

The Pariah in Contemporary Society

The Pariah in Contemporary Society:

*A Black Sheep
or a Prodigal Child?*

By

Marcienne Martin

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*To Luc MARTIN,
my brother*

Campbell, to judge from a photograph, appears to have been a rather light-skinned mulatto with features sufficiently Caucasian to enable him to pass as white, just like the hero of "The Pariah," the following lines of which perhaps describe the poet himself:

*Fair was I as her complexion,
Honest came my fairness, too,
For my father and my mother
Were in wedlock banded true.*

**Black Poets of the United States: From Paul Laurence Dunbar to
Langston Hughes**

by Jean Wagner (Author), Kenneth Douglas (Translator)
(1973, 133)

My deepest thanks to
Daniel B., Isabelle A., Karine G., Luc M., and Serge L.,
who were kind enough to answer the questionnaire on the notion of the
pariah

That this work opens for them a space of reflection,
and enable them a better understanding
that they lived as a pariah

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FOREWORD

To be excluded by difference, strangeness, dephasing, stigmata, madness, deviance, or excommunication is a universal human fate. All belonging is fragile and “Nothing is ever acquired to man, neither his strength, nor his weakness, nor his heart” (Aragon). Exclusion sometimes occurs in an unforeseen, irreversible, and unreasonable manner. There are certainly latent quarrels and prejudices rejecting, but rumour and gossip come with sneaky reinforcements.

Today, opinion, the media, and marketing create the envelope of the agreement that can be displayed with impunity. It is enough to derogate somewhat from this implicit order, by some improper conduct, so that each of us can see the incorrect detail that kills, that makes effect and feels. At all times the environments are versatile.

“What have my friends become, who I had so close to me?” asked Rutebeuf. He was conscious, of course, of being responsible, but did not tell us of what.

“They are friends that the wind carries away.” Here, it is the pariah. We find ourselves there, apart from the family, the group, and the city, foreigners in our own country. Even if one knows that no one is a prophet in their country, one must then cross their inner desert to, perhaps, find their improbable port.

The gregarious human loves reciprocal recognitions in the codes of a categorical thought and a language that welds clans and parties. The collective bond agreed, and defined as “correct,” then overflows any singular link made of subtle shared feelings. Categorical thought depersonalizes by its norm and standardization. It crushes identity. It is totalitarian by exclusive judgements concerning what escapes it. It tracks the originality and independence of spirit. Ethics, creation, and aesthetics are indifferent. The Inquisition, National Socialism, and the fatwas of radical Islamism testify to the violence of this major intolerance in its systematized versions. But, in a more ordinary way, it is better to be a good student, a model employee, and a suitable retiree.

This categorical thought is a mediocre thought, fixed in its frames and rituals. It is supported in a permanent validation by the counter-example, which is the displayed exclusion of the intruders. The rejection of the negative erects it in truth. The denigration of the near neighbor and the

criticism of the color and confession of the foreigner are commonplace propitiatory practices in any group that engages in the fusion of unconditional communion. Membership is linked to the renunciation of the debate of ideas. Even more insidiously and cruelly, every assembly of good company takes advantage of the absence of one of its members to dress it with fierce comments which disqualify them. The easy and reassuring sharing of this underhanded mediocrity comprises what mathematicians call a smaller common denominator. One thus becomes a member of a chapel or a school, where dogma replaces awareness and freedom of speech and its adventurous movements. The excluded individual is returned to their free will and can bear witness.

We know how incarceration matures political thought, and how far the discoveries escape to the mandarins and ordinary laureates of the university. The excluded is confronted with their own thought, which is no longer belonging. Galileo could testify to it like so many others: "Nobody thinks of my place; So I am," he might proudly exclaim, to paraphrase and surpass Descartes.

But in the filigree of the exclusion is the loss of original and essential love, a destroyed confidence and the announced death itself. Villon wrote at the foot of the scaffold: "Human brothers who after us live, don't have the hardened heart against us." This bitter and suffering projection suggests a possible symbolic redemption.

Brassens in his *Bad Reputation* sings to us: "Everyone will come to see me hanged ... except the blind of course." Here we access the major irony of the proved anarchist who assumes his exclusion in complete freedom and independence of mind.

Democratically condemned by the Athenian People's Court, Socrates calmly drank the hemlock. The philosophical demonstration of a transcendental truth surpasses the solidary, cowardly, and agreed opinion of the greatest number. Diogenes the cynic goes still farther, by provoking, with his posture, all the complicit abuses of possessions, positions, and powers. The excluded overthrows the balance of power by their subversion and becomes the bearer of the future and hope. The intolerant organization, striking them with ostracism, may be disqualified.

"There is no good noise except that of a banned man," concludes Villon in his *Ballad of Counter-truths*. If the social and the political see psychosocial problematics and theorize them, for the excluded people the rejection through infamy is always singular and dramatic. There is no symbolic buoy to avoid the shipwreck of the imaginary.

Finally, death usually puts an end to exclusion. "The dead are all good guys," sings Brassens in this assumption of death which makes his charm

singular. To avoid this post mortem requalification that is damaging to the order in place, the excluded are killed less and are given some care. But the beautiful humanitarian souls, being well established, do not give up their acquired advantages.

Exclusion is the object of timely political attention, but the economy cares about that only moderately. The social is supposed to be a prosthesis. But the excluded must find roots and bonds, which is a step towards making something in oneself before daring to do it in public. Social workers, the ultimate remedy of the psychoanalyst, know well the primary importance of the speech heard where the subject is reconstituted.

Through the anthropological and linguistic approach to the process of exclusion, Marcienne Martin gradually brings us closer to these fringes of hypermodern societies, where we sometimes have to survive alone, unloved and foreign to others, and often to oneself.

Asepticized materialistic dehumanization creates outcasts in all social classes. The violence of divorce and dismissal throws people into the streets. They join the refugees of the countries in perpetual war, in hazardous flight, with death on the heels.

The pariah? The witness tells us that technological advances and expansion will not be enough to reduce human inequalities. If it is not a situation of hostilities, bad luck, or awkwardness, it will be sickness or old age that will exclude them from safe belongings, in an acceptable lot.

The pariah? It is they who send us the image of the disturbing strangeness that each of us carries within ourselves with the weight of our secret fears.

Georges Botet Pradeilles
Psychologist, Writer

INTRODUCTION

—“*I have to fish them out again with my teeth,*” said the man.
“*Dead things or rotten things. That’s why they throw them in. Often they let them go bad specially, just so that they can throw them in. And I have to fish them out again with my teeth.*
So that when they give up the ghost, kick the bursting bucket and croak between my jaws,
all the pus and the filth will splash into my face.”
—“*Do you get much money for doing it?*” asked Timortis.
—“*I get the barge,*” said the man. “*And they pay me out in shame and in gold.*”

Boris Vian

Heartsnatcher

French Literature Series

Translated by Stanley Chapman, p. 245

Dalkey Archive Press

(1953–2003, 47–8)

Being the ugly duckling in a family, the Turk’s head in a group, or a pariah in society means living in significative and implicit difference, in indifference or even in cruelty.

The Phylogenesis of *Homo sapiens* includes the double articulation of “same” and “different.” The difference comes back to posit the existence of objects having at least one non-common component. If we consider all objects of the world—not including artifacts, which are not the subject of our present study—that is to say, objects born from the combination of various molecules allowing for their integration with the living world, we note that the said objects are divided into two main categories: those that are “alike” and those that are “dissimilar.” The lexical unit “similar” is semantically close to the term “identical”; however, it also differs from it. The dictionary¹ defines “similar” as an occurrence of that: “Which has in common with another/other entities some essential characteristics, appearance or nature, to the point of being considered belonging as the same type.” Concerning the term “identical,” its semantic value

¹ The definition is found on the website Trésor de la langue française informatisé (TLFi): <http://atilf.atilf.fr>.

corresponds to that:² “whose nature is absolutely the same as that of another thing.” Regarding the monozygotic twins who, although having the same genetic code, may have slight variations in facial features, even if the general perception that an observer has given the feeling that the two people are identical:³ “In fact, most pairs of monozygotic twins are not identical—they present what is called phenotypic discordance, that is to say some differences in appearance and in physical constitution, or again the specific manifestation of a trait.”

Thus, in deepening the concepts of “alike” and “dissimilar” there are those of “same” and “different” that then reflect the reality observed in the objects of the world. Between “identical” and “different,” the semantic analysis occurs at the level of the components of the object: in the first case, all components of an object X are exactly the same as those of an object Y, like an artifact reproduced in n copies. Regarding the second case, the term “different” shows that, from one object to another, the components are sufficiently distinct for the notion of similarity to be excluded. Evoking the notion of a pariah therefore refers implicitly to the “same” and the “different.” If the observation and the conceptual, symbolic, or imaginary representation of world objects allow a certain approach, their nomination by means of the lexicon is also an alternative way to apprehend them; it is constructed around a system of values, itself subject to variations; it aggregates variables such as affect, location (network, association, connotation), and the stakes (effect intended, attested) (Coñaniz 2005, 70). Regarding the study of words that reveal objects, Duméril and Duméril (1849) specify that: “The philology is no longer in any way this science of the pedantic who dissects their words and discourses on the particles; they find in the idioms the genealogy of peoples and this projects new light on the philosophy of history.” This shows that the simple notion of the “pariah” carries with it a whole universe!

The research which this book is dedicated to articulates the concept of the “pariah,” and it is through the various filters presented above that we will proceed to its analysis. Besides these, we will try to study the notion of the “pariah” using the different strata that make up human society, such as wonderful tales and literature. We will also present the perception of lexicologists and psychologists, because behind the word there is the object, which is apprehended differently by the human psyche because it is included in value systems varying from one sociocultural group to another. Even though the project is ambitious, it cannot cover this notion entirely

² <http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/identique>.

³ http://www.futura-sciences.com/fr/news/t/recherche/d/le-mystere-des-differences-entre-vrais-jumeaux-devoile_6729.

because a large number of questions emerge from it. This amounts to opening a Pandora's Box dedicated to this status constructed by human beings, which is based on the diachronic stratum of the lexicology and the symbolic, but also the very nature of living.

I also mention that if this study is based on a significant amount of research more or less distant from the notion of the pariah, a large part will take its source from the lexical-semantic study of a number of terms found in printed and online dictionaries.⁴ Indeed, the compilation of lexical units in use within the society reflects a form of consensus on the part of all the native speakers of the reference culture—here, the French culture—on the very value of the word used.

This study is divided into three chapters. In the first, the reader will find an approach to the concept of the pariah within lexicology and psychology, but also through marvellous tales and literature. The second chapter will be dedicated to the study of this status within the family group and the peer group: why this status? Who uses it? These questions will echo the field surveys by people who have been perceived as pariahs. The third chapter focuses on the pariah considered in various social groups in the contexts of gregariousness and individuation, wherein the relation between power and pariah, the world of reality, the representational universe (various organisational systems, coercive ideology, democratic substrates, etc.), the symbolic universe (totems, clans), and the imaginary (various beliefs) will be questioned.

The text emphasises the concepts of gregariousness and individuation, the latter of which Jung initiated and refers to the passage of a human, considered in its general approach, as a unique individual. Decrypting or more specifically trying to understand what corresponds to the notion of a pariah could be translated, in an ironic way, by the phrase “instruction manual” because knowing the instructions for use of an object allows for using it, of course, but also deconstructing it. That being said, what about the resemblance, dissimilarity, or difference in the living world, and more specifically in human beings? In what way can these particularities generate exclusions?

⁴ <http://www.cnrtl.fr> (Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales). Created in 2005 by the CNRS, the CNRTL federates within a single portal a set of computerised linguistic resources and language-processing tools. <http://www.atilf.fr> (Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé). The mixed research unit ATILF (Computer Analysis and Processing of the French Language) was born on January 1, 2001 in the merger between the National Institute of the French Language (INaLF-CNRS) and LANDISCO (Language Speech Cognition-Nancy 2 University).

CHAPTER ONE

THE NOTION OF THE PARIAH

1. The Living World: Survival to Domination

The condition of the pariah is defined as that of impossible inclusion and rejection

—Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun, From pariah to the elect. Around Thomas Mann

Before discussing the notion of the pariah as such we will discuss the context that works towards its emergence. This latter aspect is so vast that it must be considered in its diachronic dimension (time) or spatial dimension. The pariah, as a particular point in human history, can only be decrypted insofar as contingencies, chance, and context are analysed.

Before going further, it must be noted that it is the difference existing between each object in the world which allows us knowledge and “re-cognition” and that serves as a way of identification in the living world. The notions of difference and similarity are particularly significant for the constitution of objects of the world, as some predators use them to lure their prey or help in the reproduction of their species. Thereon, Pelt demonstrates how certain plants refuse to serve their pollination through insects, citing the case of orchids: “Thus goryte¹ males are attracted by a modified petal of the flowers of *Ophrys*, the *labellum*, which looks curiously similar to partner females of these insects” (1996, 84).

If we consider the different groups that make up the living system, they operate either by adherence to common recognition or the refusal of differences too marked, that is to say incomprehensible, and even non-integrable by the group, or on the contrary by integrating objects having little in common. Consider, for example, the insect group. Fabre, the famous entomologist of the nineteenth century, has shown that *Bembix rostrata* of the family of the Hymenoptera and *Lucilia Caesar* of the family of the Diptera have some links in common that refer back to the

¹ Order of Hymenoptera, families of Burrowers (De Saint-Vincent 1825, 445)

survival through the first being the predator of the second, which Fabre emphasises is a, “green-gold fly ... host of the corrupted flesh” (1879, 203). But, very singularly, a variety of the family of the Diptera, the *Miltogramme*, does not occupy the place of prey ordinarily devolved to the Diptera by the *Bembix rostrata*, but of the parasite. Which means that, depending on a number of factors, some varieties belonging to the same species may play a different role. Thus, the *Miltogramme* utilises the prey belonging to the Diptera family caught by *Bembix rostrata* to feed its larvae installed in the very nest of the predator, and without its knowledge. The Hymenoptera acts as both the predator but also of bait in the service of the parasite belonging to the species it hunts in order to feed the larvae of said parasites. This brief example shows how “same” and “different” can be translated in different, sometimes strange ways.

Table 1.1 below illustrates that prey, parasites, or predators have survival in common, each using the other directly as prey, or indirectly as parasite.

Table 1.1. About the living being and its status—the case of the larvae <i>Bembix rostrata</i>		
Prey	Parasite	Predator
<i>Lucilia Caesar</i> (group of <i>Diptera</i>)	<i>Miltogrammes</i> (group of <i>Diptera</i>)	<i>Bembex (rostrata)</i> , (group of <i>Hymenoptera</i>)
Source: Fabre Jean-Henri, <i>Souvenir Entomology</i> , Book I, <i>The Insect World</i> , distributedproofreaders Europe, http://dp.rastko.net (1879, 2910)		

In the living world, plants implement strategies to protect themselves from predators like trees that secrete, “related or identical hormones to the hormone managing the transformation and growth of insects” (Pelt 1996, 111). As specified by this author: “These hormones are produced at such high doses that they completely disrupt the normal development of the metamorphoses, disrupting the insect that ventures into the trees in question.”

1.1.1. Of needs in the modes “to have” and “to be”

If we consider all objects of the world (the paradigm of the living being or that of the inanimate object), each object occupies, within the biotope called “Earth,” a well-defined space that is its own: two objects cannot occupy the same space. However, the available resources for the supply of energy that will allow the living world to remain as it is, ensuring the

perpetuation of its species, are limited, be it in space or time. These contingencies induce operating modes of living dedicated to ensuring the survival of the group; consequently, this phenomenon opens onto the occupation of territories based on the need of the interested party. As Pelt points out: “The food requirements express the most constraining of the laws of life, that are common to all living beings, from the virus to the human” (1996, 85).

If the laws of the world of the living are governed by contingencies—without food there is no life—they also decline by means of reproduction, based on available resources. Referring to the law relating to the economy and ecology expressed by Malthus, Pelt mentions that this law: “postulates that the volume of populations expresses quantities of available resources ... as these diminish, demographics immediately collapse.” If this law is corroborated in some cases in others it is contested, as in the rich countries where the food surpluses accumulate and “where, paradoxically, abundance and well-being generate moderation, or even a declining birthrate” (1996, 86).

Going back to the hominid, the subject of our discussion, in hunter-gatherer societies physiological needs cover the majority of its activities. Concerning the Indian group Nambikwara, Lévi-Strauss says that:

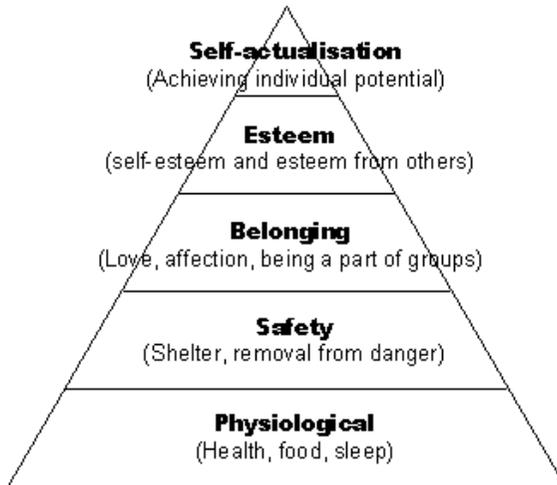
While the male group leave for a whole day to hunt, armed with bows and arrows, or work in the gardens during the rainy season, women, equipped with a digging stick, tear, knock, capture, and grab everything in their path and which can be used for food: seeds, fruits, tubers, small animals of all kinds. (Lévi-Strauss 1955, 337)

From nomadism to a sedentary lifestyle, the human being has transformed the notion of territory; in the first instance, it declined according to hunting or fishing areas, then travelled to ultimately become a delimited object, surrounded by extensible or compressible borders according to events. The extensibility of the territory has also been relayed by the transmission of its possessors’ progeny. That is to say that the spatial dimension has been coupled with the temporal dimension. Darwin thus emphasises:

In all civilised countries, the human being accumulates wealth that he transmits to his children. As a result, the rich, regardless of any bodily or mental superiority, possess great advantages over poor children when they begin the struggle for existence. (1876, 180)

Abraham Maslow (1908–70) who, among other things, was a professor at Columbia University, created Maslow's pyramid, within which the hierarchy of the needs of the human being is evaluated.

Fig. 1.1. Maslow's pyramid



The composition of the strata in the Maslow's pyramid is conjugated in two modes: "having" and "being." In order to exist, you must have at least enough to survive, which we find in the stratum in relation to physiological needs (Physiological), followed by those related to security (Safety). During conflicts, it is the latter which is first destabilised with embargos on economy and trade and curfews, not counting violent and deadly atrocities committed with weapons. The needs expressed in the "to have" mode are in relation to the physical territory and are presented in the form of territorial space and delimitation by means of geopolitical borders, of its people, and of cultivated and stored foodstuffs, with the use of various means in order to maintain both this ensemble as it is and to protect it against potential predators; that is to say, groups of hominids desiring to enlarge their own territory. The stratum in the mode "to be" refers to the needs which are not directly necessary for the biological survival of the human being, but which are indispensable in order to exist as an individual. This mode subsumes three strata: belonging needs, esteem needs, and the needs of realisation. The symbolic territory is vast, even infinite, since it depends on human imagination. It corresponds to an

extension of the physical territory (land, sea, or celestial space with satellites, in particular) that is limited.

1.1.2. Belonging and identity

In the group of strata functioning in the mode “to be,” the first is the one relating to belonging. What is included in the notion of “belonging”? According to TLFi,² “belonging” is the fact of “to belong,” and in a broader sense “with a social background, a community, a political party, etc.” Being part of a group means sharing its values and attributes. The first belonging is of the phylogenetic order. Being born as a human being, it is also belonging to the family of mammals of the order Primates, in the living species of *Hominidae*.³ More specifically, it is being part of such genealogical lineages, whether they are origin or adoption. As for the social inclusion mode of this type of belonging, it varies from one culture to another, which refers to how the group is structured and therefore, more generally, to the organising phenomenon from a given set of objects. Organisation is a way of managing and structuring a set of objects in order to give them a common basis which forms the substructure of belonging. A lexical approach of the term “organisation” refers to the meaning: “Action to organise something; as to how a set is constituted for its operation; a group that proposes determined objectives” (*Le Robert pour tous* 1995, 794).

Researchers such as Hogue, Lévesque, and Morin also give this formulation: “The organisation researches the order and determination, and strives to reduce ambiguity, uncertainty or disorder caused by the actions and interactions of its various constituents” (1988, 13).

In terms of organisational structure, this phenomenon has been the object of numerous studies, both in the foundations of society and the science of business management.

If the organisational structure of the group is based on various federative instances, these latter can become dissociative when the belonging values more or less unite the members of that group. Regarding the feeling of belonging, in a book dedicated to organisational structure, Hogue, Morin, and Lévesque mention that: “each person undertakes more or less formal and more or less explicitly to maintain its belonging to a group [and] allow [the latter] to undertake a differentiation of its structure, and its integration by statutes and powers” (1988, 38).

² <http://atilf.atilf.fr>.

³ Ibid.

Thus, the structuring of the group is possible with the birth of the feeling of belonging. However, according to various events that can occur within any particular group, the order of distribution of belonging, whether major or minor, will be reassessed. Brunet and Savoie (2003) mention that some authors consider the group as, “a set of values, ideas and practices existing simultaneously in the minds of several individuals,” while other theorists consider, “the group as an entity as real as a material object.” On this same issue, Strauss specifies that groups, whatever their system of belonging, feel the need to build “a common or shared terminology” and that “this construction depends on how we classify objects” (1992, 23–4).

Moreover, the group system is built on the basis of various societal symbolic, genealogical and anthroponymic, national, linguistic and cultural, religious or atheist, and political aspects. The anthropogenesis refers, among others, to the anthroponomy that will integrate the individual into a first type of belonging. Thus, if the geneticists have been able to decode different genomes, including that of the hominid, its transcript takes shape from a societal and symbolic point of view through anthroponomy. As pointed out by Chauchat and Durand-Delvigne:

The act of nominations is the beginning of all identity. This is the point of departure as is the nomination of the subject by one that gives him his name. In our society, the subject’s name indicates his filiation, that is to say, his place in the lineage. The nomination is the first symbolic act, that which allows an identity, vital not only in the formal and administrative sense, but also in the sense of inscriptions in the symbolic order which is that of language. Similarly, the identity of the group and its members takes its origin in the name used to designate it. It indicates its origin, its history, its place in society (1999, 62).

Finally, to belong to a group means sharing common values with all members of the group and being perceived as a full member. As to the identity, it refers to the person in their specificity of being unique and not reproducible. By considering the ensemble groups/individuals, we find, implicitly, the same notions of “identical” and “different.” Thus, referring to a member of group X as French, they will be perceived through a value system as related to their national belonging. However, if we evoke this individual in the quality of their people, another perception will be activated. Admittedly, it will be considered as known group memberships (French people), but these will be individual specificities that will then be emphasised. Regarding the pariah and their belonging, would they not be re-evaluated as non-belonging?

1.1.3. Status and Value

The identity construction of social subjects is articulated through several factors, including the anthroponomy that was presented previously, while gender belonging is another component. Nomination and gender belonging are part of a “structured set of identity elements that allow the individual to define himself in a situation and to define himself as a social actor” (Taboada-Leonetti 1990, 44).

Identity markers such as nationality, gender, and occupation are plural; they are constructed from different instances that federate the group structure. Adding value to an object can only be done if there exists a reference value around which other values are positioned, either positively or negatively. Take, as an example, the two ethnic groups studied by Mead: the Arapesh and the Mundugumor: “[The Arapesh] holds each one sweet and helpful and who wants to ignore the violence. [He] does not know sanctions against whoever uses it [because], against the really violent man, the community has no recourse.” This ethnic group has group values totally opposed to those recommended by the Mundugumor. Indeed: “the male child Mundugumor is born into a hostile world, a world where most of his fellow males will be his enemies, where he will have to be violent to realise his life ...” (1963, 25).

This value system, with components in relation to culture in place, is implemented in many social groups, particularly with regard to sexual identity. As Mead mentions: “Some form of docility, refinement, sensitivity, guts, stoicism, endurance is attributed to one sex rather than another” (1966, 152). These qualities are then part of the reference values of the social subject; by choices submitted to contingencies or of a personal nature, the social subject will manifest their belonging to one sex, or their preference if it is possible for them to integrate the qualities of the other sex. Mead reported that she had observed among the Samoan people⁴ a boy “who preferred to remain sitting amidst the women to weave mats” (1966, 154).

In political systems called “democratic,” equality between the sexes is advocated. Other systems (particularly patriarchal societies) dissociate that which is reserved for one or another sex, of what may be shared between men and women. On this matter, Mead emphasises: “In every known society the need to accomplish manifests itself in men. They can cook, weave, dress dolls or hunt the bird of paradise, if those activities are

⁴ “Samoans are Polynesians ... who live on a small group of islands, part of which belongs to the United States” (Mead, 1966).

reserved to them, and then all of society, women and men, regard them as important” (1966, 187).

Mead shows that this is based on the separation of women and men. Indeed, the latter state their sexual belonging through the flute, which became a sacred object and which hence does not belong to the universe of women. The differentiation of the role of each social subject of this community has resulted in a praxis that is unique to each sex community. Thus, “Women are forced to flee to the confines of the village when installing flutes ... [while] the men must remain aloof from the village when women give birth” (1966, 123). If a value X is given to the status devolved to the woman or the man, this is in relation to the sociocultural context in which this value is introduced, and other elements intervene as to the general or particular values also allocated to social subjects. On this matter, we can mention the theory of the valuation of social roles, or VRS, developed by Wolfensberger. For this author, “devalorization is to attribute a lower or negative value.” This theory also posits that, “Social devalorization occurs for a community or even a society as a whole, where entire social classes are judged negatively by the majority of the collectivity” (1997, 15–16). Furthermore:

more value is important in the system of values of a society, and the greater the proportion of the population in a society that adheres to a system of specific values, the more this society will want to designate and identify those who are on the margins of this value or that system of values. (1997, 20)

Valorisations and devalorisations of social roles reflect how the group considers its members in their specificity. This is so of the social subject belonging to the female group, where in a certain number of sociocultural groups their value is fixed relative to that of the male group, which means that the reference value is that of a peer having an overestimated opinion of the image of his own group. In a book dedicated to the notions of “same” and “different,” as part of the entities “man” and “woman,” Hérietier shows that the dominance of the male gender appears in legal texts, since their drafting is made from the point of view of the man who is the editor, even if, “by the symmetry and reciprocity, women are included in the text ...” (2008, 71).

We also find the predominance of the male group through language. Thus, the rules of the agreement of the adjectives in the French language, when they concern the masculine and the feminine, give preference to the masculine: “When the qualified words are different genres, the adjective is put to the masculine plural” (Grevisse 1984, 179). If the grammar rule

relating to sexual gender is now being questioned, especially regarding profession names having the masculine gender even if they are practised by women, it is nevertheless difficult to rewrite the points of view from which language was constructed because this is the set of values of a society that should be questioned. About this matter, Brauer and Landry⁵ specify that: “the *masculine generic* ... is defined as a term which, in the strict sense, refers to a group of individuals of the male sex, but by extrapolation is also used to refer to a group composed of both men and women” (2008, 245), for example, a group of students in which female students are included.

In support of this, Hérítier, an ethnologist who succeeded Claude Lévi-Strauss at the College of France, is the author of studies concerning the social differences linked to gender as well as relatives and alliances existing in some African countries. She illustrates her argument with an example from a northern Ghanaian society where, in a brother/sister couple, the sister is always designated the “younger sister,” even if she is the eldest. In this case, the woman is considered statutorily inferior to the man. According to Hérítier, this praxis is constructed on a model in which, “the relation elder/cadet is to the report parent/child what the report front/rear is to the report higher/lower” (2008, 74). Moreover, this ethnologist specifies that, whether or not there are matrilineal societies, that is to say systems within which the name is transmitted to children by the mother, matriarchy remains a myth.

Finally, depending on the role in which the social subject is brought into play and the status they occupy in society, the value that will be assigned will be declined on a scale ranging from overvaluation to devaluation.

1.1.4. Realisation and place in the group

The needs of the realisation of an individual within a group—needs that are at the top of Maslow’s pyramid—are correlated to project ideas. The idea of a project can be generated and supported by an individual or group or even the project, as such, which can integrate external people to the said realisation. It comes into operation for a given group and also occupies a position in it. The places are in relation to different areas and each social subject can occupy one or more, such as the position of parents, employees of a manufacturer, or the president of an association.

⁵ <http://www.necplus.eu/action/displayAbstract?aid=2422556&fileid=S0003503308002030>.

The place gives to the individual a position and a value. Thus, the subject occupying the place of an airline pilot is, in other words, one form of a one machine driver and is not perceived in the same way by the group as the one who conducts a backhoe loader. Although in the two cases the conducting is correlated to that of a mechanical device, the required skills are in relation to the different levels of technical sophistication and have an influence on the very perception of the trade.

The place and the status have different functions. According to the dictionary, the term “place” means a “role assigned to someone or something in a hierarchical or formal set”,⁶ while the term “status” means “position that a person occupies in society; the prestige they enjoy in this society.”⁷

The fact of implementing and executing a project within the society has, of course, an impact on the functioning of the group; however, personal realisation, through the place occupied, is often lacking. Also, many workers achieve their professional potential for purely alimentary reasons, not by personal choice. Thus, there is a lag, and this is sometimes significant between the personal aspirations of the individual and those of the group, represented by subgroups and individuals who possess the power of decision, which is not always conducive to the fulfilment of individual dreams through social realisation.

1.1.5. The power or the imbalance of the exchange

From a symbolic point of view, power, considered in human societies, corresponds to the survival of the group necessarily passing through the concept of the law of the strongest, and is transferred to symbolic territory. If we take the example of primates close to the hominid, such as chimpanzees, Diamond mentions that, as part of the phylogenetic filiation of the pygmy chimpanzee of Zaire and common African chimpanzees, we share 98% of their genetic program (1992, 10). Other studies reveal the usage of power by these primate populations, such as Cawthon Lang’s article dedicated to the family of the chimpanzee:

There is a linear dominance hierarchy among the male chimpanzees and male chimpanzees dominate females ... The male chimpanzees remain in their home communities while female chimpanzees in general are migrating during adolescence, between the age of 9 and 14 years.

⁶ <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/place>.

⁷ Ibid.

In another study on the concept of power, Servais mentions that the:

Formal rank of a chimpanzee is determined by the salvation ritual ... The real dominance can be recognised by the capacity of the alpha male to monopolise females, when they are the most attractive, and to prevent coalitions being formed against him, to go out most often winning fights or conflicts that oppose him to the other chimpanzees, to lead the group or subgroup in the direction he has chosen, and finally in its ability to put a stop to conflicts opposing the other members of the community. (1993)

Furthermore, and as stipulated by this author: “The order of primates comprises about 200 species. It is subdivided into two sub-orders: prosimians (36 species), such as lemurs in South America, and simians (158 species, including *Homo sapiens*).”

These various studies give to science the means to better understand the strange destiny of the human, inscribed in the order of primates, whose environmental awareness allows them to decrypt the reality in which they live. Furthermore, Vogt, in the preface to Darwin’s *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, evoked, “this emancipation from thought, this constant struggle against the authority and transmitted belief, inherited and authoritarian, which, under a thousand different forms, agitates the world and holds the mind awake” (1876, 9).

It is noteworthy, however, that this emancipation is always integral to the animal nature of the human being, hence the fact that this latter proceeds from the establishment of devaluing statutes concerning their congeners, referring to the position of the dominant males in the simian populations: “The formal rank of a chimpanzee is determined by the salvation rituals. Subordinates salute their superiors with deference and a dominant never salutes a subordinate” (Servais 1993).

In rituals of salutation and precedence, the latter formula corresponds to a, “right resulting from a privilege, created by the use or instituted by a rule, to be placed above someone, of preceding it in a protocol hierarchy.”⁸

They resume in a physical and representative way the social practices existing in the family of *simians*. These social practices reflect, in a symbolic way of course, but with similar aims, the monarchical-type regimes where king and queen, the dominant subjects, bear crowns and various attributes, which is all at once a way to distinguish themselves and impose authority.

⁸ Definition on the site Atilf (Treasury of the French Language Computerised, TLFi), <http://atilf.atilf.fr>.

In reference to the phenomenon of hierarchical organisation in groups of hominids, Mintzberg has developed a certain number of reflections on the concepts of power and authority: “power can be defined ... as simply the capacity to produce or modify the results or organisational effects” (2003, 39).

Authority, meanwhile, corresponds to the, “capacity to do things by the fact that one occupies a hierarchical rank” (2003, 40). For Boudon et al., “power consists of asymmetrical relations between actors and groups of actors; and its exercise is conditioned by an unequal distribution of resources” (1999, 183). As to authority, they define it as follows:

to defer or to submit to the authority amounts to “recognising” in the willingness or the judgement of another person a relevant principle of action or assessments, that one has not weighed beforehand as to the pros and cons ... (1999, 15).

Given this, what about the sophistication of power in humans? Regarding the power of the dominant being exercised on a dominated being, Crozier and Friedberg stipulate that: “it always implies the possibility for some individuals or groups to act on other individuals or groups,” and these authors add that is, “a relationship, not an attribute of the actors” (in Benabou and Abravanel 1986, 352). As stated by Martin:

in cases of extreme servitude, it has to be said that the exercise of power is carried out unilaterally, and that alone, actively engaged in this process, is the protagonist as a part of this logic of domination. The power is therefore an exchange relation in which an actor A imposes on an actor B to perform this or that action. (2009, 32)

“To exist,” the etymology of which comes from the Latin *existere*, meaning “out of, to emerge, show up,” comprised of *ex* “out of” and *sistere* “be placed” (Rey 2006, 1363), relates to the fact of belonging to a universe where everything and everyone may exist side by side with, as its corollary, the instincts of domination and subordination always present. As Crozier and Friedberg underlined:

To exist, that is to enter a field of power, since I can exist only in bargaining with another as to my will to do what they want, or by not responding to “expectations” that they have to me ... Access to sources of power, that is to say, to alternate possibilities of behaviour and actual use of these opportunities, thus reveals itself as a precondition for not only all relations to each other, but also for any personalisation process and of access to the identity. (in Benabou and Abravanel 1986, 354)