

# Spiraled Cultural Dialectics: *Construct* for Human and Social Sciences

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**Keywords—** *Concept, Dialectic, Culture,  
Spiral and Spiritism.*

**Abstract—** *The present study has as main concern to explain the need to create the construct "spiraled cultural dialectic" in order to better adapt the ideas worked on in the doctoral thesis, as well as its use in other research in the human and social sciences. To this end, I present formulations on the concept of concept on the initial pages. Then, there will be the decomposition of the terms in order to better clarify them, that is, to historicize the concepts, making, at the end, the methodological mortar of the theoretical explanation.*

## I. CONCEPT OF CONCEPTS

The designation of construct that is used here refers to the type of constructed concept that has a higher level of abstraction, different from the concept itself, which has its elements more easily observed or measured, thus coming to be constructed through the use of other minor concepts. José D'Assunção Barros focuses on the subject repeatedly in his books and articles. According to Barros,

In some cases, the researcher should not hesitate to reformulate some definitions himself, already reflected from what the specialized texts say, but adapting them based on his own critical sense. The need to create an unprecedented concept also occurs, and consequently, to define it in the most appropriate way possible for the reader.<sup>1</sup>

Assunção postulates that the term concept designates abstract and general formulations that individuals use in order to make something intelligible to their essential and everyday aspects. When formulating the

concepts, we observe that they respond to general notions in the sense of defining them, through representation or characteristics that identify them.

We constantly use several concepts in everyday life without paying attention, for example, that when we talk about family, we establish abstract and general formulations to explain about its meaning. Therefore, it will be observed that the concepts are instruments that serve not only the scientific community but are also fundamental in everyday life itself. Yet,

(...) scientific knowledge requires a second level vocabulary, that is, a technical vocabulary. For the theoretical thinking of science or philosophy, the immediate meanings of ordinary language are not enough. Concepts and terms acquire a unique meaning, very precise and well delimited. Sometimes the same terms are kept, but the meanings are changed to a well-defined understanding<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>- BARROS, 2005, p.151.

<sup>2</sup>- SEVERINO, 1978, p.145.

Such assumptions are linked to the representations that we bring about the social environment to which we are inserted, without, therefore, being able to perceive that the definition meets only the historical period in which we live, disregarding the previous realities and other non-Western models.

We generally work with “imported” concepts, that is, generated by foreign intellectuals and adapt them to our realities and needs, aiming at formulating an object through a theoretical proposal. According to Antônio Severino, “the concept is the mental image through which an object is represented, an immediate sign of the object represented. The concept guarantees a direct reference to the real object”<sup>3</sup>. Because they are abstract, the concepts refer to a theory, being, therefore, a logical construction aiming at the construction of a certain knowledge of reality. It is clear here that without it a research could not be carried out. It is the theory that allows us to explain historical realities that are different from the one we live in. As Prost explains, “historical concepts have a wider scope: they incorporate an argument and refer to a theory”<sup>4</sup>. Within this same line of reasoning Koselleck<sup>5</sup> posits that

Under one concept, the multiplicity of historical experience, as well as a sum of theoretical and practical relations, are subsumed into a single set that, as such, is given and the object of experience only through this concept.

The two authors are unanimous in stating that a word to become a concept is necessary that it comes to have a range of meanings and experiences, becoming, therefore, polysemic.

Theories are part of the great framework of evolution<sup>6</sup> of human thought, going through different phases characterized by paradigms<sup>7</sup> diverse that reigned in

the most diverse fields of human knowledge, accumulating the knowledge of the previous ones (even with ruptures and permanences) and causing this knowledge to be gradually restructured, reformulating the old hypotheses, which are expressed in a new language, more adequate to the time in question. Thus, the bases that formulate new ideas are those that previously supported human knowledge, but understood in the light of new paradigms.

Each era has its theorists, who organize the knowledge accumulated in new lands and that, with this, cause ruptures with the “old”. As expressed by Tarnas<sup>8</sup>, “Each generation must examine and rethink, from its own privileged perspective, the ideas that shaped its conception of the world”. Every historical period, however “static” it may seem, was characterized by a certain change in its intellectual climate<sup>9</sup>. This constantly provides not just a simple crossing of novelties, but a profound transformation of thought, of how man sees himself and sees the world around him.

The history of man is, therefore, marked by several ideological transformations<sup>10</sup> that changed and shaped the course of its evolution forever. When looking back, it is proposed, with this, to understand what led man to rethink his way of living, tracing new routes, envisioning new convictions, establishing new ideas, concepts and theories. Such propositions are essential to a worldview that aims to embrace all the cardinal interests of man, transporting us through a universe of inconceivable cultural wealth<sup>11</sup> created by him.

According to Paul Veyne, “(...) each concept we conquer refines and enriches our perception of the world (...)”<sup>12</sup>. With this, the concept that I propose comes from the junction of dialectic, culture and spiral form. To better explain them, the terms will be decomposed in order to better clarify them, that is, historicize the concepts<sup>13</sup>, being aware that for each of them there is a plurality of definitions, not being able to examine them in their entirety, but according to the best understanding of the construct and a posteriori, its use in the development of the Thesis.

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knowledge”. ARÓSTEGUI also alludes to the concept of Kuhn's paradigm - Historical Research - Theory and Method., 2006, p. 99.

<sup>8</sup>- TARNAS, p.13.

<sup>9</sup>- TRATTNER, 1956.

<sup>10</sup>- For more information on the topic, check; CHAUI, 1995 and GEERTZ, 2008, chapter IV.

<sup>11</sup> - The whole framework built by man is part of his culture and in this context we include family life schemes, political debates, religious observances, scientific innovations, literature, arts, in short, aspects of human creation as opposed to physical and biological processes.

<sup>12</sup>- VEYNE, 1983, pg. 30.

<sup>13</sup> - PROST, 2008, p.128.

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<sup>3</sup>- Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>4</sup>- PROST, 2008, p.121

<sup>5</sup>- KOSELLECK, 2012, p.109.

<sup>6</sup>- The concept of evolution succumbs to several criticisms and interpretations since propagated by Charles Darwin, but what I postulate is spiritualist evolutionism, a theory that unites Darwinism with spiritualism, the belief in the existence of an immaterial and immortal being, the spirit as responsible for the conduct of biological forms. For further clarification on the subject, the following books are recommended; ANDRÉA, 1977. ELGIN, 2003. FREIRE, Gilson. vols 1 and 2, 2006. PINHEIRO, 2009. PIRES, 2005. UBALDI, 2001. About the cultural aspect, we can indicate: CHILDE, 1966 and FONTANA, 2004.

<sup>7</sup>- KUHN, 2000. The essay launched in 1962 by the physicist and historian of science advocates the exact and natural sciences, but the author gives a sociological aspect to the concept when referring to the paradigm as “a set of beliefs, values and techniques common to a group that practices the same type of

## II. DIALECTICS

Etymologically, dialectic<sup>14</sup> comes from the Greek *dia*, which expresses the idea of duality, exchange and *lektikós* means apt to the word, giving the understanding of dialogue, because in dialogue there is always more than one opinion, but which has taken on various meanings throughout history<sup>15</sup>.

Coming from the pre-Socratics as Heraclitus of Ephesus (6th century BC) and Zeno of Elea (5th BC), passing through the Sophists, Socrates, Plato, dialectics ended up being forgotten in the Middle Ages, coming to resurface in the Renaissance period. The notion of dialectic comes to the contemporary world through Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) who formulated the question around three movements. This structure of the real, understood as a process, involves the data, the thesis, the negation, the antithesis and finally the negation of the negation, the synthesis. Called idealistic dialectic, that is, "(...) at a certain moment of nervous maturation, which in its entirety, finds its cause in the preceding stage and which, despite everything, surpasses it and establishes a new way of being"<sup>16</sup>, because it is the set of knowledge, ideas and concepts elaborated and reworked by man, each one adequate to its historical moment. According to Mesquita,

Idealism is the current of thought that, giving primacy to consciousness, reduces the real to the idea, to the thought, or, in other words, that considers the idea, the thought, as being the essence of reality<sup>17</sup>.

Hegel was very influenced by Christianity and his interpretation demonstrates the revelation of the dialectic, one and triune God at the same time<sup>18</sup>. The Hegelian dialectic, although idealistic, gave rise to the materialist dialectic of historical materialism created by the German economist and philosopher Karl Marx (1818-1883), in collaboration with the German politician and thinker Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). According to Marcondes,

the Hegelian interpretation of the historical process and the formation of consciousness is restricted to the plane of ideas and representations, of knowledge and culture, disregarding the material bases of the society

in which this knowledge of this culture is produced and in which the individual conscience is formed<sup>19</sup>.

Unlike the proposal made by Hegel, the historical materialist dialectic comes to have the central core of analysis at work<sup>20</sup> "The auto transforming process of the human species is conditioned, which goes against the Hegelian idea of a movement of the Absolute"<sup>21</sup> giving dialectic a constant movement in the course of humanity. Mesquita also focuses on the materialist dialectic

it is the application of dialectics, from a materialistic point of view, in the analysis of the evolution of matter (nature), as well as in the development of human consciousness and society, an analysis on which dialectical materialism is based, of the Marxist theory<sup>22</sup>.

A final analysis on dialectics is that of Karel Kosik<sup>23</sup> (1926-2003), Czech philosopher with a Marxist tradition, where he postulates that dialectical thinking makes a distinction between representation (appearance) and concept (essence) of the "thing" (reality). The "thing in itself", which the dialectic deals with, does not immediately manifest itself to man, to his understanding, because his first attitude towards reality is not investigative or examining, but rather, a practical-sensitive exercise, making the individual creates "his own representations of things (common thought) and develops a correlative system of notions, which captures and fixes the phenomenal aspect of reality".

In conclusion, dialectics is the conception of reality that as a whole is in permanent transformation, its contradiction being decisive in the movement that conditions the whole process of human development.

## III. CULTURE

The term culture was "borrowed" from anthropology, coming to define the set of attitudes and codes of behavior itself, and the first definition of culture was formulated by E. Tylor, in the first paragraph of his book *Primitive Culture* (1871). According to Geertz,

Cultural patterns - religious, philosophical, aesthetic, scientific, ideological - are "programs"; they provide a template or diagram for the organization of social and

<sup>14</sup>. GORBY, 2007.

<sup>15</sup>. For a better appreciation of these changes, the following works are recommended: LUCE, 1994 - ARANHA, 1988, pp 49/50 and KONDER, 1987.

<sup>16</sup>. CHATELET, 1972, pgs, 22/23.

<sup>17</sup>. MESQUITA, 1985, p.19.

<sup>18</sup>. GRINGS, 1981.

<sup>19</sup>. MARCONDES, 1997, p.228.

<sup>20</sup>. MARX & ENGELS, 2001.

<sup>21</sup> - MARCONDES, 1997, p.229.

<sup>22</sup> - MESQUITA, 1981, p.61.

<sup>23</sup>. KOSIK, 1976, p. 14.

psychological processes, similar to the genetic systems that provide such a template for the organization of organic processes<sup>24</sup>.

Clifford Geertz defends the concept of essentially semiotic culture, man being tied to webs of meanings that he himself wove. Through a set of “intertwined systems of interpretable symbols”, social events, behaviors, institutions or processes have been historically constructed, reshaping “the pattern of established social relations”.

According to Marshall Sahlins<sup>25</sup>, culture is historically reproduced and altered in the action of its interlocutors. Therefore, the culture inserted in History is in constant movement, causing this movement to produce a “structural transformation”, since the alteration of some senses changes the position relationship between cultural categories, thus having “a systemic change”, being this historical process called by the author “functional revaluation of categories”. As a result, as there is contact between different cultures, they reproduce from the encounter with each other, effecting innumerable variations over time and in the space in which they met.

Ruth Benedict<sup>26</sup> explains that culture is like a lens through which man sees and sees the world around him. Men from different cultures wear different lenses and, for this reason, have different visions of the realities of things. According to Roque Laraia<sup>27</sup>,

The way of looking at the world, appraisals of a moral and evaluative nature, different social behaviors and even body postures are thus products of a cultural heritage, that is, the result of the operation of a particular culture.

To finalize the understanding of the concept of culture (without wanting to close the subject), Cassirer<sup>28</sup> expresses that

the most striking feature of man, the hallmark that distinguishes him, is not his metaphysical or physical nature - but his work. It is this work, the system of human activities, that defines and determines the circle of humanity. Language, myth, religion, art, science, history are the constituents, the various sectors of this circle.

Therefore, the entire framework built by man is part of his culture and in this bulge we include the schemes of family life, political debates, religious observances, scientific innovations, literature, arts, language, in short, aspects of human creation as opposed to physical processes and biological factors.

#### IV. SPIRAL

Finally, the spiral shape<sup>29</sup>. Supported by the concept of “circularity”<sup>30</sup> propagated by Ginzburg and Bakhtin, where both historians aim to demonstrate the movement of ideas in both popular and erudite culture, I see that although ideas circulate, the spiral shape designates how these same ideas reach different levels in the understanding of human beings, creating and expanding the new concepts embedded in the propositions of his time.

The spiral is a symbol of evolution and upward movement, progressive, normally positive, found in all cultures, related to the very progression of existence. Its shape is associated with the base of life<sup>31</sup> being found from the macro (galaxies) to the micro (DNA).

Therefore, the spiral is present throughout the Universe, being responsible for the symmetrical phenomenon of nature, be it in the flowers, trees, waves, shells, hurricanes, in the symmetrical face of the human being, in its joints, its heartbeat and in its DNA. Also in the refraction of the light provided by the electrons of the atoms, in the vibrations and in other more manifestations as in the galaxies of the immeasurable universe.

#### V. APPLICABILITY OF THE CONCEPT

When proposing the aforementioned *construct*, I see that its applicability does not necessarily have to be linked only to research itself, that is, to spiritism, but that it will also be useful for other researchers to use it in a fruitful way.

As explained, the Spiraled Cultural Dialectic aims to demonstrate how ideas were dialectically reworked creating a whole new conceptual universe. All this change is the result of the cultural process in which man is inserted and the way he interprets the environment in which he

<sup>24</sup>- GEERTZ, 2008, p. 123.

<sup>25</sup>- SAHLINS, 2011.

<sup>26</sup>- BENEDICT, 1972.

<sup>27</sup>- LARAIA, 1997, p. 70.

<sup>28</sup>- CASSIRER, 1972, p. 116.

<sup>29</sup> - When I use the geometric shape of the spiral to the detriment of the circular shape, I do not intend to establish the understanding in order to position it as positive / negative, ascending / descending or any other designation, as it has no evaluative connotation, but to explain the movement of the ruptures and permanences that happen in history and that with this open new conceptual horizon for men.

<sup>30</sup>- GINZBURG, 2011 and BAKHTIN, 2010.

<sup>31</sup>- MOORE, 1961.



lives. The spiral geometric shape only aims to give the view that these paradigmatic changes take knowledge to new levels of understanding of human thought, establishing new synapses and expanding their conceptual horizons.

The constant cultural dialectic aims to elucidate the different architectural constructions of the ideas elaborated within the proposed temporal cut up to the formulation of the Spiritist Pentateuch, comparing them to each other, or better, establishing the historical connective<sup>32</sup> that communicate with each other and end up establishing new perspectives, which are constantly reworked by circularity in a spiraling movement of knowledge<sup>33</sup> because in addition to circulating, ideas end up being transformed into something new, through a flat curve that revolves around a central point (called the pole), moving away or approaching it, in a constant grouping of ideas, effecting structural transformations in the Western society, leading man to weave the intertwining of ideas with culture in a constant symbiosis.

To give the methodological mortar, I will use the "Indigenous Paradigm"<sup>34</sup>, a term coined by the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg, that through signs and signs it is possible to reconstruct cultural and / or social elements, thus resulting in an epistemological paradigm, allowing, from a scientific point of view, to (re) construct interpretive elements of culture from which they emerge. In addition, comparative activity<sup>35</sup> is an excellent methodological tool that allows, as explained by Detienne<sup>36</sup>, "Not to find or impose general laws that would finally explain to us the variability of cultural inventions of the human species, (...) but to build comparable ones (...)", carry out comparative analyzes between the different ideas that contextualized the environment European and their links with the spiritist proposal, seeing the connectivity between them and their meeting (dialectic) the birthplace of the vision brought about by this meeting.

In addition, the carpet metaphor allows us to understand the intertwining of the circularity of ideas with the culture that is historically altered, since analogously to the vertical and horizontal threads, which give total form to the piece, so also the signs or indications of historical investigation are assumed as elements revealing socio-cultural phenomena that emerged in European Latin Christian society, specifically focused on the period

between the second half of the 18th century until the advent of the spiritist proposal, through the figure of Allan Kardec and being all this ideological framework is provided by man, or that is, its culture, what it produces.

## VI. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Therefore, a spiraled cultural dialectic, different from the previous propositions, creates a new universe of understanding, a new type of dialogue through a "cultural tension", which generates processes of structural transformations that lead man to search for new symbolic frameworks, carrying out this same man reinterpretations of the reality in which he is inserted.

The sewing of ideas in the different fields of knowledge of man is accompanied, therefore, with the conceptual basis of the spiraled cultural dialectic, because, when reworking the way of thinking, these ideas are weaving a whole ideological framework, in a continuous movement, creating a set of incomparable beauty, which is the human being's journey towards self-overcoming.

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<sup>32</sup> - Expression adopted by the historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam where he aims to demonstrate that these stories are linked and that they communicate with each other.

<sup>33</sup>- UBALDI, 2001.

<sup>34</sup>- GINZBURG, 1990, pages 143 to 179.

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