

Synthesis of

# San Patrignano between Community and Society

A Research on the Biographic Routes  
of 711 San Patrignano former Guests

by

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San Patrignano between community and society	(1)	pg. 2
San Patrignano between community and society	(2)	pg. 4
San Patrignano between community and society	(3)	pg. 7
Change and life image	(3.1)	pg. 8
Drug addiction and “false self”	(3.2)	pg. 10
The life/death paradigm	(3.3)	pg. 13

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*This synthesis of the research does not pretend to be comprehensive, but merely intends to provide general (and inevitably brief) indications on the primary results attained by the research. To fully understand these results, it is recommended that one read the unabridged version. No conclusions drawn from the results of this research based exclusively on this synthesis can be considered legitimate.*

# SAN PATRIGNANO BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

## 1

Often, when the topics of drug abuse and recovery are discussed, it is with some uncertainty. Research published in recent years has divided the academic community as well as the population at large into two diverging schools of thought.

One: *Drug addiction is treatable and can be overcome*. As a consequence, myriad approaches to treatment have been proposed. Two: *Drug addiction is incurable*.

More recently, a *third theory* has gained support which draws from the previous two. It maintains that recovery is only possible for a fraction of addicts. The majority would have to continue taking a substitutive therapy supplied by the government in an effort called “harm reduction”. This only aids in perpetuating self-destructive behaviour by “institutionalizing” their malaise. If drug addiction is redefined as a normal and acceptable fact of life, then the state is relieved from the task of providing effective treatment programs. This approach, however, tends to create a feeling of hopelessness in the addict, who has little impetus for change.

In the late Seventies, when Vincenzo Muccioli founded San Patrignano, he had not devised a predetermined strategy. Driven by an intense determination to help others, he aimed to create a place where young people could achieve recovery. Through the years, not only has San Patrignano grown in size, but it has steadily increased the quality of its services as well. With experience, standards and methods were revised according to effectiveness. However, the question remains: *Is permanent recovery from drug addiction possible?* More specifically, how are those who have completed San Patrignano’s program and have been reintegrated into society living today?

In this conceptual framework San Patrignano has become a kind of testing ground - a place in which it is possible to witness the innumerable paths taken, full of diverse experiences, victories and defeats. Here, the standard definitions of terms such as “drug addiction”, “therapeutic community”, and “reintegration into society” are set aside to favor a wider and more complex pattern of interpretation.

The authors of San Patrignano: Between Community and Society begin by presenting the hypothesis that San Patrignano is a workshop where psychological, social, cultural and biographic factors combine to yield varied results.

As each individual who enters San Patrignano is unique, results upon completion of the program vary greatly. Presenting a cohesive view of the subjects’ histories and current lives can be problematic, considering the many variables and characters involved.

Paolo Guidicini, Giovanni Pieretti and their team of researchers were unsure of the results they might obtain when they decided to pursue this endeavour.

The aim was to individuate the research object, find the correct approach and last, but not least, to understand exactly what conclusions they would be able to draw.

In the book’s 750 pages, the authors hope to shed light on a mutable and complex situation; mutable inasmuch as the community is in a state of constant growth and evolution, complex because of the many variables which need to be taken into consideration.

The sheer magnitude of San Patrignano has caused much debate. Specifically, one questions if a community can operate effectively on such a large scale, and whether size can be detrimental to the objective of socialization.

In their research, however, the authors uncover various concepts which open up new possibilities for interpretation. The size of the community ceases to be merely an uncertain variable and becomes a decisive factor.

The concept of *city effect*, which is at first presented by the authors as an underlying element, eventually becomes the focal point of the investigation.

Time spent living in the community is no longer seen as a time of social marginalization, of laconic self-analysis for the subjects, who rely on the help of some good-willed social worker. On the contrary, the community becomes a microcosm of society which experiences the problems and dramas present in society as a whole. In certain situations, subjects experience a sense of intense conflict, having never had to come to terms with a heretofore unknown way of life. Living in the community means becoming part of a society, each individual experience becomes part of a greater series of events which are extremely real, concrete, and singular. It is thus impossible to generalise, as each experience is completely unique. Each of the 711 stories speak of a return to society, a challenge for which one prepares during their time in the community. Various steps were taken before the final draft of the questionnaire to be used in the research was drawn up.

This significant preliminary phase of the research was divided into 5 fundamental steps, to better define the argument. Three preliminary questionnaires were prepared and administered at different times to the residents of San Patrignano and a 'control group' made up of drug-addicts in treatment in other therapeutic communities. Moreover, the introductory research involved two additional phases: the first consisted in the profiles of 30 San Patrignano Community members. In the second we conducted interviews regarding the workday inside the community. These five preliminary steps were linked to create a cohesive vision that would make it possible to define the technical/methodological parameters and build a strategy for the research methods to be used. The final instrument used for the research on the 711 former guests of the community consisted in an interview-questionnaire which included 92 multiple choice or "semi-open" questions and 16 open-ended questions. The questionnaires were unique in that they included questions of both quantitative and qualitative nature. This methodology was applied after examining the results of the preliminary research, which illustrated the need for a number of open-ended questions, therefore allowing the interviewees to express themselves more freely and on a deeper level in regards to several 'key' themes.

The authors chose to perform their research on people who spent a minimum of fourteen months at San Patrignano. A brief synthesis of some of the basic data gathered follows. It is to be duly noted that the former guests were all personally interviewed in the cities in which they live by a team of specialised interviewers. Of the 711 interviewees, 507 were male and 204 female; 8.9% were between 19 and 25 years old; 36.6% were between 26 and 30; 38.8% between 31 and 35 and 15.7% were over 35. The interviews lasted an average of about 80 minutes, a fact which indicates the high degree of cooperation offered by the interviewees.

Their stay at San Patrignano, which was calculated comprehensively (some left the program only to return), ranged from 14 months to 3 years (38%), 29.8% from 3 to 4 years, 4 to 5 years (13.9%) and 5 or more years (19.9%); 3.4% of the interviewees were residents of San Patrignano at the moment of the interview, even though they had long since concluded the therapeutic program; 17% of the interviewees came to San Patrignano before 1983, 18.4% in the period between '84-'86, 33.9% in the period between '87-'89, and 30.7% after 1990.

The average number of family members of the interviewees upon entering in the community was 4.

When they came to San Patrignano 24.6% of the interviewees were working whereas 73.8% had worked in the past in some capacity.

Of the 711 former guests interviewed about 35% had built a new family and about 83% had created a new circle of friends since their stay in the community. Furthermore, about 80% of the interviewees had a job at the time of the interview.

These data already suggests a positive answer to the initial question.

**Yes, it is possible to leave addiction behind.** However, perhaps there is not only one predetermined path to recovery.

The interviewees offer us information which may help us to understand how each one of their lives has progressed once outside the community, be it at home with their family, their friends, or at work. In spite of the differences some key points emerge: the strong initial impact upon entering the community, the complex nature of relationships inside the community as a decisive element for change, the return to society as a moment of personal maturation.

All of them retain vivid memories of their past; their experiences with drugs are difficult to forget. However, if one can overcome these obstacles, they become points of maturation and strength on which it is possible to base a critical analysis of one's life and of one's ability to get along with others. Only then is it feasible to create a strategy, in order to return to being a productive member of society.

## **SAN PATRIGNANO BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY**

### **2**

The complexity of the communitarian experience cannot be fully appreciated without gaining an understanding of the therapeutic program. An important point to consider when reading this text is the *length of stay*. Actually, the question of "minimum length of stay" is to be taken into account when considering the living conditions and life choices of the subjects after leaving the community. The present research, carried out by the Department of Sociology at the *Università degli Studi di Bologna* on 711 former guests of the San Patrignano Community, has therefore established the minimum required permanence of the subjects in order to participate in the study. All those who spent less than 14 months in the community were excluded from the project. This period was chosen arbitrarily as a length of time in which the interviewee would have had the possibility to reflect on his chosen recovery program. The research began in earnest in January 1993 and ended in April 1994. However, initial contact with the community, including preparatory work and first meetings dates back to the summer of 1989. This sociologically based research (*San Patrignano Between Community and Society*) has as

its main focus the relationship between the subjects' lives while living in the San Patrignano Community and their experiences once they have completed the program. The aim was not, therefore, to analyse the intervention methods utilized by San Patrignano in abstract terms. It was to carry out an inquiry on a substantial number of actual cases involving former guests who had spent at least 14 months in the community. The first step was that of individuating all the former guests who met this pre-requisite. The obtained sample amounted to 2,300 units. The second step was that of tracking down the potential subjects, even though the past experience had taught us that this was a particularly complex and demanding operation.

We located 1,208 subjects who were willing to participate in the study, and obtained their home address. The Department of Sociology of the *Università degli Studi di Bologna* sent each potential participant a letter in which the goals of the research were illustrated. They were invited to meetings held at various times and in various locations around Italy.

The meetings has to be held on as 'neutral' a location as possible, such as a town hall, hotel, cinema or cultural centre.

The survey was to be performed by the *Cooperativa RicercAzione* of Faenza, an institute specialising in such research. It was carried out at the national level by specialised personnel in September and October of 1993, under the scientific supervision of the research team from Department of Sociology of the *Università di Bologna*. There were a total of 54 meeting points located throughout Italy where the subjects went to fill out the survey. The total number of subjects who replied to the invitation before the October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1993 deadline were 711 (58.9% of those who were invited). 24 of these had officially completed the therapeutic program at San Patrignano, but continued to live there and work full time in administration and management .

Examining the initial results, the researchers coined the term '*city effect*'. *City effect* connotes complexity, pluralism, simultaneous participation in numerous sub-systems involving different roles and positions; it means contact with a high number of individuals, to receive input that may often be disparate and contradictory. This experience was extremely far removed from the traditional idea of community as a world apart which exists in opposition to external society. The *city effect* becomes a relevant factor in that it represents a *turning point* in the interpretation of the data. The San Patrignano community, through this *city effect* indicated by the interviewees' answers, (see chapter 9 of the volume, entitled "City Effect: A Significant Break-Up") distinguishes itself, diverging from the commonly accepted model of a therapeutic community. This divergence, as underlined in the volume, consists in changing the very definition of the community itself. The *city effect* puts emphasis on societal elements (the size of the structure, the organisation), whereas in a more traditional interpretation the accent is placed on interpersonal relations, interaction in close proximity.

The research shows that the *city effect* allows for the emergence of certain features which are traditionally considered characteristic of completely different situations. Through the *city effect*, the community is immediately perceived by the subjects as a viable reality with an organisational structure including its own system of laws, habits, traditions and fixed steps which lead to recovery. This phenomenon constitutes a significant break-through in that it concerns itself above all with breaking the 'circle of protection' and countering the resistance to change which is inherent in the subjects'

immediate family. The *city effect* is characterised as a kind of “*trial reality*”, in the words of the subjects who answered the open-ended questions in the survey (which totaled 18830 lines).

But it is predominately the ever-present *intervention of others* intrinsic to the *city effect*, as well as the ‘homogeneous heterogeneity’ of *their peers*, that frequently upset our subjects. Some were so upset that they stated that “*it was like living among people who had never shot up.*”

However, there is one more crucial point to be considered, which is inextricably linked to the *city effect*. It is the feeling of being no longer alone and on the sidelines but of belonging, of similitude with the other members of the community. (“*Not feeling alone in tackling the problem/Seeing many guys with the same problems I had made me realise that I was not the only one/I never felt lonely/I realised that I was not the only asshole*”). The *city effect* can cause a kind of bewilderment for the subjects, stemming from the sudden realisation of their self centered behaviour. Conversely, it provides a kind of reassurance in that one feels less isolated, surrounded by people who have had the same experiences, and who are on the road to recovery.

The opinion expressed by the former guests of the community therefore passes across this first element – ***the idea that change is possible***, initiated by the community itself. (A sample sentence: “the evidence of the possibility of leaving drugs behind”). The impetus for change is initially the relationship with others, but it is the *city effect* which becomes the catalyst. Through the *city effect*, newcomers to San Patrignano experience the magnitude of a completely new type of organisation. This environment differs from past situations in which the subject had the illusion of controlling or even dominating his environment- both within his family context as well as during previous therapeutic attempts. The impact of the *city effect* is particularly overwhelming and forces the interviewees to escape from a protected logic and to face the *autonomy of things*. Such an interpretative framework is supported in the book by the analysis of the formative role that *work* has inside the community.

The community, for the majority of the interviewees, gave them job skills and represented an important role in regards to the present working situation of people who, as former guests of the community, are now on the labour market. However, almost all argue that the decisive factor when working at San Patrignano is ***group cohesion***. It is influenced by affective and moral factors, rather than technical aspects.

These are issues which overcome the *instrumental/expressive* dialectics and which allow us to find an interpretative key of ***work as a moral*** (and therefore cohesive) ***fact***. The moral fact in itself is a reality *sui generis* which overcomes, or better yet makes obsolete, the above mentioned dichotomies. Such dichotomies have sense only if the work is seen as a *means to self-actualisation*. If this self-actualisation (being more or less narcissistic) is favoured, work becomes an *instrumental* factor, becoming goal-oriented. Likewise it can become an *expressive* element, that is aimed at bestowing value on the gratifying elements related to the world of life. As a matter of fact, *instrumental* and *expressive* are the two faces of the same coin - one which considers work as a *private* rather than a *moral factor*.

If work is a moral fact, group cohesion becomes decisive: the group is no more merely sum of the parts, but a *moral synthesis*, which overcomes individual interests, not by forgetting or underestimating them, but by entering a qualitatively different dimension. This dimension subsumes

those vital elements which *privilege that which is in the common interest*. The atmosphere is definitely conducive to maturation, an atmosphere which helps to reconsolidate ties to the family, to work, to building relationships with others. Work is not only important to assert oneself, but it is part of "a normal life made up of real things". Life is and no longer a self-centered, false, chemical 'paradise', built on the unreal pursuit of dreams of immediate self-fulfilment.

It is also noteworthy that, in recent studies on youth in our country, an image of this kind is hardly to be found. No such results can be found in the research carried out on young people's relationship with work. The really new element, in our opinion, is the idea that work becomes an **element of maturation** and a **moral fact**. This idea can be found in our interviewees' answers, but is scarcely taken into consideration by many "normal" young people, taking into account the available research on youth in Italy. The literature on this topic indicates that youth view work as a means to self-fulfilment; an expectation which, though not absent in our sample, is expressed only by the minority of our interviewees and is furthermore "enriched" by an intense ethic meaning. Here, self-fulfillment is the result of an undeniable attention to non specific interests. Nonetheless, the former guests of the community are not at all Hegelian "beautiful souls", without ties to reality, who did not understand the practicality and usefulness of work. As we will deduce analytically, many former guests think that being responsible and active members of society is critically important.

The young people of whom our sample was composed show a strong connection to the general idea that self-fulfillment is less critical than for many other young people, or rather that it is possible only through **sharing** with others. **Sharing** and **self-fulfilment** are not separate, but the former makes the latter possible. The preferred perspective considers work an essential part of the subject's evaluation of the San Patrignano Community. Work, therefore, is a critical part of this evaluation: it cannot be seen in terms of *work therapy*, "*Arbeit macht frei*", or *of an end in and of itself*. Work becomes a **moral rule** in the subjects' image of the community, not a *technical rule*. It is a *means*, not the *ends*.

The attention for *what is in common*, the development of a collective awareness, expressed through the subjects' work. In such an evaluation, the former guests express an attention for a **culture of sharing**, something which represents the **quintessence** of what they learned in the community, and evidently is itself an unwritten rule of the community.

## SAN PATRIGNANO BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

### 3

Also, in Open topic F (Question 56) "**In light of your experience, what does "privation of freedom", mean to you today ...**" we can find some references to San Patrignano. Four items (of the total 348 items corresponding to 877 answers classified and used in the elaboration of the data) express an at least partially negative evaluation either of some specific community sectors, or of the fact that one is not immediately given trust, or an absolutely negative evaluation on the community ("Returning to the community / being at San Patrignano"), or on an attitude ("Dependence on the community") which can develop in the community and be connected to the privation of freedom.

The impression left by San Patrignano, however, in regards to the items about the "privation of freedom", is closely connected to the image of liberation from drug abuse and its ritualism.

It is, furthermore, noteworthy that our interviewees' words express a particular notion of *privation of freedom* (for instance: "this is a term used by addicts as soon as they go into Sanpa - they feel like prisoners because it's the 'stuff' that's doing their reasoning for them"). Conversely, the "privation of the wrong kind of freedom" is considered as a "very right thing". Finally, a peculiar idea of freedom emerges, which is defined as 'substantial', a "substantial freedom: finally being able to handle my life". Following are some of the items on this topic:

*I did not experience it at Sanpa / at Sanpa they don't deprive you of freedom / at Sanpa it's not a privation of freedom: you acquire freedom / Being addicted to drugs / taking drugs / going back to heroin is to lose freedom / using drugs is being deprived of freedom / heroin, anguish, pettiness and malice / being drug addicts / I experienced it in full when I was a drug addict: I deprived myself of it and they deprived me of it / The anguish of having to procure yourself the stuff / being forced to procure a dose of heroin in order to be "normal" person / being left in the street to die with a syringe up your arm / if it is necessary to take away freedom in order to save a person's life, I am all for it / if one is in withdrawal, letting him go is not to give him freedom but to shrug off his problems and his demand for help with indifference*

### **3.1 Change and life image (Pieretti, from page 333 to page 336)**

The problem of change must therefore be connected to the kind of life image, the kind of *human condition* assumed. If we assume the point of view of Freudian metapsychology we must take into account the image of the human condition it proposes. In it, addiction and the misery of human condition itself are the indelible markers.

In his work Freud describes the human condition's inclination to constantly struggle between inner and outer drives. The "poor ego", as he calls it, seeks continuous mediation of both of these forces. The human condition is surely characterised by weakness, but in this understanding lies the (only?) possibility of a cognizant existence.

The void which characterises the human condition from birth is the backbone of Freudian metapsychology.

*The intrauterine existence of the human being seems to be short in comparison with that of most animals. He is sent to the world in an unfinished state. As a result, the influence of the external world upon him is intensified and an early differentiation between the ego and the id is promoted. Moreover, the dangers of external world are of greater importance, so that the value of the object which can alone protect him against them and take the place of his former intrauterine life is enormously enhanced. The biological factor, then, establishes the earliest situations of danger and **creates the need to be loved which will accompany the child through the rest of its life.***

(S. Freud, *Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety*)

Man's intrinsic weakness and his inherent "misery" is a central theme in Freudian metapsychology, as well as in psychoanalytical literature in general and, above all, in J. Lacan's



thought. So it is the "illusion" of mastering his own functions which is the reactive formation and the unavoidable reverse of the medal.

This "misery" which characterises the human condition has been authoritatively acknowledged by the most important anthropologist of this century, Arnold Gehlen:

*"Placed naked among the other animals, the man would be the most destitute being; naked, weak and needy, shy and helpless: and, at the height of his misery, without a guide in life. Born with such a weak sensibility, such uncertain capabilities, and separate and languid instincts, evidently linked to thousand needs [...]."*

**A. Gehlen, *The Man. His Nature And His Place in the World***

As we know, Gehlen's idea describes the man as a *generic being*, who specialises in not specialising, and whose principle characteristic is his inadequacy (Gehlen reposes the Herderian "incomplete being" and his ability to transform this generality in adaptation).

The idea of '*manque a être*' expressed in Lacanian psychoanalysis is, on the other hand, more oriented towards the *suffering* peculiar to the human condition and the pairing of suffering - dependence. Lacan, in fact, wrote that the physiological suffering (typical of the first months of life) of the human being "expresses the human's generic dependence on the human environment". Dependence means, however, understanding this *manque a être* which characterises the human condition. In regards to this Laborit wrote: "We know that as soon as a child's body structure develops, and he slowly comes into consciousness, realizing that he is isolated from the world around him, *that he is alone in the world*. He *feels the need to be loved* in order to feel the original well-being he felt within his I-all again. What he imagines as his well-being, what he desires, although his experience of the world is very limited and his associative areas work with a still fragile aggregate, his wish, (whatever it is) clashes with reality, in a world which does not conform to his needs. *Being alone and the realisation that the world would not conform to his expectations leads him to find a way to hide his anxiety*, to no longer feel alone. He tries to let others penetrate his dream world" .

About this point Lacan even manages to be ironic: *This book is expressly for all those men whose fate in life is to let pass the mark of a void,( that is to say all men) and also for those who are distressed by it,( that is for many of them) we would like that this book could keep its knife cutting.*

**Lacan, *Writings***

To recognise the need to be loved, to accept one's need for and dependance on affection, is an important phase in the acknowledgement of the *manque a être* and a possibility to give up the illusion of being *master of one's self*, which is the *reactive formation* of the same *manque a être*.

The information provided by our data suggests that many of our interviewees are no longer *distressed* by this lack. They have begun to break down their defence mechanisms, replacing them with a new vision of the human condition. A vision which is aware of man's intrinsic *limits* and recognizes the *need for love* as the essence of life.

A decisive part of this path is opening up to others, who are no longer seen as a reserve to make use of in a parasitic relationship. People then become an instrument with which to break down the wall of defence mechanisms which impede one from satisfying this primary need (which can be so difficult to admit). Only through others can one eradicate their *resistance to recovery*, and therefore become a decisive element in our interviewees' therapeutic path. This is an element which is not

understood at the beginning, but only during the contradictory and very difficult process towards **recovery**.

### **3.2 Drug-addiction and "false self" (pages 359 to 366)**

In the entire "open topics" section, we note a contradiction: in items such as "discovering that it was impossible to hide behind a mask" we can note both the fear of being exposed, rendered defenceless (another item talks about the fear of "trying to look inside myself"), and the sense of freedom which this condition produces. A further, significant element underlines our subjects' growing awareness of what life in the community really offers: a sense of *solidarity* and *love*.

Both these feelings are not only important for change, as we have already seen, but they are also very hard to admit and "bear": *solidarity* and *love* are synonyms of warmth and tenderness, the opposite of the "tough guy act", constructed by the subject as a *False Self* (one of the items of Open topic R reads: "It means to have recovered from drug addiction, which does not permit a deep relationship"). Among the many fears that a part of our interviewees admit upon impact with the community is the tenderness, the relationship with others and the fact of having to make it without heroin; all this perplexes the subject and destabilizes his false sense of security. "Hugging people I didn't know" and "Difficulty on my part in letting go", to quote two items, are concrete expressions of the fear of recognising one's "weakness", which the heroin used to deny and hide. Heroin, as it is widely known, is the *anaesthetic of feelings* par excellence, a powerful albeit mechanical way to reduce the world to Self, the paranoid illusion of "*mastering of one's self*". But the fear is most greatly exemplified by the item which reads: "Knowing myself". Knowing oneself means admitting one's weakness, one's vulnerability and, consequently, one's inherent human need for affection, ie: the *need to be loved* ("*which will accompany the child through the rest of its life*", as Freud wrote). Heroin appears therefore as the stratagem for "not letting yourself go", for anaesthetizing one's anxiety. "Not being able to shoot up", as we can note in the open topics items, means to overcome one's suspicion of others, to let oneself go, admitting one's *need* for affection.

Admitting one's need for affection means, according to Freudian metapsychology, to truly recognize one's human weakness, one's *manque a être*, *without, however, being distressed by it* (as J. Lacan stated). A large number of our interviewees are fully aware of this. The fear of their weakness decreases as the subjects start to overcome the idea that heroin is necessary, and at the same time their self-confidence and "will to live" increase.

Some emblematic items are absolute evidence of the relationship between one's fear of weakness - and the consequent need for heroin to anaesthetize this fear - and the capacity to accept oneself and one's life with assurance.

The following selection of items belonging to Open topic H expresses a true maturation and the acquired awareness of this relationship (in the *Part Three* of the present volume these items are grouped together with the label "second level personal elaboration").

**Open topic H** (Question 61): *If yes, how do you think you have been changed?*

*I acquired an awareness of my limits / I learned to handle my limits and my weaknesses /*

*I am happier / In my relationship with myself/*

*I've learned to be at peace with myself / I'm much more serene / I'm less anxious / I've found peace again /*

*Being happy with small daily steps / living life day by day/ facing the small things of life / knowing how to sort out problems one step at a time/ I've learned to accept life day by day / I've found myself again / I've more faith in my opportunities / more confidence in myself/ in the ability to make the most of my qualities / Desire to live / love for life / I've learned to give the right value to life / desire to face life with its highs and lows / in my interest in facing life / I've become a person who loves life / giving more value to life / I used to seek death, today I love life / I've learned to get to know myself/ in the awareness of myself/ I've learned to endure life's disappointments / I have more endurance and resistance / to be stronger in life's adversities / I am tougher / I've discovered a few sides of my character that I used to believe were much more fragile / Giving a value to things that I didn't use to give / attributing the right value to things /*

*I try to live up to my potential /I am able to accept myself more / I've learned to love myself for what I am /*

*I think about the consequences of my actions / I no longer need to use displays of malaise as a sign for help / Accepting life / I accept life for what it is /*

*Greater respect for myself / I've learned to appreciate things in life, even the small things of life /I am more adaptable to various situations in life and at work/ in my way of handling certain situations / I'm no longer frightened of my body /I'm more sincere with myself/ honest with myself/ Examining differences with more detachment and optimism /*

*I've overcome my fears /I finally feel like a man / I've learned to be a man / In respecting life / I have more respect for life / To accept the various events of life with serenity / I accept life for what it gives me /*

*Believing in what you do / Giving strength to what you have inside / In going forward even when you can't see the way out / In no longer living life as if it were a game /*

*In understanding that not everything that goes through your head can always be done at any cost /*

*I've managed to be content with living with my opportunities / I've got an awareness of what a normal life can be like / Living with ourselves and the very solitude that every man has inside him / I believe I've put wishes into focus/ in recognising what I want / In not playing games with obstacles /*

*In accepting myself as a weak man but with the will to grow / I've moved on from pessimistic individualism (which was leading me to death) to a search for interests and commitments on an intimate level / I've managed to find a direction in life by fulfilling my ideas, which used to be unclear. I didn't understand them before but I suffered their consequences / .*

*I've learned to go to the root of everything in order to understand the meaning of it and live it out responsibly / Now I feel the need to express my feelings (respect, love) to others, and to make them known /*

*I have interests and goals again / I am a person with new hopes / I have found new stimuli /*

*Values which I had lost have been reawakened in me / I've found values again/ I've begun to live the values of life again.*

"I acquired an awareness of my limits / I learned to handle my limits and my weaknesses", "I accepted myself as a weak man but with the will to grow", "Living with ourselves and the very solitude that every man has inside him", "I've managed to content myself with living just with my opportunities": all these items give account of the first part of our subjects' path. "I'm happier", "Will to live / love for life / I've learned to give the right value to life / desire to face life with its highs and lows / in my interest in facing life / I've become a person who loves life / giving more value to life / today I love life, before I sought death", give evidence of the whole path. At the same time another theme makes its appearance: the tolerance to pain, anxiety, the belief that life can be lived even in difficult times. "I've learned to cope with life's disappointments / I have more endurance and resistance / to be stronger through life's adversities / I am tougher": these items suggest that there's no longer a need for heroin to live and to limit one's anxiety, ("I've found peace again"), and it is possible to have a constructive relationship with life itself.

In these items heroin represents an escape from one's fears and anxieties. Therefore, abstinence from heroin (and all things connected) is a real deliverance, even though it may be painful and never simple, made up of trials and errors.

"A slave who is finally free", free to be and feel weak, free of the illusion of "self- mastery", free to admit that he needs affection and love, and therefore the people who embody these feelings. The items I'm talking about sound so full of suffering, so arduous that they cannot be false.

**Open topic E** (Question 55): *What does the concept of FREEDOM mean for you today?*

*Not being addicted to a substance is already a huge freedom / not to be physically and psychologically dependant on a substance / being free from addiction to drugs /*

*Not being influenced by substances which can limit my choices /*

*Not being influenced by substances which can influence my actions / acting independently of constraints caused by some substances / freedom from the influences of psychotropic substances /*

*not being subjugated by any substance / Freedom from heroin / I managed to free myself from drugs / if you mean freedom from drug addiction, it makes you feel really well / abstinence from drugs is already freedom / no longer taking drugs / no longer shooting up/ being free from a substance that I*

*was giving my life up to / no longer being addicted / the only freedom you have is that of not shooting up /*

*Being able to live all of life's experiences without having to shoot up/ making decisions about my life without being bound to the stuff / deciding what I have to do without the burden of drugs / no longer*

*being just uselessly bound to experiences with drugs / being able to decide about my life 24 hours a day without the stuff / managing your life without the hassle of drugs /*

*Not having to be subject to the (limited) autonomy and the blackmail which the "stuff" made me subject to /*

*Not being dependent on situations which you can't manage or control / not having to deal with external influences from inappropriate behaviour / living without the impositions or constrictions of drugs / not depending on individuals who you don't agree with (including drugs) /*

*A slave who is finally free / before I was a slave to drugs / not being a slave to drugs and to my unrealistic ways of thinking / having been a slave to the stuff for years / without the imprisonment of drugs / not being sucker to drugs / not being slave to any vice which can bring you down / free from slavery both moral and physical / no longer being slave to anything which had brought me to the brink*

*of desperation / a rebirth without slavery to the stuff / I don't know of a greater prison than 10 years of drugs /*

*I make the decisions, not a powder/ I decide, not a bit of powder / not leading my life in relation to a powder / not being dependent on tin foil and insulin /*

*Getting up in the morning and not always having to think of how to procure heroin for myself/ not having to think about how to procure drugs / not having to buy drugs every day because I'll be in a bad state if I don't / not having to get up with the need to shoot up / not being forced to get yourself a fix / I wasn't free before because drugs tied me /*

*Doing things that I couldn't do while on drugs / living a new kind of life which I hadn't done for many years before and which I had even forgotten about/*

*Managing to resist if you even think about drugs /*

*Thinking about everything except drugs / not thinking about the stuff anymore /*

*Not wanting what I wanted before /*

*Taking drugs is a lack of respect for your own life and for that of others /*

*No longer depending on my man who used to get me the stuff/*

*Not taking refuge behind substances which don't make you face life /*

*Freedom is not going off to get yourself a fix (or throwing yourself from a window) /*

*It means you don't have any more problems with drugs, alcohol, psychiatric medication etc. /*

*An ex-addict ought to remember that his freedom before was artificial /*

*It's incredible how the concept of freedom has been associated with drugs, when at one time my day revolved around getting money and to getting high.*

### **3.3 The life/death paradigm (page 374)**

These days a resigned attitude about drug-addiction seems to prevail in the world. In many countries experiments are carried out based on the idea that addiction is "chronic" and that it is impossible to radically interrupt the relationship with drugs. We deem it important to highlight the opinions of the former guests as shown in our research: **the overwhelming majority of our data reveals a complete refusal of heroin, of all its substitutive forms, and of the lifestyle related to its use. The values of communication, exchange and behavioural practices emerge. An understanding of life is apparent** which, as we have seen, does not distinguish between higher and lower life forms, but gives value to *life in itself*. The data is full of references to a "normal life", made of love and work, and not to a life evaluated according to personal achievement. The image of life which stands out is not centred upon any particularly gratifying events (no matter if they are instrumental or expressive, as we have seen in the first chapter of *Part Two*, where we analysed our interviewees' image of work).

Life, as defined in our data, is certainly the life of a person, but also of the biological individuality, beyond any achievement, any hierarchical evaluation of human experience. As such it is truly opposed to death.

We finally report some data about the **evaluations on the community** given by the interviewees:

**Most satisfying aspect of life at Sanpa: having learned a job**

true for 529 of the interviewees (75.6%)

false for 170 of the interviewees (24.4%)

missing data 12

**Most satisfying aspects of life at Sanpa: having found regained my peace of mind**

true for 622 of the interviewees (89.1%)

false for 76 of the interviewees (10.9%)

missing data 13

**Most satisfying aspects of life at Sanpa: having given order to my life**

true for 668 of the interviewees (94.5%)

false for 38 of the interviewees (5.5%)

missing data 4

**Most satisfying aspects of life at Sanpa: having learned a sense of responsibility**

true for 676 of the interviewees (96.0%)

false for 27 of the interviewees (4.0%)

missing data 8

**Most satisfying aspects of life at Sanpa: having made new friends**

true for 648 of the interviewees (92.6%)

false for 51 of the interviewees (7.4%)

missing data 12

**Things you would have liked to have been different at Sanpa: I would have liked less people**

True for 142 of the interviewees (20.2%)

False for 560 of the interviewees (79.8%)

missing data 9

**Things you would have liked to have been different at Sanpa: the "excessive order" annoyed me**

True for 64 of the interviewees (9.1%)

False for 636 of the interviewees (90.9%)

missing data 11

**Things you would have liked to have been different at Sanpa: I didn't want to work**

True for 48 of the interviewees (6.9%)

False for 651 of the interviewees (93.1%)

missing data 12

**Do you think you changed during your stay at Sanpa?**

Very much for 483 of the interviewees (69.7%)

A little/not much for 200 of the interviewees (28.9%)

No for 10 of the interviewees (1.4%)

missing data 18



