frequently used in polemical contexts in order to qualify a whole debate, the communicative behaviour of one participant in the discussion, or the discussant himself. In context, “hysterical” refers to heated exchanges, characterized by a highly emotional tone.

In the context of a political discussion, pointing to the emotional dimension of one's contribution amounts to disqualifying it as irrational and potentially biased.

Even if the originally Freudian meaning of “hysterical” seems to be somewhat remote from its present uses in political discussions, accusing the opponent of being hysterical still suggests that he has lost control over his own communicative behaviour. Hence the conditions for a rational discussion are not fulfilled, and the opponent's argument does not deserve any serious examination.

Furthermore, the accusation of loss of control is not the only vector of

disqualification of the opponent. The adjective “hysterical” is deeply marked by the specific historical situations in which it was used, as the analysis of example 4 will show.

Example 4 is drawn from the French debate that preceded the adoption of the so-called “mariage pour tous” law, opening the marital institution to same-sex persons. During a particularly heated parliamentary session, Christian Jacob, who opposes the law, accuses Sergio Coronado, who supports it, of being hysterical[**ix**]:

(4)

M. Christian Jacob. J’pense qu’on pourrait: profiter/ euh je le: dis à mes (.) mes collègues de la majorité/ qui pourraient profiter (.) agréablement de la: coupure du dîner/(.) pour reprendre/ (.) un peu leurs le leurs esprits/ (..) [protestations dans l’Assemblée] ‘ttendez\ (.) les les les attaques (..) qui ont été les vôtres/ vous savez/ (.) on peut avoir de vrais di- différences/ (.) et: et d’ailleurs j’ai apprécié le ton/ avec lequel Patrick Bloche (.) s’est exprimé tout à l’heure/ (.) nous sommes en désaccord/ (.) Total\ XX (.) MAIS/ (.) il l’a fait avec euh beaucoup de dignité/ avec des CONvictions qui sont les siennes/ (.) et qu’on accepte que l’on puisse s’exprimer d’la même façon/ (.) sans êt’ soumis (.) à des invectives voire à de l’HYStérie/ (.) à de l’HYStérie/ (.) de par certains collègues/ je pense à vous [montrant SC de la main] (.) mon cher collègue (.) mais si/ (.) ces propos (.) vous n’apportez (.) RIEN au débat/ (.) vous n’avez pas/ d’argument/ (.) vous z’hurlez/ vous êtes dans l’hystérie totale/ (.) et je pen/se qu’il faut profiter du moment du déjeuner/ pour se calmer\ (.) je- du dîner\ (.) [puis s’adresse à Mme la Ministre]

(I think we could take advantage – I’m addressing my colleagues in the majority who could pleasantly take advantage of the dinner break to come to their senses [protests in the Assembly]. Wait, you have been the ones who made these attacks, you know, people may have important differences of opinion, and by the way I appreciated the way Patrick Bloche expressed his position a few minutes ago, we deeply disagree but he expressed his convictions with much dignity, and people should accept that we express ourselves in the same way, without suffering abuses or even hysteria, hysteria from some colleagues, I’m thinking of you [pointing to Sergio Coronado] my dear colleague, yes yes, these words, you make no valuable contribution to the discussion, you have no argument, you’re just yelling, you’re totally hysterical, and I think one should take advantage of the dinner break to calm down.)

Nothing, in Sergio Coronado's offending turn, accounts for such an attack, either in what is said, or in the tone in which it is said: it is by no way more emotional or heated than the contributions of the other participants.

Regardless of its factual adequacy, Christian Jacob's attack may be understood, as suggested before, as a strategy aiming at shifting the discussion, from the criticism of the opponent's arguments, to its very person. Such a strategy may prove useful when no simple refutation is available. It may also be seen as obeying other logics, in connection with the history of the usage of the terms "hysteria" and "hysterical" in various contexts in France. It is what is suggested by Sergio Coronado, who reacts to Jacob's charge with hysteria as follows:

(5)

Sergio Coronado : en fin d'séance tout à l'heure/ (-) euh le président euh Jacob/ m'a ::: (.) se dirigeant vers moi/ m'a qualifié/ d'hystérique\ [...] mais j'me suis interrogé\ pourquoi m'a-t-il qualifié d'hystérique puisque : (.) j'fais un peu d'histoi/re (.) et j'me suis rapp'lé/ en effet/ que (.) le mot hystéri/que servait à qualifier/ euh (.) notamment en période de trou/ble pour les dénigrer/ (.) euh par exemple : les suffragettes/ (..) par celles et ceux qui étaient opposés euh (.) au droit d'vote des femmes/ (.) ça a servi à qualifier euh Simone de Beauvoir/ au moment d'la publication du deuxième sexe/ (..) ou enco/re les trois cent quarante troissalo/pes (.) lors euh de la publication du manifes/te pour le droit à l'avortement\ (..) j'me suis dit pourquoi être qualifié par ce terme/ (.) alors que je n'suis NI une suffragette/ ni Simone de Beauvoir/ (.) ni encore/ une fem/me demandant le droit/ à l'avortement\ (.) alors je (.) je suis rev'nu/ euh (.) euh au dix-neuvième siè/cle [...] notamment aux travaux clini/ques (.) dans la foulée d'Charcot/ et je me suis rapp'lé en effet (.) et je pense que (.) c'est à ça que faisait référence sans doute le président Jacob/ (.) qu'à l'époque/ (.) à l'épo/que le mot d'hystérique servait (.) servait évidemment de (.) à qualifier TOUtes les femmes/ (.) toutes les femmes sont potentiellement hystéri/ques vous l'savez (.) cher collè/gue (.) hein/ (.) et une catégorie très particulière d'hommes\ (..) [...] (.) les invertis\ (..) les invertis\ (..) alors (.) cher/ président Jacob\ (.) vous auriez pu êt' plus franc/ (.) et faire co :mme dans les cours d'éco/le me traiter d'pé/dé\ (..) voilà/ (.) cette inju/re (.) qui fait tant de mal notamment aux jeunes qui découvrent leur sexualité/ (.) je tiens à vous rassurer\ (.) cher président Jacob (.) j'assu/me (.) j'en suis fier/ (.) et je n'ai pas (.) du tout (.) envie d'raser les murs/ (.) malgré/ (.) vos/ (.) injures\ (..) j'aimerais simplement dire (.) au président Jacob/ (.) que ce type

d'invectives (.) au sein d'cette assemblée/ (.) n'honore (.) ni vot' grou/pe (.) ni les travaux (.) aujourd'hui (.) de l'Assemblée Nationale/ (.) j'ai hon/te (.) pour ceux/ (.) qui profèrent ce ty/pe (.) de propos (.) c'est vrai que l'heure est un peu tardi/ve et j'ai l'impression/ (.) que vos nerfs commencent à lâcher\ (.) merci

(Sergio Coronado : earlier at the end of the session, President Jacob, addressing me, called me hysterical. [...] I wondered, “why did he call me hysterical?”, and as I am fond of history, I remembered that the word “hysterical” was used to disqualify people in troubled circumstances, for instance it was used to denigrate suffragettes by those who opposed women’s right to vote; it was used to denigrate Simone de Beauvoir as she published *Le deuxième sexe*; or it was used to denigrate the three hundred and forty three bitches when they published the manifesto for the right to abortion. And I wonder, why did Jacob call me hysterical, since I am neither a suffragette, nor Simone de Beauvoir or a woman claiming the right to abortion. So I went back to nineteenth century [...] and I remembered the clinical works in the tradition of Charcot, and in fact I remembered – and I think that’s what Jacob was referring to – that at that time, the word “hysterical” was addressed to all women – as you know, all women are potentially hysterical, you know that, dear colleague – and “hysterical” was also applied to a certain category of men, namely, homosexuals; yes, homosexuals. So, dear President Jacob, you could have been more frank, and, as children do in the schoolyard, you could have called me a fag. Here it comes, this insult that causes so much pain to young people who discover their sexual orientation. I want to reassure you, dear President Jacob, I assume my sexual orientation, I am proud of it, and I don’t feel like hugging the walls despite your insults. I just want to tell President Jacob that such invectives, within this Assembly, do not honor either your group, or the work that the National Assembly has been doing today. I feel ashamed for those who utter such words. True, it is late, and I feel you’re losing your nerves.)

Puzzled by the adjective “hysterical”, the use of which he deems unfounded, Coronado connects it with former uses: it was used against the “suffragettes”, that is, the feminine supporters of women’s right to vote, to disqualify them; it was used against Simone de Beauvoir as she published her book *Le deuxième sexe*, which was considered a feminist manifesto; it was used against the feminine activists who claimed the right to abortion. Sergio Coronado finally mentions that the diagnosis of hysteria was made for a specific category of male individuals,

namely, homosexuals. On that ground, he suggests that Jacob's accusation of hysteria amounts to calling him a fag: *"vous auriez pu êt' plus franc/ (.) et faire co:mme dans les cours d'éco/le me traiter d'pé/dé"*.

In the context of a discussion on a law that opens marriage to same-sex persons, charging someone with homophobia is a way of bluntly disqualifying his contribution to the debate as irretrievably biased.

Example 5 is interesting in that it illustrates how the "hysterical" qualification, when applied to an opponent in a polemical discussion, may be a means of disqualifying his position as emotional and biased. It also shows how a specific context (here, the discussion of the law opening marriage to same-sex persons) may activate some semantic features associated to "hysterical" in what Sophie Moirand (2007) would call a collective discursive memory.

4. *Paranoid*

French *"paranoïaque"* (and its shorter version *"parano"*), or English "paranoid", is another term issued from psychiatry, and entering some ad hominem attacks.

Example 6 is part of an interview of Marine Le Pen, an extreme-right politician, by the left-wing journalist Pascale Clark on France-Inter radio station. At the end of the interview, by way of closing, Pascale Clark always broadcasts a musical piece chosen by her guest. Marine Le Pen chose a song by Laurent Voulzy, the lyrics of which were written by Alain Souchon, entitled "Jeanne". This song is about a contemporary man who claims his love for a medieval women named "Jeanne". The song does not explicitly refer to Jeanne d'Arc, but irresistibly evokes her. Whereas the interview should end with the song, Pascale Clark takes the floor and cites the lyrics of "Belle-Ile en mer", another song by Voulzy/Souchon, and specifically, a brief sequence which evokes Voulzy's feeling of rejection as a mixed-race child grown up in France[x]. Though Pascale Clark does not explicitly charge Marine Le Pen with racism, it clearly is the way the latter interprets the quotation by Pascale Clark of "Belle-Ile-en-mer"'s lyrics. She then strives to force the journalist into avowing what she intended by quoting this song. Pascale Clark resists, calling Marine Le Pen paranoid[xi]:

(6)

MLP : ouais (.) non non mais attendez madame (.) moi/ (.) très objectiv'ment\ (.) euh euh que

votre: (.) la manière dont vous balancez vot' petite vanne à la fin/

PC : c'est pas une [va:/nne (.) je rappelle les paroles d'une belle chanson

MLP : [ça veut dire quoi\ ça veut dire que vous m'accusez (.) ben oui/ madame mais

qu'est-ce ça veut dire quoi quelque part vous m'accusez d'quoi

PC : mais de rien/

MLP: mais si/ si\ j'ai bien vu votre petit air pincé genre [j'suis contente de moi/ (.) j'ai balancé

PC : [mais arrêtez mais vous êtes parano/ mais

MLP : [une p'tite vanne

PC : [vous êtes parano/ le monde entier est contre vous:/ c'est juste les paroles que j'rappelle/

c'est tout/

(MLP: yes, no but wait Madam, the way you hurl your little dig at me in the end

PC: that is no dig, I'm just evoking the lyrics of a beautiful song

MLP: what does it mean? It means that you are accusing me, yes Madam, but what does it

mean, you are accusing me of what?

PC: I'm not accusing you of anything.

MLP: oh yes you are, I saw your stiff face, meaning "I feel pleased with myself, I had a little dig at her"

PC: stop that, you paranoiac! You paranoid, the whole world is against you... (I'm just

evoking some lyrics, that's all)

Example 6 is typical of the use of the adjective "paranoid" as a disqualifying means. It enables Pascale Clark to suggest that Marine Le Pen is not grounded in suspecting that the quotation of "Belle-Ile-En-mer"'s lyrics was an indirect way of accusing her of being a racist. Beyond that, "parano" suggests that this faulty interpretation of Pascale Clark's intention by Marine Le Pen is due to a mental pathology ("you are parano"), which leads her into interpreting innocent words as personal attacks ("the whole world is against you").

The diagnosis of paranoia applied to the opponent gives clearance to the speaker of the personal attacks he may make: he does not have to answer for them while taking profit of their devastating potential.

However in this specific case, the strategy fails. If you want to rebut your opponent's accusation of your having committed a personal attack by suggesting that he is paranoiac, you should be able to propose an alternative credible interpretation for what you said. Here, no doubt that Pascale Clark's alternative interpretation of what she did (I'm just evoking the lyrics of a beautiful song) is a poor one, and cannot support Marine Le Pen being charged with paranoia.

5. Autistic

The last case we will handle briefly here is the "autistic" adjective, and more specifically, its use to qualify the government. In such cases, "autistic" often works as a quasi-synonym for "deaf". Example 7 is from Thierry Lepaon, the General Secretary of a left-wing trade-union (the CGT). Lepaon criticizes Hollande's government for not defending the interests of the working classes[xii].

(7)

Les patrons ont pris l'offensive, ils ont l'oreille de ce gouvernement. Plus il cède aux patrons, moins les salariés sont audibles. Ce gouvernement est autiste de son oreille gauche, il entend bien à droite.

(Bosses have taken the offensive, they caught the government's ear. The more the government lets them have what they ask, the less audible the workers get. This government is autistic from the left ear, it hears perfectly well from the right side.

)

The same day when Lepaon made this statement, a commentator expressed a similar criticism of French government in similar terms on the blog of a French magazine[xiii]:

(8)

Le gouvernement du Parti Schizofrène est devenu autiste de l'oreille gauche et n'écoute qu'avec celle de droite le Medef, le Cac 40, et les agences de notations Standard & Poor's et Cie...

(The Schizophrenic Party Government became autistic in its left ear and listens only with its right ear to Medef [right-wing union], to the CAC 40 [Paris Stock Exchange], to rating agencies Standard & Poor's and Co...)

More generally, the adjective "autistic" is applied to any opponent that you fail to win over to your cause and who resists the arguments he's addressed. This

strategy also appears in example 9 by Jean-Claude Gaudin, Marseille City's Mayor, who deems the government to be autistic because it does not satisfy his claimings on the reform of school timetables[xiv]:

(9)

Le gouvernement est autiste. La Ville de Marseille a demandé un moratoire sur les rythmes scolaires. Il a été refusé. Elle a proposé un plan de développement du soutien scolaire. Il a été refusé.

(The government is autistic. Marseille city asked for a moratorium on the reform of school timetables. Its demand was rejected. It proposed a plan for developing support classes. Its demand was rejected.)

Gaudin's declaration elicited reactions on Twitter pointing to the adjective "autistic", the pejorative use of which is considered inelegant in the following tweets:

(10)

Tweet 1 : mère d'enfant autiste et entendre le mot autiste à tout va au gouvernement et ds les cours d'école: STOP!

Tweet 2 : autiste n'est peut être pas le mot le plus délicat

Tweet 3 : On pourrait dire... sourd, mais c'est aussi un handicap.

Tweet 4 : L'utilisation du handicap comme une injure. Classe.

(Tweet 1: mother of an autistic child and hearing the word autistic all day long used by politicians and in schoolyards: STOP!

Tweet 2: perhaps autistic is not the most delicate word...

Tweet 3: You could say...deaf, but it's also a handicap.

Tweet 4: Using the handicap as an insult. Elegant.)

To sum up, in polemical contexts, integrating adjectives issued from psychiatry into ad hominem attacks may be shown to fulfil specific argumentative functions. Accusing the opponent of being hysterical is a way of disqualifying his position as emotionally biased, and enables one to dismiss a conflicting view without having to discuss it. Accusing the opponent of being paranoid enables one to make a personal attack without assuming the responsibility for such a disputable argumentative move, while taking profit of the devastating effect it may have. At last, calling the opponent autistic when he does not come to your point is a way of dismissing his resistance to your arguments as being a mere symptom of a mental

pathology, which enables you not to acknowledge your argumentative failure.

Whereas such qualifications undoubtedly serve disqualifying strategies, they are somehow toned down by the fact that they do not claim that the opponent is motivated by malevolent intentions: if he is wrong, it's not his fault, it's because he is mentally disabled, in one way or another.

6. *Conclusion*

Our present and preliminary study was concerned with only three words, and will be developed further. The use of mental disorder subtypes outside the psychiatric field will be examined from the medical point of view, to both interrogate the reasons and the meanings of using such specific vocabulary, not only to categorize but actually to undermine the opponent's discourse. We will address the reasons of using psychiatric words, in preference to words in relationship with physical impairments, such as "he or she must be deaf not to understand" or "is he or she blind not to see the evidence?" When a medical term is used outside its obvious diagnosis field, one can question why this word is used and not another one (given that hundred mental disorders are now recognized by academics) and what is conserved from the original definition and what comes from the common sense or from the lay person's understanding of a specific mental disorder.

Our post-modern society is considered to be biologically and genetically-oriented. In parallel, one's mental health is often questioned and analyzed. For some authors, policy-makers lean heavily and wrongly upon psychiatry to define norms and pseudo-relevant behaviour (Gori and Del Vogo 2008). For others, emotions are being used for economical purposes by pharmaceutical firms (Lane 2009). Whatever the reasons, the number of mental disorders medically recognized has been steadily increasing over the years[xv]. Mental illness terms - outside the medical field - are not only applied to individuals but are also used to characterize concepts or theories: for example, it was said that economy was autistic[xvi] or that the French society was schizophrenic[xvii].

Such uses outside the medical field are paradoxical, because of the many public campaigns aiming at de-stigmatizing persons suffering from mental disorders. For the past twenty years, most western countries, including France, have launched media campaigns to emphasize that people suffering from mental disorders are "normal" persons. To name a few of these de-stigmatization campaigns, the World Psychiatric Association has launched "Open the doors" about schizophrenia[xviii]

worldwide; “Time to change” claims to be “England’s biggest programme to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination”**[xix]**; in France, the FondaMental association aims at explaining mental illnesses to the lay person**[xx]**. However, all these initiatives have not prevented the use of psychiatric terms to depreciate one’s opponents. Therefore our study will be a key for understanding how French society is mentally-oriented, specifically in political interactions.

NOTES

- i.** At least, not more than terms referring to non-mental pathologies, such as cancer, pharyngitis or diabetes: such words clearly point to physiological dysfunctions, but they do not convey any disqualifying assessment of the person who suffers these pathologies.
- ii.** English “you X you” or “you fucking / dirty / lousy X” may be considered as rough equivalents for “espèce de X” or “sale X”.
- iii.** <http://parapentesaintevictoire.blogspot.fr/2014/05/panneau-retour.html>
- iv.** <http://www.tromal.net/conte/view.php?urlHistoCount=3623>
- v.** As when Anne-Sophie Leclère, a National Front candidate for the 2014 local elections, compared French Attorney General Christiane Taubira to a baboon.
- vi.** Contesting the manliness of the opponent is a very common disqualifying strategy. It transpires from the revolting but nonetheless frequent injunction addressed to a boy in tears: “Don’t cry, you look like a girl!”
- vii.** As when, during the “Gayet Gate”, Manuel Valls suggested that “François Hollande behaved like a retarded teenager”; <https://fr.news.yahoo.com/closer-fran%C3%A7ois-hollande-agi-quot-ado-attard%C3%A9-quot-103503108.html>
- viii.** fr.soc.politique
- ix.** Christian Jacob, president of the UMP Group at the French National Assembly, February 1st, 2013.
- x.** «Moi des souvenirs d’enfance / En France / Violence / Manque d’indulgence / Par les différences que j’ai»
- xi.** Marine Le Pen interviewed by Pascale Clark, Le 7/9, France Inter, 19 April 2012.
- xii.** Thierry Lepaon, General Secretary of the CGT, on RMC radio station, 29th October 2013.
- xiii.** Dingo 117, 29th October 2013, www.marianne.net
- xiv.** La Provence, 12th June 2014.

xv. The American society of psychiatry has published several manuals for diagnosing mental disorders. The last one (DSM 5), published in May 2013, lists over 600 hundred different disorders (<http://www.dsm5.org/Pages/Default.aspx>

xvi. « L'économie autiste », Le Monde, 25 June 2012. The author, Marco Morosini, claims that "what could appear to be a courageous voluntarism is actually nothing more than the confirmation of sixty years of autistic economy." (« Ce qui pourrait paraître un volontarisme courageux n'est que la confirmation de soixante ans d'économie autiste »)

http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/06/25/l-economie-autiste_1723092_3232.html

xvii. Ezra Suleiman, Schizophrénies françaises, 2008, Paris: Grasset.

xviii. <http://www.opentheodoors.com/english/index.html>; "The WPA International Programme is designed to dispel the myths and misunderstandings surrounding schizophrenia."

xix. <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>

xx.

http://www.fondation-fondamental.org/page_dyn.php?mytabsmenu=1&lang=FR&page_id=MDAwMDAwMDAwOA

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