EDITORIAL

The french attempt to include the bouffée délirante in the DSM–V during 2006 : A recollection in the year 2050

It was the autumn of 2006. That evening, I was sitting with two French twins in a French restaurant. They had called and invited me to come, explaining that they wanted to discuss my article criticizing the DSM-V, the new edition of the US system for classifying psychiatric disorders.

To understand what happened that unfortunate evening, I need to explain my perspective on the events of the previous few months. France had had a difficult year with strikes, riots in the Paris suburbs, and the poor economic performance of several major French firms, including a delay in the production of a huge new Airbus plane in the attempt to defeat Boeing. In summary, it was a year of malaise in France, the culmination of three decades with the realization that neither Mitterrand nor Chirac had delivered the "Great France" that De Gaulle had promised.

Through some inquiries, I had come to suspect that in the prior months there had been a meeting of the French Secret Service, led by a spy who was also a psychiatrist. The French psychiatrist was annoyed by the U.S. society’s ignorance of the great French culture. Moreover, the French psychiatrist was particularly annoyed by the US psychiatrists’ ignorance of the great French psychiatric tradition. None of the US psychiatrists involved with the DSM-IV appeared to know Pinel, Bayle, Morel, Magnan or any of the great French psychiatrists. Moreover, this worst of crimes was going to be repeated once again in the DSM-V. These "clown" US psychiatrists decided, once more, to negate the existence of the "bouffée délirante"4, one of the main creations of French psychiatry. With Cartesian logic the French psychiatrist explained, "If we get the US psychiatrists to include the "bouffée délirante" in the DSM-V, we will start to win the first battle of a long war. After winning this first battle, other battles will be won too and the US will have no choice but to acknowledge the greatness of the French culture". Therefore, all the funding and energy of the French Secret Service was focused on getting the "bouffée délirante" in the DSM-V. Unfortunately, I became a "small pawn" in that first battle of this great war.

When I arrived at the table, I was surprised to see two identical men waiting for me, who introduced themselves as "Mr. Dupond" and "Mr. Dupont". As I was sitting there, I said, "Like the policemen from Tintin". Their faces lit up and one of them, the first twin (Dupond) said in a low cavernous voice, "So you have read the Tintin books!" "Yes," I said, and to win them over I added, "I used to read Asterix's books, too." The second twin (Dupont) smiled and said,
"We knew that you were a friend". Although I did not say anything, for a moment I pondered the paradox that I was considered to be a "friend" of France because I had read the Tintin books written by a Belgian. The "first twin" (Dupond) lowered his voice even more and said, "Oh, yes. We have checked you out and we know you are a friend". I was shocked and said, "What do you mean?" The same twin (Dupond) went on to say, "We know that your mother and three sisters were educated by French nuns". I was stunned and could not open my mouth to say anything. So he continued, saying, "We know that your daughter was the top student in the French exam in your state". I assumed that my face showed further disbelief about what I was hearing. The first twin (Dupond) continued in a low voice, "Moreover, we know that you rent French movies. Last week, you rented Les Triplettes De Belleville". At that time I was able to mumble, "This is not possible...". The first twin stated, "Yes, we know that you are a friend of France..." and his tone became more threatening when he added, "This is why we need to ask you a favor". I began to get worried; this twin (Dupond), the one who spoke the first time, was prone to speaking in a low voice and to directing the conversation. He appeared to be the "bad cop", while the second twin (Dupont) seemed to be playing the "good cop". I began to be seriously afraid. I thought that I was in trouble and it was better not to say that I was a Northern Spaniard, a French neighbor, who did not particularly love France.

They described how they knew through one of my friends, a Spanish psychiatrist "known" by the French intelligence services, how important I was in American psychiatry. I immediately remembered my friend who trained with Pichot, one of the leading French psychiatrists of the 20th century. Pichot had been part of the French Resistance. Thus, Pichot appeared to have introduced my Spanish friend to the world of French intelligence. Dupont and Dupond described several French or French-speaking psychiatrists in the US who were co-conspirators in this attempt to include the "bouffée délirante" in the DSM-V. I knew several of them, including a woman who was a high National Institute of Health (NIH) official, trained in Paris. In summary, all of them were expecting me to write a powerful, moving article in the American Journal of Psychiatry, proposing the inclusion of the "bouffée délirante" in the DSM-V. The twins knew I would triumph like Napoleon; the first twin (Dupond) emphasized that defeat was not possible. I argued that my Spanish friend appeared to overvalue my skills and influence on American psychiatry. However, my arguments that I have no influence on the American Journal of Psychiatry were met with complete disbelief. I could not answer the "bad twin's" (Dupond) argument that the editor of the American Journal of Psychiatry has known me for many years and that we worked in the same field of research for more than ten years. All my warnings that I was not going to be successful were not heeded. My arguments that the US psychiatrists, as with all US citizens, are ignorant of history and do not pay attention to important European traditions, were ignored. I started to sweat when the "bad cop", the first twin (Dupond), finished the conversation with one last sentence in a decisive and threatening voice, explaining that they expected me to be successful and that they knew that my health and that of my family was good, and they did not want things to "go wrong".

Obviously, I failed to convince the American Journal of Psychiatry's editor to publish my article defending the "bouffée délirante". Through my Spanish psychiatrist friend, I pleaded for my life and that of my family. I attempted to explain to the French intelligence services that it was not my fault if the clumsy US psychiatrists were so ignorant. Nevertheless, after many years of being afraid to eat any French cheese or drink any French wine, I realized that I was alive, and that the only punishment was that I was forbidden to set foot in France, so I continued with my life. Currently, in the year 2050, I am 90 years old and I can no longer fly to France or any country in Europe, due to my ailments.

Honestly, I have to provide you with another possible interpretation of this story, the one suggested by my eldest daughter who is now in her 60's. As was true of her now deceased mother, my daughter has been always skeptical of my judgment. Even worse, she decided to become an M.D. and was wildly skeptical of psychiatry; therefore, she became a geneticist! I think that she has always been rather unhappy that her father decided to contaminate the "pure" and "scientific" field of genetics with his "mumbo jumbo" psychiatric language, and his genetic articles in psychiatric journals. Anyway, she has decided that this meeting in 2006 never took place and is a "delusion"; the first concoction of my "Alzheimer's brain". It is a paradox that poor Alzheimer's name is brought to light. What would poor Alois Alzheimer think? Alois spent his whole life dealing with the neuropathology of schizophrenia and failed miserably. However, he gained his place in history by describing the neuropathology of an older female who had delusions but was not a schizophrenia patient. Alzheimer's failure to find the unknown neuropathology of schizophrenia in the brain of a psychotic woman has led to his place in history. "Life is so unfair". Who said that? I think it was one of my great grandsons. What is his name? I do not remember.

Authorship: All of this material is an unfortunate product of the author's brain and only of his brain.

Competing interest: The author needs to acknowledge that the information provided in this article is correct: he likes French cheese, wine and movies and several of his family members have strong connections with France. However, he was born in the North of Spain; he therefore had a history

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The Romans who conquered France but could not conquer Asterix's village.

7 Les Triplettes de Belleville was a 2003 animated movie released in the US as The Triplets of Belleville. It described a French cyclist who was kidnapped by the "French" mafia and brought to Belleville (a city similar to New York City). http://www.lestriplettesdebelleville.com.

of always being ambivalent about the bordering country of France.

The author is grateful to Lorraine Maw, M.A., who overcame her resistance to editing this article. After all, her parents gave her a French first name.

Terminology and References (supplementary information for the readers in 2050 who may not be familiar with the details of French psychiatry in the 19th century or with French culture and politics in the 20th century) are given as endnotes.