

About

Dear Internet user, According to Michel Tap, webmaster of this site, the function of "About" is to introduce myself to you, to specify the objectives and the achievements of more than 40 years of professional life, with the assumption that this look back may be useful to you, as a person or as a person in charge of an association or an institution...

This operation may be perceived as narcissistic, but I would like to live it as an experience, as an expression of my narrative identity (a concept studied from Paul Ricoeur)(1) , so true is it that we construct who we are through our memories and the way we tell them to others. You can consult my classic Curriculum Vitae, but in this text I would like to take advantage of your attention as a reader to make an effort to reflect, if possible synthetically (!) on my own professional life and to draw some theoretical conclusions. The important thing for me here is to take myself as a guinea pig (and not as an example!) in order to theorise my own practices and to check whether or not I have been able to practise my theories of life psychology.

1. As Erik Erikson said, access to retirement can be a time to take stock of your life. In other words, it is time for me to do some "assessments". Evaluating necessarily involves articulating two aspects that can sometimes be experienced as contradictory: 'giving value' (subjectively and normatively) and 'measuring' (objectively).

2. Some people close to me tend to consider that this site locks me into past activities, that it prevents me from objectively evaluating previous productions and producing new ones. They therefore urge me to optimise the time I have left to live, to choose quality of life at the expense of quality of service! But for me, these two qualities are both fundamental, and I am trying for the time being to value them together. Retirement has in no way stopped my passion for research, my desire to work in teams and to help those who need it.

3. But here the need for boundary work comes into play: how can research and professional relationships be balanced with love and family relationships, with the need to take care of oneself (self-compassion) without burdening others and vice versa? How can I respond to external demands while taking the time to respond to my own aspirations? This work on limits is, at the same time, a work of mourning. Any choice, any decision inevitably leads to losses which are added to the losses linked to ageing or to the inescapable.

Note: On the subject of narrative identity, I am in complete agreement with Jean-Marc Ferry when he shows that narrative identity must be overcome in order to reach argumentative and reconstructive identity (cf. *Soi, identités et adaptation* ")

4. One of the major challenges in my life has been associated with the difficulty of being both humanistic (Rogérien) and rigorous (in the qualitative as well as the quantitative), basing all my research on the positive development of the person throughout his or her life (what we called "personalisation" in the Toulouse Laboratory entitled "Personalisation and Social Change" (PCS) which I co-directed or directed for 16 years) but taking into account the scientific needs of evaluation and verification. (Today I prefer to speak of 'personation'.

5. Another essential aspect concerns precisely the way in which psychological processes (individual, interpersonal, group) and institutional, socio-cultural processes are interstructured. The notion of interstructuration of subjects and institutions proposed by the PCS Lab means that if we are strongly determined by the dynamics of institutions, social pressures, beliefs and cultural practices, we are not passive in the dynamics of these

determinations. People, individually and collectively, are also at the very origin of institutions and their transformation.

6. Most of the research undertaken (personal or collective) since 1963 (see Bibliography) is directly influenced by the need to analyse the interactions between institutional and socio-cultural arrangements and personal and collective dispositions (by dispositions I mean here "what the person (or the group) has here and now", in other words: his or her "potential", his or her actualisable skills). For example, in my post-graduate thesis (1967) I studied "the adolescent in relation to parents and teachers" (available in the library of the Institute of Psychology in Paris) (but defended in Toulouse) Adolescence is a transitional phase that can involve the management of conflicts between the young person and family and school institutions. But this phase includes the need to adapt, to 'cope' with difficult situations (what today are called coping strategies, which allow one to deal with stress and seek to resolve problems, to manage the worries of daily life). In my state thesis (1981) entitled "Identity, identification and gender representations (Approach to a study of the personalisation of the social actor)" (Paris X, Nanterre), I analysed the way in which children construct their gender identity (becoming a boy or a girl) by internalising social representations of sex and identifying with people of one or other sex. But while personal identity is based on expected gender identity, male or female, and on identifications, it cannot be confused with the latter. The personal and the collective are interstructured from the complex articulation between meanings (oriented and legitimised by the subject according to pressures and incentives) and practices. (cf. ref. biblio. N° 54 1985 Masculin et féminin chez l'enfant. Preface by R. Zazzo).

7. From the 1970s onwards, the notion of identity became central to all my work in social development psychology (personal and collective). I define identity as the system of representations and feelings from which the person or group defines itself, recognises itself, is defined or recognised by others, within the framework of its culture of belonging. (See the books and articles in the bibliography on identity). Thus defined, identity cannot be confused with personality (system of coordination of complex behaviours including behaviour, attitudes and mental activities). As such, identity is a sub-system of personality. Identity cannot be confused with the self-concept either. It necessarily implies a temporal and socio-cultural comparison (being similar or different) between the present self and the past or desired self, between the self and others. The identity dynamic is based on several paradoxes and involves multiple contradictory feelings: continuity and rupture, unity and dispersion of the self, similarities and oppositions, etc. I have proposed the term *identization* to explain this paradoxical dynamic (remaining the same while changing, building a stable self-image despite identity conflicts, etc.). We can thus speak of temporal *identization* (remaining the same over time, *idem*) and structural *identization* (being oneself, *ipse*).

8. But these processes are part of the wider dynamic of personalisation and the strategies that this dynamic implies. Identity strategies (which provide the basis for emotional security through defences and protections as well as the ability to explore and manage risks. attachment theory) allow for the development of social and cultural engagement strategies, from which the individual socialises and appropriates collective values and meanings (recognition and legitimisation strategies), and for the implementation of adaptation strategies (coping, resilience, defence mechanisms, problem solving) and orientation strategies (intentions, projects and achievements that allow one to become oneself, as Jean-Paul Sartre mentioned).

9. The theory of personalisation-socialisation can take place in what is now called positive psychology, which focuses on the person, on his or her quality of life and well-being, on his or her capacities for resilience and endurance, openness, altruism and optimism. We find here the actualising tendency and the question of Rogers' unconditional positivity, and more recently the notion of optimal experience as a temporary access to happiness, proposed by Mihali Csikszentmihalyi (cf. his major work *Flow*, in tr.fr. *Vivre*, 2004, R. Laffont). Let us also note all the work on the notion of empowerment (access to power) which can also be used in terms of interpersonal exchanges (see bibliography no. 235 and no. 229 chapter 1).

10. Within the framework of the development of health psychology in Europe, and particularly in France and Portugal, the teams in which I participate are developing multiple orientations and works on the behaviours and strategies of people in difficult situations (illnesses, exclusions, precariousness, ruptures, handicaps, etc.). We constantly emphasise the need to develop instruments or methodological situations adapted to the populations concerned.

11. Multiple scales have been constructed and validated, for example on stress, coping, social integration, endurance, Peter Pan syndrome, values and self-esteem. Self-esteem plays a major role in personal dynamics. However, it should not be forgotten that self-esteem includes negative dimensions (guilt, self-aggression, depression, etc.). We have shown that the generalized technique of reversing the scores of negative items in order to obtain an overall positive self-esteem score is questionable. We have developed three self-esteem scales based on the separate consideration of negative and positive self-esteem: the ROSES scale (Rogers self-esteem scale) based on Rogers' Q-sorts; the NETES (Nouvelle Echelle Toulousaine d'Estime de Soi) and the SERTHUAL scale (a synthesis of the two previous scales, already validated in Portugal)

12. As you can see, I have focused more on the person than on the institution, I am more of a psychologist than a sociologist. However, because of the complexity of the interactions between people and their environments, I have always attached great importance to the effects of contexts, to ecological interactions. It could be shown that the collective defence of human rights, whose great importance in the dynamics of globalisation can be seen today, would lose all its meaning if it were not based on the real defence of concrete people in the difficult, sometimes dramatic situations (genocides, wars, natural disasters, etc.) that they experience. In this context, it becomes important to mobilise, according to the values that we want to defend, and to use all the available mechanisms: associations, trade unions, political parties, churches, etc., not to impose our beliefs or our ways of thinking and living, but to serve those who suffer beyond the oppositions, but by valuing at the same time the links, the similarities and the differences

I hope that these 12 points, which were intended to be synthetic, have enabled you to better understand the orientation and significance of my research. I also hope that the documents you will find on this site will be useful and that you will be able to make good use of them not only in your work and research but also in your daily life. What would be the use of science or psychological practices if they could not tell us anything about ourselves or about what is happening in our lives and if they could not help us, eventually, to cope with it!

Yours sincerely, Poitiers, 8 March 2011 Pierre Tap