

# Trauma and Memory

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# COVID-19 and the construction of collective trauma through photographs and social media

Carmine Iorio\*, Giuseppe Manfroni\*\*

**Abstract.** The reactions to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic have constituted, and continue to constitute, a real collective trauma. The sense of insecurity, new difficulties in the management of daily life and social relations, and sudden organizational changes in the world of work are just some of the factors that have had a strong impact on the lives of people around the world and have contributed to the construction of collective trauma. The events were extensively reported, in different ways and through different media. The images, especially photographs, represented an inexhaustible source of narration. Projected on television, printed in newspapers and magazines, and published through digital social media, they became part of our daily life, especially during the pandemic, and despite all the intrinsic limitations linked to photographic language they have become the main means of storytelling. This article reports some of the best-known photographs that have circulated on social media and in print and which have in some way fixed crucial points in the narrative of the pandemic, while at the same time generating collective trauma.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Pandemic, collective trauma, social media, stratification and communication.

**Riassunto.** Le reazioni alla pandemia da SARS-CoV-2 hanno costituito, e continuano a costituire, un vero e proprio trauma collettivo. Il senso di insicurezza, le nuove difficoltà nella gestione della vita quotidiana e delle relazioni sociali, i repentini cambiamenti organizzativi nel mondo del lavoro rappresentano solo alcuni dei fattori che hanno avuto un forte impatto nella vita delle persone in tutto il mondo e hanno contribuito alla costruzione del trauma collettivo. Gli eventi sono stati ampiamente raccontati, in diversi modi e attraverso diversi mezzi. Le immagini, in particolare le fotografie, hanno rappresentato una fonte inesauribile di narrazione. Proiettate in televisione, stampate su giornali e riviste, pubblicate attraverso i social media digitali sono entrate a far parte del nostro quotidiano soprattutto durante la pandemia e nonostante tutti i limiti intrinseci legati al linguaggio fotografico sono diventate il principale mezzo di narrazione. In questo articolo vengono riportate alcune delle fotografie più note che sono circolate sui social media e sulla carta stampata e che hanno in qualche modo fissato dei punti cruciali nella narrazione della pandemia ma al contempo generando il trauma collettivo.

**Parole chiave:** COVID-19, pandemia, trauma collettivo, social media, stratificazione e comunicazione.

## Collective trauma and the COVID-19 pandemic

The term collective trauma refers to the psychological reactions to a traumatic event that affect an entire society or group of people; it does not simply reflect a historical fact or the memory of a terrible event that has occurred (Alexander, 2012). It suggests that the tragedy is represented in the collective memory of the group and, like all forms of memory, includes not only a reproduction of the events, but also an ongoing reconstruction of the trauma in an attempt to make sense of it.

There are several types of collective trauma. Some are immediate and of relatively limited duration. One example is a natural disaster such as a hurricane. Others have an impact that manifests itself over the medium to long term, such as a pandemic, an economic recession or a military conflict (Alexander, 2012). The current SARS-CoV-2 pandemic falls within the parameters of a collective

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trauma of individuals worldwide. The immediate effects are of utmost concern, but it is also important to consider the long-term effects.

There are various features of the current environment that facilitate a perfect storm of stress factors. These traumas are chronic events with an ambiguous end point. We do not know how poorly things will go or when healing can really begin. Individuals face intense direct exposure to cascading events (e.g., personal illness or loss, social isolation, economic loss), with variable and sometimes conflicting policies dictating public responses. Simultaneously, these events are broadcast in real time on mainstream and social media, with people following news coverage repetitively and across multiple mediums.

The overlap of sensationalist media coverage in the context of repeated direct exposure has allegedly created a further crisis for public mental health (Cohen *et al.*, 2021).

Decades of research on collective trauma indicate that each of these crises can independently have mental health consequences for exposed individuals, ranging from short-term anxiety to long-term depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Although the 2003 SARS outbreak lasted less than a year, health workers caring for SARS patients and SARS survivors experienced significant mental health challenges. In Sierra Leone, clinically relevant rates of symptoms related to psychological disorders (anxiety, depression, PTSD) were observed among the general population exposed for one year to the 2014 Ebola infectious disease outbreak (Jalloh, 2018).

The trauma process can be defined as the distance that separates an event from its representation; Thompson (1998) refers to the 'process of representation' or 'spiral of signification' which comprises four dimensions that we can apply to the COVID-19 pandemic situation:

- 1) nature of the pain: What really happened with COVID-19?
- 2) nature of the victims: Which group was affected by the virus?
- 3) relationship between trauma victims and audience: Who listens to the victims' stories and how do people in front of the TV identify with patients?
- 4) attribution of responsibility: Who caused the virus, how did this turn into trauma, how do we overcome the emergency?

The Coronavirus Pandemic 2019 (COVID-19) has led to unprecedented risks for mental health globally. While psychological support is provided to patients and healthcare professionals, the general public's mental health also requires significant attention. This systematic review aims to synthesize the existing literature reporting the effects of COVID-19 on psychological outcomes in the overall population and on associated risk factors.

A systematic search was conducted on PubMed, Embase, Medline, Web of Science and Scopus from the beginning to 17 May 2020 following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. A manual search on Google Scholar was performed to identify additional relevant studies. Articles were selected according to predetermined eligibility criteria (Xiong *et al.*, 2020).

The rapidly changing situation has drastically altered people's lives, as well as multiple aspects of the global public and private economy. Downturns in tourism, aviation, agriculture, and the financial sector due to the COVID-19 outbreak have been reported, as massive reductions in supply and demand aspects of the economy have been imposed by governments internationally (Nicola *et al.*, 2020). It is predicted that the uncertainties and fears associated with the virus outbreak, coupled with mass lockdowns and economic recession, will lead to an increase in suicides and mental disorders associated with suicide. For example, McIntyre & Lee (2020) reported an expected increase from 418 to 2114 in Canadian suicide cases associated with unemployment. The previous result (i.e., the rising suicide trajectory) has also been reported in the United States, Pakistan, India, France, Germany and Italy (Mazza *et al.*, 2020). Separate lines of research have also reported an increase in psychological distress in the general population, in people with pre-existing mental disorders, as well as in healthcare workers (Hao *et al.*, 2020). Overall, there is an urgent call for more attention to be paid to public mental health and policies to assist people at this difficult time.

The aim of this systematic review was to summarise the existing literature reporting on the prevalence of symptoms of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other forms of psychological distress in the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic. A further aim was to identify factors associated with psychological distress.

Relatively high rates of anxiety symptoms (from 6.33% to 50.9%), depression (from 14.6% to 48.3%), PTSD (from 7% to 53.8%), psychological distress (from 34.43% to 38%) and stress (from 8.1% to 81.9%) have been reported in the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic in China, Spain, Italy, Iran, the USA, Turkey, Nepal and Denmark. Risk factors associated with stress measures include female gender, younger age group ( $\leq 40$  years), the presence of chronic/psychiatric illnesses, unemployment, student status and frequent exposure to social media/news about COVID-19<sup>1</sup> (Xiong *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, exposure to social media or frequent exposure to news/information concerning COVID-19 was positively associated with anxiety symptoms. Regarding marital status, one study reported that married participants had higher levels of anxiety than unmarried participants (Gao *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, Lei *et al.* (2020) found that divorced/widowed participants developed more anxiety symptoms than single or married individuals. A prolonged quarantine period was also correlated with higher risks of anxiety symptoms. Intuitively, contact history with COVID-positive patients or objects may lead to more anxiety symptoms, as noted in one study (Moghanibashi-Mansourieh, 2020).

In addition to associated risk factors, studies have also identified factors that protect individuals from psychological illness symptoms during the pandemic. Timely dissemination by authorities of updated and accurate health information regarding COVID-19 has been found to be associated with lower levels of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms in the general public. Furthermore, the active adoption of precautionary measures that reduce the risk of infection, such as frequent hand washing, wearing masks and less contact with people, also predicted lower levels of psychological distress during the pandemic (Wang *et al.*, 2020). Certain personality traits have been shown to correlate with positive psychological outcomes. Individuals with positive coping styles, secure and avoidant attachment styles usually presented fewer symptoms of anxiety and stress (Moccia *et al.*, 2020). In another study, it has been found that participants with more social support and time to rest during the pandemic showed lower stress levels (Zhang & Ma, 2020).

Although trust is indispensable in a crisis, public suspicion towards scientific experts and government increases for several reasons, including access to multiple sources of conflicting information, a reduction in the use of scientific reasoning in decision-making processes and internal political struggles. Trust and credibility, demonstrated through empathy and caring, competence and experience, honesty and openness, dedication, and commitment, are essential elements of persuasive communication.

During the epidemic, there was a surge in the consumption of communication services. Since the first weeks of the emergency, high growth rates have been recorded in information consumption, both

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<sup>1</sup> The search terms used by Xiong *et al.* were: (COVID-19 OR SARS-CoV-2 OR Coronavirus 2 severe acute respiratory syndrome OR 2019nCoV OR HCoV-19) and (Mental health OR Psychological health OR Depression OR Anxiety OR PTSD OR PTSS OR POST traumatic stress disorder OR stress symptoms post-traumatic) AND (general population OR community). Data Extraction: A data extraction form was used to include the relevant data: Measurement Tools: A variety of scales ( $n = 19$ ) were used in the studies reviewed to assess different adverse psychological outcomes. The *Beck Depression Inventory-II* (BDI-II), *Patient Health Questionnaire-9/2* (PHQ-9/2), *Self-rating Depression Scales* (SDS), The *World Health Organization-Five Well-Being Index* (WHO-5) and *Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale* (CES-D) were used to measure depressive symptoms. The *Beck Anxiety Inventory* (BAI), the *Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7/2-item* (GAD-7/2), and the *Self-rating Anxiety Scale* (SAS) were used to assess anxiety symptoms. The *Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21 item* (DASS-21) was used to assess symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. The *Anxiety and Depression Scale* (HADS) was used to assess anxiety and depressive symptoms. Psychological distress was measured by the *Peritraumatic Distress Inventory* (CPDI) and the *Kessler Psychological Distress Scale* (K6/10). PTSD symptoms were assessed by the *Impact of Event Scale-Revised* (IES(-R)), *PTSD Checklist* (PCL-(C)-2/5). The *Chinese Perceived Stress Scale* (CPSS-10) was used in one study to assess symptoms of stress.

in traditional media and online. Along with a generalized increase in the production of news about the new coronavirus and a non-negligible incidence of disinformation, the health emergency was accompanied by another emergency of global scope due to an excess of information that was not always accurate and correct. This has led national and international institutions, including the WHO, to take specific initiatives to tackle the infodemic situation responsible for disorientating the public.

In its report, AGCOM (2020) tends to point out how disinformation has inevitably created a divide, emphasising the difficulty of discerning between real and fake news, and how this situation has been further complicated by the absence of a consolidated scientific knowledge base on the subject.

It is in this context that citizens risk relying more and more on alternative and unqualified sources. In the early months of 2020, and especially in conjunction with the outbreak of the epidemic in Italy, the sites of disinformation sources (identified as such by external parties specialised in debunking activities) reached increasing portions of the public. In March, at the height of the medical emergency, over 30% of Italian internet users consulted disinformation sites, a rate almost 11 percentage points higher than in March 2019, accessing them directly or through redirection from social networks and search engines (AGCOM, 2020).

Misinformation about COVID-19 has posed and continues to pose a serious threat to global public health. If people are misled by unfounded claims about the nature and treatment of the disease, they are less likely to follow official health guidelines, and this can contribute to the spread of the pandemic and pose a danger to themselves and others. Health protection strategies such as hygiene, sanitation, social distancing, the use of protective equipment, travel restrictions and other measures will be less effective if distrust in public institutions becomes sufficiently widespread to substantially influence citizens' behaviour. Misinformation about COVID-19 treatments may push people to try treatments that could harm them, while fears and mistrust about vaccines may undermine the effectiveness of a vaccination campaign.

News media professionals play a large role in the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation through their choices of who, what and how to disseminate. Choosing to uncritically disseminate statements and remarks made by influential people, without necessarily verifying the accuracy of these statements, may facilitate the spread of misinformation, and when this is repeated in the mainstream media, it is likely to gain credibility. In previous pandemics, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, misinformation and its effect on policy is estimated to have caused an additional 300,000 deaths in South Africa alone.

In Italy, various research institutes have focused on the role of media in the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the ability to manage it. The mass media are not only capable of reflecting the current reality, but also of creating it: journalism is decisive for the exercise of power in modern societies and the way journalists convey news profoundly shapes the public debate and influences the public perception of risks. As social actors, the media participate in the management of emergencies because of their ability to support, or conversely to criticize, social control policies and other decisions taken. These observations are valid in an era characterised by an increasing central role of media communication and are increasingly true during a confinement (Mazzoni *et al.*, 2020).

### **The role of photography during the COVID-19 health emergency**

According to Susan Sontag, to take a photograph means to appropriate the thing one is photographing. Through this action, one tries to establish a particular relationship with the world that gives a feeling of knowledge, and thus of power (Sontag, 1978). As a means of filtering the world, photographed images do not seem, unlike narratives, to be accounts or interpretations, but pieces of it, miniatures that anyone can produce or acquire. Photographs alter the proportions of the world, they are reduced, enlarged, cut, retouched, altered. They are used to provide evidence and proof of what happened or what one wants to make believe happened.

Photography has become one of the main mechanisms for expressing participation, for representing emotions; with its massive diffusion, however, it has established a chronic voyeuristic

relationship with the world that levels the significance of all events and gives them a kind of immortality and therefore importance that they would not otherwise have.

The type of reaction, including moral outrage, that a person may have when confronted with photographs of the oppressed, suffering and exploited depends on the existence of a relevant political consciousness and the degree of familiarity with these images. The more present the first factor and deficient the second, the more pronounced the emotion aroused will be. Photographs shock to the extent that they show something new. The more images of horror proliferate, the more the stakes will continue to rise.

It is one thing to suffer, quite another to live with the photographed images of suffering, which do not necessarily strengthen consciousness. Images sometimes paralyse, anaesthetise. When one has been repeatedly exposed to images, they paradoxically also become less real. It is as if the trauma of the photographed atrocities vanishes by seeing them repeatedly. The enormous photographic catalogue of misery and injustice in the world has made the horrific more normal by making it familiar.

The information that photographs can give took on importance at a time in history when it was believed that everyone was entitled to receive the news. Photographs were then seen as a way of providing information to people who were not so willing to read. The photographic image gave a new meaning to the concept of information. Everything can be separated from everything else, just by framing the subject differently. Through photographs, the world becomes a series of isolated particles, and history, past and present, an assortment of different anecdotes. The limitation of photographic knowledge of the world is that only that which narrates an operation can make us understand it. A photograph cannot reveal how something works. Knowledge attained through photographs risks being a form of sentimentality rather than true understanding (Sontag, 1978).

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought science to the forefront of the international public sphere. Never have so many newspaper articles been written, so many press conferences, so many minutes of news broadcasts in such a short time about a microscopic virus and the science dedicated to investigating it.

The pandemic has generated its own peculiar images. Doctors hidden behind large protective devices, rows of intubated patients in hospital intensive care units, nervous officials presenting the day's count of the infected and deceased, empty streets in usually busy cities and masked citizens queuing for the supermarket, as well as graphs and maps charting the unstoppable progression of the disease, scientists bent over lab benches rushing to produce reliable tests or effective vaccines, and the virus itself, a colourful stain covered with ominous nail-like spikes.

So, how is the COVID-19 pandemic visually represented in the media, government, and academia? What topics are conveyed by the images? What aspects of the pandemic do these images give visibility to? Are there differences in representation between these three sources of communication? Which points of view are shown and which are omitted? Are there differences between the visual images of COVID-19 and those of previous pandemics (influenza, AIDS)?

One of the studies examined focuses on Portugal and Spain (Delicado & Rowland, 2021), two countries with quite similar backgrounds (scientific, social, economic, and political) but quite different experiences with the pandemic: the first wave was much milder in Portugal than in Spain, but this was not the case with the second wave, although the mortality rate was still higher in Spain. At the time of the study, May 2021, Spain had a cumulative incidence (after 292 days) of 3,687.01 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, while Portugal had a cumulative incidence (after 286 days) of 3,354.22 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Mortality figures are more distinct: 54.09 per 1,000 inhabitants in Portugal and almost twice as many (101.46) in Spain (Dong *et al.*, 2020).

The study seeks to identify the type and content of images used to illustrate online information about the pandemic, particularly from the websites of political institutions, research organisations and the media. By examining a sample of 600 images, it aims to identify the messages conveyed and the effects these images are intended to provoke, and to highlight differences in the representations between the three sources of communication. Differences and similarities with images of previous pandemics (influenza, AIDS) are examined.

The sample containing 600 images was classified by type of website and by the content the images show. The content was aggregated into three main types: science, medicine, and social aspects.

The analysis of the images of the three types of websites from Portugal and Spain allowed us to explore the multiple forms of representation of a pandemic.

It has been observed that, as in previous pandemics, the visual representation of the virus, with its distinctive features, available at an earlier stage than in the past, is a useful shortcut for identifying all pandemic-related website content. Stylised drawings or photographs under an electron microscope signal that what people are about to read is about COVID-19 as a disease, a research topic, an object of political intervention or a cause of social impact.

The scientific dimension of the pandemic is still very much represented by people in white coats and protective goggles, lab benches or microscopes and DNA helices. Despite the hard work of epidemiologists, mathematicians, biostatisticians, engineers, economists, and sociologists, they still do not have their own symbols and hallmarks. The data they produce appear in the form of graphs, maps, and other illustrations of scientific results.

The medical side of COVID-19 is present in the images of intensive care units, doctors in protective suits and unconscious patients connected to respirators. A further cause of panic is the visual impact created by the statistics represented by ever-increasing curves and ever-expanding spots on the maps.

Some graphical representations have the explicit aim of inducing behavioural change through prescriptive illustrations of protective measures in different contexts or, otherwise, of what to do in the event of contagion.

The social aspects of the pandemic are mostly depicted by evocative images of the impacts of lockdown measures (strangely empty streets, shops with their shutters down and commuters wearing surgical masks) and preventive measures particularly focused on hygiene (washing hands and disinfecting shopping trolleys) and healthy eating. What digital technologies have become and how often they feature in illustrations of the pandemic is unprecedented.

Therefore, what is new in the visual representation of the COVID-19 pandemic? Not everything, as there are many legacies of previous pandemics (AIDS, the 1918 Flu Pandemic, even Ebola) and stereotypical ways of showing science. What is unprecedented, however, is the speed with which science has been able to produce photographs of a new virus, how widespread the graphic representations of pandemic data have become, and the exceptional images of once animated and now empty cities. Just as invisible as the virus are the ways in which it is transmitted. This infographic attempts to make this invisibility visible, providing useful tips for concerned citizens.

Another study investigated how exposure to images related to SARS-CoV-2 can influence emotions and shape risk perception related to COVID-19 (Li *et al.*, 2022). Seventy images depicting SARS-CoV-2 were collected from the websites of CDC, NIAID and third-party organisations in early 2020. First, a group of 492 adults recruited by Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) were shown the images and asked to rate their fear and aversion levels for each image. The results of this pre-test identified images that evoked high, medium, and low levels of fear and aversion, which were then used as therapeutic stimuli for an online experiment with a national sample of 500 US adults.

Visual representations of SARS-CoV-2 not only portray how the virus may 'look', but also convey metaphorical meanings that may subsequently evoke negative emotions, such as disgust and fear. Disgust is a unique emotion that initially evolved as an effective mechanism for rejecting harmful substances ingested orally (Rozin & Fallon, 1987). Similarly, fear, which is 'an intermediate variable between sets of context-dependent stimuli and sets of behavioural responses', helps humans avoid or cope with threat (Ralph, 2013). Both emotions have evolutionary significance in protecting humans from exposure to infectious diseases (Curtis, 2004).

The 500 participants in the online survey were demographically varied and representative of the national population. The results of factorial analyses of variance showed that participants did not report significantly different levels of fear after viewing the images. However, exposure to the image was associated with a significant difference in disgust. In addition, older, non-white individuals, as well as those with lower household income, reported higher levels of fear when viewing the images;



however, female, non-white individuals, as well as those with lower educational attainment and household income reported higher levels of disgust when viewing the images. Image exposure was not associated with any significant change in participants' perception of COVID-19 risk. However, females, older and non-white individuals were likely to report a higher level of risk perception after viewing the images.

Pre-existing feelings towards COVID-19 were strongly related to the fear resulting from exposure to the image. Specifically, those who felt more negatively about COVID-19 perceived more fear after seeing the images than those who felt less negatively. An analysis of covariance suggested that the interactive effects between feelings towards COVID-19 and image exposure on fear were significant. Specifically, the relationship between pre-existing feeling and individuals' fear was more significant among those who viewed Group 1 images (i.e., images that evoked the highest level of disgust in the pre-test) than among those who viewed Group 3 images (i.e., images that evoked the lowest level of disgust in the pre-test). In other words, people's fear was polarised according to their pre-existing feelings towards COVID-19 after viewing the images that evoked the highest level of disgust.

Image representations of science, ranging from symbols, photographs, illustrations, or data graphs, are increasingly used as effective tools for public communication. When it comes to health and medicine, images can help non-experts recognise the physical forms of living organisms or delineate invisible objects such as bacteria or viruses. If properly designed, scientific images can attract attention, stimulate curiosity, facilitate understanding and increase confidence in the message conveyed (Gigante, 2018). As Rosello (1998) argued in an analysis of HIV images, scientific images could indicate that "some people know how to work very hard to convey knowledge, truth" and thus arouse feelings of mastery or even "aesthetic appreciation and intellectual pleasure".

An emblematic photo was taken on 2 December 1991 that immortalised the immunologist Fernando Aikuti who, after reading the umpteenth erroneous and misleading piece of information in the *Il Mattino di Napoli* newspaper, that HIV could be contracted simply by kissing, decided to kiss his HIV-positive patient Rosaria Iardino during a congress at the Cagliari trade fair (you can see the photo in many web sites, for example this one: "The kiss that changed the medicine", <https://steemit.com/science/@riccc96/il-bacio-che-cambio-la-medicina-the-kiss-that-changed-the-medicine>). The image went around the world and *La Stampa* called it "the greatest awareness campaign against the stigma towards HIV-positive people". But did it really work?

Another photo, also related to HIV, published by the *New York Post* on 6 October 1987, shows Gaetan Dugas in the foreground with the headline 'The man who gave us AIDS' (Murphy, 2016). Gaetan had no problem telling the CDC (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*) sociologist the names of some of his sexual partners over the past three years. This was to be instrumental in defining the epidemiology of the transmission of the infection, but on the other hand it led to a growing hatred of homosexuals, so much so that the disease was renamed GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency). The *Lancet* journal spoke of a 'gay compromise syndrome', while national newspapers in several countries used expressions such as 'gay cancer' (Division of Infection Disease, North Carolina).

About 40 years have passed since the spread of AIDS and there have been many campaigns to raise awareness and provide information about the virus and the disease that can result from it, but too much fake news still continues to circulate and the stigma towards HIV-positive people remains high.

During the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, images more than anything else represented the main tool for attempting to tell the story of what was going on, and thanks to their rapid and ubiquitous dissemination, they contributed in one way to a sense of the scale of the problem and in another to increased unease. The use of images (Conti, 2016) allows us to grasp and analyze the world and to access the mass of information that our society produces, in every moment, in visual form (Conti, 2016).

To mark the crossing of the 3 million COVID-19 death threshold worldwide, Associated Press asked 15 photographers in 13 different countries to choose the image they had taken that best represented the pandemic (Winfield, 2021; see all the photos in this article by Nicole Winfield: <http://bit.ly/3OaUZ5C>)

Also in Italy, the photos that were taken and became famous abroad thanks to social networks and traditional media, have marked the months of the pandemic, and marked some milestones. From the first cases of positivity to the virus in Codogno and Vo' Euganeo on 21 February 2020 to the hope of vaccines, the photos have marked time and fixed some moments of other people's lives in the collective memory (you can see all the photos in an article in *Sky TG-24* [2020], which has selected the symbolic photos of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic).

### **The layering of trauma through social media**

An arena of the new millennium, which is potentially capable of attributing and recognising the status of trauma to an event, is represented by digital social media. They possess specific linguistic and semantic codes through which communication occurs very quickly and spreads everywhere.

Trauma, in this case, is the product of a complex and articulated work of social production of meaning. It is not the events that are traumatic but their representations. These are the product of an articulated process of social construction that winds around what Alexander (2012) calls the spiral of signification. In order to convince the wider audience that it has itself been traumatised by an experience or event; the carrier group must be successful in the work of meaning-making. The key to success in the spiral of signification lies in the effectiveness with which the 'performance' is represented within what Alexander calls institutional arenas, specific social situations with their own codes, specific languages. It is necessary for each of these arenas to treat the event according to its own linguistic and semantic codes in order for it to be attributed and recognised the status of trauma. Collective identities, effectively invested by the spiral of signification, will now appear reoriented and redefined according to the new grand narrative of the group's social history (Alexander, 2012).

They identify specific social situations, create a group identity, a social identity, in which, similarly to face-to-face contexts, individuals act as members of social groups. They create and share content, engage in discussions, and participate in a range of activities that by definition are social. Social identity in the online context describes the self-concept that results from identification with social groups or categories that individuals experience online.

Such identities are dynamic and have the ability to influence thinking, emotions, and behaviour, both online and offline (Pacilli *et al.*, 2021).

Social media, on an individual basis, are used to keep in touch with friends and family. This, however, can be expanded to include the use of social media as a networking tool for career options, finding people around the world with similar interests and simply as a means to vent one's frustrations/emotions. Although these applications are still used today for similar purposes, they were certainly used more frequently due to the forced isolation caused by the pandemic. People who disliked using social media and avoided it at all costs as a method of communication reluctantly gave in to trying these platforms to stay in touch with their loved ones. Whether through direct messaging features available on various apps or by posting pictures of their daily lives, people try to portray their lives as best they can on these virtual platforms. The way social media were used before and during the pandemic has a strong relationship with the idea of the social self (Pérez – Fuentes, *et. al.*, 2020).

Most notably with the pandemic, social media brought to light another layer of health care. Various healthcare professionals created public accounts on social media platforms, such as *YouTube*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, and *TikTok*, to provide information/updates on what was happening with the pandemic, social distancing guidelines and vaccine updates. In a peer-reviewed article published before COVID-19, Zhao & Zhou (2020) explored the various benefits and risks of being an active social media user. Some of these benefits include increased interactions with others, the availability of more accessible information, social support, and the potential to influence many health-related policies.

Social media platforms are among the most widely used sources of information in the world. The easy and cheap access to the Internet and the large number of registered users on these platforms make them one of the easiest and most effective ways to disseminate information. During major

events, the general result is usually an increased search for information, whether it is about a sporting event, a disease or a natural disaster.

A good example of this is the peak of information searches on Internet and social media platforms in China that precedes the peak of incidence in COVID-19 cases by 10-14 days, with which Internet and social media searches have a proven correlation with disease incidence (Abd-Alrazaq *et al.*, 2020; Li *et al.*, 2020)

Social media platforms have also become useful for the lay public to maintain communication with friends and family to reduce the isolation and boredom that have been associated with anxiety and long-term distress, thus becoming an important recommendation for isolation at home to help reduce psychological distress impact (Brooks *et al.*, 2020).

Some of the most striking features of social media platforms in this pandemic has been the rapid spread of protocols regionally, nationally, and internationally. Sharing protocols on treatment, personal protective equipment or even proposals for equitable allocation in settings with scarce medical resources have now become the new normal (Emanuel *et al.*, 2020).

This allows centres with less capacity to develop protocols at a sufficiently fast rate to be able to implement or adapt the protocols of others to their particular situation or resources in a minimum of time, which was unthinkable 20 years ago when most social media platforms had not yet come into existence.

Social media has the great advantage of rapid dissemination of educational content in the COVID-19 era, e.g. Chan *et al.* (2020) developed an infographic on airway management in patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. It was shared via Twitter and WeChat, requests for its translation into more than ten languages were received within days, and the distribution allowed the infographic to be adapted to the particularities of each healthcare setting.

Faster dissemination of information on preventive measures has much potential. A recent study by Basch *et al.* (2020) evaluated the 100 most viewed videos on YouTube with the word 'coronavirus', which together had over 165 million views as of 5 March 2020, 85% of which belonged to news channels; It was found that less than 1/3 of the videos mentioned recommended prevention measures, less than half mentioned frequent symptoms, yet almost 90% commented on deaths, anxiety, and quarantine status. This study leaves us with an important reflection on the missed opportunities for dissemination of quality information on infection prevention and frequent symptoms of COVID-19 on platforms such as YouTube, which are increasingly consulted as a source of information.

As far as publications are concerned, studies have shown that the dissemination of scientific literature on social media platforms (*Facebook, Twitter, etc.*) increases the number of downloads, queries and citations of these articles (Eysenbach, 2011) which, with COVID-19 are features that undoubtedly enabled a rapid dissemination of knowledge worldwide, as well as significantly reduced editorial time from months of processing to days or weeks of receipt.

Another advantage of social media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic was the possibility of organising collaborative research projects, surveys, and multi-centre studies. Finally, another advantage of social media platforms is the support of continuing medical education through live and recorded online webinars via platforms such as YouTube, Skype or Zoom.

Among the disadvantages, there is the possibility that the information transmitted is out of date, not peer-reviewed, invalid, incorrect, not applicable to our environment, or even false.

Another major obstacle for social media and the dissemination of information are 'bubble filters', a concept coined by Eli Pariser (2011), which tells of a 'personalised ecosystem' towards the user, in which algorithms, through data collected from the same user, predict their preferences and produce results considered suitable for that user. These bubbles produce a cycle of similar content that prevents the user from seeing other sources to counteract the information. This concept applies to any scenario or disease that is consulted in Internet search engines or on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

Finally, probably the worst face of social media is the possibility of spreading incorrect, alarmist and exaggerated information that can cause fear, stress, depression, and anxiety in people with or without underlying psychiatric illnesses.

A study by Wang *et al.* (2020) in China, conducting an online survey with 1,210 responses, found that 53.8 per cent of respondents considered the psychological impact of the epidemic to be moderate or severe; a research group also created and validated a scale called the 'Fear of COVID-19 Scale' (Ahorsu *et al.*, 2020) to assess the level of stress and anxiety in the population and to establish appropriate measures to prevent associated consequences, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which was the most common psychiatric consequence after the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in Asia in 2003, followed by depressive disorders (Mak *et al.*, 2009). Other more serious illnesses or events such as suicides have already been reported in parts of the world such as India, Great Britain, Germany and Italy (Thakur – Jain, 2020).

As of 30 April 2020, there were more than 8,000 articles on PubMed containing the word “COVID-19”, which tells us about the tsunami of information less than four months after its appearance in China; with all the attention poured into the media, the avalanche of data becomes unsustainable, and has been called 'Infodemia' (Zarocostas, 2020; Hua & Shaw, 2020).

Moreover, as fast as information travels, so does misinformation, which is why some authors have suggested creating working groups to combat myths and misinformation in social media platforms (Depoux *et al.*, 2020). In this way, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has developed an exclusive section on its website designed to dispel myths related to the coronavirus (United Nations, 2020).

Linked to this same problem, the 'lay' public has access to the results of preliminary and in-vitro studies through the news at practically the same time as this information is available to the medical community, which combined with the generalised fear of the virus and overwhelmed healthcare systems, generates pressure on patients to request such experimental treatments for themselves or their families, and doctors may feel obliged to try them, even when there is no high-quality evidence to support their use for these purposes.

The latest observations suggest that the enormous amount of information about COVID-19 generated on social media has overwhelmed users and had a strong impact on their psychological well-being (Islam *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, COVID-19 is not only a global pandemic, but also an 'infodemic' (Laato *et al.*, 2020). Generation Z (people born in the period from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s) grew up as a generation of digital natives and the main force behind the use of social media, but its members generally experience an above-average level of information overload. However, information overload related to COVID-19 on social media and its impact on Generation Z remains little explored.

Although most observations show that the lockdown led to increased use of social media among Generation Z, research published in Science Direct by Liu *et al.* (2021) in May found that, after the initial phase of the lockdown, young people called for a 'detoxification' from social media. Generation Z's intention to disengage from social media developed during this period and was reflected in a decline in social media use at a later stage of the lockdown.

Research findings indicate that perceived COVID-19 information overload on social media increased social media fatigue and fear of COVID-19. Generation Z users were exposed to a large amount of information about COVID-19 on social media during the pandemic lockdown, firstly due to the urgency and lack of precedent of COVID-19 and secondly due to the crucial role of social media in information consumption during the pandemic. As the amount of information, misinformation (false information created without the intention to harm others), disinformation (false information deliberately created to harm a person, group, organisation, or country) about COVID-19 increased on social media, Gen Z was, as the main group of social media users, likely overloaded with information about the pandemic (Islam *et al.*, 2020). From the users' perspective, this information overload triggered psychological distress, thus leading to user fatigue in relation to social media. This evidence is consistent with previous studies and underlines the detrimental effects of pandemic information overload on the psychological well-being of individual social media users during a global health crisis (Zhang *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore, COVID-19 information overload on social media not only affected the psychological state of social media users associated with the platforms they accessed (i.e., social media), but also their feelings and perceptions regarding the event they were informed about (i.e., COVID-19). Information overload on social media exacerbated users' concerns about the uncertainty and continuation of COVID-19 (Mertens *et al.*, 2020). Generation Z has limited life experience and a relatively low ability to digest information effectively. According to the study, the enormous amount of complex information related to COVID-19 exceeded the information processing capacity of Generation Z members and further hindered their ability to develop an unbiased assessment of COVID-19, which led to a higher level of fear of the coronavirus pandemic.

## Conclusions

The COVID-19 global pandemic is the first tragic event, in this age of technology and digital social connection, to be shared by the entire world. We have all experienced the full impact of this collective experience in real time. The countless individual tragedies caused by the virus have come together in a cumulative and reciprocal loss, and altogether have represented a collective decline in the state of well-being, to which few have remained immune.

The common effects of trauma are represented by loss of action, feeling physical and mental overwhelmed, altered perceptions of safety and, of course, a significant psychological response.

In this framework of collective trauma construction, the narration of the traumatic event and the multiple subsequent events played, and continues to play, a significant role. Communication was essential, especially considering the massive use of photographs, subsequently posted on social networks. This allowed the collective trauma to be shaped by the inherent characteristics of photographic language and social media. The COVID-19 pandemic has many of the characteristics of collective trauma. The global dimensions of a public health crisis, its rapid expansion and the instantaneous circulation of images describing profound human tragedies have started the process of constructing collective trauma. As Demertzis & Eyerman (2020) state, there are elements of the collective trauma present simultaneously: (a) emotionality; (b) attribution of blame; (c) identity formation processes; (d) defense mechanisms). Furthermore, the pandemic is: global, risky and uncertain, highly mediatized and traumatic. Demertzis & Eyerman (2020), in full health emergency in 2020, stated that it was not possible to declare the cultural trauma at that time due to the non-retrospective view. To date it could be said that the collective trauma exists.

The collective trauma was further amplified by the disinformation that was triggered on digital platforms. This framework, as a key reading of the formation of collective trauma, proved to be as much a threat to global public health as the virus itself.

The possible dissemination of false data, myths and pessimistic information combined with quarantine states can lead to anxiety, depression, and other psychological consequences. Therefore, it is advisable not to contribute to infodemics and to use social media ethically and responsibly when disseminating information. Nevertheless, there is an upside, if properly used social media present can be a valuable tool to help during a pandemic. Important new information can be disseminated quickly, such as the sharing of diagnostic, treatment and follow-up protocols, making it possible to compare different approaches from other parts of the world to fit our own context and available resources.

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## Messianic time. Redemption and memory in Walter Benjamin

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**Abstract.** In Walter Benjamin the epistemological structure of the “concept of history”, which presents itself in a monadic dialectical image, is characterized by a non-linear, non-progressive but intensive and ideal temporal dimension, in which the cognitive concept and the idea (of the good, of justice, of liberty) characterized by totality and eternity coincide. Here emerges the link between the theological realm—transcendental and ideal but secretly active in the immanence of redemption—and the immanent setting of the political. In fact, in a fleeting moment, the redeemed past renders the fulfilment of messianic time, the Reign of God, and provides the occasion and direction for praxis, for a revolutionary action that is messianic and theologically motivated, striving toward the construction of a classless society. Political action is rendered possible specifically by its link to the past, by the cognitive capacity of the historical materialist to recuperate forgotten moments and make them explode, and to fuel the destructive, liberatory power of the oppressed class (the subject, like the historian, of historical knowledge)

**Keywords:** Messianic, Time, Redemption, Memory, History, Benjamin, H. Cohen, Kant.

**Riassunto.** La struttura gnoseologica del “concetto di storia”, che si presenta in una immagine dialettica monadica, è caratterizzata da una dimensione temporale non lineare e progressiva ma intensiva, ideale, in cui coincidono il concetto conoscitivo e l’idea (del bene, della giustizia), caratterizzata da totalità e eternità. Emerge qui il legame tra l’ambito teologico, trascendente e ideale ma segretamente attivo nell’immanenza della redenzione e del riscatto, e l’ambito immanente del politico. Infatti il passato riscattato e redento rende presente in un momento fugace il tempo messianico, compiuto, del Regno di Dio e dà l’occasione e la direzione per la prassi, per l’azione rivoluzionaria, messianica e motivata teologicamente, tesa verso la costruzione della società senza classi. L’azione politica è resa possibile proprio dal legame con il passato, dalla capacità conoscitiva dello storico materialista di recuperare e far esplodere momenti dimenticati e di alimentare la forza distruttiva e liberatoria della classe oppressa (il soggetto, come lo storico, della conoscenza storica) attraverso l’immagine degli avi asserviti, senza proiettare la liberazione, come fa la socialdemocrazia, in un futuro infinito.

**Parole chiave:** Tempo messianico, redenzione, memoria, storia, Benjamin, H. Cohen, Kant.

In Walter Benjamin the ethical, political and «historical task» pertaining to the collective agent and subject of knowledge is founded on a conception of time that is not empty and mechanical, but that is full, intensive, and redemptive. This latter is the time of the Bible and prophecy, where historical contingency and the eternity of the idea coincide.

Benjamin’s philosophy of history develops continuously across the entire arc of his production, from *The Life of Students* in 1914/15 (Benjamin [1914/15] 1991, II, 1: 75-87/ Benjamin [1914/15] 2004: 18-36) to the late theses in *On the Concept of History* (Benjamin [1940]1991, II, 2: / Benjamin [1940] 2004: 389-400), in 1940. Throughout, the theological conception of the time of history as *Jetztzeit* (now-time) (cf. Desideri 1995: 153-165) stands opposed to homogeneous and empty mechanical time, the mathematically measurable time of the natural sciences:

«Historical time is infinite in every direction and unfulfilled at every moment. This means we cannot conceive of a single empirical event that bears a necessary relation to the time of its occurrence. For empirical events time is nothing but a form, but, what is more important, as a form it is unfulfilled. The event does not fulfill the formal nature of the time in which it takes place. For we should not think of time as merely the measure that records the duration of a mechanical change. Although such time is indeed a relatively empty form, to

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think of its being filled makes no sense. Historical time, however, differs from mechanical time. [...] Rather, a process that is perfect in historical terms is quite indeterminate empirically; it is in fact an idea. The idea of fulfilled time is the dominant historical idea of the Bible: it is the idea of messianic time. (Benjamin [1916] 1991, II, 1: 134/ Benjamin [1916] 2004: 55-56)

This vision considers time not as a process but as an ideal dimension (the historical idea of the Bible) in which a moment exposes a dimension of totality, eternity and completeness. Benjamin's vision positions itself in the realm of Judaic messianism as a restorative dimension of history, a return to a reign of justice (cf. Fenves 2011: 187-226). In the biblical tradition, Justice is the first attribute of God: "Righteous art thou, O Lord; and upright are they judgments [...] Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth"<sup>1</sup>; and an attribute of the Messiah, a distinctive sign of the messianic age: "And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins"<sup>2</sup>; "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness"<sup>3</sup>.<sup>3</sup> Messianism is not to be defined as awaiting a personal Messiah, but rather as awaiting a Messianic reign, "*an intra-historical but total, radical and universal fulfillment [...] linked [...] [to the] contents clearly indicated by the prophets (starting with Isaiah): peace, justice, happiness*" (Cunico, 2005: 14).<sup>4</sup> The essential character of messianic expectation, as received by Benjamin from Scholem in an intra-historical variation, is immanent and neither eschatological nor univocal, but contains within itself two opposed tendencies. On one hand, the restorative aspect brings equilibrium to a condition of disorder; on the other stands a contrary dimension of rupture and radical novelty that is destructive and apocalyptic (cf. Scholem 1971).<sup>5</sup> In the *Theses*, a revolutionary leap takes place, in immanence, between world history and redeemed history, through memory and the citation and knowledge of the past; a "tiger's leap into the past" (Benjamin [1940]1991, 1, II: 70/ Benjamin [1940] 2003: 395):

«History is the subject of a construction whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time fulfilled by now-time [*Jetztzeit*]. Thus, to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with now-time, a past which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It cited ancient Rome exactly the way fashion cites a by-gone mode of dress. Fashion has a nose for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is the tiger's leap into the past. The leap, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the commands. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical leap Marx understood as revolution» [Thesis XIV] (*ibid.*).

In Benjamin, the materialist conception of history (before the "historical materialist turn" of 1926 we might speak rather of an anarchist, nihilist vision)<sup>6</sup> is closely connected to the theological idea of time as *Jetztzeit*. Through the redemption of the past, by its actualization in the present and the critique of the concept of progress, the historian practices a "*weak messianic power*" (Benjamin [1940] 1991, I, 2: 694/ Benjamin [1940] 2003: 390) and provides a direction for political action. This action is revolutionary and aims at founding a classless society as a secularized Reign, a realm of justice. A thesis (n. XVIIa) found among the preparatory materials for *On the Concept of History* illustrates these concepts: progress is an infinite, linear process, like the Neo-Kantian "infinite task" and democratic socialism, that transforms the representation of the messianic idea as an abrupt realization

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 119;137 and 142 (King James Version).

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 11; 5 (King James Version).

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 26; 9 (King James Version).

<sup>4</sup> Cunico refers here to J. Klausner, 1956.

<sup>5</sup> The culminating point of Scholem's project on messianism is the work that appeared in 1957 in Hebrew and in 1973 in English, Scholem 1973. On the theological and political doctrine of Scholem and Benjamin cf. Jacobson 2003. Cf. also Weidner 2003. On Benjamin's messianism cf. Khatib 2013 and Desideri 2005.

<sup>6</sup> On Benjamin's "romantic" and messianic anarchism, cf. Löwy 1983 and Löwy 1988. On the *Theses* see Gentili [2002] 2019. Cf. Löwy 2001.

of the reign of justice in an “ideal”,<sup>7</sup> which is to say an unachievable goal. For the Neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen the Messiah is significant as a metaphysical and moral idea originating in Judaic prophecy, an ideal projected into the dimension of the future of history (and not toward a life beyond the earthly one) where the individual history of humans will disappear.

Benjamin individuates two concepts of the infinite task, one negative (attributed to epistemology and Neo-Kantian ethics, especially that of Cohen), and the other positive (and Benjamin’s own), that utilizes the Neo-Kantian structure of the relation between a regulating idea and a series of concepts, to construct a concept of metaphysical experience, not empty, but full (*erfüllt*) of spiritual and theological-linguistic content. The time of the infinite task of Neo-Kantianism is conceived, on the contrary, as homogeneous—the time of the physical and mathematical sciences—and empty; that is, not full (*erfüllt*) and achieved by God and through the power of divine violence/authority (*Gewalt*):<sup>8</sup>

«In the idea of the classless society, Marx secularized the idea of messianic time. And that was a good thing. It was only when the Social Democrats elevated this idea to an "ideal" that the trouble began. The ideal was defined in Neo-Kantian doctrine as an "infinite [*unendlich*] task". And this doctrine was the school philosophy of the Social Democratic party – from Schmidt and Stadler through Natorp and Vorländer. Once the classless society had been defined as an infinite task, the empty and homogeneous time was transformed into an anteroom, so to speak, in which one could wait for the emergence of the revolutionary situation with more or less equanimity. In reality, there is not a moment that would not carry with it *its* revolutionary chance – provided only that it is defined in a specific way, namely as the chance for a completely new problem [*Aufgabe*]. For the revolutionary thinker, the peculiar revolutionary chance offered by every historical moment gets its warrant from the political situation. But it is equally grounded, for tis thinker, in the right of entry which the historical moment enjoys vis-à-vis a quite distinct chamber of the past, one which up to that point has been closed and locked. The entrance into this chamber coincides in a strict sense with political action, and it is by means of such entry that political action, however destructive, reveals itself as messianic. (Classless society is not the final goal of historical progress but its frequently miscarried, ultimately [*endlich*] achieved interruption)» (Thesis XVIIa, Benjamin [1940] 1991, I, 2: 1231/ Benjamin 2003: 401-402).

In the fleeting “slipping away” of a dialectical image, the historian recuperates and recognizes a moment of the past of the oppressed classes, which enters into a constellation with immediate political conditions and makes it explode, providing a direction for praxis. Revolutionary action takes shape through a dialectical leap into the past that takes place in the messianic *now* – in the “now of knowability” (*Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*) that pertains to the “concept of history”: “The dialectical image is an image that emerges suddenly, in a flash. What has been (*das Gewesene*) is to be held fast—as an image flashing up in the now of its knowability. The rescue (*Rettung*) carried out by these means—and only by these—can operate solely for the sake of what in the next moment is already irretrievably lost” (Benjamin [1933-40] 1991, V, 1, 591-592/ Benjamin 2002: 473).

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<sup>7</sup> On the neo-Kantian theme of the “infinite task”, interpreted by Benjamin in ethical-religious terms, cf. Tagliacozzo [2003] 2013: this text seeks to demonstrate the hypothesis of the influence on Benjamin of the messianism and philosophy of Hermann Cohen. Cf. also Tagliacozzo 2018; Tagliacozzo 2020; Desideri 2015. On the “ideal” cf. H. Cohen [1929] 1988: 291-292/ 1995: 249-250 (translation mine): “29. The messianic future is the first conscious expression of opposition to the conception of the empirical sense of moral values. This may be simply designated as the *ideal*, in opposition to effectual reality [...] the new of a future. [...]. Thus arises the notion of *history* for humanity and its people. [...] Humanity [...] [is] an idea". Benjamin was reading Cohen's *Religion* in 1920 (cf. Benjamin’s letter to G. Scholem, 1-XII-1920, in Benjamin 1996: 107). For a comparison between Cohen’s and Benjamin’s messianism, see also Günther 1974: 352-35. Cf. Fiorato 2005: 133-160. A possible source of Cohen’s messianism for Benjamin may have been the essay *Das Gottesreich*, in which Cohen identified the Reign of God and the Reign of the Messiah, published by Cohen in 1913, in Cohen [2013] 1977, vol. 16: 41-50.

<sup>8</sup> On the divine *Gewalt* cf. W. Benjamin, "Zur Kritik der Gewalt", in Benjamin [1921] 1991, II, 1: 179-203/ Benjamin 2004: 55-57. Cf. on the theme of violence and divine violence in Benjamin in relation to the political philosophy of Kant, cf. Tomba 2006. Cf. also Tomba 2009: 126-144 and Tomba 2016.

The epistemological structure of the “concept of history”, which presents itself in a monadic dialectical image, is characterized by a non-linear, non-progressive but intensive and ideal temporal dimension, in which the cognitive concept and the idea (of the good, of justice, of liberty) characterized by totality and eternity coincide. Here emerges the link between the theological realm—transcendental and ideal but secretly active in the immanence of redemption—and the immanent setting of the political. In fact, in a fleeting moment, the redeemed past renders the fulfillment of messianic time, the Reign of God, and provides the occasion and direction for praxis, for a revolutionary action that is messianic and theologically motivated, striving toward the construction of a classless society. Political action is rendered possible specifically by its link to the past, by the cognitive capacity of the historical materialist to recuperate forgotten moments and make them explode, and to fuel the destructive, liberatory power of the oppressed class (the subject, like the historian, of historical knowledge) through images of enslaved ancestors, without projecting the liberation into an infinite future, as does democratic socialism:

«The subject of historical knowledge is the struggling, oppressed class in itself. Marx presents it as the last enslaved class – the avenger that completes the task of liberation in the name of generations of the downtrodden. This conviction, which had a brief resurgence in the Spartacus League, has always been objectionable to Social Democrats. Within three generations they managed to erase the name of Blanqui almost entirely, though at the sound of that name the preceding century had quaked. The Social Democrats preferred to cast the working class in the role of a redeemer of *future* generations, in this way cutting the sinews of its greatest strength. This indoctrination made the working class forget both its hatred and its spirit of sacrifice, for both are nourished by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than by the ideal of liberated grandchildren» (Thesis XII, Benjamin [1940] 1991, I, 2: 700/ Benjamin 2003: 394).

Benjamin's position on the oppressed class as subject of historical cognition can be read, as Sami Khatib writes, against the backdrop of Kant and Marx:

«Although Benjamin clearly distinguishes the subject of historical cognition from Kant's non-historical transcendental subject, [...] the epistemo-political scope of Benjamin's historical materialist concept of history becomes legible only against the dual backdrop of Marx *and* Kant. If the struggling, oppressed class takes the position of the Kantian transcendental subject, the political-economic standpoint and historicity of this collective subjectivity coalesces with its cognizing vantage point in a transcendental sense»<sup>9</sup>.

The oppressed class takes the place of the Kantian transcendental subject and, through the dialectical image (which contains a historical index, a potential encounter between fore- and after-history, that renders the image legible and usable for political action), overcomes the Kantian vision of knowledge as the relation of a knowing subject to a known object:<sup>10</sup>

«Benjamin maintains the basic structure of Kant's transcendental argument, yet expands and radicalizes it by grounding transcendental in a constellation of historical time punctuated by class struggle. In this way, historical cognition is not structured by ahistorical transcendental forms but always already imprinted by a 'historical index' (*AP*, N 3,1), which is bound to the experience of a political subject at a particular time» (Khatib 2014: 23).

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<sup>9</sup> Khatib 2014: 23. Cf. *ibid.*: “In the preparatory notes on the Theses, [Benjamin] [...] adds a further clarification: ‘This subject is certainly not a transcendental subject, but the struggling, oppressed class in its most exposed situation. There is historical cognition for them (this class) only and for them only in a historical instant.’ [GS, I, 1243].” [translation mine].

<sup>10</sup> W. Benjamin, *Erkenntnistheorie* [1920-21] in W. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, op. cit., vol. VI, 46; English trans. W. Benjamin, “Theory of Knowledge.” In: *Walter Benjamin. Selected Writings. Vol. 1.*, op. cit., 276: “Two things must be overcome: 1. The false disjunction: knowledge is either in the consciousness of a knowing subject or else in the object (alternatively, identical with it). 2) The appearance of the knowing man (for example, Leibniz, Kant).”

What is transcendental here is less the subject than the medium of knowledge, a linguistic medium, given that, “the place where one encounters [the images] is language.”<sup>11</sup> Language is a medium in that it is not a means of communication but a location of communicability (cf. Weber 2008: 13) in which a cognitive relation is constructed between subject and object, which encounter one another in the now of knowability. When a linguistic, ideal, and messianic image (for example, that of republican Rome for Robespierre, or the French Revolution, or the messianic realm) becomes legible in the now of knowability, time is contained within it as an intensive, messianic and infinitely abbreviated “time differential” (Benjamin [1933-1940] 1991, II, 1, 1038, Q<sup>o</sup> 21/ Benjamin 2002: 867) which is curved rather than linear. This logical time stands against chronological time and the time of Newtonian physics and mathematics, although some interpreters argue that it takes inspiration from the new mathematical theories of the early twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> This time is a time of crisis and political decision, a time for revolutionary action, which may entail an interruption and reversal of the course of history, such that the oppressed classes may be both subject of knowledge and political subject. The oppressed classes arrive at a polarized historical moment, represented (*dargestellt*) in the dialectical image, an instant in present time (*Aktualität*), and makes it explode into praxis and struggle.<sup>13</sup> Subject (the oppressed classes) and object (the image) of historical knowledge unite in the now of knowability, in the constellation of historical concepts that constitute the dialectical image. Both subject and object are not static, but active and involved in the historical events that they undergo and provoke. As we have seen, what permits the dialectical image to become an instrument of knowledge is its “construction” as a concept; that is, as a historical concept. Theory and praxis are deeply interwoven: praxis, provoked by the conditions of the oppressed classes, directs knowledge toward the construction of concepts and the representation of utopian ideals; theory provides direction for praxis, and thus for political action.

The concept of messianic time, opposed to the homogenous and empty physical and mathematical time of modern science which is typical of Neo-Kantianism and democratic socialism—with its vision of the progressive, “infinite” task moving toward the ideal of a classless society—is anticipated here with extraordinary import in the 1914/15 period in the *incipit* of the essay paper *The Life of Students*:

«There is a view of history that puts its faith in the infinite extent of time and thus concerns itself only with the speed, or lack of it, with which people and epochs advance along the path of progress. This corresponds to a certain absence of coherence and rigor in the demands it makes on the present. The following remarks, in contrast, delineate a particular condition in which history appears to be concentrated in a single focal point, like those that have traditionally been found in the utopian images of philosophers. The elements of the ultimate condition do not manifest themselves as formless progressive tendencies, but are deeply rooted in every present in the form of the most endangered, excoriated, and ridiculed ideas and products of the creative mind. The

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<sup>11</sup> W. Benjamin [1933-1940] 1991; 1, 577, N 2a, 3/ Benjamin 2002; 462: “For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what has been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent. – Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language.” For Benjamin’s critique of temporal “*continuo*”, cf. Ng 2017: 41-60. Cf. Desideri 2016: 177-184.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Fenves 2011: 106-113 and 242. Cf. Ng 2017: 41-60. Cf. Khatib 2014: 39, n. 18: “Peter Fenves has suggested that this unimaginable shape of time can be conceived mathematically with reference to the so-called ‘*Weierstraß* function’ and the ‘Koch curve’, which Benjamin was acquainted with.” Cf. Fenves 2011: 111: “Karl Weierstraß [...] surprised his students and colleagues in the 1860s when he constructed a trigonometric function that was so “pathological” that it had no tangent at any point. A curve corresponding to this function is unimaginable in the exact sense of the term: every point consists in a sharp turn [...] Does the course of time have a fractal shape? [...] [Scholem in] his diary entry from August 1916 [...] says ‘perhaps,’ whereas in his book from 1975 he inclines toward ‘no.’”

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Benjamin [1933-1940] 1991, V, 1, 587-588, N 7a, I/ Benjamin 2002: 470: “every dialectically presented historical circumstance polarizes itself and becomes a force field in which the confrontation between its fore-history and after-history is played out. It becomes such a field insofar as the present instant (*Aktualität*) interpenetrates it.”

historical task is to disclose this immanent state of perfection and make it absolute, to make it visible and dominant in the present. This condition cannot be captured in terms of the pragmatic description of details (the history of institutions, customs, and so on); in fact, it eludes them. Rather, the task is to grasp its metaphysical structure, as with the messianic domain or the idea of the French Revolution» (Benjamin [1914/15] 1991, II, 1: 75/ Benjamin 2004: 37).

As seen here, already in 1915 there is a nexus between the intensive, redemptive time of history, as found in the images of the utopians, and the metaphysical structure as idea, and thus with the epistemological nexus that makes the individuation of the state of perfection and justice (the “final state”, the “messianic reign”, the “French Revolution”) indispensable in the immanence of the present, through the division of phenomena by means of concepts comprehended, in fragments, in the idea (cf. Benjamin [1925] 1991, I, 1: 207-237/ Benjamin 2009: 27-56).

In a passage in the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin writes that “being a dialectician means having the wind of history in one's sails. The sails are the concepts. It is not enough, however, to have sails at one's disposal. What is decisive is knowing the art of setting them”. (Benjamin [1933-1940] 1991, V, 1: 592, N 9, 8/ Benjamin 2002: 473). The concept of the historical object (the hoisted sail that catches the wind of progress and catastrophe) is a word well-disposed in thought through the “sound understanding (*gesunden Menschenverstand*)” (ivi: 595, N 11, 4/ engl. transl. modified 476) or common human understanding (*gemeine Menschenverstand*). In Paragraph 40 of the *Critique of the Faculty of Judgment*, Kant will distinguish common human understanding or common sense – usually identified with *sensus communis* (*Gemeinsinn*) – from *sensus communis* interpreted as communal sense (*gemeinschaftlichen Sinn*): this latter is the capacity for a broad-minded way of thinking (from a universal standpoint).<sup>14</sup> This is also the capacity to use the faculties of *judgment* to find the universal in the particular,<sup>15</sup> which dialectic must have: “What matters for the dialectician is to have the wind of world history in his sails. For him, thinking means setting the sails. What is important is how they are set. Words are his sails. The way they are set makes them into concepts” (Benjamin [1933-1940] 1991, V, 1: 591, N 9, 6/ Benjamin 2002: 473; transl. modified).<sup>16</sup>

In the messianic now of knowability, the concept of the historical object, as a well-set word, exposes the “truth” (which is an “intentionless state of being, made up of ideas”)<sup>17</sup> by presenting an image of the past known and saved in a fleeting flash of representation. The monadic phenomenon is a dialectic image of the messianic reign, the representation and symbolic concept of the state of divine perfection and justice.<sup>18</sup> In the “state of fulfillment of the world”, phenomena will no longer be fragmented the way they are in the now of knowability, of immanence, and in history, the conditions of which necessarily entail knowledge and caducity. Revolutionary action inspired by the “hidden” theological-messianic dimension remains conscious of the fact that it produces a transitory political

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Kant [1790] 1990: 144 (157) § 40/ Kant 2002: 173 Cf. ibidem the "Preface", 3. Engl. Trans 56: "nothing other than this very faculty [of the power of judgment] is meant by the name of sound understanding (*gemeine Verstand*)". Cf. Kant [1783] 1976: 139 (369) / Kant 2004: 118: “For what is *sound common sense* (*gesunde Verstand*)? It is the *ordinary understanding* (*gemeine Verstand*), insofar as it judges correctly. And what now is the ordinary understanding? It is the faculty of cognition and of the use of rules *in concreto*, as distinguished from the *speculative understanding*, which is a faculty of the cognition of rules *in abstracto*.” Cf. Taraborrelli 2004: 108-112.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Kant [1790] 1990: 15-16 (XXVI)/ Kant 2002: 66-67. Here: 67: “If, however, only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is merely reflecting.” Sami Khatib identifies the origin of Benjamin’s term *Teleologie ohne Endzweck* (teleology without a final end) in the Kantian term *Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck* (purposiveness without an end): cf. Kant [1790] 1990: 67, §. 15/ Kant 2002: 112. Cf. Khatib 2013: 383.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Benjamin [1933-1940]: 591/ 473, N 9, 3: “The concept of ‘rescue’: the wind of the absolute in the sails of the concept (the principle of the wind is the cyclic element). The trim of the sails is the relative.” On the epistemological problems of Benjamin’s philosophy of history cf. Fiorato 2012: 611-624. For a possible relation between Benjamin and Gottlob Frege on the conception of sails as concepts/signs/words, cf. Tagliacozzo 2018, Chapter I.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Benjamin [1925] 1991, I, 1: 216/ Benjamin 2002: 36.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Tomba 2006: 206-255, in particular the section *Göttliche Gewalt*, 251-255.

reality not based on an eternal truth. The truth of the past, and the messianic idea of redemption connected to it, is a “fleeting (*vergänglich*) truth” that appears for a moment and then vanishes, just as the unknown, never-realized past is fleeting:

«If [...] [the image of the past] is authentic, it is due to its fleetingness (*Flüchtigkeit*). Precisely because this truth is fleeting (*vergänglich*) and a breath is enough to sweep it away, much depends upon it. Appearance (*Schein*), in fact, which agrees better with eternity, is ready to take its place» (Benjamin [1940], 1991, I, 3:1247, Ms 440).

The concept of history is a construction where the messianic idea, the perfect world, is present in every “now of knowability” in which the monadological “dialectical image” presents itself as the actualization of moments of an unredeemed past that is redeemed in knowledge and afterwards in political action. The relation between past and present is given in the dialectical image, in the concept of history, in a messianic interruption of the course of history. This owes to the Jewish doctrine of the Kabbalah, to Kant and to Marx. This owes also a great deal to Hermann Cohen’s neo-Kantian and Judaic-messianic conception of ethics and his concept of temporality and eternity, his concepts of sanctity, humanity, justice and peace bound to history, and to his ethical antiontologism and anti-eschatologism. Benjamin inverts Cohen’s idea of ethics bound to the future in the actuality of remembrance and the political interruption of the course of history.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Desideri 2005, Desideri 2015 and Desideri 2016; see Tagliacozzo 2020.

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# Reggio Calabria and the 1970 riots: A local society from revolt to oblivion

Alessio Esposito \*

**Abstract.** This article addresses the problematic issue of remembering the dramatic events related to the municipal revolt of 1970-71, within the context of the present society of Reggio Calabria. The first section briefly recalls the facts of the case, with fundamental references to the national situation and to the most controversial aspects, linked to the attacks, the perpetrated violence, and the victims. Then, it presents examples of the rhetoric that characterized the social movements and retraces the following phases of oblivion (1970s-80s), recovery of memory (1990s-2000s) and new oblivion of the narrated events. The second section employs the use of research and reflections relating to the socio-economic and demographic situation of contemporary society in Reggio Calabria. It concludes by suggesting an overall interpretation of the memory outlined in a time frame of half a century with a background of the long-term historical events. The hypothesis is that of a direct connection between the peculiar social structure of the city on the Strait of Messina and both the outbreak of the revolt and the current weak memory of those events, faint to the point of bordering a characteristic oblivion.

**Keywords:** Memory, Social distance, Revolt of Reggio Calabria, Public use of the history, Politics and anti-politics.

**Riassunto.** L'articolo affronta il nodo problematico, nell'ambito della presente società di Reggio Calabria, costituito dalla memoria delle drammatiche vicende legate alla Rivolta municipale del 1970-71. La prima sezione ripercorre sinteticamente i fatti in questione, con essenziali riferimenti alla situazione nazionale e agli aspetti più controversi, legati agli attentati, alla violenza perpetrata e alle vittime, presentando poi esempi della retorica che caratterizzò il movimento di piazza e ripercorrendo le successive fasi di oblio (anni 70-80), recupero della memoria (anni 90-2000) e nuovo oblio degli avvenimenti narrati. La seconda parte si avvale di ricerche e riflessioni relative alla situazione socioeconomica e demografica della società reggina contemporanea e conclude proponendo una interpretazione complessiva dell'arco della memoria che è stato tracciato nel corso di mezzo secolo: ipotizzando, sullo sfondo delle vicende storiche di lungo periodo, un legame diretto della peculiare conformazione sociale della città sullo Stretto, tanto con l'esplosione della Rivolta, quanto con l'attuale labile memoria di quelle vicende, tanto labile da rasentare un caratteristico oblio.

**Parole chiave:** Memoria, distanza sociale, rivolta di Reggio Calabria, uso pubblico della storia, politica e antipolitica.

## Introduction

In 1970 the population of Reggio Calabria rose up in large numbers in protest against the assignment of the headquarters of the newly formed Region to the city of Catanzaro, for reasons of dignity and cultural prestige, besides economic reasons<sup>1</sup>. During those long months the streets and squares of Reggio saw many debates, rallies, processions, but also clashes with the police, attacks on institutional, trade union and party headquarters, barricades, and attempts, which also caused several casualties (the count depends on the sources consulted), including real terrorist acts, followed by lengthy judicial investigations. In fact, at the beginning of the events, a derailment of a railway convoy

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1 Historiographical attention regarding the events in Reggio and on their broader significance has been raised earlier in the time especially by Guido Crainz, "La stagione dei 'movimenti': quando i conti non tornano". *Meridiana*, 2000, 38/39: 127-149.



took place in Gioia Tauro. It was due to sabotage of the tracks and caused 6 victims. It is very little present in the memory of the many massacres linked to that dreadful period: during the events, it has been confirmed the intervention of both mafia and far-right terrorist groups - the latter intertwined with international influences - at least to a certain extent.

This article intends to consider the production of discourses and memories linked to that historical event, only considering the local context, setting the historical and social dynamics that affected Reggio Calabria in the background, until projecting the gaze to the present-day city. Therefore, it is a critical exploration from the perspective of the sociology of memory.

The first part traces the development of the Revolt, highlighting its characteristic 'rhythm' linked to the relationship between institutions, parties and the population. Then, it focuses on the specific rhetorical strategies deployed by the Reggio Calabria movement. In more recent times, local institutions brought out those strategies thanks to the implementation of memory policies.

The second part presents a schematic picture of the context of the revolt and Reggio's subsequent events, especially with reference to the socio-economic structure of the city, as it has been taking shape to date.

In conclusion, some analytical reflections are proposed, precisely regarding the peculiar timeframe of memory that has been outlined so far, characterised by the alternation of oblivion and renewed attention around the Revolt. Some conceptual and methodological tools had been employed, which were made available both by classical sociology - primarily referring to issues such as "social distance"<sup>2</sup> - and by the sociology of memory - with particular reference to Alexander's theories.

The hypothesis is that the peculiar social situation, characterized by disintegration, clientelism and top-down traits, explains exactly the implosion<sup>3</sup> of the city and the recent fall of the Revolt into oblivion.

## 1. Facts of the revolt (1970-71)

As is well known, the establishment of ordinary administrative regions in 1948 was postponed and was carried out only after a series of legislative measures between 1968 and 1970. In some regions, above all Calabria and Abruzzo, the definition of the capital had remained just as open: in Calabria, the dispute concerned Reggio - even its name claimed supremacy in that region - and Catanzaro, a centre with a notable legal tradition. As a matter of fact, Calabria represented a unitary context only on an administrative level, but not on a socio-economic and cultural one, given the differences and divergent histories that characterised northern and southern Calabria. Mountains, scarcity of communication routes and the scarce material and cultural traffic had not produced a solid regional identification. On the contrary, Reggio had much closer ties, in every respect, with Messina and Sicily, with which it constituted a "Strait region"<sup>4</sup>, given the intense exchanges and common traditions between Southern Calabria and North eastern Sicily.

Therefore, the choice of the capital city seemed to be a matter of life and death - with its symbolic value in support of a community in crisis and with its impact on employment and public works linked to the institutional seats -. The government's subsequent news was received with dismay: the regional council should have met in Catanzaro, as the seat of the Court of Appeal - transferred there after the catastrophic earthquake that struck Reggio at the beginning of the century -. Thus, it seemed to be a "technical" decision<sup>5</sup>.

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2 Fabio Introini. "La distanza sociale. Dimensioni teoriche e attualità di un concetto 'classico' ". «Studi di sociologia», 2007, Vol. 45 (1).

3 Vincenzo Bova. *Reggio Calabria la città implosiva. Modernizzazione e degrado di una città, nascita e morte di un movimento*. Rubbettino: Roma, 1995.

4 Still fundamental, particularly for this concept, Lucio Gambi. *La Calabria*. Torino: Utet, 1965.

5 In the absence of a legislative determination, regional or national, this was the orientation that had been forming, although in fact the parliamentary commission in charge in 1950 did not pronounce: Central State Archives (Acs), Ministry of the Interior, Gab., 1967-70, b. 513.

This was, actually, the result of a pact between those political exponents of the DC and PSI in Cosenza and Catanzaro<sup>6</sup> - allied parties, within the centre-left political formula, at a national and local level - first and foremost the PSI leader Giacomo Mancini, who had been able to obtain a position of greater strength at a national level than their Reggio counterparts, for whom the regional university seat<sup>7</sup> would be assigned to Cosenza, in exchange for the location of the Council and Assembly in Catanzaro. The PCI, which was slowly growing in the region, did not object, mainly because it was interested in consolidating other agreements at national and regional level with Mancini's PSI<sup>8</sup>.

However, this affair attracted accusations of conspiracy and seemed an illegitimate way of opaquely resolving a decisive issue. Nevertheless, protests and recriminations went unanswered, because the political exponents of Reggio Calabria were silenced by the national and regional leaderships. That explains how they were then bypassed by their constituency and, in some respects, replaced by other actors in the role of leading the masses.

The cycle of protests was, as a matter of fact, started by local (centre-left) institutional exponents, who then saw it get out of hand. What we must basically note is the objective failure of politics, or rather of the parties<sup>9</sup>, to build a connection between the institutional level and that of civil society. In fact, it explains the rise, in rhetoric and then in practice, of anti-political attitudes within Reggio society.

Anti-politics<sup>10</sup> is understood here as a condition of complete delegitimization of legal institutions, the rejection of the political function itself as a dimension of agreement and integration of different interests, and the rejection of any connection with superior or external instances. Basically, the non-recognition of Reggio as the capital of the Region represented for the city a reason to feel, if not from Italy, certainly separated from the rest of the region. In this sense, the appeals to Parliament and President Saragat continued, in the confidence that, at that level, the axis that penalised Reggio locally would be bypassed and neutralised.<sup>11</sup>

The dynamic set in motion is precisely the one whereby there was a shift from anti-politics to a populist hegemony<sup>12</sup> -rejection of parties and mediations, assertion of identity reasons without any distinction on behalf of an entire population, proclamation of the superior moral dignity of society against a political class that was all conspiracy and betrayal-, or rather to hyper-politics<sup>13</sup>. The slogans took on almost apocalyptic tones on many occasions, and the behaviour kept up, in a continuous chase between challenge to the institutions and responses often of a merely repressive nature.

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6 Students in fact had to apply to the university in Messina.

7 At that time there were only those three Calabrian provinces.

8 For the timely chronology of facts, statements and coeval journalistic reconstructions, the work of journalists remains an indispensable reference: L. Malafarina, F. Bruno, S. Strati. *Buio a Reggio*. 2 voll. Reggio Calabria: Città del Sole edizioni, 2000. For general bibliographical references see the note in the conclusion.

9 For a reference to the important topic of the First Republic as a democratic and "partitocratic" system, see for example Paolo Farneti. *Il sistema dei partiti in Italia (1946-1979)*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1983.

10 The debate on partitocratic distortion of democracy, anti-politics, qualunquism, is endless. A summary: S. Lupo. *Partito e antipartito. Per una storia politica della Prima Repubblica (1946-78)*. Roma: Donzelli, 2004.

11 Here we can see how the geographic-economic situation, described by Gambi (see below) finds correspondence with sociocultural reflections. Reggio was not and did not feel an integral part of Calabria. Among the political initiatives of the time, the one undertaken by the coffee magnate Mauro (in cooperation with the shipowner Matakena) who tried to promote a popular referendum, in order to sanction the splitting of the province of Reggio (which at the time included the current one of Crotona) and establish it as a region in its own right, has been objectively underestimated in any analysis, despite being perfectly constitutional, but it had no significant feedback.

12 On this issue you can read A. Esposito. *Il populismo e le rivolte di Reggio Calabria e dell'Aquila (1970-71)*. «Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa», 2008, 73, pp. 193-220 (pubblicazione dei risultati di una ricerca conclusa nella primavera del 2007).

13 I am conducting conceptual research on this term, starting with suggestions found in: P. Taggart. *Populism and 'unpolitics'*. In Fitzi, Gregor, Mackert, Juergen and Turner, Bryan (eds.). *Populism and the Crisis of Democracy*. Routledge Advances in Sociology: London, pp. 79-87.

Fifty years ago, Reggio was a laboratory for events that are still relevant today, and, in fact, some witnesses and analysts realised that even at the time<sup>14</sup>.

Among the institutions that played a driving role in the hyper-political dynamic were certainly the police, since it is attested that it was the violent repression of an occupation of the railway tracks by a large group of demonstrators that literally set the dust on fire. The police charges were followed by the first of a very long series of clashes, which caused the first victim (martyr, as they were often called) -a CGIL railway worker, Bruno Labate-, probably struck down by a sudden illness. Many of those arrested were then harassed in the premises of the police<sup>15</sup>, and this contributed to producing a vivid tear between the state and the population.

It was 14 July 1970, and this is when the period of the actual Revolt began, which can be structured as follows:

- 1) First period of opposition in July 1970, and subsequent “truce”. In this phase, the leading role of the Action Committee for capital of Reggio, headed by the right-wing trade unionist Francesco “Ciccio” Franco -an exponent of the local MSI (neofascist party) in polemics with his own party-, was already being outlined;
- 2) Second period of opposition in September 1970 (following the new disappointment caused by the non-acceptance by the parliamentary components of the Reggio requests);
- 3) Winter break, interspersed with occasional episodes, especially close to the holidays, due to the hope in the results of the parliamentary debate, following the attention finally shown by the new Emilio Colombo's center-left government;
- 4) January and especially February 1971: after the failure to assign the capital, despite the publication of the "Colombo package", which provided for measures to benefit the city<sup>16</sup>, protests raged again, although progressively restricted to some peripheral areas<sup>17</sup>, also following the ban on all demonstrations in the area by the Interior, with the massive and decisive intervention of the police and the help of armoured tracked vehicles of the Carabinieri;
- 5) Queue of protest and sabotage initiatives were essentially completely suppressed, according to the law, until the end of 1971. Queues of further protests and further repression took place until 1973 (the opinion recently emerged is that this phase was underestimated, in terms of the consolidation of the anarchic and anti-state attitude on the part of large groups of the citizens).

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14 During the months of the Revolt in the city, thick columnists and editorialists of the various orientations, such as Giampaolo Pansa of *Il Giorno*, also came to work, and the sphere of communication became a field of contention between even opposing tendencies (in particular, *Il Borghese* and *Il Candido* engaged in presenting in populist and tendentially anti-parliamentary terms what was happening). *Lotta continua* also tried to play a significant role, presenting the events in Reggio as a revolutionary opportunity and, as we shall see, producing and distributing various documents, including filmed ones. Only recently, however, as I have mentioned, have the more problematic interpretations, which at the time were instead submerged by the interpretation in terms of mere backwardness and fascist hegemony, of the dynamics in question been recovered.

15 L. Ambrosi. *La rivolta di Reggio, Soveria Mannelli*. Roma: Rubbettino, 2009, part 2, ch. II, particularly focused on this aspect.

16 It envisaged, in short, as compensation, the assignment of the seat of the Assembly alone and of the V steel Center to Reggio Calabria, but the second measure did not materialize: the official decision on the assignment of the capital to Catanzaro was nevertheless taken by the Calabrian Regional Assembly (see Acs, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Minute, b.56, February 16, 1971).

17 Sbarre and Santa Caterina, two neighbourhoods located on the opposite peripheries of Reggio, had been constituted into a "Republic" and "Grand Duchy" respectively and separated from the rest of the urban fabric with massive barricades, and led a partially autonomous existence until the final eviction. A reading that enhances the rediscovery of a community dimension, linked to the initiative of the inhabitants of those districts, can be found in Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani. *Rivolta e strumentalizzazione. Il caso di Reggio Calabria*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 1979 (1st ed. 1971), pp.113-115. Important reflections on the concept of Revolt – referring to its different concept of time than the Revolution, so that a Revolt is not linked to a long-term project, differently than a Revolution that is linked to a project of overall social transformation - and that of anti-structure, can be found respectively in: Furio Jesi, Spartakus. *Simbologia della rivolta*, new, augmented and updated ed. edited by A. Cavalletti, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2022 and Victor Turner, *Il processo rituale. Struttura e anti-struttura*, Brescia: Morcelliana, 1969 in addition to *Simboli e momenti della comunità. Saggio di antropologia culturale*. Brescia: Morcelliana, 1972.

The count of the victims of the clashes, which - it must be reiterated - included assaults on institutional, police and political-union headquarters, as well as bomb attacks, is still debated. It amounted to at least five, to which must be added at least (but the numbers are disputed) one victim in Catanzaro, due to an explosive attack during a rally held in that city, and the six victims of the before mentioned train bombing, and which, as we shall see, had a complicated judicial history (like the one that involved several exponents of the insurgent front, Franco above all).

It's probably fair to add five other victims to the sad count, the so-called "five anarchists of the South"<sup>18</sup>. Their stories could be linked to the presence in the area, widely ascertained, of forces under the command of Valerio Borghese, former commander of the infamous X Mas, since the immediate post-war period in contact with exponents of the secret services. In this context the so-called "*Golpe dell'Immacolata*" took place on the night of 8 December 1970 in Rome. According to certain historical and judicial reconstructions, Borghese attempted it, after having placed his operational base in Reggio, by then overwhelmed by an insurrectionary and subversive climate, with the rise of certain Mafia gangs.

It could be said that the knowledge of all these facts in the public sphere have remained relegated to the margins for a long time. What probably explains these dynamics of memory, at a national level, is precisely the geographical location of the protests, and their objectively parochial tone<sup>19</sup>, so as to deny their collocation within the more general period of protests and uprisings, characteristic of that period, not only in Italy<sup>20</sup>. However, more recent reflections and research have stigmatised this approach in terms of a merely prejudicial mortgage.

Certainly, on all these aspects also weighed decisively the hegemony over the protests exercised by the Action Committee, led by Franco and his associates, who inevitably tinged rhetoric and street actions with disturbing colours, those of a far-right and intransigent populism. All that contributed to giving to the Reggio Revolt the name of a fascist episode, based on the subcultural backwardness of the South. It's the revolt of the "*Boia chi molla*" ("Who gives up is a rogue"), a mark that is only partly reliable, which facilitated the liquidation of any debate on what happened, and also helped to explain the complicated social and cultural events that followed, especially in terms of the politics of memory.

## Rhetoric and memory

In order to understand the course of the Reggio uprisings, it is necessary to take into account, first of all, the quantity of publications of all kinds that were produced in the city at the time - booklets and second-hand pamphlets, but above all leaflets and posters<sup>21</sup>. Whether the authors were exponents

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18 This is still a very controversial affair, "rediscovered" in 2001 by Fabio Cuzzola with *Cinque anarchici del sud (una storia negata)*, Città del Sole edizioni, Reggio Calabria, 2001. The five young men mentioned belonged to an anarchist circle and perished in a car accident on which later investigations placed the shadow of far-right subversion if not the equally controversial "coup." An updated picture was recently presented by Agostino Raso, *Rivolta fascista o di popolo? I partiti politici di fronte alla rivolta di Reggio e la strage di Gioia Tauro*, Città del Sole edizioni, 2020. For other elements, see infra.

19 But for a distinction between localism and parochialism, which in the context of this exposition has a certain weight, see S. Cavazza, *Piccole patrie*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2002: he distinguishes localism as a means of aggregation of a large and diverse population, from parochialism as a spontaneous moment, typical of restricted and cohesive communities. In this key, in Reggio, the parochial claim was a means of creating an interclass, "localist" aggregation, which in the long run-as we shall see-failed, perhaps also because it failed to go beyond its initial premises, based on a merely symbolic, "parochial" pride, moreover defeated in the context of regional political competition.

20 A reference text is Tarrow, Sidney, *Democrazia e disordine. Movimenti di protesta e politica in Italia 1965-1975*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1990.

21 A presentation of some of the leaflets put into circulation: Franco Arcidiaco - Daniela Pellicanò. *Boia chi molla. 14 luglio 1970*. Reggio Calabria: Città del Sole edizioni, 2020. For references to other collections of leaflets see, e.g., the 'list of sources in L. Ambrosi, *cit.*, which was also based on the collection of a large number of oral testimonies, preserved at the Circolo "*Gianni Bosio*" in Rome at the public library "*Casa della Memoria e della Storia*". Another important collection is the one made by Fabio Cuzzola and used in his Reggio 1970. *Storie e memorie della rivolta*. Rome: Donzelli, 2008.

of the local clergy, or of the various trade associations, or whether they were expressions of the political-cultural notabilities, overall these publications were characterised by three main rhetorical motifs.

### **Rhetoric**

Claim of the capital as recognition of regional, historical, and moral primacy, and as a confirmation of dignity. The underlying value of this first recurring motive was that of mere recognition: what Reggio was asking for was a given, so to speak, natural and therefore beyond any discussion or negotiation - and anyone who was even suspected of being open to the infamous "compromise" was qualified as a traitor.

Suffice it to consider passages from the appeal addressed to the citizens by Mayor Battaglia, a centrist exponent of the party, who invited the citizens to "stand ready to vigorously support Reggio's right to lead the region", declaring that "the city refuses to accept decisions taken by this or that great man, whatever party he belongs to". It would have been right that the issue of the capital was "resolved with a special legislative measure of parliament", whereas until then, just "under-the-table agreements between the powerful in government" had been made<sup>22</sup>.

Furthermore, it must be considered the following, taken from the series of mimeographed leaflets and circulated by the Action Committee for Reggio Capital: "*Reggini*, we defend Reggio with civil determination and unwavering faith because our battle of the soul wants to ensure the right to life to a whole community and the city's reconfirmation in its age-old role as the capital of Calabria - For Reggio Capital: *BOIA CHI MOLLA!*"<sup>23</sup>. It should be noticed that there are no significant differences with the tones previously used by the mayor.

After all, such perorations only emphasised the arguments expressed by those whom Lombardi Satriani<sup>24</sup> described at the time as "traditional intellectuals", expressions of the city's most educated bourgeoisie, who essentially cultivated a propensity for a rhetorical culture anchored to a mythical past, and condensed into a series of commonplaces, transmitted to the population over the decades.

### ***Regginità* and populism, anti-political, and hyper-political**

Here we come to the second rhetorical motif: what brought together the interclass movement that fuelled the revolt, and led to the constitution of an 'Us' as opposed to the internal and external 'enemies'. It represented the reference to the traditional folklore of the subordinate classes<sup>25</sup> that local politicians and men of letters relaunched, leading to the constitution of what the sociologist Vincenzo Bova has called "*regginità*"<sup>26</sup>: a peculiar feeling of unity as a community of Reggio, in opposition to Catanzaro (in a parochial<sup>27</sup> way), but also to the internal traitors, as well as to the usurpers of both the

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22 L. Malafarina, F. Bruno, S. Strati. *Cit.*, pp. 19-20 However, while in the quoted volume Battaglia turns out to conclude by "calling on everyone for calm and moderation", in others instead he reiterates that "identity, pride, and history must be safeguarded at all costs, even at the price of showing that we Southerners are also capable of waging war as a matter of pride." For the issue of differing accounts in circulation, partly due to partially autonomous strategies put in place by the government's peripheral offices, see e.g. L. Ambrosi. *Cit.*, p. 174. It is important to note that Mayor Battaglia's very speech on July 5 for some commentators represents the true origin of the uprising, especially if one gives credence to the most inflammatory version of his words.

23 Franco Arcidiaco-Daniela Pellicanò (ed. by). *Cit.*, p.20.

24 Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani. *Cit.*, pp.109.

25 Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani, op. cit., passim.

26 For the concept see Vincenzo Bova, op. cit., who has taken up the remarks in this regard by Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani, op. cit., p.94.

27 Here parochialism is understood specifically as a rhetorical manifestation of unity in antagonism to rival neighbours through the recovery of a traditional discursiveness based on territorial pride, see Vincenzo Bova, op. cit., p.24. For a discussion of the concept of parochialism, distinguishing it from other collective representations, see supra.

capital and of the democracy itself, outside the Region<sup>28</sup>.

Here we must see<sup>29</sup> how a situation of extreme social disarticulation and the relationship between society and institutions, especially following the crisis of that class of mediators, party-clientelist, who governed the city, has been the premise for a real eruption, a paroxysm of identity and rebellion, represented by a social dynamic fuelled essentially by rage and despair, by the aim of "all or nothing".

The failure of politics, both with respect to the inability of the city notables to direct local developments, and with respect to the responsibility of building more balanced relations between the different territorial realities, has produced the rapid transition from anti-politics (refusal of mediations, compromises, negotiations) to hyper-politics (claims of absolute values and recourse to or threat of the use of force).

The examples are innumerable, and one must refer to the collections and repertoires mentioned above<sup>30</sup>. However, one brief example will suffice here: the cubital title of a leaflet of the already mentioned series, in which it invokes almost religiously "Reggio always united against enemies and traitors in defence of its just rights" because "We have interpreted the demands of our people while others have ignored them" and it mentions "The sacred effigy of the Madonna [...] ran three times past the Town Hall"<sup>31</sup> as if to denounce the mayor's inadequacy. In fact, the demonstrations soon took on religious overtones, as parochialism and inter-class mobilisation gathered around traditional city symbols, first and foremost the Madonna of Consolation, also due to the role of both support and moderation exercised by Bishop Ferro, who issued a public notice declaring Reggio's claim to obtain a "legitimate right documented by millenary history, also comforted by the metropolitan role for Calabria of this ancient apostolic seat"<sup>32</sup>.

### **Anti-party and betrayals, conspirations and victimhood**

In particular, the populist, identity-driven, rebellious anti-politics concentrated its rhetorical arrows against parties, referring both to the Christian Democratic majority - unable to deal as equals with their counterparts in other cities and in parliament - and against the Socialists, allies of the Christian Democrats, both of the minor parties and especially the Communists, who had openly expressed that they did not support and recognise the reasons of the demonstrators.

Here, a classic topic of national political discourse reappeared: the anti-party one, with indifferent, reactionary, anti-Parliamentary tones from time to time, even in Reggio. However, it must be reiterated that during the Revolt the populist rhetoric never went so far as to question democracy and parliament, but on the contrary, right up to the end it presented itself as an expression of authentic democracy and appealed both to the Chambers and to the President of the Republic, Saragat, as the supreme guarantor.

Another example of a leaflet<sup>33</sup> of the Action Committee for Reggio capital, however, denounced on a full page "Nesci and Vincelli - new betrayals for Reggio" as previously the Committee had cried

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28 It is not in dispute here that a series of rational evaluations, based on concrete interests, were also widely circulating in favour of the claims, with reference to investments and especially jobs in the tertiary sector, linked to the establishment of the offices – however, this motive on one hand remained subtended, because it was certainly not diriment, and on another it was nevertheless stigmatized by observers, of whatever orientation, as attesting to a society incapable of conceiving autonomous economic development. This discourse, rooted in anti-Southern polemic and in the research of authors such as Banfield, was obviously known to the people of Reggio Calabria, who for this reason, too, perhaps, did not make it the first of their banners (but neither did they take up that of industrial or agro-industrial investments, proposed by the Left Front).

29 See in this regard in Part III Bova's and Coco's analysis.

30 Franco Arcidiaco-Daniela Pellicanò (ed. by). *Cit.*, p. 48

31 The sacred effigy was carried in procession in advance of the traditional date, as on the occasion of previous calamities against which celestial protection had been invoked, and even thereafter such symbolism remained central to the events. Franco Arcidiaco-Daniela Pellicanò (eds.). *Cit.*, p. 48. For a classic reading of the episode, Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani. *Cit.*, p.96.

32 Statement of July 16, 1970, see L. Malafarina, F. Bruno, S. Strati. *Cit.*, pp.34-35.

33 Franco Arcidiaco-Daniela Pellicanò (ed. by), op. cit., p. 36.

"Betrayal! Reggini, *once again* the parties have deceived and betrayed us" also invited "the Parliamentarians, Regional, Provincial and Municipal Councillors of Reggio to assume the responsibilities that the particular seriousness of the moment requires"<sup>34</sup>. By standing by the people and deserting the institutional seats, he spread an ambiguous message that attests how even anti-state motives spread and turned on in the Revolt.

Another phenomenon was demonstrations characterised by victimhood, whereby assorted conspirations and betrayals were reported, and a sort of martyrological propensity was created. It is not surprising that the demonstrations were accompanied (in addition to numerous acts of violence, very different in their deadliness) also by the characteristic macabre processions with hanging dummies - complete with placards bearing the names of the various 'Mancini', 'Misasi' and other 'enemy' politicians - and by bonfires in the squares where to give them, in effigy, as scapegoats, what they "deserved"<sup>35</sup>.

Victimhood became a characteristic feature of the memories of the events of 1970, a victimhood mixed with anger which represented the other side of the manifestations of wounded pride and - more recently, it can be assumed - of the weakening of the tradition of tales and slogans linked to that moment, since victimhood and resignation can correspond<sup>36</sup>.

### **Memory, Public Use of History, Oblivion**

This research doesn't intend to follow the phases of the debate around the riots and the subsequent period (which, for a long time, remained focused on the contrast between those who supported the genuineness of the protests and those who emphasised its exploitation by the right wing).

With the end of the cycle of struggles, for over a decade even society and the political-cultural world in Reggio devoted very little attention to the Revolt, burdened by the sign of defeat, humiliation and the stigma of upheaval born resulting from southern backwardness<sup>37</sup>.

A certain resurgence of attention on the events approximately coincided with the crisis of the First Republic. That was because, at a national level, a collapse of the party system referable to the constituent arc took place, and this represented the crisis of the partitocracy which had been the controversial target of an 'ideological' nature that had united the largest part of the Reggio movement in 1970. Moreover, in Reggio, the phase change was marked by the so-called Reggio *tangentopoli*, which arose from the confessions of the former DC mayor Agatino Licandro<sup>38</sup>, who, by showing the collusion between power and the local mafia, earned the nickname 'mafiopoli' by the local media. Reggio's administrations turned right in the early 2000s and returned to refer to 1970, thus riding a real electoral parochialism - although Leftist Mayor Italo Falcomatà, who had a very important role between 1993 and 2001, dedicated a monument to the fallen of the uprising, seeking to wrest the monopoly of memory from the far-right-. A significant example of public use, but also of history, of symbols and memory, is the decision by Mayor Giuseppe Scopelliti of "Alleanza Nazionale" to erect a stele in honour of Ciccio Franco, who died in 1991, and to dedicate the "Arena dello Stretto" to

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34 Franco Arcidiaco & Daniela Pellicanò (eds.). *Cit.*, p. 20, italics mine

35 Photographic evidence already in Lombardi Satriani, Luigi M. *Reggio Calabria: rivolta e strumentalizzazione*. Vibo Valentia: Qualecultura, 1971, p.84. This is the first edition of the 1979 text already cited above.

36 "The ideology of defeat and betrayal remains as the substratum of the city's collective identity, social action conforms accordingly," Vincenzo Bova. *Cit.*, p.42, which implies both the inability to oppose the reconstitution of opaque mechanisms of power and distrust of institutions.

37 The sense in which this backwardness is to be understood, if such a judgment is justified, and whether it is more of a cultural or at bottom a socioeconomic issue, and thus whether such backwardness is historical or structural, continues to divide opinion even today: for some thoughts on this, see Chapter 3, where reference is made to research that seeks to articulate the sociocultural versus the socioeconomic level.

38 Agatino Licandro - Aldo Varano. *La città dolente. Confessioni di un sindaco corrotto*. Turin: Einaudi, 1993: keep in mind that the epithet *città dolente* that is "sorrowful city" also appeared on the placards of the rioters in 1970 in Reggio. For a framing, one can read: "La guerra di mafia e la «tangentopoli reggina»". In Antonella Coco. *La distanza sociale. Reggio Calabria: le condizioni sociali in una città del Sud*. Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2011, p. 34 ff.

him, with the new name of “Senator Ciccio Franco Amphitheatre”<sup>39</sup>.

Concurrently with these initiatives, new works, both historiographical and fictional, have been dedicated to the uprisings, but this flare-up of cultural, political and civil attention does not seem to have taken root<sup>40</sup>. On the other hand, it should be considered how much attention was aroused by the initiatives of Scopelliti's centre-right administration, which then came to a traumatic end<sup>41</sup>, inaugurating a new phase of great difficulty for the city.

Some intellectuals and exponents of the cultural world involved in political and social life such as Tonino Perna<sup>42</sup>, Franco Arcidiaco or Fabio Cuzzola reflected and commemorated the events of 1970 and subsequent events, collaborating with the new administrative course, inaugurated by the election of Giuseppe Falcomatà as mayor, son of Italo. The course ended with his suspension due to a conviction for abuse of office. Unfortunately, very little of the reflections produced has been reflected in the citizens' consciousness, and it may have to be concluded that the events of Reggio now only raise attention in reference to the supposed far right conspirations and criminal and terrorist aspects.

However, a weight to the modest transfer of attention from the media to that of Reggio Calabria society is due to the lack of commitment of trade unions and political parties. In the middle of the crisis of consensus and authority in the Calabrian city as almost everywhere else, a significant exception is represented by the ANPI of the Province of Reggio Calabria, which has dedicated a series of debates to the fiftieth anniversary of the Revolt, held in summer 2020, with the participation of historians, journalists, and other personalities. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the YouTube channel, on which these discussions were broadcasted and recorded, has only a few dozen subscribers and that the views amount to a few hundred in all<sup>43</sup>.

However, with reference to the hypotheses of far-right conspirations, the enquiries that reopened the case of the Gioia Tauro bombing<sup>44</sup> - completely absent from the national public memory<sup>45</sup> - have caused a particular stir. Although they have not led to the sentence of the material executors and alleged instigators, given the passage of years, they have led, as the President of the Republic Mattarella<sup>46</sup> declared in 2020, to ascertain the neo-fascist matrix of that crime, with connections between the organisers of the uprisings.

It is remarkable, however, that the Gioia Tauro massacre has not risen, in the national memory, to the prominence rightly attributed to episodes such as the Bologna or Piazza Fontana bombings. Undoubtedly, the very little attention that local society has given to that event also contributed to that. One of the reasons consists in the obvious contradiction that would be presented to those who, wishing to celebrate, and in this light commemorate, the 1970 uprisings, would also have to commemorate a heinous crime in which elements that contributed decisively to the development of the same uprisings

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39 Franco, the populist leader of the uprising of 1970, was elected and remained senator from 1972 until his death in 1991.

40 The considerations that follow arise from discussions held with Prof. Tonino Perna (university lecturer and former deputy mayor), Franco Arcidiaco (formerly mayor Giuseppe Falcomatà's Culture delegate) and Dr. Antonella Cuzzocrea in charge of the *Città del Sole* publishing house, and with Prof. Fabio Cuzzola, all of whom agree on the very scarce presence of a memory of the events of 1970 in Calabrian society and in particular among the younger generations-a reality that can be seen if one considers the small number of public debate initiatives and in particular in schools, as the same personalities surveyed pointed out. One may see for example the interview released by Arcidiaco in the *Gazzetta del Sud* of March 25, 2020.

41 Scopelliti later became governor of the same region, a fact as significant as the investigations that led him to be convicted of abuse of office in reference to his management of the Reggio municipality (which, by the way, in 2012, under the management of the former deputy mayor who later took over, would find itself to be the first administration of a provincial capital dissolved for mafia infiltration).

42 Perna ended his term as delegate of the mayor in controversy with Falcomatà, who has since been convicted of abuse of office and had to leave office.

43 The ANPI channel in question: [www.youtube.com/channel/UCKC9PR99YhMZgwFHz25mbpg/videos](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKC9PR99YhMZgwFHz25mbpg/videos)

44 On the findings of the judicial investigations and a historiographical framing of them, the summarizing work of Agostino Raso, op. cit. turns out to be valuable, most recently.

45 See Ketì Ricciardi's documentary *Gioia Tauro. Una strage dimenticata*, del 2016.

46 [www.quirinale.it/elementi/49798](http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/49798).



were implicated (see above). In conclusion, perhaps this explains even better how the episcopate<sup>47</sup> of Reggio continued, in recent years, to give symbolic importance to 1970 events - which, as we have seen, had played a central role in that popular uprising – whereas it can be noticed the almost total absence of initiatives by the administration. It was not only because of judicial difficulties but also because of the pandemic emergency. In March 2020, a committee for the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Revolt in Reggio Calabria had been set up<sup>48</sup>, but it didn't realized so far the project to establish a museum dedicated to the uprising<sup>49</sup>.

### 3. Socio-economic framework of the city of Reggio before and after the revolt

This paragraph intends to turn our attention to the general evolution of society in Reggio Calabria up to the present day, in order to formulate an interpretative hypothesis of the presence of memories of the Revolt, making use in particular of a conceptual tool such as that of "social distance" to be placed alongside the well-known ones of "exploitation" and "clientelism"<sup>50</sup>.

With regard to the Reggio Revolt, an analysis in terms of exploitation has been developed starting from the exemplary work<sup>51</sup> of Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani. He invested the events of 1970 with great problematic commitment, in order to safeguard the potential, at least in theory, of democratic development represented by those upheavals (Satriani published the first edition of his research in 1971), by stigmatising the specific responsibilities of the local political classes that imposed a direction that was less and less compatible with a discourse marked by social progress, and polemising with those readings that too hastily dismissed the Revolt as the product of a backward culture, sparing themselves further critical in-depth sociological analysis.

Recently, however, scientific attention on the social framework has characterised some research such as that of Antonella Coco<sup>52</sup>, who, also relying on the works of previous interpreters such as Pietro Fantozzi and Vincenzo Bova, made use of the category of social distance to illuminate the situation in Reggio Calabria, with a longer-term perspective.

In the sociological debate, Coco explains, there are at least two different understandings of the concept of social distance. The first “relates to the structural dimensions of the concept and considers social distance as the interval separating in social space the position of individuals belonging to different groups, such as social classes and strata, ethnic or religious groups. On the other hand, the second concerns the subjective and psychological dimensions of the concept understood as the degree of sympathetic understanding that an individual possesses towards another person belonging to a

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47 In 2000, the bishop issued a joint statement with scholar and lecturer Pasquale Amato, author of several publications on the Revolt, proposing to establish July 14 as a public holiday for the city, because exactly on that date, on which the uprisings are made to begin, Reggio itself would have been founded (in the 8th century B.C.): <https://www.avveniredicalabria.it/luglio-non-solo-mese-della-rivolta-la-proposta-di-monsignor-nunnari-e-amato/>. Recently, in general, it has been mainly the local Church that has made itself the bearer of a memory of 1970, but from a perspective that is in essence more ethical than political, without favouring openings to reflections of a properly historiographical nature, in continuity with the traditional rhetoric that characterized the Riots (see supra). For the important role played by Archbishop Ferro during the Uprising, one can see also Di Stefano, M. *I moti di Reggio del '70. Le due facce della medaglia*. Reggio Calabria: Città del Sole edizioni, 2017.

48 Town executive committee resolution n.30/2020 (Del. G.C. 30/2020).

49 Among other things, the reference to the celebration of events that are still considered mournful, as evidenced by the annual ceremony in honor of the victims held by the municipal authorities every July 14, aroused perplexity: see Santo Strati's arguments at <https://calabria.live/linutile-rivalita-reggio-catanzaroe-antistorica-e-va-contro-la-crescita/>. Moreover, ideological divisions were also manifested on this occasion because an alternative *Comitato 14 luglio* arose, consisting of the right-wingers who had been excluded from the "official" committee: <https://www.reggiotoday.it/cronaca/50-anniversario-rivolta-nasce-comitato-destra.html>.

50 On clientelism see, e.g. Simona Piattoni. *Il clientelismo. L'Italia in prospettiva comparata*. Rome: Carocci, 2005.

51 Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani. *Rivolta e strumentalizzazioni*. Cit.

52 Antonella Coco. *La distanza sociale. Reggio Calabria: le condizioni sociali in una città del Sud*. Cit.

different group and which is elaborated in a sense of greater intimacy or estrangement<sup>53</sup>. For the former, “indicators of educational level, profession, income and housing” are considered, while subjectivity takes into account “the perceptions and concrete practices of distancing enacted by individuals<sup>54</sup>”. Measuring social distance in effect measures “the relational unavailability and closure - of varying intensity - of a subject with respect to others perceived and recognised as different [...] resulting from the dynamic interweaving of factors located on three different dimensions of space, in turn in a relationship of reciprocal co-production: physical, symbolic and geometric<sup>55</sup>”.

We therefore refer to social distance in order to better understand the processes of social inhomogeneity and “it is believed that between stratification and social distance there is a reciprocal influence, and the former is considered both the producer and the product of the latter<sup>56</sup>”.

On this theoretical basis, Coco proposed a sociological reading of the events in Reggio Calabria so far, showing how concrete socio-economic and urban-demographic dynamisms have determined an ever-increasing inhomogeneity and social distance between individuals and groups in the Calabrian city, characterising Reggio's historical developments already before the Revolt and worsening thereafter, up to the present. In fact, “as in other urban areas of the South, a weak social regulation was produced, which had elites as its main protagonists [...] whose concrete actions have distanced themselves from the protection of collective goods<sup>57</sup>. It can be noticed “the absence of ruling classes capable of guiding the city, elaborating a vision projected into the future” for which there are no “processes of social organisation nor a framework of stable interaction between several actors” in view of collective strategic choices, precisely because of the elites' inability “to elaborate new visions, mobilise resources” and at the same time “build trust, favour the articulation of the interests of the various social groups<sup>58</sup>”. Therefore, Reggio is characterised by a multiplicity of realities that “coexist in a relationship of physical proximity and strong social and cultural differentiation”, due above all to the dynamics of irrational distribution of resources “of which the phenomena of inequality and social distance are the outcome”. The reason can be found in the prominence of groups born from the intertwining of politics and crime that have prevented “any function of social cohesion” and “social integration” potentially linked to available funding: and this is to the detriment of the weakest groups, which has triggered further social disintegration<sup>59</sup>”.

Coco concludes that research on the structural factors of social distance was the premise for an analysis of the relative subjective dimension, again referring to suggestions dating back to Simmel. If then “among the elements of differentiation perceived as indicators of distance, there are factors pertaining to a disadvantaged socio-economic condition” as well as “to the cultural sphere[...] and the possibility of intertwining relations with politics”, this is the same as saying that in the “subjective social distance one finds the factors of social inequality” together with elements to be brought back to “the cultural sphere<sup>60</sup>”. Coco explains how, from research in the field, residents with a lower economic-cultural level perceive “the existence of social and cultural barriers that impede the processes of integration<sup>61</sup>”. On the other hand, in Reggio Calabria, research shows “a tendency to

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53 *Ibidem*, p. 8.

54 Ivi, pp. 8-9

55 Vincenzo Cesareo (Ed. by). *La distanza sociale. Una ricerca nelle aree urbane italiane*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2007, p. 11. Quoted by A. Coco. *Cit.*, p. 9.

56 A. Coco. *Cit.*, p. 9.

57 Pietro Fantozzi. *Familismo amorale o regolazione sociale debole?* In *Quaderni di Sociologia*, 51, 44, pp.1 85-94, 2007. Quoted by Coco. *Cit.*, p.185.

58 *Ibidem*.

59 *Ibidem*, p.186

60 *Ibidem*, p.190

61 *Ibidem*, p.191

exclude the lower-middle classes from the sphere of cultural activities<sup>62</sup>" and even a different breadth of relational networks deployed in the urban area between the upper-middle and lower-middle classes of the population<sup>63</sup>.

At the time of the events of 1970, Reggio Calabria had 165,000 inhabitants and was the most populous city in the region: there had been a chaotic urban boom, which had evidently reached a limit. The precocious, and deleterious, enlargement of Reggio had been linked to the so-called economy of the emergency<sup>64</sup> following the very serious crisis that had hit the Strait of Messina after the catastrophic seaquake that had struck it in 1908 (but already in 1783).

For all these and other reasons, agriculture was in dire straits, trade was languishing, industry was almost non-existent, and Reggio's economy was by now a *dependent one*, entirely turned to support in a patronage<sup>65</sup> from the local political class, which acted as a mediator<sup>66</sup> with the sources of economic wealth, in northern Italy and the political capital city.

The tertiary sector, with public services and commerce mutually linked and therefore equally dependent on transfers, and the construction sector, undergoing a chaotic expansion due to the action of speculation<sup>67</sup> and with the function of housing for the conspicuous immigration from the countryside (in the middle of a recession) represented the only driving sectors - but in fact penalising in the long run -. Reggio had seen a decline in activities related to maritime trade, fishing, and trade with Sicily, and had not developed an appreciable interaction with inland Calabria.

All this characterised "a model of growth increasingly centred on the building and services block, that is to say, on the ability of Reggio's ruling classes to intercept and capture external resources and financial opportunities capable of sustaining incomes [...] without, however, succeeding in activating endogenous development mechanisms"<sup>68</sup>.

What was the implication of this economic dynamic on the socio-cultural level? Coco again explains<sup>69</sup> that "the consequences[...] were very relevant not only in terms of the repercussions on employment, but also with regard [...] to the affirmation of the individual as an autonomous subject[...] and with regard to the affirmation of collective identities, without favouring the emergence of forms of collective action for the conquest of civil and social rights". Therefore, the Revolt can be considered "symptomatic of the processes of degradation of the southern urban realities [...] and of the regulatory crisis related both to the southern patronage system and to the Italian political and institutional system"<sup>70</sup>. For all these reasons it is fair to say that "the revolt of Reggio highlighted the opposition between interests of a particularistic nature and the need to regulate processes of change according to [...] collective criteria"<sup>71</sup>.

On the other hand, "Reggio's history is dominated by the pervasiveness of patronage phenomena" with the political dimension considered by the population "as a space for exchange and favours instead of rights and citizenship", with the result that this pervasive patronage system sees as

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62 *Ibidem*.

63 In Coco's work, in fact, reference is made to categories such as lower and upper and their location in specific cut-outs of the territory (e.g., whether in neighbourhoods characterized by the proximity of residents of different economic and cultural levels or not): the reading presented here presumes to be fully consistent with the cited indications.

64 D. Cersosimo. Un modello di economia dell'emergenza. In Mazza, F. (Editor), *Reggio Calabria. Storia, cultura, economia*. Soveria Mannelli (CZ): Rubbettino, 1993.

65 See in this regard, by way of example, Carlo Trigilia. *Sviluppo senza autonomia*. Bologna: il Mulino, 1992.

66 Gabriella Gribaudo. *Mediatori. Antropologia del potere democristiano nel Mezzogiorno*. Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991.

67 The subject is treated in A. Coco. "Gli anni sessanta e settanta: l'«edificazione spontanea»". *Cit.*, p. 27 ff. But on the events of Reggio's chaotic housing expansion there is no lack of documentation and analysis produced over the years.

68 Cersosimo. *Cit.*, pp. 373-74.

69 A. Coco. *Cit.*, pp.25-26.

70 *Ibidem*, p. 31

71 Pietro Fantozzi, *Politica, clientela e regolazione sociale*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 1993, p. 97. Quoted by Coco, op. cit., p. 31.

protagonists not the citizens, but “the administrators, hence the political class<sup>72</sup>”. Moreover, “the patronage nature of mediation produced [...] distrust towards the social organisation as a whole<sup>73</sup>”. If this was the social configuration, essentially characterised by a vertical and dependent regime, which ascended from Rome and, passing through the local political class, reached the chaotic peripheries, then “the movement of revolt [...] can be interpreted as a consequence of the existing fracture between civil society, political society and institutions<sup>74</sup>”. However, if the movement swept away to a large extent the old ruling class, according to Coco, it is fair to say that it did not produce innovation and indeed with its typical development and failure contributed “in a decisive manner to the progressive accentuation of the state of degradation and marginalisation of the urban reality in Reggio Calabria<sup>75</sup>”. Indeed, it has “determined a contraction of both interpersonal and institutional trust and of the possibilities of democratic participation” to the detriment of any project inspired by the search for the common good and with the parallel “accentuation of the phenomena of power management characterized by the manipulation of the political-institutional dimension for personalist purposes<sup>76</sup>”, which unfortunately well explains the subsequent impressive expansion of underworld circuits and related business connections. Actually, “the events of the seventies provoked a fracture” and constituted “a moment of decisive rupture with the State, with legality and also with an (albeit questionable) cultural, administrative and political homogeneity<sup>77</sup>” as well as “a fracture in the historical formation of the public spirit in Reggio Calabria<sup>78</sup>” with the abandonment of hope in a collective rebirth.

Rather than initiating a rebirth, the events of 1970-71 accelerated a deterioration, which later reached truly dramatic levels, especially considering how in 1971 it had been decided to focus on industries for the development of Reggio, which remained only on paper.

On the political-administrative level, following the events of 1970-71, there was a change of political personnel, but the social processes certainly did not find a better regulation, as mentioned. Therefore, the permanent willingness to exploit the historical memories, and specifically those of the Revolt, should not be surprising, considering the “rhythm” assumed by the re-evocations, their tone and the agents who promote them with episodic electoral purposes (see above).

If it is true that “cities, as subjects of political action, are called upon to develop specific capacities of social organisation [...] and strategies of integration between the communities present in them<sup>79</sup>”, one can see how the peculiar socio-economic conformation and historical events did not allow Reggio Calabria to “be a city” in this sense. The Revolt, in fact, although launched and managed by minorities, represented a phenomenon that was as genuine and visceral, where, however, in some way impolitic watchwords (“dignity”, “identity”) represented the only possible factor for aggregating the multiplicity of particularisms that characterised Reggio. Having defeated, in this sense, the “*Regginità*”, the result, certainly not inevitable, but undeniable, was that “implosion” of the movement (in the end, of a society) which Bova discusses in his inescapable analysis<sup>80</sup>.

If the Revolt was born from the absence of politics, understood as a project of integration and emancipation, and represented an attempt to respond to the “challenge” - represented by the new regional order – an attempt based on hyper-political motives and rhetoric, it failed precisely “due to the inability to create a new subject entitled to manage power and the representation of interests” and for the “inability to give consistency to systems of relations and solidarity” by not transferring “into

72 A. Coco. *Cit.*, p. 46

73 Pietro Fantozzi. *Politica, clientela e regolazione sociale. Cit.*, p. 96. Quoted by Coco, op. cit., p.32

74 A. Coco. *Cit.*, p. 32.

75 V. Bova. *Cit.* p. 37.

76 A. Coco. *Cit.*, p. 34, referring to Bova's earlier reflections.

77 Interview with an associationist quoted in Coco. *Cit.*, p. 33.

78 Cersosimo. *Cit.*, p. 383.

79 A. Coco. *Cit.*, p.7 with particular reference to Arnaldo Bagnasco's reflections.

80 V. Bova. *Cit.*.

daily practice the strong identity that had generated it<sup>81</sup>". In short, it failed the translation into a policy, into a project capable of going beyond that condition of emergency, which had generated the mobilisation.

Bova then poses the problem of what remains of a defeated movement, and in the case in question he notes how only "a shattered social body" remains with a residual feeling of common belonging based on "a feeling of defeat and generalised mistrust". Whereby "the experience of participation is transformed into ideologism, into a deep-rooted memory of what was perceived as a betrayal, without this common feeling finding places of interpretation, synthesis and propositional constructions". So, what remains is "a sort of mythical reference, as unquestionable as it is unsuitable to concretise a point of mediation between individual and collective interests<sup>82</sup>". Ultimately, "the place of memory" in reference to the Revolt "struggles to be the place of the present and the future". Life choices are centred entirely "on individual interests" since "mythical identity is detached from the concreteness of relationships", so that "*Regginità*, the 'we', dissolves in the daily actions of individuals"<sup>83</sup> driven only by the needs of the moment.

### **Conclusion: A society between memory and oblivion**

To conclude, we would like to propose an interpretation of the current situation, characterised, as we have said, by a very faint presence of the memory of the events of 1970-71 - which means, above all, a scarce attention to the debate that revolves around them and that develops from the riots themselves.

Half a century later and looking at the present time, it must be noted that in the discourse circulating in society as a whole, in Reggio Calabria and Calabria in general, the memories of 1970 re-emerge, as we have seen, only in connection with episodic political-electoral initiatives, of an instrumental nature, or are confined to the debate of relatively small circles and academic work that unfortunately - beyond the intentions - seems to interest only a limited number of intellectuals and researchers: there is almost no trace of "bottom-up" initiatives or broader involvement.

Indeed, the events of 1970 represented a trauma<sup>84</sup>, which affected an already fragile society, and which determined those further worsening dynamics, in terms of increased dependency, disintegration, social anomie documented by the research cited above. To the wounds linked to the violence that took place in the city, and to the defeat itself, around a point of honour and placed in defence of the very dignity of a community, one must add the stigma that these events attracted, producing a kind of victimhood to the nth degree, which resulted truly deleterious.

However, as is well known, Jeffrey Alexander<sup>85</sup> has brought to attention how every trauma must be understood not as a fact in itself, but as the outcome of a complex process of signification and cultural and narrative appropriation, which extends to ever wider circles and gives rise to a new interpretative paradigm: a product of social reconstruction, linked to a path of redefinition of collective identity.

In Reggio Calabria, this did not happen, probably because the Reggio Revolt was an episode that, from beginning to end, was hegemonised, not by fascism, but by the local political-administrative, entrepreneurial, or cultural notabilities, and the result was the defeat and therefore the mere replacement of these classes, without the affirmation of a new ruling class that was no longer inclined to think in particularistic terms. Moreover, as it has been said, that social situation characterised by de-structuring, went even further: in this way, a social group, even a minority one, capable of or interested in becoming the bearer of a process of social reconstruction of the memory - according to the paradigm outlined by Alexander - never emerged. So that, one could say that the Reggio uprisings constituted a historical trauma, but not a social trauma, that is, a socially re-elaborated trauma.

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81 V. Bova. *Cit.*, p. 92.

82 V. Bova. *Cit.*, p. 93.

83 *Ibidem*.

84 As could be read in the analysis of Bova, Coco and especially Cersosimo.

85 Jeffrey Alexander. *Trauma. La rappresentazione sociale del dolore*. Roma: Meltemi, 2018.

Recently, the historian Gabriella Gribaudi has developed profound reflections on this problem<sup>86</sup>, emphasising how the most dramatic life events can set in motion dynamics and paths of 'memory and oblivion', closely linked to the historical-social context, so that forgetting itself can become the subject of a particular reflection, to be placed at the centre of trauma studies, trying to understand the specific reasons and motivations. It is then a well-established acquisition that every memory, every emergence of memories - and of trauma - must be related to those specific 'regimes of historicity' and 'regimes of memory'<sup>87</sup>, which sometimes allow and sometimes prevent the elaboration, articulation and broad communication (sharing) of trauma.

Perhaps, then, in addition to regimes of historicity and memory we should focus on specific 'regimes of sociality' related to whether and how memories of historical trauma emerge, because even silence or forgetting are, in socio-historical terms, facts, 'activities', with exemplary significance.

On the one hand, in fact, silence can represent a way to deal with historical traumas, and to survive, when a collective does not seem to be offered the space for alternative scenarios.

On the other, considering how, also according to Walter Benjamin<sup>88</sup>, each subject begins a process of affirmation and re-appropriation of identity exactly when he or she takes the floor and begins to narrate his or her own story, so as to transform it into true and authentically lived experience, so as to emerge from passivity and become the master of his or her own destiny, one must note the difficulties that have burdened the population of Reggio.

The wide social distance analysed by Coco (see above) that characterised and still characterises the city has prevented the "spiral of signification" to which Alexander links the affirmation, in the public sphere, of trauma memories, from unfolding. For the scholar, in fact, it is the characteristic of threat to social identity that can lead a trauma to take on a truly collective relevance, and yet from the outset the slogans of the Revolt represented, in some respects, a means of instrumentalising the very identity of Reggio (the "Regginità") for the benefit of a minority, which by leaving the scene was unable to pass the baton to any other component of the population. Actually, the aggregative and identity factor constituted by the claim of the capital and the consequent mobilisation, were genuine. But the rioters, by placing in the capital the centre of every possible meaning and claim, had imprinted their discourses with a language that excluded any compromise, and this 'hyper-political' line perhaps did not facilitate the elaboration of further visions, which used the memories of the uprisings as a 'prism', which remained as crystallised in the bed of a traditionalist and victimistic rhetoric.

That of the identity and dignity linked to the status of capital was in fact a reason, in some ways mythical, that left no room for a more shared rational reading of the political and social situation, also because the further widening of social distances made it even more arduous to articulate new aggregations and different re-appropriations of the events of 1970, leaving instead the relative memory available for any 'public use', for any new exploitation, instead of being a factor of subjectivation. It was at this juncture that the implosion of the city movement - mentioned (see above) by Bova - and the subsequent further social destructuring took place.

Therefore, it can be hypothesised that both the same social conformation - with the prevalence of vertical and patronage ties, the scarce widespread solidarity, and the presence of a large section of the population in conditions of dependence and economic precariousness - which had favoured the 'explosion' of the Revolt, and the subsequent 'implosion', have favoured a process of erosion of memory and, in any case, a rarefied and stumbling communication. So that, instead of the 'spiral of signification' of which Alexander speaks, the result has been the unfolding of such a parabolic mnemonic timeframe which, if one considers the Reggio Calabria overall social space, it seems to tend towards oblivion.

This line of research may perhaps merit further verification and in-depth study both by means of appropriate field surveys, through interviews or statistical research, and by developing comparisons with similar historical events.

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86 Gabriella Gribaudi. *La memoria, i traumi, la storia. La guerra e le catastrofi nel Novecento*. Roma: Viella, 2020.

87 See François Hartog. *Regimi di storicità*. Palermo: Sellerio, 2007. Related to "regimes of historicity", on which French hermeneutics scholar Johann Michel later modelled the concept of "memorial regime."

88 Walter Benjamin. *Saggi e frammenti*. Torino: Einaudi, 2014.

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## Journals

### *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane*

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Edited by *Paolo Migone*\*

### **Issue no. 1, 2022, Volume 56**

Paolo Migone, *Editorial* [full-text: [www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70602/It](http://www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70602/It)]

Ezio Sanavio, *A Consensus Conference on psychological therapies for anxiety and depressive disorders*

**Abstract.** *A Consensus Conference on psychological therapies for anxiety and depression* concluded its work, in the interest of patients and their families, the universities system, continuing education agencies, National Health Service, researchers and Italian funding agencies. The committees of experts have reviewed the scientific literature and prepared a document that was submitted to a Jury, chaired by Silvio Garattini. These are some of the conclusions: (1) not all therapies should be considered first choice treatment, (2) some psychotherapies are cost-effective and more efficacious than medication, (3) these psychotherapies are recommended by the most authoritative international guidelines. Psychotherapies are underutilized in the National Health Service, and patients have to resort to the private market with an intolerable discrimination based on wealth. Methods of unproven efficacy are often used, and adequate information on recent scientific progress is lacking. There is a need for information, training, organizational and transparency interventions, with also deontological implications.

#### *Documents:*

Silvio Brusaferrò, *Introduction to the Final Document of the Consensus Conference* [full-text: [www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70604/It](http://www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70604/It)]

Silvio Garattini, *Presentation of the Final Document of the "Consensus Conference"* [full-text: [www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70605/It](http://www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70605/It)]

Angelo Barbato, Antonello D'Elia, Pierluigi Politi, Fabrizio Starace, Sarantis Thanopoulos, *A Manifesto for Mental Health* [full-text: [www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70606/It](http://www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70606/It)]

CNSP, FIAP, SIPSIC, *A proposal for the implementation of interventions in mental health* [full-text: [www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70607/It](http://www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70607/It)]

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**Abstract.** The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the serious difficulties of the mental health field due to the progressive cuts in staff and the suffering in the population and mental health professionals themselves. The three associations CNSP, FIAP and SIPSIC, that represent the majority of Italian psychotherapists of different orientations, ask for targeted interventions, including the following: compliance and updating of the Essential Levels of Care (LEA) in the public sector; increase in the number of psychotherapists; recognition of the need for psychotherapeutic interventions targeted to the different forms of distress and life cycle phases; conventions between the National Health Service and the Clinical centers of schools of psychotherapy linked to scientific associations.

Cesare Romano, *The autobiographical roots of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology*

**Abstract.** Starting from the acknowledgment that a researcher's emotional life and personal history may affect his theoretical constructs, it is argued, according to some autobiographical memories of Alfred Adler, that his childhood illness affected the theoretical construction of his Individual Psychology: in particular, organ inferiority, will to power, and masculine protest. Such key aspects of his personal theory lead us to think that his childhood experiences largely molded his theorizing. It is also hypothesized that the rivalry with his eldest brother Sigmund shaped his rivalry towards Freud.

*Comments on Cesare Romano's paper:*

Giansecondo Mazzoli, *Alfred Adler and Individual Psychology between simplifications and complexity*

**Abstract.** This comment on Sergio Romano's (2022) article tries to integrate this paper that presents correctly, however in a partial way, the relationship between some aspects of Alfred Adler's biography and his psychological hypotheses that contributed to the construction of the theoretical edifice of his Individual Psychology. Despite its conciseness, this comment integrates what is not fully described in Romano's paper, and it is also an opportunity to have a more complete view of Alfred Adler's theory. The commonplace argument that has often circulated regarding Individual Psychology is briefly discussed: it is often said that Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology is a simple theory, easily described with the use of few key concepts. It is argued, instead, that it is a theory that opens up numerous perspectives for understanding the complexity of mental functioning which, in this commentary, is briefly described.

Giorgio Meneguz, *Is Adler's Individual Psychology nothing but self-mirroring?*

**Abstract.** In this brief comment on Romano's (2022) paper "The autobiographical roots of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology", it is questioned whether it is methodologically correct to find in the narration of Alfred Adler's dramatic childhood experiences the only radical foundation of the construction of his theoretical system and of the conflict with Freud.

Erich Fromm, *Freud's concept of sexuality* (1957)

**Abstract.** A lecture given by Erich Fromm on May 28, 1957, at *The New School for Social Research* of New York is translated here in Italian for the first time. This lecture was the last in a series about the main concepts of Freud's psychoanalysis (most of these lectures were not recorded, while this one was recorded and transcribed). Fromm discusses the following topics: Freud's physiological concept of sexuality and the biological concept of sexuality suggested by Fromm; the role of masculinity and femininity; the Freudian concept of the libido; Fromm's theory of human nature, in which he conceptualizes various needs as described in his 1955 book *The Sane Society* (the need for relatedness, the need for rootedness, the need for a sense of identity, the need for transcendence, the need for a frame of orientation and an object of devotion); impacts for the understanding of patients; Freud's technique of free association; the relationship between the analyst and the patient; the importance of dreams; the present situation in psychoanalysis and its future.

Maria Gabriella Pediconi, Glauco Maria Genga, *The juridical conception of love: Giacomo B. Contri, a Freudian after Lacan*

**Abstract.** «From psychoanalysis to juridical thought» (Contri, 1994): this is the direction of the theoretical thinking of Giacomo B. Contri (1941-2022), a Freudian after Lacan, as shown in the articles and interviews published in the journal *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* [Psychotherapy and the Human Sciences] from 1989 to 2016, which we retrace here. Contri develops a revolutionary paradigm, with the twofold result of advancing the science of the unconscious inaugurated by Freud and correcting the errors of his master: «From Lacan I learned to be a Freudian» (Guerrieri & Contri, 1993, p. 103). If the unconscious is a third law after nature and nurture, since the thought elaborates the conditions of satisfaction from the very beginning by means of another person, the psychoanalyst treats the unconscious in crisis by means of the thought itself. The step taken by Contri in 2010 was decisive: noting that a School leaves the teacher/pupil model intact – mass psychology – he founded the *Società Amici del Pensiero “Sigmund Freud”* [Society of Friends of Thought “Sigmund Freud”], thus radicalizing the detachment from the Lacanian paradigm.

Pier Maria Furlan, *Introduction to the Italian edition of Otto F. Kernberg’s 1975 book “Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism”* (1978)

**Abstract.** The Introduction to the Italian edition of Otto F. Kernberg’s book *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (New York: Aronson, 1975) – *Sindromi marginali e narcisismo patologico* (Turin: Boringhieri, 1978, pp. 9-21) – is reprinted. The theoretical and clinical innovations proposed by Kernberg regarding borderline personality disorder and pathological narcissism are discussed in light of some considerations on the developments of psychoanalytic theory. This Introduction is reprinted on the occasion of Pier Maria Furlan’s death, that occurred on January 20, 2022. Pier Maria Furlan was a member of the editorial board of the journal *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* from 1978 to 1991.

## Traces

*Are idiots still useful?*

Pier Francesco Galli, *Introductory note*

Paul Parin, Goldy Parin-Matthèy, *Psychoanalysis and power* (1988)

**Abstract.** Some psychoanalytic considerations on power relationships are made. In particular, the following aspects are discussed: the frequent lack of awareness on power dynamics, the theoretical and practical obstacles to a psychoanalytic understanding of power relations, the differences between patients coming from high or low social classes within the psychoanalytic treatment, and the power dynamics that may occur between analyst and patient, with the influence also of psychoanalytic institutions. This paper was read as introduction to the Third Meeting of the “International Psychoanalytic Network” (*Internationale Psychoanalytische Vernetzung*) entitled “Are idiots still useful?”, held at the *Palazzo delle Stelline*, Milan, Italy, June 3-4, 1988.

Berthold Rothschild, *Introduction to the problem of idiots* (1988)

**Abstract.** The psychoanalysts, as intellectuals, unwittingly might have the role of “useful idiots”, i.e., in the sense of serving the interests of a given system of power or values which they apparently oppose, thus abandoning a critical conception of psychoanalysis. As is well known, the expression “useful idiots” is attributed to Stalin, who used it to define a certain type of intellectuals. The possible role of psychoanalysts as “useful idiots” is discussed in detail in its various declinations and implications, also in the light of the vicissitudes of the movement of leftist psychoanalysts. This paper was read at the Third Meeting of the “International Psychoanalytic Network” (*Internationale Psychoanalytische Vernetzung*) entitled “Are idiots still useful?”, held at the *Palazzo delle Stelline*, Milan, Italy, June 3-4, 1988.

## Discussions

Francesco Giglio, *The unrepresentable navel of trauma* [no. 4/2021]

**Abstract.** Freud, even in the passage from trauma theory to the hypothesis of mere subjective interpretation of trauma, always maintained the idea of the traumatic origin of neuroses. Hence the importance of trauma, a concept that according to Howard Levine (2021) needs greater theoretical consistency and agreement with the psychoanalytic community. Such need, which is both clinical and theoretical, goes from a new attention to the symbolic register to the texture of language and to the painful words that gave birth to the subject. Beyond the sterile contrapositions between real trauma and fantasized trauma, or between body, affects and words, a trauma is characterized by its destructive effects on the symbolic register. The return of childhood trauma in the form of current events refers to the inadequate symbolic transformation of the traumatic event. Clinical work, wherever possible, must therefore focus on words, albeit full of affects, so that old traumatic events cease to repeat themselves and become definitively the past.

## Clinical Cases

*Comments on the case of Sandro* [n. 4/2021]:

Maria Iole Colombini

Marta Angellini

Marigemma Rocco

Adriana Grotta

## Book Reviews

*Book Review Essay*

Simon Baron-Cohen, *I geni della creatività. Come l'autismo guida l'invenzione umana*. Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2021 (original edition: *The Pattern Seekers: How Autism Drives Human Invention*. New York: Basic Books, 2020) (Daniela De Robertis)

*Book Reviews*

Paola Scalari, *L'ascolto del paziente. Uno sguardo interiore*. [Listening to the Patient. An Inner Look] Molfetta (Bari): La Meridiana, 2021 (First Edition: 2018) (Luca Dominianni)

Maria Cristina Calle & Roberta Vitali (editors), *Ascoltare figli e genitori nello spazio della giustizia*. [Listening to Children and Parents for the Court] Sesto San Giovanni (Milan): Mimesis, 2021 (Paola Morra)

Rita Corsa, *Vanda Shrenger Weiss. La prima psicoanalista italiana. La psicoanalisi a Roma in epoca fascista*. [Vanda Shrenger Weiss. The First Woman Psychoanalyst. Psychoanalysis in Rome during Fascism] Preface by Marina Breccia. Rome: Alpes, 2017 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Ferhat Atik, *A Psychoanalyst on His Own Couch: A Biography of Vamik Volkan and His Psychoanalytic and Psychopolitical Concepts*. Bicester, UK: Phoenix, 2019 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Deb Dana, *Esercizi polivagali per la sicurezza e la connessione*. Rome: Fioriti, 2021 (original edition: *Polyvagal Exercises for Safety and Connection*. New York: Norton, 2020) (Francesca Tondi)

Philip Keddy, Rita Signer, Philip Erdberg & Arianna Schneider-Stocking (editors), *Hermann Rorschach's Psychodiagnostics*. Göttingen: Hogrefe, 2021 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

*Books Received*

**Journals** [full-text: [www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70623/It](http://www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/70623/It)]

*The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (IJP), 2021, Volume 102, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (Giulio Fabri Poncemi & Francesca Tondi)

Giulio Fabri Poncemi & Francesca Tondi, *Comment on the IJP*

*British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 2021, Volume 37, no. 4 (Paolo Migone)

*International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 2021, Volume 18, no. 2 (Paolo Migone)

*Ricerca Psicoanalitica*, 2021, Volume 32, no. 3 (Paolo Migone)

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Henri Collomb, *Traditional non-verbal psychotherapies in Africa* (1970)

**Abstract.** The report presented by Henri Collomb (1913-1979) at a conference in Istanbul in 1970 and published in 1972 is translated here into Italian for the first time. The French psychiatrist describes the significance attributed to mental health suffering among the Wolof and Lébou of Senegal, the society's behaviors toward the suffering individual, and the structure of the native therapeutic institutions. Henri Collomb also exposes the traditional healing methods and techniques. Lastly, the article discusses the integration, articulation, and possible conflict between Western psychotherapy and so-called traditional therapeutics, inviting the clinician working in *other* contexts to place himself in a position of listening and deciphering of local nosological representations and healing practices.

Salvatore Inglese, Yassin Dia, *Henri Collomb: Cultural psychiatry and its double*

**Abstract.** This article retraces Henri Collomb's (1913-1979) experience from 1959 to 1978 at the *Centre Hospitalier National Universitaire (CHNU) de Fann*, located in Dakar, and provides a historical framework to one of the most significant texts produced by this French psychiatrist, "Psychothérapies non verbales traditionnelles en Afrique", presented at a conference in Istanbul in 1970 and published in French in 1972, translated into Italian for the first time in the following pages of this journal. In particular, the following topics are explored: the methodologies adopted by the hospital team (multidisciplinary and multilingual), the reconfigurative needs of the hospital space, and the introduction of new clinical tools and methods (presence of a family members or accompanying persons, *pinth*, psychiatric villages), nosological representations and traditional healing techniques, including, in particular, the therapeutic ritual of the *N'döp*.

Maria Ilena Marozza, *Epistemological contaminations. Ernesto de Martino and the development of a complex psychological thought*

**Abstract.** The difficult pursuit of a comparison between anthropology and psychology, undertaken by Ernesto de Martino, raised many perplexities in the Italian cultural landscape of the 1960s. In this paper, first the obstacles he encountered during his research project on cultural apocalypses and end-of-the-world delusions are discussed. Subsequently, the new cultural setting of the 1980s, witnessing the emergence of new paradigms of thought favourable to rethinking the relationship between the individual psyche and the cultural sphere, is described. In this perspective, de Martino's pioneering thought, aimed at understanding how the human presence is intrinsically linked to cultural institutions, paved the way to the development of a complex psychology. The specific contribution of de Martino was to usher, with no prejudice whatsoever, and actually with stringent rigor and in-depth intuition, in an area in which methods of investigation and different types of knowledge about human existence are often undefined, contaminated, and undifferentiated. This is an area that today we can better approach through the various complexity theories, but at that time it was pioneered in Italy by de Martino. This led him to develop an unconventional and original intellectual trajectory, totally unlinked to the prevailing culture, a trajectory that in fact some authors have compared to that of Michel Foucault.

Helmut Thomä, *Lived experience and insight in the genealogy of psychoanalytic techniques: The "new beginning" as a synthesis in the "here and now"* (1983). With an introductory note by Giorgio Meneguz

**Abstract.** Sándor Ferenczi suggested that the patient's lived experience in the relationship with the analyst was the main therapeutic factor. This idea was followed by Michael Balint who added the concept of "new beginning", which is therapeutically effective due to the psychoanalyst's contribution in the "here and now" and not to the patient's regression. After having discussed the relationship between the concept of "new beginning" and the psychoanalytic techniques of the 1930s, unhappily polarized between lived experience and deep understanding (insight), it is suggested a solution to the controversy by restoring the use of a plurality of therapeutic techniques.

## Traces

Paul Parin, *Lies in times of peace. Attempt of a psychoanalytic and ethnological critique of “human rights”* (1997)

**Abstract.** After some general considerations on the topic of human rights, an analysis of the problems highlighted by two disciplines, psychoanalysis and ethnology, is attempted. The psychoanalytic viewpoint helps to understand what are the psychological aspects that favor the respect or the violation of human rights; the ethnological viewpoint, instead, by comparing different cultures allows us to answer questions regarding the diversity of human rights in various social structures, their validity across different countries, and the eventual imposition or conditioning, also through the use of force, of rights other than those of a given culture. Discussing with Muhidin Šarić (author of the 1993 book *Keraterm. Erinnerungen aus einem serbischen Lager* [Keraterm. Memories from a Serbian concentration camp]. Preface by Paul Parin. Klagenfurt: Drava Verlag, 1994), Paul Parin tries to give an explanation of facts that are still unclear.

## Discussions

The students of the fourth year of the Adlerian School of Psychotherapy of Brescia, *Adler on the Procrustean analytical couch. On Cesare Romano’s paper “The autobiographical roots of Alfred Adler’s Individual Psychology”* [n. 1/2022]

**Abstract.** The biography of a person allows us to reconstruct his lifestyle, his personality, and this finds correspondence in his thought. The early recollections which, according to Adler, can provide valuable clues like projective tests and dreams cannot be considered a biography and, especially if taken from multiple sources, must be carefully screened and verified. If you don’t do it, the Individual Psychology is banalized and discredited. Similarly, the important assessment of the position in the family constellation cannot be simplistically transferred to the fruitful contrast of ideas between Freud and Adler, especially now that there is documentary evidence of their debate and the schism of the psychoanalytic movement.

## Clinical Cases

Maria Grazia Sara Sicilia, *The case of Melody*

*Comments on the case of Melody:*

Inge-Martine Pretorius

Annalisa Chiesi

## Book Reviews

Peter-André Alt, *Sigmund Freud. Il medico dell’inconscio. Una biografia*. Preface by Silvia Vegetti Finzi. Milan: Hoepli, 2022 (original edition: *Sigmund Freud: Der Arzt der Moderne. Eine Biographie*. München: C.H. Beck, 2016) (Michele Lualdi)

American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR)*. Washington, D.C.: APA, 2022; American Psychiatric Association, *Desk Reference to the Diagnostic Criteria from DSM-5-TR*. Washington, D.C.: APA, 2022; American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5-TR Classification* (spiral bound). Washington, D.C.: APA, 2022 (Paolo Migone)

Lorenzo Giusti, *La “Bad Company”. Riflessioni psicodinamiche*. [The “Bad Company”. Psychodynamic Reflections] With a DVD. Pineto (Teramo): Epigraphia, 2022 (Antonella Mancini)

Marie Langer, *Frammenti di un’autobiografia. La neutralità impossibile dello psicoanalista*. [Fragments of an Autobiography. The Impossible Neutrality of a Psychoanalyst] Edited by Maria Elena Petrilli. Molfetta (Bari): La Meridiana, 2021 (original edition: in: Marie Langer, Jaime Del Palacio & Enrique Guinsberg, *Memoria, historia y dialogo psicoanalitico*. Mexico City: Folios Ediciones, 1981) (Silvia Marchesini)

J. Christopher Muran & Catherine F. Eubanks, *Il terapeuta sotto pressione. Riparare le rotture dell'alleanza terapeutica*. Prefazione all'edizione italiana di Giancarlo Dimaggio. Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 2021 (original edition: *Therapist Performance under Pressure. Negotiating Emotion, Difference, and Rupture*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2020) (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Davide Tarizzo, *Political Grammars. The Unconscious Foundation of Modern Democracy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021 (Dario Alparone)

*Books Received*

**Journals** [full-text: [www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/72172/It](http://www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/72172/It)]

*Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 2021, Volume 69, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (Jutta Beltz & Paola Raja)

Jutta Beltz & Paola Raja, *Comment on The Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 2021, Volume 90, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Andrea Castiello d'Antonio, *Comment on The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*

*Attachment: New Directions in Psychotherapy and Relational Psychoanalysis*, 2021, Volume 15, no. 2; 2022, Volume 16, no. 1 (Paolo Migone)

*Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy*, 2022, Volume 21, no. 1 (Paolo Migone)

*Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 2022, Year 60, Volume 152 (Paolo Migone)

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**Issue no. 3, 2022, Volume 56**

Mark Solms, *Revision of drive theory*

**Abstract.** A deep revisions of Freud's drive theory is proposed. The main revisions are as follows:

(1) Drives are conscious and are in fact the source of all consciousness. (2) Drive energy is equated with variational free energy and is therefore quantifiable in principle. (3) There are not two drives but many, seven of which may be described as “emotional” as opposed to “bodily” drives. (4) All drives are self-preservative or preservative of the species; there is no death drive at work in the mind. This means, at the mechanistic level, that all drives are homeostatic and anti-entropic. (5) The great task of mental development is to supplement instinctual predictions about how our multiple drive demands may be met and reconciled with each other. This work is done by learning from experience, mainly through voluntary behaviour, which is governed by conscious feelings.

*Interventions:*

Andrea Clarici, *Revisiting the concept of drive from affective neuroscience (Panksepp) to neuropsychoanalysis (Solms): A comment on Mark Solms' paper*

**Abstract.** Mark Solms' revision of the concept of drive represents the latest in a series of his in-depth reviews of the most fundamental Freudian concepts. The movement of neuropsychoanalysis begun in 2000 with the first Congress focused precisely on a neuroscientific definition of affects and emotions. In 2013, Solms proposed a substantial and profound modification of Freud's structural model, motivating his theses which argue that the instinctual *id* can only be conscious. In the current paper, Solms (2021a) reaffirms and re-evaluates the centrality of drive theory in psychoanalysis and neuroscience as a starting point for understanding conscious and unconscious phenomena, in normality as well in pathology.

Otto F. Kernberg, *A note on Mark Solms's paper*

**Abstract.** In the paper “Revision of drive theory” (*Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane*, 2022, 56, 3: 363-422) Mark Solms (2021a) correctly argues that the basic motivational forces are affect systems, activated following the general homeostatic principles that govern biological processes that assure survival and reproduction. However, psychoanalytic object relation theory points to a specifically human, supraordinate integrative motivational system that condenses component affect systems into the affiliative and counteraffiliative motivations described by Freud with the concepts of libido and aggression. They are not “drives” in the psychobiological sense, but profoundly define unconscious intrapsychic conflict and are relevant in clinical psychoanalysis.

Andrea Angelozzi, *Folk psychiatry. Psychiatry between a scientific and a popular image*

**Abstract.** Scientific research in psychiatry is creating a gap in the notions of psychiatry that ordinary people actually possess, similar to the progressive distance between scientific psychology and folk and commonsense psychology. The notions that scientific and folk psychiatry share, and those in which they often differ with counterintuitive aspects, are investigated. After outlining the essential features of the concept of common sense and popular psychology and their most representative theories, the central role that popular concepts play not only in psychiatric theory, in particular in diagnosis, but also in daily practice is underlined. These concepts also involve the image of oneself, of the world and interpersonal relationships, showing the impossibility of a psychiatry that aims to do without the common sense, and the need for a careful mediation with popular psychiatry. This aspect is even more important in practical psychiatry which in many ways is similar to popular psychiatry.

Georg Groddeck, *Speech at the end of the social dinner of the 9<sup>th</sup> International Psychoanalytic Congress (Bad Homburg, 1925)*. With an introductory note by Michele Lualdi

**Abstract.** The psychoanalyst and pioneer of psychosomatics Georg Groddeck (1866-1934) gave talks in three international psychoanalytic congresses, the last one in Bad Homburg in 1925. Here he gave not only a paper but also a speech at the end of the social dinner which brings together all the participants of the congress. And he did not miss the opportunity to return, with his typical wit and impetuosity, to the thorny question of wild analysis and psychoanalytic training, two sides of a coin that was very dear to him. The text of this speech, published here for the first time in Italian, gives us the opportunity to enter, through the eyes of one of the direct participants, into the life of events that helped to orient and shape the training system of psychoanalysis that later evolved to the present day.

## Traces

Pier Francesco Galli, *The logic of interpretation in psychotherapy* (1964). With an introduction by Pier Francesco Galli

**Abstract.** After an introduction to this 1964 talk, some considerations on the logic of interpretation in psychoanalysis and in clinical work are made. Among other things, the role of intuition and the ability of making predictions in terms of probability are discussed, as well as the relationship between clinical and empirical research. (This paper is the transcription of the audio-recording of a talk given at the Fourth training course of the “Milan Group for the Advancement of Psychotherapy” – which since the 1970s took the name of *Psicoterapia e Scienze Umane* – entitled “Theoretical problems and clinical cases”, held in Milan on May 1-4, 1964; after the paper the discussion that followed this talk is published, with interventions by Silvano Arieti, Enzo Codignola, Franco Fornari, Luigi Frighi, Pier Francesco Galli, Mario Moreno, Diego Napolitani, and Enzo Spaltro).

## Clinical Cases

*Comments on the case of Melody* [no. 2/2022]:

Federica Melandri

Rossella Andreoli

Nicoletta Santilli Marcheggiani

Maria Grazia Sara Sicilia

## Book Reviews

*Book Review Essay*

Sergio Benvenuto, *Lo psichiatra e il sesso. Una critica radicale della psichiatria del DSM-5*. [The Psychiatrist and Sex. A Radical Critique to the Psychiatry of DSM-5] Introduction by Pietro Barbetta. Sesto San Giovanni (Milan): Mimesis, 2021 (Euro Pozzi)

*Book Reviews*

Fredric N. Busch, *Psychodynamic Approach to Behavioral Change*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2019 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Francesco Scotti, *Nascita ed evoluzione di una psichiatria di comunità in Umbria* [Birth and Evolution of a Community Psychiatry in the Italian Region of Umbria] (2 volumes). Perugia: Fondazione Alessandro e Tullio Seppilli, 2021 (Volume 1), 2022 (Volume 2) (Paolo Migone)

Paolo Francesco Peloso, *Ritorno a Basaglia? La deistituzionalizzazione nella psichiatria di ogni giorno*. [Return to Basaglia? Deinstitutionalization in Everyday Psychiatry] Genoa: Erga, 2022 (Pietro Pellegrini)

Antonio Semerari. *La relazione terapeutica. Storia, teoria e problemi*. [The Therapeutic Relationship. History, Theory, and Problems] Bari: Laterza, 2022 (Paolo Migone)

James P. Choca & Edward D. Rossini, *Assessment Using the Rorschach Inkblot Test*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2018 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

Walter Charles Langer, *Viaggio al centro della mente di Adolf Hitler*. Introduction by Noemi Heike. Verona: Ginkgo, 2018 (original edition: *A Psychological Analysis of Adolf Hitler. His Life and Legend*. Washington, D.C.: Morale Operations Branch, Office of Strategic Services, 1943. New edition: *The Mind of Adolf Hitler: The Secret Wartime Report*. New York: Basic Books, 1972) (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

*Books Received*

**Journals** [full-text: [www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/71597/It](http://www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/71597/It)]

*Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 2021, Volume 57, no. 3/4 (Paolo Migone)

Paolo Migone, *Comment on Contemporary Psychoanalysis*

*Revue Française de Psychanalyse*, 2021, Volume 85, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 (Mauro Fornaro)

Mauro Fornaro, *Comment on the Revue Française de Psychanalyse*

*Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, 2022, Volume 31 (Paolo Migone)

*Psychoanalytic Social Work*, 2022, Volume 29, no. 1 (Paolo Migone)

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Paolo Migone, *Editorial*

Andrea Angelozzi, *The need for change*

**Abstract.** The introduction to the debate on the current crisis of psychiatric care in Italy is an opportunity to summarize how this crisis, its causes and perspectives are described by those who indicate only delays and incompleteness in the implementation of the reform of Law no. 180 of 1978 and those, instead, who identify structural deficits in the reform itself. The various criticalities are reviewed: from the risk of new asylums to the fragile integration of psychiatric wards in general hospitals; from the limits of involuntary hospital commitment to a renewed idea of dangerousness connected to it; from the rigidity of the Community Mental Health Centers to the unchanged aspect of stigma; from the ambiguity of the concept of evidence-based medicine (EBM) to the changes derived by legislative changes. All this occurs while the lack of resources and innovative proposals are intertwined. It is proposed a change that gives back to mental health its specificity far from the trivializations of popular psychiatry, defines the framework of reference for mental health, draws a new project and a clear model strongly anchored to scientific models, clarifying the necessary resources and limiting local administrative autonomies.

Eugenio Borgna, *Italian psychiatry today*

**Abstract.** Some problems and critical aspects of the state of Italian psychiatry are reviewed today, forty-five years after the Law no. 180/1978 on psychiatry reform. This Law was inspired by the teachings of Franco Basaglia (1924-1980), and inaugurated a new season characterized by the progressive closing of mental hospitals and the beginning of community psychiatry. There are still problematic aspects, for example many mental health professionals are attracted towards a psychiatry that mainly emphasizes the use of medication and the biological aspects of mental suffering. However, the psychiatry reform of 1978, thanks to the deinstitutionalization process and the implementation of community psychiatry, has the possibility to facilitate therapeutic relationships characterized by listening and dialogue, that may lead to respect the dignity of the patient's suffering and to see the use of medication within a psychotherapeutic and sociotherapeutic context. The paragraphs with which this article is divided are the following: "The premises", "The shadows", "The half-lights", "Psychic suffering in its dignity", "Some thoughts of Basaglia", "What is missing today", "The importance of words", "The pandemic", "Some conclusions".

Ivan Cavicchi, *Beyond the Italian Law no. 180/1978 on psychiatric reform*

**Abstract.** There is a full-blown crisis of the mental health system recognized by all but explained in a non-unanimous way. Two approaches are described, "denotative" and "connotative", on the basis of which two theses called, respectively, "unfinished symphony" and "beyond the Law 180", are developed. The first refers to an incomplete reform process that has generated aporias, contradictions, fallacies and paradoxes with which many psychiatrists identify several factors such as the following: changes in the need for care, "manufacturing defects" of Law no. 180/1978, problems of psychiatric services, difficult relationship between public psychiatric services and the private sector, increasing admissions and days of hospitalizations in residential facilities, lack of fight against mental health stigma, stress of mental health professionals and their insufficient training, limited resources. The "depot effect" of these factors, releasing and amplifying other criticalities, leads to a lower credibility linked to a diminished "perceived value" of the mental health system, and testifies to an epistemic crisis linked to a change of the original ideology that could not be transformed into science due to the halting of a reform process that should go beyond Law no. 180 of 1978. If ideology in mental health becomes science, the challenge of the psychiatry reform will be won and the mental health crisis will be resolved.

Paolo Francesco Peloso, *“Back to Basaglia”*: A possible perspective for mental health?

**Abstract.** Some problems addressed in the book *Ritorno a Basaglia? La deistituzionalizzazione nella psichiatria di ogni giorno* [“Back to Basaglia? The deinstitutionalization in everyday psychiatry”] (Peloso, 2022) are discussed. The issue of whether it may be useful for today Italian psychiatry to look back to Basaglia and more generally to the years of struggle that led to the promulgation of Law 180/1978, and whether this is still possible in Italy and in a world that have changed in so many respects, is addressed at three levels: the levels of the mental health professional, of psychiatric services, and of social inclusion. It is concluded that certainly the egalitarian, libertarian and solidarity instances that favored deinstitutionalization and the movement against exclusion seem to have lost strength today, and this makes everything more difficult, especially at the third level. However, probably this is not yet true to the point of inhibiting personal responsibility and the “choice” that each one can make: therefore, Basaglia and his years remain, in many respects, an important point of reference both for mental health professionals and the organization of mental health services.

### Traces

Pier Francesco Galli, *Ten years of groups in Italy* (1970). With an introductory note

**Abstract.** After an introduction by Pier Francesco Galli, the paper presented at a meeting entitled “Ten years of groups in Italy”, organized by Enzo Spaltro (1929-2021) in Milan in May 1970, is published. These are the themes that are discussed, among others: the role of the intellectual, and in particular of the psychoanalyst, in a society in transformation and which is modernizing; the function of group psychological and psychotherapeutic techniques and their possible use in a manipulative way; the importation of theories and techniques and the problem of possible cultural “colonization” by other countries; industrial and organizational psychology and the role of the psychologist in companies; and so on.

### Clinical Cases

Maria Cristina Calle, *The case of Matteo*

*Comments on the case of Matteo:*

Mario Rivardo

Cristiano Lastrucci

### Book Reviews

Nancy McWilliams, *La supervisione. Teoria e pratica psicoanalitiche*. Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2022 (original edition: *Psychoanalytic Supervision*. New York: Guilford, 2021) (Andrea Castiello d’Antonio)

Adriana Grotta & Paola Morra (editors), *Bambini già adulti. Problemi dello sviluppo infantile al tempo di Internet*. [Children Who Are Already Adults. Problems of Child Development in the Age of the Internet] Bologna: Pendragon, 2021 (Pierrette Lavanchy)

Andrea Castiello d’Antonio, *Scegliere lo psicoterapeuta. Una guida per pazienti e terapeuti*. [Choosing the Psychotherapist. A Guide for Patients and Therapists] Florence: Hogrefe, 2022 (Marta Restelli)

Elisabetta Marchiori & Angelo A. Moroni (editors), *Ascolto educativo. Interazioni tra psicoanalisi, pedagogia e clinica dell’età evolutiva*. [Educational Listening. Interactions between Psychoanalysis, Pedagogy and Therapeutic Approach to Childhood] Preface by Roberto Goisis. Afterword by Lenio Rizzo. Padua: Linea Edizioni, 2022 (Adriana Grotta)

Philippe Tissié, *Il caso clinico del viaggiatore sonnambulo*. [The Clinical Case of the Sleepwalking Traveler] Edited, translated, and with an essay by Valeria P. Babini. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2022 (translation of papers by Philippe Tissié published in 1887, 1890, 1896, and 1930) (Andrea Castiello d’Antonio)

Frans de Waal, *Diversi. Le questioni di genere viste con gli occhi di un primatologo*. Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2022 (original edition: *Gender Through the Eyes of a Primatologist*. New York: Norton, 2022) (Silvia Marchesini)

Richard Layard & David M. Clark, *Il potere della terapia psicologica. Come migliorare la vita delle persone e della società*. Prefazione di Paolo Michielin. Firenze: Giunti, 2022 (ediz. orig.: *Thrive: The Power of Psychological Therapy*. London: Penguin, 2014) (Paolo Migone)

Giovanni Maria Ruggiero, Gabriele Caselli & Sandra Sassaroli (editors), *La formulazione del caso in terapia cognitivo-comportamentale. Gestire il processo terapeutico e l'alleanza di lavoro*. Presentation by Marcantonio Spada. Preface by Gerhard Benetka. Trento: Erickson, 2022 (original edition: *CBT Case Formulation as Therapeutic Process*. Cham, CH: Springer, 2021) (Paolo Migone)

#### *Forgotten Books*

Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sesso e repressione sessuale tra i selvaggi*. Turin: Boringhieri, 1969 (original edition: *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*. London: Kegan Paul & Company, 1927) (Antonella Mancini)

#### *Books Received*

#### **Journals** [full-text: [www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/72172/It](http://www.francoangeli.it/rivista/getArticoloFree/72172/It)]

*Psyche. Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse und ihre Anwendungen*, 2021, Volume 75, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9/10, 11 & 12 (Silvano Massa)

Silvano Massa, *Comment on Psyche*

*The Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 2022, Volume 67, no. 3 (Paolo Migone)

*Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 2022, Year 60, Volume 48, no. 2 (Paolo Migone)

*Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria. The Italian Journal of Mental Health*, 2021, Volume 145, nos. 1, 2 & 3 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

*Psicoanalisi*, 2021, Volume 25, nos. 1 & 2 (Andrea Castiello d'Antonio)

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