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Forms of Life, Norms of Life

On the Encounter between Tosquelles and Canguilhem

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> *J'ai appris avec tristesse la mort de Tosquelles.*
> *Ma rencontre de cet homme, dans les*
> *circonstances que tu connais, est un des événements,*
> *aussi mémorables qu'imprévus, de ma vie.*
> Georges Canguilhem to Lucien Bonnafé,
> October 9, 1994[1]

Queer Tosquelles cannot be conceived without a physiologically based concept of normativity. The ability to make axiomatic judgments (*Werturteile*) – for example, to distinguish the nutritious from the noxious or the useful from the harmful – is not just a cognitive capacity and it is not limited to humans. This ability can already be recognized in simple forms of life. A few years ago, experiments by Joseph Dexter, Sudhakaran Prabakaran, and Jeremy Guawardena showed that complex behavior in this sense can be observed even in extremely simple organisms. As Dexter, Prabakaran and Guawardena showed in their research work on *Stentor roeseli* – a single-celled, horn-shaped organism – processes

of decision-making and learning occur even in microorganisms that have no brain or nervous system.[2]

In 2019, these scientists, who are affiliated with Harvard Medical School, succeeded for the first time in confirming findings that the physiologist Herbert Spencer Jennings had already written about around the year 1900, findings that were subsequently adopted by a large number of psychological and philosophical authors from Sigmund Freud and Max Scheler to Kurt Goldstein and Georges Canguilhem.[3] Through patient and attentive observations of protozoa, including *Stentor roeseli,* Jennings had shown that these "lower organisms" exhibit very selective behavior, for example, in their search for food. Subsequently, these "elementary organisms" became a kind of paradigm for the relationship between the organism and its environment in certain branches of psychological and philosophical theory. One need only think of the late Freud, for example, who in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in direct reference to Jennings, refers to the irritable "globules" or "vesicle" of protoplasmic substance, which in its interaction with the environment continually forms "pseudopods," with the help of which it "tastes" external stimuli.[4]

Looking at this research and its history does nothing to change the provocation of *Queer Tosquelles*. The title is obviously a deliberate anachronism, a "queer" connection in itself, which moreover does not yet seem sure of the direction it is pointing in. If Queer Studies is understood to mean the critical and post-structuralist theoretical current that has emerged from *Lesbian and Gay Studies* since the early 1990s, aiming to address questions of gender and sexual practices that exist independently and/or outside of heterosexuality, if Queer Studies refers to a discourse that was shaped by authors such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and significantly inspired by Michel Foucault,

[5] then François Tosquelles certainly has nothing to do with it. The reason is simple: the Catalan-French psychiatrist's main topic is not gender and/or sexuality, but the question of madness, and for reasons of time alone his theoretical references are hardly comparable with those of Butler or Sedgwick.

However, if one accepts a physiologically based concept of normativity, then the title in question can indeed claim to be of provocative interest. This, precisely, is what is illustrated by the encounter that took place between Tosquelles and Georges Canguilhem at the Saint-Alban psychiatric clinic in the 1940s. As is well known, Canguilhem, who was trained as a philosopher and doctor, hid in Saint-Alban for a few weeks in the summer of 1944 so that he could treat resistance fighters who had been wounded after the military conflict with the German occupiers at Mont Mouchet.[6]

Now, Canguilhem is one of the key proponents of a concept of "normativity" that highlights the capacity for judgment and choice as anchored in life itself, and Tosquelles repeatedly refers approvingly to the former's doctoral thesis on *The Normal and the Pathological*, in which this concept is developed.[7] As we will see in the following, the psychophysiological paradigm of unicellular organisms plays an important role in this context. Indeed, the amoeba, a close relative of *Stentor roeseli,* is the crucial example that Canguilhem uses to illustrate the ability of organisms to determine for themselves the forms and norms of their lives, including their endowment with organs.

This context is of interest here because more recent discussions on queerness explicitly refer to a concept of normativity understood in this way. In his remarkable book *Vers la normativité queer*, Pierre Niedergang stimulates the current debate by referring to

Canguilhem. Niedergang's starting point is the "normalization of sexuality" as it was criticized in French queer discourses in the 1990s. Among activists and writers such as Didier Lestrade and Guillaume Dustan, not least in reaction to the fight against AIDS, an idea of sexuality developed at this time that saw itself as largely unbridled – as "*sans contrainte*," that is, as "anti-normative" or even "non-normative." In contrast, Niedergang argues that this unlimited freedom does not exist *de facto*, and rather, that even in the field of queer practices, it is ultimately always about establishing different and/or new norms.[8]

Niedergang refers to Canguilhem for this understanding of normativity, which focuses on the collective struggle for alternative forms of life. As Canguilhem argues, this very struggle is deeply inscribed in the process and phenomenon of life itself. The biological and the social are therefore closely linked. This appears to be a remarkable turn not only in terms of content, but also in terms of history, as Niedergang traces back from Foucault, the often-cited pioneer of Queer Studies, to his academic mentor. After all, it was none other than Canguilhem who reviewed Foucault's doctoral thesis on the history of madness in 1960 – incidentally in part because people around Canguilhem knew about his stay in Saint-Alban.

Niedergang's argument could have been even more convincing if it had included findings that are now available about Canguilhem's own discussion of sexuality. As Ivan Moja-Diez and Matteo Vagelli have recently shown, in the early 1940s – that is, shortly before writing his doctoral thesis on the normal and the pathological – Canguilhem explored the question of vital normativity, including with respect to sex determination. Regarding clinical cases of hermaphroditism, such as those described in the 1930s by the French physician Louis Ombrédane, he argued that the decisive

factor in this connection was not the *structure* of the sexual organs, nor the more or less vital *functions* of these organs. Rather, the decisive factor is the "choice of behavior," which is brought about by the normative activity of the organic individual.[9]

Following these considerations, I argue that the figure of thought through which a *Queer Tosquelles* discourse can become plausible consists of two elements: first, the notion of organs whose effectiveness is not determined by their structure, and also not simply by their function, but rather primarily by their use. Here, it is not decisive whether these are internal or external organs (organs are nothing other than tools) or whether they are used by individual or collective bodies, including entire societies. Thus, technology can be meant.

It is the use of these organs, not the organ itself, that is to be understood as normative, and I mean this in a specific sense: the use does not express certain norms or standards that have been defined in advance. Rather, it is the use of the organ itself that defines the norms – and the forms of life that correspond to them.

Second, the figure of thought in question encompasses the notion of something like a liquid matrix, a soft environment, a magma, in which the organs exist, from which they emerge, in which they grow and develop, but in which they can also disappear again. With regard to microorganisms, this is the thick liquid, the (proto)plasma, in and through which amoebae, ciliates (such as *Stentor roeseli*), and other protozoa exist; with regard to humans, it is the "body without organs" that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari described with regard to the experience of psychosis, particularly in the vein of Antonin Artaud;[10] and in the case of institutions, it is the radical openness and flexibility of the institution, as

exemplified by the therapeutic work of Tosquelles or Jean Oury, the later founder of La Borde.

The basic intuition expressed in this twofold figure of thought can be summarized by a statement made in Tosquelles' lecture at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) in 1947 on "Psychopathology and Dialectical Materialism," incidentally, to an audience that included a medical student named Jean Oury.[11] With regard to the brain, Tosquelles explains here that "this organ is produced throughout life's course, and that, to a certain extent, we produce it ourselves."[12] The discourse about *Queer Tosquelles* ultimately only makes sense in reference to this *factory under the skin*, which was also described by Artaud and subsequently invoked by Oury as well as Deleuze and Guattari.[13]

1. Outlines of an encounter

Honor to whom honor is due. The first historical account of Canguilhem's stay at the Saint-Alban clinic was published in 1986 in the second volume of Élisabeth Roudinesco's history of psychoanalysis in France, *La Bataille de cent ans*:

> Saint-Alban is a motley crew of resistance fighters, lunatics and therapists. Paul Éluard and Georges Sadoul hid there and read texts written by patients. In July [sic] 1944, Georges Canguilhem emerges from the *maquis* underground to spend a few days there and care for the wounded in the surrounding farms.[14]

Roudinesco limits herself to the essentials. In fact, there is no mention in her account at this point that Canguilhem was in any way interested in the Saint-Alban clinic or Tosquelles' psychiatric

work. The author of the *Essay* only appears here in his role as a Resistance doctor caring for the French fighters wounded in the battle of Mount Mouchet.

In the same year, 1986, Tosquelles mentions Canguilhem's stay in Saint-Alban in the appendix to the publication of his medical doctoral thesis. He had submitted and defended his thesis *Essay on the Meaning of Lived Experience in Psychopathology* [Essai sur le sens du vécu en psychopathologie] at the Ecole de Médecine in Paris in 1948. When he published it almost forty (!) years later, an appendix described the diverse activities within the clinic, including in particular artistic and literary work carried out at Saint-Alban. Here, Tosquelles explains:

> In this respect, the presence of G. Canguilhem must also be emphasized, with his redefinition of the boundaries and dynamics inherent in the normal and the pathological. That was a great help to us. It should be noted in passing that Canguilhem's work found a very firm foundation in Gestalt psychology.[15]

The difference to Roudinesco is striking. While the latter gives a precise date and only briefly refers to Canguilhem's resistance activities, Tosquelles refers to the content of Canguilhem's historical and theoretical work without giving a concrete date. Instead of mentioning Canguilhem's activities in the Resistance, he refers to his medical thesis, the aforementioned *Essays on Some Problems Concerning the Normal and the Pathological*.

For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that Canguilhem's doctoral thesis was defended at the Université de Strasbourg in June 1943 – shortly before his stay in Saint-Alban. At that time, however, the university had been moved from

Strasbourg to Clermont-Ferrand to protect it from the Nazis. In the period that followed, the Université de Strasbourg developed into an important center of resistance activities in Auvergne. Canguilhem was involved in these activities in a militant manner, which is evident with respect to his participation in the battle of Mont Mouchet, among other things. The content of his work also reflects these firm commitments. Ultimately, Canguilhem's understanding of normativity cannot be separated from his activities in the resistance. It gives expression to a *résistance de fond*. [16]

Canguilhem was connected to Saint-Alban in two ways. On the one hand, he knew the psychiatrist Lucien Bonnafé, who directed the Saint-Alban clinic starting in 1943, from his medical studies in Toulouse in the mid-1930s.[17] Another link between Saint-Alban and the Université de Strasbourg was one of Canguilhem's student friends and later colleagues, the psychologist Daniel Lagache. Through Lagache, some Jewish students – Denise Glaser, for example – were hidden in Saint-Alban to prevent them from Nazi capture in Clermont-Ferrand.[18] However, this did not prevent the occupying forces from carrying out mass arrests at the university in the fall of 1943 and deporting more than a hundred university members, including students, staff, and professors, from Clermont-Ferrand to German concentration camps – including the Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar.[19]

The extent to which Canguilhem's doctoral thesis was a 'great help' for Tosquelles remains unclear at this point, as does the question of what is meant by "Gestalt psychology" in this context.

Canguilhem does not refer to Gestalt psychologists à la Wertheimer, Köhler, or Kafka in his doctoral thesis. Tosquelles may be instead using this label to refer to the holistic work of the

German-Jewish neurobiologist Kurt Goldstein, in particular his treatise *The Organism*. This study is indeed an important basis for Canguilhem's work, and it is a study that Tosquelles and Oury also rely on – not least because Goldstein's *Organism* refers back to protozoa and the work of microbiologists such as Jennings and emphasizes the constructive aspects of the organism in relation to its environments.[20]

In the appendix to the printed version of his doctoral thesis, Tosquelles does not limit himself to the positive assessment and theoretical positioning of Canguilhem. He also mentions joint work that took place between Canguilhem, the writer Paul Éluard, the psychiatrist André Chaurand and himself:

> I still keep as a kind of treasure texts relating to our "encounters" [...] in which the same patient (Melle. Co...) [sic] was the subject of a poetic reading by Paul Éluard and the subject of a phenomenological and existentialist reading by Canguilhem... which was completed by an approach to the same patient by Chaurand with the Rorschach and unfortunately also by a really brief and clumsy sketch of a veneer of psychoanalytic terms on my part.[21]

The texts that Tosquelles refers to here do not appear to have been preserved in his papers.[22] But at least the contribution by Canguilhem has been published posthumously – in 2015, as part of the edition of the *Œuvres complètes*. We will come back to it in a minute.

This publication was preceded by a number of statements Canguilhem made about his encounter with Tosquelles. Once again, the occasions for these statements were made by the aforementioned Élisabeth Roudinesco. At a colloquium

Roudinesco organized in 1991 to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Michel Foucault's *Histoire de la folie* – the *thèse* for which Canguilhem was the main reviewer – Canguilhem elucidated the context in which Foucault's original supervisor, the philosopher Jean Hyppolite, came up with the idea of asking him to take on this role. The decisive factor was Canguilhem's former interest in psychological and psychiatric issues:

> If my medical doctoral thesis of 1943 mainly concerned problems of physiology, the examination of the normal and the pathological suggested that I should also refer to authors such as Karl Jaspers, Eugène Minkowski and Henri Ey. In the summer of 1944, as a doctor in the Resistance in Auvergne, I spent several weeks hiding and caring for wounded people in the psychiatric hospital in Saint-Alban, in the Lozère, and in the surrounding area. I had already met the director of the hospital, Lucien Bonnafé, in Toulouse. He had taken in the doctor François Tosquelles, who we know has since taken his place in the debates on institutional psychotherapy. I took part in some of their work. We discussed a lot. I have vivid memories of her warmth.[23]

Canguilhem thus confirms the collaboration that took place between him, Tosquelles, Éluard and other colleagues.

The fact that this was not just a matter of diverse 'discussions,' but actually of active support, only became clear on a later occasion, however – in an interview that Canguilhem gave in the wake of another colloquium organized by Roudinesco. In 1993, the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of his medical doctoral thesis on the normal and the pathological was celebrated. In a subsequent interview, Canguilhem again talks about his stay in Saint-Alban:

> Yes, I spent two months in the Resistance, in the place that became the symbol of the Resistance in Auvergne, Mont Mouchet, and it was there that I came into contact with the Saint-Alban psychiatric hospital, where I met somebody I had known since Toulouse, Bonnafé, and a psychiatrist who had fled from French-speaking Spain, called Tosquelles, who has since become famous. I could tell you about an interrogation I carried out under Tosquelles' guidance with a lady in the Saint-Alban psychiatric hospital.[24]

On this occasion, it remains unclear what kind of 'interrogation' is meant. This will only be clarified in 2015, with the publication of the relevant document in Volume IV of the *Œuvres complètes*.

2. Canguilhem in Saint-Alban

One of Canguilhem's notebooks provides information about the work he carried out in Saint-Alban in the summer of 1944. Entitled "Observation suggested and supervised by Dr. Tosquelles. Stay in Saint-Alban from June 23 to July 5, 1944" [Observation proposée et contrôlée par le Docteur Tosquelles. Sejour à St. Alban du 23 juin au 5 juillet 1944],[25] these notes make clear that the 'interrogation' carried out by Canguilhem was based on an application of the Rorschach test. In addition to Chaurand, who – as Tosquelles reports – carried out this test with the patient in question, this diagnostic tool was therefore also used by Canguilhem.

Reading the relevant passages helps to elucidate why Tosquelles describes Canguilhem's study as 'phenomenological and existentialist.' Canguilhem's description is reminiscent of the

philosophical terminology of Jean-Paul Sartre, his former classmate at the ENS in Paris:

> We show *Mme. C.* the Rorschach plates. Since it is the general problem of similarity that is very explicitly posed for her, it seemed interesting to record the comments that were made alongside the explicit - and incidentally not very systematic - attempts at identification qua similarity. [...] In general, *Mme. C.* proceeds by means of distinctions, exclusions, negations: This is not a leg, this does not resemble an airplane. For *Mme. C.*, the world is bereft of all qualities. For her, there are no more sensual qualities. "What I eat is null and void." [...] In summary: a remarkable experience of *neantization* (néantisation).[26]

The issue here is therefore not a formal application of the Rorschach test with a corresponding evaluation. Canguilhem seems to be pursuing more of an explorative, qualitative procedure that is primarily focused on the content of the patient's answers rather than, as with the 'classic' Rorschach, paying attention to their formal aspects.

The discourse about 'neantization' obviously refers to Sartre, but not only to him. Canguilhem is undoubtedly also referring to Tosquelles' terminology and interests, which – as the doctoral thesis from 1948 makes clear – were oriented towards the psychotic "experience" of the end of the world, to which schizophrenic patients in particular are exposed. In fact, the patient "Mme. C..." studied by Canguilhem is also mentioned a short time later in Tosquelles' doctoral thesis (albeit as "Melle. [sic] C.") in the context of a discussion about the loneliness and isolation of schizophrenia. In particular, Tosquelles reproduces the following

dialog with *Mlle. C.*, which is again reminiscent of Sartre, but also already seems to gesture forward towards Beckett:

> Question: What would you like to do?
> Answer: We are waiting...
> Question: Who am I?
> Answer: Nobody.[27]

As already mentioned, Paul Éluard was also familiar with this patient. Mlle. C. may even be the patient mentioned in a newspaper article written by the Éluard's daughter, Cécile Éluard, in the fall of 1945 during another stay in Saint-Alban. Cécile Éluard's article refers to a female patient who expresses herself as follows: "Who am I? There is a huge difference between me and the Creator, I don't know myself and I don't know Him. I am nothing and am stuck in the impossibility of life. I am nothingness [...]." Cécile Eluard comments on this discourse by pointing out that "philosophers such as Pascal, Plato and Sartre" asked themselves similar questions.[28] What remains implicit in Canguilhem is here expressly stated.

The demonstrable extent of Canguilhem's active involvement in the context of institutional psychotherapy is thus outlined. At the same time, the references to Canguilhem that can be found in Tosquelles and in the wider discourse context of institutional psychotherapy should be discussed: Oury, Guattari, Deleuze and Guattari...

It is no exaggeration to locate the first reception of the 1943 *Essay* in precisely this context.[29] Camille Robcis was probably the first to point out this reception, albeit without paying particular attention to it or placing it in an appropriate context. In fact, Robcis does mention Canguilhem's stay at Saint-Alban, but –

similar to Roudinesco in her first note on the subject – ignores the fact that Canguilhem was actively involved in the work of the clinic.[30]

This makes her reference to an essay published in 1947, in which Bonnafé, Chaurand and Tosquelles discuss the structure and meaning of the pathological "experience," all the more interesting and valuable. Robcis emphasizes that this report states, among other things:

> In the psychiatric clinic, the patient appears from the outset as a different "form of life," but works on medical methodology are also oriented in this direction. As Canguilhem has recently shown in a study on the normal and the pathological, without referring to concepts of the psychiatric clinic, the morbid event [*l'événement morbide*] is not simply a quantitatively varied prolongation of the physiological state: it is another "form of life."[31]

This is one of the earliest, if not *the* earliest published reference to Canguilhem's *Essay*. Note that "form of life" is in quotation marks, as if it were a quotation. However, Canguilhem himself does not use this expression in a relevant way. Rather, he speaks of *genre de vie* [way or manner of life], which is somewhat different. Referring to the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, Canguilhem uses it to describe the sociological and biological reality of life of different classes in a given society.[32] What is meant here by *forme de vie* is probably something else, namely the "norm of life," that is, the fact that the experience of illness is the manifestation of a vital normativity.

Be that as it may, the view expressed here that illness is not simply a quantitative deviation from an average state of health, but a

qualitatively different condition, is possibly the substantive reason why Tosquelles declared in 1986 that Canguilhem's study on the normal and the pathological was a 'great help' for the work at Saint-Alban.

This hypothesis is confirmed by further references to Canguilhem that can be observed in the context of Institutional Psychotherapy. In addition to Tosquelles, it is none other than Jean Oury who refers to Canguilhem early on in his medical doctoral thesis. Oury shares Tosquelles' enthusiasm for Goldstein, who was ultimately also the fundamental author for Canguilhem. But in his *thèse* Oury also refers directly to Canguilhem's study of the normal and the pathological. In his 1950 *Essay on Artistic Creation*, he states that the difference between the terms "abnormality" and "anomaly" was "very well explained by Canguilhem." In Oury's eyes, this explanation is also productive for his consideration of artistic practices:

> *Abnormality* and *anomaly* are independent of each other. A normal individual can create an anomalous work (example: any painting of a new orientation is considered as anomalous); an abnormal individual can create a "normal" work.[33]

Incidentally, it is precisely this terminology that Deleuze and Guattari will take up when they explain the processes of "Becoming Intense, Becoming Animal, Becoming Imperceptible" in *A Thousand Plateaus*.[34] In this connection, they also explicitly refer to Canguilhem's *Essay* and provide a definition of "anomaly" that can remains relevant for Queer Studies. Obviously, processes of becoming a woman are also included when Deleuze and Guattari write:

> It has been noted that the origin of the word *anomal* ("anomalous"), an adjective that has fallen into disuse in French, is very different from that of *anormal* ("abnormal"): *a-normal*, a Latin adjective lacking a noun in French, refers to that which is outside rules or goes against the rules, whereas *an-omalie*, a Greek noun that has lost its adjective, designates the unequal, the coarse, the rough, the cutting edge of deterritorialization.[35]

Mediated via Oury and Tosquelles, there is thus a continued reference to the ability of organic individuals, profiled by Canguilhem, to determine the forms and norms of their lives themselves – even and especially when these norms do not correspond with the "normal," with what is common and average. As Canguilhem's *Essay* pointedly states: "[D]iversity is not disease; the *anomalous* is not the pathological."[36]

3. The body without organs

At this point, we should return to the lecture that Tosquelles gave at the ENS in 1947. This lecture, entitled "Psychopathology and Dialectical Materialism," not only reveals Tosquelles' familiarity with psycho-physiological research on "single cell beings" (*êtres unicellulaires*), the microorganisms to which Jennings, Goldstein and Canguilhem paradigmatically referred.[37] It also repeatedly quotes the physiologist Claude Bernard. As a matter of fact, Bernard's *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine* functions as a kind of cipher for a materialistic life science. Oury also refers to Bernard in this sense.[38]

In other publications, however, Bernard dealt with the structure and function of "elementary organisms." Remarkably, he had

already described these in the late nineteenth century in a way that in some respects anticipated Artaud's description of the "body without organs." For example, Bernard writes:

> It is not important whether a living being has organs or more or less differentiated and complicated apparatuses, lungs, a heart, a brain, glands and so on. All this is not necessary to lead a life in a perfect way. The lower beings live without these apparatuses, which are only the characteristic of the luxurious organizations [of the living] The study of lower beings is especially useful for General Physiology, because in them life exists in the naked state, so to speak.[39]

Around a hundred years later, Deleuze and Guattari wrote, with Artaud:

> *No mouth. No tongue. No teeth. No larynx. No esophagus. No belly. No anus.* [...] The body is the body/it is all by itself/and has no need of organs [...].[40]

Not only the psychotic experience per se, not just the often-quoted example of the egg, but also the physiological research on unicellular beings (what Bernard calls "General Physiology") should therefore be kept in mind if one wants to understand the figure of the body without organs more precisely.

In his lecture, Tosquelles translates this figure into the demand that matter as such should be conceived of as complex and dynamic:

> Above all, *dialectics teaches us to conceive of everything in term of its development.* From then on, 'spirit,' 'energy' and 'matter' can no longer appear as irreducible antinomies: they are stages in the evolution of a whole, of which they are parts.[41]

The idea of development initially appears to be very general. Over the course of the lecture, however, Tosquelles transfers his dynamized, one might almost say 'animistic' notion of matter to the living organism. Thus, he explains that the organ of the brain not only cannot be separated from its environment, but also not from its development. Rather, it would depend on understanding "the biological action of a determined organ as constitutive of the *unitary structure* of that determined organ, of its materiality."[42] In other words, it is the use of the organ that determines what the organ actually is.

Tosquelles' lecture also refers to Marx's *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* to explain the fact that humans produce humans through their active life, right down to the intricate relationships of the body and its organs. Rather than going into this in more detail, the convergence with Canguilhem's views should be emphasized. Canguilhem does not refer directly to the early Marx in his *Essay*, even if, as was shown elsewhere, he can certainly be considered a representative of "Vitalist Marxism."[43]

This is further demonstrated by the fact that Canguilhem, when explaining his view of the normativity of life, refers to the very microorganisms with which Bernard and Tosquelles were familiar. The relevant passages of the *Essay* directly address the question of sexuality: "Even for an amoeba, living means preference and exclusion. A digestive tract, sexual organs, constitute an organism's behavioral norms."[44]

Organs *are* the norms of behavior. This is precisely the concept of the primacy of use or, in Tosquelles' words, of "biological activity" with respect to organs, as emphasized at the beginning of this article in reference to the question of sex determination. It is not

the structure, not the function, but the use of the organ that is the decisive factor.

In other words, normativity is a practice, and the example of the amoeba cited by Canguilhem shows that behavior produces organs. At any rate, this is how one of the other microbiologists of the time, Alfred Binet, describes it when he points out that in these living beings, food is ingested "either with the help of a permanent mouth" or "with the help of a temporary mouth [*bouche adventice*] that is improvised when necessary."[45] The organs emerge with their use, and they disappear again afterwards, in the liquid matrix that makes up the body of these elementary organisms.

Canguilhem is aware that psychoanalysis has a similar conception of the normativity of life. The late Freud developed a comparable conception, for example in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, with his recourse to the "simplest of living organisms," which consist of a "little-differentiated globule of protoplasmic substance,". In his remarkable study on "Negation," Freud ties the emergence of the ego-function of choice and judgment to the nutrition-seeking behavior of protozoa.[46]

However, following the publication of the *Essay* and his stay in Saint-Alban, Canguilhem referred to another author in this context. In the early 1950s, he relied on the Catalunyan physiologist Ramón Turró, who was a professor in the municipal laboratory of Barcelona at the turn of the century, to explain the anchoring of the judgment function and thus of values in life itself. As early as 1914, that is, before Freud, Turro had published a treatise on the "Origins of Cognition" in which he gave nutrition a prominent place in the development of judgments.[47]

In this context, Turro speaks of the "existence of a kind of lower intelligence," which results in the tendencies that unconsciously guide the organism in its choice of food. At the same time, Turro emphasized the literally decisive role of the organic individual: "It is the subject that divides the appropriate portions out of itself, and that is how it has always been."[48] At this point, Canguilhem has nothing to add to this.

Conclusion

It is tempting to assume that Canguilhem was inspired in this reference to Catalunyan physiology by his contact with Tosquelles, with whom he discussed and collaborated during his stay in Saint-Alban and who he would remember fondly until the 1990s. It is equally tempting to assume that the link between Canguilhem and Tosquelles is a Vitalist Marxism that closely connects the question of life with the metabolism between man and nature. Marx described this metabolism as "labor" and made it clear that this is by no means just a conscious, cognitive activity, but extends to the level of the body and its organs. It is precisely this kind of dialectical materialism that is also of considerable importance for understanding what *Queer Tosquelles* is all about.

In Tosquelles' psychiatric theory, Vitalist Marxism is translated into a materialist commitment to the "field of classical medical biology, from which psychiatry cannot and should not move away."[49] Psychiatry is therefore not simply an idealist human science (in the sense of *Geisteswissenschaft*), but also not purely social science. It is first and foremost a life science. Its starting point is the body and its organs – "biological activity," as Tosquelles puts it. Secondly, the corresponding psychiatric theory is based on the conviction that even in madness "the presence of

the human being is revealed," the existence of an infinite field "in which every form, every event is possible."[50]

Firmly anchored in a consideration of the body and its organs, Tosquelles' theory opposes the attribution of "non-value" (*non valeur*) to the psychological experience of negation, catastrophe, and the end of the world, as is the case in psychoanalysis, but ultimately also in Heideggerian accounts of existence, where, according to Tosquelles, the "freedom, responsibility, meaning and actual energy of the madman (*aliéné*) disappear."[51]

Tosquelles follows Marx's early remarks on the production of humans as "species beings" (*Gattungswesen*) and, at the same time, Canguilhem's description of the relationship between the normal and the pathological. As a result, he is able to develop a programmatic that has not lost its relevance to this day: "The normal human being and the madman are beings that produce themselves by gaining consciousness of their being. [...] *Madness is a creation (*création*), not a passivity*."[52]

Humans are living beings that create themselves. They actively determine the norms by which they want to live. For *Queer Tosquelles*, this is the first, decisive line.

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[1] "It is with sadness that I learn of Tosquelles' death. My encounter with this man, under the circumstances known to you, is one of the most unexpected and unforgettable events of my life."

[2] Joseph Dexter, Sudhakaran Prabakaran, and Jeremy Guawardena, "A Complex Hierarchy of Avoidance Behaviors in a Single-Cell Eukaryote," *Current Biololgy* 29/24 (2019): 4323–4329.

Unless otherwise stated, all translations of texts in foreign languages are my own (H.Sch.).

[3] Judy Johns Schloegel and Henning Schmidgen, "General Physiology, Experimental Psychology, and Evolutionism. Unicellular Organisms as Objects of Psychophysiological Research, 1877-1918," *Isis* 93 (2002): 614-645.

[4] See Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, edited and translated by James Strachey *et al.*, 24 vols., London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953–74, Vol. 18, pp.1–64, especially pp.24–29.

[5] For an overview, see, for example, Donald E. Hall and Annamarie Jagose (eds.), *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, London/New York: Routledge, 2013, and Mike Laufenberg and Ben Trott (eds.), *Queer Studies. Schlüsseltexte*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2023.

[6] On this episode, see Karine Ben Faour, "Georges Canguilhem. Entre folie et résistance," in *Trait d'union. Les chemins de l'art brut à Saint-Alban-sur-Limagnole*, Lille: Musée d'art moderne, 2007, pp. 27–31.

[7] Georges Canguilhem, "Essay on Some Problems Concerning the Normal and the Pathological" [1943], in *The Normal and the Pathological*, trans. by Carolyn R. Fawcett, New York: Zone, 1991, pp. 33–229. With respect to the psychological ideas of Canguilhem see Luc Surjous, «Science et soin du psychisme dans l'œuvre de Georges Canguilhem», *L'Évolution psychiatrique* 89/2 (2024): 357–376, and Camille Limoges et Pierre-Olivier Méthot, «*Le Traité de*

Psychologie de Canguilhem et Planet. Situation, interprétation et portée d'un ouvrage inachevé», *Philosophie* 163 (2024): 45-60.

[8] Pierre Niedergang, *Vers la normativité queer*, Toulouse: blast, 2023, pp. 9–21.

[9] Ivan Moja-Diez and Matteo Vagelli, "Georges Canguilhem on Sex Determination and the Normativity of Life," *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 44/4 (2022): 1-24.

[10] See especially Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp. 149–166.

[11] Jean Oury, *Il, donc. Conversations avec Pierre Babin et Jean-Pierre LeBrun*, Paris: Éditions 10/18, 1978, pp. 10–11.

[12] François Tosquelles, "Psychopathology and Dialectical Materialism", in Marlon Miguel and Elena Vogman (eds.), *Psychotherapy and Materialism. Essays by François Tosquelles and Jean Oury*, Berlin: ICI Press, 2024, pp. 47–88, here p. 56.

[13] See Jean Oury, *Essai sur la conation esthétique* [1950], Orléans: Éditions Le Pli, 2005, p. 148, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, p. 3. On this point, see also the position of Didier Eribon, *Principes d'une pensée critique*, Paris: Fayard, 2016, who follows Foucault as well as Deleuze and Guattari.

[14] Élisabeth Roudinesco, *La bataille de cent ans. Histoire de la psychanalyse en France, II (1925-1985)*, Paris: Seuil, 1986, p. 204.

[15] François Tosquelles, *Le vécu de la fin du monde dans la folie,* Préface de Jean Oury, Nantes: Éd. de l'AREFPPI, 1986, p. 241.

[16] See Lucien Bonnafé, "Sur la résistance de fond. Un modèle: Georges Canguilhem," *Chimères* 29 (1996): 171-180.

[17] Lucien Bonnafé, "Psychiatrie en Résistance," *Chimères* 24 (1995): 11-27.

[18] Tosquelles, *Le vécu de la fin du monde,* p. 238, as well as Raphael Koenig, "Résistance et vie intellectuelle à Saint-Alban (1940-1944)," in Carles Guerra and Joana Masó (eds.), *La déconniatrie. Art, exil et psychiatrie autor de François Tosquelles*, Barcelona: Arcàdia, 2021, pp. 107–116.

[19] For an overview, see Léon Strauss, "L'université française de Strasbourg repliée à Clermont-Ferrand," in Christian Baechler, François Igersheim and Pierre Racine (eds.), *Les Reichsuniversitäten de Strasbourg et de Poznan et les résistances universitaires, 1941-1944*, Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2005, pp. 238–261.

[20] Kurt Goldstein, *The Organism. A Holistic Approach to Biology Derived from Pathological Data in Man,* New York etc.: American Book Company, 1939, p. 3 and p. 221.

[21] Tosquelles, *Le vécu de la fin du monde dans la folie,* p. 241.

[22] I would like to thank Elena Vogman and Jacques Tosquellas for this information.

[23] Georges Canguilhem, "Ouverture," in *Penser la folie. Essais sur Michel Foucault*, Paris: Galilée, 1992, pp. 37–42, here p. 40.

[24] François Bing and Jean- François Braunstein, “Entretien avec Georges Canguilhem,” in François Bing, Jean- François Braunstein and Élisabeth Roudinesco (eds.), *Actualité de Georges Canguilhem. Le normale et le pathologique*, Le Plessis-Robinson: Synthélabo, 1998, pp. 121–135, here p. 123.

[25] Georges Canguilhem, “Observation à l’hôpital psychiatrique de Saint-Alban (Lozère). (Juillet 1944, Maquis). Mme C...,” in *Œuvres complètes, tome IV. Résistance, philosophie biologique et histoire des sciences (1940-1965)*, Textes présentés et annotés par Camille Limoges, Paris: Vrin, 2015, pp. 183–189.

[26] Canguilhem, “Observation à l’hôpital psychiatrique de Saint-Alban,” p. 184, p. 185 and p. 186.

[27] Tosquelles, *Le vécu de la fin du monde,* p. 44.

[28] Cécile Agay [=Cécile Éluard], “J’ai visité des femmes enfermeés dans leur propre univers,” *Les Étoiles* (October 9, 1945): 3, quoted from François Tosquelles, *Soigner les institutions*, Textes choisis et présentés par Joana Masó, Paris: L’Arachnéen, 2021, pp. 199–201, here p. 200.

[29] In this sense, see also Pierre-Frédéric Daled, “Un demi-siècle de réception de l'*Essai sur quelques problèmes concernant le normal et le pathologique*,” in Pierre-Frédéric Daled, Mathias Girel and Nathalie Queyroux (eds.), *Georges Canguilhem, 80 ans après Le Normal et le Pathologique*, Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2024, pp. 19–38.

[30] Camille Robcis, *Disalienation. Politics, Philosophy, and Radical Psychiatry in Postwar France*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2021, p. 35.

[31] Robcis, *Disalienation*, p. 36 and p. 164 note 93, and Lucien Bonnafé, André Chaurand and François Tosquelles, "Structure et sens de l'evénément morbide," *Annales médico-psychologiques* 1 (1945): 174–181, here pp. 175–176. I am following here the translation suggested by Robcis. – For unknown reasons, Daled, "Un demi-siècle de réception de l'*Essai*," p. 22, seems to assume that the text by Bonnafé, Chaurand and Tosquelles was only published in 1986.

[32] See Frédéric Keck, "Vie sociale et genres de vie. Une lecture des *Causes du suicide* de Maurice Halbwachs," *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 13 (2005): 33-50.

[33] Oury, *Essai sur la conation esthétique*, p. 132.

[34] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* pp. 232–309.

[35] Ibid., p. 243.

[36] Canguilhem, "Essay on Some Problems," p. 137.

[37] Tosquelles, "Psychopathology and Dialectical Materialism," p. 58.

[38] Oury, *Essai sur la conation esthétique*, p. 99 and p. 137.

[39] Claude Bernard, *Leçons sur les phénomènes de la vie communs aux animaux et aux végétaux* [1878], Paris: Vrin, 1966, p. 151.

[40] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 8–9.

[41] Tosquelles, "Psychopathology and Dialectical Materialism," p. 53.

[42] Ibid, p. 58.

[43] Benjamin Prinz and Henning Schmidgen, “Vitalist Marxism. Georges Canguilhem and the Resistance of Life,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 41/4 (2024): 3–21.

[44] Canguilhem, “Essay on Some Problems,” p. 136. This passage is directly connected with the remarks on anomaly cited above.

[45] Alfred Binet, “La vie psychique des micro-organismes,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 24 (1887): 449–489; 582–611, here p. 475. With respect to “temporary organ” (*organe adventice*), see Joseph Delbœuf, *La Psychologie comme science naturelle. Son présent et son avenir*, Bruxelles : Muquardt, 1876, pp. 87–88.

[46] Sigmund Freud, “Negation,” in *The Standard Edition,* Vol. 18, *ibid*., pp.233-239, especially pp.237–238.

[47] Ramón Turró, *Les origines de la connaissance*, Paris: Alcan, 1914.

[48] Turró, *Les Origines de la connaissance,* p.31 and p.38. See also Georges Canguilhem (ed.), *Besoins et tendances. Textes et documents philosophiques*, Paris: Hachette, 1952, pp.6–10.

[49] Tosquelles, *Le vécu de la fin du monde,* pp. 107–108.

[50] Ibid., p. 108 and p. 121. See also the notion of “plasticity” in Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*, trans. Sebastian Rand, New York : Fordham, 2008.

[51] Ibid, p. 108.

[52] Ibid. See also Oury, *Essai sur la conation esthétique*, pp. 65–66 and pp. 123–124, who refers to and relies on these statements.