

A PATH OF THE THOUGHT OF WORK PSYCHOLOGY from Frederick Winslow TAYLOR to Serge MOSCOVIC

di Arturo CAMPANILE

The topic is particularly interesting and stimulating and creates a series of questions which, in their subsequent answers, have given rise to further chains. So I try to put some reflections on paper.

Work absorbs most of the time and as such is one of the most important aspects of daily life. This predominant aspect gives particular importance to the thought of Work Psychology in working environments, where the more we meet, we confront each other and where, more frequently, tensions and frictions are created in everyday life.

Before starting to talk about Frederick TAYLOR's Taylorism, I prefer to make a very rapid mention of some of the protagonists of the theorization of work, without whom this discussion could not even begin:

- Adam SMITH "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations" - 1776.

- Carl MARX Das Kapital (The Capital) - 1867 / 1894

- Emile DURKEIM De la division du travail social (The division of social labor) - 1893

- Jacob LEVI MORENO - Sociometric Test, Role Theory, Role-Playing, Psychodrama, Sociodrama - 1934)

However, another event changed the course of history: the Congress of Vienna (September 22, 1814 - June 10, 1815) which sanctioned the end of the Napoleonic period.

To give an anthropocentric vision of the worker, and thus begin to talk about the subject in question, we must begin by dating the transition between the conceptions of Men Objects and Men Subjects.

Exactly Pier Giorgio GABASSI places the origin of Work Psychology in the precise historical moment of the end of the nineteenth century, a moment in which capitalism carries out a full modification of its spirit, preparing for the second Industrial Revolution, as well as placing its energies on the solid foundations resulting from the Congress of Vienna of 1815.

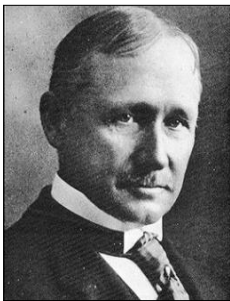
At the end of the 19th century, we passed from Liberal Capitalism (based on a harmonious vision of the convergence between the common interest and individual interest) to the Monopolistic Capitalism of Large Enterprises.

Having made this necessary historical premise, we will analyze four great moments of the historical journey by speaking of four great protagonists:

- 1) Frederick TAYLOR;
- 2) Elton MAYO;
- 3) Kurt LEWIN;
- 4) Serge MOSCOVICI.

Frederich TAYLOR - Scientific Management.

Frederich Winslow TAYLOR [Germantown (U.S.A.) March 20, 1856 – Philadelphia (U.S.A.) March 21, 1915] American engineer and entrepreneur was born in Pennsylvania (U.S.A.) into a wealthy family, immediately destined to study at Harvard he was forced to seek other training channels because of poor health (however he will finish his studies in 1883 at the age of 27, attending evening classes and graduating in Mechanical Engineering).



TAYLOR thanks to his skills (and to the contribution of his family) made a very rapid career and was thus able to carry out an analysis from within the working environments (we will still have to wait almost a century to then be able to speak of the "Participant Observation" of SANCHEZ-YANKOWSKY).

From his experience TAYLOR contested the unprofessional amateurishness of the nascent Managers and their procurers of workers. Often the initial selection consisted in throwing apples at a turbulent mass of people eager to work, to feed themselves, and the results (besides not being validly acceptable) managed to give extremely improbable assessments to apply in reality.

Basically both using his experiences in the field and applying his studies to real problems and to the workforce TAYLOR managed to give the parameters for a scientific organization of work (Scientific Management) to the condition of high wages combined with low labor costs, all this during the period in which titanic financial empires such as those of ROCKFELLER, MORGAN, CARNEGIE had arisen in the United States of America and, above all, during the Great War where war and post-war reconversion required efficiency and speed.

Other hypotheses and fundamental characteristics were the solution, to carry out any operation, through the "best way" (One Best Way), the "right man in the right place" (The Right Man to the Right Place) and human

consideration regardless of the his personal psychological characteristics, the so-called Ox-Man.

In addition to necessarily requiring companies the type of organization necessary on the basis of each individual case, the need to use vast funds, the obligation to take into account the time factor, the need to strictly follow the pre-established order, the need to submit all workers to a formative training it was necessary, for the workers themselves, a well-defined daily task, standardized conditions, high pay (in case of success) or loss (in case of failure), individual piecework, team piecework, Differential Tariff.

His "Scientific Management" envisaged an accurate study of the individual movements of the worker in order to be able to optimize the results according to a series of precise sequences. In addition to this TAYLOR proposed the request for a planning office and the creation of a series of eight figures (functional heads) who would oversee the various company functions.

The major criticisms of Taylorism lie in the method itself, considered more analytical and therefore less synthetic and global, and in its purely mechanistic vision of the human being.

Scientific Management allowed the development of "assembly lines" and Fordism owes its realization to the premises of TAYLOR.

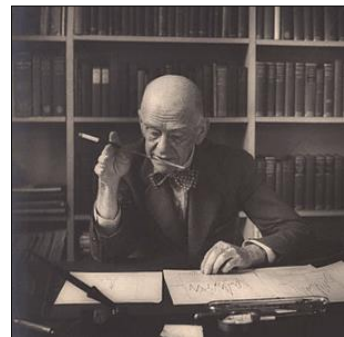
In conclusion, although harshly criticized, Taylorism still today appears to be the most used system for the technical setting of large industrial factories

Elton MAYO The "Human Relations Movement".

Elton George MAYO [Adelaide (Australia) December 26, 1880 - Adelaide (Australia) September 07, 1949] was an Australian psychologist and sociologist who was also a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Business (USA) where he was professor of Industrial Research.

He conducted his first studies relating to turn-over at a spinning mill in Philadelphia (USA) beginning to verify that a remarkable sense of group and intercommunication favored productivity and reduced the turn-over itself.

After various teachings in various US universities, he arrived at the Harvard Graduate School of Business.



In 1927 his intervention was requested at the Hawthorne plants of the Western Electric Company in Chicago, manufacturers of telephone equipment, for research on productivity and the high turnover rate present in the plant. The consequent unexpected results will lead to the birth of the "Human Relations Movement", a research and intervention approach of Occupational Psychology where the study of the psychological motivations of the workers themselves is privileged.

Studies began on the basis of enlightenment, breaks, working days. He noticed that by changing the lighting and other factors, an increase in production and a decrease in turnover were obtained. The real discovery was that the most significant variable of these successes did not lie in the lighting or in the coffee breaks. It resided in the secondary emotional factors, in feeling involved and listened to, involved in the research, by the workers. So the more active the participation, the happier the worker, the more there is an affirmation of identity, the greater the acceptance of authority. The real answer lay in the self-affirmation of the worker, and therefore there was an increase in production and a significant reduction in turnover.

This effect is still referred to today as the "Hawthorne Effect".

Elton George MAYO improving the studies of Frederick Winslow TAYLOR reversed some logic of "Scientific Management" highlighting the importance of some factors to increase the motivation of workers, including less invasive and stressful supervision, mutual assistance between workers, interactivity of previously created management and working groups, the alienation of individuals or groups eager to create parallel control systems.

Elton George MAYO as opposed to Frederick Winslow's "Ox-Man" TAYLOR began to talk about the "Human Factor" however integrating it into the concept of production but thus giving it a human dimension. Thanks to his theories it was understood that the pay aspect is not the only incentive of the worker but that there are psychological and micro-social needs that have considerable weight in the organization as a whole.

Elton George MAYO formulates, in conclusion of his research:

- Man is fundamentally motivated by needs of a social nature and obtains his sense of social identity through his relationship with others.

- As a result of the Industrial Revolution and Scientific Management, the work itself is devoid of intrinsic meaning and therefore the motivation must be sought in the social relationships that are formed on the work itself.

- The worker is more influenced by the social strength of his group than by incentives and controls from management.

- The worker communicates and responds to Management to the extent that it respects their social needs.

Unlike TAYLOR, who sees the "Ox-Man" motivated solely by economic interests, MAYO develops an image of the "social-man" based on a relational concept and that it is precisely the social dimension that represents the fundamental point of the condition working.

The motivation of the workers derives from the satisfaction of needs of a social nature and it is therefore the task of the organization to invest in their social relationships thus directly determining their motivation and therefore improving their effectiveness at work.

Kurt LEWIN - Action Research.

Kurt Zadek LEWIN [Mogilno (at the time in Germany currently in Poland) 09 September 1890 - Newtonville (U.S.A.) 12 February 1947] was a German psychologist, pioneer of Social Psychology. Among the supporters of Gestalt Psychology by Fritz PEARLS from which he received the idea that our experience is not made up of an isolated set of elements, of points that are associated, but of perceptions that are structured and related to objects and/or networks of relationships that find their meaning only in this field of relationships. He was among the first researchers to study group dynamics and the development of organizations.



Born into a Jewish family, he moved to Berlin at a young age where he attended the gymnasium and then enrolled at the university, in the same city, and where he frequented several exponents of the Philosophy of the Act. Before being able to discuss the thesis, he was recalled to the front where, from experience, he wrote a short essay anticipating the concept of "camp". Returning to Berlin and graduating he came into contact with the Gestalt school. After defending the homeland in the First World War, like many of his compatriots, he had to suffer the undeserved treatment reserved for Jews (moreover also socialists) who forced him to emigrate to the U.S.A., in 1933, after having participated, at the Institute of Social Studies, in the first phase of the Frankfurt School.

The basic concept of LEWIN is that of "Action Research" identifying an epistemological sequence composed of the planning of the Action and

verification of its possible effects. The scientific path is characterized by the sequence that develops over time along a spiral path.

This same concept also indicates the approach that qualifies, enhances, identifies "... every rational project of Action in the social ..." by individuals and organizations, and translates for those who participate in a collective intervention into an Integration of Action, Training and Research. From both a scientific and, above all, social point of view "... social eyes and ears in the neuralgic points and within the bodies of social action ...". Clearly, since there are no tools capable of perceiving these phenomena (as happens in other sciences, for example in physics, even if sometimes the final data are altered), social observers themselves must be trained in an active social perception, above all because the field of studied phenomena require an interaction with the phenomena themselves. The same concept "Action" indicates a greater valence of meanings. Action identifies both a moment of experimental research and, a fortiori, the involvement of the researcher and his colleagues in the social field together with their commitment, above all the fact that they do not participate only in the problem of knowledge but that they are part of the solving the same social problems. This fidelity of LEWIN to the experimental process is also implemented in situations where it is impossible to apply it in practice (for example, helping a community to deal with conflicts between minorities within it).

To carry out field studies, LEWIN together with Ronald LIPPIT, brings together the actors by proposing the concept of "Self-Survey" (Self-Surveying Community). The concept of "Action Research", according to LEWIN himself, assumes the following values:

- Experimental research method.
- Research on the relative effectiveness of different forms of action.
- Diagnostic research to prepare an action strategy.
- An opportunity to disseminate, promote or democratize the scientific process through the training of various social actors, anchored in practice, associating them with precise moments of the research process.

The concept of "Group Dynamics" was introduced by LEWIN himself in Psychology to indicate the relationships that affect any kind of group and that influence both its development and its conduct.

It is therefore hypothesized that the system of relationships, communications and characteristic interactions of a group can be considered as a sort of "field" where the forces are distributed and concentrated (not randomly) following trends linked to tensions and balances relating to the same community life of the group itself. In a group or in a subgroup, bonds are established which are subject to a change

deriving not only from the personality of each participant and from the environment in which they take place, but also from the interference between the "individual" conditions of each participant and the "group" ones. which are due to social interactions and interpersonal perceptions.

Relational approaches in Psychology all owe a large cultural debt to LEWIN's thought. LEWIN's very definition of "group" has interesting characteristics: "...a dynamic whole (or totality) made up of individuals who perceive each other as more or less interdependent in some respect..."

Another important content of LEWIN is therefore linked to the Theory of the Field (the concept of "field" born during his stay in the German army during the Great War).

The Field Theory is generally summarized with the Formula:

$$C = f(P,A)$$

C = Behavior; f = function; P = Personality; A = Environment.

The Behavior (C) of a subject is a Function (f) regulated by interdependent factors consisting of his Personality (P) and the Environment (A) that surrounds him.

Person and Environment are closely interconnected and form the "living space" of each subject. Both must be considered "one constellation" to predict or understand their behavior.

Serge MOSCOVICI - Social Representations.

Serge Ştrul Herş MOSCOVICI [Brăila (Romania) 14 June 1925] is a Franco-Romanian psychologist, one of the most important figures in the field of European Social Psychology.



The first presentation "Theory of Social Representations" (RS) dates back to 1950 and intends the representation of reality semantically constructed and socially shared.

For MOSCOVICI, Social Representations are the synthesis of shared values founding on common characteristics and believes that Social Psychology simultaneously interests psychological and social phenomena, also through the mental processes that condition social dynamics.

The studies conducted by MOSCOVICI on social influence have led to the functional model which hypothesizes, for those with power, greater authority and influence over the opinions of those at a lower level. Indeed, he believes that all people are dynamically both a source and a target of social influence to a degree related to their status. For MOSCOVICI, society is thinking and active and is not limited to the passive and slavish

implementation of the thoughts and will of the ruling class. In his book "Social representations" he describes the processes implemented by the human being as a person to try to control his innate fear of the unknown through "anchoring and objectification".

The "anchorage" consists in associating something new with what is already known (for example the face of a stranger or a dish of Asian cuisine).

The "objectification" consists in making concrete what is virtual (for example the eternal dilemma of painters who had to assimilate the figure of God, in a painting, through human features or a person).

Social Psychology deals with the development of two important mesotheories (theories proposed to connect the Macro and Micro levels), with a cognitive orientation, in which MOSCOVICI also was collaborated, the "Theory of social influence of minorities" and the "Theory of social consensus and collective decisions".

Currently MOSCOVICI he directed the "Laboratoire Européen de Psychologie Sociale" of the "Maison des Sciences de l'Homme" in Paris.

At the end of this quick roundup, on very important figures in Occupational Psychology, I end by analyzing the current situation by reconnecting to MOSCOVICI's vision of Social Influence.

Serious crises of economic depression have already been present in the history of humanity (previously considered famines or similar). We recall the most recent ones: The severe Depression Crisis (which occurred in England from 1873 to 1895), the Great Depression (which occurred in the U.S.A. between 1929 and 1934) and the current Global Crisis (which grips a large part of the World even if it is true that the previous crises had already had repercussions on the entire Terraqueous Globe). Jeremy RIFKIN (US economist) already in 1995 predicted that the system had lost its initial thrust and for the future 2020 anticipated that as many as 80% of the U.S. population would have been unemployed and the remaining 20% of work would have been the prerogative of a super-elite of specialists engaged in a spasmodic race not to get out of the game. Perhaps (and we hope) this will not happen (in this way), but surely the race of holders of economic power will lead to an ever-restricting number and rank of the now few participants.

Our hope for a better future rests on the hope that these Super-Rich, those who already now choose and direct our fashions, will not get to decide, in the Future, the Choices of Us All and the Destiny of Planet Earth.

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Arturo CAMPANILE

