

Dubal, George (1909-1993)

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DUBAL, GEORGE (1909-1993)

George Dubal, Swiss psychoanalyst and doctor of theology, was born in Geneva on September 18, 1909, and died there on March 9, 1993.

He received a Protestant education. Upon finishing secondary school, he commenced university studies at Eugène Pittard's laboratory, then successively attended the universities of Strasbourg, Geneva, and Paris. He took part in the new-schools movement in French-speaking Switzerland and took a very early interest in psychoanalytic thinking. At the age of sixteen he experimented with the Jungian method of free association. "This method," he wrote in his memoirs, "enabled me to save a comrade from suicide."

He discovered the psychoanalytic experience from one of the first Swiss psychoanalysts, Dr. Gustave Richard of Neuchâtel. He joined Richard, Marguerite Bosseret, and William Perret in creating "new schools" to forward educational reform. Dr. Richard entrusted one of his sons to him for psychotherapy. During this period Dubal met Charles Baudouin, one of the pioneers of psychoanalysis in Geneva. He went on to become his friend and collaborator. A course of several months spent working in Préfargier Hospital introduced him to the treatment of psychotics. He then encountered Charles Odier, with whom he undertook psychoanalysis. In 1933 he corresponded with Freud on the subject of the libido. He wrote, "In accordance with the concept of general relativity, Freud responded to me that he had no major objection to making a distinction between a general libido and a particular libido."

In 1935 he married a psychoanalysis buff who wrote various works under the name of Rosette Dubal, among them *La psychanalyse du diable* (Psychoanalyzing the devil) in 1953. Dubal and his wife were both committed to social change and

collaborated closely in integrating into social change a psychoanalytic point of view. His psychoanalytic work within the framework of the cure and preventive work outside this context were of equal importance to George Dubal. In fact, like Sándor Ferenczi or Wilhelm Reich, he struggled for the inclusion of psychoanalytic considerations in education and cultural policy.

Before World War II, if we can trust his memories, he was the only practicing psychoanalyst in Lyons, where he became the friend and collaborator of Dr. A. Réquet, head of the Vinatier Clinic. He claims to have introduced psychoanalytic thought to members of the Esprit Group under Frutiger, the president. He also gathered around him friends from the Philosophical Society to discuss the influence of psychoanalysis on philosophical thought. His pedagogical need to reach the general public spurred him on to write a hundred or so pamphlets on psychoanalysis, some of which were published.

In 1953 he made the acquaintance of Marie Bonaparte and John Leuba, who invited him to attend the 15th Conference of French-Speaking Psychoanalysts in Paris and to react to the theory of the instincts propounded by Maurice Bénéassy. Two years earlier he had published in the *Revue française de psychanalyse* (French review of psychoanalysis) a much-appreciated paper titled "La psychanalyse existentielle de Sartre (Sartre's existential psychoanalysis). As early as 1947 in his book *Psychanalyse et connaissance* (Psychoanalysis and Knowledge) he had analyzed the limits of a phenomenological approach and criticized the finalism of a theory of the instincts as reflected in psychoanalytic practice.

During the events of May 1968, when protests by students at the Sorbonne became violent and led to protests at universities across France and strikes by French workers, George Dubal defended the students and called into question the relationship between knowledge and power, sparing neither psychoanalysts nor the societies that shelter them. Like some of his Zurich colleagues, he did not share the ideology of those who, as he wrote in his memoirs, "try to put their patients in the party line with respect to power," to the detriment of respect for the individual.

In the French-speaking Swiss psychoanalytic community, in his practice, as a committed author writing in the journal *Construire* (Building) and the review *Vivre* (Living), and in his conferences at the Artimon, George Dubal was a creative individual who defied all forms of man's indoctrination and stultification of man.

Mario Cifali

See also: Switzerland (French-speaking).

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