

Editorial

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This year marks the thirty-first year of publication of *Ricerca Psicoanalitica, Journal of the Relationship in Psychoanalysis*, and the year opened with the death of Michele Minolli, who was its passionate creator and Editor-in-Chief from 1998 to 2009. If this magazine is still around and is being renewed, it is also thanks to Michele. In wishing to express our gratitude towards him, we set ourselves the goal of reflecting on the reasons behind this cultural project and rethink them in the current context. Why was it important to found this journal? What does the name signify? To answer the first question and understand the significance of the second, it is necessary to take a step back, into the recent history of psychoanalysis and in that of the Italian Society of Relationship Psychoanalysis (SIPRe).

Michele Minolli, or simply Michele – as someone who stopped to smoke a cigarette with him simply remembers him and still call him today – was animated by a great desire to know and devote himself to a particular subject by whatever means was necessary: the human being. He was not alone in his intent. Despite his strong presence, his inability not to speak his mind, his irreverent style, he knew well that to get to the bottom of things and move between them, he would need to have a continuous confrontation and find people who were driven by this same desire. Hence, from the end of the 70s, together with a group of colleagues, he began on a journey that led to the foundation of SIPRe and this journal.

For many people Michele represents a founding father or the founding father. For others, he embodies the ability to believe in an idea and take it to its extreme consequences (to use a phrase dear to him). For still others he represents irritation for the constantly provoking questions he asked.

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Michele was this and much more. Certainly, the scope of what he created through SIPRe and its journal, going against the tide with respect to the prevailing psychoanalytic thought of those years, is much broader than the memories of those who knew him and who will always carry him in their hearts. In this particularly significant year we have discussed how we can best bring out the elements that motivated Michele's commitment in order to relaunch them into our present and future. We thought that asking colleagues who were close to him and who travelled alongside him seemed like a good positive way to approach the challenges of SIPRe's current course. Certainly we, too, were tempted to honor or celebrate, and perhaps even to sanctify a little. After all, celebrating or honoring the founding father of a school of thought are reassuring relational positions for those who are heir to the legacy. They represent a way of maintaining a positive connection with those who are no longer with us, of strengthening a sense of identity with those who share a school of thought, and they constitute a refuge from the uncertainty inherent in the journey of those who must set off alone. Thinking of Michele, however, we did not succumb to this temptation and we thought it would be more useful for our Association to test our capacity for consistency in a world that is changing increasingly rapidly and that we now have to face without him. Michele knew the constraints of the relational positions of celebrating, honoring and sanctifying so well that he transformed his whole life, his profession and his teaching into a continuous search for alternative positions. Autonomy, authenticity and personal consistency were for him the ideal relational positions to strive for so that the subjectivity of each person, in any context, could exist and creatively find its way, freeing itself from the constraints of delegating to others and to authority. In this special issue dedicated to reflections on Michele Minolli's thought and his journey, we want to bring together his teachings and promote his very autonomy, authenticity, and personal consistency and thought in those who knew, appreciated, esteemed, or even opposed and fought him. We, too, like Michele, recognizing that we belong to specific and binding cultural, historical, family, relational, somatic configurations, can create a space for something new and original. Maybe this is what Michele would have liked and appreciated for SIPRe and for present and future members.

Fortunately, Michele did not leave us with theoretical truths to keep faith with. Even the few concepts he proposed, such as that of the I-Subject, self-presence, self-consciousness, return to self - often changed several times over the years - remain open and mobile, ways of seeing and relating to human beings and their experience. However, he leaves us with a method: the passionate and continuous search for one's own theoretical truth, one which with the utmost theoretical honesty and self-presence appears most suited to that specific time and space that is our life, always ready to discuss

ideas with those who think differently, to question certainties and to venture down paths that are not well travelled nor legitimized by the professional community. No authority can legitimize good theory and good care; each of us is responsible for the direction of their own life and that of their theoretical tools; each one of us can and must have direct access to their own theoretical truths. Of course, discussing with colleagues and the authors of the past is inevitable and indispensable, but not as a way of seeking consensus and validation, if anything, as a stimulus to verify the consistency and utility of one's thought. Anyone who knew him will remember how Michele was assertive and tenacious in his theoretical statements to the point of provocation, so much so that it was not uncommon for his lectures and seminars to develop into intense debates and clashes where everyone tried to convince the others of the integrity of their own vision. Actually, the tenacity and assertiveness concealed a profound awareness that there are no absolute or revealed theoretical truths, and the endless search for the most suitable concepts, metaphors and words to understand human reality and care is the only guarantee of existence and to affect existence. It was almost as if, as he talked, we were being challenged and provoked into argument, to disagree, to point out differences and nuances. It was a way of flushing people out of their easy and comfortable certainties: even provocatively claiming his thought to be the truth, paradoxically highlighting its contingency and partiality, and the need for each person to cultivate their own consistency, their own authentic and personal relationship with the theories.

SIPRe is the product also of this personal research and this method. It was for Michele a way of working, a place to work, to exist, to establish himself and question himself with authenticity, finding his own way and place in the world. Surely SIPRe today is different from its beginnings and will follow new and different paths from those followed up to now. But if it is able to choose its own path today, maintaining its uniqueness and originality, it is thanks to having learnt a research method rather than loyalty to certain people or theoretical principles that would define its boundaries and identity. Changing and moving forward is neither painless nor simple, but the method embodied by Michele helps the old and the new generation to walk this path safely without losing its way or going around in circles.

Two last considerations - one more theoretical and one more clinical - seem helpful to complete the perspective opened up by Michele. Firstly, his continuous research into combining subject and relationship never followed obvious paths. For example, the term *Psychoanalysis of the Relationship* and not simply *Relational Psychoanalysis* was a thoughtful and courageous choice. In the first place, it was not easy to define oneself as a psychoanalyst in the 1980s for those outside the tradition of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society. Secondly, it was almost an oxymoron for

those times to reintroduce relationship into psychoanalysis as a critical element for the development, knowledge and care of the subject. And finally, to coin the term *Psychoanalysis of the Relationship* meant underlining the non-instrumental character of the relationship for the purpose of caring for and understanding the subject. Psychoanalysis should not simply become more relational and use the relationship for treatment, but it should propose a non-obvious analysis of the ways in which the subject in its uniqueness and specificity combines with its context to exist, assert itself and evolve. This basic option is connected to the second, more clinical consideration. At the foundation of Michele's thought there has always been a unitary, basic positive conception of the subject. People cannot be the result of their relationships; rather they develop within and thanks to their relationships, maintaining an internal unity and coherence that makes them exist and allows them to assert themselves. The unitary referent of the subject's experience within its context remains the center of psychoanalytic interest. And subjects have within themselves all the resources necessary to connect with the world without succumbing to dependency. Therapy arises from this deep awareness and trust in the ability of each human being, in any context and time, to find their own active way of being in the world so as not to suffer, or suffer less. And this attitude of trust was directed towards everyone, not only towards patients, but also towards the newborn baby, the child, the young person, and the student.

In order to promote this grateful and free position towards one of the founders of SIPRe, we asked witnesses to Michele's personal and professional journey to offer a personal description and reflection on their encounter with him and richness of his teaching. Each of the authors of this special issue has concretized this indication in a personal way, forming a creative framework of reflections that we offer to reader with pleasure. The issue opens with the republication of the first article written by Michele Minolli in the first issue of *Ricerca Psicoanalitica* in 1990. The choice was made with the idea of tracing an imaginary thread, an ideal track starting from the first issue of the journal leading to the present day. The various contributions take this track and extend it into the future. The work of Maria Luisa Tricoli (2020), eye witness to the founding of SIPRe, leads the reader to the historical process that led to the re-reading of classical psychoanalytic thought in a new relational perspective, and to the formulation of the concept of the I-Subject. Gian Paolo Scano's article (2020) is an authentic, close-up photograph of the beginnings of the pioneering adventure he made with Michele and the group that was forming. Romina Coin's work (2020) conveys with passion and transport the reflections that have characterized Michele's thought in recent years, touching on also the work dedicated to psychoanalysis in couple. Finally,

the contributions of Maurizio Dodet (2020) and Renè Kaës (2020) open up to the experience of an encounter between Michele's thought and different approaches, such as constructivist and groupal approaches, presenting their points of contact and making interesting comparisons.

Also in this special issue, we have given space to our regular columns. We have three contributions in *Lecture*: the first is an interesting conversation between Fabio Vanni and Salvatore Zito (2020) which begins with the latest book by Edgar Morin (2020) and touches on themes of fraternity understood as relationships that emerge from a perspective of verticality to relaunch into horizontal responsibility with constant engagement in cooperative processes. In the second contribution Gianfranco Bruschi (2020), discusses *Nel contagio*, a book that Paolo Giordano wrote at the onset of the pandemic, which develops some reflections and returns to the theme of social responsibility. The third review concerns Massimo Fontana's book *La diagnosi e le sue implicazioni nella clinica psicoanalitica*, which Laura Corbelli (2020) takes up as a valid tool for continuing to rethink diagnosis within the framework of current ideas of psychoanalytic thought. For the *Sguardi* column, Giovanni Zorzi (2020) presents the film *Captain Fantastic*, an interesting stimulus to reflections on individual/family relationships and contemporary society. Finally, for *Trasformazioni* we have a contribution from Bonassi (2020), who tells of his involvement in a telematic psychological support project implemented by the Ministry of Health for the COVID-19 emergency.

And now we just have to wish you all a happy reading.

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