

The paradoxical process of identization

I have proposed to call the conflicting back and forth between identity and the project of change (individual or collective) 'identization'. In the last published chapter (n° 332. "Suffering, trauma, coping and resilience in life") I evoke the myth of the island Vanuatu: "**the tree and the dugout**" analysed by Joel Demaison in his thesis, (1985):

Every human being is torn between two contradictory and yet major needs:

- the need for the pirogue, i.e. for movement, for travel, for *breaking away from oneself, from one's community*;
- the need for the tree, i.e. the rooting of identity, *the attachment to one's community*.

Men constantly wander between these two needs, sometimes giving in to one, sometimes to the other... *until they understand that it is with the tree that the dugout canoe is made*. (I would add that the dugout can also travel to save the tree.) "The tree is a metaphor for man, the man who stands upright in his 'place' plunges with it into the sacred ground of depth. Depth takes precedence over breadth. The tree-man lives only through the group-dugout. From the 'founding journey' of arrival on the island, Melanesian society 'asserts itself as much as a society of roots as of journeys'" (1986, p. 518).

But I would like to add today the example of identization when an identity crisis occurs, for example in an elderly person who begins to lose his or her temporal and spatial bearings. Here is a real dialogue experienced by Hélène, who faithfully reported it to me, with great emotion:

"The phone rings, I take the call.

- I am Sylvie, (I do not recognise who is speaking)
- Sylvie? Sylvie what?
- I am Sylvie," the person repeats (I still don't recognise the voice)
- Sylvie Redon? (She does not answer directly!)
- I'm calling to tell you that we're moving!
- Oh, really! Why are you moving?
- I don't know, they didn't tell me!. But you know, we're going to a house that's the same as this one... the same as here! .. And Alain (their son) is going to live not far away, in the South! .. I can't talk to you for long on the phone! Here's Jerome (her husband), he wants to talk to you.

Jérôme takes over communication

- Sylvie tells me that you are moving?

- Not at all! She's talking nonsense ... it's not about that these days! (said very calmly). Goodbye!").

(Names and surnames have been changed, of course!)

Identization, as a paradoxical articulation between identity and project, is clearly at work in this dream equivalent! The personal identity is disturbed (she does not answer the question of her identity), the project (moving to the South) is paradoxically harmonised by the identity of the house (the house in the South is the same as the one here!) and by the maintenance of the maternal identity (her son is here but he will be there too).

Of course, identization cannot be understood without the historical aspects, without placing the personal and contextual conditions, without the emotional dynamics that inevitably accompany any conflict, any crisis.

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