

## Notes for a late dialogue

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Within our scientific community, Gerard Duveen was and will remain for me the most significant figure after Serge Moscovici. I have always felt close to him. This may look surprising as our relationship was always marked by some distance and we rarely had direct contacts with one another but this proximity stems from personal and intellectual factors. The personal factors that I now will relate are obvious; the intellectual reasons behind my admiration less so. Gerard Duveen did not instigate a specific school of thought nor pretended to make a significant contribution to the study of social representations, by contrast with what other colleagues have done. Rather, he appeared as someone devoting his intellectual ability to the defense and illustration of the thinking of Moscovici to whom he dedicated numerous works and comments. And this, until the last moments of his life when, despite his illness, he put his last strengths in the publication in English of 'La Psychanalyse, son Image et son Public' and, in the organisation, in Cambridge, of the meeting that produced the special issue of the 'Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour' that commemorated this publication.

However, a close reading of Gerard's published outputs enables one to appreciate the originality and consistency of his thinking. This thinking, supported by a deep knowledge of significant works in psychology, sociology, philosophy and linguistics and much attention to his colleagues' contributions, was dedicated to the

enrichment of the theory of social representations. It is in the light of this reading, that draws me singularly closer to him, that I put forward some comments in order to initiate a dialogue that life did not allow to take place as a fertile face-to-face conversation and that I offer to Gerard as a last tribute.

I would like to begin this tribute by expressing my gratitude towards Gerard. He was for me a discreet and efficient witness whose intellectual recognition and affinity became obvious even before we had actually met. I met Gerard for the first time in 1992, in Ravello, during the first international conference on social representations. He had already done much for me since, in a most discreet way, he had decided, as soon as he had obtained a copy, to organise the translation and the publication in English of my book 'Folies et Représentations Sociales'. This translation, admirably done by his friend Tom Pownall, had come out, two years only after its publication in French, in the United Kingdom and in the United States. One can only imagine my pleasure and happiness at this event. But, for me, Gerard is not only a fortunate initiative and a generous gesture.

He is also a face, an expression. And I can still see his warm and benevolent smile when he welcomed me as I arrived in Ravello. I was feeling very intimidated and, as a result, clumsily thanked him. Then, he left me to meet those who were close to him by age or by friendship. It is only much later, going through the comments he made about my book, that I realised the esteem in which he held me.

Other memories connect me to Gerard's name. During a symposium held in Paris, and at Rob Farr's request, I had organised a small reception at home. Gerard and Rob came for dinner with some of my doctoral students. They were curious to know me better and, together, we looked at photographs going back to my youth, and listened to music that I like and some recorded by my son, a percussionist and an expert in contemporary music. Upon his return to England, Gerard sent me an imposing book on musical anthropology, 'Rationalizing Culture', which I read with passion and have kept preciously. How could Gerard, who had perfectly grasped the contradiction between the sensitivity and the intellectualism in contemporary music, have felt, and to that extent, my interest for the way the messages conveyed by this music are perceived? How could he have guessed that the book he was sending me was answering a deep curiosity for this topic? I can confess that his gift played a key role in convincing me to work on the role of music as a vehicle for social representations. Through his sending me this book, he had in a way authorised,

justified my approach. It is only much later, through the references he made to Lucien Goldmann's work, that I understood his prescience of the possibilities presented by the perspective I was adopting.

Another evocation. During the closing conference of the International Days on Social Representations, organised in 2005 at Joao Pessoa, I presented a diagram proposing a correspondence between social representations and different spheres – subjective, inter-subjective and trans-subjective. Gerard was the only one to come and talk to me at the end of this talk, his eyes filled with excitement and mischief. In passing, he told me: "This is an interesting and sound proposition but what is the connection between the different spheres?" Language of course, I wanted to reply immediately, but he had already slipped away. Here as well, it is only much later, and again through his references to Lucien Goldmann, that I fully appreciated the meaning of his comments and of his knowing smile.

The confidence behind Gerard's gestures, behind his actions, surprised me even more since through his speech, his humour, the distance brought about by his immense culture, one could be tempted to look at him as a somewhat sceptical, reserved, if not cautious individual. Possibly, whenever he was personally concerned, Gerard adopted a most dubitative attitude due to his high intellectual expectations. However, when this gaze concerned other people, it had the acuteness and the sharpness of a solid and well-informed judgment. He would then commit himself to support them by acting as their 'editor' as can be appreciated in the work he did for the work of Serge Moscovici.

The initial goal of this article was to see how Gerard had read Moscovici and had presented his work to the outside world. Through my reading of his written outputs, I was trying to identify what he wanted to reveal and the light he was trying to shed on it. However, as I was revisiting Gerard's writings, I realised that I was discovering a number of aspects, of nuances which, going beyond a mere interpretation or mediation, were expressive of an original thought that was opening up new horizons. And I got caught trying to read these writings in a deeper way, longing for a dialogue that did not have the chance to take place while he was alive.

This brings me to a first point that I would like to emphasise: the idea that Duvéen is the most Lewinian among Moscovici's readers, a connection that joins them very closely. Both of them refer to Lewin when talking about groups. Both of them, sharing the same critical analysis of the works done on intergroup relations

within social psychology, go back to Lewin, to the significance of the internal dynamics of groups and of the types of interdependence that exist amongst their members.

In the original elaboration proposed by Duveen in order to connect this dynamics to the concept of social representations, the Lewinian influence appears clearly. One sees a relationship with Lewin's first reflections on children and on temporal seriation visible in Duveen, first through his choice of research topic (1990), and then through his concern with change. This concern will encourage him to examine the interplay between the anchoring of representations in the past or in traditions, their destabilisation through cultural contacts and in current social issues, and their projection in the future or within a project. It will persist through the importance he granted to social influence.

Especially visible is the reference to notions that allow for a definition of the concrete forms that relations within groups can take. In particular: those dealing with status, power, interest-led motivations, or a quest for legitimacy. The treatment of these notions represents a unique contribution from Duveen. On one hand, he follows Lewin's use of psychoanalysis in analysing the way through which human interests, needs and desires express themselves, are fulfilled or not through interactions (2000). He will keep referring to psychoanalysis when he will develop his prospective vision about phenomena of resistance (2001) and of doubt operating in the construction of representations.

On the other hand, through the notions of status and power, he will introduce the actual social dimension of social relations, which explains his interest in the works of the Geneva School. With the notion of legitimacy, Duveen makes use of a complex social dynamics that affects the form of social representations. Along with Moscovici, he focuses on the link that exists between the historical development of societies and the emergence of the phenomenon of social representations. But he offers a fresh reading of the transformations affecting their shape when one goes from pre-modernity to modernity. This transformation influences the legitimization mode of representations. In pre-modern societies, legitimization is linked to the exclusive power of political or religious authorities. In modern societies, the sources of legitimization become more diverse and more competitive. Different groups become involved in the socio-psychological productive process of knowledge and attempt to confer to their representations a hegemonic status. Which is another way to emphasize

the role of processes of influence. Duveen's last article (2008) will end this analysis by a reflection, again inspired by Moscovici, on the extent of the influence held, in our contemporary worlds, by mass communication media. The latter define specific forms of sociability (sympathy, communion, solidarity) that influence the forms of representation.

Finally, Duveen finds inspiration in Lewin's topological vision in order to explain the combination of meanings in the construction of social representations. Thus, in his discussion of Smedslund's 'psychologic' (1998), when he comments on the variety of relationships that can exist between the signifier and the signified, he moves away from a univocal relation between them, motivated or not, in order to propose a conception of the representation as a 'dot in the semiotic space' around which a set of meanings develops as a stable representational structure. This insight on the topological configuration of representations appears to me as a very fecund one, and one that sheds an innovative light on the complexity of cognitive polyphasia.

This set of notions and perspective will become a most successful proposition through its combination with Moscovici's ideas on communication and influence. This original contribution is made stronger through the filiation it claims with Piaget and Goldmann to whom many of Gerard's writings explicitly allude. This is evidenced by the attention Duveen gives to the processes of deconstruction and reconstruction that characterise the development of knowledge and of socio-cognitive constructions, in relation with action and interaction within a common cultural background. From this results, and at the same time on this depends, his meeting with the genetic perspective adopted by Lewin and Moscovici and the importance that he grants to the function of 'familiarisation with the unfamiliar'. This is one of the functions Moscovici attributes to social representations, besides those of mastery, stabilisation and attribution of meaning to the environment, and of orientation to communication. The familiarisation of the unfamiliar is directly brought in parallel with Piaget's psychological genetic and the genetic structuralism of Goldmann – who indeed worked as Piaget's assistant and took part in the latter's work on genetic epistemology before specialising himself in the sociology and philosophy of culture.

The affinity between Piaget's and Duveen's thought having already been commented upon in the previous issue of the PSR on Duveen's contributions, I will instead focus on the one with Goldmann's. In particular, Duveen (1998) refers to the latter in the context of the relation that exists between identity and representation

where communication plays a significant role. By assuming the correlative construction of the subject and the object in the dialectics of knowledge (2000), he draws his inspiration from this author rather than from Piaget who shares this assumption about the correlation. In his dynamic and social understanding of the subject, of the object and knowledge, Duveen relies both on Goldmann and on Moscovici.

At this point, it might be helpful to remind us of some aspects of genetic structuralism that is discussed here. Goldmann puts forward the idea that any human behaviour must be understood as an attempt to provide a significant answer to a particular situation, an attempt that tends to create a 'dynamic equilibrium' made of constant deconstruction followed by restructuration. A representation is "a meaningful structure towards which strive the thought, the affect and the behaviour of individuals". This structure is not built by individuals that are isolated from each other. It is a result of the inter-subjectivity whose development, via communication, is at the origin of the constitution of the social subject. The latter produces representations of the world that become, through inter-individual exchanges, common to a particular group whose members share similar existential experiences. Instead of the 'I-it (subject-object relation) and 'I-you' (subject-subject relation) relations, there emerges a 'we' collective subject thanks to a common relationship with a shared reality that will produce a vision of the world for a 'trans-individual' group subject. As a result, there would be a set of global attitudes towards the world and towards life, visions of the world which are not individual but social facts, produced by the concrete situation of humans located within social relationships that vary throughout history. In Goldmann's view, one must relocate representations within their socio-historical context as a result of the dialectic, the constant interaction between social structures and the representations developed by humans.

This perspective represents in many ways a resource for a thinker such as Duveen when, concerning the link between identity and representation, he wants to go beyond Piaget's analysis which, through its abstract character, establishes a homogeneity between the forms according to which subjects and objects are built (2002). We find an echo of this in many of Duveen's approaches:

- in his works on children whose identity is at once defined by parental constraints, before they can elaborate their own perspective through their interactions in their environment of secondary socialisation;
- in the way he deals with the learning difficulties in mathematics among schoolchildren of north-east Brazil who are torn between ways of thinking that belong to their environment of origin and others that are perceived as belonging to a foreign culture;
- in the assertion that knowledge is always the product of a particular group of people that find themselves in specific circumstances in which they are engaged through specific projects.

However, this echo is particularly visible in the significance granted to communication and in the way to see its relation with social representations. And this is here that the reference to Moscovici will allow to develop an approach that puts forwards the diversity of social representations even among those groups that appear culturally homogenous (2007). Diversity that Duveen defends passionately, going as far as envisaging different types of conflict and granting social influence a key role in the transformation of social representations and, consequently, of identities. From Goldmann, he keeps the idea that communication is the building block of identity in that all social relations decide what can or cannot be communicated and in that communication can result in a change and a re-organisation of representations. Along with Moscovici, he turns influence into a powerful element of these processes for two reasons. On one hand, Duveen (2001) associates the stability of identity forms to the stability of these networks of influence that underlie the various representations. On the other hand, any change in the relationships between the sources of influence triggers a change in the dominant representations and, as a result, in the identity schemas that depend on representations.

Thus the theories of social influence and of social representations developed by Moscovici are combined together. Moreover, this enables one to highlight the power of representations and to clarify their leverage function in communication processes, a function that Moscovici had at once made clear. Thus Duveen (2000) claims that if representations are a result of communication, they are also the necessary condition for communication to develop. This dialectic makes possible a change in representations. Their stability and their organisation depend on the

stability and organisation of the forms of communication that underlie them. However, human interests determine the forms of communication. Changes in the former will induce changes in forms of communication and trigger the emergence of new representations produced by the transformation of existing structures.

Here, Duveen's genetic structuralism becomes clear. It was already visible in the distinction established between the different phases of the genesis of social representations – micro, onto and macro. It re-asserted itself in the objective assigned to the study of social representations, which must be more than a simple photograph of a way of thinking and aim rather to describe the dynamics of its production and of its change. It will take a new physiognomy by focusing on the motivational and social sources of this dynamics. To insist on the interests, desires, and needs that are behind one's adhesion for a specific representation makes clear the actual subjective dimension of a representation. The references to psychoanalysis and Goldmann's contribution on the homology that exists between the psychological dynamic and the social one bear witness to this.

Without trying to second-guess Duveen's thought, I cannot help thinking that the sympathy that he expressed for the proposal I made during the JIRS conference mentioned earlier reveals some affinity between our ideas. Indeed, one can detect in his analysis of the dynamic character of social representations a distinction, without a doubt implicit, between the subjective dimension, the inter-subjective dimension as applied to communication and interaction, and the trans-subjective dimension. A direct reference is made to the latter when Duveen compares the constraints played by networks of influence on individuals and groups, and consequently on their representations, to the constraint produced by those social representations that force individuals to adopt a specific identity.

I limit my reading of Gerard Duveen's work to these comments. I am aware of the gaps, notably regarding the contributions of his epistemological reflection and of the 'social and genetic constructivism' that he was championing. It is about these ideas that I would have liked to pursue, with Gerard, a dialogue interrupted by his passing away. I would have pointed him the expectations answered by his work which, thanks to its impressive capacity to synthesise, the innovative use of perspectives whose complementarity he was able to show, brings us face to face with a genuine system. This system conveys an organic solidarity to dimensions that are

usually treated separately or exclusively. It opens us promising avenues to the psychology of social representations.

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