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Editorial

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The focus of this special issue emerges from an idea voiced by many, an idea which stimulated our curiosity and the wish to direct attention to some aspects of Italy's relational movements. This led to a call for papers, with a deliberately broad spectrum, from exponents of different schools of thought and fields of study, to reflect on the concept they feel is important in the Italian relational psychoanalytic panorama (both in the past and in the future), or to recount their experience or their contribution to the relational perspective.

However, in presenting the theme of this special issue and the impact of relational theories in Italy, we should start by reflecting on what we mean by 'relational psychoanalytic movements'.

After Freud's death, but also during his lifetime, psychoanalysis branched into various theoretical currents that gave prominence to aspects of the theory which were considered predominant in the concept of a human being. One of these currents, known as 'relational psychoanalysis', has its roots in the theorisations of the English object relations school which emerged in the 1930s (Suttie, Fairbairn, Guntrip, and then authors such as Winnicott and others who merged into the London *middle group*, and was, as the name suggests, midway between the two groups directed by the 'leading ladies' of London's psychoanalytic community, the 'Annafreudians' and the 'Kleinians'). This innovation in the English school of object relations has been defined by Morris Eagle (1991) as the second great 'correction' in the history of psychoanalytic theory (the first correction was notoriously the one made by Heinz Hartmann when he modified the conception of ego) which Freud considered originated from the conflict of the id with reality, postulating an autonomous area of the ego, innate and conflict-free. On close inspection, however, Ferenczi (see his

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The Clinical Diary, of 1932) had previously made important relational observations concerning therapy which were only later interpreted in this light.

In the period when the theory of object relations emerged in England, in America the interpersonal theory of Harry Stack Sullivan (1953, 1954, *etc*.) blossomed in a completely independent way; his writings were published (mainly by students) from the 1940s and 1950s onwards, but Sullivan actually held seminars and had written his first articles as early as in the 1920s (Conci & Pinkus, 1989; Conci, 2000). The school of interpersonal psychoanalysis – or rather, of interpersonal 'psychiatry' – (also called interpersonalist, culturalist, revisionist, neo-Freudian, *etc*.) of Sullivan and the other members of what became known as the *Washington School of Psychiatry* (Erich Fromm who came from the Frankfurt school, his ex-wife Frieda Fromm-Reichamnn, Karen Horney, Clara Thompson who had been in analysis with Ferenczi, the spouses Janet and David Rioch, *etc*.) stressed the importance of 'real' interpersonal relationships, not of the intrapsychic world, as the main factor in the constitution of personality, also because among other things it had abjured the Freudian theory of drives and other current aspects of psychoanalysis in what is considered the most important split of the psychoanalytic movement in America. It is no coincidence that the interpersonal school was marginalized, considered 'non-psychoanalytic', and for many years remained practically absent from the psychoanalytic *mainstream*. It is worth noting that it is from this group, and in particular from Erich Fromm, that the *International Federation of Psychoanalytic Societies* (IFPS) was founded in 1962 and is still today the second international generalist organization of psychoanalysis of which the *William Alanson White Institute* of New York has been a member since its foundation.

The American interpersonalists did not look kindly on the English school of object relations either, and the reason is very simple: for the Sullivanians, the *bête noire* was the intrapsychic, which was seen by them as an enemy because they saw it as closely related to the Freudian conception of drives as the main factor in the constitution of personality. It is true that the English spoke of *relationships*, but they used the term 'object relations' (as did Kernberg, who studied in Chile in a Kleinian culture) meaning by this relations between internal, *intrapsychic* objects; for this reason the British were still considered part of the psychoanalytic movement, despite having drastically changed the conception of drive, and as the well-known *dictum* of Fairbairn (1952, p. 137) states, understanding it to be not pleasure-seeking but object-seeking, thus abandoning the concept of tension release as the main motivational factor.

It was Steve Mitchell – but not until half a century later, in the 1980s – who made it clear to the 'hard core' of the post-Sullivanians of the *William Alanson White Institute* in New York that the English school had made an important contribution; he legitimized them, so to speak, rehabilitating the English school. He tried to unite the two important 'relational' schools from

either side of the ocean, which had led separate lives for decades. The integration engineered by Mitchell, implied, among other things, that the movement was no longer called interpersonal but *relational*, echoing the English term 'object relations' to indicate that attention was also directed to the internal world. However, there is a fortuitous reason why the term 'relational' became widespread, and was linked to an episode that Mitchell himself once recounted in an interview with Jack Drescher (1993-94). At the *New York University Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy & Psychoanalysis* (commonly called *NYU Postdoc*) there were two separate courses: a 'Freudian' course and an 'interpersonal-humanistic' course. Mitchell also wanted to teach the theory of object relations but this subject could not be fitted in since the content of the two courses had already been defined. Mitchell and two colleagues (Manuel Ghent and Bernard Friedland) formed a subgroup within the interpersonal-humanistic course in which they began to teach object relations theory. They were joined by Phil Bromberg and Jim Fosshage, and the five of them were finally allowed to offer a third course within the *NYU Postdoc* which was called 'relational' (the so-called *relational track*), which is how the term relational spread, thanks to thi initiative by Mitchell.

The London *middle group* in the meantime had continued its line of research with the rich contribution of Winnicott's students (Masud Khan, among others), up to Bowlby, whom we can also include in this current (he was supervised by both Anna Freud and Melanie Klein, not being comfortable with both), even though he had some idiosyncrasies that set him apart and made him almost an outsider in the London psychoanalytic community. In fact, John Bowlby was ostracized by many; he was considered a non-psychoanalyst due to his position on certain issues (for example, he claimed that motivation for attachment was independent of libidinal motivation; in addition, he favoured an experimental perspective, typical of natural sciences; see, for example, Bowlby, 1981). Bowlby's isolation saddened him, but we could claim it also brought him good fortune because it obliged him to lean more towards the world of academic research and not to rely on psychoanalysis, and this radicated him more firmly in a branch of experimental research now among the most important across the various areas of clinical psychology. It was only after his death – as can sometimes happen – that Bowlby was consecrated, so to speak, by a large part of the English and international psychoanalytic movement; however, he was already a benchmark for some sectors of the cognitive movement, for instance, the 'Roman school' of cognitive therapy led by Gianni Liotti, his influential friend, who had fully embraced the evolutionary perspective (as we know, Bowlby's main frame of reference was Darwinism and human ethology).

In 1983, on the opposite shore of the Atlantic ocean, Greenberg and Mitchell published *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*, a watershed, a sort of manifesto of the relational psychoanalysis movement, considered by some its official beginning – thanks also to its wide circulation in various

countries (in Italy, it came out in 1986 and was adopted in some university courses). A year later, Morris Eagle's book *Recent Developments in Psychoanalysis. A Critical Evaluation* came out and was also a success, and, like Greenberg and Mitchell's book, presented a panorama of the various models of psychoanalysis without taking sides, unlike the two young (then) and students of the *William Alanson White Institute* in New York. Greenberg and Mitchell pit the drive and relational models against each other, siding in favour of the latter; they saw these two models as alternatives, as a dichotomy, but this view was not universally shared within the wider psychoanalytic movement. An aside: if, as we said earlier, some of Ferenczi's intuitions had anticipated the English object relations school, it is also true that a large part of Ferenczi's work was produced in the same period as Sullivan's in America.

In 1988 Mitchell further organised his ideas – gradually diverging from Greenberg (1991) who moved to more moderate positions – in the book *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis: An Integration* (it was published in Italian in 1993 with an introduction by Marco Conci, who knew Mitchell and who was a keen scholar of the historical developments of psychiatry and interpersonal psychoanalysis – see for example, his monograph on Sullivan [Conci, 2000]). The following year Lichtenberg (1989) published *Psychoanalysis and Motivation*, celebrating attachment within his 'pentagram' of fundamental motivational systems. In the same period, in Italy, Gianni Liotti was developing his model of motivational systems based on cognitive-evolutionary psychology, also made up of five groups of motivations, such as that of Lichtenberg (see Migone & Liotti, 1998), but it is Panksepp (1998; Panksepp & Biven, 2012) who supplanted these models by making a definitive contribution based on seven main motivations (see in this regard, Solms's [2021] important revision of the drive theory). Lichtenberg's work was based not only on his clinical experience, but also on a careful review of the literature, for example of the research of Bowlby, Emde, Greenspan and other exponents of infant research, but above all, of Daniel N. Stern who in the 1970-80s conducted important experimental studies on newborns which he presented in the successful book *The Interpersonal World of the Infant* (Stern, 1985), a milestone that, among other things, invalidated the theories expounded ten years earlier by Mahler, Pine & Bergman (1975) on the primary narcissism of the child.

Merton Gill (1982b) became another important point of reference for the relational psychoanalysis movement; Gill, one of the most respected exponents of the tradition of ego psychology, therefore of the *mainstream*, was invited to speak at the *William Alanson White Institute* (Gill, 1982a) for the increasingly relational positions he held, and for which he had redefined the concept of transference, adopting a 'perspectivist' conception of the analytic relationship, which would be expanded in a 'socio-constructivist' view by his collaborator Irwin Hoffman (1983, 1998). Gill made other important contributions: for example, in 1984 he reviewed the difference between psychoanalysis and psychotherapy modifying his conception of thirty years ear-

lier, in 1954, which had been the reference point of the classical tradition.

In the 1970s, a small group from Rome (see in this regard Tricoli [2020] and Scano [2020]), began to critically study the history of psychoanalytic thought and to identify, in part, the critical issues that were recognised overseas. The critical issues of an epistemological and logical-conceptual nature emerged especially in relation to metapsychology and drive theory, the basis of the Freudian theoretical framework that had seen in Rapaport's work perhaps the last attempt to save it (see Holt, 1989). For this group, also, the concept of 'relationship' appeared fruitful, especially in juxtaposition with that of 'subject'. The encounter with infant research and the *relational track* ideas, and later, the encounter with the work of other European authors (for example, Thea Bauriedl's work [1980] in Austria) had important consonances with these travelling companions.

And in the Italian psychoanalytic world? The cultural landscape of Italian psychoanalysis under the influence of Freud saw the hegemony of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society (SPI) which was not particularly open to contributions from the relational perspective, although this would not be the case for long. The first attempts came late and focused on the re-interpretation of some operational concepts related to clinical practice (see, for example, Filippini & Ponsi, 1993).

In 1985, the Roman group (Minolli, Tricoli, Scano, Mastroianni, Cadeddu, *etc*.) having spread also into northern Italy, founded the Italian Society for the Psychoanalysis of the Relationship (SIPRe). After a slow start, SIPRe became increasingly prominent; it developed a trajectory of thought with a historical-critical slant, subsequently becoming increasingly proactive. It was the beginning of the journal *Ricerca Psicoanalitica. Journal of the Relationship in Psychoanalysis.* The first issue appeared in 1990 and for several years was the only publication with a focus on international relational thought. In the early 1980s, SIPRe founded a school of relational psychoanalysis in Rome, followed by a school in Brescia, and in the latter half of the 1980s in Milan. The school of relational psychoanalysis for adolescents and young adults opened in Parma in 2010, thus SIPRe became the epicentre for relational psychoanalysis education in the country. While participating in the main international relational psychoanalytic congresses (the IFPS and the *International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy* [IARPP]), its exponents produced original ideas both on the theoretical and clinical levels, using different therapeutic tecniques with respect to traditional work with adults (children, adolescents, groups, couples, families). Only since the 1990s have other Italian and European researchers and groups embraced relational thinking, which can be said to have gradually become *mainstream* in the psychoanalytic community.

Clearly, any attempt to present a picture of the developments in psychoanalysis is difficult, especially when dealing with recent developments that we are not sufficiently distant from. Therefore, we will briefly list the contributions contained in this special issue 2/2022 of *Ricerca Psicoanalitica*

in alphabetical order according to the authors' surname. We will briefly mention the theme of each contribution, leaving to our readers the pleasure of reading them.

Cesare Albasi, Aloiscia Boschiroli and Daniele Paradiso, in their article 'A relational psychoanalytic perspective on trauma, dissociation, and their relationship with psychopathology and borderline organization', discuss trauma and dissociation in a relational perspective, starting from two theoretical-clinical points of view: from a more categorical perspective (suitable for severe pathologies), and from a more dimensional perspective (as part of the experience of many patients with less severe conditions).

Rosa Bedetti, Giorgio Cavicchioli and Tiziana Scalvini ('The intersubjective approach in psychoanalytic work') discuss the concept of intersubjectivity: they distinguish a narrow definition and a wider one, and retrace its recent history up to the present time and apply the concept to therapy.

Marco Conci, in an in-depth article entitled 'Stephen Mitchell in Italy, 1988-1996', discusses the complexity of interaction – at a personal, cultural, scientific and professional level – in his encounter with a foreign author in an autobiographical account of their relationship; it is a reworking of one of the central chapters in his 2019 book, *Freud, Sullivan, Mitchell, Bion, and the Mulitple Voices of Contemporary Psychoanalysis*.

Romina Coin ('Thoughts on subject and relationship') contains reflections on subject and relationship taking Michele Minolli's theory as a starting point and revisiting it in the SIPRe perspective.

Roberto Cutajar, in his article 'The relational experience in the psychoanalytic situation' discusses the relationship experience in analysis and revisits Sullivan, focusing on the three levels of experience – prototaxic (body), parataxic (visual image and dream) and syntaxic (language). The author makes observations about and connections with the research of Wilma Bucci and Bion.

Finally, Gian Paolo Scano proposes a dense and complex work on 'Constraint and meaning', a topic he has been working on for some time; he goes from the discovery of the subject and the relationship to the reinterpretation of the unconscious, not in the Freudian sense but in an original way.

Enjoy the reading!

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