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Dr D. W. Winnicott 87 Chester Square SW1 ~~Sloane 9544~~

30th March 1967.

Dr. Ginette Raimbault,
16 rue de Marignan,
PARIS, VIII.

Dear Dr. Raimbault,

I want to write you a letter about the proposed conference. It is not an easy letter to write and I assume that what I write will reach Dr. Maud Mannoni (copy enclosed for this purpose). What I am writing concerns not science but politics which unfortunately have to be taken into consideration. Please try very hard to recognise the reality of my dilemma.

I find that your group is associated with Dr. Lacan. Lacan is someone of whom I am personally fond and I greatly admire him. His capacity for discussion is exceptional and it is quite understandable that he is the analyst who is best accepted in the universities. I think he is accepted on account of his erudition.

There is another thing about Dr. Lacan, however, which is that he is difficult as a personality. There is no secret about this and I don't mind if you show him this letter. He will not be surprised.

Dr. Lacan has provided the psycho-analytic world in France with a very big problem in terms of the training of psycho-analysts. You know all about this, of course, and I know a great deal about it too. It is not a question of who is the better person when we have to compare one analyst with another. It is a matter of the organization of training and the maintenance of training standards. As you know, it has not been possible for Dr.Lacan to fit himself into anything that is offered in regard to an official training programme. In other words, because of what he is like he is outside psycho-analysis and therefore outside the International Psycho-Analytic Association.

These things do not matter to me in so far as I am simply myself interested in the discussion of anything that has to do with child psychiatry, but the fact is that I am at present President of the British Society. By taking part in this conference I am to some extent open to the criticism that I am involving the British Society in the politics of psycho-analysis in France. The British Society has not asked me to withdraw from the conference but I am very much concerned that in my position as President I shall not cause misunderstandings between the British Society and the French Societies.

There is one other awkward thing about Dr.Lacan and that is his liability to get publicized. It is this that I fear. It is only too easy for capital to be made out of the fact that the President of the British Society is taking part in this activity which, as it seems, is associated with the name of Dr.Lacan.

I would be grateful if you would answer this letter giving me your personal reactions, which

I will treat confidentially. I would not like to miss the conference and I would not like to cause ill-feeling. Nevertheless while I am President of the British Society whatever I do drags other people into the arena. You might be able to help me by some kind of guarantee that I will not be involved in any publicity and that no capital will be made out of the fact that someone who is an official in the psycho-analytic world is taking part in a discussion that could not be attended (so it seems to me) by any of the members of either the French or the Paris Societies. At first I thought the word psycho-analyst would not appear in the programme but I see that I was wrong and that the discussion of psycho-analysis is definitely part of the programme in so far as it relates to child psychiatry and especially autism.

Finally I want to repeat that I feel friendly towards the members of the group; that I feel I have been properly approached; and I am thoroughly interested in the subject. But in spite of this I think I would not have accepted had I known of the close connection that you all have with Dr.Lacan. My trouble here, as I have explained, is not an objection to Dr.Lacan, but a dislike of getting mixed up in an unresolved political wrangle. This is especially difficult because in taking a long view and considering the training standards I am definitely not on the Lacan side in the controversy.

I look forward to hearing from you soon, and if either of you are in London I would be very grateful to you for the opportunity for a further discussion.

With good wishes,
Yours sincerely,



D.W.WINNICOTT. F.R.C.P.