

Poverties and Anti-Poverty¹

“Etre pauvre ... c’est connaître incertitude du lendemain, ne jamais savoir sur quoi on peut compter ... et, le plus difficile à vivre, avoir le sentiment d’être mis au ban de la société. ‘Quand vous êtes à la rue, les seules personnes qui vous parlent ce sont celles qui sont payées pour le faire’ résume un ancien sans-abri.”²

A. LECLERC AND I. REY-LEFEBVRE (14. 09. 2018).

Many social philosophers today are freshly interested in the interconnections among the concepts of development, sustainability, and extreme poverty. Much progress has been made, and more is promised.³ One way forward lies in social scientists focusing further on at least some features of the social order that arise from reflection not just on global but also on regional and national attempts to eliminate extreme poverty. The idea is that several such features might contribute to articulating further, if not a less inadequate conception of a “philosophy of sustainable development,”⁴ at least a less unsatisfactory conception of what extreme poverty itself is.

After reflection, I believe that some further critical work at different levels needs to highlight a broader understanding of extreme poverty than what is mostly evident in very recent UN and EU

economic, sociological, and political syntheses. Part of that broader understanding must include more attention to the phenomena of cultural poverty.

In order to get some critical distance on the already very well-documented UN Millennium and Sustainable Developments shared objective to eradicate global poverty and its implicit philosophy of development, narrowing the focus from the global to the national levels proves useful.

In this light, then, I would like to try to elucidate several implications for a renewed understanding of extreme poverty itself. To do so I look here at some of the assumptions underlying the new anti-poverty program to alleviate poverty in the particular case of France.⁵

1. Eradicating Extreme Poverty in France

In 2018 the DREES (“*La Direction de la recherche, des études, de l’évaluation, et des statistiques*”), a French official agency, which at the time functioned under the Ministry of Solidarity and Development, reported that 7.5% of the EU population today suffers from severe material deprivation.⁶ Moreover, 11 September 2018 the official French statistical agency, INSEE (“*Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques*”), reported that 14% of the French population in 2016 was poor.⁷

We need to note that the percentage of poor persons in France also includes the ca. 8% of those “*en activité*,” that is, not the jobless but those actually working, those the French call “*travailleurs pauvres*.”⁸ All these persons were poor in the specific sense that they lived at the time on less than 1026 euros per month.⁹

Some of the most recent studies of poverty in France are to be found in one of the “*Focus*” publications of France’s important *Conseil d’analyse économique* (CAE) importantly entitled “*Pauvreté*

et emploi.”¹⁰ But just what is the link between the two notions in the publication’s title?

The link between poverty and work, the authors of the 2017 report argue, is to be found in a certain correlation. For “those most at risk of poverty [in France today] are monoparental families, couples with at least three children, and young people. [And] these are also the very groups for whom employment rates are lowest or for whom part-time employment is most developed.”¹¹

France counts today ca. 9 million poor people in a population of a little more than 64 million. In other words, currently ca. 14 to 14.2% of France’s population is poor. Further, a figure between 13% and 14% is roughly stable. But although roughly stable statistically, poverty in France continues to change demographically.¹²

Unlike the years of prosperity from the early fifties to the late eighties (the “*rente glorieuses*”), poverty in France now mainly affects young people, children, and households suffering from severe unemployment levels.

Further, there are many more very poor single-parent families today than a generation ago. Still more, while stable nationally, the geography of poverty in France is now largely concentrated in the deeply disadvantaged urban zones the French first called “*zones urbaines sensibles*” before settling on the even more misleading expression, “*quartiers prioritaires*.” Here the poverty rates are two or three times greater than in most other places in France.¹³

In particular, poverty in France is mainly understood as relative poverty. France’s poverty rate is relative in the sense that this rate “is defined,” one of the four authors of the April 2017 CAE report has noted, “on the basis of a threshold fixed at 60% of the median adult revenue [in 2017] of 1,105 euros per month.”¹⁴

By contrast with arriving at this definition of relative poverty in France, a definition of extreme poverty (“*la grande pauvreté*”) is

arrived at “by adopting lower thresholds, either 50% of the median (856 euros monthly) or 40% of the median [again, in 2017 of (676 euros). Then the poverty rate decreases to 8% (5 million persons) and to 3.4% (2.1 million persons) respectively.”¹⁵

By way of alleviating the different kinds of poverty, the French government, like other EU governments, uses a mix of social redistribution programs. Each has its own specific eligibility conditions and monetary grant levels and limits. In June 2018 these diverse French programs as a whole, which are known as the “*minima sociaux*,” “*aides de logement*,” and “*les prestations familiales*,” cost ca. 29 billion euros.

This amount is the equivalent of 2.6% of France’s gross domestic product, its “*produit intérieur brut*” or PIB.¹⁶ The result has been to lower France’s relative poverty rate from 14.2% to a relative poverty rate after the social programs’ transfers of 12.6%.

These diverse French social programs are very expensive. They are in fact so expensive that President Macron allowed himself to make a demeaning remark in a video earlier in the summer of 2018 about the programs costing a “*pognon de dingue*,” a French slang remark meaning roughly “a crazy pile of dough.” Opposition parties jumped on the remark and pointed to the polls showing that the French very largely continue to approve of these programs.

In fact, despite the general financial crises since 2008, France’s social system has continued successfully to play the role of a social stabilizer. The system is broadly efficient and widely approved by French citizens.¹⁷ Nonetheless, this very extensive and generous social system has yet to make much substantive progress with lowering the incidence even of extreme poverty.

Accordingly, major reforms of France’s entire social system are, once again, under renewed and heated discussion. The general reform objectives include trying to decrease social and fiscal fraud

(ca. 250 million euros annually) and introducing greater simplicity and better cost-benefits throughout. The reforms under debate are both financially technical and politically quite contentious.

Clearly, however, almost all of the improvements proposed presently come under the heading of “economizing,” and economizing as much as is politically possible for the now little over one-year-old Macron government. Importantly for our interests here, this double point – *economic and political possibility* – is one of the several basic background assumptions that constructive criticism should make explicit.

Meanwhile, on 21 June 2018, the French government published the official accounts of the social protection programs through 2016. At the same time, the French government also published the Ministry of Solidarity and Health’s official organism, the DREES’ reactions to this report. Predictably, the DREES reactions stressed the great costs. France’s total collective efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion in 2016 cost 40.5 billion euros.¹⁸ What they now cost in 2019 has not yet been published.

The director of the DREES commented on these figures. France’s expenses on its total social programs between 2006 and 2016, he said, “progressed 3% per year coming to 0.3% of France’s GDP. Certainly,” he continued, “France is the country in Europe, and doubtless in the world, that spends the most on such programs. Its system of social protection is among the most generous. Also [its social protection system] has forced the decline of the French population’s monetary poverty by 10 points lowering from 24% before redistribution to 13.4% afterwards.”¹⁹

In France three criteria define the threshold of poverty taken as monetary poverty in particular.²⁰ The first criterion for determining the threshold, as noted above, is 60% of the median national income per month and per person. According to DREES, after

redistribution through the social system programs, this criterion yields a monetary poverty rate for France of 13.4%.

The second criterion is the degree of the “severe material deprivation” of households with respect to such items as regular inability to pay monthly rent, and so on. On this criterion ca. 4.4% of French households suffer from monetary poverty in the specific sense here of severe material deprivation. This percentage compares favorably with 7.5% of EU households generally.

The final criterion of monetary poverty is the number of persons living in households where there is a very low level of work activity, that is, where persons in the household are working less than one full day per week. The percentage of such households in France is 8.4% by comparison with 8.5% in Sweden, 9.6% in Germany, 11.3% in the UK, and 14.9% in Spain.

Now just here we come upon a second basic background assumption in the new French anti-poverty program – the focus on reducing *poverty understood almost exclusively as monetary poverty*.

2. Monetary Poverty and the Poverty of Destiny

What needs emphasis here is that France is preparing to shift the main focus of its current anti-poverty programs. The new focus will not merely be on combating monetary poverty (*les inégalités de revenus*) but on what President Macron called in his 9 July 2018 Congress speech to both the French Assembly and the French Senate convened at Versailles, combating the inequalities of destiny (*les inégalités de destin*).²¹

The three criteria mentioned above are all criteria for defining and measuring what is called “monetary poverty.” What will be the criteria for defining and measuring the so-called “inequalities of destiny” or poverty of destiny, no one yet knows in sufficient detail

till the government's new "poverty program," announced finally on 13 September 2018, is completely and critically examined.²²

Still, President Macron in his speech elucidated partially his understanding of what he was calling vaguely "the poverty of destiny." He said that the poverty of destiny includes the poverty of persons being born in certain places in France, of growing up in certain families, and of attending certain schools.

Taking these considerations seriously, he claimed, yields the observation that the fate of some poor persons, their destiny, is already sealed by their bad luck from their beginnings and their schooling. This is what he seems to mean by the poverty of destiny as opposed to monetary poverty.²³

This distinction between *the poverty of destiny* and *monetary poverty* seems to be a third basic background assumption.

President Macron had already hinted at several preliminary ideas for the new French anti-poverty program. The new program will be the result of initiatives and proposals coming, so to speak, from below and not from above. By contrast, the UN's formulation of its MDG goals in 2000 set the example for how to design anti-poverty programs from above. But the new French anti-poverty program appears to try to follow the example of the UN's 2015 SDGs program as designed from below.

The earlier top-down programs focused on continuing increases in the regular endowments of social programs like the *minima sociaux* and/or widening their scopes. The earlier programs had as their main objective helping people to live better in the precarious situations they already experienced. Now, however, the new main objective is for poor people to "emancipate" themselves from their precarious present situations and to live better in new situations. These new situations are supposed to be those that poor persons have both helped, and been helped, to create for themselves.

“*Emancipation*” then and not “*assistance*” is the new governmental watchword. And it too is further basic background assumption, the fourth. *«Le cœur même d’une politique sociale,»* President Macron said at Versailles in July 2018 before the combined audiences of the French Assembly and Senate, *«n’est pas d’aider les gens à vivre mieux la condition dans laquelle ils sont nés et destinés à rester, mais d’en sortir.»* Poor people in France are on this view to move into new situations to assume their rights and to carry out their responsibilities in society like other citizens.

And the means for this emancipation from poverty are not to be so much the allocations of still more new funds, but new kinds of a real accompanying of poor persons towards action and work.²⁴ But other than evidently vague catch words, just what these so-called kinds of a “real accompanying” come to (“*un accompagnement réel vers l’activité, le travail, l’effectivité des droits fondamentaux*”), no one yet knows.

3. A 2018 French Anti-Poverty Program

In the autumn of 2018, France was just one of the currently 27 member nation states of the EU. Each of these countries, like very many elsewhere in the world, continues to struggle with the increasing problem of how to eradicate not just poverty generally but extreme poverty in particular, especially among children.²⁵

Extreme poverty is understood at the EU level as, notably, “severe material deprivation” as a percentage of the average national revenue of any particular EU country. And severe material deprivation itself is understood in the EU as “the forced [i.e. involuntary] incapacity to cover the expenses linked to at least four of the following nine goods and services: rent,²⁶ heating, food, vacation, refrigerator, car, telephone, television, and unexpected expenses.”²⁷

In 2016 in France, 4.4% of the population was suffering from extreme poverty, that is, severe material deprivation. By comparison, extreme poverty for the EU as a whole was 7.5% of the EU population, whereas the percentages for Sweden and Germany were lower, respectively 0.8% and 3.7%, and were higher for the UK (5.2%), Spain (5.8%), and Italy (12.1%).²⁸ Reliable numbers for 2019 are not yet available. By contrast with the understanding of extreme poverty at the EU level, poverty itself in France in 2018 is understood as the condition of any French person who has to live on less than a total of 1026 euros per month.²⁹ In 2016, 14% of the French population or 8.8 million persons were poor (a small decrease of 0.2% from the 2015 percentage).³⁰

With respect to the different ages of poor persons in France, the official French *Institut national pour les statistiques et études sociales* (INSEE) calculated in September 2018 that the situations of retired poor persons were somewhat better than previously. But INSEE also calculated that the situation of persons in single-parent families was four times worse than the situations of poor couples with one or two children. For young persons less than 18 years old, 19.8% were understood as poor (roughly one out of five).³¹ Other figures for adolescents between 10 and 19 years old showed 17.7% were poor, whereas the percentage of poor children less than 10 years old was 17.4%.³²

4. Short Histories

After this overview and before looking briefly at some details, we need to note that the new French anti-poverty plan has both a proximate and a remote history.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, the French state, like some other EU countries (including notably Germany which already at the end of the 19th century had created a social insurance system),

has always considered its multiple responsibilities to include providing assistance to the poor, however poverty is defined.³³

After the Second World War, France established progressively a comprehensive social protection program (not unlike the program set out in the UK's Beveridge Report of 1942 and its successors) that replaced the older patchwork efforts both of the earlier "*solidarisme*" of L. Bourgeois and of the later E. Durkheim's "*solidarité organique*" of France's Third Republic. This French comprehensive program was based on P. Laroque's understanding of the providential state as providing unity, universality, and uniformity. The program put at its center professional activity and salaried work.

In 1988, however, in the presence of massive and long-term unemployment (*la nouvelle pauvreté*) the French state revised and expanded its social protection measure so as finally to include those without professional activity and salaried work, the jobless.³⁴ French anti-poverty measures were now to comprise the new RMI of M. Rocard's government, a *revenu minimum d'insertion* to aid the unemployed whose revenue was below a national poverty threshold. For previously the unemployed could not qualify for the French social protection program since the unemployed by definition did not have any salaried work.

The new RMI closed this gap in the French social protection program. Further, in 2007 the new RSA of F. Fillon's government instituted a *revenue de solidarité active* to guarantee a minimum annual income for all those qualifying.

Since the turn of the new century, however, an old debate continues today concerning the responsibilities and not just the rights of those benefitting from France's now truly comprehensive social programs. According to its critics, these programs have given rise to a so-called "culture of assistance" with its frauds and especially its dependency relations.

5. A Fresh Start?

Against this historical background, the now widely shared conviction in France is that the actual situation of poor persons, especially that of poor children, demands a genuinely fresh attempt to fulfill the French state's political and social obligations.³⁵ The most recent changes in 2012 under President Holland did not accomplish fully enough their objectives.

Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the previous anti-poverty programs did not take sufficient analytical account of how the phenomena of poverty have greatly changed since the last major overhaul in 1988. For after a period of rough stabilization of the poverty rate around 14% over roughly the last quarter of a century, poverty now in France looks very different from how it looked in 1988 in at least four respects.³⁶

Unlike earlier, poverty today in France mostly affects not older retired persons but mainly young children and infants. Further, since the 2000s, for the first time the number of poor single-parent families is now higher than the number of poor persons who live even in large traditional families.

Moreover, unlike the end of the 1990s, the current character of poor persons in France has become much more international in the sense that many poor persons in France today are legal and illegal resident migrants who do not speak French as their first language. Hence they incur still further problems in getting out of poverty.

Finally, discussion of the poor in France is no longer just one major social topic among others. In fact, the theme of French persons' struggles against poverty has become truly quite an urgent one.³⁷

Such considerations plus several other factors, such as the resounding failures in the UK so far to reform its own social protection programs³⁸ and the present political conjuncture in France, con-

vinced the new French government under Prime Minister E. Philip and the new president E. Macron to introduce their new anti-poverty program. First announced in October 2017, then postponed till April 2018 only to be postponed once again in July till its final announcement on 13 September 2018, the new anti-poverty program benefitted from several interim contributions.

First, on 4 June 2018 three respected French economists, J. Pisani-Ferry, P. Aghion, and P. Martin, who had helped develop President Macron's economic plans in his successful presidential campaign, urged publicly in an influential opinion piece in *Le Monde*, France's afternoon newspaper of record, that the new government seemed to be indifferent to dealing effectively with continuing serious social problems.

Then on 5 September 2018 the Prime Minister received two major reports. Among other matters, the first argued for a complete reform of the existing social programs, especially by unifying both the bases for qualification for the many different benefits and the benefits themselves. The second major report proposed concrete measures to increase substantially the assistance for those poor persons qualifying for benefits and actually receiving them. Henceforth such persons should be properly accompanied professionally in using these benefits efficiently.³⁹

President Macron himself chose to announce the new anti-poverty plan. The plan comprised 21 measures, extended for four years, was financed at 8 billion euros, and consisted of three main elements and a number of associated ones. The first major element was a set of carefully studied measures to ameliorate the situations of very young poor children. The second were measures to improve substantially the situations of poor unemployed persons especially with respect to gaining employment once again. And the last were measures to simplify in many ways the social protection system as a whole.⁴⁰

Among the other 21 measures were free breakfasts for young children in school and especially low prices for all other school meals, provisions for more child care centers, a new legal obligation for all persons up to the age of 18 to continue their education, a young persons' guarantee for all between the ages of 16 and 25 in greatly precarious situations, professional accompaniment for all those receiving the *minima sociaux* benefits, special financial aid for financing a complementary insurance plan besides the general social insurance, increased construction of new housing to reduce if not eliminate the government's still having to house some very poor persons and families in private often insalubrious hotels, and a great administrative simplification that fused many of the required steps for *minima sociaux* qualification.⁴¹

Importantly, the French president announced the new anti-poverty program as but the first of an already planned series of comprehensive basic reforms to construct a new French providential state for the 21st century. Besides the anti-poverty program, these other reforms are to include the thoroughgoing overhaul of the health system, including the health dimensions of work, the retirement system, the dependency programs, and the unemployment insurance programs.⁴²

Still, as informed critics were not slow to point out, the impressive new French anti-poverty program did not, as several recent technical studies strongly recommended, increase the value of the RMI benefit. Nor, even more importantly, did it fill the gap in the coverage afforded by the *minima sociaux* to those young people covered to the age of 18 and from the age of 25 but not from the ages of 18 to 25. Yet 25% of those very young French persons between the ages of 18 and 25 live below the French poverty line.⁴³

Perhaps even more striking was the omission once again (with but one exception in the Hirsch plan of 2007) of no specification what-

soever of indicators and budgeted objectives for the reduction of poverty which most economists agree are prerequisites for the probable success of any such comprehensive programs.⁴⁴

When taken as a whole the and under such a welter of programs, costs, and plans for radical reform, what, if anything might be called if not France's philosophy of development at least the philosophical orientation of France's new anti-poverty program?

6. The Anti-Poverty Program's Presuppositions

This question is not idle since President Macron himself studied philosophy and was for a short time an academic assistant of the renowned French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005). Moreover, he himself as well as his critics have repeatedly called special attention to the objective of his new anti-poverty program as an "emancipation" – a strongly philosophical expression reminiscent of several repeated reflections in Jürgen Habermas' earlier neo-Marxist work – from the devastating grip of poverty across successive generations of French citizens.

The details of both poverty in France and the extensive programs designed to alleviate both general and extreme poverty, may not improperly be seen as overly derivative from a notoriously centralized, significantly redundant government system. Consider for example the often-overlooked, extensive, and strongly undervalued role of associations in France's efforts to assist the poor. And consider too the relatively insensitive attentiveness of public institutions to the immaterial aspects of poverty. Here I have time to say just a word about each of these.

The largely welcome talk of new basic ideas for an eventually reformed French social assistance system to come from the bottom and not from the top clearly presupposes the continuing influence

of the traditional and extraordinarily well-entrenched centralized or Jacobin structure of French governments.

Given the weight, however, of history and practice, actually implementing as opposed to just theorizing and merely legislating a truly decentralized and still effective social system for France is hardly possible. One basic characteristic then of any underlying philosophical elements in the new French anti-poverty program is its fundamentally centralized and not distributed nature.

Closely related to this first characteristic is a second attribute, the deeply ingrained attitude and belief in France that both setting the objectives and implementing them for the elimination of extreme poverty is pre-eminently and almost exclusively the government's affair and no one else's.

Historically, the mainly Roman Catholic religious orders in France took responsibility for dealing effectively with the social problems and social development of the vast majority of the French people. But in today's strictly laicized France, following the secularizing laws of 1905 that succeeded the much earlier drastic and murderous events of the French Revolution, most religious orders and churches, synagogues, and mosques themselves no longer have either sufficient official warrant nor sufficient personnel and financial resources to assume such immense tasks.

Moreover, such private associations are neither expected to address the needs of the poor, nor indeed for many citizens today are they welcome to do so. Rather the prevailing current view in French culture, however subtle the issue of "*laïcité*" remains,⁴⁵ is that for solving societal problems, the government is the default setting. This is the case not just for remedying the country's evident defense deficits or ecological problems or dealing effectively with so many other troublesome issues but also for remedying its great and growing social evils like persisting extreme poverty.

As for the continuation of many traditional roles for private associations, they are viewed as just one more expedient, until the French government and especially (under De Gaulle's Fifth Republic's constitution since 1958) the all-powerful French presidency finally faces up to assuming completely one more of its supposedly essential responsibilities. Whatever social responsibilities French non-government associations may retain is to be considered properly as merely delegated and not essential ones.

Besides the major characteristics of an essentially centralized nature and its fundamentally exclusively governmental responsibility for dealing with extreme poverty, the new French anti-poverty program also exhibits still another underlying philosophical element. That characteristic element is its almost exclusive focus in its social systems on eliminating material deprivation.

In other words, a new comprehensive French anti-poverty program is almost exclusively not philosophical at all; it is, in one of its many forms or other, almost exclusively economic. And yet that exclusivity itself represents finally a philosophical choice.

Such multi-dimensional approaches, for example as found in the Oxford Poverty and Development Initiative Program and its Multi-dimensional Poverty Index,⁴⁶ make important room for diverse cultural influences on extreme poverty. This kind of room, however, is most often characteristically missing in French development and anti-poverty approaches.

Does the new comprehensive French anti-poverty program then have any truly marked philosophical character? Probably not. Should it have such a character? Given the elusive immaterial and not exclusively material nature of poverty and extreme poverty, it probably should. This is but one of the several basic questions that should insist on further public and critical discussion.

7. Poverty's Many Dimensions

In concluding, there is clearly no improvement of the often-dramatic situations of so many poor and extremely poor persons in France and elsewhere without such continually adapted and renewed government social protection programs as the new French anti-poverty program of September 2018. Poverty doubtless has increasingly well-defined economic, social, and political bases, which affirm its title of objective poverty. Considering that each of these constitutive bases is undergirded by philosophically and politically motivated presuppositions, governments can address these bases better.

But just as clearly there can be no end to such a vastness of human suffering without equally determined effective attention to the more than exclusively material sides of poverty and extreme poverty. These other sides include educational, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of such human predicaments. In not being exclusively material, however, these kinds of poverty are not objective in the same sense that material or monetary poverty is objective, and their proper measurement is not usually possible.

And, third, the other side of poverty that is neither properly speaking either objective or non-objective is what is partially on view here in the daily experiences of such French persons who frequent the *Secours populaire* and similar associations in Paris and elsewhere in France.

Perhaps we may denominate this dimension of poverty and extreme poverty in a deliberately vague way as “interpersonal poverty,” the poverty of inter-dependent persons who lack social networks.⁴⁷ Personal poverty is neither exclusively material nor not exclusively material; it is *sui generis*.

How could it be the case that not even such extraordinary social protection programs in Europe today such as the newly compre-

hensive French anti-poverty program of September 2018 appear finally unable to come to effective enough grips, not with objective or subjective poverty, but with the deeply puzzling sufferings of interpersonal and interdependent poverty, the vast suffering of persons as such undergoing poverty and extreme poverty – the ever-present and truly profound feeling of never being free?

No anti-poverty program, I think, whether in France or elsewhere, can ever come to effective enough grips with these kinds of extreme poverty, with the persistent solicitations of so many destitute persons.

My question then is this: why is it that no anti-poverty program can come to effective enough grips with interpersonal and interdependent extreme poverty?

Envoi: Being Poor

Some time ago in Paris two distinguished journalists for *Le Monde* ran an informal social experiment. At the entrance to a centrally located branch of the French social assistance agency, *Secours populaire*, the two women stood throughout the day. They asked each person entering whether he or she considered himself or herself “poor.”

Only one person replied, “Yes.” And that person, in a barely audible voice, replied, “I think one could say I’m poor. I have to pay attention to everything.” Most replied almost automatically “No.” One explained: “There are worse situations. I manage. I’m lucky to have a roof over my head. So many people are in the streets.”⁴⁸ She was referring to those whom the French call “the SDF,” *les sans domicile fixe*, the homeless.

The journalists observed that “être pauvre, c’est se priver parfois d’un repas, mais aussi des soins. J’ai dû appeler une vingtaine de dentistes avant qu’un seul accepte de traiter ma rage de dents,” raconte

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un ancien SDF. C'est aussi imposer des sacrifices à ses enfants, leur refuser une inscription au club de foot, n'inviter jamais personne chez soi. Mais, [être pauvre, c'est] surtout, 'ne pas être libre !', confie Marie, 48 ans. . . . On dépend des administrations pour tout, il faut sans cesse remplir des dossiers.' En fin de droits, au chômage, elle touche l'allocation de solidarité spécifique: 'Tous les six mois, on me réclame mon avis d'imposition, il faut faire des photocopies, se déplacer . . . Tout cela prend une énergie phénoménale.' »⁴⁹

Endnotes for Essay Nine

- ¹ This essay is a revised version of a paper first presented in shorter form in at the XXXVII International Symposium on Eco-Ethics held in Denmark at the University Campus Tuborgvej in Copenhagen and at the University of Roskilde 7-12 October 2018. My thanks to P. Kemp, N. Hashimoto, and J. Dahl Rendtorff for their generous invitations.
- ² A. Clerc and I. Rey-Lefebvre, «*Être pauvre, c'est 'ne pas être libre,' 'dépendre des administrations,*» *Le Monde*, 14 September 2018.
- ³ See for example the very recently published final report of the International Panel on Social Progress, *Rethinking Society for the 21st Century*. (Cambridge: CUP, 2018), esp. Volume Three.
- ⁴ On the bases of such common usages as '*international policies should support sustainable development*' and '*sustainable development has become the guiding theme in much environmental literature*' the various current Oxford dictionaries define "sustainable development" as "economic development that is conducted without depletion of natural resources." The expression "the philosophy of development" occurs in the standard reference work, *A Dictionary of Sociology*, ed. J. Scott, 4th ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2014) p. 746. On this view a philosophy of development focuses on resolving the tensions between human populations having to exploit the natural environment to satisfy human needs and yet also having to preserve the natural environment for the present and future generations.
- ⁵ Although both argumentative analytic philosophical approaches and expository hermeneutic ones to certain questions overlap, my approach here is mainly expository and only partly argumentative. Two excellent short essays on the similarities and differences are M. Beaney, *Analytic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2017) and J. Zimmermann, *Hermeneutics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2015).
- ⁶ DREES 2018a. «*Privation Matérielle Sévère en 2016 [en UE], en % de la population,*» in DREES 2018. See, however, Barbier 2018. «*L'Allemagne et la Grande-Bretagne, modèles ou repoussoirs,*» *Le Monde* 17-18 June, p. 12. For an alternative European view see Ingram 2018 and Ingram and Derdak 2018. In general, the number of poor people in France in 2018 is 14.2% compared with 15.9% in the UK, 16.2% in Sweden, 16.5% in Germany, and 22.3% in Spain (I. Rey-Lefebvre, «*Protection sociale: un système efficace et apprécié des Français,*» *Le Monde* 22 June 2018. p. 10). According however to Eurostat, the official statistical office of the EU in Luxembourg, in 2007 13.1% of French persons were poor according to this monetary definition. Outside of the French situation discussed in more detail in this section, the percentages here for some other EU countries need careful elucidation in each case. Note that sometimes numbers vary because the poverty

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line varies from year to year and some cited numbers are not necessarily from the same year. For example, besides the discrepancy above see also note 30 below.

- ⁷ Poverty in France is currently measured mainly as monetary poverty, that is, the situation of the number of individuals living on less than 60% of the median revenue national (after redistribution in the form of social transfers, or 1015 euros per month per person. For the general notion of poverty today see Brown in: Brown *et al.* *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations*, 4th ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2018). It needs recalling that poverty is “a complex and multidimensional phenomenon.” Note that the new and now standard reference work on social issues in France today is the *Dictionnaire des Inégalités et de la Justice Sociale*, ed. P. Savidan (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2019).
- ⁸ See L. Moniez, «*Les travailleurs pauvres, ces invisibles*,» *Le Monde*, 6 September 2018, p. 2.
- ⁹ *Le Monde*, 14 September 2018. This percentage was 0.2 points lower than the French official poverty rate in 2015. In 2016 INSEE reported that 19.8% of those persons younger than 18 were poor, 38.3% of jobless (compared with 6.4% of those working) were poor, and 34% of single parent families were poor.
- ¹⁰ *Pauvreté et emploi*,» *Focus*, N°016-2017 April (Paris: Office of the Prime Minister). The CAE is a committee of distinguished professional economists of different theoretical orientations tasked with providing France’s Prime Minister with continuing reliable economic advice. See also *L’Observatoire des inégalités: Rapport sur la Pauvreté en France*, ed. L. Maurin *et al.* (Paris: Compas, 2018) for the first annual report of the *Observatoire des inégalités* published in October 2018, the annual report of the *Observatoire national de la pauvreté et de l’exclusion sociale* of the French government Ministry of also published in October 2018, and the annual statistical report of Secours Catholique Caritas France of 8 November 2018 (on line). In my discussion here I update and supplement some of the information in CAE 2017 with summary indications from Rey-Lefebvre 2018.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3; my translation.
- ¹² The relative stability of the poverty rate in France at ca. 14% since the 1980s is based on the understanding of poverty as monetary poverty. This assumption however masks the absence of stability and continuing evolution in what INSEE now calls “conditions of life poverty” or life-style poverty (“*pauvreté en conditions de vie*”). While close to the monetary poverty rate, this other poverty rate “does not always concern the same persons” (Damon, «*La Pauvreté a changé de visage*,» *Le Monde*, 23 June, 2018 cited in M. Charrel, «*La France face au défi de la pauvreté*,» *Le Monde*, 5 September 2018, p. 2). Besides revenue, this second kind of poverty rate also includes the substandard housing of almost 4 million persons in France today (according to the authoritative figures of the Abbé Pierre Foundation), lack of regular access to health services, to cultural activities, and to nutritious food.

- ¹³ Damon, «*La Pauvreté a changé de visage,*» *Le Monde*, 23 June, 2018, p. 12. Cf. Damon, *Exclusion: vers zéro SDF ?* (Paris: La Documentation française, 2017). More recently see D. Cosnard, «*Les inégalités se creusent en région parisienne,*» *Le Monde*, 4 June 2019.
- ¹⁴ Bargain, «*Un 'pognon de dingue' pour les pauvres?*» *Le Monde* 17-18 June 2018, p. 12.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.* Numbers in the following paragraphs are taken from this mid-June 2018 economic source. Contrast these current French procedures with the recently recommended new procedures in the UK to define the poverty threshold not on a one-year basis but as the average of a three-year basis.
- ¹⁶ The French PIB is roughly equivalent to the international GDP or gross national income (not to the more familiar GNP or gross national product, which is slightly different). See: Black *et al.*, *A Dictionary of Economics*, 5th ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2017), pp. 231-231; cf. Chang, *Economics* (London: Penguin, 2014), pp. 212-220.
- ¹⁷ See the polls cited in Rey-Lefebvre 2018a and the demeaning implications of the slang remark according to the philosopher, Sandra Laugier in Laugier, «*Du social certes, mais sans rien de concret,*» *Le Monde* 11 July, 2018.
- ¹⁸ Rey-Lefebvre 2018a.
- ¹⁹ J.-M. Aubert, cited in Rey-Lefebvre 2018a; my translation.
- ²⁰ For the three criteria of monetary poverty in France and the pertinent percentages, I follow closely Rey-Lefebvre 2018a, p. 10. See also the excellent summary article of H. S. Richardson, «*Vingt et un principes et valeurs pour le XXI^e siècle,*» *Le Monde*, 4-5 November 2018.
- ²¹ I. Rey-Lefebvre, «*Le plan pauvreté sera mis en œuvre en 2019,*» *Le Monde*, 11 July 2018, p. 7.
- ²² Two initial reactions are the qualified ones of *Le Monde's* 18 September 2018 editorial and the negative ones of D. Gélot, «*Un plan pauvreté en trompe l'œil,*» *Le Monde*, 19 September 2018.
- ²³ I. Rey-Lefebvre, «*Le plan pauvreté sera mis en œuvre en 2019,*», p. 7.
- ²⁴ *Loc. cit.*
- ²⁵ Cf. Bhalla and McCormick, *Poverty Among Immigrant Children in Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
- ²⁶ See: I. Lefebvre, «*L'envolée des loyers, facteur aggravant de la pauvreté,*» *Le Monde*, 7 Septembre 2018, p. 2.
- ²⁷ DREES 2018. «*Direction de la recherche, des études, de l'évaluation, et des statistiques,*» Ministère de la Santé (Paris: La Documentation française), as cited in *Le Monde*, 22 June 2018, p. 10.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ INSEE, 11 September 2018. Note that A. Chemin, «*Assistances publiques [Entretien avec Serge Paugam],*» *Le Monde*, 15 September 2018 reports the poverty

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- line in France as 1015 euros per month. The INSEE numbers of 11 September 2018 are the current official French statistical numbers. The French poverty rate or poverty threshold is calculated as 60% of the median revenue.
- ³⁰ A. Clerc and I. Rey-Lefebvre, «*Etre pauvre, c'est 'ne pas être libre,' dépendre des administrations,*», p. 12. A. Chemin, «*Assistances publiques [Entretien avec Serge Paugam]*» reports the poverty rate in France in 2016 as 13.6%
- ³¹ *Ibid.* Cf. D. Gélot, «*Enfants pauvres, enfants démunis: quels indicateurs ?*» *Cahiers de l'Onpes [l'Observatoire national de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion sociale]*, (octobre 2017).
- ³² A. Chemin, «*Laïcité, de la théorie à la pratique,*» *Le Monde*, 29 September 2018, p. 2. See also S. Paugam, *Ce que les riches pensent des pauvres* (Paris: Seuil, 2017).
- ³³ For the history I rely here on Paugam's remarks in Chemin, «*Assistances publiques [Entretien avec Serge Paugam]*» and his book S. Paugam, *Ce que les riches pensent des pauvres*.
- ³⁴ See the historical comments of S. Paugam in Chemin, «*Assistances publiques [Entretien avec Serge Paugam]*», p. 2.
- ³⁵ For an excellent and quite recent survey of the poverty situation in France today see the *Le Monde's* three-part series “*La France face au défi de la pauvreté,*” 5-7 September 2018 on, respectively, substandard housing and unemployment (E. Albert), poor workers (L. Moniez), and the jump in rental costs (I. Rey-Lefebvre).
- ³⁶ Damon, «*La Pauvreté a changé de visage,*», p. 4.
- ³⁷ Cf. A. Clerc and I. Rey-Lefebvre, «*Etre pauvre, c'est 'ne pas être libre,' dépendre des administrations,*» *Le Monde*, 14 September 2018.
- ³⁸ See E. Albert, «*Au Royaume-Uni, l'impossible réforme des aides sociales,*» *Le Monde*, 5 September 2018, p. 3.
- ³⁹ A. de Guigné, «*Deux rapports pour enrichir le plan pauvreté,*» *Le Monde*, 6 September 2018, p. 25.
- ⁴⁰ V. Malingre and I. Rey-Lefebvre, «*Un plan pauvreté pour rééquilibrer le quinquennat,*» *Le Monde*, 14 September 2018, p. 12.
- ⁴¹ Service France, «*Vingt et une mesures pour lutter contre la précarité,*» *Le Monde*, 14 September 2018, p. 13.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ L. Corvelaire, «*A 18 ans, je n'avais plus aucune place d'hébergement,*» *Le Monde*, 14 September 2018, p. 13.
- ⁴⁴ D. Gélot, «*Un plan pauvreté en trompe l'oeil.*»
- ⁴⁵ See the debate between J. Scott and D. Schnapper in A. Chemin, «*Assistances publiques [Entretien avec Serge Paugam]*», pp. 2-3.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. Brown *et al.*. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations*, p. 445.

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- ⁴⁷ For an ontological account of persons as essentially interdependent entities see P. McCormick, “Ethics, the Interdependence of Persons, and Relationality,” *Ecoethica*, 7 (2018), 125-140.
- ⁴⁸ A. Clerc and I. Rey-Lefebvre, «*Etre pauvre, c'est ne pas être libre, 'dépendre des administrations,*» *Le Monde*, 14 September 2018, p. 12; my translation.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*