Narrative organisation of social representations

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The dual character of the social representations theory

Social representation*s* theory is deeply rooted in French social theory (Bergson's dual memory system, 1889; Durkheim's collective representation, 1898; Halbwachs' social frames of memory, 1925; Blondel's radical constructivism, 1928) the cognitive anthropology of Levy-Bruhl (1910) and the French version of psychological or mental constructivism (Janet, 1928; Piaget, 1945). This is certainly one of the reasons, if it is not the main one, why social representations theory has*,* for decades, fallen outside the interest not only of mainstream social psychology, but also of symbolic interactionism or sociological social psychology (Graumann, 1988). Both dominated by Anglo-American traditions which were, respectively, melded with German phenomenology through Heider (1958) and Schutz (1971-72). However, in parallel with a growing discontent with the largely individualistic, asocial and acultural trends in mainstream cognitive social psychology, there has been a burgeoning interest in social representation*s* theory outwith the 'Latin' world (see Forgas, 1981; Moscovici and Hewstone, 1983; Farr and Moscovici, 1984). Currently, an evolving social representation*s* theory competes with discursive psychology (Harre, 1995), discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), and cultural psychology (Bruner, 1991) to become the leading paradigm of the "second

cognitive revolution". This seems to be happening despite the fact that social representation theory is often criticised for lack of clarity; contradictory formulations; and, having little predictive value, (e.g. Jahoda, 1988). Further, social representations theory is sometimes held not to be a 'real' social psychological theory, but rather a broad approach or framework for studying social psychological phenomena, or as Doise (1993) puts it a "grand theory". As such it is said to lend general conceptions about individual and/or societal functioning to orientate research efforts and to require completion by more detailed descriptions of processes which are compatible with it, but which may also sometimes be compatible with other theories.

The key to the problematic character of the social representations theory can probably found in its dual character which was formulated in Moscovici's initial suggestion in the following way: "...we can see two cognitive systems at work, one which operates in terms of associations, discriminations, that is to say the cognitive operational system, and the other which controls, verifies and selects in accordance with various logical and other rules; it involves a kind of metasystem which re-works the material produced by the first" (Moscovici 1976, p.256.). These two systems are traditionally studied in social psychology separately from each other. The cognitive operational system which is bound to the individual mind encompasses processes including attribution, scripts, implicit theories, categorisation, and stereotyping is the target of mainstream social psychology. In contrast interpretative rules and the social distribution of knowledge are placed onto the social level of analysis, and are approached by phenomenologically or sociologically orientated research. The "titanic" attempt (Gergen, 1994) to avoid both psychological-mentalistic and sociological reductionism by integrating the exogenic and endogenic world views, i.e., individual, social, and collective levels of representation (Cranach, 1992; Jesuino, 1995) into a single theory, however inevitably complex, runs the risk that the gain in explanatory value is at the cost of its relation with empirical research (c.f. Ibanez, 1991).

The bridge between the levels of representations is social communication. Communication not only transmits, but also shapes representations and makes

them socially shared. In Moscovici's words, social representations provide people with "a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history" (Moscovici, 1973, xvii.). It also links representations to cultural and societal dimensions (Jodelet, 1989). But again, such a complex notion of communication may, at the level of empirical work, demand simplification, and exactly this happens with discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) which eliminates individual cognitive processes from the reconstruction of social representations out of discourse.

There is, however, an analytic, which offers a systematic solution to the dilemma of accommodating individual cognitive processes and social representations of groups in a single empirical framework. The dilemma for the empirical study of social representations consists in the fact that the raw material that one can collect is composed of individual beliefs, opinions, associations, or attitudes from which the organising principles common to groups of individuals must be pieced together and linked to their cultural, sociological, and social-psychological characteristics. Doise and his co-workers (Doise, 1993, Doise, Clemence and Lorenzo-Cioldi, 1993) have further elaborated the basic concepts of the social representation process - anchoring (to anchor strange ideas, to reduce them to ordinary categories and images, to set the into a familiar context, c.f. Moscovici, 1984, p.29.) and objectification ("to turn something abstract into something almost concrete, to transfer what is in the mind to something existing in the physical world." c.f. Moscovici, 1984, p.29) - at the level of their assessment. (Social representation is conceived not only as a contentful structure, but also as a process, Moscovici, 1984). Doise et al analytically differentiated between four phases of anchoring. In the first phase, during data-generation, mapping the objectified social representations is performed. In this phase, social representation is conceived as a collective map, common to a given population. Social representations do, however, not equate with shared beliefs. They are, rather, common reference points to which individuals within a group may relate differently. Therefore, in the second phase, social representations are conceived as organising principles of individual differences in relation to the common reference points. Thus, in this phase, anchoring the

individuals in the collective map or social representational space takes place. These first two phases which consist of relating the social representation with personal attitudes, beliefs and values, gathered at the intra and inter-individual level. are called psychological anchoring by Jesuino (1995) For the third phase sociological anchoring is performed. This is a close cousin to sociological and cultural analysis, in that it attempts to identify social representations of groups in terms of their stratified and historical/cultural position. Finally, in the fourth phase, through psycho-sociological anchoring, social representations are related to social psychological processes of social comparison and social identity that arise at the interface of different group relations (see, Duveen and Lloyd, 1986; Breakwell, 1995).

Universality versus particularity of the social representation processes

The above use of the anchoring concept seems to solve the much debated issue of universalistic versus particularistic nature of social representation (see Billig, 1993). It accepts anchoring as a universal process that occurs in each social, cultural and historical context in accord with Moscovici, who stated that the theory "excludes the idea of thought or perception without anchor" (Moscovici, 1984, p.36). However, this universality is not held to be identical with a universality of having cognitive schemata or categories by each individual. For empirical studies, anchoring of new, unfamiliar ideas into the existing system of categories, is a particularistic process in the sense that it proceeds according to the existing category system and the system of symbolic regulations particular to each social or cultural context. If social representation theory could not work at this more specific level, it could hardly escape from becoming either another version of neo-Bergsonian philosophy or mere cognitive psychology amended with some social theorising. The fact that social representation*s* theory and research focuses on the content as well as on the social origin of categories (see e.g. Farr, 1985), or as Billig (1993, p.48.) puts it, "If categories bias the perception of individuals, these biases have group origins (i.e. not arbitrary operations to diminish stimulus overload, J.L.) and are part of a whole cultural set

of meanings.", opens up the possibility of building specific theories within the general theoretical framework.

Social representation*s* theory allows for an interpretation that denies the universality of the objectification process. If we follow the route that Moscovici (1984) suggests, social representations derive from abstract, scientific knowledge as opposed to the Medieval age when the transformation of knowledge went in the opposite direction (i.e., from the mundane to the esoteric). Transforming abstract knowledge into a concrete, material knowing requires objectification*:* however, according to the above line of thought, this process is neither diachronically nor synchronically universal by necessity. There was all thought common senese thought in the Middle Age, and it was *sui generis* material, i.e. material thought was primary compared to the abstract thought.Therefore, if we remain consistent to Moscovici's theory, there was no need for an objectifying of abstract knowledge to meet the needs of common sense. For synchronic or contemporary social knowledge, Moscovici (1984, p.23.) claims that social representations "are in certain respects specific to our society" and he describes the social representation process as "specifically modern social phenomenon" (Moscovici, 1984, p. 952-953.). Pervaded as is our modern consciousness by scientifically-originated concepts, abstract, non-objectified thought still exists*.* Hence, as Billig (1988, p.7.; 1993, p.50-51.) rightly notes, objectification again appears to be a non-universal process. Those who conceive objectification as being universal in social representation, like Doise, Clemence and Lorenzo-Cioldi, *(*1993) focus not on the social or psychological universality of the process, but on the particular ways in which social groups make the unfamiliar familiar, real, and experiential by using the experiential material available to the group, extending and reinforcing the common experience of the group.

Social representation*s* theory has generated a large amount of empirical research which is hardly characterised by methodological orthodoxy (see Breakwell and Canter, 1993). Besides a wide range of quantitative methods (see Doise at al., 1993) and even experimentation or quasi-experimentation (see for example*,* the work of the Aix-en-Provence school on breaking the cognitive organisation of social representation into *central core* and *peripheric system*,

Abric, 1984, 1994; Molineri, 1995), there is a strong tradition of using qualitative, anthropological methods (Herzlich, 1973, Jodelet, 1989) in interview studies or focus groups (Zani, 1987). Duveen (1993), following Geertz' (1973) ideas on *thick description,* bases his research on observational and conversational data via which they construct interpretations upon the social representation of gender. Most recently, qualitative and quantitative methods are combined. Content analytic categories of verbal, visual, or audio-visual material which are clearly products of preceeding interpretation are quantified, and the positioning of different groups or individuals relative to the qualitatively interpreted category matrix is approached by quantitative analytics (see De Rosa, 1987, 1994) or the interpretation is helped by quantitatively assessed patterns.

These studies address various aspects of social representation, nevertheless they share the position that the worldview embodied in social representations theory that the system of meanings in which individual thought is anchored by social representations is *categorical* by nature. People are often depicted as naive scientists operating with naive theories consisting of naively anchored and objectified categories. However, in the *consensual world* of common sense as opposed to the *reified world* of science (Moscovici, 1994) the *communicational character* is *most common: one, that is,* who gives more importance to relationships with others than with things. As Jesuino (1995) writes, "In very schematic terms it is the former world that makes science possible or, at least, some type of science, the one that has the physics as model and the formal logic as instrument. In the second world the rules are different, the formal logic replaced by the *natural logic* (Grize, 1989), and decisions are taken through dynamic processes of convergence and adjustment, as identified by now classic research in social psychology". This distinction between "scientific logic" and "natural logic" of thought had already been described by Moscovici (1976) when he contrasted scientific argumentation based on rules of formal logic with communication that is aimed at maintaining group cohesion, but in the past decades of research it has somehow faded away from attention.

The narrative turn in psychology

Recently, however, in the social sciences and humanities there has been a growing recognition of the distinctively *narrative* character of social knowledge or social thought (e.g., Gergen and Gergen, 1988; Neisser and Fivush, 1994; Ricoeur, 1984-1985; Robinson, 1981; Sarbin, 1986; Schafer, 1980; Spence, 1982; Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers, 1992; White, 1981). In the next section of the chapter we will elaborate on the characteristics of narrative understanding, whilst in the concluding section we will consider the possible consequences of this narrative turn for social representation*s* research.

In psychology, one of the leading protagonist*s* of the narrative approach is Jerome Bruner (1986, 1990, 1996) who clearly distinguishes between two modes or *two natural kinds* of human thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, and of constructing reality. One he calles *paradigmatic or logico-scientific mode* which operates with abstract concepts, establishes truth by appealing to procedures of formal logic and empirical proof, *and* searches for the causality that leads to universal truth conditions. The other, more mundane mode of thinking is the *narrative mode*. This deals with human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. It verifies itself by its lifelikeness, and strives to establish not truth but verisimilitude. Bruner (1986, p.11-12.) illustrates the two types of causality implied in the two modes with the following example: "The term *then* functions differently in the logical proposition 'if x , then y' and in the narrative *recit* 'The king died, and then the queen died.' One leads to a search for universal truth conditions, the other for likely particular connections between two events -- mortal grief, suicide, foul play." In other words, narrative thinking strives for *coherence.*

The most conspicous materialisations of narrarive thinking are stories told by formal authors and ordinary people. Bruner (1986, p.14.) sensitively notes that stories must construct two psychological realms, or as he calls them "landscapes"*,* simultaneously. The constituents of the *landscape of action* are the arguments of action: agent, intention or goal, situation, instrument, and so on. The other realm, the *landscape of consciousness* maps what those involved in

the action know, think, or feel, or do not know, think, or feel. This simultaneous dual landscape of narrative argues that developed narratives are not simple accounts of what happened but imply much more, notably about the psychological perspective taken toward those happenings. The capacity to elaborate on action, the necessary involvement of time (see Ricoeur, 1984-85; Cupchik and Laszlo, 1994) and perspective (Uspensky, 1974; Laszlo and Larsen, 1991) makes narrative a *"natural instrument"* for differentiating between action, affect and thought, and for *re-integrating* them (see Bruner and Luciarello, 1989, p. 76-79).

By the same token, Bruner and Luciarello (1989, p. 79.) emphasize the constructive character of narratives: "...one deep reason why we tell stories to ourselves (or to our confessor or to our analyst, or to our confidant) is precisely to 'make sense' of what we are encountering in the course of living..." and indeed lives, for someone's life is not "...univocally given. In the end it is a narrative achievement." (Bruner 1987, p.13.) Bruner, similarly to Ricoeur (1984-85) or Flick (1995) conceptualises the relation between life, construction and interpretation as a circular mimetic process: "Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative." (Bruner, 1987, p.12.)

The storied nature of human knowledge

Although by no means taking a social constructionist position, Schank and Abelson (1995) in their recent chapter argue for the storied nature of the human mind. They claim that "virtually all human knowledge is based on stories constructed around past experiences" and "new experiences are interpreted in terms of old stories" (p.1.) Schank and Abelson insightfully derive the roots of all sorts of knowledge, from facts to beliefs, from a continous flow of story-telling and story understanding. Even lexical items, like words, numbers and grammar itself can thereby be approached in the context of stories. Thereby, Schank and Abelson challenge the classical cognitivist model of the human mind (cf. Newell and Simon, 1972) as information processor whose mental activity focuses on theorem proving and problem solving. This they do by noting their atypicality in

everyday life: "few people spend time trying to prove theorems, and if they do, they don't ordinarily talk about it." (p.15). However, in this argument here is an implicit phenomenal distinction between *abstract, theoretical reasoning* and *mundane, everyday understanding,* which is parallel with earlier noted distinctions between *Moscovici's scientific* and *communicational logic* and Bruner's *paradigmatic* versus *narrative thinking*. There is no doubt that, at least in human affairs, Schank and Abelson give a clear priority to the latter type of thinking. Schank and Abelson's new theory is a further elaboration of their earlier ideas of episodic or scripted organization of human memory and understanding (Schank, 1975, Schank and Abelson, 1977), in which they had already challenged Tulving's dual (episodic versus semantic) memory system. Although they focus mainly on the cognitive construction of stories and memory effects of storytelling, their observations on the *social context of storytelling* and their notion of *story sceletons* have wide social implications. In fact, when they state that understanding means "mapping your stories onto my stories", they refer to the cognitive constraint to "settle on a story we have been reminded of...select a mental path to take...Because we can only understand things that relate to our experiences." (Schank and Abelson, 1995, p.17.). This strictly cognitivist and in this sense somewhat trivial statement, however, implies not only that people can alone communicate stories which can be related to other people's storied experiences, i.e., there should be a *social sharing,* but also addresses the issue of the variation and distribution of stories within a society or culture, and the relation between story and reality. Similarly, when Schank and Abelson claim - referring to the famous *Annie Hall* scene in which the female and male protagonists construct different stories to their psychiatrists of having much or little sex, respectively - that "Our memories are comprised of the stories we tell, and the stories we tell comprise our memories" , they hurry to add, that stories interpret the world, and we can see the world only in the way that our stories allow us to see it. (p.60.).

Nevertheless, our stories are not only our individual stories, mental or verbal. Common experiences are articulated in common stories or story sceletons in a culture or society. Every society has its *"frozen historical stories"*, and although the individuals may take different vantage points, may construct

different stories for the same activity or event they participated in, the culture communicates to its members the possible set of story sceletons. This is the lesson of the various decision studies that demonstrate that the choice between the possible set of decisions is highly contingent on the choice in the possible set of stories which can be constructed around an event or activity (Abelson, 1976; Pennington and Hastie, 1992; Wagenaar, van Koppen and Crombag, 1993). Even autobiographies are social constructions (Gergen and Gergen, 1988; Nelson, 1993) local and contingent to ambient narrative possibilities. It is difficult to see this set of story sceletons as anything else than a culturally valid *naive psychology* or *common sense*, or as Bartlett (1932) did, as *social frames* providing rationality.

One major contribution of Schank and Abelson's theorising is bringing back *intentionality* into the study of social knowledge. Stories or narratives are intentional by necessity. Heider had introduced the intentional categories of a naive psychology in his seminal work through the story "The Fox and the Raven" by Aesop (Heider, 1958, p.15.), after having demonstrated them empirically in his earlier work. (Heider and Simmel, 1944). There is a growing evidence for the significance of intentionality coming from a number of sources:

- in contemporary cognitive psychology on the representing of categories in relation to human goals (Rosch, 1978; Barsalou, 1991),
- in studies of early cognitive development emphasising the modularity of the perception of causation (Leslie, 1991, Gergely, Csibra, Nadasdy, and Biro, 1995),
- in sociobiology in terms of the relatedness of the human intellect to social interaction (Dunbar, 1993),

Heider (1958) used intentional categories in the social domain when relating elements of thoughts in balance theory and in explaining action in attribution theory by a search for the rules of constructing "conceptually good figures": or as we would say today, coherent stories. A decade later, criticising reductionist and homeostatic approaches to Heider's theory, Abelson (1968) proposed a return to Heider's naive psychology, and outlined a self-contained *psycho-logic*.

The storied knowledge theory of Schank and Abelson (1995) is a close descendant of this psycho-logic (see also Harvey and Martin, 1995) having all the merits, but also most of the faults of that theory. Namely, it admits that stories construct but neglects that they are themselves constructed.

Another reduction that Schank and Abelson (1995) have performed is reducing narratives to stories. As a consequence, although they do indeed replace the conception of the human mind as an information processing problem solving machine, what they offer instead is a *story machine,* which misses all the experiential aspects that Bruner's narrative approach, however implicitly, allows for. This quite ironic, because Abelson (1975, 1987), and Schank (1985) were pioneering among artificial intelligence theorists in acknowledging *the* experiential capacities of narratives.

The important point here is that the *narrative paradigm* can offer not only a particular logic of intentional actions, thoughts and feelings on a cognitive level, but also the capacity to deal with emerging, non-conceptualised experiences like feelings or images, or time and perspective. When we read a story we may not only understand the time and location of the actions but imagine the spot and the protagonist, and reading about, say, the death of the protagonist's wife, we do not only understand that he feels grief, sometimes we feel this grief ourselves (see Oatley, 1992). This capacity for engagement is exploited extensively by literature. As Vygotsky (1971) noted, literature is articulating unspecified, vague, and non- conscious feelings in social relations, therefore it counts as a "social technique for emotions".

This type of narrative capacity, however, is not delimited to literary narratives; it belongs to the real life of social groups when they act together and experience their own actions. An outstanding Hungarian psychologist, Ferenc Mérei (1949) insisted that group traditions and thereby group identity are composed *mainly* of the experience of togetherness, of the experience of joint, concerted activity. One of his favourite examples is taken from a nursery school where the horn of a passing fire-engine induced a complex "fireman play" with a table serving as fire-engine, a rope serving as house, and so on. Several days

later one of the children imitated the noise of the fire-engine horn. This signal, a kind of a *pars pro toto,* retrieved the whole scenario that the children played with the same enthusiasm as before. Merei termed the cognitive representation of this experience-part that serves to retrieve the whole emotionally filled collective experience as *allusion.* Literary narratives in their landscape of consciousness often rely on similar allusion in order to generate an immediate warmth of collective experiences (Laszlo, 1996).

Narratives, of course, can be, and indeed are conceived not only in the non-essentialist way (after Bruner, 1990) we have illustrated thus far i.e., as vehicles and materials for the social-cognitive construction of reality and meaning. Narrative research in psychology extends to narratology, i.e., the study of how stories work and to the psychologically interpreted forms and functions narratives play in people's life. For our present purposes, however, this latter type of narrative research can be side-stepped. In the concluding section attention will be given to the more immediately germain task of building a bridge between narrative psychology and social representation theory. While the pillars of this project have already been erected (Farmer, 1994; Flick, 1995, and several chapters of this volume) much the work still lies ahead (Murray, 1997).

Applying narrative concepts to social representations

Narrative concepts and narrative methodology are not, in fact, distant from or alien to social representation's intellectual tradition. Maurice Halwachs, a student of Durkheim, vigorously argued in his works for the role of narratives in constructing and organizing social experiences. He claimed that people create and share stories that render their world intelligible. Their community feeling or social identity derives from narratives. Narratives, he further argued, also provide the social anchoring for even the seemingly most individual memories (Halbwachs, 1925; 1968).

It was the US-based contemporaries of Durkheim, Thomas and Znaniecki (1918-1920), who first introduced the attitude concept into social psychology.

Partly as a contrast to Durkheim*'s* objectivist view concerning social facts, they treated *attitudes* similarly to how social representations theory was later to do: as socially acquired and shared representations that guide people's thinking and behavior. They contrasted attitude phenomena with *values* that are, in the Durkheimian sense, objectively facing individuals, and explicated them from personal narratives embodied in letters and autobiographies.

The later individualization of the meaning and use of personal documents, just as with the individualisation of the attitude concept itself (Allport, 1935, Allport, 1955) should not obscure the fact that narratives first were analysed in social psychology according to the social meaning they carried.

More obvious to the project of linkage and closer to contemporary social representation*s* research is the use of narrative discourse in ethnographically orientated studies based on interviews (e.g., Herzlich, 1973, Jodelet, 1989). Interviews are in many respect*s* *pseudo-narratives,* guided by the interviewer, that provide groundings to the researcher from which he/she can uncover the system of meanings or the interpretative context of the phenomena in focus. What is*,* howeve*r,* curious and certainly reflects theoretical and methodological orthodoxy, it is that both Herzlich and Jodelet deliberately neglected the narrative qualities of their interview material and*,* instead of also taking into account the storied nature of the explanations, concentrate*d* exclusively on the categorial anchoring and objectification of health and mental illnes*s*, respectively.

There is no doubt that social representation*s* theory, as Moscovici and his followers present it, has a leaning toward representing the world in categories, or in their relatives such as concepts, values, stereotypes, images (see Moscovici, 1973, p.xiv.). But there is also a claim for social representations being "theories" or "branches of knowledge" that are used for discovery and organization of reality (ibid). The status of a theory whether scientific or naive, or in transition beween the two, is already dubious. Theories even in such abstract fields as physics have proved to be stories, not to mention theories about human affairs such as history or, *mutatis mutandis*, psychology (see Harraway, 1984; Mulcay,

1985). Theories*,* as generally conceived*,* are meant to be causal and explanatory. For many phenomena in the world causality can be inferred by relating the effect to the cause. This is exactly what traditional attribution theory (Jones and Davies, 1965; Kelley, 1967) pursues. Moscovici (1984, p.46.) - ironically, rather in the way adopted by some of the US scholars he criticises (e.g., Kruglansky, 1975; Abelson, 1982) - directs our attention to another type of causality that is more prevalent in social relations and deals with intentionality or as Moscovici calls it "finalities".. Let me quote him extensively: "Since most of our relationships are with live human beings we are confronted with the intentions and purposes of others ...Even when our car brakes down or the apparatus we are using in the laboratory doesn't work we can't help thinking that the car 'refuses' to go, the hostile apparatus 'refuses to collaborate' ...Everything people do or say, every natural disturbance, seems to have a hidden significance, intention or purpose which we try to discover... Instead of saying: 'for what reason does he behave like that?' we say: 'For what purpose does he behave like that?' and the quest for a cause becomes a *quest for motives and intentions*. In other words*,* we interpret...We are always convinced that people don't act by chance, that everything they do corresponds to a *plan* (italics is mine -J.L.)".

Although he continues that we tend to "personify" which in this context equals objectification) motives and incentives, "to represent a cause imagistically, as when we use the term 'Oedipus Complex' to describe a certain type of behavior", the above argument clearly refers to the narrative quality of our everyday explanations, and in this sense does not differ radically from narrativist calims i.e., that narrative *is* the "organizing principle" of how humans make sense of the world (Sarbin, 1986, p.2.). Investigation of attribution of unemployment (Laszlo, 1997) or attribution of responsibility (Miller, 1984; Markus and Kitayama, 1991) clearly reveals that alternative glossing of causes and intentions is highly dependent upon the intentional character of social representation.

Social representation*s* theory's preoccupation with objectification of anchored categories tends to obscure this intentional character of social thinking, at least for empirical research. Although materialisation of abstract knowledge seems indeed to be a basic process in social representation, both abstract,

conceptual knowledge, as well as its objectified counterparts in everyday thinking of social groups, at least in human affairs, are intimately connected to stories prevalent in these groups. Therefore narrative methodologies can be applied to studying how social groups objectify meanings.

Even the anchoring process can fruitfully be studied by narrative methodology. Flick (1995, p.85.) notes that empirical investigation of how social representation develops from a new unfamiliar experience often faces obstacles that are hard to overcome. It seems to be necessary to know the cognitive and/or social system of categories pre-existent before the new experience or phenomenon emerges in order to know in which of the given categories it is integrated or anchored or if there are new categories developed for anchoring the phenomenon. It is also important to know the moment when the unfamiliar emerges. But unfamiliar phenomena are normally discovered for social representation studies only after they have already permeated social thinking. This is the case with AIDS (Joffe, 1995), or with nuclear accidents (Galli and Nigro, 1987) where life has produced natural experimental situation*s*.

For dealing with these difficulties, Flick (1995, p. 85-86.) has introduced the concept and method of *retrospective anchoring.* This gives access to the subjective construction and, along the way, to the social construction of the phenomenon and the parts of reality referring to it. He considers that the narratives people tell have the capacity to sketch retrospectively the appearance and the effect of a theory, a cultural object, etc., providing a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the phenomena.

Methodological issues in the use of narrative analytics: "thick narration"

To summarise our argument, the narrative approach to social representation processes puts forward a model of social knowledge in which anchoring and objectification of new, unfamiliar phenomena are intimately related to those aspects of categories that enable them to be parts of coherent, culturally acceptable narratives. Further*,* individual or group placements with regard to this

shared system of meanings are also held to be best understood by exploring of how people locate these categories in narrative context. Finally, individual and collective stories jointly provide a "thick narration" of phenomena which then can be analytically scrutinised.

Scholarship, it is generally accepted, has often been advanced by technological innovation. Recent advances in computer technology have made possible such developments as Computer Aided Qualitative Text Research (see Miles and Huberman, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). For narrative analysis, and perhaps more widely, such eclectic tools offer an advance over exclusively qualitative or quantitative methods. Sophisticated programs that have been and are being developed in this area have the capacity to perform quick hypertext analyses, i.e., all text generated in a particular population can be handled as one huge data base. This is particularly advantageous for the narrative approach to social representation, because it can penetrate the unstructured content-aspect of narratives. Even complex coding systems like the one that was developed by McAdams (1988) for analysing narrative qualities of life stories can be translated into the language of computer-analytics. Additionally, content aspects and structural aspects can be studied in combination.

The scientific impact of technological innovations, however, entail their own special risks. The easy and handy applicability of computer analytics to large text bases brings with itthe risk of research marked more by the pedantic and mechanical than the creative. To whatever social phenomena research be directed, it should never suffice for invesitgation to be driven by mere bottom up theory building. There are many kinds and types of narratives and these will vary markedly in their cultural salience for any given social phenomenon To find the most adequate narratives and to construct the most relevant analytics should always remain the innovative task of the researcher not delegated to statistical heuristics - however sophisticated.

How narrative approach contributes to the explanatory potential of social representations

When deriving social representations from collective representations, Moscovici (1984, p.19.) makes the following distinction between the two: "...collective representations are an *explanatory device*, and refer to a general calss of ideas and beliefs" whereas social representations are phenomena that are related to a particular mode of understanding and communicating "which need to be described and *need to be explained".* (italics is mine - J.L.) But what do social representations themselves explain?

In cognitive psychology, representation is conceived as mediating varble between stimuli and responses. Moscivici refers to Fodor (1975) who codified this position as follows: “It has been a main argument of this book that if you want to know what response a given stimulus is going to elicit you must find out what internal representation the organism assigns to the stimulus. Patently, the character of such assignments must in turn depend on what kind of representational system is available for mediating the cognitive processes of the organism” (Fodor, 1975).

In contrast, Moscovici (1984, p.61.) conceives social representations as independent (i.e., not mediating) variables or explanatory stimuli. He writes "Each stimulus is selected from a vast variety of possible stimuli and can produce infinite variety of reactions. It is the pre-established images and paradigmes that both determine the choice and restrict the range of reactions...In other words, social representations determine both the cararcter of the stimulus and the response it elicits, just as in a particular situation they determine which is which." Moscovici claims that if we want to understand group processes, we should learn about the relevant social represeantations in the group, and the meaning of these representations. However, conceived in this way as ratinonal knowledge systems in the group, social representations can't be causal explanations of the behavior (Wagner, 1993; 1995). If a group forms a social representation about madness and an element of this representation is the belief that madness is contagious, then washing mad people's clothes separately from other people's clothes, i.e., the behavior, is not the consequence of the social representation or locally consructed naiv theory. Rather it is a behavioral description or illustration of a further belief belonging to the same representation, i.e., separate washing of mad

people's clothes prevents infection. According to Wagner (1993;1995), social representations, because of their consensual and rational character, can rather be approached analytically, than synthetically in a deductive-nomologigal framework. They can't be brought into an "if-then" type causal relation with the behavior.

Wagner (1995) following Bourdieu (1980) and Doise (1976) points out that research of social representations may be directed to uncovering structural homologies between social and mental structures. In this case, social representation is the *explanandum* and socio-genetic conditions of its emergence are the *explanans*. On the other hand, social representations may enter the expalanation as *explanans* of the phenomena following them. In this case, study of social representation proceeds on the level of individual social knowledge and social interaction, but the explanation is not directed to the individual action, instead to social objects or facts. As Wagner (1995, p.172) claims, these social objects or social facts are action consequences, which aren't logically connected to representational beliefs, as actions themselves are. For example, Di Giacomo (1980) studied a students' protest movement at a Belgian university, where protesters split into two distinct groups having more militant versus more lenient representations about the issue. These discrepant representations lead to serious difficulties in communication between the groups and finally resulted in faliure of the protest movement. According to Wagner (1995), it is not the individual or group behavior what is explained in this study by social representation or discrepancies between the two sets of social representations. Behavior is only one of the possible expressions of mental representations. The same can be told verbally in an interview or can be given in writing when answering a questionnaire. What explained is, it is a social fact: the faliure of the protest movement.

This interpretation has several problems. The most appearent one is that it neglects the fact that the faliure itself enters immedietely the process of social representation. Social representations are evolving about the faliure of the protest movement whose consequences are much less ready to identify. Another problematic element of the above interpretation is that the faliure as social fact is a behavioral event in itself. It is a decay and a cease in protest activity. Social

representation of the protest movement involved goals, means serving these goals, and activities corresponding the goals and means. The discrepancies in goals and beliefs in the two groups lead to abandoning the protest in both groups. As the example of the two student groups in the protest movement shows, there are more possible social racionaliies within a single culture. Different groups may represent the same social object differently, that, in turn, may lead to misunderstandings and aborted actions. This latter aspect may better enlight the status that is attributed by the narrative approach to the social representations in the explanation of social behavior. In relations with the goals, representations also imply (and predict) behavioral outputs and reactions to the results of actions. This implicational relationship provides ground for a modal explanation (von Kutschera, 1982) in which social representation does not cause social behavior, but it implies behavioral and mental conseqences (see also Wagner, 1995, 172.). On the other hand, representations of each group, as far as the goals, means, condititons, expected results, etc. are concerned, seemed to be coherent in itself. In our view, this coherence within the possible rationality domain is provided by the narrative organization of the representation. Behavioral and mental consequences of the faliure do not belong to the protest-narrative, however, they may form the elements of a subsequent narrative which is in implicational relationship with the former one.

The power of the coherence can be illustrated be a study by Rowett and Breakwell (1992), in which the researchers dealt with the situation of social workers who are attacked be their clients. They uncovered a strong social represeantation or naive theory among social work professionals of why and how a social worker gets attacked. Parts of this representation are lack of skill, low experience and authoritarian behavior of the social worker, and dangerous environment. There is also a theory about the nature of the interactions which generate violence. The researches also pointed out that this theory is wrong in literally all respects. Nevertheless, despite considerable attempts to dislodge it, the social representation which offers a a coherent explanation of violence is still pervasive. Social workers who became victims of such assaults, both mentally and behaviorally react by decreasing their self-evaluation and by forming assumptions about their inadequacy and inefficacy.

The above examples illustrate that the analsysis based on the narrative organisation of the social representation relates representation to social interaction by implication. The narrative approach to the social representation includes behavioral goals and results of actions, as well as anticipations and evaluations concerning the results. The examples also show that logical analysis is not sufficient to generate implicational explanations: empirical studies are needed.

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