

# Lost in the crowd<sup>1</sup>

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In memoriam Moisés Sobrinho

The text examines a forgotten public debate between Serge Moscovici and Pierre Bourdieu which was held in Paris in 1982 on account of the former's book, "The Age of the Crowds". The interest if not the actuality of the debate resides, as it is attempted to show, in the inherent boundaries and underlying disciplinary ambiguities which pervade the field of social sciences as in the case here between social psychology and sociology. At the time the encounter concluded, a truce between the two parties had not yet been achieved.

**Keywords:** crowd, psychology, sociology, interdisciplinary, science, boundary object, unconscious

## INTRODUCTION

In 1982 a debate between Serge Moscovici and Pierre Bourdieu took place at the Maison de Radio France in Paris. The chosen theme was to be - L'Âge des Foules (The Age of the Crowd), the title of a book published by Moscovici in 1981. Moscovici and Bourdieu were well known at the time, with established reputations as being leading French social scientists, both having succeeded in achieving wide international recognition; Moscovici as a leading social psychologist, and Bourdieu a no less prominent figure in the field of sociology. As it often happens in social sciences, notwithstanding the proximity of their interests as scientific researchers, their trajectories never crossed one another, a sort of no man's land separating their working fields.

One reason for recalling this debate after 40 years is to illustrate how interdisciplinarity is difficult to achieve in the realm of social sciences and, on the contrary, how banal the sciences wars

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on the conference given in 2021 at the 15th CIRS (International Conference on Social Representations) online: <https://remosco.hypotheses.org/news-nouvelles/cirs-2021-programme-videos>

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are. It is intriguing to remark that this public debate was never published or even quoted in the extensive bibliography of their associates and analysts, or why it did not give rise to a detailed commentary that, as it seems, is a worthwhile pursuit. My intent is not to conduct a full examination of the debate rather to focus on some of the specific issues regarding the boundaries of these neighbouring, yet notably distant disciplines - social psychology and sociology, namely in the present case where the theme is under discussion. – the crowd, is a typical “boundary object” - a notion borrowed from Good (2000).<sup>2</sup>

Besides, the issue of the ‘crowd’ has never ceased to figure in the agenda of the social and political scientists, having now acquired a particular salience during the pandemic where so many identity movements massively saturate our mediascape. One recent dramatic example was the invasion of the Capitol in Washington by hundreds of supporters of then President Trump in January 6, 2021 where we can listen, from one of the attendees, that the “crowd is in itself the weapon”.

## **THE CONTENDERS**

In order to give a brief foundation of context to the debate let me briefly recall some curricular features of the two contenders. They had many characteristics in common: they were both French, having almost the same age, they were academics working side by side in prestigious institutions such as the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales*. Bourdieu similarly lectured in the *Collège de France* from 1981 until his death. They both have greatly contributed to the development not only of their disciplines, but also to lay the groundwork for what would become a transdisciplinary social theory.

In a statistical study conducted by Bourdieu on the community of the French Human Science’s scholars, the names of Moscovici and Bourdieu figure as rather close in the plan defined by the two orthogonal first and second inertial axis (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 290) which could suggest an epistemic proximity that actually never took place. It seems that there was instead a rivalry leading to a mutual ignorance or, at best, brief ironic indirect allusions of one another. But if there are similarities in their personal trajectories and academic positions there are also differences, still more salient in the elitist atmosphere of the French scientific communities.

Moscovici could be a typical example of an interdisciplinary scholar. He had not limited his scientific curiosity to endow social psychology with a new look (*un nouveau regard*), or even to upgrade

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<sup>2</sup> “The history of social psychology I would suggest, also contains numerous “boundary objects” that have been shared /borrowed by practitioners, researchers, community members and individuals, within social psychology and its neighbouring disciplines – for example, the notions of “self”, “identity”, “group”, “crowd” and “culture” (Good, 2000, p. 387). Social psychology being itself a boundary discipline mediating between psychology and sociology reproduces internally a fractal new boundary between what came to be designated by the unhappy labels “psychological social psychology” versus “sociological social psychology”, the former referring to when social psychology is reduced to an applied general psychology to social situations, and the latter when the social psychology aims at studying what Moscovici has ironically designated as the “scandal of the social thinking” actually much less scandalous today.

its epistemological status among social sciences. As a student of Koyré, whose courses he also attended, Moscovici published several studies on the history and philosophy of science, having even discovered manuscripts related with the first opponent to Galileo. His book, published in 1968 - *The Human History of Nature* – was written in parallel with his research on the social representations of psychoanalysis. Endowed by an immense erudition spanning across both natural and social sciences as well as humanities, I would venture to say that his project was ultimately to construct a social theory<sup>3</sup> of which his social psychology was the central, but not only dimension.

It is in this sense that I interpret the two *magna opera* that he published *L'Âge de Foules* in 1981, and *La Machine à faire des Dieux* in 1989. In the former text, Moscovici analyses in detail the work of some of the founding fathers of the “collective psychology”, such as Le Bon, Tarde, and Freud. In the latter work, Moscovici pursues his survey of the founding fathers of the social sciences, examining the works of Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel. The subtitle, “Psychological Explanation of Social Phenomena” seems to confirm the more comprehensive interdisciplinary if not transdisciplinary intentions of the author.

Bourdieu, like Moscovici, was also a remarkable polymath bridging sociology with the humanities and the arts. Another example of an interdisciplinary scholar, which suggests that the interdisciplinarity is very often a personal choice; a self-selected individual rather than a group practice. His sophisticated theory of action is not easy to summarise. It was gradually constructed acquiring its full-fledged expression in the book *Le Sens Pratique* [The Logic of Practice] published in 1980. Bourdieu, like Moscovici, also seems to look beyond the boundaries of his discipline, at least whenever limited to a routinised normal science. Bourdieu very often reminded us that sociology at the time was despised by the normaliens, an attitude that he rejected but equally took upon himself as a challenge to upgrade the discipline, like Lévi-Strauss had successfully achieved in the field of anthropology.<sup>4</sup>

In this spirit Bourdieu undertook the ambitious project of overcoming the traditional dichotomous split between structuralism and constructivism, as well as between methodological individualism versus holism - the Achilles' heel that haunted, and maybe still haunts the field of the social sciences. It was this epistemic boundary that his theory of action was supposed to surmount via a rather sophisticated model interconnecting a triad of concepts - habitus, field and capital. Although

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<sup>3</sup> Moscovici in particular was very active as a member of the Committee on Transnational Social Psychology in the institutionalisation of this new discipline worldwide. The details of the political and diplomatic activities developed by this international group are described in a book co-authored with Ivana Markova published in 2006, which became an indispensable document for the history of social sciences.

<sup>4</sup> "Ayant quitté la philosophie pour la sociologie (transition-trahison qui, du point de vue de ceux qui restent attachés au titre de philosophe fait une différence toto caelo), je ne pouvais, en tant que savant d'aspiration, que rester enraciné dans la vision rationaliste; cela, au lieu d'utiliser, comme Foucault et Derrida, les sciences sociales pour les réduire ou les détruire, tout en les pratiquant sans le dire et sans payer le prix d'une véritable conversion aux servitudes de la recherche empirique" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 205).

abstract enough, Bourdieu succeeded in operationalising these concepts in a number of empirical studies thoroughly described in the much-acclaimed book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984).

There, we are invited to return to the Kantian question regarding possible conditions and variations in the formation of taste, but now on more empirical, common-sense terms on a vast panoply of current household and personal objects such as furniture, food, clothes, entertainment, etc., would be at a great extent influenced by class habitus, which might be objectively mapped and interpreted in terms of class styles, as well as life styles. We are surely beyond the traditional social-demographic criteria as used in social sciences in that the empirical findings are not only descriptive, but rather grounded on a dynamic model with the aim of explaining how individual decisions are eventually social, being generated and reproduced in terms of a circular dialectic, articulating habitus and fields. The central notion of habitus which Bourdieu borrowed from Panofsky is defined as a “disposition”, a sort of incorporated way of responding to environmental stimulus, be they proximal or distal, dynamically integrated throughout the trajectories of the socialisation processes to which the agents are submitted, as well as differentiated by the amount and the nature of capitals they come to be endowed. In the words of Bourdieu “... the life-style, characteristic of an agent or class of agents, that is the unity hidden under the diversity and multiplicity of the set of practices performed in the field governed by different logics and therefore inducing different forms of realisation, in accordance with the formula: ((habitus) (capital)+ field = practice))” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 101).

The social equation proposed by Bourdieu is particularly heuristic leading to the autopoietic circle of structuring structures and structured structures, introducing in this way a sort of metonymic/circular causality linking the habitus to the field. Notions like habitus, fields, and capital, beyond their metaphorical nature, could also be considered as examples of interdisciplinary concepts, a sort of boundary work evoking and expanding the discipline of sociology, borrowing new concepts from psychology (habitus), economics (capital), and physics/systems (fields) (Gieryn, 1983, 1999). It could be argued that a study like *Distinction* could easily be classified as an illustration of mass behaviour, although, as we will see, this is a vocabulary that Bourdieu does not seem to be fond of.

## OVERVIEW

The idea of this rapid survey was to suggest that there is much in common in the attempts of both social scientists to develop and renew not only the disciplines they have embraced, but also how both have strived to construct a more ambitious transdisciplinary social theory.

The concept of habitus has been compared with the concept of social representation, a suggestion first introduced by Doise and Lorenzi-Cioldi (1989). I would not say that these constructs could be reduced into one another but there are at least some complementarities or a family resemblance

that could justify boundary work. The notion of “habitus” seems clearly anchored within a psychological field, activated at the individual level, but devoid of a cognitive explanation mediating the socialisation process towards the social action. The habitus, as actually posited by the theory of action, thus becomes a black box which could however be half-opened by examining the way the agents cognitively process the information continuously emerging from the social fields. Described as limited by Bourdieu, the model runs the risk, from a psychological perspective, of not going beyond a sophisticated neo-behaviourism, becoming problematic to explain how social change is possible. Such a problem could however find a possible way-out through a dialogue with the Moscovici’s social influence theory of innovation showing how the socialisation processes are not limited to zero sum intra-field conflicts.

The very notion of field could also offer a common ground for extending the conversation. Central to Bourdieu’s theory of action, it is no less important in Moscovici’s theory of social representations likewise described as a field theory (Moscovici, 1976). For both authors the metaphor of the field, which Kurt Lewin borrowed from the modern physical sciences, played an important role, although at different levels, which could be a reason for an attempt of a micro-macro articulation. Notwithstanding the potential complementarities, the dialogue between Bourdieu and Moscovici never took place, neither between the two kings nor among the loyal subjects they both succeeded to mobilising. The isolated example of Doise & Cioldi, in their attempt to propose a dialectic synthesis of the two theories, was never fully developed, not even by themselves. Could this be an example of the science wars? Not exactly; because there was no war, the elusive borders of their fields being carefully surveilled by each other.

It is in this context, assuming that my reading is correct, the debate between Moscovici and Bourdieu, also for its rarity, might however offer a good example of a scientific controversy. Moreover, the silence that met the debate afterwards, could also be interpreted not as some paradigmatic incommensurability but rather as personal incompatibilities so common among leading social scientists. One may recall the case of Durkheim and Weber whose relationships were no more than a polite reciprocal indifference, if not a silent hostility.

## **THE AGE OF THE CROWD**

The crowd was an issue to which Moscovici paid particular attention, which is likely due to its association to the emergence of a social psychology — the idea that the collective movements could be described, if not explained in psychological terms. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in all probability due to the turbulence caused by successive revolutions and social movements, namely in France, the crowds became a matter of public concern giving rise to a number of interpretations by authors including Le Bon and Tarde, as well as Sighele and McDougall. Initially the issue was dealt with through a legal-

medical framework of ‘the criminal crowds’ predominantly developed by Tarde and Sighele, and later being loosely generalised and disseminated by Le Bon to wider, informal, as well as institutional, gatherings. Since then the crowd(s) or semantic variations such as mass(es), mob, populace, entered as a regular topic into the social sciences. The essay “Group psychology and the analysis of the Ego” published by Sigmund Freud in 1921, was a new innovative step in linking the individual to group behaviour. The reference that Freud made in his seminal essay in response to Le Bon’s *Psychology of crowds*, published in 1905, might have contributed to its otherwise doubtful scientific legitimacy.

What, however, seems to have attracted Freud as well as Moscovici to Le Bon was presumably his shift toward a more comprehensive notion of the crowd beyond the anomic features to which the word as the thing was, and still seems to be associated. For Freud, but also for Moscovici, what became central was what could explain the glue which aggregates a mass of followers around a common leader, why, as already asked by La Boétie, so many accept to obey by the will of so few or, in more updated terms, why do we eventually come to love Big Brother? The answer had to be found, as suggested by Freud, in the unconscious affective identification processes beyond the strict Oedipus triangle. Moscovici expands this process as the one at the core of the Weberian notion of “charisma”, and to his proposed distinction between totemic and mosaic leaders, maybe the most original contribution of *L’Âge des Foules*. It is somewhat intriguing that Moscovici had not considered the role of Emile Durkheim, namely on account of his controversy with Gabriel Tarde.<sup>5</sup>

In Moscovici’s *La Machine à faire des dieux* published in 1989, the author recognises the lacuna. As he writes “I did not take advantage of this admirable book in my previous study *The Age of The Crowd* in which I dealt rather with the hypothesis posed by Freud in his *Totem and Taboo*” (1993, pp. 32)<sup>6</sup>. In fact, the polemic between Tarde and Durkheim was crucial for a better understanding of how the question of the crowd became a boundary object decisively contributing for the demarcation of the *statu nascendi* disciplines of sociology and (social) psychology, both disciplines still sharing a common matrix.

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<sup>5</sup> It could be of interest to compare the debate between Tarde and Durkheim with one between Moscovici and Bourdieu in that both are focused in discussing the boundaries between the disciplines of psychology and sociology. The former debate took place between the period 1893 and 1904 during which the two authors addressed mutual critical texts. There was one only public seance at the Ecole des hautes etudes sociales, but unfortunately no records were preserved. In 2008 a group of researchers made a recension of the debate based on a script consisting of quotations from the works of Tarde and Durkheim, arranged to form a dialogue. “A short version of it was acted out, in French, by Bruno Latour (Gabriel Tarde), Bruno Karsenti (Emile Durkheim), and Simon Schaffer (The Dean), under the direction of Frederique Ait-Touati, on 14 March 2008, at McCrum Lecture Theatre, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, UK, as part of the conference Tarde/Durkheim: Trajectories of the Social. A podcast video of it is available at <http://www.crash.cam.ac.uk/events/47/>.” Vargas (2008). It is not difficult to imagine, would they be invited, that Moscovici could perform the role of Tarde and Bourdieu the role of Durkheim. As remarked by Mark Twain, the history does not repeat itself but often it rhymes.

<sup>6</sup> Je n’ai pas tiré profit de cet admirable ouvrage dans mon travail antérieur sur “L’Âge des Foules”, où il était plutôt question des hypothèses exposées par Freud dans *Totem et Tabou* (Moscovici, 1989, p. 43)

Borrowing from Borch (2012), to whom my understanding of this issue owes very much, the crucial point would be that the position of Freud about the crowd would be better understood when linked to the more political concerns pursued by the German social sciences, than to what meanwhile took place in France. In historical terms, as shown by Moscovici in his seminal book on social representations, psychoanalysis was scarcely known in France and even less in terms of the emergence of the masses. The timid Tarde's attempt to introduce a sort of psychosociology of the masses was met by firm opposition from Durkheim, which at least in France, decisively contributed to the separation of sociology from psychology. This seems relevant for the understanding of the antagonism displayed by Moscovici and Bourdieu in 1982.

## THE DEBATE

The public debate between Moscovici and Bourdieu took place on the June 8, 1982, at the Maison de Radio France<sup>7</sup> and had a duration of one hour and eight minutes, being followed by a few inaudible questions raised by the audience.

The theme was *L'Âge des Foules*, the title of the Moscovici's book published some months before, in 1981. One may understand the surprise raised by this unexpected resurrection of a such forgotten topic. In fact, coming back to authors like Le Bon and Tarde as proposed by Moscovici appeared, at the time, as flogging a dead horse.<sup>8</sup>

The debate starts with a long exposé by Moscovici. In a rather provocative style he claims that “the crowd psychology is, beside (à côté) political economy, the social discipline which had the greatest impact on the effective history” a statement reproduced quasi *ipsis verbis* from *L'âge des foules* (p. 13). It seems problematic to accept that these two disciplines based in two apparently opposite visions of the human nature, the (emotional) passions of the *homo socialis* versus the (rational) interests of the *homo economicus*, might have operated historically in parallel rather than in a dialectical way. Moscovici is not explicit on how to understand the epistemic relationship between these two disciplines. It thus comes as no surprise that the debate comes to be greatly marked by this central issue. It seems to me safe to admit that for Moscovici the psychological factor is central for the explanation of the political life. Moscovici seems to suggest that behind the invisible (right hand) of the market guided by a (rational) cognitive unconscious there would be the work of a no less invisible (left) hand guided by a non-rational unconscious being this latter one which distributes the power between leaders and

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<sup>7</sup> The debate can still be listened on the website of the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel.

<sup>8</sup> Tarde had meanwhile acquired a renewed notoriety. Many of Tarde's titles have now been reedited and studied by a number of authors. We would be living nowadays in a Tardomania (Mucchielli, 2000). Deleuze in his work *Différence et Répétition* (1968, p. 104) was the first to mention the relevance and actuality of the Tarde's intuitions of which neither Moscovici nor Bourdieu seem to have been acquainted. The same cannot be said about the questionable Gustave Le Bon being rather intriguing the scientific legitimacy that Moscovici seems to accord him (Barrows, 1981; Thiec & Tréanton, 1983; Dupuy, 1992).

followers. The collective psychology introduced on the turn of the century, preliminary and approximative as it now might appear, had however a decisive role in offering a sort of matrix onto which social psychology acquired its own epistemic identity.

Moscovici pursues his presentation, stating that he had approached the problem of the crowd through three biases (*trois biais*): (1) the psychological bias stressing that for psychologists the crowd is not defined by the number of people assembled but rather by the change in their behaviour - they do not behave in the same way alone or when assembled; (2) a second bias is political, introducing the distinction between the leaders (*meneurs*) and followers. The governance of societies has to take into account the political rhetoric used by the leaders to mobilize the people; (3) the third bias is historical - a reason for having conducted his study through the history of the crowd psychology, a discipline created in France by Le Bon and Tarde, most likely linked to political events which took place in France in the turn of the century and still fresh in the collective memory. In this third historical perspective he introduces another provocative innuendo in suggesting that “[the crowd] under the bias of anomie, as once acknowledged by Bourdieu, the psychology has penetrated into the sociological model.”

In this first presentation, one reason for Moscovici claiming for the scientific legitimacy of the new discipline introduced by Le Bon was the wide popularity acquired by *La Psychologie des Foules*, not only in France, but also in other latitudes and by prestigious readers. For example, Bourdieu reminds Moscovici, in the first 24 pages of the Max Weber’s magnum opus, Le Bon is quoted. But not only does this seem to be a weak argument for legitimating Le Bon as a scientist (which he was definitely not), but in the case of Weber the quotation was made to highlight Weber’s perspective of social action as distinct from the dubious psychological tones of the French author. Moscovici also invokes the Chicago School to which, as also remarked by Borch (2012), the case of the crowd has to be analysed not only in epistemic universal terms but also in accordance with regional trends. If in the natural sciences the disciplines are in principle transnational the same cannot be said of the social sciences; always much more entangled with regional contingencies and traditions.

If I have correctly understood the position of Moscovici in this face-to-face controversy, where the rigour, or the argument cannot be the same as in a written text, the underlying subtext was mainly centered on his intent to stress the need of reinforcing the interdisciplinary links between social sciences, never separating the psychological from the social processes. Crowd psychology was perhaps considered by Moscovici as a way of legitimizing the social psychology in the attempt of a mediating instance between the individual and the societal. This was one of the vindications of the collective psychology of Freud in positing, maybe for the first time, and against Durkheim’s positivism, that there is no distinction between individual and social psychology. Another important distinction, already in the text of Le Bon, but further elaborated on by Freud, was the distinction between natural and artificial crowds, these latter typically exemplified by the institutions like the Army and the Church where the differentiation between leaders and followers may become rather concerning due to an eventual



authoritarian drift. Let us now turn to the reaction of Bourdieu whose first intervention was also rather lengthy.

Bourdieu starts by rejecting that crowd psychology could be considered as a science. According to him it is instead a mythology with the appearance (allure) of a science, certainly with a certain social efficacy, eventually espoused by the naive man-of-the-street. Bourdieu uses here the word “social phantoms” which could correspond to the Moscovici’s notion of social representations, a notion which although central in his own work Moscovici, in his replica, never invokes. Besides, neither Moscovici nor Bourdieu ever mention their own theories and concepts which might be interpreted as a tacit social agreement on the rules of the game.<sup>9</sup>

Not being a science, as argued by Bourdieu, the crowd psychology could instead become the object of science which apparently displaced the issue to another field, be it the sociology and philosophy of science, or a more general epistemological level. Bourdieu cannot take seriously forgotten writers such as Le Bon and Tarde, brought back to life by Moscovici, with their ridiculous descriptions of the crowds as female, victims of obscure processes such as hypnotism (Le Bon) or suggestion and imitation (Tarde). Even Freud who Bourdieu accepts and respects as a psychoanalyst, but not as a naïve sociologist, did not resist in adopting the same vocabulary. Bourdieu does not seem sensitive to the successive substantive changes of the concepts used to explain the apparent mysterious glue that aggregates the masses. Hypnotism, even as metaphor, or suggestion and suggestibility are not simple variations of the same basic concept, let alone the fundamental move introduced by Freud through the notion of libido. Moscovici has carefully distinguished those semantic nuances in *L’âge des foules*, but does not come back to it in the debate, maybe because this would deviate the attention from the central issue. Being a mythology, recalls Bourdieu, it is not falsifiable as claimed by Popper, being the merit of the French sociology to have resisted to the appeal of the psychology of the crowd. By French sociology one may presume that he alludes to Durkheim, who, in fact, as already mentioned, rejected Tarde’s attempt to explain the cement of society in what Durkheim considered to be a reduction of social facts to psychological processes. Bourdieu admits however, replying to the insinuation of Moscovici, that the concept of anomie<sup>10</sup> introduced by Durkheim might be interpreted as an attempt to rationalize phenomena such as religion as a well-grounded error (une erreur bien fondée).

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<sup>9</sup> The rules of the game, or the “illusio” if we prefer Bourdieu’s notion, does not constrain the external observer which explains why I think to be allowed to insert some counterfactual arguments or hidden strategies of the mind.

<sup>10</sup> The concept of anomie, firstly introduced by Durkheim, was in fact recalled by Bourdieu in the “Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique” (1972). In his later courses delivered on the Collège de France Bourdieu in 1985 about general sociology as well as in the one of 1998-2000 about Manet the anomie is interpreted in as a quasi-autonomic capacity of generating diversity of judgement and eventually social change. Under this new more positive sense the concept of anomie could be compatible with the Moscovici’s theory (1979) of social innovation as triggered by nomic active vs anomic (passive) minorities. It might be presumed that at the date of the debate those ideas were not yet fully developed. Another interpretation could be that this was another confirmation of how an opportunity for boundary work was avoided and lost.

It is a little bit intriguing, at least for me, that Bourdieu came to invoke the Popperian criteria of falsifiability to delimit science from non-science, and even more strange that Moscovici comes to agree that “this is a good theory”. As a matter of fact, neither Moscovici nor Bourdieu in their contributions to the philosophy of science were prone to accept this strict criterion for scientific demarcation. What they both have borrowed from Popper was rather the crucial importance of the conjectural and creative side of the scientific practice, as an alternative to the Kuhnian’s normal science. In the particular case of the psychoanalysis, rejected by Popper as a science, it was not excluded by Bourdieu and even less by Moscovici. It would even be plausible to suggest that due to the epistemic role attributed to the unconscious by Moscovici, his bias would not be more psychoanalytic than psychological.

Bourdieu was more receptive of Popper’s epistemology. In the texts dedicated to the sociology of science (Bourdieu 1975, 1976, 2000) the only explicit reference I could find to Popper was made in the course at the Collège de France in 2001, but to stress only indirectly Popper’s criterion of demarcation. Bourdieu recalls that for Popper the idea of “objectivity” in science requires the friendly-hostile cooperation of their numerous scientists. The scientific objectivity could thus be defined as the “intersubjectivity of the scientific method” (Popper, 1945) which seems to confirm the priority attributed to the collective validation, but on methodological terms.

Moscovici is more explicit in rejecting Popper’s structures on the demarcation criteria, “which have long being shown to be inapplicable. When, in a word, we declare one thing to be a science, and another a non-science, we are invoking the criteria of proof and rigour, and not those of discovery and fecundity. According to the latter criteria, psychoanalysis has amply justified its status” (Moscovici 2008/1976, p. xxxiii). In his reply Moscovici clarifies that he also does not agree with the simplistic notions presented namely by the Le Bon in his book on the psychology of the crowd in 1895. He has “treated him (Le Bon) “en ennemi” (as an enemy). The naïve theses of Le Bon, possibly due to his populist style, had a considerable impact perhaps, as suggested by Bourdieu, because they expressed the phantoms of a reactionary bourgeoisie afraid of the threatening mass movements. Moscovici also agrees that nineteenth’ century French people were “mainly worried with two problems: the Revolution and Order”. But the idea of coming back to those authors is justified, as importantly stressed by Moscovici, by the fact they were the first to raise the question, a question which could become an object of science — “whenever we enter in a new complex domain the first approach consists in moving from the unknown as well as the unarticulated to the knowable and articulable.” Moscovici, does not feel discomfort that the mythology be included in a science provided that the mythology be heuristic, helping the emergence of discovery. He seems much more focused on Bourdieu’s structuring structures, in the sociopsychological process of discovery, than of its final consolidation into the structured structures. I dare to suggest that both contenders could easily agree around the epistemic approach to a science as the social psychology in a *statu nascendi*, would they be open to the Popperian attitude of an “amiably–hostile cooperation”.

Another argument introduced by Bourdieu was that the issue of the mass movements could be more adequately approached from the perspective of history as it has been illustrated by the social history in England with authors like Hobsbawm, Thompson, and Tilly. Bourdieu references Tilly's work titled *Le siècle des révolutions* ?, in which I could not confirm where the mass organisations are described as rational, aimed at precise objectives, in contrast to the image of female, hysteric, manipulated masses of the French authors.

Moscovici replies that he also knows quite well those writers, recalling that it was Thompson himself to first denounce the superficiality of these works of the British historians. He adds, and I would like to particularly highlight this point, that psychology was not and could not be ignored in those approaches to mass movements, but the sort of psychology which those authors have applied, based on the feelings of fear and panic, was finally rather simplistic – a “psychologie bricolée”, unable to explain why those revolutions and social movements had to insert ideological discourses and revolutionary cults in their practices. Moscovici denounces here a usual problem observable in social sciences. Since the field of social sciences is not so clearly demarcated as the natural sciences, it is expectable to find some parallel approaches to the same issues with a variable amount of sophistication. Sometimes the differences are more nominal than substantive, redundancies and overlaps are frequent, which instead of favouring a culture of interdisciplinarity eventually contribute to an ambiguous syncretism.

Years ago, Piaget (1970) argued that due to the lack of internal hierarchy, social sciences would have problems in developing a mutual cooperation. This could explain why each one of the social disciplines, even those with a nomothetical status, have a tendency to hegemonize their field – for the economist as for the sociologist, every societal issue could be explained (reduced) in terms of their own discipline, all the others being no more than fields for application. Social psychologists are also vulnerable to this imperialistic approach giving rise to another instance of the unhealthy science wars. On this view, it comes as no surprise that Moscovici might have started this debate claiming that the case of crowd psychology – a metonymy of social psychology (?) - had the same relevance as the political economy for the understanding of social history. This was of course a rather ambitious as well as a controversial statement difficult to be taken seriously not only by Bourdieu, but also by the community of social sciences. The status of the general psychology in the field of science is in itself rather problematic. In the study coordinated by Wallerstein (1996) for the rationalization of the social sciences, to which prominent scholars coming from various disciplines have contributed, it is curious to see that psychology was not included. In a later article Wallenstein (2003) explains in a footnote: “I would not include psychology in the mix, for two good reasons. First I think that the level of analysis is quite distinctive. Second most psychologists would prefer to be called biological sciences rather than social scientists, and they would be right, in my judgment, given the kind of work they are in fact doing” (p. 455).

The situation becomes even more dubious in the case of social psychology considered (1) as a mere applied psychology to social stimulus or, as claimed by Moscovici with particular vehemence, (2) that social psychology is a social science “de plein droit”, constructed to fill the vacant space between the individual and the society. The task in this new battlefield does not seem to recognize the autonomic role aimed at by the sociological social psychologists. Sociologists have meanwhile developed their own versions of micro level analysis, such is the case of ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism, as sub-disciplines that compete with the Moscovici’s theory of social representations. Instead of interdisciplinarity one can therefore suspect that social disciplines would prefer another kind of boundary work, coming to import and reformulate concepts from other neighbouring disciplines - as we have seen with the Bourdieu’s concept on habitus, a sociopsychological hybrid which could be negotiated with Moscovici’s concept of social representations.

In the debate that opposed the two scholars it is curious to note, as above remarked, that neither of them call upon their own concepts and theories for arguing about crowd behaviour. The attempts of Moscovici to enter into the citadel of sociology appears to revive the controversy that took place many decades before between Tarde and Durkheim. Only that in this latter case Durkheim had eventually come to recognise that the case of religion as a rather complex phenomenon of collective effervescence was deserving of special attention from the social scientists. But even in situations where anomalous, or less rational behaviours lead to appeal for psychological explanations, Bourdieu tends to invoke the social context which significantly conditions the individual choices. He gives the example of the concentration camps - situations where the created conditions lead people to become monstrous (les conditions sont données pour que les gens soient monstrueux).

In replying to an interruption of Moscovici - wherefrom does come that monstrosity? Bourdieu curiously uses the word drive (pulsion) with inverted commas (entre guillemets), as he adds, “which could have a biological origin but, when socially worked, meet the favourable conditions for expressing themselves”. Pursuing the same line, he adds that it is the anonymity which is common to the concentration camp, to the bureaucracy, and to the masses as well. Moscovici in his reply stresses that Bourdieu is using a psychological language. Yes, agrees Bourdieu “but I reconstruct it in sociological terms”. Moscovici recalls in turn the motive that led him to be interested in this issue of the crowd. He had run a seminar three or four years beforehand about the phenomenon of the concentration camps, where he too had the occasion of examining those always invoked reasons which finally, as he concluded, do not explain too much (tout ça n’explique pas grand chose). The main problem, he adds, is “how to transform an ensemble of anonymous people into an active mass to which he had not yet heard a reasonable explanation”.

Bourdieu, although not rejecting the fact that chaotic unstructured gathering of the populace might eventually march under a common cause, was much more receptive to the more structured artificial crowds where the mechanisms of top down manipulation can be observed on a more systematic

way, and where the dominance of the leaders is exerted through more stable ecological mechanisms instead of the enigmatic charisma, another black box that gives a name to the phenomenon instead of explaining its underlying process. As Bourdieu ironically says “the leaders lead because they lead” a remark that very much irritates Moscovici who, in turn, insists on the neutrality of the beliefs, of shared beliefs, without which the mechanisms of manipulation could not work - an argument that Bourdieu seems to partially accept which does not mean that the debate could be concluded on consensual terms. The notion of belief is in itself no less intriguing, as no less central, for this dispute which could have led to another conversation between these two scholars, but such an exchange, as far as I know, never came to be pursued.

## **FINAL REMARKS**

The debate between Moscovici and Bourdieu would require a more comprehensive analysis beyond the specific question of the boundary work between two social disciplines. Many other no less relevant questions were raised during the course of the debate, namely regarding the nature of the concept of crowd, herein not clearly distinguished from other close notions such as masses, mobs, publics, people, etc. but this was not the purpose of the present text. Nevertheless, such fuzziness very much contributed to the fatal flaw of a not minimal “construction of the (scientific) object”. The reader, and even more the auditor, might feel a little bit lost in understanding of what the contenders are talking about. This apparent incapacity or willingness of both scholars to endeavour in undertaking a negotiation about a boundary object, such as what exactly the notion of a crowd was, may be that the focus of the debate was not aimed at finding a sort of overlapping consensus, but rather to reinforce the specific traits of each one of these cultural social disciplines.

We are far from the generous approach of the cultural sociologist Mauss, who in 1924 addressed a group of psychologists with the aim of reinforcing the interdisciplinary links between the two so naturally close scientific fields. It is maybe at this superordinate level of the culture that psychology and sociology become interdependent and entangled. Besides, when mining the intellectual trajectories of Moscovici and Bourdieu, it might be seen how they both look upwards to culture as the epistemological level at which the collectives acquires a more comprehensive intelligibility. The debate appears now as a rather isolated episode in the intellectual lifeworld of both scholars, which could also explain its silent reception by the scientific community to which they were affiliated. Even if Bourdieu had never shown interest in the sociopsychology of the crowd, either before as after the debate, Moscovici would have never ceased to pursue deepening the nature of these collective processes. Anyway, the argumentative structure developed in *L'âge des foules* did not change significantly thereafter.

In 1986, Moscovici edited a book co-authored with Graumann about crowd behaviour with a chapter he titled “The discovery of the masses”, where he condenses in more economic terms his former seminal book. In this same chapter he, however, highlights what I think to be his major thesis to wit, that “the crowds are the unconscious. The crowd psychology is simultaneously the psychology of the unconscious.” Not the universal collective of Jung, but a more local, as well as proximal version reminding of Tarde’s epidemic emergence of a sort of “group mind” always grounded in the history of the collectivity. A fascinating illustration of this work of the unconscious is offered by Moscovici in an article also dated from 1986 (Moscovici, 1986). In this text Moscovici focus more specifically on the “conversion process” - how people come to change their opinions and attitudes as well, through the silent latent work triggered by divergent views, a process exemplarily described by Proust – a writer, not a scientist – another facet of the boundary work now between art and science. But also, Bourdieu, although under a more societal bias, has shown a similar interdisciplinarian sensibility well documented in his studies about the writer Flaubert, as well as the painter Manet. It was in this latter work that one finds one of the most enlightening developments about Durkheim’s concept of anomie, unfortunately not pursued in the debate in spite of the challenge made by Moscovici.

If the practice of interdisciplinarity seems to be, at best, a solitary endeavour pursued by open minded researchers, always looking beyond their limited paradigms, this is by no means the rule, as exemplified by Moscovici himself with the research he was able to conduct with Galam (Galam & Moscovici, 1991), a physicist interested in developing the new hybrid field of sociophysics.

As regards the boundary work Moscovici seems to give more credit to the cooperation between the hard and the social sciences than within the field of social sciences (Moscovici, 1998) which seems to converge with Piaget (1970), who also claimed that the interdisciplinarian boundary work seems more easily pursued between hard sciences and soft sciences, where disputes about turf demarcations are less likely to take place. The field of psychophysics has been around since the pre-history of the general individualistic psychology, but the new proposal of Galam (2012) was focused on the more specific group/collective processes and how could they be formalized in physic-mathematical models. The collaboration of both researchers led to the publication of a number of papers where the phenomenon of symmetry breaking, studied by the physics of particles, is applied to group process models formerly hypothesized and experimentally validated by Moscovici. However, and regrettably, such studies were an isolated attempt which were not pursued by social psychologists, maybe due to the requirements of dealing with mathematical tools.

In a rather different vein, another interdisciplinarian attempt, for which neither Moscovici nor Bourdieu were attracted, has been developed between social sciences and computing simulations, now considerably enriched by the big data, which may render the debate between Moscovici and Bourdieu further outdated. Both Moscovici as Bourdieu were innovators, both attempting and succeeding in endowing their disciplines with an independent, if not an ambitious, hegemonic status within social

sciences which might explain why they were more focused onto what distinguishes them than what could approach them.

In any case, and now in a more charitable stance, controversial debates as this one, with contenders of this stature, are always welcome, inviting us to jump over their shoulders to see a little bit farther.

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