

**Personalisation and relational dynamics**  
**(Remarks on Carl Rogers' "philosophy of life")**

**Pierre Tap and Nathalie Oubrayrie -Roussel**

**Preliminary note : Defence and illustration of personalisation** (Pierre Tap)

It seemed necessary to me to add a preface to this work which is a "Defence and Illustration of Personalisation". This is the title of my recent cri du cœur published on LinkedIn on January 8, 2021 (in 8 languages). I had indeed noticed that the term "personalisation" defined in all languages (even in French) did not correspond at all to the way we define it in psychology, in Toulouse in particular. I therefore had to make my cry from the heart heard in as many languages as possible. As I was not really a polyglot, I relied on translation software!

Let us remember for the moment that for the authors of this book, personalisation is to be confused with "**development and fulfilment of the person**" and that it should not be confused with "customisation" or, even more so, with "mass personalisation"!

Here is the text as it was published that day:

"I received a message from Amandine Rochedy, Doctor of Sociology at the Jean Jaurès University in Toulouse, who told me: "I'm working on food practices in specific populations: autism, prader-willi. I deal with the phenomenon of personalisation to talk about the construction of the food repertoire from childhood to adolescence and I would like to mobilise your research. Would it be possible to tell me in which paper I will find a reference to this dimension. I have selected several of your papers, but your opinion would be important to me. Thank you in advance for your response".

I immediately understood that this request was going to force me to react about "personalisation" by a "public" action: to show the difference between the Toulouse conception of personalisation and the one that Wikipedia evokes under this term!

Here is how Wikipedia defines this term: "**Personalisation** can be a material action (modification involving physical activity on the object) or a **psychological**, quasi-anthropological phenomenon of identifying an artefact with a human form, a person, a social function. In modern everyday language, personalisation is the appropriation of an electronic or written medium or consumer product on the basis of personal data provided by a user, or by the will of the user himself".

Emmanuel Mounier and Paul Ricoeur (Christians), Ignace Meyerson, Henri Wallon, Philippe Malrieu, (non-believers), philosophers, psychologists, and many others, must turn over in their graves, faced with such a definition. Paul Racamier

had warned us when in 1965 we spoke to him about naming our laboratory "**Personalisation and Social Change**". He had just published an article on "Personnation", a term which seemed to him more appropriate to define "**the development of the person**". But today the term "personnation" does not appear either!

However, we have maintained the term "Personalisation", after and with Philippe Malrieu, according to the conceptions previously developed by Henri Wallon and Ignace Meyerson. It is true that in 1964 (in another context) I participated in a tribute to Emmanuel Mounier "Présence de Mounier" by proposing a chapter entitled "For a Personalist Psychology" (1964, 1968).

For the first time I mentioned 'personalisation', quoting Mounier: 'Personalisation is affirmation, communication, adhesion. The subject is not enclosed in a passive subjectivity, it welcomes duration as well as space... in a drive towards the future'. The psychologist, with a welcoming attitude, must be able to grasp this dynamic process. But psychology must understand the development of the person without neglecting the complexity of real situations, as experienced by the person. "The person is one, the person is a global act, and therefore the understanding of the person can only come from a global act at the same level. The effort of personalisation is an effort to harmonise the dislocated parts of the psyche "around a centre and an itinerary". The person is thus also an oriented act, it is necessary to grasp it in its duration. This was the meaning of my commitment in psychology: to centre myself on the real person in his or her own dynamics, but in his or her relationships and social actions.

In 1973, the book in homage to Ignace Meyerson "Problems of the Person" (ed. Mouton) was published.

Later, articulating the links between the dynamics of the individual and "social changes" was the stated objective for the creation of the Laboratory as URA 259 CNRS (which I co-directed with Jacques Curie between 1978 and 1991).

Between 1967 and 1981, enrolled in a State thesis with René Zazzo (Nanterre), I participated in the work of his Laboratory on Identity, and could follow Paul Ricoeur's teachings on the same theme or other associates.

In 1983, Ricoeur published "**Meurt le personnalisme, revient la personne**" (Fiftieth anniversary of the magazine **Esprit**). In it, he proposed the notion of "person-attitude", specifying the importance of conflict and crisis, of identity and otherness, of commitment: "I have no other solution than to identify myself with a cause that is beyond me"; "in conviction I risk and submit myself", "Human action can only be seen as interaction".

In 1987, the PCS Laboratory (Toulouse Personnalisation et changements sociaux, URA CNRS 259) and the Cognitive Psychology Laboratory (Aix, CREPCO URA CNRS 182) organised, under the aegis of the CNRS, a colloquium "Psychisme et Histoire" (published in 1987 in the Revue TIP volume VIII, 1-4), with an opening

speech by Jean-Pierre Vernant, in homage to Ignace Meyerson. He quotes him: "One does not stop," he writes, as in conclusion to the colloquium on the Person, "making and unmaking oneself" (p.11). He also said: "I wished for the unpredictable out of aversion to the principle of identity". For my part, I had proposed "Histoire individuelle et individualisme dans l'histoire" (pp.221-231) as a way of evoking the emergence of the person in history, and also the relationship between personalisation and institutional regulations. "To personalise oneself is to construct a temporal aim for oneself and/or for others, it is to draw a life plan, to bring into play a system of projects. *Personalisation defined as an attempt to harmonise behaviour through a life project is therefore not separable from socialisation* (p.225).

This explains why our Laboratory worked during this period on the theory of the "interstructuring of the subject and institutions" proposed by Malrieu (1987), from personal identity to psycho-social interconstruction (Tap, Introductory conference on identity and psycho-social, Aix-en-Provence, 1988). We have also published several works on socialisation (including two at the PUF 1991 and 1993).

Today we are told that in 1987, Stan Devis called "personalisation" the process by which companies offer customers a wide variety of variations of their product so that **each customer can "personalise" that product, making it his or her own and "unique"**. In this way, the objects that are "mine" become confused with what is me as a person. Personalisation would consist of having my mark on these objects so that they are no longer "standard" but in accordance with my "preferences" and "desires". In this way, we move from the personalisation of oneself to the personalisation of the objects that I buy as a customer, to their "personification" so that they confirm my identity, through the "marks" on my possessions.

It was then proposed that this process be called "*mass customization*". Customers are said to be demanding these industrial and commercial procedures. (*La personnalisation de masse*, François Abada 2014 L'Harmattan)

It seems that the antonym (the opposite) of mass customization is the "depersonalization" proposed by "behavioural" psychology ! But in the case of depersonalisation, the person is "alone" with their illness and their "carers". They are not "en masse". Fortunately, the authors do not speak of "mass depersonalisation"! History is unfortunately there to remind us of its existence.

In fact, the antonym of depersonalisation is indeed personalisation as we define it: personalised development of the individual person!

We could also discuss the "behavioural targeting" or "merchandise fetishism (Marx)" that customisation implies. We also hear about the "hyper-personalisation" that is strongly used by "brands" to "stand out". Indeed, we need to talk about "branding", which would be a change from "masking"! That would bring us, from one day to the next, to tattoos ... We arrive at the skin (which you

can't buy !) ... Very important questions of course! So we must not drop mass personalisation but see how personalisation and "mine", my properties (including my body) are linked together. From the age of 3, the child learns the "it's mine" which already allows him to affirm his "I"!

In any case "the problems of the person" (to use the title of the colloquium proposed by Ignace Meyerson) are always there! We must study the person, certainly including as a client! This is what I have already done in a conference at GEPSO (Groupe National des Etablissements et Services Publics Sociaux), Annecy-le-Vieux, "Dynamique institutionnelle et stratégies identitaires de l'**usager du** social" (published in hospital studies, Bordeaux, 2008), or how does the person survive in his or her identity as a client ! But let's come back to the development of the person!

Pierre Tap

## Preface

## **Personalisation and relational dynamics (Remarks on Carl Rogers' "philosophy of life")**

**Pierre Tap and Nathalie Oubrayrie -Roussel 0**

### **Introduction**

In an interview<sup>1</sup> Rogers said he was "dismayed" that his work is referred to as a technique. "It is not a technique but a philosophical conception of life, a way of being". The rogerian dynamic is therefore not reduced to recipes, to procedures, within the framework of dual or group therapeutic interaction. But Rogers has also been criticised for the "angelic" character of his philosophy of life. It is based on the hypothesis of the positivity of man's deepest nature (cf. Rousseau, 1762). It is society, through its pressures and modes of control, that perverts it. For Rogers this background of the "animal nature of man" is not limited to primary emotions. According to him<sup>2</sup> the centre of the personality (...) is naturally positive, it is fundamentally socialised, forward looking, rational and realistic". Referring to Maslow (1954), he points out that "antisocial emotions such as hostility, jealousy, etc. are the result of frustration of more fundamental instincts, love, security and belonging which are desirable in themselves" (op.cit.). The theories associated with Rogerian philosophy necessarily introduce a ferment that is both innovative and contesting into pedagogical, therapeutic and more broadly social practices. They can therefore be perceived as liberating or utopian and illusory or dangerous depending on who judges them.

We would like to evoke here, beyond sterile polemics, the very topical character of rogerian conceptions and practices in the light of the work of psychology (social, developmental, health, etc.) insofar as this work is centred on personal dynamics and interpersonal relations.

Of course, articulating a philosophy of life to scientific, pedagogical or therapeutic conceptions and practices, implies the establishment of a metapsychology, a value system that serves as a reference and that can be discussed in relation to cultures, ideologies or belief systems, possibly opposed or competing.

The rogerian conceptions are fundamentally based on the importance of systems of representation and their link with emotional processes (internal or expressive). They emphasise centration on oneself (representation, evaluation, etc.), on others

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal des Psychologues*, n° 23, 1984

<sup>2</sup> 1969,74

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(representation of the other) and on the relationship between the other (individual and collective) and oneself.

Today, we can make the difference, in these interactions, between

- *The event*: primacy of the context for oneself or for the other, introducing to the *situational dynamics*;
- *The experiential*: primacy of the personal or interpersonal itinerary favouring the ability to take advantage of the *experience*. The experiential implies the primacy of processes, the experiential the primacy of procedures;
- *Existential*: assumes the primacy of meaning and values;
- Finally, *potential* implies the primacy of reserves, potential skills that the subject can *update*. These "reservations" may or may not, according to the authors, be assimilated to innate or acquired *dispositions*.

As we can see, the notion of "person-centred therapy" must introduce a reflection on the notion of "centration" and on that of "person".

\* *Self-centredness* introduces the question of the possibly egocentric (cognitive), narcissistic and egotistical (affective) character of behaviours and attitudes<sup>3</sup>. It is therefore important to analyse how the person can learn to manage the necessities of (cognitive) *decentration* and *emotional distance* (*from one's own emotions and feelings*). In order to "centre myself on the other" do I have to "decentralise" myself? What then are the characteristics and limits of such decentralisation?

\* As regards *centering on the other (or others)*, it is important to introduce differences and links between

- The *interpersonal relationship*, whether it is a *dyadic relationship between two or more people*;
- The *group relationship* implies the establishment of a "we" that goes beyond relationships between people;
- The *institutional relationship* involving the establishment of systems of rules and powers.

These three types of relationships foster multiple processes of communication, influence, involvement, pressure, help and support, solidarity or division, dependencies and identifications, etc.

The person is both a *socius* (member of a complex society) and an *alter-ego*<sup>4</sup> (privileged interlocutor with another who is a bit like me, but from whom I differ, the others being our "similar", and not identical, even if we share "identities" with them).

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<sup>3</sup> Egocentrism implies the intellectual inability to articulate one's own point of view and the point of view of others; narcissism implies considering one's own body or self as an object of attention and love; egotism implies the swelling of the self (perceiving oneself as the centre of the world and asserting oneself as such under the gaze of others).

<sup>4</sup> Wallon, H., 1956

\* The *focus on the relationship* raises questions about the in-between, about processes of influence, about cooperative behaviour or conflicts, about attachment and detachment, about involvement or dis-involvement, about internal and external pressures, the management of situations and projects, the necessary collective adaptation to difficult situations, mergers and empowerment, marginalisation and integration.

Analysing this triple centering leads to a broadening of the notion of *centering on the person* insofar as the *person* is at the same time the *other*, the *self* and the *relationship between self and other*, in a specific (personal) *situation, environment* (spatio-temporal), *surroundings* (interpersonal relationships, groups and networks) *and framework* (institutions and cultures).



## Chapter 1

### The person, one or multiple? About congruence

The scientist's objective is to build theoretical models, made up of the articulation of multiple concepts, and to put these models to the test of observations and experiments. While Rogers criticizes models that are too "objectifying" (both behaviourism and psychoanalysis), he has constantly tried to elucidate the nature of the intra- and interpersonal processes involved in everyday behaviour. He proposes concepts articulated in a model and constantly strives to verify its modelling in interactive practices (dyadic or group, pedagogical, therapeutic or family, etc.). As we will see, one of the essential themes of his conceptions concerns the difficulty of the person to escape internal divisions, preventing him from facing daily deadlines or giving meaning to his life. The question of psychic unity is in fact a major philosophical question. All philosophies, since antiquity, have revolved around "being". When they do not evoke absolute identity and coherence (God, the Absolute Being), they ask themselves if being is One (Parmenides) or Multiple (Democritus). This is a very topical question. In a recent article F. de Singly evokes the question of the coherence of the self: "*the total or fragmented self?* ». He makes a hero of a novel speak who declares: "*Let us be content with fragments (...). If that is possible, if we don't try to form everything, then it seems to me that I can live... quite well*" and the author concludes: "*Disenchanted, he no longer has the courage to undertake this work of identity unification where the statutory self reinforces the intimate self*"<sup>5</sup>.

#### *Internal congruence and self-awareness*

However, one of the central concepts of the rogerian model is the *congruence* which fundamentally characterises this work of unification. According to him, congruence implies an "<sup>6</sup>exact correspondence between the 'emotional' and interactive experience and awareness (...)". The crucial moment is a moment of *integration in*<sup>7</sup> which communication between the different internal 'homes' is no longer necessary, because *they have become one*" <sup>8</sup>(Rogers, 1968, 108).

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<sup>5</sup> De Singly, F. (1996) La fabrique familiale de soi in *Sciences Humaines*, special issue *Identity, Identities: the individual, the group, society*, 15, 18-21

<sup>6</sup> It is we who underline.

<sup>7</sup> idem

<sup>8</sup> It is we who underline. It should also be noted that Rogers uses the notion of "*communication*" between internal households. These homes would function as

Before discussing the topicality of this concept in psychological research, let us make a few remarks on the historical use of the term "congruence". It was first used by the Greek atomists to designate the interlacing of atoms. According to Democritus, nature is composed of atoms whose movements are mechanistically regulated. Simplicius evokes the fact that atoms can either remain isolated or they "intertwine with each other according to the *congruence* of their figures; sizes, positions and orders, remain together and thus realise the *coming into being* of composed bodies". The word congruence is also associated with the notion of *symmetry*. Congruence is said to occur through the intervention of symmetrical adjustment mechanisms.

We have just seen that Rogers uses the term "exact match" to define congruence. Mapping is one of the important material or symbolic processes in the effort to articulate the different fields of a system. It can therefore also be applied to personality, perceived as a complex system. It would be the functional product of the constant quest for internal coherence and unification undertaken by the person. These efforts would imply a confrontation between behaviours, feelings and representations, an effort to coordinate and prioritise affective, cognitive and conative processes<sup>9</sup>. These different processes would facilitate self-acceptance through the "subjective awareness" and reflection of immediate experience. When "an experience has become fully conscious and fully accepted, it can be dealt with effectively as in any other real situation" (op.cit. 110). A discussion therefore becomes necessary about this centering of the person on himself or herself.

However, Rogers emphasizes above all the importance of the concordance between self-awareness, self-evaluation and the emotional dynamics that guide the way the subject expresses himself or herself, possibly without the subject's knowledge. He emphasizes the importance of self-awareness to the point of considering it as the centre of the personality. According to him, the self must be limited "to aspects of the individual and those relationships with others and with the world that are available to consciousness" (quoted by Corraze, 1995). He draws on the results of subjective self-assessment tests to show the importance of this, not only in person-centred psychotherapy, but also in subjective self-

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"inner characters" (cf. Janet, 1929) interacting, rubbing shoulders without communicating or ignoring each other. This hypothesis can be associated with Kaës' (1991) notion of 'internal groups'. Freud himself sometimes used interactive metaphors to analyse the relationship between psychic instances (that, me, superego, ideal of the self).

<sup>9</sup> Emotional includes emotions and feelings. It is closely associated with the imagination and the management of values (normative affects) in relation to oneself or others. Cognitive includes all the mental activities of information management, reasoning, thinking and problem solving. The conative finally concerns motivations, tendencies to act and all aspects associated with the organisation of activities.

evaluation. According to him, it is the agreement between the present self and the ideal self that defines self-esteem. He argues that the closeness between the two measures is all the stronger the more balanced the person is. But it is difficult to admit that self-awareness identifies with the reality of the person. *Self* theorists have called Insight the relationship between the subject's self-image and the reality of the self. Insight would correspond to Rogers' lucidity or congruence. It refers to the distance between what I believe I want and what I normally want, between a collective normative ideal (social and cultural desirability) and a self-ideal for oneself.

Self-awareness is not naive. It is of course associated with the field of consciousness (associated with the experience currently lived, and likely to trigger "realisations"). But this is the synchronic dimension of consciousness. The diachronic dimension is linked to the journey, to the itinerary of the person who builds, orients, transforms or relaunches his personality through events and memories linked to the past as well as to perspectives of a time that will have to be filled in.

But, on the other hand, self-awareness is not independent of the social conditioning and cultural influences from which it borrows values and life references in order to make them its own. It is not constructed from unifying correspondences alone. For example, Jaspers (1950) referred to the existence of four characteristics of self-awareness: unity, opposition to the outside world, identity and activity. These aspects were constructed by the interactions and transactions between the subject and his various environments (of belonging or reference).

A disturbance in consciousness, representation and/or self-image has important consequences on *personalisation* (the development of the person over the course of his or her life).

### ***Dissonance and alexithymia***

In any case, Rogers has shown how the effort of matching feelings, acts and thoughts was beneficial in the therapeutic dynamic or in overcoming daily difficulties, outside of therapy.

In these situations, it is of course the negative effects of non-congruence that one must leave. The subject may show very strong feelings (perceived by others) without being aware of this expression and therefore without being able to really communicate with others. For example, an angry man may sincerely believe that he is pointing out the facts and does not feel aggressive emotions. There would be non-congruence because of the separation between the emotional experience manifested (organizational) and the subject's awareness of it.

Non-congruence could be compared to two other important and often evoked concepts: dissonance and alexithymia.

- *Dissonance*, in its *cognitive*<sup>10</sup> version, implies the existence of a discrepancy, a non-correspondence between opposing thoughts or evaluations, or between thoughts and words. We can also evoke the existence of<sup>11</sup> *affective dissonance*, characterised by the difficult coordination between contradictory affects or feelings. The non-congruence would be, in a way, the conjunction of these multiple dissonances. Whatever models are then used to explain these processes (cognitive, psychoanalytical or other), we must make a difference between conscious, non-conscious and unconscious, in the way the subject lives his *internal divisions*, and which he does not always perceive the links with his psychic or physical suffering, and his difficulties of self-acceptance or adaptation.
- The term *alexithymia* was proposed by Sifneos (1973)<sup>12</sup> to define a psychosomatic illness characterised by difficulty in assuming and expressing one's own emotions<sup>13</sup>. It is also characterised by a striking absence of thought content and fantasies, whereas the subject, on the other hand, is inclined to constantly detail facts, events or physical disorders (cf. the concept of "operative thinking" proposed by Marty and de M'uzan in 1963 to characterise this deficit). These subjects rarely dream. The expression of their emotions, feelings or affects is often inappropriate. They use action to settle or flee conflicts, and often in an impulsive, feverish, irritated way. They often complain of feelings of emptiness and boredom. In relationships with others, they are both dependent and narcissistic or lonely.

These last remarks make it possible to suppose the articulation between internal non-congruence and relational and more widely social difficulties. Psychic conflicts are reflected both in the way the body is managed and in the way it behaves towards others, or under its gaze.

### ***External congruence as a mapping between self and others***

We know how difficult, demanding, sometimes conflictual, and especially humiliating close relationships (love, friendship, sympathy, co-management of a life together) are. But they are at the same time or successively passionate, exhilarating, especially rewarding. The matching in relationships with others is

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<sup>10</sup> See Festinger (1950)

<sup>11</sup> cf. de Vos (1980) "Affective dissonance precedes cognitive dissonance. It is the conflict between discordant emotions that requires resolution in conscious thought. If there is no conflict at the affective level, the individual can tolerate without difficulty the confusion of concepts or cognitive inconsistencies. But individuals cannot tolerate conflicting emotions without resorting to defence mechanisms (op. cit. p. 32).

<sup>12</sup> Work developed by Nemiah J.C., taken up by Taylor, G.J. (1984,1990) and presented and continued in France by Pardinielli, J.L. (1992) from which we draw inspiration here.

<sup>13</sup> Alexithymia = not (a) being able to "read" (lexi) one's own emotions (thymia)

not symmetrical or identical. As Levinas rightly shows, face to face is not co-presence but proximity; and this proximity is not of the type of the equal to the equal, it is asymmetry or more precisely primacy of self or of the other. It takes on a double character: the other can be perceived and experienced as something, vulnerable, demanding and begging, but also perceived and experienced in its inaccessible and irreducible height.

The notion of otherness is co-originating with the notion of narcissism. Even when we speak of children's early capacity to give, we can assume that altruism based on reciprocity can only be a work at the limits, between the devastating assertion of self and the feeling of being alienated from the desire or demand of the other.

The relationship with others would not be based on generosity, initiative or identification. But it would first of all be part of a "provocation" in the etymological sense of pushing forward, setting in motion, soliciting or forcing the expression "to be".

In the name of values associated with relational practices, Rogers challenges this type of argument, banning an asymmetrical relationship that<sup>14</sup> is based on interpretation. On the other hand, he values the *understanding* and *intuition* associated with *looking* (eye), and the *trust* and *openness* associated with *listening* (ear).

But the very notion of unification raises the question of how it relates to the management of conflicts, divisions and duplication. If there is a need for unification, it is because the subject lives through contradictions. However, "contradiction and ambiguity are, in the course of experience, the lived sign of personal existence"<sup>15</sup>. But the same author declares elsewhere: "the progressive unification of all my acts, and through them of my characters or my states is the act of the person".<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In many contemporary works, one notes the debatable assimilation between "asymmetrical" and hierarchical, between "symmetrical" and "egalitarian".

<sup>15</sup> Mounier, E. (1946a, in 1961, II), p. 69

<sup>16</sup> Mounier, E. (1936 in 1961, I), p.528

## Chapter 2

### Visionary intuition: the look

Rogers is today claimed by some cognitivists to the extent that he places great importance on the mechanisms of information management in the relationship that the subject establishes with himself, through his own mental activities (awareness, self-centred understanding, self-evaluation) and in the thought processes associated with communication and interaction with others (manifestation of intentions, intuitive evaluations of others, positive consideration of others).

Descartes associated the soul with the gaze<sup>17</sup>. Rogers, for his part, uses the metaphor of the *gaze in the* analysis of intersubjective processes<sup>18</sup>. It is this metaphor that guides the concepts of *clairvoyance*, *transparency*, *intuition and empathy*.

#### *The clairvoyance*

Clairvoyance implies the cognitive ability to *perceive*, to read directly, what is not audible or visible, what is hidden in oneself or in others, behind noise or appearances. But this position would be *voyeuristic* if I myself remained hidden while I "read" the other as much when he expresses himself as when he protects himself.

#### *Transparency*

In order to avoid this asymmetrical situation, the protagonists should strive to sharpen each other's foresight and, to achieve this, to develop *transparency*, *that is to say*, to be seen, perceived, understood in terms of what each person would be unvarnished, unmasked, helpless, in their true (?), deep (?), real (?) being. In the conception of "expressive" transparency, Rogers assumes that the congruence of one is perceived and appreciated by the other in interaction. But expression (called spontaneous) can become a dangerous perceived exposure for the self, or the vulnerable other. There is always a danger in group "manipulations" to push the other to free himself or herself from his or her own defences. Coherence and internal control are, like the *spinal column*, what allows the subject to structure himself as such. But in the absence of internal coherence, a *shell is* better than no

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<sup>17</sup> Tap, P. (1997) about the spatialization of the psychic through the gaze in Descartes.

<sup>18</sup> Tap, P. (1986) Personnalisation et intersubjectivité, special issue *Intersubjectivités, Connexions*, 47, 149

defences at all. Defending oneself can be authentic, although not transparent: "Move along, there is nothing to see"! ».

### ***Intuition***

Intuition is also part of the language of vision (*intuitio* = looking, *intueri* = looking). Like clairvoyance, it is an ability to *see through* what is hidden (Mouloud, 1995). "Etymologically, *the* terms *Intueor*, *Intuitus* refer to the act and attention of looking. In a broad sense, *intuitus* is a direct attack on the object that presents itself in its fatuity. The term *Intuitus* has inherited from the Greek notion of *noesis*: a simple act of thought that does not disperse in perceptive moments" (op.cit.). Intuition is apt to designate any form of immediate understanding and concerns all layers of knowledge. It can be *anticipatory* and *penetrating*. We empathically grasp the meaning of the conduct of others without having to conclude this "grasp" with analogical inferences. Intuition goes to the essential and facilitates the passage from the phenomenon to the being of things. Intuition can therefore be assimilated either to a founding knowledge, prior to reasoning, or to a unifying knowledge, synthesising the reality thus captured.

The intervention of clear-sightedness, transparency and intuition in the relationship between people, would favour a true "intersubjective" communication (egalitarian relationship with reciprocal respect, between *subjects who are not subject to the law*). *Is this an illusion, a utopia, or a profound reality?*

## Chapter 3

### Empathic intuition

#### *Empathy and sociometry*

Empathy, associated with clairvoyance and intuition, implies the ability to "put oneself in the place of": this would be a particular process of identification" (Rogers, 1968, p.49) which would not be emotionally fusional, nor would it be associated with reciprocity based on contract or decency. In order to clarify its nature, it is interesting to show how rogerian conceptions find a great echo in research on sociometry, based on the initial work of Moreno (1934). Empathy is associated with the *degree of perceptive acuity of the person* in the evaluation of socio-affective relations within a group. Sociometric techniques attempt to analyse and measure how subjects perceive their own situation in the group of which they are members<sup>19</sup>. They are asked to self-evaluate their relational affinities or rejections (*selection of people: choice and rejection*), to assess by whom they assume they are chosen and rejected (expectations, perceptive attitudes: "who chose me, rejected me?"). "This area of *selective perception* is a particular sector of the general problem of empathy, i.e. sensitivity to the attitudes of others and the penetration of their feelings" with respect to the subject ("positive, negative or neutral feelings that others may have about me") (Maisonneuve, 1995). In this context, it is possible to obtain three types of measures<sup>20</sup> :

- 1. The confrontation of *perceptive attitudes* (i.e. the subject's expectations with the actual attitudes of others towards him/her). The subject has "evaluated", more or less well, who has chosen or rejected him: *degree of clairvoyance* ;
- 2. Confronting the *selective attitudes* of the subject with the perceptive attitudes (expectations) of others. The latter have more or less well perceived the choices and rejections formulated by the subject: *degree of transparency* ;
- 3. The confrontation of perceptive and selective attitudes at the level of the subject itself. There is a correspondence between the choices made and the choices supposedly received: *degree of congruence* (here we should say "external congruence").

The reference to sociometry allows us to show that what is important in the processes mentioned (congruence, clairvoyance, transparency, intuition and

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<sup>19</sup> Naturally, sociometric techniques are only applicable to people who know each other well within a group.

<sup>20</sup> Trilogy borrowed from Maisonneuve (1995).



empathy) concerns the *ability to evaluate, in a cognitive way, processes which are of a different nature (emotions, feelings, affinities or oppositions, friendship-love but also rejections and hatreds)*. However, Rogers' proposals tend to agree with the hypothesis that the subject's ability to evaluate his own emotions in an empathic interaction with another person (therapist or not) tends to transform the way he will deal with these same emotions (positive or negative).

But sociometry also allows us to raise two essential questions:

1. There are significant differences in people's ability to situate themselves in terms of clairvoyance-transparency-congruence in sociometric tests. It is obviously essential to understand how "mistakes" are made: misunderstandings, lack of discernment, prudence, need for security or gratification. Analysing these errors in real daily situations allows the person to better understand the origin of his socio-perceptive illusions. It is true that certain illusions (about other people's feelings and attitudes in particular, but also about abilities or personal feelings to be engaged, etc.) can be vital for people if they are associated with significant feelings, beliefs or core values

2. Sociometric selections and perceptions are only committed representations. The essential question, which has long been the subject of research in psychology or social psychology (of the child, adolescent or adult) is the following: How are affinities organised or how do "repulsive" behaviours emerge? Are affinities based on similarities<sup>21</sup> (for example: homophilia = loving those who resemble you), on complementarities or on equalities or hierarchies, or on specificities (perceived or unconscious otherness: for example, loving people who are different from oneself because one cannot "confuse" oneself with them)? It seems to be a proven fact that similarities respond to a concern to secure the self, while otherness and complementarity respond to a need for fulfilment. The two theses are not exclusive.

### ***Empathy and intersubjectivity*** <sup>22</sup>

In the existential conception, solipsism can only be overcome in a subject-to-subject relationship, in the immediate experience of intersubjectivity, of the reciprocity of consciousness. The gaze of the other also plays a driving role. But, according to Sartre, for example, the other is, originally, the one who looks at me and who alienates me and freezes me in that gaze. My original fall is the existence of others, "hell is others," etc.". To avoid being stuck, reduced to the state of an object-confit, I have only one means of salvation: *retaliation*, in order to freeze in

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<sup>21</sup> The question is important, all the more so as the term "affinity" for relations between people is historically the extension of a chemical term (or rather alchemical, *affinitas*, XIII<sup>o</sup> S) characterising the property of two bodies to unite with each other through their similar particles.

<sup>22</sup> The following remarks in this paragraph are based on or inspired by *Personalisation and Intersubjectivity* (Tap, P. 1986).

my turn others as objects. But supposing that my riposte succeeds, communication fails, the other-subject escapes me. Thus *conflict* is inherent in any intersubjective relationship, even and including friendly, loving and more generally proximal relationships. In the Sartrean *vision*, love is about the possession of the other as subject and object, both as freedom-captured. However, "the other is by principle elusive: he flees from me when I seek him and possesses me when I flee from him"<sup>23</sup>. Thus, in order to defend himself, the individual tends to deny the authenticity of the other. This vision leads to the pessimistic conclusion that "subjectivities remain out of reach and radically separate" (*op. cit.* ). Intersubjectivity is therefore impossible.

Certain works would seem to prove Sartre right. Thus, in a presentation of works concerning the links and oppositions between intimacy and sociability, Brehm (1984) shows that love is increasingly presented in a mercantile and utilitarian perspective of social exchange. The multiple difficulties felt by the protagonists of intimate relationships are evoked. Thus the reciprocity of self-disclosure, confiding in each other and receiving confidences in return, tends to fade as the relationship becomes more durable. Isn't it therefore easier to talk about one's life to a stranger in a corridor, on the train or on any other network perceived by the listener?

Let's take another example, that of jealousy. This would seem to have its origin mainly in the threat to pride and self-esteem, associated with the need for exclusivity in the relationship with the other. As La Rochefoucauld said, "There is more self-esteem than love in jealousy". Today, sentimental and marital breakdowns are becoming more frequent. We live in an era of multiple relationships and multiple relationships mean multiple experiences of conflict and dissolution. Should we conclude from this that man is always a wolf to man, that human beings are condemned to devour each other, to tear each other apart or to break up their relationships?

Many authors have criticised the pessimistic version of human relations. For example, Gabriel Marcel (1968) criticises the Sartrean conception because it implies the Cartesian postulate of a primary self-awareness, of an isolated and prior individual cogito. He contrasts it with the hypothesis of a primary intersubjectivity, prior to the separate consciousness of self and others. In terms of the development of the child, Henri Wallon (1956) evokes the hypothesis of a primary consciousness "with double focus". Two terms, two foci "which could not exist one without the other, although or because they are antagonistic: one, the ego, which is an affirmation of identity with oneself, and the other, the alter-ego, which sums up what has to be expelled from this identity in order to preserve it" (1946). According to Gabriel Marcel, if the self experiences a failure in intersubjective communication, it is because it is unavailable: "being unavailable: being busy with oneself" (*op.cit.*, p.105). Mounier also proposes this hypothesis:

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<sup>23</sup> Sartre, J.P. (1943)

"It is in a prior project of unavailability, and not in my freedom as a subject, that I grasp the other as an object, it is in the same disposition that I reduce myself to receiving him or her as an invader"<sup>24</sup> (op. cit., p. 105). The latent aim of the encounter would be to allow the subject to emerge from a strong state of tension characterised by multiple tensions and contradictions. Either one then refuses the face-to-face encounter to maintain one's beliefs in Love and in the Other, or one prepares for the disappointing encounters provoked by the volcanism of passions, or finally one refers to the demonstrations based on social masks, playing the picnic in a stilted context, not very well prepared for this<sup>25</sup>.

It is therefore necessary to re-question the function of other people's view of oneself in the intersubjective dynamic. The alienation of the self by the other and the rejection in return of the other is fortunately not the only engine of intersubjective communication. Communication with the other can just as much favour the emergence or the reinforcement of my identity. The gaze can be alienating, but it cannot constantly be reduced to an invasion, an encroachment that would strip me and enslave me. The gaze of the other is at least as upsetting as it is alienating. "It shakes up my confidence, my habits, my self-centred sleep. He is, even hostile, the surest revealer of myself. Thus, the positive interpersonal relationship is a mutual provocation, a mutual fertilization."<sup>26</sup>

If it is true that the other can encourage my depersonalisation by treating me as an object, an animal or an automaton<sup>27</sup>, it is also true that the first movement that reveals the subject, in early childhood, is a movement towards others. The child exposes himself to the eyes of the other, places himself under the gaze of the other, but also to the other's point of view. The latter is therefore both a *foment of conflict* and a *propeller of projects*. Personal projects and conflicts are part of the history of intersubjective relations and the construction of the subject, or its "digging".<sup>28</sup> In the end, communication with the other person can just as much favour the emergence or reinforcement of my identity, promote personalisation as well as alienating fixation. The existing is torn, but its existence is at the same time an emergence, tension and struggle (Jaspers), it is a being tended towards its realisation (Heidegger).

The central concepts of the rogerian model are based on the importance of the conscious perception-representation of oneself, of others, of the relationship

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<sup>24</sup> Mounier, E. (1947)

<sup>25</sup> The "aperitif" hanger-on seeks to satisfy his or her own needs, while others are there to satisfy their strategies for conservation and social recognition.

<sup>26</sup> Mounier, E. (1949), p. 455.

<sup>27</sup> Bettelheim proposed to define alienation in this way (1976).

<sup>28</sup> Gabriel Marcel, on the subject of the functioning of the person, stated that "it is not so much a question of building as of digging" (1940). But, as all builders know well, building necessarily implies digging, especially to provide foundations!

between oneself and others and their influence on the emotions, feelings, relational behaviour and the psychological organisation modalities put in place by the person under consideration. It is therefore important to return to empathy and to show that it is not limited to the acuity of the perception of others' behaviour.

### *Empathy and affectivity*

According to Widlöcher "the essential therapeutic aim (in the rogerian orientation) is to free the present relationship from the scoriae of the past and to make it recognise its original character: that of being a non-possessive form of love. Accessing this present positive relationship means freeing oneself from the neurotic shackles of fixations on the past, which are obstacles to authentic individualisation" (Widlöcher, 1995). In other words, it is in early childhood, or at least in the past (possessive love, etc.), that the cause of the personal, and in particular socio-affective, difficulties currently experienced by the person in consultation must be sought. This position, which is sufficiently cautious, is undoubtedly acceptable to many therapists. Rogers does not deny the effects of personal history. What he does discuss, however, is the validity of psychoanalytic therapies involving an interpretative centering of regressive processes (through interposed memories and dreams) and based on the hypothesis of a return to the traumas (real or supposed) or fantasies associated with childhood experiences. The attitude of the therapist in Rome has nothing to do with cognitive-behavioural conceptions and practices, whose overly directive character he discusses, but above all with the discrepancy between the conceptions used to support the interpretation of patients' difficulties and the insufficient theorising and practical justification of the therapist-patient relationship.

What, then, is the attitude of the Rogerian therapist in his or her interaction practice? How is empathy justified as a method? Can it be confused with sympathy? If not, what characterises this "particular identification"?

The notion of empathy is indeed evoked in relation to very diverse practices. For example, Chertok (1995) claims that hypnosis offers a privileged model of empathy. The hypnotic relationship is said to have an archaic element that is not accessible to verbalization. Interpretation, an intellectual process, would become less important than "this form of emotional, intense, fusional, symbiotic communication called empathy". Empathy thus presented is confused with emotional dependence and hardly corresponds to Rogers' definition of empathy. Roustang (1980) wonders if the true spring of transference is not the same as hypnosis. This identity of process would have been suspected by Freud, but his followers, including Lacan, rejected it.

What about the *comparison between empathy and sympathy*? According to Bergson, sympathy would imply a person's ability to "coincide with what the other person has that is unique and inexpressible". If Rogers does not go so far, he assumes, as we have seen, a similar type of matching when he defines empathy.

Therapists in Rome generally tend to reject the confusion between these two notions. But it is worth looking at them more closely. The suffix "pathology" present in both terms is to be questioned. It means to suffer, to be *sick* (pathos, pathology) but also *feeling, affection*<sup>29</sup>. Sympathy certainly means to have positive feelings towards others, affective bond, but etymologically it also implies the hypothesis of *suffering-with*. Does empathic concordance imply an emotional participation of the therapist? If there is participation, what about its 'transparency' (appearing through) and management (control, projection, transfer)?

The confusion between illness and feeling clearly shows that affectivity in general is perceived in a rather negative way (conduct disorder, difficulty in expression, etc.) both through language itself and in relational practices.

In his *Treatise on the Passions*, as in the *6th Meditations*, about "affective states", Descartes contrasts passions (admiration, love, hatred, desire, joy, sadness) with "inner emotions". He considers passions to be useful insofar as they push the person to act and to "reach the end in which movements and passions participate". But passion (in the passionate sense) is the exasperation of a feeling. It may mobilise emotions, but it is not the same as them<sup>30</sup>. The six passions evoked by Descartes can be assimilated to feelings. Feeling can be associated with an opinion or belief (assent), an intuition (foreboding) or a passionate impulse (resentment). Feelings lead the person to act or react, including to the outcome of their own actions (Janet, 1929). It sometimes tends to have a lasting effect on our relationship with others and the outside world. "Feeling is first and foremost an awareness of a presence, of an "there is". But this presence is not neutral. Feeling is awareness of a value, it is always immediate awareness of an existence whose value commits us. Finally, feeling cannot be confused with knowledge.

Based on these assumptions, sympathy is a characteristic form of feeling. What about empathy? It cannot be confused with emotion or passion. On the other hand, we have seen that it can be assimilated to intuitive and direct knowledge? But isn't empathy more than that?

Let us compare this with the *phenomenology of affectivity* proposed by Max Scheler (1928). This author proposes to consider sympathy as a mode of

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<sup>29</sup> The term "affection" also means an illness (e.g. heart disease) and a positive feeling towards others (e.g. affection between mother and child).

<sup>30</sup> Emotion is a crisis, more or less sudden and violent; it is more limited in time, and more directly associated with the body. The feeling is more or less deep and more or less lasting, but it necessarily introduces a reference of value and meaning. Passion also gives itself as meaning, but it is a fanatical idealization of the object of passion; it is exclusive and idolatrous. In collective terms, passion provokes aggregate-fusion at the expense of intersubjectivity. Individuals settle together in the 'aesthetic sphere', in the *imaginary passion of immediacy*, at the expense of *demands* (ethical sphere of the Ideal) and *fulfilment* (sphere of the religious), (Kierkegaard, 1970).

immediate knowledge associated with intuition and which he calls *emotional intuition on values and on the diversity of the person's actions*. Emotional intuition makes it possible to grasp the immediate expression of others' experiences (which are characterised by feelings: love, hatred, etc.). It facilitates participation, reciprocity of consciences, discovery of meaning and values. It would imply "affective discernment". Emotional intuition would concern communities as much as individuals.

Although the term "emotional" is confusing and debatable, it seems to us that Scheler's emotional intuition bears some resemblance to Rogers' *empathic intuition*. Rogers' *empathic intuition* articulates a particular mode of knowledge (intuition) and a particular mode of affective-axiological identification (based on feelings and values, especially ethical ones).

## Chapter 4

### From appearance to authenticity and back again

#### *The mask as masquerade, parade and mediation*

Clear-sightedness, transparency and intuition imply that the self functions like a glass house, a luminous self and communication without masquerade or parade. Yet we know how much the behaviour that is supposed to differentiate between men and women is based on *masquerade* (for women) and *parade* (for men).

In fact, these two strategies concern all of us, men and women, young and old, etc. They are based on the hypothesis of the opposition between an interior (an

intimacy) that is hidden, and an exterior that serves as both a screen and a projector.

- *The screen* is both *what hides* (the screen, the smoke screen, etc.) *and what is projected and shown* (the cinema or computer screen: the board on which an image is projected);

- *Masquerade* is often evoked in a feminine, possibly pejorative way, because it is associated with *make-up, make-up, mirror, theatre (make-up artist) or magic (masco = witch; mascoto = spell, good luck charm)*. In any case, we are introduced to the theme of masks;

- The *parade* joins for a part the masquerade, no longer associated with the face, but with the body, by the added ornaments: clothes, ornaments, tattoos, *piercing*. The Latin verb *parare* meant (se) "to prepare", (s') "to prepare"<sup>31</sup>. It has proliferated in 1. to parry, to adorn; 2. to parade (like the circus, the parade), (<sup>32</sup>to) parade oneself, to show off; 3. to parry oneself at once, to protect oneself against (fencer's parade, but also bumper, bulletproof, or...). Parry, protect yourself against (fencer's parry, but also bumper, bulletproof, etc.), anticipate a manoeuvre (pare-excitations<sup>33</sup>! etc.).

- *Appearances*<sup>34</sup> *and appearances* have long been discredited, as philosophers and scientists agree that the reality of the processes is not the same as the perceptible, visible manifestations. Appearances are downplayed because they are only *symptoms of hidden processes*. However, today's man continues to cultivate appearances superbly, to take great care of appearances, of the image he gives of himself.

The different meanings thus updated are interesting for our purposes. They show that masking is also a way of expressing and showing oneself, of revealing oneself (in the way one hides oneself, one reveals oneself), but also of defending oneself, in a relationship to oneself or to others.

Of course, the question remains as to how the relationship between what is hidden and what appears is organised. A *cleavage* can be supposed between the two realities, the phenomenal reality and the psychic reality, the surface behaviours of the being and the deep personality, etc. A cleavage can be supposed between the two realities, the phenomenal reality and the psychic reality, the surface

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<sup>31</sup> For example, courtship parades in animals, or preparation rituals related to marriage and sex in men, but mainly concerning women.

<sup>32</sup> The parade also refers to the *exhibition*. Both imply a corporal emphasis, more or less seductive or aggressive.

<sup>33</sup> Term used by Freud to evoke defences against that which can endanger the self.

<sup>34</sup> The terms "appear" and "appearances" are derived from the verb *parere*: to appear, to appear (as well as the words "transparaître" and "transparences") and must be associated with the fact of "being there" (as opposed to "disappearing": no longer being there). But appearance can be illusory or falsifying.

behaviours of the being and the deep personality, etc. One can suppose the existence of a denial of one of these realities or of the mechanisms of duplication (cleavage between two selves or parts of the self) and/or duplicity (hiding what I am for my own benefit), etc. But we can also analyse the positive dynamics of the interaction between two worlds which should neither merge (the subject disappears in the movement of successive events or multiple identifications) nor separate (schize and incommunicability).

***Play and make-believe in the symbolic construction of the person***

Wallon said that "emotions peg the social to the body" (1956). This is all the more true when it comes to the emergence of play behaviour in children. Indeed, it is in the immediate experience of the emotion felt that young children play their first relational games: for example, the child's bursts of laughter in the circular game where the face is hidden with a handkerchief that is then removed. Through these first games the child learns to communicate, in the attention paid to the gestures of the other and in the reduction of the "tension" that these gestures provoke. The child learns, among other things, that what is hidden from view is always there (the object hidden behind the piece of furniture, the mother's face or her own face hidden behind the handkerchief). He will also experience the manifestation of emotions to or by others. He will perceive the need to assume the existence of feelings and thoughts that are only partially expressed, that it is better to keep to oneself or that should only be revealed in certain circumstances or in relation to privileged persons. This is how the subject is constructed, in his reservations (potentialities and retentions) as well as in his expressions (verbal and non-verbal).

Then we see the appearance of *simulacra*: for example, the child *pretends to* hold a pillow and sleep. Symbolic or fictional games, including role-playing games, appear later on (Malrieu, 1967). These games allow the child to appropriate and master reality, but they also give him/her the opportunity to anticipate events, happy or unhappy, and to prepare to face them.

Child's play is part of what Winnicott (1971) called the *potential space* (1971), which is that in-between of the personal and the social, which is neither totally one nor totally the other, which can favour the establishment of spaces of freedom (real or imaginary), and of the whole culture. For the adult, as for the child, play is always both social and separate from the social, because it involves risk, confrontation with uncertainty. Simulacrum and vertigo are processes which allow both the adult and the child to take an even more distinctly social risk, that which consists in getting out of the role assigned to them. Georges Herbert Mead (1934) asserted that social life can only be fully assumed if the individual accepts the role linked to his or her status without becoming totally confused with it. This is undoubtedly the key to the apparent paradox that links and separates both play and culture. The latter is enriched by tendencies which maintain a certain distance



between the individual and his or her social determinations, or which encourage people to assume the risk of a collective life never totally free of uncertainty.

It is in such a context that the use of masks in religious rituals can be placed. The mask is not only there to hide. On the contrary, it is the corresponding spirit that can express itself, show itself, through the person wearing the mask. The mask becomes mediation, no longer this time between the psychic and the social, but between the here below and the beyond. They allow the group to find its security, to have the proof that the gods or spirits are with them. Like all symbolic objects, they allow a link to be made between what is separate. Rather than denying the separation, new means of communication must be established between the elements (groups, people, etc.) that have been separated. This is the paradox of the mask: it hides and it reveals. In this active in-between, cultural enrichment and the weaving of social bonds takes place, through the interplay of collective meanings. A part of play intervenes in such rituals. They are generally made for men. Women are supposed not to participate in the meaning, not to be in the "secret". In reality, they pretend, play the game of not knowing and behave towards children as if they did not know the secrets (magic powers, sexuality, etc.).

Crozier (1977) has shown that in any social organisation, and no doubt in any society, there is *a space (or zone) of uncertainty and indecision in the interplay of rules and prohibitions*. This space allows social actors to develop their freedom, to manage new choices. The term "play" this time means not only the relative lack of definition of the role of the actors, but also the vagueness of the functioning (just as there can be "play" in the articulation between elements of any mechanical or hydraulic system). Crozier's hypothesis has sometimes been translated into terms of the actor's strategy. If I am totally transparent, my behaviour is predictable in the play of power relationships. If, on the contrary, I maintain a certain opacity, if my behaviour is not totally predictable, I acquire power over those whose attitudes or decisions I know in advance. This hypothesis on the cynicism of human behaviour is at the antipodes of the rogerian conception which refuses to manage situations in terms of power relations and roles. Without denying these relationships, Rogers wants to situate himself differently.

### ***From "persona" to "person".***

The term "person" comes from the Latin *persona*, itself of Etruscan origin and which first meant "theatre mask" and then "(theatre) character". If, like Shakespeare, we (metaphorically) equate the world with a theatre, the question is how we assume our roles and whether, as actors, we identify with them. In other words, three more or less contradictory questions are being asked:

- What is the relationship between the social roles (that I play) and the person (that I am)? Are the former experienced as constraints or as opportunities? Am I faithful to the expectations of the other actors or those who structure the scene?

- Can I express myself authentically in my role practices? Isn't social life, with its theatrical side, artificial in relation to psychic reality?
- Should I adapt, integrate, play the expected roles? Or should I try to be myself? Are both simultaneously conceivable?

The sociologist Gurwitsch (1966) considered that sociability implies the linking of individual consciousness (actor) and collective consciousness (scene and text). Starting from the degree of *fusion* of individuals in the *We*, the degree of *attraction* of social practices (motivation of the actors, interest of the roles played) and the intensity of the *pressure* exerted by the group, he defined the difference between *mass* (fusion +, pressure +), *community* (balance between fusion and pressure) and *communion* (fusion +, attraction +, pressure -). We can therefore see that socio-affective processes, the effects of power and constraint, are at work in group sociability, as they were in interpersonal sociability (dual or multiple).

How to be at the same time socius (member of a society), *alter-ego* (in a proximal and identificatory relationship with the other) and *subject*? To take up the metaphor of theatre, the subject is not only the (social) *actor*, he or she must also be an *author* (of works and products that make sense, for oneself and for others) and a *director* (ability to organise real and imaginary spaces, to manage networks and interactions, to facilitate expression and innovation, for oneself and for others). But of course, social reality can be a matter of pressure (constraints) and lack of attraction (low motivation in work or private life, etc.).

It is true that social organisations, structures and institutions are the source of many ills. They are heavy, superficial, cold, hypocritical, etc. whereas we aspire to authenticity, depth, freedom, communicative warmth. But if we actively seek these values, society does not oppose them, for the good reason that there is not "one" society, but a multiplicity of groups with multiple aspirations and injunctions. To free myself, to give meaning to my life, to find warmth, I will seek out those who feel, think, live or want to live like me; I will define what I oppose and draw the consequences in my actions and interactions. In this way, I will be able to integrate my way of asserting myself and my way of dealing with social bonds, of socialising.

In fact, the need to assert oneself may involve taking risks in the choice of roles and activities. "Modern man lives a strong existential anguish which eventually leads him to fall into depression or pushes him to realise his potential and to do something, whatever the risks. He wants to test something beyond himself, to satisfy his quest for a radical Other, allowing him to transcend the state of daily life."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Tap, P. (1988) p. 241

## Chapter 5

### Positivity: trust and sense of value

#### *Trust as a primary credo*

Rogers has often been criticized for his notion of trust, as it can be worked from individual and collective stories. According to him, unconditional trust would be that of the baby's relationship with its mother, an organizational trust that predates any code, any contract. He proposes as an objective to find this type of functioning in the here and now of the therapeutic relationship. It is therefore advisable to discuss this primary mother-child trust before analysing the meaning of introducing this unconditional positivity into therapy.

On the subject of primary trust, Rogers joins some psychoanalysts such as Erikson and Winnicott.

According to Erikson (1972), in the first year of life, the child experiences well-being or malaise, both physical and psychological, through the mediation of the relationship with the mother, particularly in the regulation of nutritional needs, care management and the monitoring of loving relationships. Having confidence in the baby means learning to *rely on the* similarity and continuity of "external providers". Confidence in the other person will facilitate self-confidence, the ability to resist frustrations and feelings of abandonment. The child will then agree to let the mother out of her sight, without showing excessive anxiety or anger. Conversely, the feeling of malevolence would be associated with unregulated physical or psychic suffering, with the poor quality of interactions. According to Erikson the solution of the nuclear conflict between trust and mistrust is the first task of the self. It will allow the child to build a sense of identity (continuity of self) and self-valuation that does not contradict what others expect of him.

But this primary trust of absoluteness will be constantly challenged as the child builds up his or her own image in interaction with others, will experience doubt, uncertainty, or even mistrust of others whom he or she perceives as resistant, frustrating and forbidding. Parents need to be able to convey to the child a deep, almost somatic belief that what they do has meaning. Eventually, children become neurotic, not because of frustrations, but because of an absence or loss of the social meaning of those frustrations. In other words, the relationship of power (or powerlessness) is already present in the management of the first social interactions through the affirmation of desires and their limitation.

According to Winnicott, "the mother who is good enough responds to the infant's omnipotence and, to some extent, gives it meaning over and over again" (1965,122). "The 'good enough' mother appears to be a fundamental condition for

the emergence and development of self-confidence in the child" (Tyar, 1998)<sup>36</sup>. The 'good enough mother', according to Tyar, 'would (in fact) be the mother who frustrates the child with deprivation' (opt.cit.112). "The child creates the Kred<sup>37</sup> that the mother presents to him" (op.cit. 113). The Kred describes the infant's experience of omnipotence associated with the mother's omnipotence.

The mother's work transforms anxiety into an experience in which the infant can overcome himself. "The sufficiently good mother constitutes the first stage of the principle of trust in the declension of distinctions inside and outside, good and bad, incorporation and projection, omnipotence and distress ... from there can be ordered trust which appears not as a state of the self but as a pre-moic work, the state of fiance<sup>38</sup>", (opt.cit., 113).

### ***From primary trust to demistrust: unconditional positivity revisited***

Trust implies the establishment of value, *reliability* and *faith, in oneself and in others*. Mistrust is associated with the introduction of a problem, a stigmatised difference, a negative value judgement about the judgements of others. "The principle of trust intervenes with the question of strangeness, because it challenges the figures of the discourse of difference in the civilised community" (opt.cit., 254) (cf. Freud's disturbing strangeness, the collusion of the identical and the different...).

There is therefore a danger in rogerian therapy of confusing the unconditional positivity towards the consultant with the feeling of maternal omnipotence that the therapist may experience and the fusional aspect that may accompany it. This is because trust can be defined as "relying confidently on the *integrity* of another person" (Webster). Integrity (both psychological and moral) implies 'wholeness', absence of fault, harmony, etc. (Webster). Self-confidence in the child would thus imply the illusory perception of an all-powerful mother through her very integrity. But the person, throughout his or her life, will experience failures of confidence, doubts about the behaviour of others. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between trust as a pragmatic issue (trust lived from day to day) and trust as an ethical value? As Tyar (op. cit.) puts it so beautifully, it is not a question of trying to regain primary confidence, but of cultivating the capacity for *distrust*, both in relation to oneself and to others. "If the work of demistrust makes the subject optimistic, it is not because of a diagnosis of external reality but because of the *subjective position that the being is willing to take*" (op. cit. 253). Here, then, but

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<sup>36</sup> The British form 'good enough mother' is translated as 'good enough mother', the term 'enough' evokes lack, while the term 'enough', a literal translation of 'enough', evokes excess.

<sup>37</sup> Kred = primary belief, the creed of trust (this term would be the very ancient root of all words related to belief, *credere in Latin, etc.*). ).

<sup>38</sup> The "fiance" is therefore equivalent to an *original alliance* (this meaning is found in "engagement" and as a suffix in trust, mistrust, etc.).

after a diversion, we find that unconditional positivity towards others is not an infantile emotional fusion, but, on the contrary, an ethically based decision in the service of an encounter practice.

***Trust as a socio-moral contract: the difficult return to "fides".***

The common origin of the Latin words *fides* (faith) and *foedus* (pact, agreement, alliance) <sup>39</sup>suggests the idea of trust. "Faith is a lasting commitment of trust in variable forms such as: word given, promise, profession of self, oath, contract, treaty, alliance, various conventions. This requires "trusting" and "inspiring trust". The legal and religious character of the Latin "*fides*" is based on the fact that trust is not natural; that assent must be managed by the "sworn". Loyalty of course poses considerable sociological and legal problems. It is often one of the foundations of the coherence of a group, and of the possible cooperation between its members. When a person is in difficulty, it can be said that his or her faith in social functioning is rather "cooled", as is the feeling of being loved and recognised by those close to him or her. Social withdrawal and difficulty in accepting help from others are therefore associated with problems of personalisation. In order to facilitate social integration, the subject must regain a minimum of confidence in social functioning, even though institutions, through bureaucracy or denial of people, are not ready to change the reception arrangements to make them more human.

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<sup>39</sup> According to Dumézil (1958), they come from the same Indo-European root, *beidh-*, which also gave the Greek *pistis*.

## Chapter 6

### **Non-directiveness, permissiveness or democratic interaction?**

#### *Laissez-faire or permissiveness?*

The question now arises as to whether the practice of non-directiveness implies laissez-faire in the person-centred rogerian conception? Indeed, a comparison between permissiveness and laissez-faire is necessary.

The practice of non-directiveness does indeed suggest this involvement, as it seems to be linked to laissez-faire by the therapist's attitude of listening and silences towards his client. The confusion between this method and laissez-faire is maintained by those who criticise the rogerian conception, as it can be understood as an educational strategy or style. To show that there is indeed a distinction between laissez-faire and permissiveness, let us take the example of parental educational strategies. Rogers criticized the authoritarian educational strategy in favour of a permissive strategy that suggests parental tolerance, freedom and initiative on the part of the child.

Permissiveness is often referred to in terms of a tolerant parental attitude towards the child. It is based on the idea of encouraging great freedom in the other person's activity and the choice of values for the child's development. Freud stressed the importance of meeting the child's instinctive needs, which paved the way for a less directive, less authoritarian education. Dreikurs, a disciple of Adler, argued for an open education that combined freedom and responsibility in the learning system. He evoked the idea of stimulation, of encouraging the child to make voluntary choices. However, he insisted on the need to avoid laxity and to define restrictions in order to give the social structure a sense of security and functionality. In fact, it is a question of getting the child to repress himself the freedoms he is inclined to use himself in order to naturally engage his responsibility in the social order.

Albert Pessio, for his part, studied the emotional impact on the child of permissive and restrictive behaviour and proposed that parents intervene when the child acts in a way that is destructive to him or her and to others. For his part, Ginott emphasizes the importance of restriction as a guarantee of avoiding insecure risks by emphasizing the implicit message it contains: avoid fear of impulses.

On the other hand, over-permissivity (laissez-faire) is generally disapproved of. In order to clarify matters, studies (Lewin, 1939; Schaefer, 1959; Malrieu et al, 1969; Baumrind (1971); Vandenplas-Holper, 1979; Lautrey, 1980; Maccoby and Martin, 1983) addressing the notion of parental educational strategies have made it possible to define typologies that are most often based on the binary articulation between emotional security (S+ = security/ S- = insecurity) and authority (C+ = control/ C- = laxity), resulting in the existence of four strategies.

Baumrind (1971) also established a typology by cross-referencing parental control and support. She thus contrasts the educational styles: stimulating or 'authoritative' (high control and support), permissive (permissive being more or less confused with laissez-faire, loose control and high support) and authoritarian (high control and low support). Permissiveness here would be weak control. Authoritarian would be strong control. Here she refers to *controlled permissiveness*, i.e. an attitude of authority referring to a minimum of restrictions combined with the absolute necessity to respect certain limits decided by the parents. She concludes that strong or weak control condemns the child to dependency.

According to Maccoby and Martin's (1983) typology, it appears that laissez faire is confused with parental disengagement and not with permissiveness. According to these authors, the permissive style shows little control (C-) and more security (S+), in the sense of an implicit presence of warmth.

Thus, without confusing permissiveness with laissez faire, we can evoke the idea that the notion of non-directiveness in Rogers' pedagogy can be replaced by that of "controlled permissiveness" which then presupposes a democratic functioning. This association would correspond to the stimulating educational practice of Malrieu et al. (1969) and Baumrind (1971), because Rogers emphasises the importance of confident listening, understanding and acceptance of the subject in the pedagogical or therapeutic situation, to enable him or her to face his or her problems and adopt appropriate behaviour.

### ***Do non-fusion heat and non-binding control define democratic strategy?***

The pedagogical relationship should be seen as a democratic relationship which implies a process of commitment on the part of the interacting parties, but also processes of *openness and conviviality based on exchanges* with the outside world. The reference to family educational typologies based on security and power shows us that these two characteristics are necessary to ensure the internal functioning of families. But according to Kellerhals and Montandon (1991), they are not sufficient to ensure family cohesion. Indeed, they emphasise the importance of the relationships established by families with the outside world, to ensure the development of the individual. In this sense, they defined four styles of family group cohesion based on the *internal autonomy (or fusion) of the members* and the *opening (or closing) of the family to the outside world*. In the therapeutic relationship, these two characteristics are also at work: security, as a basis of trust, and power, as a framework and limits to be set, to ensure the internal functioning of the relationship. But the question of interactivity with the outside world arises.

In the rogerian orientation, the question of the nature of the commitment of the interacting parties arises: is it egalitarian? Can we speak of democratic relations in this two-way relationship?

In Rogers' non-directive psychotherapy, the therapist simply helps the subject to express himself or herself by simply rephrasing certain conclusions or impressions that the patient communicates to him or her. In this way, "the subject is given free access to his or her lived experiences, particularly to the present experiences that are generated by the therapeutic relationship". Here the therapist bases his democratic strategy in the relationship on the need to engage the person in self-discovery and to help him to become himself through self-awareness. This awareness comes from past experiences and from a greater openness to the experience thanks to the fact that the person experiences, through the relationship, a more varied range of emotions, with greater intensity. This close contact with one's emotions can then lead the subject to more confidence in himself, in his body, and help him to orient his behaviour and make choices. Relational cohesion is based here on freedom of expression and on the reciprocal non-influence between the subject and the therapist, as can be the case in the educational relationship between parents and children (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The therapist conveys a nonfusing warmth, he does not merge with the other, but in a non-binding way, he controls the very framework of the relationship by inciting, by his very presence, the subject to evoke his experiences.

### ***Openness, conviviality, association and commitment***

The dynamics of interpersonal interaction, in the rogerian orientation, is based on the principle of the freedom of each person and egalitarian relations between the two partners involved in the relationship. This conception can be applied to dyadic or group relations. On the other hand, it is difficult to apply it to institutional relations.

Any dyadic interaction, centred on communication and openness to the other, is based on processes of engagement and empowerment in the relationship, of one subject in relation to the other. Power is present in any relationship, it is not only expressed in terms of control but it can be more or less fusional (affective power).

*Commitment*, as a conduct or act of decision, brings into play the very being of the one who is involved in the course of the world and is a power of self over oneself that does not appear to be linked to any particular determination and that transcends any limitation. The conduct of engagement is a type of attitude aimed at actively assuming a situation, a state of affairs, an undertaking or an action in progress. It refers to a style of living, a way of situating oneself in relation to events, to others, to oneself, through actions. The concrete form of commitment allows two beings to situate themselves in relation to each other.

Intersubjective engagement proves to be the most decisive form of engagement: insofar as it relates to a state of life. This type of commitment combines two particularly significant approaches: the promise (relating to a status of existence) and the bringing into play of the totality of an existence. Pedagogical and therapeutic commitments seem to be able to function at their full potential only if a "mute" is put under the pressure of competition and institutional pressures, to



put it on hold. However, it is difficult not to take into account the difficulties that people experience in these groups and institutions and the suffering that these difficulties produce.

## Chapter 7

### **Adaptation and management of suffering: stress, coping and resilience**

*The management of suffering is based on a successful adaptation to situations perceived as destabilising for the subject but also on the necessary recognition of oneself as a person. Doesn't all suffering ultimately participate in an original and common suffering: the simple suffering of existing as a person? The suffering being and the suffering being (or in other words, waiting for something, the elderly person struggling with loneliness and isolation, for example), lives badly from not being considered as a person by others, in his or her entirety, and from being "maladjusted" in the face of new situations that arise.*

In this, the development of the person is based on the dynamics of interpersonal relations in relation to the collective or institutional dynamics, through which strategies for personalisation and the management of suffering are put in place.

#### ***Anxiety, anguish and stress as adaptation disorders***

In the Social Sciences and Humanities, *adaptation* means maintaining equilibrium or even returning to the previous state whatever the changes in the environment. According to Nuttin (1967), the term adaptation corresponds to a functional adjustment between the two poles of the vital process: the organism and the environment. Adaptation refers to all forms of interaction that ensure the functioning of an organism or personality and the environment. "The individual is adapted to his environment only insofar as he succeeds in constructing this environment according to his own conceptions of it" (op.cit., p.127). Through the transformation of situations according to his own conceptions, the individual seeks to realise himself in the world. Adaptation would thus be a "strategy implemented by the subject in order to realise "his own structures within the limits of the requirements of the environment and the plasticity of the organism" (op.cit., p.136). Piaget (1954), for his part, considers intelligence as a form of adaptation in so far as it is an extension of biological adaptive mechanisms. It results from the dynamic equilibrium between two processes: assimilation and accommodation, which allow the subject to organise himself and to differentiate his behaviour more and more. When the influx of data exceeds the capacities of the assimilation scheme, the imbalance only ends when the need is satisfied.

In this, maladjustment can be a driving force for vitality. It provokes the feeling of discrepancy between oneself and others, between our inner perception, our conception of life and the image that others send us of ourselves, the image that the world sends back to us of its complexity. This gap functions as a source of

inspiration, curiosity, research and creation. But the individual is still unsuitable in certain areas of his or her existence.

The subject's life may be punctuated by events (illness, mourning, failure...) which call into question his or her psychological, social and biological balance. According to Rivolier (1989), the subject then implements immediate and specific coping strategies necessary to maintain or restore the constructed equilibrium.

Thus, the suffering person perceives at a given moment the gap between him or her and others, a gap relative to his or her personal way of functioning which no longer seems adapted to the reality of daily life. They will have to overcome the anguish and anxiety they are experiencing and manage the stress linked to the situations they have experienced. Anxiety, anxiety and stress are perceived as adaptation problems.

*Anxiety* refers to a painful emotional state experienced in a traumatic situation or linked to the expectation of danger related to an indeterminate object (Mazet and Houzel, 1975). It is an emotion in response to a symbolic, existential or ephemeral threat (Lazarus, 1991, cited by Sordes-Ader, 1996, p. 76). The anxious being experiences a mismatch between the questions he asks himself about his own origin and his destiny in the world and the answers that this same world can give him. He feels isolated within himself in the face of his difficulty in being in the world. The subject would then be the creator of meaning or would be situated within a meaning that he always has to take up, without ever being able to grasp it in its entirety, while remaining attentive to it.

*Anxiety* also refers to an emotional state with a negative tone. It comprises three fundamental elements: the perception of imminent danger; an attitude of expectation in the face of this danger; a feeling of disorganisation linked to the awareness of total powerlessness in the face of this danger (Pichot, 1987). Anxiety<sup>40</sup> is defined as a fear without an object, whether primary or secondary, isolated or associated with escape (phobia) or struggle (obsessions). Normal anxiety has an adaptive function in that it is an emotional response of stopping and waking up to an incongruous situation. Pathological anxiety is due to an excess of anxiogenic situations (external factors of a psychological and social nature) or to an excessive facilitation of the response (internal factors of a neurobiological nature). Tolerance to the anxious experience is also to be taken into account.

Anxiety differs from anxiety because it is much more experienced somatically, with all its attendant organic disorders, symptoms of constriction and oppression. Anxiety is more thought; it is a lasting tension linked to a psychological disorder reflecting an indefinable feeling of insecurity. The psychological expectation, the

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<sup>40</sup> Psychic anxiety is usually distinguished from physical anxiety ("lump" in the throat, palpitations, accelerated breathing, frequent urination, diarrhoea, pallor, leg swallowing).

apprehension of a happy or unhappy event, of a difficult or dangerous situation, provokes painful psychological pain (Sordes - Ader, 1996).

As for the state of *stress*, it also seems to reflect a set of biological and psychic disturbances, temporary or lasting, caused by any kind of aggression on an organism and its responses.

In the English language this term means: constraint, insistence, force applied to an object, tension. "In the language of contemporary psychology, this term refers sometimes to more or less stressful situations, sometimes to the physiological and psychological reactions of a person in these situations" (Van Rillaer, 1992, 66).

Selye, a Canadian researcher, looks at subjects suffering from various diseases: they all present a common defence response to different attacks. He then studies the effects of different aggressors. This is how he defined, in 1936, what he would call the "General Adaptation Syndrome". The term "stress" did not appear until 1946 and refers to the physiological response of the organism to various harmful external agents. He later took up these notions again and defined "biological" stress as an interaction between opposing forces and resistance.

Following further work on 'good' and 'bad' stress, Selye, in 1956, redefined stress as the non-specific response of the body to any environmental demands made on it. Tensions come from outside the subject: they are stress-causing environmental stimuli, the stressors. The latter cover "a multitude of determinants likely to cause disturbances, imbalances leading to individual tension, upsetting the balance of the organism" (Cazals, 1995, p.39). The sources of stress can be related to the material environment, the pace of life, the family context, professional work. The manifestations of stress are in this respect linked to adaptive requirements. The subject's response to environmental stimuli is not immediate. Information must be processed, evaluated, in relation to past experiences, available resources, the present state and anticipation of the future. The subject's adaptation requires the use of a system of adequate responses to the demands of the situation felt to be distressing, which then leads him/her to reduce his/her state of anxiety or to maintain an acceptable level of tolerance.

### ***Defending, adapting and surpassing***

In all situations, whether happy or unhappy, the relationship with others proves to be a determining factor in the personal development of the individual and in his or her adaptation to situations. The subject is led to demonstrate successful adaptation in order to overcome obstacles and overcome the situation that is perceived as stressful. He/she puts in place identity strategies and specific defence mechanisms in order to react to internal and external pressures, which are sources of stress. In the attempt to adapt to internal pressures, the subject mobilises unconscious *defence mechanisms* whose function is to channel and manage the stress experienced. By taking into account the data of reality and setting up transformation processes (assimilation/accommodation), the subject adapts to the situation, reducing or eliminating everything that causes anxiety. In a constructive

way, the subject tends to focus on solving the problem experienced as stressful, with a view to overcoming it. On a more defensive mode, it calls upon processes of sublimation, which reflect a defence that is over-adapted, allowing socially acceptable processes to be put into play.

Many works have proposed models concerning adolescents' reactions and strategies in difficult situations (abuse, disability, illness, etc.): either the subject will implement response strategies in the face of stress (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus and Folkman, 1980) or he will adopt protective and resilient behaviour (Rutter and Garmesy, 1983; Garmesy, 1996) through the implementation of psychological defence mechanisms. In this way, a process of protective risk response is developed.

### *Coping and resilience*

The coping theory is based (Lazarus, 1966) on the hypothesis of a transaction that takes place between the subject and the environment in the context of a situation presenting stress-generating events for the subject. The subject will have to react both to the stressors and to manage his own stress.

Coping is a stabilising factor enabling the subject to maintain psychosocial adaptation during periods of stress. The subject constantly modifies his or her environment to find conditions compatible with his or her desires and possibilities. Successful adaptation to the situation depends in part on the ability of individuals to abandon their usual coping strategies that have become ineffective or irrelevant, and on their ability to develop new coping strategies (Mages and Mendelsohn, 1979).

The "coping" response will also depend on the subject's past experience, his or her learning, skills, memorisation of failures and successes, self-evaluation and response to demand (Rivolier, 1989, 93). Competence implies that the subject is able to adapt, to acquire the ability and flexibility to develop new strategies requiring creativity and speed, in the implementation of mental activities and motor and social behaviour.

According to Lazarus, in fact, "faire-face can be considered as a form of problem solving in which the issue at stake is the well-being of the person... and refers specifically to the relationship with the demand situation which is experienced as a producer of stress" (in Rivolier, 1989, 93). "The subjective evaluation of the situation (the meaning that the subject gives to the situation) will determine why and to what extent the relationship that the person has established with the environment has become stressful" (Esparbès-Pistre, Sordes-Ader and Tap, 1996, p. 265). These authors highlighted the following adaptive strategies: control, social support, withdrawal, refusal. Coping is not only an adaptive process but also a personalization strategy.

The theory of *resilience* (Rutter & Garmesy, 1983) was developed to understand how the subject manages to hold up in situations considered very brutal, difficult and/or conflictual: family conflicts (Shaw & Vondra, 1993; Legrand-Sébille,

1997), war (Baddoura, 1998), abandonment (Fonagy & al. 1991), life in concentration camps (Moskovitz, 1983), situations of long-term chronic adversity (illness, disabilities, etc.). This theory is "based on a psychobiological aspect of the individual, on his or her robustness, his or her ability to hold out "in all circumstances", his or her *endurance* implying a capacity for commitment, challenge and control (Kobasa et al., 1982) in risky situations, but also a "competence" to endure suffering, whether or not under the gaze of others" (Tap and Vinay, 1999). Resilience behaviour has been defined as 'positive adaptive behaviour' (Garmesy, 1996). The subject makes the best use of protection modalities already experienced since childhood to defend him/herself from risks and to continue functioning in spite of stressors. Resilience develops and is learned at all ages (Rutter & Madge, 1976).

Resilience concerns multiple coping mechanisms, partly related to the "...".

This is in contrast to coping, which is associated with specific events (daily worries or major events). When a situation presents risks, resilience mechanisms are activated by taking the initiative, enabling the individual to feel a sense of efficiency and control over his or her life in the face of the course of events. However, taking the initiative refers to risk-taking, which is considered positive if the objective is to succeed. This mode of functioning can be devastating, particularly during adolescence, when the subject does not always measure the full extent and consequences of his or her actions.

In order to interact with the environment, the subject uses the necessary mediations at his disposal: namely, his ability to endure, to resist, to be resilient, to make the essential effort and to experience suffering. In resilience, the individual develops protective mechanisms that reduce the incidence of risk by exerting effects on the risk itself or by modifying the fact of being exposed or exposing oneself to the risk. Protection lies in how one copes with change (Rutter, 1990).

Thus, coping makes it possible to work on stress and immediate stressors and to carry out both emotional and functional, but not very sustainable, management in the present situation. Resilience, on the other hand, influences the way one reacts to very high, constant and lasting stress. It allows the subject to work on his or her own limits in the face of stressful situations.

## Chapter 8

### Personalization, socialization and temporality

#### *From personality to person*

In psychology, personality is evoked in terms of organised and structured systems composed of stable and individualised elements.

Thus, in spite of the diversity of situations, individuals would possess specific traits that would require a certain coherence between them, to ensure the stability of conduct.

Personality can in fact be evoked as an instituted system with its own rules and regulations, implying the notion of routine, of habitus. It would correspond to ways of being and behaving. It is "a function of coordination and hierarchisation of behaviour according to the demands of action and interpersonal and social relations" (Tap, 1979, p.10).

However, it is not innate and is built up throughout an individual's existence on the basis of his or her relationships with others (Nuttin, 1965) and the external and internal pressures on the subject which may at any time call into question his or her way of doing things.

Thus, it is in these more or less difficult situations, particularly during the period of adolescence which is a privileged phase of upheaval, that the subject will have to surprise himself or others by making decisions that are not usual for him.

The transition from this alienated structure to a more autonomous personality structure is the result of the process of personalisation (Tap, 1988).

According to Malrieu, personalisation involves creating works of art. This allows man to both defend himself and overcome the conditions that alienate him (1978, 1979). "It is in the act of defending oneself so as not to lose oneself that one reaches what may appear to be the summit of human achievement" (Malrieu, 2003, 14).

Personalisation thus implies questioning the established styles and rekindling a tension of self-realisation based on the cooperative articulation of strategic quests. In order to develop, adapt, adjust, orient, defend oneself, while taking into account one's identity anchors, one's roots, the subject puts in place a set of strategies, each of which emerges and develops in close relationship with the others.

With reference to the work of Tap (1988) and Esparbès, Sordes-Ader and Tap (1996), there are four individual or collective strategies that best illustrate this process of personalization:

- *Identity strategies* have the function of maintaining a continuity of the self over time, and try to reinforce the self-esteem and well-being of the subject through the legitimisation of his or her actions and the anchoring of the subject in a personal, family or cultural time. According to the process of **identification**

underlying these strategies, the subject will construct his or her identity, integrating change in continuity.

Identity is "the process by which the subject (or the group) tends to manage the paradox between the continuity of his being (identity) and the observation or need for self-transformation, according to the meaning given to situations, social behaviour, projects and adaptive processes (stress management)" (Tap, 1999). It allows the subject to constantly 'reassure' himself or herself, to make a changing self-image, unstable social position, variable projects and adaptive reactions seem or actually become invariant. "Identity implies the implementation of identity strategies thanks to which the person constructs him/herself in action (in a satisfaction/dissatisfaction relationship, a feeling of personal value articulating being and becoming) through multiple defences and reminders" (op.cit.).

- *Strategies for social integration, positioning and social commitments* are based on multiple social practices and needs. These include attachment styles, modes of appropriation of social statuses, roles and characters, i.e. socialization linked to initiation, insertion and integration. These strategies are guided by the modes of influence of cultural and social factors, by identification with roles and social models, by the adoption of attitudes in line with the expectations of privileged and significant people. They aim at the development of the self from the interaction between the organism and the stimulus-events (mainly people).

- *Anticipation, forecasting and project strategies* imply the definition of a goal to be achieved, depending on the obstacles and internal or external resources. The project approach takes place in complex environments, in response to a problematic situation, to a conflict to be overcome, and to the need for a decision to be taken. The project is intended to manage the indeterminacy of this situation. It will emerge from a detailed analysis of the situation, which aims to gather information and identify the existing opportunities and constraints (Oubrayrie 1992). Project strategies are to be understood as a response to a precise situation made up of constraints, opportunities and availabilities. "The (project) strategy aims at transforming the initial situation in the direction of the desired objectives. To do so, it must take into account the perceived obstacles, the cost of getting around or overcoming these obstacles" (Boutinet 1990, p.232).

"All project strategies imply a representation of the lived situation and the desire to reorganise it, to transform oneself, to prepare for the future. Faced with conflictual, critical situations, where the subject can no longer project himself into the future, anticipate, foresee, invent, the project will have the function of readjusting, re-harmonising, restoring capacities, through strategies for overcoming the problem. The subject is led to control the situation and to control himself in order to cope with it" (Esparbès-Pistre, Sordes-Ader, and Tap, 1996, p.261).

- *Coping strategies (coping)* with stress involve the ability to react to immediate or future difficulties, to adapt to difficult or new situations. For stress to occur, the



demand must be perceived as a threat and the subject must consider that he or she does not have the means to cope with it.

In order to overcome the conflict linked to the situation perceived as stressful by the subject, the latter engages in coping strategies in order to adjust to the new situation or to defend himself against any hold or subjugation. These *strategies for adapting to* difficult situations include stress management (through the implementation of coping strategies) and risk management through the existence of "anti-excitation" type processes (resistances and defences) or methods of protection against their negative consequences (resilience) (Tap and Vinay, 1999). What makes it possible to articulate these various strategies "is the meaning that the subject gives to the situation, to the context in which he or she is, to the relationship between his or her own history and aspirations. This meaning cannot be reduced to elements of understanding and meaning. It includes the way in which the subject applies his hierarchy of values to the necessities of action, but also the way in which he eventually transforms this hierarchy, according to the effects of adaptation on his own evolution" (Tap, 1999).

Thus, the person is not a "submissive, passive and immobile conditioned structure. Its essential characteristic is commitment, it is act, realisation and it is experienced in a temporal horizon. The person is inseparable from a present, he is a subject actor who makes choices, has initiatives, but it is also a past, a history, strategies of rooting and identity continuity, it is also the organisation of new temporalities, the organisation and realisation of possibilities. The person is to be understood as an attempt to unify being and acting, power and meaning" (Tap, 1991, p. 54).

The study of the development of the person therefore implies considering the person in the totality of his or her being, in its entirety. The rogerian conception evokes the fact of focusing on the person and considering this development as fully functional and self-actualized. Through the implementation of new personalisation strategies during its development, the subject "updates" the structure of his or her personality, according to the situations and challenges experienced, but at the same time ensures the fulfilment of the person.

### ***Personal dynamics and time management***

Personal dynamics and time management are based on the construction of identity in conjunction with the development of projects. The construction of personal identity as a sub-structure of the personality is fundamental for the development of the person. It enables the subject to give meaning to his or her life path. It can be defined as *a system of representations and feelings of and about oneself* (Tap, 1991).

In the search for a personal identity, the subject is in search of meaning and significance. He tries to situate himself in relation to systems of meaning existing outside him (culture, ideology, morals, beliefs). He is also in search of power and influence by controlling the situation and what happens to him. His quest for autonomy is made through efforts to give himself his own norms, his own internal

or external limits, avoiding too much dependence on others and institutions. Finally, it is in search of a hierarchy of values that will enable it to establish legitimacy in a relationship with those who defend or promote similar values. Its various identity quests are part of a relationship with time and thus pose the importance of the relationship to the past, present and future, especially during adolescence. In this way, a self-awareness is developed in time, an inscription of oneself in the temporality which is always managed in the present.

The subject's identity takes on meaning in relation to past experiences and anchors, it is actualised in the present through self-affirmation and the social valorisation of acts, and finally, it is constructed (or renewed) through projects in the future, reflecting an effort of anticipation on the part of the subject and a desire to revive identity in accordance with deep motivations. It is therefore *the here and now that makes* sense in relation to the past and the future. By the same token, it is the social and psychological integration of the subject that is at stake, through anchoring in the past and projects in the future.

More specifically, the project involves a tension of self-realisation on the part of the subject. Through the subordination of means to ends, aimed at by the subject in the establishment of his or her projects, the subject must make efforts that are accompanied by pleasure and/or suffering in their realisation. Projects, both individual and collective, evolve in relation to social data and requirements. According to Malrieu (1973), they are elaborated through conflicts that can be identified at the level of interpersonal relations. The overcoming of these conflicts thus goes through a phase of objectification of interpersonal relations and the determination of objectives and critical behaviour with regard to situations, personal and social identifications and previous value models.

In this respect, the project is at the very heart of a person's development and adaptation. Multiple projects are set up throughout life, particularly during adolescence. The professional project, among others, has the particularity of promoting the social integration necessary to establish the adolescent's personal identity (Rodriguez-Tomé & Bariaud, 1987; Dubet, 1973; Boutinet, 1990; Guichard & Huteau, 1997). The development of a life project allows the subject to situate himself in time and society. The sentimental and family project responds to an ideal of self in the future through the search for a soul mate and the constitution of a family (Rodriguez-Tomé & Bariaud, 1987). The subject's history and emotional experiences are then all factors that come into play in the development of the project.

The project, as a process of personalisation, is an effort to liberate oneself through action and interaction. It is also a source of socialisation of the subject, in that it requires reference to social models, to identification with these models. The project facilitates self-realisation through affiliation to groups, productive creation and participation in collective activities (Tap and Oubrayrie, 1993).

The project can become a real adaptation process in certain situations. For example, in the face of illness, some adolescents use this strategy as a way of

coping with the present situation (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993). Generally speaking, in the absence of a self-project, the subject is suffering. They may then withdraw into the past (nostalgia, impossible mourning) rather than looking to the future; it will be difficult for them to cope with the needs of social integration and adaptation to the difficulties of everyday life.

Thus, through the implementation of projects (family, social, professional, etc.), the person can adapt to new situations but also integrate socially.

### ***The person and his/her social integration***

In the course of its development, the subject makes multiple advances that involve the processes of personalisation and socialisation. If the subject is confronted with the need to take on a role, and to establish a social position, he or she also seeks to fulfil himself or herself as a person. The socialisation process is brought into play under the pressure of groups and institutions whose aim is their survival or their own promotion, sometimes to the detriment of the person's self-realisation. The development of the person thus involves the process of socialisation which is achieved through a double integration: social integration and psychological integration.

*Social integration* refers to the bringing into play of three processes that enable the subject to become part of social relations and networks: *initiation* (it is the learning of the codes of the system), *insertion* (it is the positional registration in the same system), and *integration itself* (it is the cooperative articulation of differences and similarities with the other members of the system).

*The psychological integration of social data* consists of "bringing social and cultural characteristics and requirements into oneself". Three processes are also involved: identification, refers to the ability to identify social actors and to identify with them, then comes the internalization and appropriation of their characteristics.

In this double game of integration, the person has to adopt social positions specific to the different roles he or she assumes (professional role, parentin....g role, ). In this way, the subject's very personality will be expressed through a plurality of diverse and complementary roles. The positions taken by the subject will be expressed through attitudes towards others and situations perceived by the subject. In reference to Maisonneuve (1973), the character would constitute a compromise between the spontaneity of the subject (impulses and aspirations) and social demands; it has a function of securing and enhancing the value of the subject's personality, and is thus distinguished between four characters: the character as a stereotypical role (the *duty to be*), in accordance with the model's expectations, the character as a mask (the *appearance*), which refers to a more or less lucid compromise, with opportunistic and manipulative intentions, the character as a *refuge* (or as an alibi), associated with protective or even magical style role-taking, and finally the character as a personal ideal (the *will to be*), which refers to the expression of the deepest self.

Through these different roles, the person tends to adjust to the situation. The strategies that the subjects use "consist of finding a real solution (more or less relevant) to the recognised conflict by modifying the relationship between the roles played" (Maisonneuve, 1973, 105).

The articulation of these different roles and the resolution of conflicts remain an important psychological issue to ensure the development of the person and to successfully adapt to a constantly changing society.

## **Prospective conclusion** (Pierre Tap)

Part of this work had been published by the two of us in the Portuguese magazine "*Pessoa como Centro. Revista de estudos rogerianos*" under the title "*Personalização e dinâmica relacional*" (Lisboa 1999-4, pp. 41-84). However, we have since revised and completed our concept and have had the opportunity to apply the personalization strategies to the different phases of life: from the so-called "two-three year crisis", which now begins earlier, at around 18 months! (Tap, 2017) to retirement and the end of life (Tap, 2011, 2013, 2018), through the crisis of adolescence and the different phases of adult life, as proposed by Erik Erikson (1972,1974).

For example, in the book "Questions d'éducation familiale" (Questions of family education) we jointly proposed the theory of "transactional dynamics" in power relations between adolescents and parents in relation to "the critical analysis of *empowerment*" (Tap and Oubrayrie Roussel, 2004, pp. 27-52). We assume that the adolescent's acquisition of power is constructed progressively by the implementation, during parent-adolescent interaction, of educational and psychological procedures and processes which contribute to the development of the subject's competencies. The model of personalization strategies (identity, social positioning, stress management or coping, and project) can be related to the notions of negotiation, empowerment and empowerment used in other sciences. "Project strategies, in particular, make it possible to free oneself from a problematic situation, to find a breach, an opening, a flaw, to give meaning to an itinerary, to manage conflicts by anticipation or hope for change (real or imaginary). Faced with a thwarted project, the subject can use multiple strategies (Safont , Leonardis & Oubrayrie, 1994, Tap and Oubrayrie, 1993): they can be "autonomous" or "heteronomous" or "reactionary", or counter-dependent..." (Tap and Oubrayrie-Roussel, 2004, p.33).

I also proposed to differentiate between the development of the person (personalisation) and *identization*. **Identization** is the process of construction, development, evolution of representations linked to identities (individual identity and collective identities) such as gender and sex, ages, professions, cultures, etc. ). Identity, etymologically speaking, places the emphasis above all on the "same", the permanence, stability or balance of representations (of oneself, of us). *Identity, on the other hand, introduces the hypothesis of a paradoxical dynamic between two or more processes likely to harmonise or enter into conflict (identity crisis)*. It therefore implies both the constant effort of differentiation, affirmation and valorisation in behaviours and practices, in relation to others (self-promotion), as well as the construction of an interiority, a subjectivation, a tendency to give meaning and value to oneself, to one's own life, beliefs, commitments and projects (self-identification). It is therefore particularly important not to confuse identifications with identization, but to try to understand how they oppose, harmonise or coexist in parallel".

In the 2019 editorial of my official website ([www.pierretap.com](http://www.pierretap.com))<sup>41</sup> I stated: "I proposed to call 'identification' the to-and-fro between identity and the project of change (individual or collective). In my last published chapter "Suffering, trauma, coping and resilience in life" (2018) I evoke the myth of the Vanuatu island "*the tree and the dugout*" analysed by Joël Demaison in his thesis (1985): Every man is torn between two contradictory and yet major needs: -the need for the pirogue, i.e. movement, travel, *withdrawal from oneself, from one's community*, and - the need for the tree, i.e. rooting in one's identity, *attachment to one's community*. Men constantly wander between these two needs, sometimes giving in to one, sometimes to the other, *until the day when they understand that it is with the tree that the pirogue is made* (I would like to add here, however, that the pirogue can also make a movement to save the tree from disappearing! )

This metaphor also applies well to the concept that I have proposed to call "identization", the harmonious or conflictual construction of primary attachment and the project of the self (articulated to collective projects). I hope of course that others will take up this concept... with metaphor.

We pass the "baton" to them!

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<sup>41</sup> My website [www.pierretap.com](http://www.pierretap.com) has been blocked (12 January 2021) by Adobe for technical reasons (use of Adobe Flash Player which has become obsolete). Michel Tap, my eldest son and webmaster of the site will hopefully find a solution to this blockage!

## Postface

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