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Understanding Social Representation Theory as a Paradigm: Some Problems

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Several authors have considered Social Representations Theory as a paradigm in the sense of Kuhn's philosophy. We allow ourselves to question this attribution. On the one hand, unlike the "normal science" postulated by Kuhn, research has not only solved empirical problems. Conceptual controversies, which have been crucial in its modification, have been included throughout the history of this theory. On the other hand, ontological commitments do not only emerge from the activity of the scientific community but are linked to world conflicts and conceptions, which are, in turn, linked to historical contexts. Finally, the relative lack of analysis of the moral and political value dimension in scientific knowledge production in the definition of paradigms, severely constrain it in the case of the Theory of Social Representations. Finally, when intervening these values, social psychologists face the need to reconsider the epistemological concept of objectivity which includes critically viewing these values rather than ignoring them.

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INTRODUCTION

The notion of a paradigm was fundamental in Kuhn's philosophy of science and has aroused interest in several researchers of Social Representation Theory (hereinafter SRT). Some authors have considered the emergence of SRT as a paradigm shift concerning cognitive social psychology. Among others, Sammut, Andreouli and Valsiner's recent introduction to *The Cambridge Handbook of Social Representations* (2015) has considered, that although Kuhn himself had not accepted it, the emergence of SRT has genuinely involved a radical change in the agenda and concepts of social psychology, that is, a paradigmatic revolution. Following Billig (1991), introducing the concept of social representation has constituted a real intellectual revolution around which social psychology has reoriented. Moscovici (1981) made a fundamental critique of the cognitive perspective of social psychology based on the E-O-R scheme: "… when we study social representations, we refer to how human beings ask themselves questions and seek answers, but not in as much how they handle information and behave… "(p. 13-14). In sum, a reformulation of the concepts and problems has taken place organizing the research in the field.

Jesuino (2018) states that Moscovici himself cautiously accepted Kuhn's diagnosis of the pre-paradigmatic nature of social sciences - without being specific on social psychology - as the dispersion of currents does not reach a unit of foci and research methods. When Sammut, Andreouli, Gaskell and Valsiner (2015) referred to these sciences, they stated: "… the only consensus is that there is no consensus" (p. 3) On the other hand, Marková (2014) showed that Moscovici had rejected the Kuhnian explanation of the paradigm shift which basically emerged from anomalies in empirical research, i.e., problems or enigmas persistently unresolved.

The arising question would be whether the notion of paradigm is adequate - from the epistemological perspective - to characterize the SRT as a scientific endeavour. Although we are facing a fundamental reorganization of the theses of cognitive social psychology, viewing it

only through the concept of a paradigm shift in any of its meanings (Kuhn, 1962, 1970, 1977) has become extremely problematic.

Firstly, we must characterize the concept of paradigm in Kuhn's thinking. This author clearly modified the unit of analysis of classical epistemology moving from the concept of theory, as a linguistic entity, to that of an organization of the scientific community activity. While the analysis in classical normative epistemology, logical positivism and later Popper dealt with the finished product of the scientific activity, Kuhn viewed the epistemological activity as focused on its mode of production. Thus, the constitutive role of history and the scientific community was introduced in the interpretation of scientific knowledge, thus distancing from the classical version which sought to reach the foundations of science through the *a priori* study of its formal language (Kuhn, 1962, 1970).

The central thesis is that mature sciences can be considered in terms of the scientific community's problem-solving activity. This scientific endeavour is guided by the paradigms historically construed by the community and characterized by the following features: firstly, their attempts are mainly featured by certain assumptions about the knowledge domain of the discipline, the authentic ontological commitments indispensable for thinking about problems; secondly the laws organized in the form of theories. However, a paradigm is considerably more than a theory. Paradigms are constituted by epistemic values or criteria to evaluate scientific production. Their simplicity must help organize the phenomena under study. Theories must be fruitful, leading to new discoveries. They must be adequate since the experiments must prove the inferences drawn. There must be consistency among their statements and regarding other disciplines. These epistemic values are hierarchized distinctively at different times in the discipline history. Finally, there is a community consensus on exemplary ways of research, of doing good science, applying theory to solve specific problems, using mathematical techniques or experiments. The latter is, perhaps, the fundamental paradigm component in its most classic version (Gómez, 2014; Kuhn, 1977).

If we consider the previous characterization and, anticipating the peculiarity of the discussion that will follow, we allow ourselves to underscore the relevance of the values shared by the scientific group that intervenes in the decision making. Should these values not exist, we would not be able to identify the practices of the sciences in their history. In this perspective,

there would not be criteria to prove the hypotheses for any context. Therefore, a "good theory" can be considered in terms of the criteria guiding the decisions which are called values.

From the historical viewpoint, solving mostly empirical problems is the regular scientific activity occurring most of the time in research, i.e., formulating hypotheses and solving puzzles experimentally, or reviewing the methods used. However, empirical problems appear, i.e., in the study of nature (physics, astronomy or chemistry, and even biology), which are opposed to the researchers' expectations, and that they are irresolvable at the boundaries of a paradigm. The accumulation of these anomalies produces disorder and insecurity in the research process to the point that only then the world conceptions are questioned, or philosophical thoughts are used to reflect upon the paradigm itself. The old paradigm endures with its anomalies if no other alternative arises, and when this happens, the old one is abandoned.

In the history of a discipline, the new paradigm solves those empirical difficulties unresolved by the previous one since it can face them with greater rigor and explanatory power. That would be the typical cases, such as the appearance of Copernican astronomy, *vis-a-vis* the Ptolemaic; the Newtonian physics *vis-a-vis* the Aristotelian physics; Darwin's theory of evolution, *vis-a-vis* creationism. In all these cases, scientists who shared the previous paradigm shifted to the new one not irrationally but well-founded. Within a disciplinary field, this transformation establishes an apparent discontinuity between the new paradigm and the previous one. We are, then, facing a scientific revolution. Undoubtedly, our author defended science rationality but with a much broader interpretation than algorithms for deciding situations. This interpretation focused on scientists' work engaged in solving the riddles. Hence Kuhn argued the immeasurability of the paradigms, for instance, between the physics in Aristotle and Newton. Two reasons underlie his argument. Firstly, there are no rules to precisely adopt one paradigm over another, albeit the good reasons to do so. Secondly, new relationships are established among the new theory, the facts, and the experiments, even when the same words, for instance, *force*, are used in the Aristotelian and Newtonian paradigm.

Therefore, each paradigm is unintelligible for the other. At the end of the 1980s, Kuhn (2000) diminished the strong incommensurability, stating that the members of a paradigm can grasp the other, for instance, the Newtonians can understand the Aristotelians, but the meaning of some key terms cannot be translated into the other language, such as the concept of *force*.

After his book *Structure of the Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Kuhn started to abandon the concept of paradigm, replacing it with the disciplinary matrix (Kuhn, 1977). Towards the 1980s, the scientific revolutions became historical events with partial taxonomic modifications, leading to an increase in scientific specialties (Kuhn, 2000; Bird, 2018).

This article attempts to consider the problems that result from interpreting SRT as a paradigm in its most classical sense. Firstly, we will analyse the thesis that the development of SRT is similar to that of normal science and that its characterization is linked only to the resolution or no resolution of the enigmas in empirical research. Secondly, we will discuss Kuhn's thesis that limited the values in science to their epistemic version. Thirdly, and, given the intervention of non-epistemic values (moral and political) in SRT research, we will advocate for the thesis that SRT can reach objectivity if non-epistemic values intervention in research is acknowledged.

IS SOCIAL REPRESNTATION THEORY A PARADIGM?

In the study of the historical meaning of the SRT, if we take into account the previous considerations about the notion of paradigm, there are several reasons to understand SRT as a theoretical revolution about cognitive social psychology. SRT presupposes a dialectical relationship among the individual, the other, and the object, transforming the tenants and entities of its ontology. It radically modifies the formulation of research problems, it alters theoretical assumptions and concepts and introduces a methodological polytheism - formulated by Moscovici and unseen in the other perspective.

However, some aspects of paradigm characterization are hardly applicable to interpret the SRT formation and transformation. Firstly, a thesis puts forward the existence of a long period of normal science in all disciplines. During this phase, scientific activity mainly focuses on solving empirical problems, raising new ones, and suggesting different ways of approaching questions. Either way, as Kuhn argues the similarity in the ways of solving empirical problems guides scientists (1962). The tenets arguing that scientists set out the search for a conceptual review only when the empirical anomalies become irresolvable is not valid for the SRT.

In the strict sense, it cannot be claimed the exitance of a proper normal science in the SRT in the Kuhnian sense. Much of its history has been crossed by ruminations on its concepts (Marková, 2017a; Moscovici, 1981;1996, 2001), by the metatheoretical controversies with

cognitive social psychology, with British discursive psychology (Castorina, 2013; Potter & Edwards, 1999; Voelklein & Howarth, 2008), and with developmental psychology (Castorina, 2017; Psaltis & Zapiti, 2014), among others. This critical endeavour has been around the nature of the philosophical presuppositions of the SRT (Marková, 2017b, Moscovici, 2001), the epistemic status of social representations (Jodelet, 1989; Wagner, 2005), the requirement or no requirement to produce detailed definitions (Jahoda, 1988; Moscovici, 1988), the relationship between SR and reality (Castorina, 2016a; Wagner, 2005), the individuation of SR (Castorina & Barreiro, 2010; Valsiner, 2003) or the compatibility or incompatibility of the SRT with programs in other disciplines such as developmental psychology, anthropology or other social sciences (Castorina, 2017; Psaltis & Zapiti, 2014). In this sense, it is worth mentioning that according to Laudan (1985) - unlike Kuhn - even in the natural sciences, the protagonists of rival programs (coexisting paradigms) have allocated a significant locus to conceptual discussions, foisting one on the other mutual incoherence, contradictory consequences, vague definitions, or incompatibilities with the surrounding scientific knowledge. There is a general feature of the history of science practices, i.e., assimilating scientists' arguments in the evaluation of their productions.

Epistemological reflections have been crucial in SRT research. These thoughts can be distinguished from theory production and empirical- problem resolution in the methodological research cycle (Castorina, 2007; Valsiner, 2012). In this sense, the meaning of core concepts in SRT theoretical corpus has been transformed, such as *themata* (Moscovici & Vignaux, 1994), cognitive polyphasia (Wagner, 2005), subjectivity (Jodelet, 2008) or the relations between SR and power (Howarth, 2006, 2014). To a large extent, these transformations have resulted from controversies within SRT, with other programs (such as discursive psychology) or the needs of the research itself (Howarth, 2006; Marková, 2000; Voelklein & Howarth, 2008).

Moreover, if we stick to Einstein's ideas (cit. in Marková, 2008), inventing a theory implies not only conceptual controversies between the new and the old perspective, for example, between the nascent SRT and cognitive psychology but also with the empirical difficulties of the latter. In a general sense, the most influential research in more than fifty-year history includes a review of the fundamental thesis, an explicit treatment of epistemological issues which become a constitutive part of the process of knowledge development in the SRT. We can affirm that, in their dynamic articulation, these investigations have focused on the

questions related to identifying and proving hypotheses, proposing a theory and reflecting epistemologically (Castorina, 2007)

Moscovici (1966) recognized the novelty in Kuhnian thesis, which argues that science transformation must be sought in the: "... evolution of the community of the wise that obeys their standards ..." (Moscovici, 1966, p.124). However, "... one wonders whether the autonomy of the scientific communities of the wise is sufficiently grounded." (Moscovici, 1966, p. 126). He doubted about the thesis that the paradigmatic transformation was originated only by processes within the paradigm, as a consequence of the anomalies (the reiteration of unresolved empirical problems) leading to the paradigmatic crisis. It is a known fact that for Kuhn, only the scientists resorted to reconsidering the conceptual bases of the paradigm that became explicit for them for the first time in order to overcome the anomalies. Moreover, Moscovici believed that scientific revolutions largely depended on social life changes, including communications, economics, or philosophy. In other words, empirical anomalies are not the only condition of the revolution by default, but also the excess in terms of the many new truths reached and derived from multiple sources (Moscovici, 1996).

A central claim in Kuhn (1974) is that the ontological commitments (regarding the domain of disciplinary knowledge) are the components of each paradigm and are produced and assumed in the scientific community. However, Moscovici (1966) considered it as a limited approach because such commitments are not systematically linked to the beliefs emerging from social groups' conflicts and experiences. Either way, the conceptions of the world (*worldviews*) that constitute these commitments - which are not empirically questionable - and account for to introducing the social into science. On the other hand, this introduction has been Kuhn's significant contribution to epistemology. The paradigms are socio-historical constructions built within the scientific communities, and that define them. Unlike the paradigms, the conceptions of the world do not stem from the scientific community itself, but a broader context. In our opinion, before the crisis, in the research processes and during them, philosophical or metatheoretical controversies, which are not "internal" to the paradigm, are actively involved. In this sense, it seems necessary to mention the role of an extra-scientific culture to understand scientific revolutions. At least two perspectives can be mentioned. Koyré (1961), Moscovici's teacher, postulated that the change in theory content in the history of science was caused by mutations in philosophy, regardless of social contexts. Thus, he stated that scientific

revolutions, in physics especially, are a consequence of the modification of metaphysical systems, that revolutions do not occur in *vacuo* but within a framework of ideas and principles, mostly considered part of philosophical conceptions.

Nevertheless, we advocate for a thesis sustaining that *epistemic frames* (hereinafter EF) or *conceptions of the world* (García, 2000) or *cosmovisions* have been related to significant scientific changes, the emergence of new questions in contexts of social and ideological changes, even intervening as epistemological obstacles to the renewal of science (García, 2002; Piaget & García, 1983). Thus, the study of scientific change is extended towards its social context conditionings, the dominant culture at a specific time and place, and their transformations. This tenet has arisen from the dialectical thought of the universe as "an organized totality" in Taoism marking Chinese science. It has rejected the idea of the cause with the effect later prevailing in the West (Needham, 1956). It has gone through the Newtonian mechanics influencing the modern science as a whole, including the beginning of social sciences or the individualism that excised the individual from society, enabling and at the same time severely constraining the research in psychology and particular cognitive, social psychology in the last century. Even Marková (2014, 2016) has mentioned that *Naturphilosophy*, with its holism and interactionism of the parts of nature, was no stranger to the emergence of Wundt's psychology and then Gestalt Psychology. It seems to share, in turn, the same dynamic approach to totality with Einstein's physics. In this sense, we may argue the existence of a more extensive locus than Kuhn's proposed notion of paradigm, since it emerges from the transformations in the conceptions of the world produced in the society surrounding the scientific community. The reference to an extra-scientific culture that reaches ideological cosmovision appears as a novel aspect of the category of EF, by linking social practices and conflicts with scientific production (Becerra & Castorina, 2016a, 2016b). These are established and can be modified before or together with the scientific theory itself, i.e., every significant scientific change is, at the same time, a change in the epistemological and ontological assumptions (Becerra & Castorina, 2016a, 2016b). The emergence of SRT has occurred due to the modification of the epistemic framework, which ceased to be excisional to become relational and dialectical (Castorina, 2016b). Thus, a clear difference has arisen regarding the characterization of change within the paradigms.

On the other hand, the dialectical EF is compatible with Moscovici's ideas, later reconsidered by Marková (2003, 2016) regarding the epistemology of dialogicity, which has structured the conformation of the SRT. This thesis has been clearly linked with the European social and intellectual context within which Moscovici elaborated his theory since the end of the Second World War (Marková, 2016a). In particular, we have already stated that this is the formulation of a thought opposed to EF of the split initiated by Descartes (Taylor, 1995) which has been hegemonic in the constitution of a good part of psychology, including social psychology. Already in modernity itself, a relational and dialectical philosophy was formulated by Leibniz, Hegel or Schelling, even Marx, and closer to us, the relational thinking in Cassirer, Bourdieu, the holism of the dissociability of science and philosophy in a global system of representation in Koyré's (1961) or Einstein's meta-theoretical reflections (Moscovici, 2019). This philosophical approach was the EF enabling the constitution of the SRT, and its further development that Marková later specified in terms of dialogicity (Marková, 2017b). It entails that the radical change in cognitive social psychology has meant a change in the epistemological and ontological approach closely linked to the vicissitudes of the social thought in a historical context. However, these ideas are not strange to Moscovici (1997), they are even linked to his personal experience. There was, and there still is an interconnection between the ethical decisions and the assumption of values rooted in the vicissitudes of the society at his time within the scientific activity. These are, perhaps, our most important objections to the concept of paradigm.

NON-EPISTEMIC VALUES IN THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS THEORY

To assess the relevance of the paradigms concerning SRT, we consider its fundamental limitation, that is, the only exceptional intervention of moral and political values in the production and validation of scientific knowledge. In a broad sense, we understand values as *vectors for action* positively faced by a historical community. Values influence social actors' decisions; this is the case of the researchers (Gómez, 2014). Epistemic values are inevitably played in the decision-making process of choosing research problems, opting for one theory over another, or even resisting to abandon a theory. For Kuhn, they are the standards that a scientist aims to achieve. In other words, their choice relevance should lie on the explanatory power of the theories, the predictability of the facts, the coherence of the theoretical system, the

fertility of the hypotheses, and its simplicity. Therefore, assessing theories will not depend only on empirical evidence, since scientists differ in the way they validate theory according to those standards of rationality. These standards are distinctly ranked in confirming these theories in different contexts, whether they privilege, for example, consistency or fertility (Kuhn, 1977). Throughout his work, Kuhn also recognized the intervention of subjective factors external to the paradigm, such as moral or political values, or philosophical conceptions when scientists choose between competing theories. However, they are not clearly relevant to set the standards of theory confirmation.

Furthermore, as it is the case of the notion of paradigm, considering values from within the disciplinary field, Kuhn could not analyse the consequences of placing scientific revolutions in a broader social field. In this sense, the dialogicity in Moscovici and Marková is linked to the philosophical ideas that are not alien to the conflicts and social experiences that severely condition them. Such a perspective, like the thought of the split for cognitive social psychology, cannot be detached from the socio-historical conditions in which it emerges. It must also be anchored in non-epistemic values of a social nature. These values are inseparable from moral and political values.

In the history of philosophy, Hume, logical positivism, and its critics in the style of Popper, not in Kuhn, all values were considered subjective and objective facts in a radical dichotomy between the two. It means that science is free of values or should be based only on factual statements different from value statements. Maintaining such dualism is an indispensable condition to achieve some objectivity, i.e., we can advocate for the impartiality and neutrality of scientific research, as essential to such activity. We understand objectivity in the positivist approach as a way of knowing already given facts and by unique methods, i.e., believing in access to an existing outer world, which is publicly accessible, shared, impersonal and selfless, through procedures that involve the elimination of all social values and interests of the research process. Thus, it is presumed that knowledge is under "ontological tyranny" (Gómez, 2014, p. 141)

On the contrary, Putnam (2002) has convincingly rejected the thesis of the sharp separation between facts and values showing the confusing nature of such distinction or the impossibility for empiricism to give a satisfactory notion of the concept of *facts*. His positive

thesis is the non-separability or overlap between facts and values, which even permeates the scientific vocabulary.

On the other hand, in the SRT, Marková (2013) coincides with Moscovici (2011). She has questioned the neutrality of the facts of social life in cognitive social psychology, rendered in scales and questionnaires aiming to capture subjects' behaviours without the sense of value they are granted. Even the rationalization of interpersonal relationships under objectified rules accounts for that dualism. On the contrary, if the behaviours involve the actors' senses, the researchers themselves cannot avoid a standpoint about them. At least, this perspective facilitates thinking on their own values when it is assumed the emerging tension that implies facing the differences between their values and those of the social actors. Therefore, it is plausible to think that research in SRT cannot be limited to recording *facts* without the intervention of practical judgments which would be inherent in the scientists' work.

In this sense, we must affirm the validity of ethical choices based on personal judgments or social interests in social science researchers. As stated before, Moscovici considered that ethical positions are constitutive of scientific innovation and research in SRT (Marková, 2016). In this case, we can say that cognitive social psychology of individual attribution is marked with social bias based on a philosophical conception which establishes a dichotomy between the individual and the society that guides itself by the vector of moral individualism, among others. On the other hand, if SRT contextualized in the dialectical thought is consistent, it adopts the values of solidarity or recognition of others (Castorina, 2016b).

For us, many social psychologists' desire for being neutral is a non-epistemic value in itself as it orients a course of action towards the reliability and knowledge de-subjectivation. The choices of the problems to pose or the units of analysis are based on social interests existing in the social science research community. Thus, a scientist model is exclusively valued by researchers' identification with an idealized methodology, with a way of doing science applying the scientific method derived from the prestige of the natural sciences in their positivist interpretation. They commit themselves, in this way, to the moral requirement of being reliable in the scientific activity purportedly stripped of subjective interests.

Besides, in SRT, the concern about the conflicts of the subordinate groups is relatively recent, although Moscovici had already proposed to study the representations of stigmatized groups, as a resistance to the dominant representation, and to move towards another social

identity (Howarth, 2006). The pervasive search for the content and structure of the representations failed to place them in social conflicts with their political implication. At the same time, not doing so, it means to accept the world as it is or with modest amends (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). So, a contemplative position still pervading in research is adopted. It does not question the existing social order or takes sides with the social sectors subject to inequality challenging power relations.

When psychologists perform interventions on subjectivity, social interaction, or the public and ideological sphere, they help question the hegemonic representations. Advocating the postponed or stigmatized social sectors guides research and can influence these social groups' quality of life. Thus, the research aims to contribute to transforming a social group beyond showing how this group structure the reality, given the instruments available to intervene in the legitimation or resistance processes, consensus or dispute of social meanings. It is necessary to discuss whether a critical awareness of inequality should be promoted as a fundamental component of the SRT, whether it is committed to the de-alienation of groups and people, in the transformation of the self-awareness achieved by social groups' self-awareness (Fals Borda, 1985; Jodelet, 2007, 2008; Martín-Baró, 1996, 2006)

THE OBJECTIVITY OF RESEARCH IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Finally, a fundamental epistemological issue: does the recognition of non-epistemic values eliminate objectivity? Are they an indispensable condition? Can psychological knowledge reach a level of objectivity guided by non-epistemic values?

For feminist epistemology (Anderson, 2004; Longino, 2002, 2015), non-epistemic values have guided the construction of psychological knowledge and especially the search for empirical evidence. However, intervening in the narrowing of the research object, for example, does not require a legitimization of empirical research since values do not guarantee evidence or its rational. Its legitimacy depends on identifying problems in such a way that evidence can undermine value-based judgments. Therefore, value-guided inquiry must not lead to a predetermined conclusion. In other words, a research design must allow for falsifying evidence of hypotheses suggested by those values. Otherwise, the role of the latter is illegitimate. Such hypotheses can be corrected if scientists use the same kind of methodological precautions that are acceptable for research guided by other assumptions.

Following our reasoning, the intervention of value-judgement is justified if objectivity is conceived dissimilarly from the mainstream view, i.e., based on the representation of a unique world, or on capturing facts before knowledge (Gómez, 2014; Castorina, 2016a, 2016b). Psychological research is constrained by the world of human actions which resist or do not resist the proposed hypotheses. These may be, or not, empirically sustainable and with theoretical coherence, while they are strongly charged with value aspects. The objectivity lies in the interaction among researchers. It is based on agreements and disagreements on the non-arbitrary exchange of methods and results - its nature is social. It derives from a critical activity among the members of a research program and even regarding its social consequences (Longino, 2015). This intersubjective validation is opposed to any representative realism that tends to find the truth in the adequacy of a thing and the of the mind (Bourdieu, 2003). Thus, objectivity is not prior to its construction. It is a project, in the sense of Bachelard, a laborious historical conquest of knowledge. For historical rationalism, it is a related achievement attained during the processes of contextualized knowledge elaboration in consonance with the legitimacy criteria historically produced by the scientific community.

In this regard, it must be said that Kuhn (1962) also rejected objectivity as a copy of the world, and he considered it as a possibility for the members of a scientific community to reach intersubjective agreements about the value hierarchy when deciding between theories. But it is only about epistemic values.

In contrast, SRT sets a round-trip relationship between non-epistemic values and the pursuit of objectivity. It cannot only be an exercise of technical or methodological procedures, or the set of consistency or fertility values. On the other hand, the critique of the social conditions of the practice of a social science is a component of the elaboration of objectivity (Bourdieu, 2003; Longino, 2015). It is essential to include the contrast of values in the process of scientific knowledge. They are not judged - neutrality, solidarity, individualism, equality - as external factors, but as part of objective knowledge development. For the rest, value judgments themselves can be questioned by factual judgments: social sciences can make claims as a result of empirical research that shows the nature and functions of scientists' evaluative beliefs about the course of their scientific procedures. Moreover, arguments can be given to question the consequences of adopting specific non-epistemic values, for example, the belief of psychologists in a political world that happens without their participation, and that is negatively

valued. Such evaluation leads to their political immobility, for example, in the face of the stigmatization of certain ethnic minorities.

In SRT, if we seek to delve into the dispute and conflicts at the origin of the representations, the researchers' viewpoint on political values is expressed. The same should be said of those who believe they are neutral in these matters. Should we bear or question the social order? Should we consolidate or transform it? More considerable attention to conflicts in the constitution and transformation of SRs is not alien to the values that preside over research. The aim is changing social conditions, rather than merely describing them (Raudsepp, 2005). If for Moscovici (2001, 2011), social psychology is a humanitarian moral science, it can respond to problems linked to the empowerment of the dominated sectors to achieve their liberation. Not only we should study the representations of social reality, but how it can be transformed. We must thematize collective resistance and social change, as well as oppression and social reproduction (Elcheroth, Doise, & Reicher, 2011). This commitment to political ideals is not at odds with the pursuit of the objectivity of psychological knowledge.

Moreover, questioning certain non-epistemic values can help achieve objectivity in the methodological cycle, when these values hinder the raising of particular problems or constructing knowledge to prove or to enable the emergence of consequences in psychological practice that are questionable from other non-epistemic values that resort to good reasons. It would be the case of individualism or letting a society to be characterized by relations of domination. It is necessary a critical exercise on these values. In this sense, questioning the social conditions of the research – covering political or moral preferences- or verifying the domain of arbitrary preferences depends on a critical interaction in the scientific community or with other communities. In this way, a more or less transcendental no epistemic authority is at stake. This perspective guarantees knowledge from nowhere, and it is above that interaction among the protagonists of the research (Longino, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS

The epistemological concept of paradigm in Kuhn presents serious difficulties to be considered as a fair characterization of SRT. A careful analysis rules out a strict use of the concept, although it can be used in a metaphorical sense to refer to the profound transformation that has meant in social psychology. In this discipline, ontology and epistemological

presuppositions are linked to the social context of the ideas beyond the scientific community. Besides, the conceptual changes and epistemological controversies throughout SRT history do not fit the normal science version of empirical problem solving, distinctive of the notion of paradigm. Finally, and above all, the intervention of non-epistemic values in formulating and validating hypotheses results in reformulating objective knowledge, so to speak. Without ignoring Kuhn's significant contribution to contemporary epistemology, the peculiarity of SRT development requires another epistemological instrument. Alternatively, at least, it is necessary to review the concept of paradigm, if we want to use it to describe and characterize SRT

However, it remains a relevant issue to establish whether SRT is a theory, a paradigm, a research program (in the sense of Lakatos, 1971), a research tradition (Laudan, 1985, 1986) or any of them (Castorina, 2015). In this latest version, unlike Kuhn, a conceptual discussion is considered as more relevant than overcoming empirical anomalies to interpret scientific change. Even significant modifications in the hardcore of the ideas are acknowledged during the historical unfolding of a research tradition (Castorina, 1993). However, it is difficult to think that any of the previous epistemological versions coming from the “hard" science model, such as astronomy or physics, can account for the specificity of the social sciences, particularly the SRT. Perhaps, the unit of epistemological analysis might have to be reconsidered to do justice to SRT’s specificity.

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