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## Janet's Emotions in the Whole of Human Conduct

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*As William James said, one sees what one is  
prepared to see, so too, one cannot study the  
psychology of man without guiding ideas, without  
philosophical or even religious interests.*

—Pierre Janet, *Autobiography*.

There are some everyday situations that are very difficult to account for from a psychological point of view. Imagine Paul working on his laptop in a local coffee house. He writes, but also listens to Bach through his headphones, watches the customers, and takes sips of his coffee; every couple of paragraphs, he switches his screen from his text to a chessboard, where he tries a few moves, hoping to win over a friend with whom he plays on-line. Or imagine Virginia, who goes to the cinema: she knows she soon will be traveling to meet a friend in a remote country, and feels that her life is changing; she knows that the romantic exotic story she will see on the screen will bring her somewhere else, calm her, and also help her to imagine her uncertain future.

These situations are difficult to account, for they are at the junction of phenomenon that psychologists have come to examine as distinct and independent. From a first viewpoint, one might say that these vignettes convoke dynamics and entities that belong to the sociocultural sphere: internet-chess games or movies are the products of a place and a time in history; they carry shared meanings, are public, and reflect widespread networks of representations. These two situations present us with specific social frames that have their own rules (coffee house, cinemas) or with interpersonal relationships (distant friends, close consumers). They finally illustrate intrapsychical, subjective, and partly non- or un-conscious dynamics: Paul's taste for coffee and Bach, and Virginia's personal version

of the movie she will see, at specific moments of their lives. Hence, these vignettes allow us to see experiences that—thanks to the mediation of symbolic objects—are at the junction of the cultural, social, public, and shared and the individual, private, internal, and unique. From a second viewpoint, these two vignettes can be said to illustrate conduct that intermesh dynamics of feeling, perceiving, doing, and thinking.

In other words, to understand everyday interactions within our symbolic worlds, we need a psychological theory that can account for the embeddedness of the sociocultural and the subjective, as well as the cognitive and emotional aspects, of human experience. We need a form of holistic understanding of human conduct.

The French psychologist Pierre Janet (1859-1947) constructed a complex model of human conduct seen as a whole, where emotions play a central role. I will argue that Janet's holistic model can illuminate current issues in psychology.

In what follows, I will thus try to present this model, which has been largely ignored in non-clinical psychology until recently (see Meyerson, 1947; Sjövall, 1967; Ellenberger 1967; Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2000 for various accounts). I will first locate Janet's work, and highlight its proximity and differences with other *Ganzheit* approaches (Diriwächter, 2003b). I will then give the main lines of his theory: first, the hierarchy of conduct and the principle of tension and, second, the question of the regulation of emotions, and their semiotic component.<sup>3</sup> On this basis, I will finally apply this model to a modern, everyday cultural experience—Lily goes to the cinema. This will, I hope, show the relevance of such a holistic model for contemporary analysis.

### An Informed Ambition

At the turn of the twentieth century, European scientists were observing with some perplexity the abundant, but extremely parcellized psychology just emerging in new American laboratories (Schelgel, 1904; Herbert, 1904; Delabarre, 1894). On their side, scientists from France, Germany, and Austria were trying to offer integrative views of human behavior in its situated complexity (Diriwächter, 2003; 2003c; 2004).

Pierre Janet had a double ambition in that context. First, he wanted to offer a unifying vocabulary for the endless observations accumulated by psychologists. Second, he aimed at proposing an integrative understanding of human conduct as a whole (for example 1926: 204).

His enterprise can be seen as based on three pillars. First, Pierre Janet's double training as a philosopher and a medical doctor brought him to define the exact scope of a psychological enterprise: it should avoid, on one side, the danger of becoming a physiology, and, on the other side, that of being a philosophy. Second, Janet's professional positions gave him a privileged access to the ongoing scientific production. Chair of experimental psychology at the

College de France, researcher at *La Salpêtrière* in Paris, he participated to major international meetings, and was invited for lectures all around the world.<sup>4</sup> As co-creator and director of the *Journal de Psychologie Normale et Pathologique*, which was abundantly reviewing French, Austrian, German, American, and British psychology, he translated original foreign contributions, which kept him informed of the ongoing researches. Additionally, Janet was an attentive reader of the works in progress of Piaget,<sup>5</sup> Durkheim, and Levy-Brühl. The third pillar of Janet's work was his clinical work at *la Salpêtrière*, where he took care of hysterics, neurasthenics, and psychotics. He collected numerous case studies, did experiments with patients, and followed a few of them over the years, thus creating longitudinal data.<sup>6</sup> Janet's writings are based on his own observations in the hospitals and in everyday situations, with adults and children, and on existing ethological and anthropological studies. He published extensively and systematically on most aspects of human psychology, including the unconscious (in parallel to Freud) and the development of children's thinking (before Piaget).

Janet's project of unifying psychology is not meant to be a top-down process; a unified theory will, on the contrary, grow through a bottom-up movement: accumulated data is grouped and common categories eventually emerge. Formulations are at times close to common sense, probably as a consequence of Janet's attempt to simplify and unify the descriptive vocabulary; his theoretical notions also evolve through time. I will thus have to translate some of Janet's propositions and limit my reading to one state of the evolution of his changing model.<sup>7</sup>

### French Holism

In France, psychology was closely linked to psychiatry and psychopathology. These sciences were strongly anti-idealist in a tradition going from Maine de Biran to Taine. They identified the volitional and embodied components of thoughts, as well as their automatic, elaborated, or creative aspects (Skövall, 1967). At the same time, German Gestalt and *Ganzheit* psychologists developed their approaches against "elementists" schools. In the line opened by Wundt, they were attentive to preserve the totality of an experience (*Erlebnisganzheit*, Diriwächter, 2003; 2003c; 2004).

As a French scientist, Janet started identifying subparts of human conduct. Yet his unifying project brought him to fix the *conduct* as unity of analysis for his psychological inquiry. A *conduct* can be seen as an ever-changing composite of embodied emotions, thoughts, and actions. This unity of analysis reassembles phenomenon ranging from perception and automatic behavior, to moral and religious ones. A *conduct*, thus, seems to approach the more holistic notions searched by the Germanic traditions.

Janet's studies on conduct and the work of the *Ganzheit*-psychologists, as presented by Diriwächter (2003; 2003b; 2003c; 2004), appear to overlap on

many points: the notion of *act of synthesis*, the centrality of *emotions*, and a *developmental* orientation. They diverge on the place given to *sociocultural* dimensions and to *meanings* in the psychological enquiry.

The *act of creative synthesis* notion, developed by Wundt and redefined by his followers, plays a central role in Janet's theory. Wundt gave two meanings to the *creative synthesis*. It first designates the reverse operation to that of *analysis*, as psychologists practice it. It also means the emergence of a unitary experience out of a constellation of lower processes. Applied to empirical cases, the notion can show how a myriad of partial impressions can melt into the perception of a spatial form (Diriwächter, 2003b; 2004). *Ganzheit*-psychologists, such as Volkelt, refused the summative quality of this approach where the whole seems to be an aggregation of parts. They preferred to see synthesis as a transformation of relationships, or of totalities in other totalities. They also showed that Wundt's *creative synthesis* did not explain the move from elementary processes to higher human conducts (Diriwächter, 2004).

Without explicit reference to these authors and issues, Janet defined *acts of synthesis* in a non-summative way, which accounts for the linking of process of various complexities. Janet proposed a major division between two types of conducts. *Actions* are reactions to things as they appear within one's interaction with the world; *intelligence* (thought) is made out of representations of these conducts. *Acts of synthesis* belong to the latter and make these superior to the former, for what

often allows one to recognize that a state is superior to another one is what one could call, the "grasp of consciousness" of the psychological operation. (1926: 209)

In effect, an *act of synthesis* contains, groups, and systematizes other acts; it enables the emergence of a new unified conduct, which "cannot necessarily be analyzed in its parts."<sup>8</sup>

*Act of synthesis* is a key concept for a complex, hierarchical theory of human conducts. Higher-level conducts emerge through the "coup de force" of an *act of synthesis*. Conducts themselves can be structured composites of various levels of complexity. Consistently with this model, Janet's empirical observations are descriptions of conducts that include embodied actions, perceptions, thoughts, and emotions constantly moving and merging from one state to another and from one degree of complexity to another one.

Similarly to the centrality of *Gemüt* in experience defined by Krueger (Diriwächter, 2003b), Janet saw emotional qualities at the core of conducts. *Ganzheit*-psychologists retain, after Wundt, that emotions can be distinguished according to their depth: love or religious faith are "deep" emotions. For Janet, love and faith are also to be separated from other emotions. Yet, it is not because of their "depth," it is on the basis of their place in the hierarchy of conducts. Love and faith are extremely social in nature (faith depends on

institutions, shared meanings, social regulations, etc.) (Janet, 1935: 98). As they are completed by higher-level regulatory principles (e.g., “becoming a better person”), they can have an orientation power for people (e.g., a person would thus avoid committing “bad” conducts). They can be constitutive of people’s identity and confer unity to their conducts. Thus, as some *Ganzheit*-psychologists would agree, emotions might be experienced as qualities of the world (e.g., poor people appear as “charity inspiring”) and confer orientation to a person’s development.

In effect, like Wundt in his *Völkerpsychologie*, Janet wanted to offer a developmental psychology. On the one hand, drawing on historical comparisons, he worked with the hypothesis of a similarity between human phylogenesis and ontogenesis. On the other hand, when looking at individual cases, Janet always took the developmental story of a person in account, within his or her historical and societal location, as *Ganzheit*-psychologists promoted (Diriwächter, 2003b).

Contrary to Wundt, Janet never tried to account for social or historical processes, or to analyze the development of communities. He always kept the person’s human conduct as unit of analysis. The social, the cultural, and the symbolic became relevant for him only because they are part of the genesis of a person’s conduct. It is, thus, through a person’s social and located conduct that the community as a whole operates and has to be studied.

Finally, Janet was adamant about keeping psychological processes, such as meaning-constructions, at the heart of his enquiry; it is on this ground that he distanced himself from the *Gestalt*-psychologists. Indeed, their emphasis on the parallelism between the organization of perception and the brain was, for Janet, missing the object of psychology—meaning in the whole of conducts (Janet, 1935: 232-256).

In sum, Janet addresses most of the issues raised by the promoters of a *Genetic Ganzheitspsychologie* as described by Wellek (1950, in Diriwächter 2003b)<sup>9</sup>: holism, as an attempt to take in account all the aspects of human experience in a psychic totality; the structured nature of conduct; the centrality of emotions in these totalities; and their developmental nature. Yet, in Janet’s holistic project, emphasis is put on the person’s conduct as constrained, constituted, and mediated by social and historical forces; social forces are not examined by themselves.

### A Hierarchy of Conducts

Janet’s psychology is a dynamic hierarchy of conducts; thanks to *acts of synthesis*, consciousness emerges “like a flame burning out of these regulations growing out of action” (Janet, 1926/2003: 116).<sup>10</sup>

In his attempt to offer a systematic and genetic model of human action, Janet proposed a tripartite hierarchical organization.<sup>11</sup> The thresholds between three levels of conducts are synthetic acts of various degrees of complexity.

*Inferior conducts* are the most “animal” of human’s actions. They are directly caused by or linked to external stimulations: reflex answers, perceptive acts, and elementary social acts, but also basic operation of thought.

Among such basic elementary operations of thought, Janet identified *relational acts* (1936). Janet’s paradigmatic example is the conduct of the “apples in the basket”: to comprehend apples in a basket, a composite of the perception of the apples *and* a perception of the basket are required. That is, there is “the act of synthesis of two perceptive conducts” (1926: 217), hence, the conduct includes a *relation*. These first relational conducts always suppose an interaction with the world: these are seen *in* the world, not in one’s mind. Janet described examples of what we might call relations of countenance (“this in that”) and of transformation (“if I pull the drawer, it will be open”) and the first conducts implying signs, that is, mediated actions (“this stands for that”).

Relational acts enable the emergence of language, seen as relations between conducts and words. Words can affect the world, contain, and transform. At this level, relational acts also enable memory—an action can be done in relation to another absent conduct. Hence, a sentinel is doing an inferior conduct—keeping watch—yet it requires the relational act of memory of linking his present watching with the memory of a past attack. For Janet, the emergence of language and memory was what distinguished human from animal conduct. Memory and language will enable the next levels of conducts: operations of thoughts.

*Middle conducts* are independent from the external world. Their objects are not the world or others, but previous thoughts, beliefs, or words. Here, relational acts occur between representations. For Janet, inner thoughts result from the interiorization of social conducts. In human genesis, there is a progression that goes from talking aloud to oneself, to talking in a low tone, to internal speech—out of which emerges thought (this idea has later been developed by Vygotsky).

Relations between thinking and external reality take the form of *beliefs* and *will*. Will is a thought that is immediately translated into conduct; belief is a thought that sees its realization indefinitely postponed. At this level emerge also conducts of *reflection*. These require the suspension of action that is doubt and a delaying of satisfaction. Reflection can thus take the form of a *decision*, an internal deliberation between various tendencies. These can lead to relations between thoughts and actions, such as beliefs or will, or to new synthetic acts between thoughts.

*Higher conducts* include reflective acts about thoughts. Reflective conducts can take the form of an evaluation of the consequences of tendencies or of the origins of these: They imply the mobilization of memories and the explorations of possible futures.

*Regulative acts* belong to this level of higher conducts. Regulative acts can sustain people’s commitment into unpleasant or non-gratifying conducts and orient, and canalize their action. Morality, responsibility, long-standing com-

mitment, goals, and expectations are regulative acts. They appear as inherently social. When people adopt them to regulate their conducts, those in turn change them. People's various conducts can become oriented towards one goal, their identity acquires unity, and the world appears to them as consistent and filled with truth.

Janet's hierarchical organization of conducts is not strictly a stage theory.<sup>12</sup> The three types of conducts coexist in various proportions in everyone. The hierarchical model, rather, offers a tool to analyze most everyday behaviors as well as cases of psychopathology observed by Janet.

Everyday irrationalities and psychopathology can be seen as anomalies of relational acts made between perceptions of the world (inferior conducts) and thoughts (beliefs or will, which are middle conducts) or a lack of acts of synthesis. Hence, an alcoholic who makes the decision not to drink anymore and is at the bar next hour, is a man who has had a reflection (internal deliberation) that has not been followed by the related action; it can be seen as a belief, but mostly it lacks long-term tendencies and regulating functions.

Additionally, in his attempt to account for everyday and clinical conducts, Janet developed a *model of tension* within the hierarchical model. Every action needs a certain strength to be achieved; the "ability to concentrate and the number of phenomena that one can hold in consciousness define the psychological tension one is capable of at that moment" (Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2000, p.106).

The higher in the hierarchy of conduct an action is, the stronger the psychological tension has to be, and the more important will be the person's expense of energy. Due to a lack of tension, neurasthenic, or epileptic persons often accomplish acts that seem normal but that lack goal directedness.

Tension and strength vary according to people's particular life events, to their fatigue, or to strong emotions; they also vary from person to person. However, external means can sustain, reinforce, or guide a tension. On one side, interpersonal relationships can support tension: a hypnotist guides his patient's tension and enables her to effectuate a psychological synthesis; the encouraging director of a factory can "drain" his workers' engagement into work and support their tension. On the other side, higher forms of conducts do precisely support such tension. As we have seen, one's commitment to moral, religious, or professional ideals has unifying virtues and can sustain long-term efforts. It appears that semiotic means, such as socially shared principles, sustain and guide the tension required for a person to engage into various middle- and low-level conducts beyond fatigue or emotional variation.

### Composites of Emotions

Janet was interested in everyday anomalies, which he saw as results of inadequate relational acts. But how can such inadequate relations occur? This is

where feelings, *les sentiments* in French, enter the hierarchy of conducts: strong feelings are indeed responsible for unrealistic or misleading relations or the absence of required acts of synthesis. The role of emotions in the hierarchical model thus has to be understood.

Emotions are difficult to observe as conducts. Janet defined the problem following Ribot, who was reading Wundt, Külpe, and Stumpf. Emotions are not actions directed toward the world or the others. They rather seem to be a tonality or a quality that does not change action (1928: 11). Contrary to representations of things or objects that can be discussed in reference to the world, they seem to be part of people's inner life, and are idiosyncratic and difficult to share. Hence, it is impossible for two persons to agree on what the feeling of a shared supper has been when one felt it as a joyful meal and the other, a sad one. How then do we to define emotions within a psychology of conducts? Janet defined two criteria for theorizing emotions.

First, a good theory of emotions needs to account for what is specifically psychological, that is, the complexity of a human conduct.

The psychological fact is neither spiritual, nor corporal; it occurs in the human being as a whole, since it is nothing but the conduct of that human being, taken as a whole. (1928: 36)

Janet rejected mentalistic approaches to feelings—emotions are ideas—as well as “peripheric” theories, which (in the legacy of James, 1884) saw emotions as the result of organic affection. Both consider feelings as consequences and overlook their complexity. Janet felt closer to what he calls the “American pragmatists” (he quoted among others G. Stanley Hall, John Dewey, David Irons, and HN Gardiner) and German intellectualists (after Arthur Schopenhauer and Baruch Spinoza).<sup>13</sup> The first ones reintroduce the course of actions as components of emotions; the second, the course of representations and their mutual relations as part of emotions. The two approaches, hence, locate emotions at two of the levels of Janet's hierarchy of conducts.

Second, a theory of emotions needs to account for empirical cases: usual emotions, as well as the inexplicable clinical cases of emptiness or absence of feelings.

Janet reported a patient's description of a case of emptiness:

It is a state where one does not feel, does not think, does not represent what one does or what one says. One does whatever with a total indifference, as if one wouldn't be concerned. . . . I am in the emptiness, I am a body without soul, when I am somewhere it is as if I wouldn't be there, if I speak about something, as if I would never have seen it . . . I see without seeing, I am a blind who sees. (1928: 69)

Creating a theory of emotions that can be integrated in his hierarchy of conducts and that satisfies this double constraint, Janet distinguished emotions linked to *primary actions* from emotions linked to *secondary actions*.

*Primary* actions are all the conducts that are produced as reactions to the world—automatic actions, obedience, routines, verbal answers, or memories. These include bodily actions as well as forms of language or thoughts; they can also be reflective, as long as they are directly stimulated by an encounter with a person or an event located in the world.

*Secondary* actions are of the same type as primary ones (thoughts, expressions, behavior), but they follow, or are *caused by primary actions* (1928: 122). These are thoughts about thoughts, inner attitudes towards primary actions, tensions toward the past or the future, spontaneous conducts, productions of new sentences, actions, grasps of consciousness, etc. In terms of emotional conduct, a person “does not contemplate his or her perception like one contemplates a spectacle,” but adds to that numerous secondary actions:

Sentimental regulation seems to be essentially made out of the addition of secondary actions which, by their presence, modify primary actions, increase or diminish them, or orient them in various ways. (Janet, 1935: 103-104)

The distinction between primary and secondary actions does not strictly overlap the previous hierarchical division. Any given action can be either primary or secondary according to where its impulse is located. It does not correspond to the division between automatic versus synthetic acts; a person in an emptiness state can be asked to recall his or her last trip to Oxford, and this can be told with the right details, clarity, and humor even if it is for the first time. As a story told the first time, it is not an automatic act; yet the person would not have initiated a memorization by himself; it occurs, because another person stimulates it; it is thus a primary conduct.

The distinction between primary and secondary conducts is enough to account for states of emptiness that were resisting to previous theories of emotions. A mother sees her son climbing a chair and being in disequilibrium; and she does not react to prevent his fall. She would react if ordered by Janet—and her act would be a primary action. Her lack of spontaneous action is not necessarily due to a lack of fear or love, but due to her lack of secondary thoughts (what she knows about falling, what might happen, what would be the consequences, what the child means to her, etc.). States of emptiness can be thus explained as states in which the secondary actions are absent.

If the distinction between primary and secondary emotional conduct can account for difficult clinical cases, it can *a fortiori* account for normal emotions:

If the feeling of emptiness and the state of emptiness depend on the suppression of thousands of secondary actions, of thousands of echoes and harmonics that normally go along with normal actions, it is quite likely that the opposite phenomenon, the development of secondary actions, must play a role in normal feelings. (Janet 1928: 126)

Janet explained most emotional behavior in terms of combinations of primary and secondary actions in the hierarchy of conducts.

*Basic feelings* are primary conducts, provoked by external or internal conditions that constrain or facilitate physical and mental conducts. Effort, tiredness, sadness, and happiness are such basic feelings. They can involve specific and shared patterns of conducts that are easy to identify and can be reflectively known as *feelings*. Emotions “choc” are less clearly definable; they come from brutal modification within one’s environment and can disorganize thought (Sjövall, 1967: 56).

As primary conducts, emotional phenomena are provoked by conditions affecting one’s possibility of actions; these might be soon objects of reflections, or awake secondary conducts that modify the initial conduct. Sadness in memory is less sad than real sadness; emotions that are expressed and are about unrealities have a more remote, less precise impact; or the reflective awareness that one’s fantasy is not real and reduces the strength of its feelings.

In fact, the relations created around emotional conducts quickly expand, and emotional conducts appear as complex ones. The complexity of emotions comes from their location in time and in the social world, as well as from the fact that they are composites of inferior, middle, and high level conducts. An emotion occurs to a person in a time and place. At this point, the person is engaged in conducts linked to his or her perception of the situation, which include physiological states, thoughts, and emotions. These can immediately trigger secondary thoughts, such as memories of similar situations, thoughts about its cause, or memories of situations involving similar emotions. These thoughts and memories might provoke other physiological reactions and actions. The person will have to interpret them as they appear at this time and place, given his or her current future orientation and their emotional correlates. The emotional state emerges out of this complex set of relations. Hence, on a happy day, a woman might see the scarf of a dear friend and feel her heart beat—which would remind her of the intense moment of the gift of the scarf and its related love feelings; that would be reinterpreted in the present moment, that includes the knowledge that this friend will not come back. A form of regret finally emerges out of this present sadness and past happiness.

A felt emotion appears to emerge as a result (not necessarily a reflective synthesis) of a vast composite of modified basic feelings, perceptions, mental conducts, memories, internalized social regulation, that have personal and shared meanings and prolongations in the social and symbolic world.

### **Semiotic Regulations of Emotions**

Janet was not so much interested in categories of emotions than in the processes in which these are involved—*regulation* processes (Janet, 1928; 1935). The regulations are bi-directional; on the one hand, emotions modify one’s conducts at various levels, perceptions, actions, and thoughts. Basic emotions, such as fatigue or sadness, regulate conducts as well as complex emotions that result from internalized pattern of behavior. On the other hand, generalizations

of conducts, reflective thoughts, and secondary emotions regulate emotional experiences and, thus, the whole conduct.

A closer look to these complex and looping emotional regulations will highlight their social, cultural, and symbolic nature and thus, the social and cultural nature of conducts.

First of all, life-preserving instincts such as self-love and love for others can be seen as having a social origin. Hence, some feelings are to actions what a person's warnings are to a child's action (1935: 101). A trace of this external origin of regulation can be observed in Janet's patient who mumbles to herself, with a particular voice: "you are thirsty, so drink a bit"—and thus takes care of herself as another would do. On the contrary, the sudden absence of a person assuring such an external regulation can bring the abandoned person to self-hatred (Janet, 1926).

Then, a person's emotional regulations can be expressed so as to be readable by others and shared with them. Janet, thus, identified various semiotic forms that mediate relationships and that enable someone to awake in someone else a similar thought, intention, or action (Janet, 1936).

Language is one semiotic way of sharing feelings. Conscious feelings can be the objects of deliberate expressions to others, with the aim of touching or moving them. Yet, language is imprecise; it is more efficient to formulate actions that are already shared than to catch internal regulations. It is also often socially marked in a way that renders personal uses difficult. But this difficulty should not be overlooked. Janet described how his patients develop complex metaphors when trying to express their feelings. These attempts have their function: numerous attempts of expressing a feeling through various metaphors might contribute to specifying a feeling and to transform it (Janet, 1926).

Hence, the manipulation of semiotic means—even in a clumsy "trial-and-error" manner—is part of the person's work of grasping his or her emotions and contributes to their reflective regulation. This point is particularly clear in Janet's (1935) presentation of play as a way through which a person can transform his or her emotional state. Against cathartic models of play, he observes how a child, exhausted after a school day, might recover all her energy after half an hour of play (1928, 1935).<sup>14</sup>

On a social level, art offers other semiotic mediations of emotions. Discussing the work of artists and the reception of art, Janet (1936) saw symbols as enabling relational acts between emotions. The poet's symbolic work allows the reader to establish new relations between memories, images, and emotions and to construct a new composite that enables him to feel the emotion intended by the artist. Thus, semiotic means in general, and not only language, participates to personal and social regulations of emotions.

Through semiotic mediations, the social and the personal become deeply intermeshed and mutually constitutive—as Janet showed in his analysis of the role of beliefs in the regulation of emotions. Janet defined *beliefs* as forms of

representations, without necessary link to the real, which can be socially shared. Beliefs triggered as secondary conducts modify people's primary actions and thus their perception. It thus transforms emotions themselves:

Objects, people, situations become interesting or insignificant, real or unreal, sacrilege, dangerous, ugly, amoral, catastrophic or flattering, advantageous, superb, etc. This coloration that the feelings confers to things becomes one of the most important component of beliefs. (Janet, 1927/2001: 111-112)

Emotions coupled with beliefs that have a necessary interpersonal, social, or symbolic dimension modify a person and his or her world. In effect, on the one hand, feelings can become objectified and perceived as being characteristics of the world—as when one says: “everything in this house is ignoble, ugly and dirty; everything is sad and lugubrious” (Janet, 1928b: 297). On the other hand, feelings that are not attributed to external objects become parts of the intimacy of the person.

Finally, the social domain enters in the regulation of emotions at a higher level of generalization. Beliefs can themselves be objects of reflection. This is where they become general regulating ideas, such as the idea of the difficulty of work, success, or luxury. These higher-level socially shared semiotic means regulate both beliefs and emotions.

At the higher levels, “rational” and “experimental” beliefs—that is, regulations that come from the socially produced science—finally replace and suppress strong personal feelings. In effect, explains Janet, rational and experimental conducts have to be undertaken by all human beings in the same way, and a scientist has to make abstraction of his feelings. Hence, laws such as rules of religion, moral, or logic can finally replace emotions as regulatory principles (Janet, 1928: 158).

The dynamic and hierarchical nature of emotional conducts leads logically to an interactive developmental understanding of conducts. Janet indicated microgenetic as well as ontogenetic development.

Firstly, emotional composites can be generalized within a person, either applying to a wide range of situations, or as automatic answers. Secondly, as a given person regulates some situations in a certain way, others with whom he or she interacts might react in a constant way; she or he would then adjust her or himself to the others' reactions. Social emotional regulations, thus, are part of the construction of one's personality. Third, conducts change with age: older persons are, for Janet, involved in more generalized conducts and spend less time in the torments of primary feelings.

To summarize, Janet saw emotions as including modifications of the perceptual systems and of the inner organic state, but also behavioral reactions, related memories and thoughts, and situational and personal constraints. In Janet's definition of emotions in the whole of conducts, dynamics of emotions can occur at four levels: one primary layer of basic feelings (positive or nega-

tive, with or without activation) can be seen as the embodied consequences of modifications of the conditions of the conduct; second, these can be apprehended mentally; third, these first modifications evoke secondary conducts, memories, echoes of other situations, and their social and cultural prolongations and their emotional tonalities; fourth, these composites can be reflectively identified and synthesized—as a complex emotion, as part of one's regulation or reorientation of actions, thoughts, and emotions. Each of these levels can be regulated by semiotic mediations, as well as modify the whole of the conduct.

With this centrality of emotions in conducts and its developmental orientation, Janet's theory of emotions corresponds to the *Ganzheits* agenda. However, in contrast, Pierre Janet refuses to see the social and the cultural as abstract entities. He rather examines these as constitutive of conducts from *within*, through internalized patterns of conducts and semiotic regulations. These characteristics—developmental and semiotic orientation, centrality of emotions, complex conducts—are what might turn Janet's model into a resource to address current problems in psychology.

### Whole Conducts Today

Pierre Janet had a double agenda—reunifying the diversity of psychological research and giving a model of human conduct as a whole. His model has not been retained by psychology as a unifying frame, not even in the limits of researches on emotions. That field has indeed been for a long time concentrated on the division and the relation between emotion and cognition (Piaget, 1954; 1964; Oatley, 2001; Kahneman, 2003; Schnall & Laird, 2003; Laird, 2007); mainstream psychologists are currently trying to define ways to unify their field and empirical data. Although they come to propose hierarchies of conducts (Izard, 1993) and distinctions between primary and secondary emotions (Lambie & Marcel, 2002; Russell, 2003), they do not mention Janet and mostly ignore that these issues have been addressed by him and others in the past.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, cultural psychology and theories of action are currently engaged in a work of defining ways of accounting for complex phenomena, hence, rejoining Janet's second objective. In that respect, I want to examine how Janet's hierarchical model, his theory of emotions, and his developmental and semiotic orientation can contribute to our understanding of everyday cultural experiences.

As mentioned in my introduction, one of the challenges of psychological inquiry today is to account for people's everyday interactions with cultural objects in their symbolically saturated environments. Developing children do not only interact with elders and peers; they spend increasing time interacting with virtual worlds, through complicated machines, religious participations, and various cultural experiences ranging from listening to downloaded music, to visiting interactive museums, reading novels, and seeing 3-D movies. These cultural experiences trigger complex dynamics of perceiving, feeling, understanding, and interpreting.<sup>16</sup>

Given their importance in everyday life, cultural experiences necessarily participate to the development of the person and the making of individual and shared meanings. We thus need a more holistic understanding of cultural experiences. Can Janet's model help us to frame these phenomena?

As Janet proposed, one criterion to evaluate a theory is to test its power to account for empirical facts. I will thus apply Janet's model of complex conducts and emotions to an empirical vignette.<sup>17</sup>

\* \* \*

At the time she was interviewed, Lily was in a period of uncertainty during which she had to decide what to do the following year—whether to study or not, whether to work, in which country to live, etc. Asked whether she had seen any noticeable movie during that period, she answered<sup>18</sup>:

Something is a movie I watched, about—and it is recent, it must have been the first days of September, I think it was called *After-life*—it is a Japanese movie . . . they end up.. it is like an immigration office, and they have to pick up a memory. . . and it is all about the selection process . . . So you have young people, you have old people, and all kind of people. And it is all about this process, you know, about going, choosing, and being able or not able to choose, and these people who are unable to choose, xx so they are stuck there, for centuries. I always think of that—I think about that often for a reason or another. I've thought about it the other day, just a couple of days ago—but I can't remember xxx. It is interesting, because when I watched that movie, I didn't think automatically what would I choose. But the people I was watching the movie with, just asked me xxxx—what would I choose, I really don't know—it would be sort of logical, but I didn't ask myself xxx . . . I think about [this example] because—when death comes in memory . . . xx I think about it when I think about sorts of life . . . about relative happiness, and the difference between being content, and not, or having lots of energy, or not much energy. I mean all these things I have been thinking for a long time, it is a schedule for life. So every time these things come out, and because I am thinking about the future quite a lot right now, and about people, whether they are staying my life or not staying in my life. xxx Because how people choose their memories, has a lot to do with how people choose their lives.

Applying Janet's hierarchical model, let me identify some involved dynamics of emotional regulation and of semiotic mediation. This movie belongs to "independent cinema"; for Lily to see it with her friends is a social conduct, guided by symbolic codes, and expressing some personal choices. It is seen with friends—and is, thus, part of the regulation of these relationships. It had a "strong" effect on Lily during watching. It was, for one part, an emotion "choc"—but created in a non-real space, that is, with the gratuity offered by play. In that space, Lily engaged in a perceptual suite of conducts, which have their emotional impact, and which might awaken secondary conducts.

In effect, the story of *After-life* is located in a strange school; characters wear brown uniforms, furniture is metallic and anonymous, and the ambiance

is dusty and faded. We see offices in which young and old people sit in front of what appears to be civil servants, trying to answer their difficult questions—they have to choose something. Slowly, through the strangeness of the dialogues, thinking about the title, we understand what it is about, and why these persons seem to have such difficulty answering. These people are dead and have been asked to choose their best memories. The civil servants will recreate it for them, and people will be sent to stay within that memory for all eternity.

We can reasonably think that Lily, perceiving such images and experiencing various bodily and physiological changes by having memories triggered by various cues, was experiencing a specific emotional state (inferior conducts). The semiotic organization of the movie—in which the viewer perceives changing colors, décor, childhood, and dream-like qualities—implies various relational acts. These might awake memories as secondary emotions with their own qualities.

After having seen the movie, Lily's friends pushed her to reflect upon her own experiences; this offered a social "drain," an external regulation sustaining the tension to operate synthetic acts on her experience. This led her to try to express what the movie had been for her; that is, she used language and its approximations, both to articulate and modify her own emotions and thoughts (inferior and higher conducts), and to offer them in social exchange (middle conducts). During these attempts, she might have reflected upon these relations themselves and realized that the embarrassment, confusion, incertitude of the characters might have captured and reflected quite precisely her own apprehensions—having to choose where and what to study.

But the movie adds something more to her questions. It frames issues of choices in terms of "afterlife." They are formulated not only as "what do I want," but elevated in terms of "what is a good life," that is, at the level of values and commitments (higher conducts). Thanks to the relation Lily creates between the film and her life through "choosing one's memories is choosing one's life," Lily can consider her fears, thoughts, and future projects in terms of these higher-level values. Now, Lily adopts a canalized, unified reading of her thoughts and fears: questions of choices of studies (middle conducts) are solved within the boundaries fixed by higher principles, and they become oriented towards an aim—to have a good life. Primary emotional states are apprehended through synthetic acts; these are named "contentment" and "low energy." Then, thanks to higher regulatory principles, Lily's life gets a unity and a goal orientation: the past memories—those of sadness—are turned into a future where one can be content and have energy. Finally, often recalling that movie, Lily appeared to have internalized its high-level regulatory support.

For a while, then, Lily uses that movie as a complex symbolic resource (Zitoun et al., 2003; Zitoun, 2006; 2007) that allows her to confer some unity and orientation to the diversity of her changing experience, and thus, to change her world.

\* \* \*

Through this brief analysis, I have sketched one way to use Janet's theoretical tools to analyze the complexity and mutability of contemporary cultural experiences.

### A Future for Conducts as a Whole?

As it was the case a century ago, psychology is specialized in investigating infinities of sub-aspects of human behavior. As a consequence, it becomes very difficult to unify this knowledge in order to understand everyday situations; these then appear redoubtably complex.

To account for persons' thinking, feeling, and doing in changing, multiple, real, and virtual symbolic networks, holistic theoretical models are required. The model proposed by Janet enables one to analyze the complexity of human conduct without reducing it to either of its aspects—mental or social, abstract or embodied—while also showing its constant evolution. The semiotic orientation of the model confers to it a surprising modernity; and Janet's exploration of a wide range of themes—fiction, pathology, or everyday life—have shown the flexibility of a model open to evolution through the confrontation with new case studies. Thus, Janet's hierarchy of conducts might help us to a more sounded understanding of the complexities of everyday situations.

### Notes

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2. Contact address: Institut de psychologie et éducation, FLSH, Université de Neuchâtel, Louis Agassiz, CH-2000 Neuchâtel, Switzerland. Email: Tania.zittoun@unine.ch
3. I will ignore other aspects of his work—his theory of the unconscious in link with Freud, as well as his therapeutic propositions. About their relevance for modern therapeutic of trauma, see van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1989.
4. He seems to have been the guest of two series of lectures at Clark University in 1904 and 1906, before Freud (Koelsch, 1984; unconfirmed information).
5. Examining the genesis of symbolic thinking and language, Janet (1934a, 1934b) mentions the promising work of the young Piaget. He also never fails to add that it would be better if the observed children would talk less!
6. He indicates in his autobiographical notes that his clinical observations constitute his most important work (1930). Here, I cannot do justice to this work.
7. See Valsiner and van der Veer (2000) for a presentation following the historical evolution of the work.
8. "Not necessarily be analyzed" is Janet's formulation; it, thus, prudently refuses to decide between Wundt's and Volkelt's propositions.

9. This parallelism cannot be strictly explained. It is not clear how much Janet had first-hand access to German literature. Of course, Janet knew German authors (such as Külpe, Stumpf, or Wundt) through Ribot's writing (Janet, 1928). He had access to the papers of authors that have been translated for the *Journal de Psychologie* and other French and English journals (for instance, Külpe, 1910), and he met some German authors at international symposiums, such as the Wittenberg symposiums on emotions (Reymert, 1928). He included German works in his 1929 review of theories of emotions and devoted a chapter to discuss Gestalt theory (1935: 232-256). Janet pointed out the fact that German psychologists did not sufficiently distinguish between a *Gestalt* "in the world" and a *Gestalt* as perceived by an observer. Janet also considered that the definition of *form* was too loose. It applied to a too-wide range of situations (class of objects, concepts) and was therefore imprecise, hiding, for example, that the motive-ground relation examined by Gestalt authors is just a sub-case of container-content relationships. To show the weakness of the notion of form, Janet gave an example: the "form" of a plum needs also the "matter" of a plum to be recognized as a plum; matter and form are part of the "scheme of the plum." The "conduct of the plum" includes the apprehension of matter, form, and notion that must have been mentally put in relation. One would not try eating a plum in paper (form, not matter); and one knows that plum marmalade is not a plum (matter, not form). Therefore, *Gestalts* are not enough to account for conduct. For a discussion of Janet's reading of Gestalt theory, see Sjövall 1967: 68-69. Janet's explicit theoretical affiliations go, rather, to Henri Bergson (Janet, 1935, 1936), William James (with whom he has kept a correspondence over the years), John Dewey, and James Baldwin. It is probably more on the basis of American pragmatism that Janet develops his dynamic theory of emotions as central and in constant evolution and rearrangement. Hence, if Janet's work can be seen as a French holistic approach to psychology and as sharing many properties with the second Leipzig laboratory, it is not certain that this proximity is intentional.
10. All references: my translation from French—except Janet, 1928b.
11. The model was reworked through most of Janet's lectures and writings. I choose to present the tripartite models presented in the two volumes of *De l'angoisse à l'extase* (1926 and 1928) and in a later summary of the hierarchical model in *Les débuts de l'intelligence* (1935).
12. Janet's propositions will be largely developed by Piaget (1954, 1964)—especially the ones regarding the thresholds between types of conducts. Piaget retains them as an ontogenetic succession, whereas Janet seemed to have a more broader project (and more speculative).
13. First convinced by the James-Lange Theory of Emotions, Janet will progressively move away from it, addressing all the objections it raised (Janet, 1928 for an account).
14. As Freud (1908), Janet emphasized the continuity of play and some of adult's experiences—especially his relationship to art. For Janet, playing is pleasurable before anything else; it is "gratuitous," does not have any aim within the real and allows one to explore possibilities and to live experiences and emotions that have no place in the reality—all while being highly economical. All the negative sides and consequences of such actions in real life are avoided. This economy is part of the overall positive (mood enhancer and re-energizing) effect of playing conducts. This view lead Janet to argue fiercely against any pedagogic canalization of children's play (1935).
15. These approaches do not avoid the two dangers that Janet had indicated: they are philosophical, or mostly physiological (looking for emotions in neurons), or they

ignore the fundamental symbolic nature of human conduct. There are, however, a few important integrative theoretical elaborations of emotions that keep a holistic character. See in particular Valsiner, 2004; Magai & Haviland-Jones, 2002; and De Rivera, 1983.

16. Promoters of these artifacts often have their consumers' emotions as their target. Correspondingly, psychologists have mostly examined the effect of these cultural experiences on people's behavior, and, in particular, on socially condemnable behavior; violence is thus understood as a consequence of the emotional load of cultural experiences, and cognitive responses are often seen as a way to overcome these emotional dangers.
17. This extract is part of a research project on young people's symbolic resources in transitions, enabled by a European Marie Curie Research Fellowship and a Corpus Christi (Cambridge, UK) Research Fellowship (Zittoun, 2006).
18. "xxx" indicates unclear word.

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