

The Meaning of Meaning Between Social Psychology and Cultural Sociology

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Outline

- **Origins of the analytical concept (brief overview)**
- **Key (heuristic) questions**
- **Some key figures (and methodological issues) between cultural sociology and social psychology**
- **Example one: coquetry as cultural code and mode of conduct (double historicity and double social function of a cultural representation)**
- **Example two: generational imaginary**
- **Provisional summary and concluding puzzle (dissolving the Cartesian subject)**

Origins of the concept

- **Philosophy: *Vorstellungen***
 - Immanuel Kant, Schopenhauer
- **Psychology: *apperceptions***
 - Wilhelm Wundt
- **Sociology: *collective representations***
 - Émile Durkheim

Karl Marx

A Romantic Critique of Representations

- **Double concept of representation**
 - **Representations as “intermediaries”**
 - **Reified supra-individual imaginaries (fetishism)**
 - **Mediation as alienation**
 - **Reality as unreality**
 - **Representations as “mediators”**
 - **Representations of representations: making the unreal real**
 - **Representing practices: real but alienated and alienating**
- **Love and society: the Marxian moment of Margaret Thatcher**
- **What’s empirical about radical “empiricism”?**

Key questions

Social representations

- **Are social representations subject or tool of analysis?**
 - Representations “of” or representations “as”
 - Is there a duality of the social?
 - Our example: psychoanalysis and controversies about it
- **What are social representations or what they do?**
 - Substantial vs. functional definition
- **Are social representations applicable universally or to a particular class of objects?**

Between (cultural) sociology and (social) psychology

- **Symbolic interactionism (George Herbert Mead)**
 - **Dialogical transmission of meaning**
 - **Good uses of alienation: pre-condition of sociability**
- **Phenomenology (Alfred Schutz)**
 - **Ideal types, natural world-view and chemes of interpretation**
 - **Signs and significations: fundamental social trick (meaning revealed = meaning granted)**
 - **Codifications of meanings and social distribution of knowledge**
- **Social dramaturgy (Erving Goffman)**
 - **Framing and keying: social production of the real**
 - **Appearances matter: re-presentation of Self**
 - **The concept of enactment**

Coquetry:

Simmel between Social Psychology and Durkheim

- **Social function I: Coquetry as cultural code and mode of behavior**
- **Social nature of representations**
 - **Misunderstandings (ever present possibility of erring) as an empirical proof**
- **Social function II: Representation of the social**
 - **Feminity vs. masculinity**
 - **Adulthood vs. childhood**
 - **High class vs. low class**
- **Historicity of representations**
 - **Origins of a concept**
 - **Changing meaning of a concept**

Generational imaginary: representations as valuations

- **Historical origins of generational imaginary**
 - **Nation states**
 - **Democratization of social life**
 - **Historicity of existence and the widening gap between experience and expectations**
- **The concept of anticipated generations**
 - **Revolution and expected generations**
 - **Media images: announced generations**
 - **Everyday valuations: assumed/projected generations**
- **Believing is seeing: objectification and anchoring as continual social processes**

Summary

- **Primary representations: figurative kernels**
 - **Cultural: carriers of meaning**
 - **Social: in origins, uses and functions**
- **Secondary representations (representations of representations)**
 - **Behavioral**
 - **Semantic (themata)**
 - **Pictorial and material, symbolic and iconic, etc.**
- **Monty Python's puzzle: semantic versus performative representation of individuality**