

POST-COLONIAL MARCEL JOUSSE

Marcel Jousse (1886-1961) was at once a Jesuit priest, an artillery officer in the Great War and a research professor in the major Parisian institutions. He was a student of Marcel Mauss in anthropology, of Levy-Bruhl in ethnology and sociology and of Pierre Janet in psychopathology. Jousse is also a disciple of Bergson's philosophy. He used the knowledge of his masters, of his religious training and his military training to build the foundations of a new science and, above all, a new method: the anthropology of geste¹ and rhythm.

This vibrant and dynamic anthropology is primarily a *praxis*. Jousse founded a transdisciplinary approach that wants to explore the human depth, the Intimate, respecting strict scientific criteria. The Intimate, as such, is not observable or measurable. So the gestures only, as the founder of a science of cognition and behavior can guarantee the scientific paradigm of this approach.

The joussean behavioral science applies to all areas of life, and constitutes an original inquiry. In an interview with Frederic Lefebvre for *Literary News (les Nouvelles Littéraires, Paris)*, Bergson said of this knowledge: "it is a very new thought."

Jousse breaks with the study of ideas, concepts and images to explore the "basement of the Spirit" (*les sous-sols de l'Esprit, dixit Bergson*). To achieve this, he builds on the logic of practical everyday action which he uses to decrypt the mental attitudes of children and adults in the field of psychology, his own culture and the cultures of the world in the deployment of his ethnological and sociological method of exploration of the Anthropos: a human compound, as he coins it after Thomas Aquinas, a *complexus* of semiotic gestures, in his own definition.

Jousse defends the unity of mankind. This means, methodologically, for us to remain rooted in a multiple unity. He fights a racial paradigm that irrigates all the sciences of his time and in this he goes counters his former teachers: Levy-Bruhl, famous for his studies of the "primitives" and "primitive mind" is the recurring target of artillery captain Jousse. Thus, a few months only after the defeat of the French army in Indochina at Dien Bien Phu, Jousse builds on current events to point a finger in a wound still fresh:

¹ "geste" is a joussean neologism in English; it was not used as a scientific paradigm before him.

Latin *gerere / gestus*: to act, so: decide and implement - the gesture of a human compound that converts cosmic, physical, and biological interactions into an anthropological and semiologic geste.

With Jousse, all human movement, whether microscopic or macroscopic, is significant and "translated" in mirror and in echo, according to the laws of concrete analogy, the natural or social interactions of the universe,. The geste is a human characteristic, a distinction, a dignity.

" Through the fundamental law of interaction, the Laboratory of mimismologic anthropology has penetrated the ethnic milieu.

We are at home in all ethnic backgrounds, if we delve deep enough. When I find myself in front of my very dear friend the deputy of the Sudan Sissoko, I am immediately transported into the heart of his mother.

It is in the heart of their mothers that the sons will understand each other.

This would be a truly pertinent study: the past and present resulting in Dien Bien Phu. We had one such merger and we will have many more, until the time has come when we will realize that we have failed.

Instead of trying to understand the traditions of the people we met, we chose to demolish them. Where we should have confraternized, we colonized.

There is no need for us to beat our breasts: we did but follow our own colonized past by treading the the Latin path . It was THE civilization. Whereas we should recognize Civilizations.

This is not Civilization. Talking of "savages", of "primitive" is nothing but evidence of ignorance and complacency. My dear master Lévy-Bruhl admitted as much, but only *post mortem* ... "

This lecture taught at the Sorbonne on 24 February 1955 summarizes a 30 years' fight with Lévy-Bruhl which Jousse was to win.

Jousse is one of the few scholars to tackle the problem at the root. Colonization was an unquestionable wrong, but a wrong rooted in the mind and to be tackled there, in the concept of race, a concept Jousse rejects. Geste alone, i.e the various mental and behavioral attitudes with a common cognitive anthropological foundation, can be the scientific way to study cultures, societies and civilizations objectively and honestly.

Jousse thus established an a-racialist and anti-raciologic basis for combat in his very epistemology. In our current post-racial (at least in Europe) and postcolonial environment, this has become a default position, but in the thirties, after the colonial exhibition in Paris, Jousse's was a very lonely voice indeed.

This for the time uncommon and daring line of thought found its outlet in a new anthropology, a *comprehensive* anthropology.

Jousse spent a few years in the United States at the end of the First World War as a French officer seconded to the American military. He was responsible for training officers in the use of the 75 canon, and, at the end of the war, he remained for a diplomatic mission to extend the support of America to France, which France needed to finance its reconstruction.

During this period, he met the Amerindians. After work, he goes every night in the reserves and he learns from them. He will always maintain that they were his masters.

He was fond of quoting an Indian princess:

"I remember what I was told by the Indian princess ZIT Kalasha when I found myself in a Sioux tribe in the United States:" Given the way you Europeans study us, you can only see us as savages. "

Jousse then becomes aware of the methodological nature of the problem.

"What is needed is a kind of method from within.

Instead of judging them in relation to us, we need to understand them in relation to themselves. "

(Course taught at the Sorbonne 12/03/31)

In the 20ies, listening in on Bergson's College of France lectures , Jousse discovers this essential formula: intellectual sympathy.

"We have that deepest of things, intellectual sympathy. Mr. Bergson has brought this issue to the forefront of all scientific endeavour. As Victor Hugo put it: "To understand is to love."

The only true scientific attitude is to espouse reality and this reality, here is not the curve, the tree, the stream that meanders through the valley, it is a human being with all his wealth, his complexity, his errors too no doubt, but a human being who, with you as his anchor, offers you what is real to him. "

This is the meaning of "scientific interchange." : the need to "adjust each other's *real*".

Course taught in the Sorbonne 01/21/32

This is the starting point of his epistemological break with the scientific, ethnological and sociological milieu of the time. The practical consequences are just as pronounced. First, Jousse explains ethnological observations through the gestural and mental logic of the peoples concerned; he puts himself in their situation rather than being judgmental. He puts aside all ideology. This is why his work has a relevance that of other ethnologists' misses: their approach is flawed from the outset and that their equipment does not make for effecting work.

The ethical dimension soon appears. It is indeed all about equality of peoples and civilizations. The colonial empire has no basis and it spoils the relationship that we could have build with all those cultures, who also have treasures to teach us.

Drawing the argument to its logical conclusion, Jousse replaces the colonization principle by the principle of confraternisation².

² During the First World War, scenes of fraternization between enemy soldiers took place. At Christmas for example, French and German soldiers left their trenches and, in the middle of the battlefield, they fraternized. This fraternization, spontaneous and improvised, influenced the choice of Marcel Jousse.

Brotherliness is the ability to overcome enmity, to move out of one's corner in order to build friendship. The comprehensive method allows for this to happen: one needs to be able to put oneself in someone else's place.

One could compare this outlook on things to that of Jousse's co-religionist Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who was the first to formulate the concept "planetization".

"Currently, our French ethnicity, under the pressure of events, gradually becomes aware of this fundamental error.

Too long, you have made us forget ourselves and you ventured out to people who are like us, *paysans*, people of the land, who are called Malagasy, or Indochinese, or Tunisians and so many others. And now that these *paysans* of their *pays*, tillers of the soil of their land became aware of their vitality, we are faced with the logical conclusion ... and it's not over. You never tried to understand all these peoples to the depth of their ancestral traditions. All you ever wanted to do is to impose upon them, looking down on them from the height of your so-called civilization, the one and only.

And even in your own country, the Breton peasants whom I lovingly spoke of just now, you, you called them country bumpkins. To remain oneself, with one's customs and traditional language, this too you mocked, despised and rejected ...

What I said so many times in my classes, remember? It's not colonization, but "confraternisation."

At present, attempts are made, without much success, to find bases for our country that could be used anthropologically, before we enter all those these areas that should have been, not lands to colonize, but societies with which to fraternise."

Sorbonne, 02/17/55

Such anti-colonial logic is a double-edged sword. Indeed, Jousse is the only thinker to establish a close relationship between the behavior of colonial empires "outside" and the behavior of these regimes 'inside'. Science, along with political and economy, first colonized the France internally.

Prehistoric man was invented. This is the "primitive" at home. Medieval obscurantism was similarly invented. Traditions and behaviors of the French countryside were despised, stifled by the same methods those colonial empires now export. Jousse accuses Western bourgeoisism and progressivism of these misdeeds. Above all, he reveals the existence of a logic of domination both much older and much closer to us than we thought.

Planetization is globalization, not only of the economy -which is already a fact- but also that of the minds, which is a vital necessity. This Teilhardian ecosophy is a vision of the future, a conditional to which we have an ethical duty to tender under penalty of plunging into the abyss.

The jousian co-brotherhood is the anthropological dimension and practice of planetization.

Teilhard said: What are we living? What should we do?

Jousse said: What is it about? How can we go about it?

Teilhard and Jousse were the two geniuses of the Company of Jesus in the twentieth century. The experience of the First World War was crucial for them. They are "those of 14". From the Belly of the Beast, the work they bore was both different and complementary.

After 1945, Jousse called post-colonialism: the post-history. Postcolonialism concerns Brittany as much as Malagasy. There is a common basis for all these cultures that progressivism wants to conquer: the living tradition. She is born and grows in contact with nature in a constant interactivity. Man models it as much as he is shaped by it. Traditional man is a peasant, in that he is shaped by the land he shapes. There is a double adjustment between nature and culture that all the old traditions of the

The Joussean reflection on the traditions of man and land, is also an awareness of the need for an ecosophy. It lays the groundwork for what could be a balanced post-modernity. There is a need to connect what has been a systematical disconnect:

- to link up peoples of the world through a comprehensive approach.

- to link up past, present and future by ending the war that modernity declared with tradition. Thanks to a dynamic circular movement, we can "return" to the past and draw from the wisdom and experience of the elders, and then make it our strength to build a viable present and a sustainable future.

- to link up with "nature", precisely beyond the nature / culture dichotomy through practical, landshaping ecosophy.

Jousse does not doubt the universal nature of this issue and he sows the seeds for the labour to come.

What follows is the introduction to one of his seminars at the School of Anthropology in Paris on 5/25/46. It reflects the depth of his teachings:

"Today, I want our last four lectures to come forth from our first four lessons.

In the first four, I showed you what this biological, zoological phenomenon called Colonization truly is. We showed the tools that are shaped by the actions of the Anthropos. We saw the great colonizing beasts of prey.

Facing this Colonization, I want to show you a phenomenon in need of study, not only by me, but by those who will extend me. And this phenomenon is what I'll call the Confraternisation.

In the mechanism of Colonization, a man whose reliance is rather on zoology conquers Men. Do you hear this clearly?

In CONFRATERNISATION, a man relying on Anthropology, conquers a man. And conquering a man is greater than conquering all men. Conquering through Fraternization rather than conquering by Colonization.

If asked what I bring anew to the question, this it is. The tool that will replace today what happened yesterday.

Last time, after class, I was asked if I found it acceptable that we settled among peoples in order to civilize them by cannon-fire. Guns were never civilized anyone. They kill and destroy.

Let's look today how, after the mechanism of colonization, tools of CONFRATERNISATION may be developed. And to do this, I'll put to you three great gestes of the Anthropos, that is to say of the human compound, and we'll study:

I ° - What is the geste³: TO UNDERSTAND

In the geste TO UNDERSTAND, we analyze:

- 1 To Understand a Thing,
- 2 To Understanding Oneself,
- 3- To Understand a Man

Indeed, in order to understand this geste of Communicating requires that we analyze three facts:

- 1-what I call Personalising,
- 2- Signaling,
- 3 - Misunderstanding.

What does it mean, to Confraternise?

- 1- It is knowing how to sympathize
- 2- Knowing how to receive
- 3 - and knowing how to give.

In his lectures, Jousse attracts a high number of foreigners, representative of the French colonial empire, and of the cultural minorities in difficulty in France. Asians, Jews (mostly pre-war), and then , after 1945, Africans. Some of those who attended soon stood out: Claude Tresmontant and Andre Chouraqui in Jewish and Christian studies, or Léopold Sedar Senghor, Alioune Diop, who led Senegal to independence. The anthropology of gesture fed their political commitment and their search for identity. It gave them fertile methodological tools with which Jousse and his students left their mark in the history of decolonization and Judeo-Christian friendship. Post-colonial history is the way out of the culture of contempt that Jousse fought all his life. Self-contempt and contempt of the other is the matrix of ignorance and violence.

Let us render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. This victory is the victory of Marcel Jousse.

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