

What and why Questions in Social Representations: Securing Moscovici's Legacy

Gaskel, George ¹

¹ *London School of Economics, United Kingdom*

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ABSTRACT

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In 1963 Serge Moscovici assessed developments in research on attitudes and opinions in the Annual Review of Psychology. While this review introduced 'La Psychanalyse' and the concept of social representations to the English speaking world, it is his assessment of some of the research on attitudes and opinions that seems to me to be of particular contemporary relevance. Moscovici was highly critical of the body of research assessing public opinion - information gathering as he called it.

In this essay I suggest that a complementary and potentially more productive research question starts with why? What invites an answer based data and facts; why invites an answer starting with because – the beginnings of an explanation. And with because comes the opening of a possible contribution to the understanding processes and of linking representations to other concepts.

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