

Deconstructing Masculine (Will)power through French Medical Models of Trauma (1914–1919)

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Willpower (*la volonté*) vs. Automatism (*l'automatisme*)

La volonté

- Inhibition; self-control; consciousness; reason
- Order; equilibrium
- Self-determination; identity
- Autonomy; independence

L'automatisme

- Emotions; impulses; muscular reflexes; the subconscious
- Dysregulation; excess; chaos
- Passivity; impressionability
- Dependence; subjugation

"Anything that disaggregates the equilibrium between our conscious personality and the subordinate automatism favors [psychological] contagion. [...] The more the inhibitory power of the will diminishes, the more the lower [cognitive] centers work, the more they perceive, and the more they repeat by their account that which they have perceived. For the absence of willpower is like a *carte blanche* for automatism; undisturbed by a counterforce, it unfurls [or deploys] completely and transforms us into veritable automatons."

"Tout ce qui désagrège l'équilibre entre notre personnalité consciente et les automatismes subordonnés favorise la contagion. [...] Plus le pouvoir frénateur de la volonté diminue, plus les centres inférieurs travaillent, plus ils perçoivent, et plus ils répètent pour leur propre compte ce qu'ils ont perçu. Car l'absence de la volonté est comme une carte blanche pour la vie automatique; non dérangée par une contre-force, elle se déploie complètement et nous transforme en véritables automates."

—Adam Cygielstrejch, "La psychologie de la panique,"
Annales médico-psychologiques (1917)

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"[U]nder a shock too violent, the will breaks [...] [T]here is a rupture of equilibrium. This miserable subconscious takes advantage of this short-lived moment, when it escapes from the lucid control of our reasonable intelligence, to force its way into the conscious mind, submerge it, dominate it, and, finally, impose on it the panic that makes it lose its head [...]"

"[S]ous un choc trop violent, la volonté se brise [...] [I]l y a rupture de l'équilibre. Ce subconscient misérable profite de son avantage momentané, où il échappe au contrôle lucide de notre intelligence raisonnable, pour faire effraction dans le conscient, le submerge, le domine et finalement lui imposer ses paniques qui l'affolent [...]"

—André Gilles, "Étude sur certains cas de neurasthénie,"
Annales médico-psychologiques (1916)