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On genetic social psychology: A rejoinder to Doise*

GÜN R. SEMIN

Psychology Division,
University of Sussex,
Falmer, Brighton, U.K.

In writing a rejoinder to Willem Doise's thoughtful contribution I find myself in a dilemma between focusing on a particular issue at some length and exploring briefly the diverse and multifaceted implications of constructivism for social psychology that he has drawn. In deciding upon the former course of action I have also committed myself to a narrow path of investigating an issue that is of particular interest to me (see for detail Semin and Papadopoulou, 1990).

One of the major contributions that Doise and his colleagues have made to socio-cognitive development is on social marking and socio-cognitive conflict (see, for instance, Doise, 1989; Doise and Mugny, 1984; Doise and Palmonari, 1984; DePaolis, Doise and Mugny, 1987; Perret-Clermont, 1980; *inter alia*). In essence, what strikes me about this approach is that it is predicated on the assumption that the child has already mastered certain rules and conventions (e.g., principles of equality versus inequality) in its social relations that are then 'transferred' (experimentally or otherwise) to, for instance, cognitive tasks creating a 'marking' and thus leading to a 'socio-cognitive conflict' between the demands of the social rules that are mastered and the cognitive task. There is an explicit assumption of 'isomorphism' or rather 'homology' suggesting a correspondence 'between the relations characteristic of the one structure [e.g., social] and those which characterize another [e.g., cognitive]' (De Paolis *et al.*, 1987, p. 12). Thus the approach centralizes social conflict as a critical process in the attainment of cognitive development. The fundamental tenet is that the divergence between one's own views and that of others triggers cognitive development. What is critical in this approach is the specific nature of the social interaction that is instrumental in mediating cognitive development. I would like to argue that what is in need of more careful attention is the distinctive features of the *types of social interaction* that take place amongst peers which are instrumental for cognitive development under investigation, and to extend this perspective to consider domains which are more at the core of social psychology. Other neglected aspects may also

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include the types and sources of control on the type of exchanges in interaction that are of interest (see Goodnow, 1989).

The problem that I would like to address in this context is precisely those features and qualities of the social psychological processes (i.e. the nature of interaction, or joint action) in their relation to the acquisition of socio-cognitive and emotional repertoires. This appears to me to be an unelaborated but central theme in genetic social psychology. I would like to argue that in order to elucidate the social nature of cognitive-emotional processes one cannot but take a genetic perspective, and in doing so one has to consider processes of *representational or semiotic mediation* (Vygotski, 1981; Wertsch, 1984, 1985) as they are observed in social practices manifested in face-to-face communication and social interaction. In such an examination my preferred framework is a Vygotskian one. He notes that: 'Any function in the child's cultural (i.e. higher) development appears twice, or on two planes. First, it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First, it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition' (Vygotski, 1981, p. 163). I would like to argue that this is also the case with emotional development, which I am going to use to illustrate my argument. The critical issue in such contexts is to unfold the nature of the mediational processes in social interaction that are responsible for the acquisition of, for instance, informed representations of social emotions. Let me elaborate upon this theme by summarizing a framework I have developed elsewhere (Semin and Papadopoulou, 1990).

Adult representations of children's competences, abilities and their capacity for emotionality enter the shaping of the situated adult-child social interaction in a formative manner. Such representations typically define and regulate this interaction in accordance with socio-cultural patterns. Consequently, much of the child's access to socio-cultural processes and structures is mediated through the joint action between those agents involved in 'mothering' and their child. This is largely because of the child's relative lack of social self-regulation and the mother's particular definition of her own role in situations with her child. In this context the mother-child social constellation acquires a very specific meaning. One can regard the mother *analytically* as entering the child-mother dyad in a twofold manner. Once as herself and then as a component of the mother-child dyad, namely as 'another' social individual constituted by 'joint action' (Wertsch, 1985; or 'interpsychological functioning', Vygotski, 1981; *inter alia*). This basically means that the mother in completing the child reproduces a social identity for the child and in doing so defines her self in an 'extended' manner, i.e. inclusive of the child's actions. She has what one may call an '*extended identity*' (see Semin and Papadopoulou, 1990). Thus, the argument we developed is that the mother and the child constitute a unit in social interaction, in which the mother presents a complementary component to the child's actions. A critical feature of joint action is that the mother completes the social activities of her child as a function of her representations of her child's abilities, capabilities and social competence. Such complementary activities will thus vary as a function of what the mothering agent believes the child should master at the specific development stage which the child is in (see Cole, 1985; Vygotski, 1981). In its early stages joint action is largely other-regulated, i.e. by the mother. As the child develops the main changes that occur are due to the internalization of joint action and the consequent increase in self-regulation

of the child as a function of its developing representational world. This should be correlated with a decrease in the degree to which the mother takes responsibility for the child's action, and also a diminution in the definition of the mother's extended identity.

From the point of view of the child there is an emerging world of social conventions and rules regulating proper conduct. This is a consequence of the various social interactional processes which change their structure and shape as a function of the mother's changing representations of the child's developing competences. Such changes are in large part facilitated through the organizing and enabling functions of language in which the child is developing its proficiency. The specific social interactional patterns which emerge constitute external guidelines regulating social interaction in circumscribed concrete incidents. The internalization and generalization of such incidents is largely mediated by language (Wertsch and Stone, 1985). As Vygotski (1956) suggests: 'In order to transmit some experience or content of consciousness to another person, there is no other path than to ascribe the content to a known class, to a known group of phenomena, and as we know this necessarily involves generalization. Thus, it turns out that social interaction necessarily presupposes generalization and the development of word meaning, i.e. generalization becomes possible in the presence of the development of social interaction. Thus, higher, uniquely human forms of psychological social interaction are possible only because human thinking reflects reality in a general way' (p. 51).

Essentially, the model suggested above provides a framework within which one can actually make specific types of assumptions about the nature of the interaction processes that may be involved in the socialization of, for instance, emotions, but also cognitive functions. The specification of such interactional processes from a genetic point of view also provide a better understanding of adult socio-cognitive processes. This is because the child's internalization of a particular interaction between mother and child in turn transforms the nature of the situation, and consequently, the nature of the interaction leading to processes of re-representation for the interlocutors (for the child *and* the mother). This type of explication of the nature of what is taking place on an interpsychological plane allows us to identify the ontogenesis and nature of 'higher socio-emotional' functions. Let me illustrate this briefly by sketching the bare outlines of a piece of research.

The focus of the research was on parental social practices, in particular mothers, in the socialization of embarrassment as a social emotion. If the mother defines her identity in an extended manner as proposed above, namely inclusive of the child's actions, then a critical proposition in the model of joint action is the following: the mother should display the emotion (i.e. embarrassment) for her child if she does not think that her child has as yet acquired or is in the possession of the appropriate emotional display (particularly in the case of younger children). This would be one of the critical elements which would result from the complementarity of the actions postulated by the extended identity concept. Additionally, one would expect the mother to engage in more punitive action towards the child who commits a faux pas because the type of social emotion in question is a self-punitive one (Semin and Manstead, 1981) and a young child who has not mastered the required social practices is unable to experience this emotion and thus is not capable of self-punishment. With the increasing age of the child and the gradual acquisition and mastery of the relevant social practices and displays the mother's complementary actions should diminish, her

'need' to complete the actions of her child should be reduced, that is she should not display any embarrassment for the same faux pax for the older child and also disengage from punitive actions. Essentially, the results of a study we conducted (Semin and Papadopoulou, 1990) with 90 mothers (10 mothers for each of the age groups 4 to 12 balanced for gender of child) provide support for these contentions. There is a significant negative correlation between embarrassment displayed by mothers and the age of their child and a decrease in punitive measures as a function of age. (Additionally, there is a significant positive correlation between the degree of embarrassment reported for the child and the child's age). These features are however integral elements of the experience of embarrassment at an adult level. Namely, in the face of a faux pax, one displays a negative emotional experience which is self-punitive. Thus, embarrassment is essentially the internalization of a social interaction which consists in its bare bones of: a faux pax; a perceived negative evaluation by others; and a public display of this emotion (Semin and Manstead, 1982). What one is doing by an examination of the distinct types of social interactions involved in the acquisition of this emotion with reference to a Vygotskian framework, as exemplified in the case of embarrassment, is to identify the critical elements of specific social practices contributing to the acquisition of a specific emotion. These social practices change over time as a function of what the child internalizes (i.e. from the interpsychological to the intrapsychological) and thus the nature of the interaction changes as a consequence, until the child is able to display culturally informed modes of social practices as an autonomous agent.

Especially, what I am attempting to sketch by summarizing some of our preliminary work (Semin and Papadopoulou, 1990) is a theoretical framework which is essentially constructionist in orientation but is complementary to the Genevan school's work, as exemplified in the area of socio-cognitive conflict and social marking. However, the emphasis I would like to put on future developments in this area is a broadening of the nature of the social interaction processes by *explicating the features of social interaction* that serve as mediational processes in the acquisition of higher socio-emotional and socio-cognitive functions and thus also providing a more informed unfolding of adult psychological realities. My intention was to suggest that such an approach also extends the considerations involved in social marking and socio-cognitive conflict from a view of homology between social and cognitive tasks to more complex constellations of joint action. An implication of this type of approach is also that it permits a better understanding of adult socio-cognitive experiences since a diachronic examination of diverse higher socio-cognitive processes allows a better appreciation of the composition of the intrapsychological. In that vein, my rejoinder is intended literally as a 're-joinder' rather than a critical comment and is inspired by Doise's creative research and his thoughtful comments on constructivism.

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DOUBTS ABOUT WHAT IS SHARED

During the last decade a series of papers in the *European Journal of Social Psychology* have been devoted to the study of 'shared' social representations. The concept of social representation has been defined as 'a system of concepts and images by which individuals and social groups represent and give meaning to social reality' (Doise, 1989). The concept of social representation has been used to describe how social groups and individuals represent and give meaning to social reality. Doise, 1989, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025. The concept of social representation has been used to describe how social groups and individuals represent and give meaning to social reality. Doise, 1989, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025.

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