Social Representations and the Genesis of Social Knowledge

Gerard Duveen and Annamaria De Rosa

University of Cambridge and Università di Roma "La Sapienza"

Abstract: Two approaches to the origins and development of social knowledge are identified in the current research literature, one derived from theories of social cognition and the other, which reflects an emerging trend in European developmental psychology, from the perspective of social representations. While both share a constructivist orientation, the former is limited by its theoretical individualism, whereas the latter considers the construction of social knowledge within a social and interactive framework. In particular, the theory of social representations considers social knowledge as knowledge of the symbolic order of society.

Two research areas are examined as examples of these contrasting perspectives. The first, economic socialisation, focusses on some of the theoretical issues which distinguish the perspectives, while the second, the development of representations of mental illness, considers methodological issues.

Finally, the concluding section examines limitations in current work associated with social representations, as well as outlining some of the perspectives which this approach has opened up.

1. TWO APPROACHES TO THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE

During the past twenty years psychologists have come to recognise that children's curiosity is engaged as much by social phenomena as by natural ones. This orientation toward the social world in developmental psychology has given rise to numerous studies, through all of which a central theoretical issue can be traced: "What does it mean to speak of a child acquiring social knowledge?". In whatever field the genesis of social knowledge has been explored this issue has had to be confronted, whether the objects of inquiry have been interpersonal relations or social and institutional organisations. Indeed what distinguishes between studies of the genesis of social knowledge is not the phenomena under investigation (interpersonal understanding, moral judgement, friendship, law, economy, etc.) but rather the distinct assumptions which are made about this central issue. This literature encompasses two distinct theoretical perspectives, social cognition and social representations, which are differentiated precisely by the way in which these various assumptions are associated with diverse conceptualisations of the subject and object of knowledge, as well as being linked to distinct levels of explanation.

Theories of *social cognition* construe the development of social knowledge as the application of progressively more mature psychological structures to social phenomena. Such theories will, perhaps, be more familiar to readers in the English speaking world. But there is also a second approach emerging, particularly in Europe, which rejects the separation of psychological form and social content implicit in such theories. Taking its cue from Moscovici's genetic social psychology, this approach considers the child's developing social knowledge within the context of the *social representations* of the community in which they are growing up. Even if, as we shall argue, the theoretical sophistication of this approach has rarely been matched by an equal sophistication in its empirical investigations, it is an

approach which has rapidly gained strength over the past few years. Yet it remains a position which has been more cogently argued as a critique of theories of social cognition, rather than as furnishing a persuasive and clearly elaborated alternative conception. Nevertheless, social representations as a framework for investigating the development of social knowledge has become a major trend in European developmental research (cf Doise, 1989, 1990; Duveen and Lloyd, 1990a).

A critical review (de Rosa, 1990b, 1991) of the principal differences between theories of social cognition (Piagetian and post-Piagetian as well as information processing approaches) and social representations emphasised that while both approaches share a *constructivist* orientation, the former are limited by an individualistic perspective, whereas the latter also considers the genesis of social knowledge within a *social* and *interactionist* framework. This difference is reflected in the contrasting conceptualisations of the child as a knowing subject: social cognition considers the child through the metaphor of the "naive scientist" and as an "economist of cognitive resources", while for social representations the metaphor is that of the subject as a "social actor" in daily life. In theories of social cognition the production of social knowledge is de-contextualised, and the key questions focus on the "why" and "how" of knowledge. For social representations the *context* for the production of knowledge extends to include the historical inertia which accumulates around representations; and the value placed on context is associated also with the valorisation of *content*, on the "what" of representation. In addition, as cognitive structures, social representations are always a means through which the child establishes a social identity; generating a focus on questions of "where" social knowledge is constructed, "who by" and "with whom".

When we consider developmental issues in the light of social representations, it is possible to distinguish three different types of genetic transformations (see Duveen and Lloyd, 1990b). In the first place we can consider the processes through which social representations themselves evolve and change, that is we can consider social representations from a *sociogenetic* point of view. This refers not only to the processes through which particular representations are diffused through society, but also to the historical processes through which representations are transformed.

A different set of issues arises when we consider the development of individuals in relation to existing social representations. From this *ontogenetic* point of view the human infant is born into a world which is already structured in terms of the social representations of their community, of their culture, and the question to be addressed is how the child becomes an independent actor in this social world. Construing the ontogenesis of social representations as the development of the child as a social actor provides us with a point of view from which to consider contemporary notions of development. In each case it enables us to ask what kind of child results from a particular conceptualisation of development. Is it the social actor who figures in contemporary accounts of social psychology, with their attachments to various social groups expressed through their social identities?

As well as sociogenesis and ontogenesis, there is a third genetic aspect of social representations which it is important to distinguish. This is the genetic moment which arises in all social interactions, the point where individuals meet, talk, discuss, resolve conflicts. In short it is the point where people communicate with one another and in which social influences are exerted. Social representations are evoked in all social interactions as the participants negotiate their social identities and seek to establish some common definition of the matters in hand. This is the *microgenetic* aspect of social representations. Through the

course of social interaction participants may come to adopt positions distinct from those with which they entered the interaction, and in this sense microgenesis can be a process of change. In many instances the changes which can be observed are transitory rather than structural as individuals adopt particular social identities in order to pursue specific goals or accomplish particular tasks. Yet social interaction is also the field in which social influences are most directly engaged, and in many instances the influences at work in social interaction may also lead to structural change in the representations of participants. These changes may be ontogenetic transformations in the development of social representations in individuals (as, for example, in the studies of social interaction and cognitive development, cf. Doise and Mugny, 1984), but they may also contribute to sociogenetic transformations resulting in the restructuration of social representations. Indeed, ontogenesis and sociogenesis are always the consequence of microgenetic processes. Microgenesis constitutes a motor, as it were, for the genetic transformations of social representations.

Identifying microgenesis as the source of ontogenetic transformations serves to reminds us that all development is the outcome of processes of social interaction, of dialogue and conversation. From this perspective social psychology and developmental psychology are not distinct enterprises. They are fundamentally concerned with the same phenomena. It makes no sense to try to counterpose one to the other, even if, at present, it is still difficult to give a clear articulation of the sense in which there is a coherent theoretical perspective embracing the concerns of both disciplines. But then this is precisely one of the goals of approaching development from the point of view of social representations.

The distinctiveness of social representations as a perspective on the genesis of social knowledge is explored further in the following two sections which examine research on two themes which have also been investigated from the perspective of social cognition. A consideration of the research on economic socialisation focusses on some central theoretical problems, while studies of the development of representations of mental illness allow us to focus on methodological problems. The final section of the paper outlines some of the key issues which need to be addressed from the perspective of social representations.

2. CONTRASTING SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND SOCIAL COGNITION: TWO EXAMPLES

2.1. Concepts and Representations in the Development of Economic Knowledge.

Economic socialisation has emerged as a significant focus of interest for research on the development of social cognition, and a number of Piagetian, or Piagetian-inspired studies have appeared in recent years (cf Furth, 1980; Jahoda, 1981; Berti and Bombi, 1988). A representative example of this approach is the development of the child's concept of the Bank. The following sketch draws on the work of the authors cited above, all of whom undertook their research through extensive clinical interviews. The development of concepts such *The Bank* is conceived as a linear sequence of stages. At each stage the child's knowledge of the bank is assimilated within existing representation of everyday life by the child's available instruments of cognitive organisation. Each stage crystallises the extent of the child's knowledge of social life, but it does so under the impact of changing and developing cognitive structures.

At the earliest level the bank is construed as a fount or source of money, an image formed under the influence of children's observational knowledge; they see their parents and others having recourse to the bank to replenish empty pockets and wallets. Children are able to represent their knowledge, in the sense of making present something which is absent, but it is representation tied to the concrete facts of their observation.

At the second level the bank is seen as a repository into which people pay sums of money which they can later withdraw, though this process is governed by a notion of equivalence, one cannot draw out more than one has put in. This image is formed on the basis of those cognitive instruments which enable the child to recover aspects of reality which are invisible to observation. Yet it is a representation dominated by the cognitive principle of equivalence, the amount of money available is always conserved across whatever transformations or transactions occur.

Finally, at a third level the functions of the bank are defined through notions of interest which generate both profits for the bank and the interest paid to customers. This image is formed under the influence of cognitive instruments which go beyond a notion of equivalence in simple transformations. It is an image set in a context of complex networks of operations and transformations.

The outcome of this development is an adolescent who is quite knowledgeable about the functions of the bank, but we have no idea of how they will use this knowledge, nor how they evaluate the functions of a bank. That is, we have quite a clear idea of the development of children's knowledge about the bank, but little or no sense of how this knowledge is located within the context of more general social representations of the economy.

From the perspective of social representations, economic socialisation appears in a different light. Studies of children's judgements of the relative pay for different sexes and different occupations suggest something quite different about developmental issues. Duveen and Shields (1985, see also Duveen, 1989) showed 3-5 year old children photographs of men and women doing the same job and asked them to indicate which, if either, was paid more. No age effects were found, but men were judged to be paid more than women more frequently than women were judged to be paid more than men, an effect which was stronger among boys than among girls. Emler, Ohana and Dickinson (1990) asked 7-12 year old children from three countries to estimate the salaries paid to four different occupations. They too found no effect for age, but reported differences between children from different social classes, with middle class children reporting greater differentials than working class children {1}. From a very early age, therefore, children give quite systematic patterns of judgements. Children across the age range from 3 to 12 years judge that the powerful and dominant groups in society are paid more than the less powerful and dominated. What change one can observe appears to correspond to children's changing sense of the relative power and dominance of different occupational groups. And these results are all the more startling when one takes account of other results from Berti and Bombi's (1988) work which suggest that

---

1. Burgard et al (1989) replicated with a German sample the Scottish study undertaken by Emler et al, and reported precisely opposite results. They found age but not social class effects. However, there are differences between the studies in the way that social class is defined as a variable. Indeed, neither study goes beyond a demographic consideration of social class indicators derived from parental occupation or income. This may be inadequate as the basis for describing the socio-psychological influence of social class on adolescents, who may well reject aspects of their parents' ideology.

certainly the younger children would have a very limited understanding of the concept of payment for work. Nevertheless, they have already acquired a central representation of social life which enables them to make relative judgements about the importance of different occupations.

This work presents us with something of a paradox in relation to the theme of development, for there seems to be no development at all, at least if we take development to imply some kind of regular and structured series of changes. Yet there is an important contrast to be drawn between these two strands of research which focusses precisely on the issue of development. For cognitive-developmental approaches, cognitive organisation is based on *concepts* defined logically with extensions and intensions. It is assumed that the mature form of concepts corresponds, if not to the scientific definition of economic institutions, at least to some consensual adult definition. Development is defined by its end point, which serves to organise both the theoretical analysis of earlier stages and the methodological approach to be followed. In this conception there is a distinction between the form and content of knowledge, with logical structures assumed to provide the form through which content is organised. It is knowledge which is at the centre of this perspective; we are in the realm of the world of facts in which the discourse of values has little or no role to play.

For the theory of social representations, it is the *representations* themselves which constitute cognitive organisation, and they are distinct from concepts in some important respects. Representations are elaborated through communication, so that any particular representation exists within a network of other representations to which it is related through a series of associative links. Further, representations are inherently evaluative, they take shape through the social discourse of values and are not bound by the cannons of logic. There is no *a priori* distinction between form and content. In short, social representations focus our attention on the world of values in addition to the world of facts. And this focus on valorisation leads us to the heart of the developmental paradox, since values cannot be organised in terms of a logical sequence which could provide the framework for a developmental study. But children have, somehow, acquired the evaluative aspects of social representations of economic relations, even if they have not yet acquired a mature understanding of economic concepts (a similar point appears in studies of the development of gender, Lloyd and Duveen, 1990; though earlier studies of nationality, Piaget and Weil, 1951, Tajfel, 1981, had demonstrated a similar effect, even if its significance was not articulated in the same terms). In the development of social representations, valorisation precedes conceptualisation.

This is the puzzle on which we need to concentrate. It may be that as against the extensive discussions of the nature of concepts we still have an impoverished understanding of the nature of values as psychological categories. What seems clear is that children have acquired at least some of the central values of our culture before they have access to its conceptual structures. The symbolic order of society exercises an early and profound influence on the development of social knowledge in childhood. Indeed, one could go further and argue that without this influence it would seem unlikely that conceptual structures could be abstracted from the mass of information presented to children.

The contrast between these two approaches exemplifies the way in which each approach gives a different sense to the word *representation*. For theories of social cognition the word is used synonymously with cognition (even if this usage departs from a strict Piagetian perspective). For social representations, on the other hand, *representation* refers to the

organisation of the symbolic order, and for this reason the *content* of what is represented carries as much significance as the *form* in which it is represented. It is this orientation towards the development of a psychological theory which emphasises the significance of the symbolic order which is most characteristic of social representations. Indeed, Moscovici notes that the "term *cognitive* is not exact when it is applied to social phenomena. It would be more appropriate to use the word *symbolic*, which is not the same thing" (1986, p.73).

The emphasis on the symbolic in social representations brings with it a focus on levels of explanations which are appropriate to accounting for the development of a social actor. From this point of view the child's development needs to be understood as a social process, as the outcome of social influences. The child needs to be considered as a social being whose life is lived within the context of a culture, a symbolic order which surrounds the child from birth. Indeed, even before birth the child is the object of parental representations which can influence the very course of their development (cf Lloyd and Duveen, 1990). From this point of view, growing up means above all coming to participate in the symbolic order of society.

Theories of social cognition are oriented around a different image of the child, one in which the child is seen as an active constructor of knowledge, an amateur scientist engaged in the pursuit of discovering order beneath the flux of perceptual appearances. Cognitive development is seen as the primary force activating the child's acquisition of social knowledge. Studies which have attempted to examine the cognitive prerequisites for the acquisition of particular economic concepts (e.g. Berti and Bombi, 1988) make clear through their very use of the term *prerequisites* the theoretical direction of the explanations they offer. The child is engaged in an individual struggle for the acquisition of knowledge. Some studies have also investigated the influence of social position on this process, though with mixed results. Berti and Bombi (1988) found few differences between children growing up in different cultural contexts within Italy. Jahoda (1983), on the other hand, reported that Zimbabwean children's direct experience as actors in the market place gave them an advantage over Glaswegian children whose experience of buying and selling did not include any active engagement in negotiating prices. Yet in both cases the model of social influences which underlies the research is the Piagetian notion that while culture may accelerate or retard the rate of development, it does not intervene in the actual structures which develop.

Is it possible, however, to account for the development of the child as a social actor in terms of the individual acquisition of knowledge? The fact that children acquire values before they acquire concepts suggest that such a view is at best an incomplete one. For values are above all the expression of an individual's attachment to a culture and its symbolic order. Consequently, studies in the development of social representations have always tended towards an integration of developmental and social psychology within the framework of a *genetic social psychology* (cf Moscovici, 1990).

2.2. Grasping the Symbolic Order - Methodological Issues in the Development of Representations of Mental Illness.

In spite of the significance of the symbolic order for social representations, research studies within this paradigm have often been limited to investigations of how opinions and information vary between social groups. This has often led to the accusation that social representations is nothing more than an alternative name for attitudes. Indeed the traditional techniques of questionnaires and interviews are not well adapted to the investigation of the symbolic order which is more clearly seen in anthropological or historical research, and

particularly in ethnographic studies. There are few examples of studies in social representations which exemplify the richness of an approach which draw on a multiplicity of methods to address questions of both opinions and their elaboration as part of a symbolic order (but see Jodelet, 1989).

Social perceptions of the mentally ill and of mental illness provide a second arena in which it is possible to explore characteristic differences between research derived from social cognition and that inspired by the paradigm of social representations. The literature regarding this "object", and in particular research using the construct of "attitudes", is virtually boundless. A recent review (de Rosa, 1991) sought to outline the different approaches by reconstructing the theoretical directions and methodological principles of a great mass of contributions on the boundaries between social psychology, ethnopsychiatry, social psychiatry and developmental psychology. As well as undertaking a critical review this article also emphasised the interest and limits for a student of social representations of such an informative heritage, even if the concept of attitude is only a lower order aspect of the wider concept of social representations.

Research on the mentally ill and mental illness is considered in the present article in order to underline the multidimensionality of studies inspired by social representations as compared to the more sectional interests of research derived from social cognition. The former are concerned with grasping the construction of social representations by individuals and social groups, with a strong focus on the "content" of the representation and the historical and cultural symbolic order to which it both belongs and gives expression. The latter, on the other hand, have been concerned with identifying cognitive factors and evaluative biases in the perception of deviance and psychopathology, with a focus on the "processes" of categorisation, codification, memory, and information retrieval without any concern for their symbolic value.

To recognise the contrast between these two approaches it is sufficient to compare the recent work of Denise Jodelet (1989) with any studies drawn from the endless literature on the social perception of mental illness and the mentally ill among adult populations. Jodelet's study, using a sophisticated ethnographic approach, was undertaken with a real population (13 small rural villages in a region of central France where, since the beginning of this century, the mentally ill have been housed as "lodgers" in families within these small local communities) rather than a population constructed artificially by the simple aggregation of individuals selected on the basis of those variables which research designs have privileged time after time in the great majority of social psychological studies in this area (sex, class, age, education, professional role, proximity to and distance from experience with the mentally ill, etc). In order to investigate how social representations become rooted within the social relations of the population and how they are articulated in these relationships, Jodelet examines naive theories of mental illness (which distinguish illnesses of the "brain" from those of the "nerves"), the relations between mental illness and the moral character of the mentally ill, and, above all, she examines the relations between representations and symbolic conduct, analysing the impact of these representations on the behavioural norms imposed on both the lodgers (who must, for example, use different cutlery and plates than their hosts, as well as entering and leaving the house by a different door) as well as the hosts (in respect of sexual relations with their guests, for example).

Apart from notable exceptions of work derived from symbolic interactionist perspectives (such as Goffman's dramaturgical approach, or Garfinkel's ethnomethodology) the

enormous literature on attitudes towards mental illness and the mentally ill has not generally been concerned with investigating the symbolic-cultural order in the interweaving between representations and behaviour, even when research has included a consideration of the behavioural component of attitudes. The objectives which these studies have set themselves have been very much narrower, such as measuring the social distance between subjects and hypothetical stimulus figures described as "mentally ill", or the relations between belief systems about mental illness and individual difference factors (including, for example, sex, socio-economic status, information about and familiarity with the theory and practice of psychiatry, national and local identities, and personality variables such as authoritarianism or dogmatism).

Research derived specifically from the perspective of social cognition has been even narrower in its range, and particularly in the period 1965-1985 which McGuire (1986) identified as an interlude of social cognition in studies of attitudes. In all research in this perspective, including studies of attitudes towards mental illness and the mentally ill, there was a polarization of interests towards a focus on the process dimensions of the construction and organization of knowledge around a social "object" which becomes loaded with stereotypical attributions, rather than the descriptive content of its representation. Studies have focussed on implicit theories (e.g. Furnham, 1988), on processes of prototypical categorization (Cantor and Mischel, 1979) and attribution (O'Mahoney, 1979) which sometimes refer to more general theories (Fransella, 1985, for example, refers to personal construct theory) and sometimes to the role of more specific cognitive processes or situational factors, such as focussed attention (Langer and Imber, 1980).

Even within the more meagre area of studies of the genesis and development of belief systems about mental illness through childhood and adolescence, the only research program undertaken within the perspective of social representations (de Rosa, 1984, 1987, 1990a) is clearly distinguished from social cognition research by the multi-dimensionality of the levels investigated (iconic, informational, symbolic, cognitive, emotional, relational, etc) and by the adoption of a level of explanation for the results which is based on an integration of interactionist and constructivist perspectives. By contrast studies derived from social cognition (e.g. Coie and Pennington, 1976; Marsden and Kalter, 1977; Dollinger et al, 1980; Wilkins and Velicer, 1980; and Weiss, 1986) have employed methodological procedures which have generally aimed to investigate the capacity of children of different ages to recognise and discriminate "deviant" stimulus figures from control figures, and, in some cases, to investigate the severity of judgements expressed by children about various forms of deviance and underlying aetiological theories. In this type of research the instruments used have nearly always been scales constructed around categories defined by the researchers, and these experimental techniques have been a long way from proposing the use of a multiplicity of methods which would allow multiple levels of analysis to examine the interaction between them. Further, the levels of explanation used to consider the influence of age (which is always defined in terms of the child's capacity to recognise and discriminate mental illness from other types of behavioural deviance or from a "normal" control) always return to a rigidly linear and sequential conceptualisation of cognitive development or moral judgement.

The picture which has emerged from a decade of research on the development from childhood to adulthood of social representations of mental illness is much more complex (de Rosa, *op cit*). This research has been undertaken with both naive groups and experts, and these subjects have been differentiated not only by age but also by sex, status, education, region (North, Central and South Italy), intra-national differences (urban as against rural) as

well as cross-national contrasts (various European countries). The results of this research have shown that when verbal methods have been used (in particular structured questionnaires and social distance scales), these have revealed a picture of the development of social representations from childhood through adolescence quite similar to that drawn from social cognition research. Age as a variable is found to be more important than any of the other variables considered (sex, social class, locality). With age there is a progressive modification of representations, which begin as criminalised (madness=deviance), become medicalised (madness=illness), before, in adolescence, becoming psychologised (madness=psychological disturbance of a social-relational nature). Social distance scales, which presented hypothetical encounters with a mad person in different situational contexts, also yielded results in which was the principal factor. The youngest children maintained the greatest distance (fear, withdrawal, avoidance), while adolescents were most disposed towards social contact. Adults (particularly teachers) expressed attitudes similar to the tolerance shown by adolescents.

On the other hand, when non-verbal means (drawing and colour pyramids) were used, these provided evidence of the figurative nucleus and archaic symbolic dimensions inherent in madness. These contradicted the representations which subjects expressed verbally and showed a different developmental path. While drawings of a "normal" person generally showed images of individuals who personified identifiable social roles (doctor, policeman, nurse, teacher, footballer), drawings of the mad person, as well as those which subjects were asked to make as if they were done *by* a mad person, produced a wide range of more than 20 stereotypical images. These were categorised in three types:

[1] *Magical-fantastic representations*, which included drawings depicting two polarised characteristics, one ambiguously positive, the other more explicitly negative. These images take up the double theme of madness in history. There is the mirthful figure of the jester, which sees in madness an expressive liberty and creative opportunity denied to normal individuals (for example, drawings which show the mad person as a clown, a minstrel, an artist, an eccentric egg-head). But there is also the terrifying and monstrous figure, which sees in madness diabolical manifestations and possession by malign supernatural or unnatural forces (drawings which show the mad person as a devil, for example, or as a mythological figure like a centaur or a dragon, or an androgynous figure, or theriomorphic half-human half animal hybrids, or a polymorphous figure with parasitic elements with more limbs or more heads, or the inverse, mutilated figures without arms or heads, or with a single cyclopic eye, skeletons with their flesh stripped off, mechanical and robotic monsters, images combining elements from the animal, vegetable and human realms, etc).

[2] *Representations of madness as deviance* including images which show stereotypic nuclei in a range which goes from the most violent and criminal (madness depicted as a murderer, someone who cuts people's heads off, someone shooting a gun, someone throwing punches, someone throwing rocks, a terrorist with a bomb and a knife -just to give a few examples) to a vision of madness as the infraction of formal or informal social norms, or simply inadequacy in situational contexts (drawings depicting the mad person as displaying gross incongruity at the level of behaviour, such as walking in the sun with an open umbrella, or undressing in the street, or standing in the middle of a street in front of a tram, and so on, such images have also been widely seen in history, witness for example the tradition of popular prints of the "world turned upside down" which circulated throughout Europe between the 16th and 18th centuries), or again to a vision more in line with a diffuse

way of perceiving the mad as marginal (the drug addict, the drunk, the vagabond, the freak, the transvestite, victims of a society which rejects them, etc).

[3] *Medicalised representations of madness* in which the stereotypic nucleus of the drawing belongs to a vision of madness as an illness, whether organic (the mad as physically impaired, with an overdeveloped head, or as a rigid skeletal figure with visible alterations to bodily structure, or as someone in a wheelchair, or without a limb, etc) or psychic (the mad person as someone inadequate at an ideational level, subject to delirium and hallucination, who, for instance, puts on church vestments believing themself to be Satan, or as the archetypal megalomaniac who believes he is Napoleon, or as someone retarded both mentally and in time who thinks he lives in Nero's Rome, or again as someone who thinks they are at home while they are in the park; or those drawings in which the mad person is depicted as someone depressed, always sad, or with tendencies towards self-injury or self-destruction, tearing out their eyes, cutting off their head, beating their head with a club or a hammer, or throwing themself under a train; or again as a nervous and problematic individual, continually thinking about their difficulties, or as an institutionalised individual in an asylum, etc).

The breadth of the repertoire of stereotypic images of madness in the drawings of children and adults appears, then, to be an elaborate figurative translation of the polysensual dimensions of madness into the social. Indeed surprising similarities emerged when these images were compared with images of madness and the monster taken from historical popular prints as well as painting and sculpture (cf de Rosa, 1987). This also demonstrated the precocity with which the process of differentiation between the "normal" and the "deviant" is set in motion, as well as an archaic persistence at the representational level in the figurative imagination of children and adolescents.

From a purely methodological point of view the use of a "multi-methods analysis" (in which diverse research techniques are employed with the same groups of subjects, cf De Rosa, 1990a) indicates the impact which the choice of research instruments has on the level of representations elicited. In particular, structured verbal techniques (such as questionnaires and social distance scales) allowed more peripheral dimensions of the representation of mental illness to be elicited, that is dimensions which varied as a function of the socio-demographic characteristics (age, sex, class, locality) and social identities of subjects. Such techniques were sensitive to subjects' ideological and more conditioned opinions through social desirability influences in their responses. Non-verbal techniques (such as drawing), on the other hand, were well adapted to the investigation of the figurative nucleus underlying the representations, which have sometimes contradicted the ideological constructions expressed by the subjects themselves.

Within the context of a multi-methods analysis the use of a semantic differential (de Rosa, 1982) as well as free associations (de Rosa, 1988) proved particularly interesting. Although both of these are verbal instruments, results showed them to be more independent of social desirability effects than other such instruments. The former emphasised the influence of evaluative processes on personal structural dimensions, as a function of the image of a normal person, the mad person and the self. A categorical differentiation emerged between the three profiles which was consistent through the whole sample, including both children and adults. All groups showed representative patterns which positively polarised the image of the normal person and negatively that of the mad person, with the self located in an intermediate position. This pattern was also evident among those adults who had responded

to the social distance scale by expressing tolerant attitudes towards the mentally ill and a de-criminalised and de-medicalised representation of mental illness. A similar picture of substantial consistency across different groups of subjects emerged from a study using free associations. This was used to investigate the structure and content of the semantic field associated to five stimulus phrases -a normal person, a mad person, an ill person, mental illness, the self. These results also showed a strong categorical differentiation between normality and abnormality, and between deviance and physiological pathology, even though some differences were observed according to the content of the social representations in different groups as a function of the different stimuli presented.

This dual track in the stereotyping of madness, which, through "words" tends towards positively connoted representations and follows models of scientific knowledge, while the preserved archaic symbolic dimensions are crystallised in "images", does not mean that there is a contradiction in the representation, but, rather, that we find ourselves in the presence of an extraordinarily contradictory social object. Recent cross-national extensions of this research have provided further evidence of the consistency of this pattern, through the use of verbal instruments in Spain (Ayestaran et al, 1987; Paez, 1987) and graphical techniques in Switzerland (de Rosa and Schurmans, 1990).

For the present article the significance of this research program is that it underlines the greater complexity of information about the representation of aspects of the social world which becomes available when a paradigm is used which values the symbolic order of reality and its historical cultural roots, even in a peculiarly social psychological approach. In addition, the notable similarities between the results from these studies and those derived from social cognition concerning the early social competence of children in the recognition of deviant behaviour and the progressive elaboration of ever more complex aetiological theories of mental illness suggest that it would also be of interest to the student of social representations to deepen their understanding of the processes of genesis and cognitive anchoring of the representational elements elicited -provided, of course, that this does not lead to the bracketing of symbolic dimensions rooted in a much wider cultural order. In a certain sense there is the possibility that the comparison between these areas of research (social representations and social cognition) united more by the simple criteria of thematic affinity than by a shared vision of the ways in which knowledge of the social world is constructed and organised, will lead to a more complete and integrated study of the genesis, construction and transmission of knowledge of the social world.

3. OPEN QUESTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

The two examples we have considered illustrate the contrast between social representations and social cognition. The first example, economic knowledge, examined approaches to the development of social cognition following a broadly Piagetian tradition, while the second, mental illness, focussed on attitudinal research more or less strictly derived from information processing models. In both cases we have sought to argue that the distinctive characteristic of social representations is its concern with the symbolic order of society. From this point of view, the development of social knowledge corresponds to the internalisation of the symbolic order which enables the child to become an active participant in society, a social actor.

In seeking to grasp the psychological significance of the symbolic order, the theory of social representations recognises the complexity of the social world in which knowledge is

never neutral, but always saturated with values. This complexity is expressed in the multiplicity of levels of analysis of social phenomena (individual, interpersonal, collective and historical) characteristic of social representations. In other words, for social representations the significance of social knowledge is the contribution it makes to the construction of social identities.

Developmentally, research based on social representations led to the conclusion that for the child valorisation precedes conceptualisation. Thus the focus on the symbolic order means that for social representations the traditional account of the development of cognitive functions becomes problematic. The adoption of the paradigm of social representations as an explanation of the specific modes of knowledge of the social world and the processes through which they are constructed leads to the abandonment of a view of development as a rigid linear and cumulative sequence. From the point of view of the theory of social representations the knowing subject does not shift from a "naive" to an "expert" knowledge of reality, that is from a kind of "pre-logical" thought to a "logical" form of thought. On the contrary, these two forms of knowing continue to exist even into adulthood, where various forms of "pre-logical" thinking persist. There is a kind of "bi-logical" cognitive polyphasia which encompasses two different forms of knowing, the consensual and the reified, informal and formal ways of thinking. Which form of thinking is evident in a particular situation will depend on the context in which knowledge is being produced, the social identities engaged in its production, and the functions served by its production and communication. The co-existence of these two ways of thinking can be seen in all the "exceptions" to logical thought in adulthood reported in empirical research (above all cross-cultural, but also within Western societies) which has sought to demonstrate the validity of a universal sequence of human development.

Notwithstanding the theoretical perspectives which social representations have opened on the genesis and development of social knowledge, existing empirical research within this tradition has rarely exploited these possibilities to the full. Indeed most research on social representations has examined adult populations rather than the development of social knowledge in children, which has rendered the process of ontogenesis largely invisible. This, though, is a minor point, since there is already a growing number of developmental studies of social representations. The major problems are more deep rooted. Realising the advantages of the integration between social and developmental psychology promised by this perspective will depend on future research overcoming the limits which have been evident in most published research. Three broad issues need to be resolved:

[1] Research will need to investigate groups based on real social institutions, rather than taking as the unit of analysis social groups defined solely by the demographic characteristics of individuals.

[2] In general the research instruments used have been inadequate in relation to the complexity of the dimensions involved in the construction of social representations. Indeed, most studies have relied exclusively on verbal instruments (such as questionnaires or interviews) to the exclusion of investigations of other symbolic activities (such as observations of symbolic conduct or projective techniques). Further, this methodological restriction has also meant that few studies have included an analysis which considers the different levels at which social representations are expressed. Most studies have examined opinions or attitudes measured through verbal scales, but these have rarely been analysed in relation to other aspects of the symbolic expression of social representations. Thus, the

interaction between different components of social representations, such as attitudes, images and conduct have rarely been examined (though Jodelet's work, 1989, is a notable exception) Indeed, some components of social representations (such as their historical sociogenesis) have been largely ignored altogether (once again though, Jodelet is the exception).

[3] Moscovici has described the genesis of social representations in terms of the complementary processes of *anchoring* and *objectification*. But these processes have rarely been investigated in relation to the pre-existing belief systems of subjects, that is, research has rarely investigated processes of genesis and transformation in social representations. This is one area in which developmental studies of social cognition remain notably more advanced.

These problems will need to be resolved if a viable tradition of research into the development of social representations is to flourish. But even then some fundamental questions will remain to be answered. How is it that the newborn infant who lacks any means for independent action in the social field can become a more or less competent social actor within a few short years? Responding to this question will entail a deeper critical analysis of developmental theories, such as those of Piaget and Vygotsky, which share with social representations the same principal assumptions of a constructivist and interactionist perspective, but which have examined development primarily as a characteristic of cognitive functions. We also require a theory of the acquisition of values, which these theories do not provide, at least in any detail. In this context it may well be that we need to consider the acquisition of values in the context of the child's acquisition of language, not in the sense of the acquisition of syntax or grammar, but in the sense of mastering the unspoken pre-suppositions of language which enable them to participate in conversations.

Social representations as a theoretical paradigm is concerned with the psychological significance of the symbolic order of a culture, and viewing development from this perspective highlights issues which remain obscured when the genesis of social knowledge is considered from the individualistic perspective of social cognition theories. Social knowledge is never just one more bit of information, or a new routine for processing information, it always serves a purpose for the subject who constructs it. Indeed, analysing both these aspects of the genesis of social knowledge would require the adoption of a psychological theory as broadly based as social representations, which is oriented as much to social life as it is to cognitive functions.

REFERENCES

Ayestaran, S., de Rosa, A. S. and Paez, D. (1987). Representacion social, processos cognitivos y desarollo de la cognicion social. In D Paez (Ed) *Pensamento individuo y sociedad. Cognicion y representacion social.* Madrid: Editorial Funadamentos.

Berti, A. E. and Bombi, A. S. (1988). *The Child's Construction of Economics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burgard, P., Cheyne, W. M. and Jahoda, G. (1989). Children's representations of economic inequality: A replication. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 7,* 275-87.

Cantor, N. and Mischel, W. (1979). Prototypes in person perception. In L. Berkowitz (Ed) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, Volume 12.* New York: Academic Press.

Coie, J. D. and Pennington, B. F. (1976). Children's perception of deviance and disorder. *Child Development, 47,* 407-13.

de Rosa, A. S. (1982). The image of 'mentally ill' as perceived socially by children and their parents. *Abstracts of the 20th International Congress of Applied Psychology* (Edinburgh, 25-31 July 1982): 382.

de Rosa, A. S. (1984). Psychogenetic aspects in social representations of 'Mad Person' and 'Madness'. In S. Ayestaran (Ed) *Psicosociologia de la Enfermedad Mental: Ideologia y Representacion Social de la Enfermedad Mental.* Bilbao: Imprenta Boan.

de Rosa, A. S. (1987). The social representations of mental illness in children and adults. In W. Doise and S. Moscovici (Eds) *Current Issues in Social Psychology. Volume 2.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

de Rosa, A. S. (1988). Sur l'usage des associations libres dans l'études des représentations sociales de la maladie mentale. *Connexions, 51,* 27-50.

de Rosa, A. S. (1990a). Per un approccio multi-metodo all studio delle rappresentatzioni sociali. *Rassegna di Psicologia, 3,* 101-52.

de Rosa, A. S. (1990b). Considérations pour une comparison critique entre les R.S. et la Social Cognition. Sur la signification d'une approche psychogenetique a l'étude des représentations sociales. *Cahiers Internationaux de Psychologie Sociale, 5,* 69-109.

de Rosa, A. S. (1991). Thematic perspectives and epistemic principles in developmental social cognition and social representation. The meaning of a developmental approach to S.R. In M. von Cranach, W. Doise and G. Mugny (Eds) *Social Representations and the Social Bases of Knowledge.* Special issue of the *Schwezerische Zeitschrift fur Psychologie.* Bern: Hans Huber Verlag.

de Rosa, A. S. and Schurmans, M.N. (1990). Immaginario e follia nelle rappresentazioni sociali di bambini e adolescenti di due paesi europei. *Rassegna di Psicologia, 3,* 297-340.

Doise, W. (1989). Cognition et représentations sociales: l'approche génétique. In D. Jodelet (Ed) *Les Représentations Sociales.* Paris: PUF.

Doise, W. (1990). Individual cognitive functionning: Societal aspects. In H. T. Himmelweit and G. Gaskell (Eds) *Societal Psychology.* London: Sage.

Doise, W. and Mugny, G. (1984). *The Social Development of the Intellect.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Dollinger, S. J., Thelen, M. H. and Walsh, M. L. (1980). Children's conceptions of psychological problems. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 9,* 191-4.

Duveen, G. (1989). The child's re-construction of economics. In S. Berentzen (Ed) *Ethnographic Approaches to Children's Worlds and Peer Cultures.* Trondheim: The Norwegian Centre for Child Research.

Duveen, G. M. and Lloyd, B. (1990a). (Eds) *Social Representations and the Development of Knowledge.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duveen, G. M. and Lloyd, B. (1990b). *Introduction.* In G. Duveen and B. Lloyd (Eds) *Social Representations and the Development of Knowledge.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duveen, G. and Shields, M. (1985). Children's ideas about work, wages and social rank. *Cahiers de Psychologie Cognitive, 5,* 411-2.

Emler, N., Ohana, J. and Dickinson, J. (1990). Children's representations of social relations. In G. Duveen and B. Lloyd (Eds) *Social Representations and the Development of Knowledge.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fransella, F. (1985).The relationship between Kelly's constructs and Durkheim's representations. In R. Farr and S. Moscovici (Eds) *Social Representations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Furnham, A. (1988). *Lay Theories.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Furth, H. G. (1980). *The World of Grown Ups.* New York: Elsevier.

Jahoda, G. (1981). The development of thinking about economic institutions: The bank. *Cahiers de Psychologie Cognitive, 1,* 55-73.

Jahoda, G. (1983). European 'lag' in the development of an economic concept: A study in Zimbabwe. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 1,* 113-20.

Jodelet, D. (1989). *Folie et Représentations Sociales.* Paris: PUF. English translation (1991), *Madness and Social Representations.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester-Wheatsheaf.

Langer, E. J. and Imber, L. (1980). Role of mindlessness in the perception of deviance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39*, 360-7.

Lloyd, B. and Duveen, G. (1990). A semiotic analysis of the development of social representations of gender. In G. Duveen and B. Lloyd (Eds) *Social Representations and the Development of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marsden, G. and Kalter, N. (1977). Children's understanding of their emotionally disturbed peers. I. The concept of emotional disturbance. *Psychiatry, 29*, 227-38.

McGuire, W. (1986). The vicissitudes of attitudes and similar representational constructs in twentieth century psychology. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 16*, 89-130.

Moscovici, S. (1986). L'ère des représentations sociales. In W. Doise and A. Palmonari (Eds) *L'Etude des Représentations Sociales*. Paris: Delachaux et Niestle.

Moscovici, S. (1990). Social psychology and developmental psychology: Extending the conversation. In G. Duveen and B. Lloyd (Eds) *Social Representations and the Development of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Mahoney, P. D. (1979). Attitudes to the mentally ill: A trait attribution approach. *Social Psychiatry, 14*, 95-105.

Paez, D. (1987). (Ed) *Pensamento individuo y sociedad. Cognicion y representacion social*. Madrid: Editorial Funadamentos.

Piaget, J. and Weil, A. (1951). The development in children of the idea of the homeland and relations with other countries. *International Bulletin of the Social Sciences, 3*, 561-78.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human Groups and Social Categories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weiss, M. F. (1986). Children's attitudes toward the mentally ill: A developmental analysis. *Psychological Reports, 58*, 11-20.

Wilkins, J. E. and Velicer, W. F. (1980) A semantic differential investigation of children's attitudes toward three stigmatized groups. *Psychology in the Schools, 17*, 363-71.

Gerard Duveen   Annamaria De Rosa
Department of Education   Facoltà de Psicologia
University of Cambridge   Università degli studi di Roma 'La Sapienza'
17 Trumpington Street   via dei Marsi, 78
Cambridge CB2 1QA   00185 Roma
United Kingdom   Italia