

The feelings of those who have been expelled. Notes on some psychoanalysts forced to leave Genoa because of the Italian Racial Laws

*Cosimo Schinaia**

Abstract. The separations the Jewish professionals were forced to because of the racial laws were violent, traumatic, brutal, not deeply sought-after. They had to hide and unjustly suffered the distancing from their scientific interests, but they also promoted in some cases passages, transitions from one cultural landscape to another, exchange of ideas, transpositions of concepts, models from one world to the other. The author recalls the story of Emilio Servadio, Ettore Rieti, Stefano Fajrajzen, three Genoese psychoanalysts, who did not return in Genoa and made good fortune elsewhere.

Keywords: memory, feelings, Servadio, Rieti, Fajrajzen.

«When in 1873 I first joined the University, I experienced some appreciable disappointments. Above all, I found that I was expected to feel myself inferior and an alien because I was a Jew. I refused absolutely to do the first of these things. I have never been able to see why I should feel ashamed of my descent or, as people were beginning to say, of my race. [...] These first impressions at the University, however, had one consequence, which was afterwards to prove important; for at an early age I was made familiar with the fate of being in the Opposition and of being put under the ban of the 'compact majority'. The foundations were thus laid for a certain degree of independence of judgment» (Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, 1925, p. 9)

Memory is often the subject of controversies and divisions and can be declined in as many ways as the number of witnesses, interpreters, exegetes, etc. This is because memory is a living material intertwined with our lives, worldviews, ways of conceiving the present and the future. However, one thing is to take note of the various possible variations, another is to deny the racial drives that characterized our history and specifically what happened in Italy first with the notorious *Manifesto of Race* and then with the Racial Laws, both proposed in 1938. It is worth noting that Italians reacted to these laws with indifference and often with open support. Today this work of revisionism and falsification is almost impossible even for the most hardened denier. Anti-Semitism is only a variant of racism to which we have to beware today.

The expulsion from the working places of many professionals provoked intense feelings of shame, an inner upheaval made of modesty, humiliation, mortification, embarrassment. Shame is connect to traumatic experiences in which the subject feels impotent and has not the possibility to defend himself or herself from the irruption of stimuli too intense to be psychically elaborated (Baranger, Baranger, and Mom, 1988).

The writer and journalist Lia Levi (2018) recalls her father's silence when she asked him why he did not go to work and comments: "Only later I understood only that it was only shame that made my father's dumb".

The separations the Jewish professionals were forced to because the Racial Laws were violent, traumatic, brutal, not deeply sought-after. They had to hide and unjustly suffered the distancing

* Member of the *Società Psicoanalitica Italiana* (SPI) and of the *International Psychoanalytic Association* (IPA), Psychiatrist, Training and Supervising analyst of the SPI and full member of the IPA, E-Mail <cosimo.schinaia@gmail.com>, web site www.cosimoschinaia.it.

from their scientific interests, but they also promoted “*passages, modern transhumance, transitions from one cultural landscape to another, [...] exchange of ideas, transpositions of concepts, models from one world to the other, from an inner space to another*” (Diena, 2016, p. 134).

Migrating implies crossing not only geographic but also cultural and existential borders. The dimension of the passage therefore involves a complex process of psychic transformation and negotiation at the relational and cultural level. The two poles of emigration are the origin and the destination. “*To emigrate is to be confronted with the new and the unknown: it means allowing yourself to be traversed by the unknown without allowing yourself to be assimilated by it, without being annihilated to go through without being assimilated, without being annihilated by dismay, and without feeling threatened. At the same time, emigration fuels the need to firmly preserve one’s roots and allows them to grow in the face of otherness: this means to not ignore that your original identity is always inside of you, but rather to slow down that hard work of transformation that aims at reaching a separation from our origins. Emigration means having experienced the loss of the container object. Such a feeling is strictly connected to the removal of the indigenous reference points*” (Schinaia, 2016, p. 2).

This situation requires to learn to tolerate and even to endorse an insurmountable and fruitful ambivalence. This is difficult to do without the risk of losing the focus, that is to say, the risk of being into an unstable equilibrium between security and insecurity, known and unknown, recognition and disorientation, identification with the origins and identification with the stranger.

There is the risk (a risk that necessarily has to be taken in order to structure a new identity) of establishing a compensatory mechanism of hyper-adaptation to the new environment. This means to superficially and falsely assimilate the new culture so that a person seems to be more autochthonous than the autochthonous people, imitates the natives without an authentic elaboration, too rapidly re-arranges the coordinates of orientation of his or her own existence. The fear of not being adapted to the new context, also due to the impossibility to be supported by some consolidated and recognized collective identities (family, community, nation) only the original environment can provide, would favor the establishment of a false robotic self having conformist characteristics of rigid submission to the rules and inhibition of the affections. This is because in the new environment there is not a container able to receive and modulate the person’s deep anxieties.

The linguistic gap regards not only the learning of a vocabulary and a syntax but also of facial expressions and gestures to recognize and a number of symbols to appreciate (Pélicier, 1964). The expressions of feelings like joys and affliction are not universal. Thus, some errors of interpretation of the surrounding world and its messages are always possible (Frigessi Castelnuovo and Risso, 1982).

Traditionally, psychoanalysis has modeled and still models itself on new cultural and social systems, on new traditions in time and space, it is always crossed by new scientific paradigms. The scientific propositions, often conceived as indisputable and absolute, are subjected to theoretical and practical testing. The models are transformed and the practices are integrated. In order to build new anchor points up, to get used to new sights, to settle into new contexts, and to provide necessary mediations and translations between them, psychoanalysis allows us to “learn to learn” (Bateson, 1972). This means to reconsider those features taken for granted and to become involved with them again. In other words, this means to allow and promote fantasies of a new beginning in contrast with those feelings of having sacrificed, blocked, or censored some aspects of the true self for adapting to the environment.

The sufferings these professionals forced to leave their homeland experienced led them to welcome with greater sensitivity the distress of the new patients they encountered (Diena, 2016).

Among psychiatrists, psychologists and psychoanalysts overwhelmed by anti-Semitism in Italy we mention: Gustavo Modena, vice president of the Italian Psychiatric Society; Marco Levi Bianchini, the founder of the first Italian Psychoanalytic Society, who had to hide to escape persecution; Anselmo Sacerdote, Isidoro Imber, Luisa Levi and Guido Treves, who had to resign from the Turin Psychiatric Hospitals; Evelina Ravitz, who left the Psychiatric Hospital of Trieste; Giuseppe Muggia from Venice, who died at Auschwitz; Edoardo Weiss, Emilio Servadio, Ettore Rieti, G. M. Hirsch, Enzo Bonaventura, Stefano Fajrajzen, Ladislao Kovacs, Amedeo Limentani, Silvano Arieti, who chose exile. The German-born Hans Loewald, who graduated in Medicine in

Rome in 1934, worked in Padua, and decided to take refuge in the United States of America, where he became one of the best-known American psychoanalysts, famous for his contributions on the issue of sublimation.

Brief annotations on Genoese psychoanalysts

Biographical note on Emilio Servadio

Emilio Servadio was born in 1904 in Sestri Ponente, which at his time was not an autonomous town, but a quarter of Genoa. He is famous for having been the only Italian analyst who published a scientific article (Psychoanalysis and Telepathy) in 1935 in "Imago", the journal Sigmund Freud directed. In 1938, he moved to India, where he carried out his pioneering work as an analyst in Bombay. After the fall of fascism, Servadio returned to Italy and re-founded the "Rivista di Psicoanalisi" (the Italian Journal of Psychoanalysis) in 1945. In 1947 he officially re-established the Italian Psychoanalytic Society (Società Psicoanalitica Italiana) and became its president. He then separated from this society in 1992 to found the Italian Association of Psychoanalysis (AIPsi). He died in Rome in 1995.

We know very few of two other psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, Ettore Rieti and Stefano Fajrajzen, who lived for a period in Genoa, where Arturo Morselli and Ugo Cerletti, two of most important positivist psychiatrists in Italy, taught. They were the pillars of the so-called "psychoanalytic resistance" against the positivist psychiatry.

Biographical note on Ettore Rieti (Hector Joseph Ritey)

Ettore Rieti was born in a Sephardic Jewish family on August 17, 1900 in Alexandria, Egypt. He was a Freudian psychoanalyst, a criminologist, and a child psychiatrist. He was the founder of the Metropolitan Center for Mental Health in New York.

He came to Italy in 1916 to study as a concert pianist, but then he started to study psychiatry at the Universities of Florence, Rome, Turin and Genoa, and worked as a psychiatrist in various institutions, including the mental hospital of Grugliasco and the Genoese psychiatric hospitals: first that of Quarto and then, from '32 to '39, that of Cogoleto. Since 1907, a small group of psychiatrists was formed in Cogoleto Hospital. This group was led by Dr. Terravagni, which was sympathetic with the Freud's thought and translated in Italian and discussed the Gradiva essay. A young assistant in the Cogoleto Hospital, Ettore Rieti was his best pupil.

He was among the members of the first Italian Psychoanalytic Society, that Marco Levi Bianchini founded in 1925 at the Psychiatric Hospital of Teramo, for which he was appointed as Treasurer Secretary. In 1932 he was one of the founders of the Italian Journal of Psychoanalysis, whose publication was suppressed by fascism two years later. In 1933 he attempted a critical assessment of psychoanalysis in Italy.

Because of the Racial Laws, he moved first to Paris, where he worked with René Allendy, who in 1926 founded, along with Marie Bonaparte and several others, the Société Psychanalytique de Paris, and then to the United States, where he took the name of Hector Joseph Ritey and lived a large part of his professional life, achieving wide fame. He dealt extensively with the relationship between religion and psychiatry. His most notable work is "*The Human Kingdom: A Study of the Nature and Destiny of Man in the Light of Today's Knowledge*" (1962).

Among his works in Italian, I want to remember: "*La volontà come sintesi*" (The will as synthesis) (1929), "*Le disposizioni eidetiche visive dei malati mente*" (The visual eidetic dispositions of the psychiatric patients) (1932) and "*Tecnica dell'esame psicologico sperimentale in psichiatria e medicina legale*" (Technique of experimental psychological examination in psychiatry and forensic medicine) (1937).

He died on October 14, 1968 in New York. In his honor the Jewish National Fund planted a grove in the Kennedy Forest in Israel.

Until when Morselli was the director of the University Psychiatric Department, there was no room for psychoanalysts. At his death, Morselli was replaced by Cerletti, the inventor of electroshock. In 1935 Leonardo De Lisi was called to replace Cerletti. He was a neurologist open to

art and personal friend of the painter Giorgio De Chirico. He created a circle of disciples including one who later became an important psychoanalyst: Stefano Fajrajzen.

Biographical note on Stefano Fajrajzen

He was born in Lodz in 1910, from a Jewish father, a wood merchant who moved to Genoa (his brother Aleksander was the playwright, actor and director Alessandro Fersen, and his niece, Alessandro's daughter, Ariela directs a small kibbutz Bar 'am in Israel on the border with Lebanon. She is the custodian of the memory of his father, whose works are kept in the Fersen archive at the Museum of the actor of Genoa). Fajrajzen studied Medicine in Genoa and followed the lessons of Cerletti and De Lisi and, passionate about psychoanalysis, studied German to do an analysis in Vienna, where he moved in 1934 and did his analysis with Rosa Walke, a pupil of Paul Federn. Rosa Walke was killed by Gestapo in Paris on 1942.

Returning to Genoa, he resumed his studies and specialized in Neuropsychiatry with a thesis on sexual abstinence. He emigrated to Switzerland and then to London, where he made an analysis with Edward Bibring. In 1940, like other Italian citizens residing in England, he was interned in the concentration camp of the Isle of Man, where he met Amedeo (Adam) Limentani. Back in London, he worked as a paediatrician to earn (little) to live. He returned to Genoa, but then left for the United States, from which he left in 1948 to move to Rome, where he published in 1950 a book on sexual abstinence with the forward of Levi Bianchini. He was unable to have academic fortune in Italy, so he returned to the United States and worked at Hillside Hospital on Long Island in New York, where thanks to the teachings of Harold Searles, he was also able to extend the psychoanalytic technique to borderline and psychotic patients, overcoming the limits of the traditional setting, involving the hospital staff in a team work. Fajrajzen returned to Rome in 1961 and became a well-known training and supervising analyst of SPI. He died in 1994.

In one of his works in 1973 there is a quotation from Marcel Carné's movie *Les enfants du Paradis*: «C'est simple d'aimer» is pronounced by Garance, the girl, but Baptiste is looking for an absolute and unconditional love and cannot appreciate the real availability of Garance, losing his magic moment and chasing her uselessly for all his life. As Fajrajzen writes, he cannot accept the "real" symbiosis, overcoming the other's narcissistic desire. "It is so simple to love": in its disarming simplicity this sentence constitutes a rigorous teaching for the treatment of the psychotic patient.

Conclusions

I conclude with the verses taken from a sermon by Martin Niemöller, a German Lutheran pastor, to highlight the risks of apathy and carelessness towards violence and hatred:

*«First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me».*

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