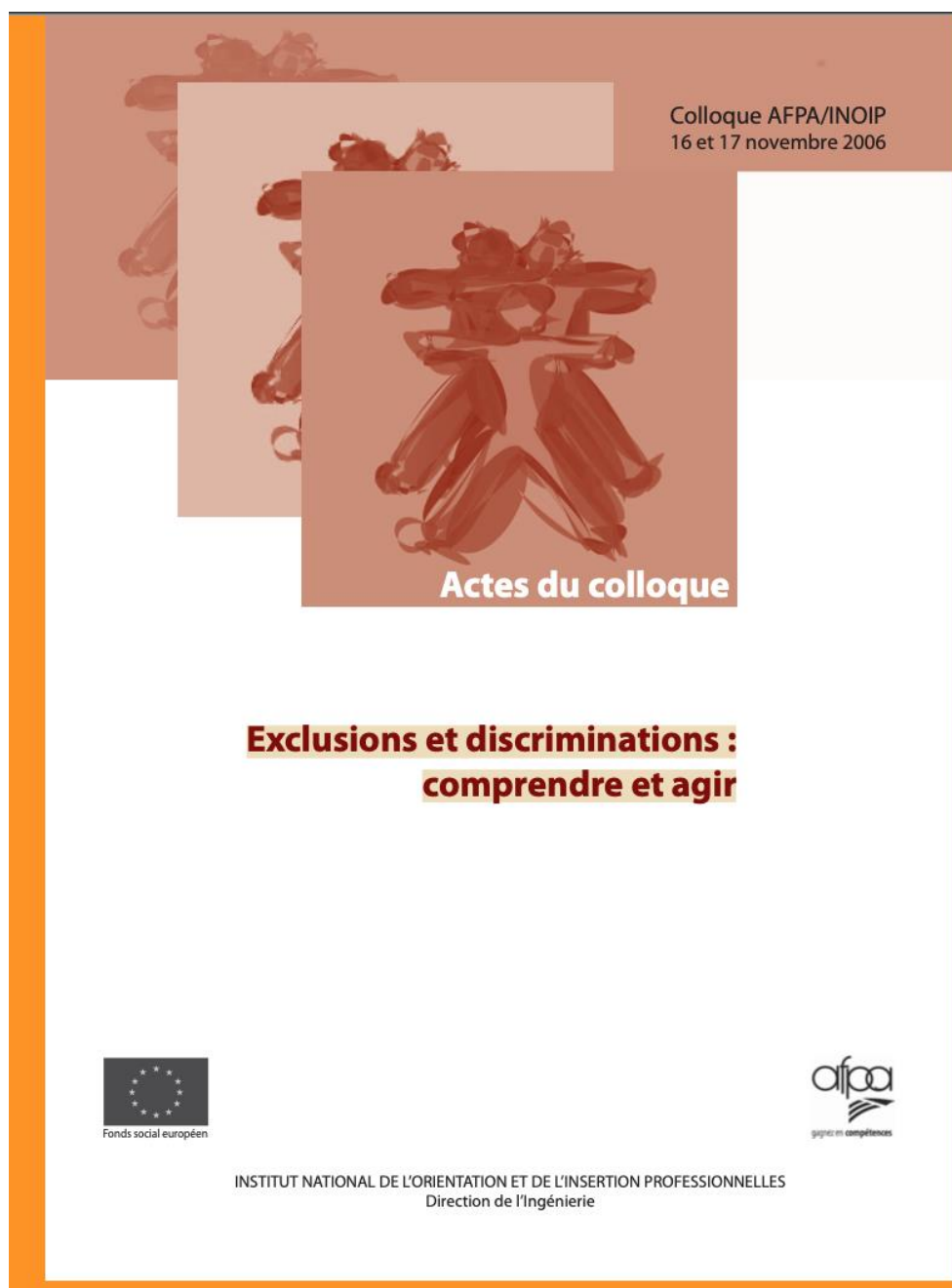


Exclusion and discrimination: understanding and acting

AFPA-INOIP conference on exclusion Lille 16-17 November 2006



Presentation of the Conference Bruno SIMON (AFPA - Director INOIP)

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The effects of exclusion and stigma on personal and social identity

Pierre Tap ¹

Introduction

There is a constant methodological debate among researchers in the humanities and social sciences about the difficult articulation between scientific explanation and subjective understanding of situations and research objects. I have always defended the necessity of this articulation which obliges us to navigate between individual or collective life stories and case studies on the one hand, and rigorous and quantifiable research on large samples on the other. But is it possible to circumscribe populations that can be identified as "excluded"? This is because the very notion of social identity implies the identifiable attribution of a category accompanied by qualifiers. I would like to show here the need to analyze exclusion, both as an objective reality and as a lived feeling, in its complex relationship with multiple collective identities and with personal identity. But as I did during my oral presentation in Lille, I will start to reflect with you from an encounter that I have qualified as "questioning", both in personal and theorizing terms, about the identity of a homeless person and of my own, in relation to exclusion and stigmatization.

A "questioning" meeting

It is Thursday, March 24, 2005. From Pamiers, I have to go to Toulouse for an awareness meeting on Rogerian therapy (²in the evening, at the Centre Naissance à l'écoute) and for Alexandra's thesis defense (the next day). I want to take the train, but a bus is planned to the Auterive station (30 kms; 20 minutes) where we will take the train to Toulouse. It is crowded, I sit down on the window side, a seat is free on my right, on the corridor side. I see a man arrive, "homeless style" (!), obviously drunk. From far away, pointing his finger in my direction, he shouts: "I'm going next to the old man"! (it starts badly!)³ ... He sits down heavily near me, stares at me ... I do the same! Forty years old, dressed about right, but traces of blow on the face, and stinking of alcohol... - (Him) L. "The old ones... I respect them, he says by caressing the lapel of my jacket... Who are you? Your race?"⁴ he said, looking intently

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² The fact that I am a Rogerian therapist (professional identity) has of course an important place in the orientation of my personal identity and I will moreover find myself questioned about it in the relationship whose intrusion I recount here.

³ I should point out that he had a choice of several free seats on the bus. Why did he choose to "stand next to the old man"? I suppose it was because I was looking at him, whereas usually we tend to lower our heads and not look at the homeless in the face? ... But this is only a hypothesis!

⁴ Social classes, professions ... are thus catalogued as "races". He returns later to the "races" (social and cultural differences). I reacted by mentioning my disagreement. "I am anti-racist... We are all equal". He will show his

at what he would call my "folder" or "bag" (briefcase) ... "With your leather folder, who are you?" Of course this violent intrusion makes me uncomfortable at first... I am however thinking of the Rogerian attitudes in therapy (empathy, congruence, unconditional positivity), but in this context it is not obvious! To be centered on the person, to listen to him, even though he questions me in police mode! - L. (Him) You have a good "face" (a good face)! - M. (Me) Like Santa Claus! He gets angry ... I even feel like he's going to hit me. - L. No, leave Santa alone (I don't believe it!); You're not answering my questions! What did you do this morning? I decide to answer him and to dialogue "in truth" ... - M. I read - L. What did you read? - M. A thesis on the handicapped, blind and deaf ... - L. Ah, a teacher! ... What do you have in your bag ... Open your bag! (Inwardly, I smile, thinking that he wants me to "empty my bag", to say everything about what I am! Definition of the being by its having: face, body, towel...). - M. In my bag I have Alexandra's thesis which will be defended tomorrow in Toulouse - L. Ah! Open your bag, show me the thesis! I open the bag, take out the thesis and show it to him. ... His attitude changes, as if my answer was a sign of confidence in him. He reads carefully and aloud the title "The psychological experience of sensory impaired adolescents: self-esteem, feelings of integration, stress, coping strategies and self-orientation in hearing and visually impaired adolescents" ... He stopped at the words "psychological" and "coping" but did not ask a question. He then reads "members of the jury". - L. "But then you are a judge?". I explain to him that not all juries are "judicial"! - L. That's good... The cover is pretty⁵, but the important thing is what's underneath! He flips through the thesis and twice pretends to give it back to me, then takes it back (as if to test my confidence: this precious object I could steal from you...). Finally he gives it back to me, satisfied... I have some difficulties to put the thesis back in the briefcase; he perceives my tremors. - L. Wait, let me help you... Don't be afraid of me! - M. I have been shaking since I was a child... It has nothing to do with you! He then asks me about my disability and its origins, then about my own origins. - L. I respect old people because they have experienced things that we have not... Were you a resistant? - M. No, I was a child during the war. L. Did you kill someone? - M. No - L. I did... (followed by stammered sentences and silence) (...) - L. What is your first name? - Mr. Peter - L. Well, Mr. Peter, you are nice. Let's shake hands. He will propose four times this ritual of communication during the following minutes; but the fifth time he extends his index finger and asks me to touch him with my index finger... I understood the meaning of this gesture only the next day, in relation with the cover of the thesis and the creation of Adam (cf. note 5). The handshake punctuates an agreement or a comparable situation. - L. Do you have a girlfriend? - M. No, I live alone - L. Me too! (handshake!) ... Have you ever had a girlfriend? - M. Yes, but I am divorced. - L. Me too! (paluche) ... You had beaten her?! - M. No! - L. I did! (no paluche!) - L. What did you do to her?... - M. We had differences (!) - L. Nobody is perfect! He associates self-esteem with the questions he asks: - "That's a good question, isn't it? He is repeatedly prompted to talk about himself, unrelated to his questions. But these questions are a way to value himself and to test the trust he can give me. I learn for example that he comes from Andorra where he bought cigarettes to sell them in France. As a result, he feels like smoking, even though it is forbidden on the bus. I point it out to him. He ignores it and lights his cigarette. The driver reminds me that it is forbidden to smoke. "It's still a bit strong that you can't do without it for fifteen minutes! My questioner then puts out his cigarette by crushing it on his thumbnail! A few seconds later, he hears the ringing of a cell phone. He turns to the young man and says, "If anyone asks for me, you say I'm not here! - L. So you're a psychiatrist? - M. No, I'm a psychologist. - L. Ah, that suits me! But are you

agreement, but by regretting to have been "fooled" in his contradictions ("OK, shit! he got me!"), proof that he lived the situation like a fight...

⁵ Let us specify, for the understanding of the continuation, that the background image of the cover represents the hand of God and that of Adam symbolizing the "creation of Adam", work of Michelangelo. -

Freudian or Lacanian? - M. Neither, I'm a Rogerian" - L. Who is that, Roger (Rogé)? - M. No, Rogers (Rodgersse), Carl Rogers, who proposed a therapy centered on the person. - L. Write down his name! - M. I don't have any paper. He takes out of his pocket a piece of oily paper, as big as four stamps. I write Karl Rogers on it⁶. He pockets the paper with satisfaction and says to me: - L. It is important for me, what you have just done ... - L. In therapy, it happens that a person changes from the words you have pronounced? - M. Probably, but we rarely know it ... Or twenty years later! But the important thing is what the person discovers for himself. - L. And can the therapist change? - M. Of course, he is involved too. He starts tapping very hard on the top of the towel (to the point of hurting his fingers) and says: - L. "That's a lot of stuff in there! - L. I love poetry... Nerval... Baudelaire... And you, who is your favorite poet? - M. These days, Du Bellay, because he wrote "Happy who, like Ulysses, made a beautiful journey and then returned full of use and reason to live among his own people for the rest of his life" ⁷and that corresponds well to my concerns (as a retiree!)... - L. Ah, yes, Du Bellay, a poet of the Middle Ages... I also suggest a sentence: "One must have lived through an inner chaos to see life with the beauty of a shooting star" (⁸He associates this sentence with Nietzsche). Now, what would you like? - M. I have to have a gallbladder operation. I would like it to go well! - L. Well, I'll stop asking questions now ... But you should eat less rich! He won't say what he would have liked, because we arrive at the station of Auterive. Before going down, he suggests me to kiss us. Which we do. He gets off and goes to speak with the station master. I got on the train. While passing in the corridor, he sees me and says "is that you? (As if to convince himself that he didn't dream our dialogue!), "yes". He then turns to two close travelers and says: "You recognized him? it's him! It's my mentor! This whole scenario lasted less than twenty minutes! But was it theater, cinema? During these 20 minutes, Mr. the questioner, of whom I know neither name, nor first name, nor nickname, will have obtained to dialogue with me, to obtain a great number of information on me, and to reveal a minimum of it concerning him. And yet ... I had the feeling that something happened to him too. I must specify that from the moment I decided to "speak in truth" (congruence) I no longer smelled his alcohol, I no longer saw the wounds on his face, I was focused on his eyes, mobile and alive. Afterwards, I told myself that those 20 minutes were the shortest therapy of my professional life... It was person-centered, yes, but which one? Mine? Sure, his? Maybe, both? No doubt! Apparently, this dialogue has nothing rogerian, and nothing therapeutic ... and yet?! ... Something important happened for both protagonists. ...

The effects of personal involvement in the research object

I would like to end this meeting by clarifying a few points that are essential to the understanding of this story and the very involved way in which I tell it.

1. I was obviously "marked" by this unexpected encounter because, at the same time, one of my own sons disappeared for several months, resurfacing only when the cold weather arrived

⁶ The fact that I wrote Karl and not Carl shows that I was not totally serene!

⁷ After verification: Du Bellay did not speak only of Ulysses, he also evoked Jason who conquered the golden fleece. He says "to live among his parents..." and not "to live among his own". These are significant errors and omissions for me! I have just returned to live in the city of my childhood.

⁸ I didn't know this reference and didn't go to check. But a Portuguese colleague told me that Nietzsche's sentence inscribed in a Lisbon subway station would be the following: "It takes a great (inner) chaos to give birth to a shooting star".

and telling us how he had lived the life of the Parisian homeless... between his departure, after his fortieth birthday,⁹ and his return at Christmas;

2. I immediately told all my relatives this "story of the bus", intensely experienced as significant for my own narrative identity¹⁰. I then had the opportunity to see the importance of memory effects. My story was completed with each new "narration" and as certain parts of the dialogue came back to me;

3. This is the reason why I decided to write but also to tell and publish this part of my private life, which was so strongly questioned by the unknown questioner. This is obviously a matter for discussion ... For any researcher, "the self is hateful" and yet it necessarily intervenes in the way of choosing and treating an object of research. The denial of these implicit and often voluntarily hidden or camouflaged influences does not change anything to their reality. If the reader is shocked by my approach, I apologize, but as Paugam rightly points out, in order to understand the processes at work in exclusion or social disqualification, two major dimensions must be brought into play:

* At a macro sociological level, the collective and societal representations linked to these phenomena facilitate the elaboration of (identity) "categories" of people considered as "poor", "precarious" or "excluded". These categorization processes are constructed through social assistance institutions, institutional forms of social intervention (public or private)¹¹

* At a micro sociological level¹², we must take into account the meaning that populations (individuals) give to their lived experience, the behaviours they adopt with regard to those who perceive and designate them as "excluded", and the modes of adaptation they develop in the various situations they are confronted with (Paugam, 2002, 2001, 1996, 1993). (These remarks also apply to the researcher himself, who is not a disaffiliated or disaffected machine.)

I fully subscribe to this two-dimensionality, as I also subscribe to Castel's when he contrasts the axis of the worker's place in the division of labor with that of the same person's participation in networks of sociability (Castel 2001, 1995, 1991). But the major question, in my opinion, is linked to the fact that these dimensions, like these axes, can be perceived and/or experienced as positive or as negative: whether it is a question of work or of family and friendships, of meanings and behaviors perceived and experienced as legitimate or illegitimate. When we speak of disqualification in the field of sports, there is exclusion insofar as the athlete has not respected the rules of operation of his or her sport.

It should be noted that social exclusion does not refer to self-disqualification, although such a process does occur. As far as disaffiliation is concerned, we find here a term dear to associations, unions or parties. Affiliation implies both external pressures (from friendly pressure to proselytizing) and an internal decision (accepting to commit oneself to a collective cause, which goes beyond oneself and in which one believes). Conversely, disaffiliation can be an external decision (exclusion, excommunication, etc.) and/or an internal decision (not renewing one's contract, one's card, voluntarily disengaging). From these few remarks, we can

⁹ ... anniversary accompanied by a self-quarantine caused by multiple pressures but which were not linked to economic and financial needs

¹⁰ I have discussed the importance of the notion of narrative identity, proposed by Paul Ricoeur (1990), in the article "Identity and Exclusion" (Tap, 2005, pp.60 - 62).

¹¹ By experience I would say that these interventions are not limited to social assistance services (social assistance, financial assistance, RMI management...). They also concern police, medical (Samu, emergency services, psychiatric hospitals), banking (blocking of accounts, bank exclusion), judicial, local (town halls), etc...

¹² This level corresponds precisely to the "bio-psycho-social" level, to which I am placing myself in the present intervention. But my remark is not meant to be polemical at all!

see that there are two two-dimensionalities to be articulated: the one that opposes the positive and the negative and the one that introduces the place of decision, by internal or external control. Of course, other dimensions complicate this simple¹³ presentation. For example, the opposition between the activity and passivity of the excluded, between awareness and the difficulty of converting one's behavior (stop smoking, etc.). From integration to exclusion: from words to people ... in pain. Today, more and more people are experiencing economic difficulties, faced with unemployment and the deterioration of their living conditions. To these difficulties can be added stigmatization of identity. The stability and sense of unity included in the very notion of identity become impossible. Uncertainty and instability are associated with a generalized dynamic of victimization¹⁴; they diffuse in the various living environments as well as in the various activities of the person. Studying the effects of exclusion is therefore justified in relation to individual experience, the evolution of social practices and the mutation or reinforcement of cultural values. Concerns about these effects cut across all the human sciences and concern all sectors of social life, particularly those related to work, health and education. Exclusion is experienced as unjust mistreatment. It is important to know whether the fight against its effects is really taking place, and whether the opposite processes of cohesion, insertion or integration are progressing accordingly. When one analyzes the way in which the notions of cohesion, insertion and integration are used, not only in the research literature on exclusion but also in the official speeches and documents of the government, political parties or associations that are supposed to find solutions on the ground, one may doubt the existence of an agreement on the processes involved, and even more so on the means of avoiding exclusions and their effects. The fact remains that the notions mentioned are part of the systems of representations and values that guide the discourse of those in power and the socio-economic and socio-political institutions they direct. But they are also implicitly active in the decisions and behaviors that weave the personal and relational existence of each citizen. We note, for example, that the term "insertion" is essentially linked to the professional world and that the term "integration" is almost exclusively used in relation to immigrants. As for the term cohesion, which has become fashionable¹⁵, the authors rarely specify its meaning, as if it were self-evident. It is therefore important to propose sufficiently clear and differentiated definitions. If we refer to the work of psycho-sociologists since Lewin (1972), cohesion "is the set of forces that attract or maintain each member in the group"¹⁶. But Cartwright and Zander (1968) specify that the stronger the interdependence, the more the points of view in the group will tend towards homogeneity and the more deviations and deviations will be sanctioned. In cohesion, the group takes precedence over the individual, to the point that the latter must abandon his or her specificities and commit to conformity and consensus. Of course, cohesion cannot be decreed.

¹³ I do not say simplistic, because the thought by couples (white - black, day - night, right - left, etc.), that Henri Wallon has well analyzed in the child (1945) is certainly to be overcome, but not to be stigmatized, except when it is used not for discrimination - differentiating (implying the respect of the differences) but for discrimination - stigmatizing (racism, etc.)! (Note that perceptual color discrimination is not stigmatizing; racial discrimination is). Language plays an essential role in the integration-exclusion-cohesion dynamic. But this role depends on the links between language, action, awareness and the affirmation of values.

¹⁴ In the article published in *Connexion* (2005), I recalled the collective and individual importance of this process of victimization and its consequences on behaviour.

¹⁵ With regard to fashionable notions, such as resilience, project, cohesion... we note that their emergence corresponds precisely to the moment when the daily activities of people and institutions are perceived as alienating, when we live from day to day, without anticipation and without project, when we imagine solutions to get out of an unbearable situation that is repeated. Fashion appears from then on as a useful strategy of fight against this very alienation: utopia, dream, imagined solutions can sometimes give back hope and by him the means, individual or collective to realize a "breakthrough".

¹⁶ Germaine de Montmollin, 1977, p. 154 note

It can only be the result of work on the maintenance functions (of the group) when the forces of progression (including the forces of production without being confused with them) are out of order.¹⁷

The notion of insertion supposes the idea of inscription in a territory, of investment in a collective space. The inserted system takes a place, a position in the host system. It is like "embedded", "intercalated", but remains clearly differentiated. It does not merge with the whole. For example, the divider inserted in a book is not part of it; it can be removed. Finally, the notion of integration, as its etymology suggests, implies the idea of unity, of completeness, of wholeness. The system is integrated if there is "play", flexibility, in the articulation and functional interdependence between the subsystems (groups or persons); each of these subsystems retaining a differentiated identity, position and function. True integration can therefore be confused neither with assimilation (where the subsystems are no longer differentiated), nor with individualistic or sectarian differentiation (where the subsystems are no longer sufficiently articulated with each other, with the assertion taking precedence over integration). Integration is obviously the opposite of exclusion, since it implies the possibility of welcoming new members who will be able to forge links and manage functions in relation to the old ones. The term integration, as we have seen, is used in relation to the reception of immigrants, but theoretically it applies to all internal groups and institutions (family, school, company, neighborhood, region, country). Flexibility is therefore one of the characteristics of an integrative system. At the individual level, it can be defined as the ability of the individual to develop new strategies, to abandon the old ones if they have become ineffective, irrelevant or dangerous, which will promote good adaptation. This adaptive flexibility implies the ability to make concessions, to manage contradictory demands in the best possible way.

Exclusion as a negative dynamic

But let's come to the question of exclusion itself. According to Castel, it is a word¹⁸ in which a large number of people with heterogeneous characteristics are placed: the homeless, the long-term unemployed, the handicapped, young people in the suburbs. For his part, Paugam considers the term exclusion to be a pre-notion, in the Durkheimian sense, both vague and equivocal. But he also speaks of it as a concept-horizon insofar as exclusion makes it possible to better grasp the failures of socialization, to analyze the reproduction of inequalities and its limits, to better define the loosening of social ties and its consequences, and finally to specify the intrusion of identity crises.¹⁹ But both authors emphasize the importance of social judgment in the very definition of exclusion. Paugam speaks of social disqualification²⁰ and Castel of social invalidation²¹. People are not really excluded from society, but they are negatively categorized (stigmatization) and go through a complex process of vulnerability-destabilization and disaffiliation (Castel) or of fragility-assistance-dependence before reaching actual marginalization (Paugam). Even homeless people who cut themselves off from social welfare services remain in a position of solicitation, by panhandling and adopting different behaviors towards passers-by (cf. the homeless panhandlers and their conflicts with the homeless workers). The life of the homeless can be hard, as someone on a site dedicated

¹⁷ The forces of maintenance are those that the group uses precisely to resolve conflicts, to introduce negotiations and mediations, and to maintain the cohesion necessary for the realization of common projects. In order to act, the group mobilizes the forces of progression which then take over from the forces of maintenance.

¹⁸ Castel, 2001, debate part 1 p.2

¹⁹ Paugam (2002, 2001, 1996)

²⁰ cf. the book resulting from his thesis on "La disqualification sociale : essai sur la nouvelle pauvreté" 2002, PUF coll. Quadrige

²¹ 20 Mentioned during the debate organized by the CNDP, cf. Castel (2001)

to them said: "You never end up on the street by chance. There is always a very long history beforehand, sometimes going back to childhood. To oversimplify, let's say that one day the pressure on your shoulders reaches the breaking point. And you break. On that day, the people around you, worried or relieved to see you no longer, wonder what will become of you. You walk. Aimlessly. Free. Immensely free. The weight that was crushing you has disappeared in one go... It's bubbling in your head. You know you won't go back. Every step you take takes you further away from your past, you leave behind boxes of memories at every corner. You have no idea what will become of you and that makes you laugh. For a few hours. Because then it's less and less funny. The state of grace lasts as long as you spend the money you still have, a few days at best. Then, very quickly, the backlash becomes all the more violent because it has been delayed. The temptation to withdraw from the game may then become strong. You can commit suicide, which has the disadvantage of being irreversible. You can finish yourself more slowly with alcohol, drugs and/or more or less hallucinogenic molecules. It lasts as long as it lasts, when it gives out there is not much left to recover. You can finally stuff a couple of things in the bottom of a bag and follow your feet. Welcome to the club"²². As the professionals of psychiatry (doctors and social workers) and for example the teams of the ORSPERE have shown²³, hospitals and clinics are today and more and more confronted with a new theme associating exclusion and psychological suffering. Atypical, suffering, de-socialized and precarious patients are arriving in ever greater numbers..." in the existing integration mechanisms which are proving ineffective. Over the years, the social policies of insertion and integration implemented have shown their limits of intervention in the face of exclusion. As a mental health problem, this psychosocial distress challenges the public psychiatric system. It also reveals the emergence of a new space of psychopathological suffering for which the usual psychiatric and psychotherapeutic practices prove to be inoperative. This psychopathological and psychosocial suffering inevitably crosses identities. The homeless are men, 90% of them. The cultural differences direct the sufferings of migrants and exiles in ²⁴different ways. The identity is also called into question by the disease (Tap, Tarquinio and Sordes-Ader (2002), etc.).

In any case, two important assumptions can be noted;

- The first one can be deduced from the previous remarks: more and more people find themselves in difficult situations, whatever the origin of this situation, and they feel a social and psychic malaise, they are confronted with a distress, a psychosocial suffering associated with the "durability of the processes of rupture and exclusion, as well at the individual as at the collective level", and which is translated by a "remarkable constant in the failure" ²⁵

²² I did not find the Internet reference of this site, but the testimonies multiply on the Web, without speaking about the actions of the "children of Don Quixote"... and their humor... "Sancho Pança, come back... Don Quixote is here!"... ready to fight again against the windmills!

²³ Cf. the ORSPERE website, for which Jean Furtos is (or was) responsible: <http://www.ch-le-vinatier.fr/ORSPERE/publications/sante-mentale-exclusion.htm>

²⁴ See on this theme the excellent work by Kaës and other authors: *Différences culturelles et souffrances de l'identité* (1998). Cf. also the multiple contributors of the intercultural in this book.

²⁵ According to the Lazarus report "Les souffrances qu'on ne peut plus cacher" (Suffering that can no longer be hidden), the Inter-ministerial Delegation for the RMI, this suffering certainly concerns people living in a situation of great precariousness, but it also occurs in the face of difficulties in the socialization of children and adolescents in the family and school environments. They are present in the rise of family, school and urban violence, as well as in health care institutions. On the other hand, the adult population suffers from a major weakening of the ability to enter into relationships, itself associated with a disinvestment in oneself and a fear of the public sphere. Among the people who are permanently assisted, there is an increase in psychological symptoms that are authenticated as such. The result of all this is a growing difficulty for "shrinks" to distinguish the ill-being of the excluded from that of the duly recognized mentally ill (inspired by articles from ORSPERE)

- The second hypothesis is associated with the fact that the notion of exclusion introduces a critical judgment of society and its instituted bodies, which are incapable of managing social cohesion and facilitating the integration of its members.

The notion of exclusion initially concerned only extreme poverty, but today it has been broadened to include precarious situations: economic insecurity, marital and family instability, difficulty in managing anxiety and stress, difficulty in adapting to mobility, changes, limits or pressures. It is not a question of evoking responsibility here (public authorities, globalization, schools or companies) or there (vulnerable people). To understand the links and conflicts between identities and exclusion, we need to introduce mediating notions, to assume the existence of processes that can explain the regulations and the absence of regulations, the ruptures and the strategies to avoid or manage them. Among those that come to mind are: sociability and networks of relationships, mechanisms of legitimization and authorization, the way in which one makes sense of one's experience, the way in which one chooses the affiliations that matter to one or the alienation that prevents one from choosing one's affiliations and the activities that are associated with those affiliations. The notion of disaffiliation evoked by Castel with regard to exclusion ²⁶ should not make us forget that the person can experience professional disaffiliation (unemployment, being put in the closet, etc.) but find compensatory or regenerative affiliations elsewhere, or simply alternative ones. It is true, as Paugam reminds us, that "statistics prove that economic exclusion is accompanied by a loss of sociability and less participation in community life"²⁷. But it is also true that the idealized image of the salaried worker and the quasi-sacralized value of work are no longer popular. However, I still think that work can still function as an optimal experience, according to the expression dear to Rogers, and taken up today by those who develop positive psychology (which is, of course, the opposite of positivist psychology!)²⁸. I believe that it is useful to call upon them to better understand the real experience of people living in difficult situations.

Return to more positive views of difficult situations

Positive psychology strives to analyze the conditions of access to optimism, happiness and well-being, even in difficult situations. After Rogers and his book "La relation d'aide et la psychothérapie" (2005, ESF), we can mention Csikszentmihalyi and his theory of flow (1990), translated into French under the title: "Vivre, la psychologie du bonheur" (2004). Among the American authors and works that have not been translated but are important are: Argyle (2001), Peterson and Seligman (2004), Snyder, Lopez (2001), Gillham (2000) and in Spanish, Vera Poseck (2006). It is interesting to note that Martin Seligman (1995, 1998, 2002), one of the leaders of positive psychology, was for years the worldwide promoter of research on what he called "learned helplessness" (see 1974). This early research has undoubtedly been helpful in understanding depressive processes, but Martin Seligman's shift to understanding the positive dynamics of human development, particularly from optimism, happiness and well-being, is an important part of the effort to counteract the prevailing victimization/aggression and to propose more humanistic and humanitarian interventions.

"Excluded" or not ... They want to survive!

²⁶ Castel (1999) *Les métamorphoses de la question sociale : une chronique du salariat* Paris Gallimard

²⁷ Evoked during the debate organized by the CNDP, see Paugam (2001)

²⁸ See in particular Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's seminal work (2004).

As Sébastien Schehr (1999, 2001) rightly points out, life is not limited to work ... And if one loses one's job, one must nevertheless continue to live ... Moreover, difficulties can come from something other than unemployment, "distancing, breaking away, dissenting are (also) part of life. But the limit of the unbearable intervenes when the misfortunes multiply. As we have mentioned elsewhere (Tap, Tarquinio and Sordes-Ader, 2002), the multiplication of stressful events (unemployment, illness, marital breakdown, but also administrative procedures and other daily worries) plays a significant role in the way in which the person can cope. Identity" variables, such as social origin, age, gender, etc., have little influence on well-being, especially among adolescents. On the other hand, the nature and quantity of the daily difficulties and major events experienced by the persons concerned during the previous two years have a massive influence on the fall in well-being. The fall in the level of subjective well-being tends to accelerate after two or three events (Grob)²⁹. This result obviously reminds us that resilience has its limits³⁰; but it also raises the question of the origin of the multiplication of difficulties: are they unfortunate accidents, accidents provoked by the person and which would multiply with the accentuation of his vulnerability, or are they social effects through attitudes and behaviours based on the rejection and stigmatization of this same person?

From Surviving to Living ... Or the positive management of difficult situations.

The "negative theme", according to Schehr's expression (1999, 2001), is generally associated with the hypothesis that the homeless person does not do what he or she should in order to solve his or her problems and to defend himself or herself against the situations he or she is confronted with, but also to fight against the destructive part of himself or herself. The evolution of awareness and the observation of the complexity of the causes of exclusion, has made us abandon the image of the excluded person only perceived as lazy and antisocial. Nevertheless, the (American) image of the opposition between "winners" and "losers" is still very strong in popular representations. The initial conception of the "invulnerable" resilient was also based on this representation. "In order to get out of it, one must..." act, focus on the problem and not on the emotions it provokes, take responsibility, etc. As Schehr says, "We are only able to think of others through the eyes of a typical ideal figure, a kind of ideal of the productivist ego...; (it would be necessary, for example) to manage to think of others, the unemployed or the precarious, without the distorting mirror of the worker model. But it is not only a question of representations, as we have seen with Paugam, we must take into account the meanings, the real behaviors and in particular the modes of adaptation of people in a situation of exclusion. Schehr agrees with this when he proposes to recognize the competences of the so-called "disqualified" and also to recognize their right to "disaffiliation". This is also what Garnier-Muller (2000, 2001) advocates after having talked to homeless people. According to her, "the poor are never passive, they reconstruct forms of social integration and informal hierarchies... Survival in precariousness presupposes the invention or recomposition of social links"... "Our fields of investigation, far from being places of social apathy, are a universe of bubbling behaviors... (The poor) are not reduced to clinging to the shreds of the social link, they have their own forms of socialization, authorizing something other than resignation, in spite of the difficulties" ... And she adds

²⁹ Grob, A. (1996) Entwicklung und regulation des subjektiven wohlbefindens (habilitation manuscript. University of Bern), 69p

³⁰ Regarding resilience and its links with exclusion, see the excellent works of Boris Cyrulnik (1999, 2001 in particular). See also Tap (2005), Vinay, Esparbès-Pistre and Tap (2000).

"begging, small-scale trafficking are another way of organizing and integrating socially and economically" ... These people have very different ways of being. These can be manifested in the organization of survival, or in acts of "petty crime", or dependent aggressiveness, or by the invisible adaptation to a poverty experienced as shameful. The question is therefore associated with the way in which we "qualify" or "disqualify" these behaviours: either we assimilate them to the "system d" (resourcefulness system), as after the last war, or we integrate them into the category of delinquent acts. In all cases, the question arises of the difficult transition between repressive behaviors based on the "disqualifying" judgment and behaviors of assistance to persons in danger, based on the "victimization" judgment. We can refer to the difficulty of the police or local authorities who are constantly obliged to "dislodge" homeless people who have come to live in such and such a place during the cold weather (with or without the help of Don Quixote!). To dislodge people without housing, that lends to laugh, but it is also sad, even if I understand very well the concern of the agents of the public force, just as much as that of the politicians. If the individual can hardly fight effectively against the exclusion of which he or she is a victim, it is important to see how he or she uses his or her internal resources (resilience, ability to control and critically reflect on the situation, coping or ability to positively manage stress, etc.). But it is also important for those who want to help them to see what effect the help they receive, or can receive (external resources) has: support from family and friends, acquaintances or public services responsible for receiving and supporting people in difficulty.

Exclusion and resilience ³¹

A person is said to be resilient:

1. if they have experienced an extreme situation, a high risk dysfunctional event, an "abuse" causing high stress and generally disruptive effects;
2. if she was able to go through this situation, to live this event without major disruptive effects on her psychological and social development. This is true throughout life, because development does not stop at adolescence!

Bruno Bettelheim, an American psychoanalyst, was responsible for one of the first analyses of the psychological effects of an extreme situation. In *Surviving* (1979), he states: "We find ourselves in an extreme situation when we are suddenly catapulted into a set of life conditions in which our old values and coping mechanisms no longer function and some of them even endanger the very life they were meant to protect... The sudden and simultaneous collapse of all (our) defenses against death anxiety precipitates us into what I have called, for want of a better term, an extreme situation" (op. cit. , 24). The resilient person would therefore be the one who has survived the extreme situation. Bettelheim evokes two times in this process of "survival", two distinct and yet very associated times:

- the original trauma associated with an extreme regime of terrorism³² and which at the time causes the degradation of the personality, the destruction of the previous social life by deprivation of support;
- the subsequent effects, in terms of vulnerability, on the person's entire life.

The survivor can then respond in three ways:

³¹ I am repeating here, with a few changes, what we developed with Marie-Christine Llorca for the CREAI-PACA review "Au fil du mois" in the special issue on "the exclusion process" (2004). I would like to thank Marie-Christine Llorca and Philippe Pitaud, who was responsible for the issue (see Tap and Lorca 2004).

³² In 1943, Bettelheim published an article entitled *Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations* and began with the following information: "The author spent approximately one year, spanning 1938-1939, in the two largest German concentration camps for political prisoners, Dachau and Buchenwald.

- 1. *Letting oneself be destroyed by the experience*, an attitude based on the feeling of inability to reconstitute oneself, on guilt and on the feeling of a perceived injustice: "I have suffered so much, and on top of that I have to justify myself, to give an account!"
- 2. *Denying any lasting consequences*. The person does not deny the historical fact experienced, but he/she denies, represses or represses everything that can be linked to the current effects; he/she refuses the idea of a necessary personal restructuring or an inevitable relational, axiological or cultural restructuring. This process can be conscious (refusal), preconscious (denial, repression) or unconscious (repression);
- 3. *Struggle to remain conscious and try to cope with the most terrible dimensions for him, and be able to reintegrate (reconstitute himself)* ³³.

These processes seem to us to be applicable to many situations³⁴, especially those linked to exclusion, whatever its form. In these periods of distress, the meaning and purpose of life impose themselves on the consciousness of the people concerned. It is as if we only worry about the purpose of life and the meaning of our identity when we are distraught, in an unbearable situation. As Bettelheim (1979) points out, this quest would allow us to understand the true meaning of our ordeal, or incidentally of that of others, because "the worst of the ordeals is softened as soon as one believes that the state of distress is reversible and that it will certainly have an end" (op.cit. 15). If life loses all meaning, the person feels that suicide is a fatal solution. But the temptation to commit suicide is most often associated with a desperate cry for help, to elicit a response from others to regain the meaning of one's own life, which is the only antidote to suicide if it is linked to the love and help of others (even when the person runs away from and rejects this help). We can indeed consider that, throughout his life, the person is confronted with multiple problems, must manage or overcome multiple conflicts. These conflicts even facilitate his subjective dynamics (being a subject who is not subjugated, not alienated) and his personal capacity to make choices, to orient himself through projects, to give meaning to his very difficulties. We must not forget, of course, that this person lives and progresses in social contexts that include their systems of rules (institutions) and propagate harmonized or opposed systems of values (cultures). In other words, social structures carry meanings that find their legitimacy in cultural works, belief systems and explanations of the world and of life, which the person will appropriate, transform or reject. In the same way, social changes necessarily influence personal changes. It is important to analyze these dynamic links (Esparbès-Pistre and Tap, 2001). The constant confrontation of subjects and institutions provokes, between the first and the second, a real "interstructuration" (Baubion-Broye, Malrieu and Tap, 1987). There is not only interaction or transaction, but reciprocal structuring or destructuring. In an article entitled "Resilience or the struggle for life", Serge Tisseron (2003), a psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, goes to war with the notion of resilience, which he associates with the struggle for life dear to the American mentality. Resilience, because it is associated with an "autonomous ego", would be an instance that favors the success of the most capable according to the Darwinian conception. However, in the American view, success is equivalent to virtue. The author makes three criticisms of the notion of resilience:

³³ It should be noted here that Bettelheim speaks of psychic integration (or reintegration). But the definition of integration applies to the personal system as well as to the societal system. What changes, of course, is the nature of the system, of the subsystems as well as the modes of functioning and regulation.

³⁴ It may seem unacceptable to compare the life of the excluded to that of the concentration camp prisoners that Bettelheim evokes (after having lived in two such camps himself). But the extreme character of a situation does not only depend on the objective conditions; it also depends, as we have seen, on the way the person lives these conditions and adds emotions and feelings (anxiety, stress, feelings of injustice and unbearability) that can suffocate him or her and push him or her to flee from this extreme experience, both inside and outside.

1 This is ambiguous, because it masks the fragility of the defenses developed by the person to cope with trauma. Psychic resistance can change in an unpredictable way. Resilience is "never solid".

2. Resilience also masks the great variety of defense mechanisms intended to fight against the consequences of a trauma. Some mechanisms would go in the direction of affirming personal choices, others on the contrary would accentuate unconditional dependence on the Other, on the group.

3. Resilience covers processes of trauma management that can either benefit the "former victim" and his or her entourage, or benefit the person at the expense of his or her entourage. The myth of redemption would not be far off, "the resilient person being supposed to have overcome the dark part of his or her suffering in order to keep only the glorious and luminous part".³⁵

But the successful overcoming of a trauma does not mean that all traces of hatred, of violence in return against the abusers have disappeared. The return of the social link was able to "put to sleep, for an indeterminate time, the monster lurking in the hollow of bruised personalities". The author ends by specifying that the psychoanalysts who were interested in the resistance of traumas (Ferencsi, Anna Freud, Winnicott) renounced to classify under the same term phenomena which result more from the environment than from the psychic potentialities specific to each person. Several authors mention the fact that the same psychological process can lead to the best or the worst in moral or social terms. Malrieu (2003) shows that the process of personalization was also at work in a SS who had left his previous condition and found in his fascist commitment a means of social valorization and personal coherence. Moreover, Michel Hanus, psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, in his book entitled "La résilience, à quel prix? Surviving and bouncing back" (2001) analyzes examples of resilience of people confronted with difficult situations, in particular children, who, far from collapsing, seem to develop, in these ordeals, real capacities of resistance and even of blossoming. The interest of these observations is to show that everyone has hidden resources that can be mobilized in these traumatic circumstances and that the worst is never assured. "However, we should not underestimate the reality of the underlying emotional wound that has not yet healed. We are thus confronted, in the case of resilience, as we were in the case of identity, with a paradoxical notion that includes multiple meanings, but introduces a major issue: that of trust or distrust in people, psychological processes, attitudes and human mechanisms. We can decide that the bottom of the human soul is "monstrous" or "naturally good", that the victim can become an executioner (by identification with the aggressor) or repeat his victimization. Working on the aggressor/victim/resilient trilogy implies the acceptance of a complexity where each person is not all black and the other all white, where each person is at the same time in search of love, power and recognition, and where the personal story is woven from the social link and the narcissistic process, inseparably. One cannot dissociate either the psycho-social processes from the nature of the feelings in connection with the values and the dynamics of the relations between these values (scientific, ethical, aesthetic, legal and relational). To conclude on this point, let us remember that the general public's interest in the notion of resilience must be taken into account. It is fundamentally perceived as a call to hope. "If those who have lived through extreme situations have not been destroyed by them, then I too can hope, see the end of the tunnel. Hope is in a way an illusion that keeps us alive. But it must necessarily be balanced by anticipation and the realization of projects.

³⁵ This last remark introduces the criticism of the Manichaeism underlying the resilience: victors-victims, dark force-light force, Manichaeism directly explained in a film like Star Wars!

Exclusion and external resources: social support

Individuals can compensate for the negative effects of objective situations of loss by the social support they receive. Research based on the notion of social support (or relational social support) provides information on the functional properties of networks and focuses on networks that are significant for the individual, i.e. social groups that are symbolically and affectively important for the subject: what are the networks used for, do they really help in difficult situations, are they accessible, or how do people use them?

The primary network (friends and family) constitutes a principal source of social support; it is an intermediate space or buffer space³⁶ between the micro and the macro social through which the individual can be integrated into society and build his identity thanks to the informational and normative support of the network. It plays the role of the trapeze artist's net, which makes it possible to avoid being taken in charge by the secondary (social) networks in case of difficulty (illness, unemployment). The notion of social support implies that every individual needs to be socially well inserted. His or her network must be sufficient, well configured and well structured. The question that then arises is the definition of a good network. The existence of a primary support network for the social actor seems to be all the more decisive as it functions, as it gives the capacity to face social problems and risks. The pathological effects of exclusion or marginalization can occur within these networks because "these smallest units of the social body are to be considered as the bearers of both their problems and their solutions". In the same way, the network may "no longer respond" when the person devalued by illness or unemployment is no longer able to keep his or her place in a system involving parity or reciprocity. Donati (1994, p. 83) emphasizes the connection between formal and informal networks. "The formal-informal mix appears ever more vital to the normal functioning of social relations," thus emphasizing the necessary social palette of the individual's relationships that range from intimate, close relationships to looser, distant institutional relationships, each fulfilling different roles. It turns out that the appropriation of the supports offered by a network is part of a larger strategic whole and that the individual will be more or less a beneficiary or will focus on a particular type of help according to his or her needs. The effect of social supports is indeed modulated by the meaning attributed to the situation. We have shown (Tap and Vasconcelos, 2004)³⁷ that there are psychosocial mechanisms that can account for the differentiated effects of job insecurity. The mode of solicitation and registration in relational networks informs us both about the areas of activity that the person values and about the constraining or resource function of social ties. (Cazals-Ferré, M.P., Llorca, M.C, 2002). Some strategies focus on the importance of relational ties and downplay the role of work. In this case, the mention of work is only sketched out because the job is placed in second place in the hierarchy of goals. The use of all the networks, close, friendly, and formative and professional networks combines formal and informal links and continuously supports the transition situation (unemployment) which is not experienced as a rupture. This conception of social support is affiliated with a buffering model (Cobb and Kasl, 1977, Cohen and Wills, 1985). This model advocates that social support has an indirect impact on health.

³⁶ This is the "buffer" effect. See for example Plancherel, Bolognini and Nuñez, 1999

³⁷ In this Franco-Portuguese collective research (Toulouse / Coimbra), we have shown that psychological and psychosocial differences between people in precarious situations and those who do not have socio-economic difficulties exist, but they are not as strong as one might suppose.

The links between self-esteem and social support as a means to fight exclusion

Social support is in fact only beneficial if it meets the needs and expectations of the person confronted with a particular aversive situation. Moreover, the action of the support is only effective if the stressor is of high intensity and if the "receiver" perceives a coherence between the characteristics of the problem, the type of support (emotional, material) and the source (family, friends, colleagues). In some cases, however, social support, instead of being "moderating", tends to provoke an increase in stress and aggressive reactions.³⁸ According to Nadler and Fisher (1986), Western society demands that people be infallible and self-sufficient. It motivates people from a "positive" model of autonomy and competition. Asking for help is then perceived, as early as school, as proof of incompetence and insufficiency. It is true that this process of influence can be countered by educational, pedagogical and relational methods that orient the help relationship differently. But when the individual has systematically learned to associate his personal dignity, his self-esteem with the task, he will feel his dignity questioned and his personal value threatened, when others want to give him their support. The authors then contrast two perspectives. The first one, called vulnerability perspective, consists in assuming that a person with a low self-esteem will not dare to ask for help (strategy --)³⁹; conversely, the person with a good self-image will find it natural to get help (strategy ++). In the second one, on the contrary, the coherence perspective, the person with a good self-image will feel threatened by the help of the others and will avoid asking for it (+- strategy); conversely, the person with a low self-esteem will address the others as superiors from whom it is natural to ask for help (-+ strategy). The four strategies undoubtedly exist in reality. They can also follow one another in the same individual according to the periods of his life. The two concepts mentioned by Nadler and Fisher (self-esteem and coherence) are two of the major dimensions of any identity: positivity (self-esteem, feeling of personal value) and unity (coherence, consistency) (Tap, 1991, 1993). However, when faced with exclusion, an identity crisis occurs which often risks being translated into violence, against oneself or against others. In conclusion, it should be noted that identity is always managed in the in-between of the psychic and the social, the self and the other, even when people want to isolate themselves or are forced to do so to escape the unbearable.

³⁸ As a result of this comment, continuing to associate social support with the term "moderator" is questionable. The term "modulator" would be more appropriate. It would mean that social support can increase or decrease stress, increase or decrease risks or protections.

³⁹ The first sign represents self-esteem (+ or -), the second sign represents attitude towards social support (+ or -)

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