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## **SCIENTIFIC MATERIALS**

Genesis, development and actuality of the Social Representation theory in more than fifty years (1961-2011 and beyond): the main paradigms and the "modelling approach"



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# Social Representations: The Beautiful Invention

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## INTRODUCTION

It is from Tarde's essay on art (1893) that I borrow the expression that makes up the title of this article. In this essay Tarde defines the meaning of the term "art" broadly to "include all the exercises of the imagination and of human ingeniousness, the invention in thousands of forms". For Tarde "everything is an effect of art" encompassing "theories and scientific methods". Later he writes: "We call beautiful any form that is simple and fruitful, Newton's law of gravitation, or that of motion, a discovery pregnant with consequences and foreshadowed truths that are indefinably accumulative, or an invention capable of prolonged application and utility that have no visible limits." And in a footnote Tarde adds: "The highest degree of the utility of a thing is its utility to provoke new and different utilities; the highest degree of the truth of an idea is to be the source of new truths. Thus, let us simply call an invention useful when we find it susceptible to spread through imitation in a viable way, and call an idea true when we find that it is susceptible to propagate in the minds of people for a long time; while we should reserve the term beautiful for an idea that we find able to make us discover more ideas, and for an invention that we judge fruitful to future inventions." (Tarde, 1893, p. 537).

*Psychoanalysis, its image and its public* stands as a paradigmatic illustration of this statement. The term "beautiful" must be reserved for an idea that can lead to the discovery of more ideas, and for an invention that is fruitful to future inventions. Moscovici's "oeuvre" has never been a project for pure imitative repetition or replication as it is often the case in psychology. His work proposes itself as an impulse to open new avenues of discovery. It is in this sense that *Psychoanalysis, its image and its public* is to be considered seminal: it gave rise to new inventions.

In this paper I shall try to demonstrate this by outlining the research and the approaches that have been inspired by the propositions put forward in the two versions of the book, the first edition published in 1961 and the second edition published in 1976, the translation of which is celebrated in this Special Issue of

the *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*. In order to do this, I will isolate and examine a number of topics taking into account the time, the place and the scientific context in which they were used and diffused.

#### INVENTION AND INVENTIONS

Why speak of invention and inventions, in the plural? After all, the book was inscribed in the framework of a discipline with a firm tradition and established schools of thought. But the way in which Moscovici tells the story of the discovery of the concept of social representation shows that this is about an invention. It is an innovation, even more important because it comes in the period after the WWII, when social psychology was blooming in the United States and had not yet reached the crisis of the seventies brought about by post-modernist criticism.

In his text “The first article”, Moscovici (2003) tells the story of the discovery of the term “representation”. There he narrates the dissatisfaction he felt with the concepts and perspectives proposed by social psychology and expresses how the answers given to his doubts have matured. Let me quote his words: “It is most likely that I belong to the family of researchers whose curiosities, ideas, observations, are born more out of personal experience than out of scientific orientation or programme. . . . The topic of social thought, or rather of social knowledge, was essential from the start . . . Little by little it became clear that while I had defined a problem I was lacking a concept to build a theory”. He thought that concepts like opinions or attitudes were deficient both from an intellectual or an aesthetic point of view. The state of the literature available in psychology and the social sciences made it “difficult to know or to discover the concept of which I was in need” (p. 12).

It was in the French National Library where he carried out “personal research on philosophy and the history of sciences” that he found the concept of representation. He says: “without wanting it or asking for it, I stopped in a passage of Father Lenoble’s book on the philosophy of sciences, the *Essay on the Concept of Experience*, published in Paris in 1943. In a sense, it summarized my project and presented me with the concept that I was thinking about without actually knowing it. Here is the passage which caught my attention: ‘There is no common sense, but as many common senses as there are civilizations. The common sense of the European, popularizing philosophy and the mechanical sciences, and Christian morality, is not that of the Asian or the Negro of Africa; the common sense of the French of the twentieth century differs deeply from that of the French from the eighteenth century. Carried by language, like language itself and all collective representations, it expresses the intermediate, the average: common sense wakes up thought in them who do not think; it overpowers thought in them who do think’. You don’t know how you know, but, in one instant, the generic image that had known its concept. Collective representations was only a term but it was

enough to direct my readings, my interpretation of research material and even the very idea that I had of social psychology" (ibid., 13). Moscovici found the term but the invention consisted in the choice of social representation in lieu of collective representation and in the scope of the phenomena subsumed under the notion at the cross-roads between psychology and the social sciences.

As for the plural of the term invention the various contributions inspired by the main issues raised in *Psychoanalysis* reveal that we are dealing with original models, illustrating and enriching the initial intuitions in their own manner. In order to account for these developments I shall consider the historical moments and the places of their emergence, similarly to Bakhtin's (1981) perspective on "chronotope" to tackle their spatio-temporal matrix in local scientific contexts and timely trends of thought and ideologies. The history of the reception of "Psychoanalysis, its image and its public" is, in fact, marked by the evolution of the political contexts and the influence of the debates that have animated the scientific communities in European, North and South-American countries.

In the following, I will examine: 1) The different periods and places that have modulated the mode of reception of and reference to Moscovici's ideas; 2) Those features that highlight the innovative character of the 1961 and 1976 editions of "Psychoanalysis, its image, its public"; 3) The major trends of research that the two editions of the book have inspired, leading to innovative proposals in terms of domains covered, and in terms of theoretical models, empirical concerns and methodological devices; and 4) Some reflections on future developments.

#### PERIODS OF DIFFUSION OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS THEORY

The echoes of Moscovici's work can be analyzed in terms of periods which reflect relations within various domains of knowledge, in particular social psychology, cognitive psychology, philosophy and the social sciences. These relations have involved several positionings ranging from acceptance and recognition to ignoring and criticising to partial borrowings, reinterpretations and additions.

The first ten years following the publication of the first edition can be described as the latency period and this is so for two reasons. On the one hand, these years correspond to the years of maturation of the work published at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies under the umbrella of the concept of social representation. On the other hand, we encounter a phenomenon of blockage caused by the influence of the dominant paradigms in the social sciences. The allegiance to "theories of suspicion" such as Marxism and psychoanalysis put in doubt the validity and the legitimacy of the study of common sense. At the same time the dominant influence of various streams of structuralism in anthropology (Lévi-Strauss), linguistics (Jakobson) and semiology (Greimas), philosophy (Foucault) and psychoanalysis (Lacan) led to the disregard of humanism and the

disappearance of the “subject”, diverting interest from psychosocial processes. Moreover, as the social representations approach stressed an autonomous symbolic level mediating the articulation between social structures and individual processes, it has been associated with an idealist stance strongly attacked by positivist, materialist and objectivist tenants. Nevertheless, the influence of Moscovici’s ideas was already evident, as far back as 1958, in the work of T. Parsons daughter, Ann, published posthumously in 1969.

During the second period, beginning at the end of the sixties, there appeared many French publications where Moscovici’s proposals were explicitly taken up again. Most of these were studies of a psycho-sociological and sociological nature. In line with research on psychoanalysis, they focused on variations in the images, beliefs, and attitudes, associated with social groups and the modes of relation between individuals and the social world. They used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to highlight the social and historical determination of the content and structure of representations, in various domains: education, health, gender, groups, childhood, justice, etc. At the same time, a stream of experimental research emerged, focusing on the systemic and structural properties of representations, aimed at showing the effect of intergroup relations on representation formation as well as the role of representations in social relations and practices. The majority of these trends of research were situated in France.

The third period was initiated by the conference on social representations organized in 1979 by R. Farr and S. Moscovici in the European Laboratory of Social Psychology at the Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, Paris<sup>1</sup>. A book based on the presented papers was published in English in 1984. At a time of strong crisis in social psychology, the theory of social representation appeared as one of the major alternative trends to rethink the discipline together with ethogenic psychology, social constructionism, discursive social psychology, and critical psychology (Collier et al., 1991). This period saw a growing and accelerated research interest in Europe, particularly in Austria, England, Germany, Italy and Spain. Nevertheless, corresponding to—and sometimes because of—the diffusion of the approach, discussions concerning the legitimacy of the notion of representation emerged under the impulse given by post-modern epistemological criticisms and the dominance of the linguistic and discursive turns. This situation has resulted in some important critical debates, reflected in articles and books, which gave rise to different orientations of research in the field of social representations (De Rosa, 1992). As we shall see later, these orientations have gained autonomy, prefiguring the present state of the field.

A fourth period opened at the end of the eighties, marked by the adoption of the concept of representation in both research and theory by the social sciences, particularly in France<sup>2</sup>. The end of the “great narratives”, the abandonment of what was called “Russian thought” or “Chinese thought” after the collapse of the Soviet empire, involved upheavals in the social sciences that called into question economic determinisms and social conditionings. This state of affairs had as a

consequence a sort of rehabilitation of the concept of representation. Whereas in social psychology linguistic and post-modern approaches had put the concept of representations into question, in the social sciences which refused both the dogmatism of the “linguistic turn” and the standpoint of positivism in favour of interpretive devices, this rehabilitation rapidly was transformed into claim and ultimate recourse. It went hand in hand with the correlative affirmation of the need for a return to the concept of an active and thinking subject and a new interrogation into the nature of the social bond. This, according to Dosse “implies another scale of analysis, that is closer to social actors. Daily life representations play the part of methodological levers which allow for more interest in the instituting rather than in the instituted.” (1995, p. 418).

The involvement of the social sciences in social and collective representations studies is today impressive, particularly in anthropology and history (Jodelet, 2008). On the one hand, we can observe in this literature a generalized use of the term representation; when the term is not mentioned as such we find descriptive categories for systems and processes of meaning whose conceptual frames are similar to those proposed in social representation approaches. On the other hand, the social sciences confer to representations related to practices and discourses specific functions such as: constitution of social reality and social orders; operator of political and social transformations; symbolic mediation sustaining social identity and the social bond; and modelling of sensibilities and practices in mass culture. These perspectives are in line with those developed in social representations studies. Last but not least, we find in recent cultural analyses of globalization and in studies of developing contexts addressing concrete situations a designation of representations as the specific object of cultural science (Appadurai, 1999). Indeed from the third period onwards there has been a strong development of social representations research in Latin America. This fact deserves mention inasmuch as it demonstrates the relevance of Moscovici’s proposals to open new fields of research that are adapted to the demand of developing countries and suited for application in domains such as community, health and education, as well for intervention and change in social fields.

In 1989, in an introduction to the field of research on social representations I used the metaphor of a domain in expansion (Jodelet, 1989). The image has been largely confirmed at the end of the century when we see the multiplication of references to Moscovici and to social and collective representations together with a growing number of publications and the institutionalisation of teaching and research training. The impressive character of the diffusion of social representations is attested by the increasing curve of publications (books, articles, conference communications) registered from 1961 to 2000 in the meta-theoretical analysis of de Rosa and d’Ambrosio (2008) from 75 in the 60s to 3,189 in the 90s. Programmes of teaching and research in diverse universities and the the creation of the “European Phd on social representations and communication”, in 1992<sup>3</sup>, have contributed to the research training of doctoral students from many different

countries<sup>4</sup>. Finally, since 1992, Wolfgang Wagner has lead the publication of a journal “Papers on Social Representations”, that has been online since 1999<sup>5</sup>.

But at the same time, we can observe a fragmentation of the field and a double regionalization: a thematic one with specific and independent perspectives adopted to cope with theoretical proposals and a geographical one often corresponding to academic and scientific contexts, orientations and debates in diverse parts of Europe. Some fundamental concepts are neglected or forgotten, and alternative sub-models emerge, sometimes without true dialogue. In this historical evolution we can identify the impulse that Moscovici gave to fields of research on social representations. Such an effort requires an overview of the major issues proposed by Moscovici that found echoes in multiple domains of research.

#### THE INNOVATIVE FEATURES OF PSYCHOANALYSIS, ITS IMAGE, ITS PUBLIC

The tentative comparison of the two editions of *Psychoanalysis* which I shall offer is certainly not exhaustive. It aims to scrutinize some of the major issues that influenced the development and the physiognomy of the field while having no intention of covering all authors and questions at stake. A brief overview of the first edition is necessary, and this for a number of different reasons.

This version has been inspirational for numerous scientists who have referred to its theoretical and empirical contribution for the analysis of common sense. It has put forward the imperative to overcome the dichotomy between psychological and sociological approaches to human behaviour. It searched an object that could allow social psychology to be relevant both at the individual and social levels through the articulation of psychological and social processes. The choice of social representation led, in the 1961 publication, to the formulation of a social psychology of knowledge distinguished from both a sociology and a psychology of knowledge.

Nevertheless Moscovici claimed the existence of “points of encounter not by a desire of harmony, but due to a correspondence between concepts and objectives aimed at independently”. This was the case in particular for sociology and anthropology, since they were the basis of representational studies and because there is an analogy between the phenomena studied in different societies and between the functions of common sense and other forms of thinking. But it also held for social and developmental psychology, particularly Piaget’s work, whose contributions too were taken into account. These remarks call attention to the continuity of Moscovici’s concerns. He later noted that he wanted to establish an anthropology of contemporary societies (Moscovici, 2000; 2001). In another text, he claimed the importance of inter-disciplinarity, in search of “the interdependence between different knowledges along common borders so that a science can make use of another until their contact becomes fertilizing, stimulating and allows cross-breeding” (Moscovici, 1999, p. 222).

## The Innovative Character of the 1961 Edition

Published in 1961, the book introduced themes of a strong innovative character. It innovated in relation to the choice of the research object, the problems there formulated, and the new perspectives which it opened.

The object of research, social representations, sought to construct a truly “social” social psychology and its innovative character can be underlined by three points: a) its focus on common sense thinking; b) its role in the constitution of reality, and c) its complexity. The book deals with “common sense” a specific form of “knowledge” which was a word that sounded relatively unfamiliar in social psychology (Pepitone, 2008). Leaving aside authors as Heider or Lewin, or sociological trends as symbolic interactionism, the study of common sense as a result of social and interactive processes and a counterbalance to the individualistic bias of cognitive approaches was not a point of interest at the time. Its role in the constitution of reality was of little concern. One has to remember that Berger and Luckmann’s book “*The Social construction of Reality*” (1966) and Gergen constructionist model (1982) appeared some years later.

As for the complexity of the object, it was implied by the phenomenon at stake and the intention to construe a perspective at the crossroads between psychology and social sciences, enlarging social psychology so that it comprehends the full range of interdependent influences that integrates society, culture, and the individual. To cope with the phenomena of social representations implied to combine concepts borrowed from neighbouring disciplines (from attitude and belief to ideology and culture) relocating them in a holistic framework that refused the reduction of social representation to any one of them. Such a procedure anticipated complexity theories and implemented interdisciplinary requirements.

The problem linked to the construction of the object innovated insofar as it differed from the sociological tradition centred on collective representations as social constraints and tackled the specificities of modern societies, which are marked by diversity and change. It highlights the role of communication and the media in the diffusion of science in contemporary societies, its reception and its effects on the thinking and communication of social subjects (individual and collective).

However, the decisive and most productive novelty of the 1961 edition is the development of a new perspective in knowledge studies, which conferred to social psychology a specific task while redefining its domain. The long tradition of the sociology of knowledge provided the background to elaborate a new perspective of a social psychological type. The criticisms levelled at sociological theories of knowledge considered these unable to constitute an integrated scientific corpus despite the adoption of the common and basic principle that postulated that intellectual productions are conditioned by social frames. Moscovici paid attention to the correspondence between the organisation of social relations and social representations. What differed in relation to the sociology of knowledge was the

autonomous concept of social representation situated in the organisation of collective life on the one hand and, in the “constitutive formations” of representations on the other. These latter involve the types of relations, the languages and the cognitive systems of a stable or sometimes invariant nature.

This autonomy was directly imputed in the role of language and communication and the specificity and legitimacy of a social psychology of knowledge. In this direction, Moscovici has proposed a comprehensive approach covering a large spectrum of communicative forms, ranging from inter-personal, intra-personal and inter-group forms to those in mass communication. To this end he elaborated an analytic model of communication systems. These communicative devices became a central focus in the second edition and in further developments of social representations research.

Other important aspects emphasising the specificity of the social psychology of knowledge refer to relations between cognitive processes and social interaction, and to the functioning of natural thinking and logic. This was possible thanks to the combination of psychological, social psychological, linguistic, semiological and anthropological perspectives. They enable the development of an original and integrative model of social thinking, and introduce the cultural, symbolic and imaginary properties of thinking and knowledge, which became a resource for future developments.

The model introduced in the first edition of *Psychoanalysis* was maintained in the 1976 edition. Three influential aspects of this original model are important. The first is the combined analysis of knowledge processes and products at both the individual and collective level. Here we have the double and inseparable aspects of social representations as both constituting and constituted forms of thinking. This perspective has allowed the elaboration of theoretical propositions on the basis of empirical observation and the analysis of discourse, images, textual and iconic forms of media messages and practices. This has fitted with the systemic and complex character of the phenomena studied in natural or experimental contexts in terms of content (attitude, information, image, beliefs, etc.), production (individual, group and collective) and functions (orientation of behaviour and communication). The second aspect concerns the relationships between representations and public issues in conflicts, disagreements in social divisions, different kinds of information and education among other issues. This aspect acquires theoretical validity through the use of comparative designs.

Finally, *Psychoanalysis* in 1961 developed a series of theoretical propositions, which were reaffirmed in the second edition. These sought to a) describe the content of social representations in terms of different dimensions (information, attitude, and field of representation) and its modes of elaboration (information dispersion, inference pressure, focalisation); b) analyse the processes of formation of representations (objectification, anchoring); c) delineate natural thinking and its logical properties (formalism, informal repetition, analogy and cognitive polyphasia; and d) explore the functions of representations (the orientation of behaviour and communication).

## The Second Edition of 1976

The reorganization of the second edition of *Psychoanalysis* shows shifts in Moscovici's concerns. The discussion of the sociology of knowledge disappears: having said all that was necessary, Moscovici does not hark back on his refection. There are now references to the social psychological literature and to major thinkers in sociology, psychology and linguistics. As a consequence, the relation between social factors and social representations is no longer treated in terms of determination but in terms of an isomorphism between social regulations and the structure of social representations. The "order and movement of reflexive forms" are thus compared with "the order and movement of interactive and cultural factors". Conversely, the social dimension is essentially tackled by accentuating the importance of language and communication in the production, functioning and efficacy of social representations. This perspective stresses jointly the constitutive role of interpersonal, intergroup and of media communications and discourses. Such an emphasis had twofold consequences.

First, it expanded the analysis of the properties and functions of social representations including their influence on communicative and practical action. Representations are considered as meaning; they express group dimensions as well as cognitive and symbolic ways of naming and classifying social reality and coping with unfamiliarity. Moreover, they provide a new reflection on diversity in forms of knowledge. Second, the emphasis on communicative devices is deepened by Moscovici's critical account and proposals on how to overcome the shortcomings of social psychology. In 1970 he already suggested central core "as the unit constituted by the interdependence, actual or symbolic, of a plurality of subjects in their relation to a common environment, be it of a physical or social nature. Such a perspective is applicable to group phenomena as well as to psychological and social processes and integrates the factuality of social relations into the description and explication of psychological and social phenomena. In this case the relation subject-object is mediated by the intervention of another subject, an Alter, and becomes a complex relation between subjects and between subjects and objects" (Moscovici, 1970, p. 33).

These propositions were brought together in 1984 under the triangulating schema "Subject-Alter-Object", which has become a reference largely adopted in the field. Even further, and in clear opposition to the trends of the cognitive sciences, from 1976 onwards Moscovici produced a series of papers underlining his preoccupation with linguistic and communicative issues. A compilation of these major papers (Moscovici, 2000) reveals that his social vision is complemented by a strong emphasis on cultural factors and on the anthropological perspectives outlined in *Psychoanalysis*. References to Vygotsky, Piaget, Lévy-Bruhl and Holton amongst others permit differentiating, along with common sense, different forms of thinking (ideological, scientific, magical) and beliefs. The exploration of processes of objectification is complemented by the consideration of a new principle of trans-historical kind, *themata*. Themata allow an understanding of how

social representations are structured and at the same time draw attention to the role of memory and tradition, in conjunction with emotion and subjectivity. These theoretical extensions in time have contributed to the transformations of the research trends inspired by *Psychoanalysis*.

#### FIELDS OF RESEARCH

The next sections are devoted to innovative contributions in the larger field of social representations research. Two moments will be disentangled in order to give account of the emergence, consolidation, development and disappearance of specific orientations during the first period, and the three following ones.

#### Developments in Research Inspired by First Edition (1970–1980)

The diffusion of “*Psychanalysis*” led to new research perspectives during the years between 1970–1980. These perspectives borrowed from the book, particularly in France, the social analysis of knowledge and meaning. New domains of research opened up. The emphasis on the mutual transformation of scientific and lay knowledge resulting from the penetration and diffusion of science in society gave rise to a new and vast domain of research devoted to scientific vulgarization, the teaching of science and knowledge transmission and assimilation. At the same time new attention was given to social spaces where science had an impact: body, education, health, handicap. The model proposed to analyse media communication systems stimulate the study of literature and the press contribution to the formation of social representations. The importance given to images in social representations finds an echo in studies of images related to madness and to cities.

Second, the relations between social representations and social structure guided new trends of research devoted to the effects of social membership in the content and organization of social representations. A series of studies considered the social inscription of subjects and groups as the organizer of systems of meaning and representation related to objects of common concern. These studies focused on a) the class condition: the working class and cultural images, women and social class; b) social experience: health representations as an expression of the relations individual/society, mental handicap as an expression of parental and professional roles; c) social and institutional norms guiding practices in the educational and justice sectors; and d) engagement in political and social movements: students’ protest movements, social participation, voting practices. These approaches focusing on the social basis of knowledge were pursued in the following periods (see Von Cranach, Doise, and Mugny, 1992).

Third, complex qualitative and quantitative methodologies have been developed to study content (information, attitude, representational field), processes

(objectification, anchoring) and function of social representations in relation to social membership, experience, and engagement. Original techniques of meaning elicitation (verbal free associations) were combined with non-directive or semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, both in field studies or in experimental tasks in the laboratory. In addition, experimental studies were devoted to exploration of theoretical constructs centred on the structural and systemic properties of social representations and their relation to practices and social relations.

Experimental investigations gave rise to the first original models offering complementary perspectives of social representations. Two new streams emerged: the study of structural properties and socio-genetic research. They offered the first demonstration of the link between social representations and behaviour, demonstrating that: a) with an identical experimental design, it suffices to change one element of the representational situation (the task or its objective, the self or the partner) to induce different behaviours (Abric, 1971); b) the dynamic of inter-group relations mobilizes a representational activity that anticipates, regulates, or justifies each group action (Doise, 1972). Given the coherence of their projects, the tight articulation between theory and method, and the number of researchers involved these streams were labelled “Schools” taking the name of their universities: Aix en Provence and Geneva.

The Aix en Provence School, (Abric, Flament, Guimelli, Rouquette) devotes its activities to the study of social representations considered as constituted states of shared meanings, beliefs and cognitions distributed in homogeneous populations. Doctoral theses on social representations examined structure, relation with practices and processes of transformation. Drawing on sophisticated statistical procedures, this structural approach, also called “theory of the central nucleus”, distinguishes central and peripheral elements in a representational state. The former guarantees the general meaning and organization as well as the stability of the state observed and the latter gives concreteness and expression to the central system, allowing regulation and adaptation to social context, individual differentiation and possibility of change. In its origin, this model is directly in line with Moscovici’s analysis of the process of objectification that includes the schematic organization of selected information items around a “figurative nucleus”.

The Geneva school was led by Doise who prefers to call it “Leman School” because it assembles researchers (among them Clemence, Lorenzi Cioldi, Straerklé), pertaining to, or trained in a variety of Swiss universities. An original appropriation of Moscovici’s conceptions led to the insertion of the social representational approach in a social psychological perspective considering different level of analysis (intra-individual, inter-individual, inter-groupal and ideological) and different explanatory systems (Doise, 1986). The emphasis on the relations of social representations with inter-group and intra-group interaction produces a complex analysis that interweaves determinants from the social basis and the cognitive aspects of social representations.

The activities of both the Aix and the Geneva schools have been pursued and extended in the two last decades, producing theoretical enrichment, methodological refinement and applications in diverse domains at the international level.

### Research Development since 1980

The publication of the second edition of *Psychoanalysis*, combined with the renewal of perspectives in the social sciences and the alternative streams proposed in social psychology have changed the face of social representations research. One can observe during the past few decades an application of particular aspects of the theory, a use of different methodologies and local perspectives developed around specific problems. This movement registers a relative withdrawal from direct social determinism in favour of processes of interaction linked to the construction of social representations. In the studies of common sense we find references to new authors in sociology, linguistics, anthropology, psychoanalysis, the cognitive sciences and philosophy.

This diffusion of Moscovici's theory is marked by the progressive extension of the use of, and reference to, the perspective of social representations present today in Europe, North America, Latin America and more recently, Asia. Three characteristics of this diffusion can be isolated: the multiplication of the issues studied, the flexibility of methodological choices and the theoretical enlargements that follow current scientific developments and debates in relation to contemporary social problems. These include: community, environment, economics, ethics, gender, health and mental health, identity, inter-group relations, politics, press and mass communication, and science and technology. These issues imply an innovative adaptation of selected elements of Moscovici's proposals to highlight social dynamics and symbolic systems or answer questions appearing in a specific social domain. At the same time, and particularly in developing countries, the reference to social representation overcomes the limitations of mainstream social psychology by adapting research tools to the peculiarities of local contexts and the voices of local people.

The differentiation of research on the basis of methodological criteria gives evidence of innovative ways to capture social representations as both product and process. As a product, content analysis provides a dual orientation towards a structured field and structuring devices. As process, research accentuates the genesis (developmental and social), the functioning (stability and change) and social efficacy (behavioural prescription and communication orientation). Extending Moscovici's use of a set of techniques to encompass the complexity of phenomena in question, most studies display a fertile inventiveness illustrated by the publication of specific manuals (De Rosa, 1990; Flick, 1992; Doise, Clemence, and Lorezi-Cioldi, 1993; Abric, 1984; Bauer and Gaskell, 2000; Abric, 2003). These present the possibility of combining and adapting different modalities of data collection

and treatment used in the psychological and social sciences, and establish new instruments and multi-method designs. New roads are opened to study social representations through images. The attention paid to the collective and interactive production of social representations has encouraged the use of focus group discussions.

As a result, laboratory experimentation is overtaken by, or combined with, observation in real milieus, quantitative enquiries and interpretative qualitative approaches so that methodological options can respond to the dynamic specificity of social representation in concrete social contexts and public spaces. Furthermore, discussions about the fit between theoretical models and empirical techniques take place. Moreover, researchers are concerned with correspondence between ontology, epistemology and methodology and the assessment of the validity of results by triangulation (Flick, 1992). At the same time there have been large international investigations aiming to compare specific contents and processes linked to national, historical and local contexts. One can interpret this propensity for diversity as a sign of innovation. It contrasts with the univocal methodological choices in the field of social psychology, which tends to be divided into discrete fields drawing on canonical tools without any overlap or complementary use of experimental, qualitative and quantitative approaches.

As for theoretical development, it can be attributed to the consolidation of the existing Schools and to the emergence of new and different trends which elaborate original models focusing on cultural dimension and on language and communication. The structuralist approach lead by the Aix School is marked by a systematic exploration of the formal and functional properties of social representations organization. Experimental and field studies identify specific social representations by their central core and demonstrate its stability. These studies differentiate normative and functional elements of social representations and their relations to attitudes. They verify the situational and behavioural conditions of transformation of social representation eliciting the non verbal parts, "the mute zone". Empirical research has studied gender, globalization, managing, marketing, practices in agriculture and hunting, professional mobility, road safety, school, security, social relations, tourism.

The Geneva school studies theoretical formulations of the social genesis, marking and regulation of social representations, and a wide range of objects treated through the lens of a societal approach. In line with his model of levels of analysis Doise takes into account the contribution of Moscovici on press analysis and Bourdieu's sociological theory. He proposes a new definition of social representations as principles of position-taking linked to specific insertions in social fields and as symbolic organizers of social relations. Doise, Clemence and Lorenzi-Cioldi (1993) insist on the heterogenous nature of social representations produced by individuals and groups occupying different social positions. They develop Moscovici's perspective on anchoring, drawing on the psychosocial four levels model of analysis and the phases of psycho-genetic development proposed by Duveen (1997). In

parallel, research programmes have been launched on intergroup relations, social marking in cognitive operations and social representations of intelligence. More recently, a large international study on Human Rights as normative social representations has shown that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights constitutes a framework whose representation is anchored in different ways in social and cultural contexts (Doise, 2002).

Among the new perspectives opened by Moscovici's reflection on the symbolic and cultural dimension of social representations is an anthropological one. The anthropological perspective, combined with the psycho-genetic perspective (Duveen and Lloyd, 1990), studies the construction of gender identity in childhood, using ethnographic methods in the natural setting of pre-school (Lloyd and Duveen, 1992). Other trends focus on the symbolic function of social representations in organizing social relations between groups in cultural settings (Jodelet, 1991), on their relations between knowledge systems linked to communities identities (Jovchelovitch and Gervais, 1999; Jovchelovitch, 2007), and on the modernisation of tradition (Wagner, Queen, Verna, and Themel, 1999).

What deserves attention in these new trends is their relation to intellectual debates introduced by post-modern and discursive streams of thought that emerged in the eighties. The latter produced strong criticisms of social representations, which were reduced, erroneously in my view, to a purely mentalist and cognitive construct. Be it as it may, the epistemological controversies engendered by the confrontation between alternative orientations, and between these and the predominant cognitive concerns of mainstream social psychology have instigated theoretical refinements, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon literature.

The interactive production of social representations and their linguistic nature has led to a focus on the discursive basis of their formation, properties and effects on the construction of social reality, daily life practices, everyday common sense, personal and community identity. The social discourses held in public or in everyday encounters ensure the holomorphic nature of social representations; they constitute social objects and institutions, describe the actions of actors and guide interactive behaviour in order to maintain and reproduce social conditions (Wagner, 2005). From another but similar perspective, social representations are treated as situated systems of meanings and knowledge, the varied products of communicative efforts in concrete cultural contexts and public spheres where power entails different forms of knowledge legitimacy (Jovchelovitch, 2007).

Moscovici's triadic model "Ego-Alter-Object" has been taken over and expanded in two ways. The Tobleron metaphor has been used to account for the diachronic transformation of social representations through social exchange (Bauer and Gaskell, 1999). Going beyond face-to-face interaction, the dialogical model of Marková (2003) provides a dynamic conception of socially shared knowledge. Bridging Bakhtin's dialogism and Moscovici's theory, this conception assumes that, through and in communicative interaction of Ego and Alter, an Alter always intervenes in the relation between an Ego and an Object, each pole

of the triad being empirically implemented under diverse forms. The dialogical process results in shared knowledge marked by historical, cultural and rhetorical characteristics and presenting controversial and argumentative aspects. Attention to language and discourse has also led to an interpretation of social representations in the frame of narrativity (Lazlo, 2008).

Finally, culture encounters a sound echo in social representations research in diverse countries, giving rise to different, not yet systematized, approaches of the relations between culture and social representations. Second, the links between social representations, tradition and historical knowledge guides attention to the study of memory. Third, the development of pragmatics and experience contributes to the study of the experiential dimensions of social representation. Fourth, the renewed interest of the social sciences in collective representations offers a way to expand the analysis of the relations between social representations and group action, identity, conflict, and the transsubjective ideational features of social life. Last but not least, the movement of return to the subject (Jodelet, 2008) in the human sciences finds a parallel in Moscovici's recent revival of old perspectives on subjectivity. He states (Moscovici, 1998) that the discovery of the subjectivity of social life impressed him in Lagache's lessons. But despite his allegiance to the idea, it has been necessary to recover, in writing his autobiography, the subjective strength to introduce it in his work. This new vision opens up a novel road to reintroduce the imaginary, the affective and the emotional dimensions in the analysis of the psychic functioning of social representations. All these proposals are combined with discussions about the ontological and epistemological status of social representations and their value as descriptive and explicative devices in studying individual-society relations. That is why the original features they present may be considered as true innovations.

#### FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

One of the most serious gaps in developing Moscovici's heuristic proposals refers to the processes of production of social representations, namely anchoring and objectification. They are referred to by many researchers but rarely with a complete account. Very few take into account the different phases identified by Moscovici. Each process comprises three continuous phases. The first two relate to their internal constitution under social control and the third one to their use in coping with the external world. Objectification involves "information selection" and its "schematization" that in turn allows a "naturalization", a projection of representational constructs as concrete entities in the lifeworld. Anchoring explains how sense is given to unfamiliar objects through their "insertion in an existing conceptual frame" together with their "interpretation in function of a principle of signification", the product of which is used, via "instrumentalization", for naming, classifying and interpreting social objects.

These processes express the dialectical relation between social conditions and the social construction of reality, with a circular movement between world and thinking. It seems to me that this analysis is inspired by the cybernetic orientation of Moscovici's speculations. He himself notes, in the quoted article of "Journal des Psychologues", that the discovery of cybernetics has provoked "one of the most indelible intellectual emotions experienced in his life". Cybernetics led him to consider social psychology as an "hybrid science", a term that has become today a must for epistemological reflection, as a science that is studying and inventing phenomena that no other science can approach in a significant way.

In relation to the process of objectification researchers have mainly retained and discussed the third phase, naturalization, the concretization of abstract notions. The less observed are the first and the second phase of information selection and schematization. We must remember, however, that in the selection of information refers to the same type of phenomenon that was studied by Bartlett as conventionalisation. Mary Douglas (1986) reminds us that Bartlett has been directly influenced by Wiener, the inventor of cybernetics, who worked in Cambridge with Bertrand Russell. The correspondence between the two phenomena is evident by their relation to processes of communication and confirmed by a variety of studies on cognition. The second phase, schematization, is recognized as a basic thinking process in philosophy, in knowledge theories, and in the human sciences as shown by the recent development of the notion of "practical schema" in sociology and anthropology. Moscovici's originality is to have underlined the image-like character of the "figurative nucleus" and its central position in structuring knowledge. As we have seen, the latter has inspired directly the trend of structural analysis of social representation. In a related way, the notion of image, originally adopted by researchers and subsequently abandoned, is returning with new reflections on the imaginative creativity of social representations (Arruda and DeAlba, 2008). The notion of image opens new avenues to the exploration along with sociological and anthropological analysis.

The process of anchoring has been for a long period neglected in the analysis of social representations, as I have indicated in 1984 (Jodelet, 1984a). But the attention to the familiarization of the strange gave it a new lease of life. The integration of novelty into prior knowledge has been studied in cognitive sciences as the confrontation between the old and the new. It has also been studied in relation to social position and subjective experience. Less attention has been devoted to the the second phase, i.e. the ascribing of meaning. This stage concerns the interdependence between the elements of representation by a "principle of signification" and the cultural and social values to which the subject adheres. This stage highlights the processes through which ideas are evaluated and positioned. Moreover, as signalled by Herzlich, the semantic nature of social representations is a way of avoiding its reduction to a pure function of organization of information.

More recently we find in Moscovici's work in the notion of themata an echo of the earlier dynamic between the stable figurative nucleus and the networks of signification "open and sensible to the movements agitating society".

To end with this commentary on the reception of Moscovici's ideas let me say a word on the analysis of natural thinking and its logic. Notwithstanding existing models for the analysis of natural logic (Grize, 1996), few researchers have paid attention to this line of investigation, preferring instead to examine argumentative and rhetorical forms of discourse. It would be interesting to consider the logical aspects of social representations. This has been the case recently with the hypothesis of cognitive polyphasia in the analysis of natural thinking. Moscovici conceived this process as the dynamic coexistence of distinct modalities of knowledge corresponding to specific types of inter-relations between the subject and his surrounding world. This process points also to the juxtaposition of items pertaining to different layers of knowledge, as shown by the study of representation of mental illness in a peasant community (Jodelet, 1991) or by Jovchelovitch's (2007) analysis of the cultural diversity of knowledge. The new field opened up by this issue deserves further elaboration of Moscovici's hypothetical construct.

#### CONCLUSION

The amplitude of Moscovici's proposals has allowed, from a theoretical and empirical point of view, multifaceted developments that prove their fecundity and call for a cumulative consideration without exclusion. In the conclusion of the 1961 and 1976 versions of his book Moscovici displays a surprising humility. He speaks of uncertainties of perspectives just outlined, of a question asked at every moment but not yet resolved: "How does man constitute his reality?" which he could not answer in the first attempt. Until recently he did not speak of a theory of social representations, an expression that is now part of the canon of social psychology and comprises a variety of contributions and different interpretative styles. Each one of these contributions tries to develop in its own way some of the proposals, hypotheses and so called adumbrations of "Psychoanalysis, its image and its public". Moscovici himself has not ceased to enrich its implications and its far-reaching insights. Today the theory of social representations is seen as a "systemic theory", important to the future development of social psychology (Palmonari, 2008).

This state of affairs raises some questions. In face of the multiplication of new theoretical formulations, some of which intending to elaborate further the original insights of the theory and others intending to complete the achievements of Moscovici's theory, how to think about their mutual relations and their relations with the whole system he has proposed? Are we in the presence of models (or paradigms, or perspectives) that gravitate around a seminal and central one, or in the presence of a grand theory from which sub-theories develop? To answer these

questions we need to find the way to unify perspectives that cristalize around specific central points but that so far remain in mutual ignorance or struggle with one another. There is today an essential need for dialogue between the different sub-theories (or models, or paradigms, or perspectives) so that the complexity of phenomena can be addressed. A task in charge of whom? Could it be of the author of "Psychoanalysis, its image and its public"? Why not? Did not he claim in the conclusion of the book we are celebrating here: "The work of science is never done, and its virtues lie in its ability to begin again. It is folly to want to have an immediate key to all the difficulties. The difficulties are such that some people are reluctant to attempt an analysis of all the problems, and they then nibble away at the most superficial aspects instead of taking them on as a totality. It is an illusion to believe that this acquits us of our responsibilities. One day or another, we will have to go back to the totality, especially if we are studying it *in vivo*, and it is best to tackle it from the start, even if we do not really have the means to do so, and even in the midst of the uncertainties I am referring to" (Moscovici, 2008: 361). Such reflections retain all their actuality.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The European Laboratory of Social Psychology has been created in 1976 in the Foundation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, under the direction of Serge Moscovici.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the major French theoretical and empirical research based on field and experimental studies are illustrated in the book on "Social Representations" edited by Farr and Moscovici (1984). Wagner (2005) gives an extensive and analytic account of most of these research trends. For those who read French, synthetic overviews of the field can be found in Jodelet 1984, 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Informations on the European Ph.D. on Social Representations and Communication, can be found on the phd web site: [www.europhd.net](http://www.europhd.net).

<sup>4</sup> In the frame of the European Ph.D. 14 editions of International Summer Schools and 12 Lab Meetings have been directed to 962 participants from 47 countries: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Columbia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldavia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA, Venezuela. The teaching staff has comprised 224 professors coming from: Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, United Kingdom, USA.

<sup>5</sup> *Papers on social Representations*. Peer Reviewed Online Journal. <http://www.psr.jku.at/>

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