

AN APPROACH TO THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE TO UNDERSTAND POSTMODERN ART

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to define a methodology to understand the Art of postmodernity through the Theory of Knowledge. Since we are dealing with the artistic expressions of postmodernity, we start our reflection from the changes that occurred in French thought after the events of May 1968 in France. These events generated important changes that allowed us to overcome the epistemic limitations of positivism and structuralism, entering into Deconstruction, and the search to know reality from the intuitive, the non-rational, where human existence is also recognized as being made up of the irrational. To delve into the subject we will start with the concept of Epistemological Obstacle raised by Gaston Bachelard, and then continue with the approach of Hermeneutics of Hans Gadamer, and finally the Social Representations of Denise Jodelet. This as a first step in the search for epistemic tools in the understanding of the Arts in postmodernity.

ABSTRACT

The present work aims to define a methodology to understand the Art of posmodernity, through the Theory of Knowlwdge. Since it deals with the artistic expressions of posmodernity, we begin our reflections from the changes that occurred in France thought after the events of may 1968. These events generated important changes that allowed us to overcome the epistemic limitations of positivism and structuralism entering into Deconstruction, and the search to Know of reality from the intuition, the non-rational, where human existence is also recognized as irrational. To delve into the subject, we will begin with the concept of Epistemological Obstacle proposed by Gaston Bachelard, to later continue with Hans Gadamer's approach to

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An approach to the Theory of Knowledge to understand postmodern Art.

This article aims to identify a methodology of analysis that allows understanding postmodern artistic expressions, which are impregnated with ephemerality, where different artistic disciplines such as plastic arts, photography, video, music, corporal expression, sculpture, architecture, among others, are integrated and ordered by ideas, the Art of concept.

Since we use the Theory of knowledge as a methodology of interpretation, we will take as a starting point the changes that took place in France in 1968, during the month of May. This is because, among the important changes that took place, the search for new ways to access knowledge gained strength.

After the French May, there were great changes in the way of interpreting reality, the limitations of positive knowledge became evident, as well as structuralism as a way of accessing knowledge. It is recognized that positivism provides an important, objective, measurable and replicable type of information, but it does not allow the interpretation of human qualities such as love, friendship, gifts, festivities, etc., which are fundamental in the human evolution, integrating and mobilizing social existence. Similarly, structuralism is questioned, considering that societies find multiple ways of organization different from the great stabilizing structures, such as the economy, politics or the family, leaving aside vital elements in social construction such as: utopia, identity, rootedness, social control, among others.

Thus, a profound revision of the paths that were being followed to know reality was proposed, and from these questions various positions emerged, among which Jaques Derrida and his Deconstruction approach stands out, where he denounces that man has developed many areas of knowledge, especially technological ones, and as a consequence of this hyper-specialization he has lost the reason for which he investigates and develops, he states that today's society is like a great building that must be deconstructed to build it again, establishing new guiding links.

Michel Foucault adds that since man has lost himself and has forgotten the reasons for which he approaches knowledge, it is necessary to make an archeology of knowledge, for which it is necessary to go to the past and find the original questions and then make the reverse journey to the present, to restructure knowledge.

Michel Foucault refers to find in philosophical ontology the original questions and there the origin of reflection.

Based on the above, we propose to approach reality from the artistic expressions of postmodernity using the contributions of Gaston Bachelard, Hans Gadamer and Denise Jodelet.

1.- EPISTEMOLOGICAL OBSTACLE. Gaston Bachelard (1884 - 1962)

Our objective is to demonstrate how the concept of epistemological obstacle developed by Gaston Bachelard can be used as an operative concept in artistic spaces.

The understanding of artistic spaces involves great difficulties because in order to know them it is necessary to resort to the senses and emotions, in addition to rational thought, since works of art are captured by the senses and interpreted by reason based on the emotions they awaken.

To understand it better we must understand that the arts express Man and his relationship with life, with existence, with reality, and he does it in multiple ways. That is why it is necessary to resort to operative concepts that allow its understanding, among which we can mention the epistemological obstacle.

Gaston Bachelard developed the concept of epistemological obstacle that is very useful to explain one of the greatest difficulties that arise when interpreting reality, which are the researcher's own pre-judgments or pre-concepts, to which the author says; these are psychological difficulties that do not allow a correct appropriation of objective knowledge. Certainly, in the case of the Arts this premise must be present, since we must also include the limitations of the sensory organs to capture the reality to the own experience of each creator, for example the deficient vision or limited hearing, typical of the human condition.

Based on the above, when we are faced with artistic expressions, the question arises as to whether we can understand their *raison d'être*, the message they convey, the social function of Art and that of the Artists.

Traditionally the plastic arts are interpreted as paintings or sculptures that have a decorative purpose, but there are also ephemeral works, concept art that raises the non-permanent, and this further complicates the understanding of art and its social function, being also a reflection of reality.

As a premise it is good to keep in mind that artistic languages are susceptible to interpretation, and to be able to do so it is necessary to keep in mind that artists respond to the historical moment and the society to which they belong, the works of art symbolize a specific moment and the relationship of the artist with his time, his personal relationships, his aspirations and conflicts. It is also necessary to consider that there is a particular element that is creation, and the creative act, which allows an artist to be identified as such, as well as a work of art to be differentiated from the rest.

That is why when we approach the artistic work and interpret it from its communicational quality, we are leaving aside fundamental aspects of the creative act.

We must also consider that when we approach Art, what we perceive is mediated by ourselves, the perception of our own world and what we think of the world of the other, leading us to inaccuracies, prejudices, preconceived ideas, which as Gaston Bachelard says are difficulties that are found within the intellect of man, and which contain elements that he identifies as psychological difficulties. Leading us to interpret the work of art in a different way than it is.

The work of Art represents reality, but it is not reality, it contains elements extracted from reality that are expressed through artistic creation, therefore from the point of view of the search for truth, the work of Art, is not Truth nor does it lead us to it, but it is conformed by true elements, that is to say; it represents Truth, in such a way that it can represent it but it is not.

Hence Bachelard speaks of epistemological obstacles as the obstacles that prevent us from arriving at the truth, and identifies 10 obstacles.

- 1- The first obstacle to overcome is that of the first experience; this experience is made up of information that has been perceived in the first years of life, and therefore, could not be subjected to any criticism, so that these first experiences pass without sifting to become primary truths, against which it is impossible to create new knowledge that goes against them. This obstacle is reinforced by the apparent caprice of nature, which shows us an immediate reality that has nothing to do with the true; that is why “the scientific spirit must be formed against nature, against what is inside and outside of us, against the impulse and teaching of nature, against natural enthusiasm, against the colored and varied fact. The scientific spirit must be formed by reforming itself.”
- 2- The second epistemological obstacle identified by Bachelard is the realist obstacle, which consists in taking the notion of substance as a reality, which is not discussed and from which a whole series of knowledge starts and which has a direct and indisputable relation with the nature of the substance itself, as it cannot be explained, it is taken as a fundamental cause or as a general synthesis of the natural phenomenon to which it is assigned. At this point a real, mysterious substance ceases to be a scientific problem and becomes the generator of all reality.
- 3- The third obstacle identified by Bachelard is the verbal one and is located in the verbal habits used on a daily basis, which become more effective obstacles the greater their explanatory capacity, thus a term that appears clear and diaphanous to the understanding is treated as an axiom that does not need to be explained, it ceases to be a word and becomes an empirical category for the one who uses it.

- 4- The fourth obstacle raised by Bachelard is the unitary and pragmatic knowledge that is present in every pre-scientific community, since the concept of unity allows simplifying the study of any reality by being able to explain it, the whole must also automatically be able to be explained in its parts, unification explains all reality. The concept of unity becomes more dangerous if it is united with that of utility, because immediately more explanatory value is given to what is in some way useful, thus 'for pragmatic rationalism a note without utility is an irrational one.' [2]
- 5- The fifth epistemological obstacle is the so-called substantialist that consists in the union that is made of the substance and its qualities, Bachelard distinguishes a substantialism of the hidden, of the intimate and of the evident quality; in the substantialism of the hidden a reality is supposed to be enclosed, covered by the substance which becomes a problem because that substance must be opened to expose its content; in the substantialism of the intimate the deep quality is enclosed but not in a superficial way but deeply enclosed, so the work to open it becomes more difficult; according to Bachelard in the substantialism of the evident reality is grasped in a direct intuition giving rise to a simple and dangerously simple explanation.
- 6- The sixth obstacle is the realist, in which the understanding is dazzled by the presence of the real, to such an extent that it is considered that it should not be studied or taught, the real is adorned with images that carry with them the marks of the personal impressions of the subject who investigates, thus the argumentation of a realist is more aggressive against the non-realist because the former believes he possesses the reality of the phenomenon.
- 7- The seventh epistemological obstacle is the so-called animistic one, according to which any subject pays greater attention and therefore gives a greater value to the concept that leads to life, that contains life or that is related to it; in the investigative spirit, life will always take precedence because it gives great value to the element or elements that have the possibility of containing it; This valuation is not new and has always accompanied man at any stage of his intellectual development; it is not by chance the great value given to blood in all cultures and in the great majority of civilizations, since it was identified as the life-giving liquid without which life was not possible and, if it was allowed to escape, life would also escape. Everything that possesses life already has a superior character compared to that which does not, 'the word life is a magic word. It is a valued word. Every other principle pales when a vital principle can be invoked' [2] [2].
- 8- The eighth obstacle is the myth of digestion, which refers to any phenomenon that is related to digestion or cooking (the stomach is considered as a big boiler) will obtain a greater explanatory value; Thus, as the alchemists considered the process of digestion as a small fire, they gave more importance to the processes in which fire will be needed to obtain a product or a reaction; digestion not only

carries the idea of fire but also of life, since it is by the process of assimilation of food through digestion that life is maintained. In this way the obstacle is reinforced by another previously treated, the animistic one, making it even more dangerous for the attainment of objective knowledge.

- 9- The ninth epistemological obstacle, Bachelard identifies as the libido, which is interpreted from the point of view of the will to power or the will to dominate others, present in the individual who investigates and which he cannot fail to reflect in his experiments or in his attempts to give a coherent explanation of a new phenomenon. Another facet of this obstacle is the constant reference to sexual thoughts that are present in every scientific spirit in formation when confronted with a new situation, and which according to Bachelard is fully manifested in chemical reactions, although they are present in all disciplines of knowledge.
- 10- The last obstacle is identified by Bachelard as that of quantitative knowledge, since all quantitative knowledge is considered free of errors, jumping from the quantitative to the objective, everything that can be counted has a greater validity compared to what cannot, what cannot be counted or that does not have great influence on the final quantification can be disregarded, allowing the typical error that happens when the scales of the problems are not taken into account, taking the same judgments and experimental reasoning from the very large to the very small.

All the above notions constitute elements that hinder the passage from a pre-scientific spirit to a truly scientific spirit. These notions are not only characteristic of contemporary scientific thought, since Bachelard shows that they also appear in a very evident way in antiquity and in medieval times, thus showing that epistemological obstacles are not specific to a particular scientific community or to a particular stage in the history of knowledge, but are present in the subjects who have tried to do science throughout time; it is only by systematically overcoming epistemological obstacles that the spirit can evolve from a pre-scientific state in which the raw material of knowledge is the surrounding reality to one in which the very notion of reality is taken as an excuse to do science, in which new knowledge emerges from new realities existing sometimes only as mathematical symbols.

This is a concept developed by Bachelard that is very useful to explain one of the greatest difficulties that arise at the moment of interpreting reality, which are one's own pre-judgments or pre-concepts, to which the author says; these are psychological difficulties that do not allow a correct appropriation of objective knowledge. Certainly, in the case of the Arts and social sciences in general, this premise must be present.

Auguste Comte (1798-1857) created positivism, which is a philosophical current that bases truth on the experimental method of the positive sciences and rejects or denies any theological and metaphysical interpretation. This current reduces the knowledge of truth to the positively verifiable and rejects the possibility of knowledge in the metaphysical, which includes emotions and feelings, which are the means of expression of the Arts.

In the field of thought; Francis Bacon in his work *Novum Organum* raises the need to maintain a skeptical attitude towards acquired knowledge, but raises the possibility of reaching the truth as long as the mind can be cleansed of errors that are always present when an investigation is carried out, and which he calls idols. The aforementioned idols can be interpreted as the need to feel that one has the absolute truth, that the ideas and/or conclusions one has reached are true and absolute. In the face of what is real, what one thinks one knows clearly obfuscates what should be known.

Based on the above, when we are faced with artistic expressions, the question arises as to whether we can understand their *raison d'être*, the message they convey, the social function of Art and that of the Artists.

The point is that art must be approached from the sensitive and interpreted from the emotional, to finally be understood rationally, which is not an easy task. Positivism insists that if something cannot be interpreted from Reason it is not conducive to knowledge, however, reality includes the irrational as Kant stated in his text *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he highlighted the limitations of Reason to know, and opened the inquiries to the irrational, to which we could add, that reflection allows the understanding of a much broader and integrating reality. The above is with the purpose of recognizing that artistic languages have meaning for society, they exist and this cannot be denied, besides their message, which is symbolic, is susceptible to interpretation, for which the tools of positivism cannot be used, but the tools of the artistic disciplines can be used, both equally in the search for understanding reality. Reality is much more than the positive and the great social changes indicate it, as an example of this we have that between the first and the second world war an extraordinary event arises in the city of Zurich, the so-called DADA movement, which reflects the reality of the moment, it is an expression of malaise and at the same time presents a path to a different reality, a hope to live in freedom and without rules, giving free expression to human nature.

The DADA movement exemplifies Bachelard's epistemological obstacle. It is about overcoming an expressive and communicational obstacle from the world of Art and the need to actively participate in the construction of a new world, one that does not lead to war and the destruction that accompanies it. It represents an effort to recognize the failure of a way of life and the announcement of a different one, a hope. It is about ideas, emotions, frustrations, longings, among others, that are found in the deepest part of the psyche, it is not about scientific method but about life, thriving, changing, it is an effort of survival, it is the expression of the survival instinct to which vitalism refers.

Later in time, around the events that took place in Paris in May 68, an opening towards new ways of thinking was achieved and as an example of these changes Jaques Derrida proposes Deconstruction, referring to the crisis that was experienced in the intellectual spheres to understand reality, he stated that due to the development of technology and new disciplines man had lost his way and did not know why he was inquiring, he said it was necessary to deconstruct what was built to rediscover the *raison d'être* of knowledge and then build a better civilization.

In this environment of changes and questioning, the recognition that knowledge cannot be circumscribed to positivism, absolute Reason and the scientific method have led to consider existence as limited, excluding the non-quantifiable, arises with great force. In response to the above, reflections led, among others, to value the qualitative as conducive to knowledge, where life history is certain and informative, and individual experience contains elements of the collective, where the subject-object relationship is recognized as dynamic and inter-influential, where the social imaginary contains social representations as proposed by Denis Jodelet. These changes allow to approach artistic production valuing the symbolic, the subjective, where, as happened with the DADA movement, it can raise needs for change and also approaches and utopias of a new order, of hopes, longings and desires.

Finally, the search to overcome obstacles has always accompanied man, and this mechanism identified by Bachelard explains how it operates in the human psyche, becoming an operative concept in the process of understanding artistic expressions and their social function.

2.- HERMENEUTICS. Hans Gadamer (1900 - 2002)

Hans Gadamer, considers “language as a reality charged with an ontological meaning, since being occurs in language as truth, as the unveiling of meaning that is not essentially different from the different finite representations in which it accesses human subjectivity” (de la Maza, 2005, p. 135).

This epistemological reference is an interpretive method of qualitative research that aims to explore the meaning of individual experiences in relation to the understanding of human interpretation. Gadamer identifies that authentic engagement with reading requires awareness of the intersubjective nature of understanding in order to promote a reflexive engagement with the text (Gadamer, 2008).

Gadamer’s key concepts are of particular interest as they attempt to use philosophical hermeneutics to interpret narrative, and the communicable. The very experience of reading and understanding of all human production is important when relating concepts of presupposition (bias, prior structure), intersubjectivity, authenticity (being reflective), temporality (time affecting understanding linked to emotion), tradition and history (culture) to the interpretation of the written word (Gadamer, 1998). To what we understand as binding with any artistic discipline since they conform different types of languages (Gadamer, 1998).

What is significant about Gadamer’s hermeneutics is its ontological approach and its ability not only to interpret human understanding, but also misunderstanding as a mechanism of effective communication (Gadamer, 1977).

One of the key concepts in Gadamer’s hermeneutics is language (logos) and understanding as means of communication between people. The word triggers a denoted name given to an object and a resulting mental image. In thinking about any object, unconsciously internalized thought within the shared medium and externalized thought of communication with other

people are united (Gadamer, 2008). Therefore, the commonality of language ensures a shared acceptance of meaning.

Gadamer suggests three interrelational points of relevance to language and understanding: first, the universality of language; every dialogue has the capacity to reason, to project understanding onto another and to read between the lines. This dialogue may take the form of a reflection or a narrative of the research participants. A questioning mind ensures that language fills any gaps towards a shared understanding by opening the human potential for an infinite dialogue with others in a fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 2008).

Secondly, Gadamer refers to the essential forgetting of language; as the meaning of what is said is lost there is the possibility that the “real being of language vanishes” (Gadamer, 2008, p. 64). This author develops the ontological reflexivity (life experiences of the world) of language as a means of communicating the meaning of what others say and write. This ontological freedom encompasses historicity, temporality and authenticity through hermeneutic analysis.

Finally, there is what Gadamer called “lack of self” (Gadamer, 2008, p. 65). According to this author, when one speaks, one speaks for someone and for oneself. By naming the word (in text or visually) one enables the unifying effect of language and communication with others. Gadamer suggests that there is a presence of the spirit evident when language is used, for example: projecting hesitation, anxiety, intention and attitude (Gadamer, 1998). Language delivers indicators of the truth hidden in the meaning of words and reveals that something exists in a (hermeneutic) circle of ontological possibilities (Gadamer, 2008).

Another of Gadamer's core concepts is interpretation, which is closely related to language. For this author, the subjectivity of each interlocutor implies a fusion of horizons. From the familiar to the strange, all interpretations derive from a basic level of prior understanding or judgment (Gadamer, 1998). The author suggests that all interpretations derive from a basic level of prior understanding or judgment and acceptance of the inner world of subjectivity (Gadamer, 1977). People rarely know other people's views unless asked and instead guess or make assumptions. The German philosopher also refers to two modes of experiencing alienation in our concrete experiences: aesthetic and historical consciousness. In both cases judgments are based on the validity of judgment, characterizing our sense of art in general being dependent on time, cultural transcendence, resonance and authority (Gadamer, 2008).

The alienation of historical consciousness is the art of maintaining an objective and critical distance from the events of the past. As soon as language is put in writing, it becomes the ultimate form of self-alienation and its overcoming is the highest task of understanding; the latter oscillates between finding coherence with preconceived ideas and new ideas (Gadamer, 1977). This can be understood when facing a work of conceptual Art, where the historical referent of modernity does not allow its comprehension since the linguistic referents do not allow it, it is as if they were different languages. In this context of understanding due to the constant and necessary state of socialization, its effects are linked to states qualified by Gadamer as inauthenticity and authenticity (Gadamer, 2008). Inauthenticity refers to the unawakened state of being and sense of self in the world, particularly when it accepts social norms, personal traits, habits, beliefs, values and prejudices of society. In contrast, authenticity becomes relevant in

the search for meaning and interpretation of life, which generates fundamental questions when it comes to understanding the individual in each person. The effects of other people on the worldview of the self question the state of authenticity and the motivation to continue a project for fear of exposure (Gadamer, 1977).

His view of intersubjectivity is that other people do not limit one's understanding of who one is, which is evident when one turns to others for advice, comments, and ideas. First, Gadamer suggests that testing ideas on other people, as in the process of inquiry, is part of the process of learning to understand the biases that provoke our own judgments. Second, through dialogue one perceives that people have good reasons for disagreeing with what someone else has put forward and finds other ways to accommodate new thinking. Therefore, a central tenet of Gadamer's work is to remain open to conversation with others in order to establish those issues or spaces in which one agrees or disagrees, what is right or wrong (Gadamer, 1998). On the other hand, Gadamer identifies the concept of prejudice, defining it as a temporary judgment that is "issued before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined" (Gadamer, 1977, p. 269). The term refers to judgments, presuppositions, biases, prejudices of cultural traditions, whether positive or negative. They are necessary stepping stones towards a better understanding where even vague notions of the meaning of a text are important because they ensure the familiarity of the words and the interpretation of their meaning (Gadamer, 2008).

For Gadamer, tradition and history are never properly grounded or interpreted, but are understood by the ever-changing horizon of the one who consumes or participates in it. The profound concept of historicity and understanding is that the human being is thrown into a world that has a historical context, which is better understood as it matures in time. The essence of men and women is necessarily tied to the antiquity of the world around them, temporally and inevitably not created by them. One is born with a past even when one begins to know that one lives and has the capacity to think and to wonder, adapting to the world as it is. Therefore, one studies history to the extent that one's own person is historical. This reduces the risk of being absorbed in oneself and forgetting history, while allowing people to remain naive and to re-present the past in the present and the future (Gadamer, 1977). Bachelard's thought and Gadamer's coincide in terms of the dangers to which the researcher is exposed when making a social reading, in which prejudices and the historical moment to which the story belongs and to which the reader belongs must be considered, as well as the knowledge one has of the languages, in order to understand it. In the case of postmodern art this is evident.

3. SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS. Serge Moscovici - Denise Jodelet

A society is composed of individuals with their own and common characteristics, with thoughts, feelings and ideas that build an imaginary, which rules and regulates their lives, interweaving beliefs, statements and customs that become universal. These phenomena are approached from the perspective of the theory of social representations, which is described by Materán (2008) as "a theory in development and permanent debate" (p. 244), who in turn adds:

“More than 40 years have passed since its first formulation and, nevertheless, the theoretical debate, empirical research and the integration of interdisciplinary approaches are indicators of its evolution and relevance. The Theory of Social Representations is one of the relatively recent models in the area of Social Psychology; this theoretical proposal outlines an interesting and renovating methodological approach within the analysis of common sense and everyday life; it could be valued as a useful explanation in the study of the social construction of reality” (p. 244).

Social representation theory is a social psychological framework of concepts and ideas for studying psychosocial phenomena in modern societies. It argues that social psychological phenomena and processes can only be adequately understood if they are seen as embedded in historical, cultural, and macro-social conditions. In doing so, he attempts to overcome the shortcomings of those theories and approaches currently widespread in social psychology that are based on methodological individualism and on an epistemology that functionally separates the subject from the object (Calixto, 2021). The Romanian social psychologist Serge Moscovici, whose book *Psychoanalysis, its image and its public*, published in 1961, “formalized the theory of what became a novel field of research within social psychology” (Materán, 2008, p. 244), is recognized as the initiator of this research.

A social representation is understood as the collective elaboration “of a social object by the community for the purpose of behavior and communication” (Moscovici, 1963, p. 251). The elaborated object becomes social reality by virtue of the community’s representation of the object. Therefore, “subject and object are not considered functionally separate. An object is placed in a context of activity since it is what it is because it is partly considered by the person or group as an extension of its behavior” (Moscovici, 1973, p.xi). A social representation is also a “system of values, ideas and practices with a dual function: first, to establish an order that enables individuals to orient themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and, second, to enable communication... providing a code for social exchange and a code for naming and unambiguously classifying the various aspects of their worlds and their individual and group history” (p. xiii).

A social representation is a collective phenomenon belonging to a community that is co-constructed by individuals in their daily discourse and action. In other words, a social representation is the set of thoughts and feelings expressed in the verbal and manifest behavior of actors that constitutes an object for a social group. For Moscovici, social representations are “cognitive systems that have their own logic and language, and that are not simple ‘opinions about’, or ‘images of’ or ‘attitudes towards’, but ‘theories’ sui generis, aimed at discovering reality and its ordering” (cited by Cruz, 2006, p. 35). He also defines them as:

“systems of values, ideas and behaviors with the double function of establishing an order that gives individuals the possibility of orienting themselves and dominating their social and material environment, that of ensuring the communication of the

group, providing it with a code for its exchanges and to name and classify in a univocal way the different aspects of its world” (quoted by Cruz, 2006, p. 35).

Cruz (2006) notes that the theoretical discussion on the definition of the concept is very diverse, “where each author tries to define the term from different approaches: by the characteristics of social representations, by their functionality or by more structural issues” (p. 35). According to Moscovici, “social representation is an organized body of knowledge and one of the psychic activities through which people make physical and social reality intelligible, integrate themselves into a group or into a daily relationship of exchanges” (quoted by Piña and Cuevas, 2004, p. 103).

Commitment to a social representation will depend on what type of representation it is. Moscovici (1989) identified three types: hegemonic, emancipated and polemical. These offer different freedoms for the individual to construct a personal representation. Hegemonic representation assumes little individual variation. Emancipated representation involves individual variation based on differential exposure within group contexts. Controversial representation involves individual variation based on participation in the prevailing intergroup conflict Moscovici (1989).

It is the scope of personalization of representations that arises when emancipated or polemical representations prevail over an object; this is one of the necessary conditions for innovation and change. This statement is not intended to trivialize or ignore the real differences between individuals in their power to maintain or proselytize their personal representations. One of the things this perspective emphasizes is that personal representations will perpetually be under pressure to change from the social representations that surround them. Individuals who are personally powerful (through position, experience, or some other route) are more likely to be able to retain their own personal representations and to be able to influence the development of social representations. Indeed, the role of the individual in mediating emancipated and contentious representations remains to be empirically examined (Lynch, 2020). Any examination of the freedoms available to the individual in deriving a personal representation begins to highlight the need to understand the role of the individual in the construction of a social representation. Given that a social representation is defined as a set of understandings shared by a number of people, then, to the extent that any individual in the relevant communities rejects the shared understanding, the status of the social representation changes. We can see this in how in the field of the Arts, they are interpreted as elitist, belonging to privileged sectors and high purchasing power.

It may be that the social representation itself changes its content. It may simply change its adherents (moving from one group of people to another). It may change its meaning, becoming less used and less prominent. What is important here is that the processes surrounding the creation of personal representations also flow backward to influence the construction and perpetuation of social representations. Another apparent characteristic of social representations is to attract and retain adherents (Lynch, 2020). It appears that adherence can be acquired in many ways. It may depend on who promulgates the social representation (e.g., if it emanates from a community that is distrusted, it may have low adherence). It may be associated with how the social representation is transmitted (some routes of transmission are more reliable than

others; some are more immediate and high impact). It may be linked to the extent to which the social representation has already reached saturation in the particular social environment, for example, in terms of the number of people who accept it, how long it has been active, the number of channels through which it is communicated, or how many times it has been presented. In addition, adherence could be associated with the extent to which the social representation is able to trigger, or is aligned with, emotional activation (Urbina and Ovalles, 2018).

It seems likely that the rigidity of a social representation matters when it comes to how identity processes can work with it. It would still be possible to assume that the individual interacts with the adhering social representation intentionally and is not only reactive, but it seems a logical inevitability that resistance or reactance to it will be less or less effective. It seems likely that the penetration of the social representation into the personal representation and then into the identity structure is greater if the adherence is greater. It may also be linked to its permanence or intransigence in the identity structure.

Jodelet (2020) defines social representation as “a phenomenon which, under various forms (mental event, verbal statement, pictorial image, sound, etc.) presents a symbolic character in what takes place, and whose represented entity (its object) may belong to the material, factual, human, social, ideal, or imaginary universe” (p. 52). (p. 52). Incidentally, the author adds: “Social representation reproduces its object by transforming it under the effect of psychological factors (emerging from cognitive or psychic functioning) and social factors (linked to communication, intersubjectivity, group membership, location in a social sphere and a system of social relations)” (Jodelet, 2020, p. 52).

Both authors also see the concept as a process of communication, of reproduction of cultures and identities, of identification with certain social groups that harmonize with personal and collective interests, among which common places are shared.

In this sense, Jodelet (2003) assures that social representations “are approached both as the product and the process of an activity of appropriation of reality external to thought and of psychological and social elaboration of that reality. In other words, we are interested in a modality of thought, under its constituent aspects - the processes - and constituted - the products or contents”(p. 37). Also, Jodelet (2015) states that social representations have their own autonomy and effectiveness, are modalities of knowledge and must be recognized in their “genesis, functioning and function in the processes that affect the organization, life and social communication, in the mechanisms that contribute to the definition of the identity and specificity of social groups and of the relationships that these groups have among themselves” (p. 21).

Jodelet adds that the phenomena that make up the local world of a group are social objects. There is no doubt that things can be described within many frameworks. The best known frameworks in psychology are the scientific frameworks provided by physics, chemistry, biology, and other sciences. The descriptions provided by these sciences are valid descriptions in their own right, but inappropriate for capturing the specific social characteristics of the objects that constitute local worlds (Jodelet, 2018). Social objects are constituted by representations,

i.e. by the discourse and concerted action of group members without which there would be no object for people to address, don we find as an example artistic and cultural expressions in general.

Events and phenomena that disrupt the life course of social groups are threatening and often unknown. They require both material and symbolic coping (Moscovici, 1976). While material coping is clearly a task for engineers, scientists and other professionals, “symbolic coping” is at the heart of social representation theory. In fact, social representation theory aims to describe and explain exactly this process. A social representation arises whenever the identity of a group is threatened and when communication subverts social rules (Moscovici, 1976, p. 171).

Being a social psychological approach to study the regularities of social life, the theory of social representation cannot do without a historical perspective (Moscovici, 1976). The meanings of social objects that exist in a group today were also shaped by past events. Unlike the theory of attitudes, beliefs and values, which studies phenomena only in terms of specific aspects, such as valuations or as cognitions, the social representations approach makes it possible to capture macrosocial phenomena in their historical and dynamic totality (Jodelet, 2018).

These epistemic tools, which we consider operative concepts, allow us to delve into artistic spaces with the intention of understanding their message and their social reason in the postmodern world.

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