AN APPROACH TO THE HISTORICITY OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

AN APPROACH TO THE HISTORICITY OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS. This article aims to emphasize the historicity of social representations as a fundamental aspect for understanding the generativity and the stabilization processes of their content. To do so, it considers that social representations are the result, on the one hand, of the reappropriation of content coming from different chronological periods and, on the other, of the content produced by new contexts. The article presents some aspects of the reciprocity that exists between social representations and the perspective of the history of mentalities, thus emphasizing that the objectivization and anchoring processes that form social representations, are privileged processes for the investigation of this historicity.
SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS – HISTORY – SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The historicity[1] of social representations is characterized by the fact that when they are presented as a "modality of private knowledge, the function of which is the preparation of behaviors and communication between individuals" (Moscovici, 1978), they are powered both by knowledge coming from daily experience as well as by the reappropriation[2] of

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[1] This word is understood to mean the condition of that which is historical; historicity is something that is constructed and not given and unchangeable content.

[2] The word 'reappropriation' is here used in accordance with the understanding of Gurza Lavalle (2004), for whom permanence in the current context of a series of "themes" produced in the past does not imply continuity

historically consolidated meanings and that, by and large, they form part of what Hobsbawm (1997) called "invented tradition"[3].

The reapproparation of the past, far from being static, is permeated by a certain plasticity as each generation changes (or does not change) the sense and understanding of preexisting knowledge and of historically consolidated meanings[4]. In other words, each current context selects content from the past that will be updated once more by means of a reference and an interpretation that, in the final count, are dependent on the meaning that a particular group will attribute to its area of experience and its expectation horizon[5].

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in the realm of "problems", i.e. in the "specific forms of approach from which the *theme* is reconstructed and understood" (p. 69).

[3] According to Hobsbawm (1997), "invented tradition" is understood to mean a "set of practices, normally governed by tacit or openly accepted rules; such practices, of a ritual or symbolic nature, seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior through repetition, which automatically implies continuity with regard to the past" (p. 9).

[4] For Schaff (1995), one of the problems of the 20th century, which has fascinated theorists in history, refers to the fact that each generation has its own view of the historical process. The explanations for this were, he said, formulated in the following interchangeable terms: a reinterpretation of history occurs because of both the varied needs of the present as well as the effects of past events that emerge in the present. However, this variability does not affect the objectivity of historical knowledge, given that "as soon as historical knowledge is taken as the process and overcoming of historical truths – like truths as additive and cumulative truths - it is understandable why there is a constant reinterpretation of history and the variability of the historical image; this is a variability that, far from denying the objectivity of historical truth, on the contrary confirms it" (p. 277). Now, if one considers History as being a form of indirect knowledge of the past indicating "both the narration of events as well as the events themselves" (Lalande, 1993, p. 471) and being, therefore, prone to the limits imposed by that very knowledge, the interpretation of this past becomes dependent on the current context from which its plastic characteristic derives.

[5] According to German historian, Reinhart Koselleck (2006a), "experience space" and "horizon of expectation" are formal categories of knowledge that form the basis of the possibility of a history without, however, conveying an historical reality *a priori*, since "all history was constituted by the experiences and expectations of the people who act or who suffer. However, we have still said nothing about a concrete history - past, present or future" (p. 306). For the author, "experience is the current past, one in which happenings became incorporated and can be remembered. It is in experience that both rational elaboration, as well as the unconscious forms of behavior that no longer exist, or that no longer need to be present in knowledge, merge. Moreover, the experience of each one, passed down from generation to generation and by institutions, always contains and preserves a 'foreign' experience. In this sense,,history has always been conceived of as

Now if, as Marková states (2006), the theoretical scope of social representations assumes that their content be structured - and one of the objectives of the theory is precisely to identify and analyze them –consideration of their historicity is fundamental for understanding generativity and stability construction processes, given that social representations are both the result of the reappropriation of content coming from other chronological periods as well as those generated by new contexts, which means that they are established concomitantly with constituted and constituent thinking (Suarez Molnar, 2003).

This substantiation creates the need to discuss social representations also as "psycho-historical" phenomena, dispelling the impression that they are presented either as an "organized *corpus*" waiting for the use of a suitable methodological tool to be unveiled (Di Giacomo, 1987), or as the product of a type of "universal abstract", established within an unhistorical context.

Notwithstanding the importance of studying the historicity of social representations for understanding their genesis and the stability construction processes of their content, this is something that, although not new, is still little explored, as evidenced by the work of Castorina (2007), Villas Bôas and Sousa (2007), Jodelet (2003), Bertrand (2003, 2002), Moliner (2001) and Rouquette and Guimelli (1994). In general, research into social

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knowledge of 'foreign' experiences" (p. 309-310). It is from this area of experience, built up from historical knowledge that is produced or experienced, that a future will be planned in which a horizon of expectation is established, a horizon that "is realized today, is the future present, directed at the not-yet, at the non-experienced, at what can only be foreseen. Hope and fear, desire and will, unrest, but also the rational analysis, the receptive vision or curiosity form part of the expectation and constitute it" (Koselleck, 2006a, p. 310). Historical time, constituted by the intertwining between what is understood by the past and what is glimpsed as being the future, is built from the tension, therefore, that exists between experience and expectation. It is worth pointing out that German philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer (2002), also works with the "experience and horizon" pair, although he has another concern. For this author, experience "not only refers to experience in the sense of what this teaches us about such and such a thing. It refers to experience in its entirety. This is the experience that each one has to constantly acquire and that no one can be spared from. Here, experience is something that is part of the historical essence of man. Although it is a limited objective, the educational concern, like the concern parents have for their children, a concern for saving someone from undergoing certain experiences, the experience as a whole is not something that anyone can be spared from. In this sense, experience presupposes, of necessity, that many expectations are disappointed, because this it is only acquired through this" (p. 525). With regard to the possibilities of linking the "experience space" and "expectation horizon" concepts to the theory of social representations, see Villas Boas (2008).

representations tend to emphasize much more the action of everyday practices in analyzing the current state of a particular representation than its genesis and stabilization process, in which the role of historically constituted determinants is fundamental.

Despite the importance of these discussions, understanding the dynamics of social representations, as well as the mechanisms that constitute them, obliges an analysis of their historicity, at the risk of considering them an unhistorical phenomenon, constituted within a generic context which, in general, has contributed to the existence of research, both in the educational field as well as in other areas, that is increasingly descriptive and not very interpretative.

SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND THE HISTORY OF MENTALITIES: ASPECTS OF RECIPROCITY

Within the area of social representations that emphasize historical aspects[6], the study by Jodelet (2005) investigated a French rural community in the 1970s, in which mentally ill people lived freely. In his analyses, the historicity of madness comes into the picture as a representational object due to the verification of behaviors that indicated what the individuals thought of aspects of their daily life, having as their reference point historically located theorizations. Mention can also be made of more recent works, such as the one by Herzlich (2001) about the social representation of health, the considerations of which are close to those developed by Jodelet (2005), and the work of Bertrand (2003/2) on the social representations of vagrancy and begging, in which the author discusses the historicity of these objects, comparing documents produced in the 19th and 20th centuries by analyzing the legal discourse.

Despite the fact that the theory of social representations in the production of historical knowledge is little referred to, the same is not true of the word "representation" that, despite

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[6] Criticizing the idea that the relationships between history and psychology are based on the position that it is history that should benefit from borrowing form psychology, Jodelet points out that "this position forgets the fact that psychology should integrate historicity into its models in order to be applicable to history and, above all, that it runs the risk of leaving to one side contributions from history that go beyond a sensitive relativization of the phenomena that psychology studies" (2003, p. 100). In the psychology area, even though they do not focus on the reference point of social representations, there are authors can be mentioned who include historicity in their analyses, like Mitsuko Aparecida Makino Antunes, Marini Massimi, Artur Arruda Leal Ferreira, Francisco Teixeira Portugal, Ana Maria Jacó-Vilela, and others.

being polysemic, as declared by Cardoso and Gomes (2000), authors who even identify its use as a "synonym of 'conception' or of 'understanding' that various historical spaces/times have produced"[7], has been characterized as central to the current production of the different historiographic currents.[8]

Among the works in the history area that discuss the issue of representation and consider psychosocial aspects in their analysis, there is the classic work by Marc Bloch (1993). "*Les Rois Thaumaturges*" [The Royal Touch: Monarchy and Miracles in France and England], published in 1924, which analyses the widespread belief in Europe that kings had the power to cure skin diseases with a touch, and "*La Grande Peur de 1789*" by Georges Lefebvre (1979), which maps out collective psychological behaviors in relation to the French

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[7] For Cardoso and Gomes (2000), one of the reasons for the absence of a clear definition of what representation is in the area of history arises from that fact that its use is relatively recent and refers initially to the so-called history of mentalities, despite being better instrumentalized by Roger Chartier in his approach to cultural history. Also, according to these authors, the theoretical categories of the history of ideas refer to conscious/unconscious, time/duration, from which originated the introduction of concepts like "collective representations", "world views", "spirit of the age" etc. For a differentiation of the concepts of representation, ideology and imaginary, see Falcon (2000). On the different conceptions of the term representation, as well as the theoretical-methodological problems generated by its indiscriminate use in the production of historical knowledge, see Cardoso and Malerba (2000). With regard to the relationships between history and social representations, see Cardoso (2000).

[8] Falcon (2000) even considers that the relationships between history and representation should be analyzed by means of the notions of difference and identity. According to this author, "Just like difference, *representation* is a key concept of historical discourse; like *identity*, it is the concept that defines the true nature of this discourse. In other words, in the first case *representation* indicates a characteristic of historical discourse – its dimension or cognitive function – thus constituting a theoretical-methodological concept, i.e. epistemological. In the second case, *representation* points to the textual character and to the linguistic dimension of the historical discourse, thus constituting a concept or a narratorial and/or hermeneutic issue" (p. 41). Having made these considerations, Falcon will locate the "history and representation" debate at the crossroads of the two different historiographic paths that he calls modern and post-modern. According to the author himself these are the two faces of Janus: "one is looking in the direction of *representation* as a category inherent to *historical knowledge*; the other is looking in the opposite direction and sees *representation* as a negation of the very possibility of this 'knowledge'" (p.42), in which the first aspect prefigures modern historiography, as represented by authors like Pierre Vilar and Roger Chartier, and the second the post-modern, represented, for example, by K. Jenkis who, by taking representation as the opposition to objectivity, introduced the negation of the historical real, making historical narrative no different from other narratives, such as fictional narrative, thus diluting its analytical capability.

Revolution. In Brazilian works, there are studies by Carvalho (1990) who, when investigating the formation of our republic, points to the failure of the attempt of this new system to associate itself with a female image, in particular, with the French Marianne. Considered a laughing stock, the popular tabloids ended up anchoring the new republic in the only image of a public woman at the time: the prostitute. In other words, as there were no social representations of women participating in civic life, the figure of Marianne found no fertile ground for it to take root and ended up failing as a patriotic symbol.

Obviously, in citing such examples, there is no intention here of disregarding the differences in approach between the fields of history and psychology that have distinct, albeit complementary, questions to respond to .According to Moscovici, the perspective of historians differs from that of social psychologists to the extent that the latter

> ...emphasize the production of ideologies and ask themselves from whence came the ideas we have on society and politics. Are these ideas socially determined? What validity can they aspire to? However, these are not the questions I love and to which, as a social psychologist, I will seek to respond. The questions of my discipline are other: how are ideas transmitted from generation to generation and communicated from one individual to another? Why do they change the way people think and act until they become an integral part of their lives? (1991, p. 77)

Even if these differences are weighed up, it is possible to conclude that works, both in the area of history with an emphasis on representations, as well in the area of social representations with an emphasis on history, take account of the existence of frontier zones, explained in general lines below, which involve these two fields of knowledge, such zones having already been delineated ever since the initial work of Moscovici[9]. According to this author the notion of "collective representation", from which he derived the notion of social representations, "would have really fallen into disuse if it had not been for a school of historians that conserved its features through their research into mentalities" (Moscovici, 2001).

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[9] According to Roussiau and Renard (2003), Moscovici, in *La psychanalyse, son image e son public,* prepares the first references to the influence of the past on thinking, by developing the anchoring process (Moscovici, 1978).However, according to these authors it is from the study carried out by Jodelet (2005) in the 1970s on the social representations of mental illness that the relationship between practices and social representations focused on historical aspects is explained.

It is obvious that, despite their common origin, these words are not entirely synonymous[10] neither did they follow the same path: while the history of mentalities[11] reached its apex in the 1960s, above all in France, currently this notion has been dismissed in academic circles despite, according to Vainfas (1997), there having recently been "extraordinary vigor in studies about the mental,, albeit with new labels and in different attire"[12]. The theory of social representations, on the other hand, underwent the reverse process: it was little used at the beginning, but currently the approach is widely used in various areas of knowledge (Jodelet, 2003).

According to Jodelet (2003) the reciprocity between the theory of social representations and the history of mentalities can be observed in what has to do with the definition of the objects, with the collective character of the phenomena studied, and with becoming aware of the affective dimension; it is also possible to add to this a concern with historical times: long, medium and short in duration[13].

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[10] Cardoso and Gomes (2000) observe that the closest term to social representation is the concept of "mental tools [*outillage mental*], developed by Lucien Febvre in the 1920s and still little studied in history and that refers to the "group of categories of perception, conception, expression and action that structure the experience both of the individual as well as the collective".

[11] According to Castorina (2007), "the word *mentality* comes from English philosophy and refers to the way of thinking of a people [...] i.e., it designates the values' systems and beliefs of an age or a group, which Columbus and the sailors of his caravels or Caesar and his soldiers share" (p. 77). For Vovelle (1991), the concept of mentality does not only incorporate the "spirit of an age", to the extent that it might include conflicts and tensions between different social classes. In this sense, this author considers that the history of mentalities can be understood as a history of anonymous masses, whose focus is on the "intermediaries" and no longer on the elite. Cardoso and Gomes (2000) point out that the various strands of the history of mentalities used the notion of representation as a constituent of social relations, guiding not only collective behavior, but also the transformations of the social world, bearing in mind the studies developed by Georges Duby about the imaginary of feudalism in which representation appears as an "inner framework", a "latent structure", a "simple image" that ensures the passage of different symbolic schemes. For more information about the concept of mentalities, see Burke (1980, 1991) and Ariès (1993).

[12] For more information about the process that led some historiographic productions to substitute the notion of mentalities for that of representation, see Silva (2000).

[13] Following this same line of interpretation, Castorina (2007) points out the following convergences between social representations and mentalities: "Both performed a notably similar critical role in the recent history of each discipline; the notes that characterize the respective definitions of these categories are equally nebulous; because of this their relations with ideology are debatable, but illustrative of their more relevant features; both

Emilani and Palmonari (2001) also pointed out that the approach to the history of daily life,[14] affiliated with the approach to mentalities (Vainfas, 1997), is similar to the concept of social representations, not only because of the fact that their study object focuses on the area of ideas, but because they are concerned with a type of "spontaneous edification" of knowledge. So Moscovici (1978), when presenting his idea of the existence of two forms of rationality[15] – logical-scientific thinking and social thinking, which allows the social world to become a familiar and predictable place –, brings to Social Psychology the concern with daily life as a "private and specific place of our experience and of knowledge, a place at times public and at times private, based on common meanings and shared procedures of interpretation and negotiation" (Emilani, Palmonari, 2001, p. 143).

More than concepts that retain a certain similarity, the very issue of generativity and the functioning of social representations are tributary up to a certain point, of processes linked to mentalities to the extent that

> ... in its capacity as socially constructed and shared knowledge, offering itself as a version of the reality upon and with which to act, representation is a practical and socio-centric thought [...], harnessed to the service of satisfying and justifying the needs, interests and values of the group that produce it; which, on the one hand, brings it close to ideology and, on the other, compromises the set of codes, models and prescriptions that, guiding the action, take part in the culture and the mentalities. (Jodelet, 2003, p. 102-103)

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are the result of processes of the imaginary of intellectual production; moreover, each one has a decisive influence on the practical lives of individuals; finally, the understanding of each or them involves articulation between society and the individual" (p. 76).

[14] Defining what is "daily" is not an easy task, since it is presented without a clearly defined outline, precisely because it resists any attempt at discovery. So, "whatever its aspects, the daily has an essential characteristic: it does not allow itself to be captured. It escapes" (Lefebvre, apud Emilani, Palmonari, 2001).

[15] The fact that Moscovici proposed the existence of different rationalities does not constitute, according to Emilani and Palmonari (2001), anything new, since various authors, like Freud (primary and secondary process), Piaget (re-logical thinking and logical thinking), Bruner (narrative thinking and logical and scientific thinking), and others, had already pointed out this variety. However, according to these same authors the thing Moscovici brought that was new comes from the fact that he associated this social thinking with the idea of agreement when he defined social representations as common sense theories, i.e. as "part of the practical knowledge that is mainly concerned with daily life".

Another aspect that may also be indicated as continuity, both in the plan of history as well as in the theory of social representations, refers to a critique of the analytical use of the notion of "representation" that also has a more descriptive than an explanatory aspect in both areas[16]:

> Often deprived of the theoretical tools necessary for preparing a formal and/or conceptual analysis framework, most historians working in this perspective make limited and almost always factual use of these two notions [representation and political culture]. Employed in isolation, without reference to the system of theoretical relationships on which it depends, the concept of *representation* appears in certain cases, to serve only as a rhetorical and justificatory figure of a certain intellectual fad. (Smith, 2000, p. 96)

In terms of discontinuity[17], the relationship between social representations and mentalities is developed more around the small differences than the major divergences. An example of one of them is the indiscriminate use of the word "unconscious" that sometimes reduces the role of the social in the action of individuals (Jodelet, 2003).

Another difference refers to the question of the inertia or the affection for practically imperceptible changes, which provoked various criticisms of the history of mentalities that were above all related to the idea of temporality that was inherited from the Braudelian line. However, these differences in relation to the theory of social representations have been diluted, above all after the approach of Vovelle (1991), who insists in the analytical effectiveness of the concepts of "long duration" and of the "anthropological look", as well as the need to relate mentalities to explanatory historical totalities, because, according to this author the idea of inertia and immutability are notions that are incompatible with the historian's craft, translated in general lines as that of explaining social transformations in time.

According to Jodelet (2003), the viewpoint of social psychology differs from the viewpoint of history in its timescale, to the extent that "mentalities compromise the past and

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[16] With regard to the critique of the descriptive use of the notion of representation on an analytical plan, see in relation to history, Silva (2000), Malerba (2000) and Capelato and Dutra (2000) and with regard to the theory of social representations, Menin and Shimizu (2004, 2005) and Arruda (2005).

[17] On the continuities and discontinuities involving notions of mentalities and social representations, see Castorina (2007).

the long time and representations compromise the short time and accelerated time, including conjunctural precipitations because of the means of contemporary communication." However, despite the fact that representations are commonly associated with short time, it is possible that in some situations, they last longer, as indicated, for example, by the studies of Banchs (1999) on gender. It is believed that this situation is also particularly observable in what Moscovici (2003, 1988) calls hegemonic representations[18], characterized by the fact that they go beyond groups and because they have a structural and temporal stability that can, however, change since they are anchored in culturally disseminated beliefs and values, as is the case, for example, with the social representations of country. To a certain extent this would justify the existence of a "regularity of style"[19] (Moscovici, 2003), a type of continuity in the categories of thinking related, for example to "imagined communities"[20], to use the expression coined by Anderson. According to Roussiau and Bonardi

> ...the intelligibility of the construction process of a representation requires that an appeal be made to the past, to history and to memory, both for emphasizing what from the past is inserted into the new representations (the mark of the past, and as a consequence, the specificities of the present) as well as for understanding how memory and knowledge are linked, how the preconstructed acts on the acquisition of information and new knowledge. (2002, p. 41)

In other words, even though the genesis of certain social representations may be defined in the historic time as being of long duration, they are, of necessity, linked with the time of short duration, given their dependence in relation to the ideological context of the moment, to the degree of implication of the group(s) that prepared them and to the link and

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[18] According to the typology proposed by Moscovici (1988), there are also polemic representations that, being mutually exclusive, would be determined by the antagonistic relationships between members of different groups and the emancipated representations created in a certain group and shared by others.

[19] For Moscovici (2003), regularity of style refers to a sense that goes beyond individuals and institutions, allowing, therefore, for an articulation with the idea of long duration, as developed by Braudel (1988). However, this does not mean that they follow a type of inertia, but that there were no macro-changes in their elements.

[20] For Anderson (1991),the term "imagined community" is understood as a symbolic construction, since "the members of the smallest nation will never know, never meet or ever hear about the majority of their compatriots and, despite this, in the mind of each one lives the image of their community" (p. 6).

the style of communications shared by it (them),[21] given that it is in the epicenter of social representations that, precisely, the system of values shared *a priori* by a certain group is found and "it is in this same system of values that the strange and the novelty are anchored" (Gigling, Rateau, 1999, p. 64).

In this sense the articulation between history and social representations is directly linked to one of the main objectives of the latter, which is to transform the strange into the familiar (Moscovici, 2003), to indicate not only the relationship that groups and individuals establish with others and with their environment, but also to guide their action by means of a code that allows the different aspects of daily life to be named and classified in a precise way[22]. This is why the study of the historicity of social representations is a privileged field for analysis of the processes of content naturalization, above all by means of temporal concepts of continuity and change, which concepts, it has to be added, are also fundamental for understanding the historical process.

OBJECTIVIZATION AND ANCHORING AS "PSYCHO-HISTORICAL" PROCESSES

To consider the historicity of social representations it is important to observe the combined action of two processes,[23] objetivization and anchoring, which are at the heart of the

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[21] According to Jodelet (2003), "an historical look is necessary to indicate the places from which the transformations of categories and the structures of social thinking operate and to locate manifest or latent stabilities" (p. 108).

[22] According to Uribe Patiño and Acosta Ávila (2004), the function of social representations is essentially that of guiding practices and discourse, since the exterior presents an unfamiliar dimension. Therefore, the strange is that which is unknown (or is little known) and can be both related to biological, natural or physical phenomena as well as to objects of science and technology and to institutions, ideological apparatuses and social or professional means. So, "reinserted in social relations, the strange object is redefined and reconstructed, integrated into the discourse, becoming more familiar and, to a certain extent, recuperated, retranslated, retouched in a double movement of figuration and resignification" (p. 127).

[23] According to Moliner (2001), "social representations are constructed by means of categorization processes of objects and people, of inference and causal distribution, etc. These are social, cognitive processes [...] their characteristics reside in the fact that they act on socially invested material (that which concerns us and that concerns others) and which is socially determined. This means that social cognitive processes will allow

origin and functioning of social representations[24] and that compete for determining their content and structure. According to Jesuíno, objectivization and anchoring processes

> ...are, first and foremost, successive or, rather, juxtaposed, or even parallel; it is not possible to discern well which of them is functioning, given that the beginning of one never follows the end of the other. There would be a type of gestalt switch in the passage from one to another. Consequently, the theory seems to turn its back on integration; it remains open, without closure, which is perhaps not a weakness but, on the contrary, the translation of the nature of the phenomena on which it is erected. (2001, p. 288)

Although, currently, the process of objectivization is studied by investigating the elements that concentrate the meaning of the object represented, as well as its articulation with the daily practice within social groups (Casado, Calonge, 2001), Moscovici (1978) initially conceived it as a process developed in three successive stages: constructive selection, or the decontextualization of information; creation of the nucleus or figurative scheme; and naturalization.

In the first stage, some privileged information is selected and separated from the original creation context, being reorganized into a theoretical set and once again integrated with the thought system of the group in question (Di Giacomo, 1987). According to Paez,

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individuals to treat information that is common to the majority of the members of a social group, provided it comes form the same experiences. Furthermore, its functioning and its development will be determined by social factors that are also common to members of a same group. [...] Naturally, social cognitive processes result in the construction of widely shared knowledge. As far as concerns the preparation of social representations, this convergence factor is reinforced by anchoring and objectivization processes" (p. 17-18).

[24] The rise of a social representation is linked, in general terms, to the existence of at least three factors related to the positioning of a group vis-a-vis an object that is socially significant to it, such as: information dispersion, focus and pressure to inference. The first arises from the fact that individuals are exposed, in their social surroundings, to a large amount of disperse and diffuse information that needs to be integrated and processed in a selective way. Therefore, for reasons that are inherent to the very complexity of the object of the representation there is a difficulty in accessing information that is actually useful to knowledge of this object, which favors, according to Moliner (2001), "the indirect transmission of knowledge and, therefore, the appearance of countless distortions". Focus, on the other hand, has to do with the position of the social group in relation to the object of the representation, in which there is an interest in some aspects of this object in detriment to others. Finally, pressure to inference occurs when individuals adhere to the dominant opinions of the group.

...this takes place along with a process of discourse decontextualization,. In other words, it is abstracted from its production conditions, from the ideological apparatus and from the supposed issuer, from the characteristics of the object-content of the information and from the characteristics of the receptor "victim" of the discourse. (1987, p. 307)

The second stage consists in the composition of a scheme or figurative nucleus, in which certain elements start to play a more important role than others, by means of the construction of an "imaginary tributary structure of a conceptual structure, which is going to form the central nucleus of the representation" (Casado, Calonge, 2001), i.e., the concept is here converted into an image linked to ideas or to words. Ayestaran, De Rosa and Páez (1987) also add that, despite the fact that the prior activated knowledge is conceptual, it also has figurative aspects that are associated with an affective dimension in such a way as to construct a certain structure.

The third and final stage is naturalization, in which the elements of the figurative scheme are perceived by individuals as a direct expression of that which is being represented, in other words, the image becomes natural and is treated as real[25]: "the figurative scheme is going to 'be' the phenomenon presented. Concepts are transformed into social categories of language that directly express the reality. Concepts are ontologized and automatically come to life" (Páez, 1987, p. 309). This is precisely what Abric (1994) says when he states that all reality is represented; there is no objective reality, *a priori.* In this sense, after these three stages objectivization "supplies individuals with the feeling that their discourse about the world is not an intellectual construction, a theoretical vision of the real, but the simple reflection of the surrounding reality"[26] (Moliner, 2001).

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[25] Casado and Calonge (2001) observe that the end product of the objectivization process may refer "to personification, to the use of metaphors, to physical images and analogies. All this is finally configured in what Moscovici (1981) calls consensual universe, a subjective and changing reality, constructed by means of communication and interaction between individuals, in contrast with the reified, solid and unchanging universe of the sciences" (p.77).

[26] According to Casado and Calonge (2001), "it is by means of the objectivization process that the abstract is transformed into the concrete, concepts or ideas are transformed into something 'real', the image is materialized, attaches words to things, the conventional begins to be considered as an indicator of proven phenomena, the symbol becomes the sign, the word becomes an extension of the real, the idea becomes not an intellectual product, but a reflection of the real, and the invisible becomes visible and perceptible" (p. 76).

However, naturalization of the novelty, in which the abstract is transformed into the concrete, is only completed when the latter is inscribed not only in intergroup relations, but also into preexisting thought systems by means of anchoring[27], a process by which "the knowledge system of the representation is anchored in social reality, attributing to it a functionality and a group interaction regulatory role." (Páez, 1987). It is for this reason that, when the points are identified in which a representation is anchored, the knowledge domains that engender their most general meanings are also recognized (Moliner, 2001).

Two complementary forms of anchoring[28] are identified by Moliner (2001); one corresponds to the fact that information about a given object is interpreted according to existing socio-cognitive systems, in such a way that the knowledge produced in one domain may guide the cognitive work prepared in another; the other refers to the idea that knowledge produced and interpreted, based on this preexisting system, will be instrumentalized by social groups to legitimize their positions, in other words, such knowledge will be, of necessity, classified and labeled by means of categories and meanings that are considered positive or negative (Palmonari, Doise, 1986). In this sense the objective of anchoring is twofold, given that it allows for the construction of systems of thought and understanding, while at the same time engendering consensual and acceptable views of action (Moscovici, 2003).

It is, therefore, by means of the anchoring process that the representation becomes rooted in social relationships, based on preexisting thought frameworks[29] that are accessed

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[27] Páez (1987), quoting Codol, states that the term courage "originated in the psychology of perception and has to do with the fact that by inserting and indicating a meaning to a representation the meaning and position of other objects and situations are altered". Palmonari and Doise (1986), on the other hand, point out that "the term anchoring has a gestalt origin; in this sense, it might be equivalent to inserting a new object in a well-known reference framework to be able to interpret it".

[28] Casado and Calonge (2001) point out that Doise, unlike Moliner, presents three different "types" of anchoring, which are: psychological anchoring (integration of knowledge with beliefs or values), psycho-sociological anchoring (how individuals symbolically situate themselves because of social relations) and sociological anchoring (a link between social representation and the feeling of belonging to a particular group).

[29] An example of the use of these pre-existing thought frameworks is to be found in the passage in which Pero Magalhães Gandavo, in his book *História da província de Santa Cruz* (1576) [History of the province of Santa Cruz], describes an armadillo by means of known references: "The most unlike any other animals [...] they are called armadillos and are almost like piglets: they have a shell like a tortoise, which is divided into many plate-like joints and arranged in such a way that they look just like a horse with armor-plating. They

with the objective of becoming familiar with new and strange experiences (Moscovici, Vignaux, 1994) and that allow

> ...for integration of the object of the representation in the values' system of the subject. But it is equally it [the preexisting thought framework] that translates social insertion and the appropriation by social groups of a representation emerging in a social environment with all the social and cultural conflicts that follow from it. (Roussiau, Bonardi, 2001, p. 20)

At the end, therefore, of the objectivization and anchoring processes, representation becomes "saturated with reality" (Casado, Calonge, 2001) until, at a certain moment in time, the strange is converted into the familiar and starts being perceived as an objective reality, and is then incorporated into the language and collective memory. The social function of these processes consists, precisely, in facilitating communication from the transformation of theories and complex concepts into a tool for categorizing behaviors in order to serve as a guide for action[30].

To conclude, and revisiting the idea of the processes that form social representations, it is worth remembering that, at the same time in which objectivization and anchoring operate, they access, according to Moliner (2001), the processes of collective communication (interpersonal communication, public debate, the media, cultural communication, etc.) that contribute to individuals sharing the knowledge they have prepared. So, if objectivization allows for the naturalization of an intellectual construction and anchoring makes possible the integration of a given object into the system of values of the individual and of the group there

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have a long tail all covered with the same shell. The snout is like that of a piglet, although much finer and they only put their heads out of the shell. They have short legs and dig holes like rabbits. The flesh of these animals is the best and most appreciated there is in this land and it tastes almost like chicken" (Gandavo, apud Zamboni, 1998).

[30] According to Casado and Calonge (2001), "this transfer or integration from the old and known to the new and unknown has implications on the functioning of consensual knowledge. In fact, this knowledge tends to reconfirm the accepted assumptions, to verify rather than contradict; we understand ourselves, we understand others and we understand events as a pre-existing benchmark; memory tends to predominate over logic, the verdict over the sentence, the past over the present, the response over the stimulus and the image over 'reality'" (p. 78).

arises "at the same time, a process of collective communication, which can adopt different forms that accompany and modulate the processes of knowledge production" (Moliner, 2001).

In any event, it is in this transformation of the strange into the familiar that objectivization and anchoring can be seen as privileged processes for investigating the historicity of social representations to the extent in which they are inscribed within the framework of preexisting thinking "tributaries, each time, of belief systems that are anchored in values, traditions and images of the world and of the being" (Mocovici, Vignaux, 1994) and that are dependent on socio-historical conditions, which cannot therefore be associated with temporal, immutable and unhistorical principles, which is why representations can also be analyzed as psycho-historical processes[31]. So, while Guareschi and Jovchelovitch (1995) state that "cognitive, affective and social dimensions are present in the very notion of social representations"[32] it is the historical dimension that forms the basis of these other dimensions,

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[31] In addition to the historicity of knowledge itself that constitutes social representations, there is also the influence of the history of the group that shares them to the extent by which the shape, the content and the meaning of representations vary in accordance with the existing social groups. According to Álvarez Bermúdez (2004) and Uribe Patiño and Acosta Ávila (2004), these variations can be investigated from three basic dimensions: the first dimension, called informative, refers to the amount, type, organization and communication of the information that the social subject has about a given object; the second, called field of representation, has to do with the structure, organization and hierarchy of the propositions relating to this object; and the third corresponds to the attitudinal dimension, i.e. a favorable or unfavorable attitude vis-à-vis the object, including the emotional implications it arouses. These are three articulated dimensions that are transformed into an instrument for interpreting reality that is linked, according to Casado and Calonge (2001), to a need for adapting and maintaining the socio-cognitive equilibrium that forms for the collective subject a social identity, and it is precisely because of this need that representations present social functions linked both to both the subject-object relationship as well as to social interaction from the description, classification and explanation of reality.

[32] Guareschi and Jovchelovitch (1995) explain the existence of these three dimensions in social representations in the following way: "The phenomenon of social representations and the theory that is put forward to explain it has to do with the construction of social knowledge and, to this extent, it involves cognition. The symbolic and imaginative character of this knowledge brings up the dimension of the affections, because when social subjects make an effort to understand and make sense of the world they also do it with emotion, with feeling and with passion. The construction of symbolic meaning is, at one and the same time, an act of knowledge and an affective act. Both cognition as well as the affections that are present in social representations find their basis in social reality" (p. 20).

in such a way that the constitution even of representations is dependent on historical variables and is always linked to temporal concepts of permanence and change.

PERMANENCE AND CHANGE: THE PLASTICITY OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

The historicity of social representations is located in a zone of confluence between content and more stable characteristics, because they arise from previous historical periods that are reapprpopriated in common sense and flexible content, which are dependent on the immediate context and that are characterized by the mobility of their elements.

In other words, the articulation between permanence and change is an aspect that is intrinsic to the historicity of social representations[33] and not an "external measure in which duration depends on the chronological distance that separates the two distinct states of a phenomenon" (Suárez Molnar, 2003, p. 98). Therefore, despite the representation being anchored in preexisting knowledge learned in accordance with the effect that it causes on the present[34], it does not lose sight of its pragmatic aspect of being a guide for action and a

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[33] This characteristic can be extended to the relationships between history and psychology in a general way, because according to Antunes (1998), "the historical understanding of psychology implies knowledge of the social relationships in which it is produced and that give it its bases of support and possibilities of development. It is necessary to consider the needs existing in the reality in which it is found, in the conjunctional and structural factors present, in the power relations that are formed at that historical moment and in that specific situation, in the ideologies that circulate in the social formation in question, in the values, representations and ideas they convey. Since psychology or rather, psychologies, consist in knowledge prepared about the psychological phenomenon and propose a set of practices designed to act on it, it is necessary to identify and locate the point of view of the subjects who construct it, their social inclusion, the conceptions and interests of which they become spokespersons. Psychologies and their producers and reproducers that are isolated temporally and spatially are not found and are far from being neutral or above the ideas and practices that permeate the society of which are part" (p. 366).

[34] Here Gadamer's perspective on effectual history, characterized by what contemporary reception manages to determine "from its horizon of expectations, from the various mutations suffered by concepts or ideas in time" (Jasmin, 2005, p. 30) is used. For Gadamer every hermeneutic situation is historically determined to the extent that "when we try to understand an historical phenomenon from the historical distance that determines our hermeneutic situation as a whole, we always find ourselves under the effects of this effectual history. It determines in advance what shows itself to us as being questionable and as an object of investigation, and we

translator of social reality, the reason why it is both defined as a product and a process, at one and the same time (Jodelet, 1986); a product because it is constituted by means of content coming from other historical ages, and process because, even though its origin may be located it is always incomplete given that other content feeds it, which led Moscovici (2003) to state that "we are forever in the situation of analyzing representations of representations".

The articulation proposed between permanence and change as being intrinsic to the historicity of social representations corresponds, in the final analysis, to both the stable and dynamic dimensions of common sense, although generally speaking it differs from the theorization of the central nucleus and the peripheral system (Abric, 2003, Flament, 1994, 1994a) to the extent that it is only consideration of the historicity of social representations that allows for the permanence or change of a particular concept at different historical moments to be checked, indicating the structural stability of representational content, since the chronological reference point becomes obligatory for identifying what is the same or different in a temporal perspective.

Obviously, this is not to say that sociological and structural aspects consider the theory of social representations as an unhistorical phenomenon. Abric (1994) himself, a representative of the structural line, alleges that "social representations are strongly marked by their inclusion in a temporal and historical process", which is why the theory of the central nucleus, a tributary of this line, proposes several mechanisms for collecting and analyzing the data for identifying the elements that go to make up its nucleus and its peripheral system.

In this sense, works based on a structural approach that bring with them a concern with an historical dimension of a particular representation, cannot be solely based on the technique

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soon forget half of what it really is, and furthermore we forget the whole truth of this phenomenon every time we take the immediate phenomenon as the whole truth" (2002, p. 449, t. 1). That does not mean that Gadamer is proposing that effectual history is an auxiliary discipline of what he calls the sciences of the spirit, but that it is recognized that its effects operate on any understanding, regardless of any awareness of this, warning that "when effectual history is denied in the ingenuity of methodological faith, the consequence may even be a real deformation of knowledge. This is known to us through the history of science, such as carrying out an irrefutable proof of things that are obviously false. But, as a whole, the power of effectual history does not depend on its recognition. This is precisely the power of history on limited human consciousness: the power to impose itself even here, where faith in the method wants to deny historicity itself. Hence the urgency with which the need to become aware of effectual history imposes itself: this is a necessary demand of scientific awareness (2002, p. 450, t. 1).

of free association[35], since considering merely the evocation frequency and position indicators is to emphasize knowledge inferred from a direct experience of the subjects in relation to information available at the present time, which may mean they are considered permanent and, therefore, stable or central elements that do not necessarily come from social life.

Observation of the historicity of social representations generates, therefore, parameters that allow us to interpret as permanent only those elements that actually emerge from social life, which leads to the conclusion that even a structural approach - or sociological, that works around the idea of the organizing principles of representations (Doise, 1986) – does not dispense with an historical examination of these elements. Obviously, there is no intention of stating that all research on social representations should consider their historicity as a study object, since this choice is linked to the question prepared by the researcher. However, if the intention is to investigate generativity processes and the construction of stability or even the organizing principles of social representations, then there is no way of disregarding the historical dimension, since only the study of social representations, coupled with an historical analysis of their content, makes it possible to check if the permanence of some particular content corresponds to the respective permanence of its meaning, even if the historical context of its use is different.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The contribution of an analysis that considers the historicity of social representations offers, therefore, in weighing up their stable and dynamic dimension, the possibility of establishing an analytical and interpretative reference point about the representational content in the sense of investigating the processes that constitute it, thereby contributing to its denaturalization, in other words, to an understanding that it is part of an historical construction and not a type of "universal abstract", to the extent that it allows the "historical

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[35] In general terms this technique, determined by the combination proposed by J.B.Grize, P. Vergès and A. Silem of three indicators, which are the frequency of a given element, its appearance ranking in evoking the subject and the importance that is attributed to the item evoked, consists in asking the respondent to say four or five words that come into his or her head when given a specific inductive term (Abric, 2003).

experience of our society"[36], which is expressed in the updating of elements from the past that are 'presentified' in contemporary social representations, to become visible.

This assumed, from the standpoint of the structural frameworks of social representation, the presence of elements derived from a knowledge base constituted in another historical age is a fact inherent to the very nature of the representation which, according to Koselleck, "proves that there are deep connections between problems that are formulated and experienced differently", according to an interview he gave to Fernández Sebastian, Fuentes (2006, p. 138), because the historical context is different. This being so, only an historical analysis, articulated with a psychosocial perspective, allows the context to be discussed that made it possible to establish certain representational content in detriment to other.

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[36] Wagner (2003), very probably inspired by Walter Benjamin, presents an image for this situation. According to him, "common sense is like a Turkish doll in the old history of the automated game of chess. The doll was made in such a way to appear as if it was seated at a table, in front of a chess board, smoking a pipe. An intelligent arrangement of mirrors makes the table appear real in such a way that someone can look underneath it. In fact, however, a dwarf was sitting underneath the person who seemed to be the chess master. He directed the movements of the doll, playing chess, just as the historical experience of our society directs our movements in practice on a daily basis. So, just as the dwarf was invisible to the observer, so the historical experience of our society is invisible to us, the players" (p. 18-19).

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