

Here we are, then, with our second issue.

In this editorial, we will linger over three aspects: telling our readers about the journal's life in the interval between the two issues; clarifying some theoretical elements related to the notion of rite, as they emerged in the internal debate within the journal's authorities and in the life of the institution; and finally, briefly presenting the work we are offering you today.

### The journal and its internal life

A second issue often represents a major challenge: creating is one thing, confirming is another. The greatest difficulty in this process lies in the absence of a rite that gives the project enough depth and continuity (symptomatic for a journal called *Riti*). A rite does not gain importance, relevance, and meaning because it has been decided so, nor because it was performed once; for that to happen, it requires time, a history. Where are we, then, in our brief existence? Life probably entered the journal through rites of passage. This issue represents a first one: the moment following birth, when the identity of the newcomer is defined and strengthened through a first entry into social life, not as an adult but as a young child, in the image of baptism or of the *tollere liberos* among the Romans, or of other rites by which the child is identified as a young member of a community. This passage has allowed us to understand and formalise an important boundary: that of our periodicity. For us, the ideal interval between two issues will be three years, during this phase of the journal's life: the time necessary to let an issue mature and deepen its substance. In between, articles will be published on the website and will therefore be immediately available. Other rites of passage have accompanied us over these years: marriage, in the symbolic sense of alliance, and death. The alliance we have established with the *Associazione Archivio Storico Olivetti* will allow us to explore new fields, give greater visibility to this journal, and strengthen the credibility of our work. This is an important event, worthy of emphasis, and we are very

pleased to announce it to you. The preface to the collection of Olivetti studies, which we are launching in this issue, will provide the reader with more detailed information on the project; we refer the reader to it.

Death, on the other hand, is unfortunately not symbolic. As these lines are being proofread, we wish to remember the name of Claude Riveline, whose works, inspired by Durkheim, suggested the journal's name. He passed away early December 2024.

And above all, we wish to evoke the memory of our friend and colleague Corrado Paracone, who was part of this adventure from the earliest days, as a member of the Scientific Committee and as a contributor to this issue in the Olivetti research field.

We had initially planned a precise and detailed article on the Olivetti universe, its historical processes, and its various initiatives of innovation and transformation, written by Corrado. However, along the way, the desire to explore this subject in greater depth imposed itself on us, and exchanges with the Olivetti Historical Archives allowed us to lay the foundations for this new project. Corrado was therefore supposed to follow this topic for *Riti* (assisted by Giorgio Nepote Vesin for AASO).

But life sometimes has other plans. Corrado began to feel very tired, preventing him from following the project as he would have wished. He therefore first asked me to help him, then to replace him. The long and beautiful article he was preparing thus became an interview, a joint work. We barely had time to complete it: we discussed the final details two days before his death. I then had to continue alone the work of my colleague and friend.

Originally, I was supposed to actively follow the *Dossier*; in fact, I ended up following both the *Dossier* and the Olivetti studies. Let the reader forgive this massive presence; it is the final rite of passage that decided so.

While Corrado left us, Giorgio joined us in taking on an important role, and we thank him for that.

Finally, we would like to thank Russ Vince who, together with Antoine Legrand and myself, founded this journal (based on an initial idea from Angelica Sturiale and myself) and ensured its scientific direction until the publication of the first issue. Since then, he has helped and advised us as a member of the Scientific Committee; he has contributed to this issue with an important article of which he is co-author.

## A reflection on rites

In the previous editorial, we presented the Riti project – who we are, where we aim to go, and what we want to do. This also allowed us to explain the choice of the name, precisely through the works of Riveline. Today, in our internal debate, the need arises to explore more thoroughly what rites, and therefore our name, mean to us. What does it mean to refer to a concept coming from anthropology, and what does it mean to place it at the forefront of our systems' investigation, making of it one of our keys of interpretation?

In our exploration of rites, we will mainly rely on the contributions of Gilbert Lewis (1983; 1979).

It is well established in anthropology and psychosociology that the term rite refers to any formalised behavior or activity carried out according to rules or procedures defined by society.

Etymologically, the Latin term *ritus* covers two meanings: the specifically religious one and the broader one of custom or prescription, tradition, or habit. This definition is necessary because many tend to – almost like a system-in-the-mind – refer rites only to the sacred or, at most, to broaden their meaning to the rites of passage studied by Van Gennep (1909). There is a sort of reluctance, a vague resistance, a *distracted* desire not to go deeper. The following definition may perhaps offer further insight -: *The rite may be defined as a type of structured activity, oriented towards the control of human affairs, of an eminently symbolic nature and having a non-empirical referent, such as a socially established rule* -: (Firth, 1951, p. 222).

This formulation, very precise according to us, can explain this reluctance: there are few areas of human experience in which we accept to entirely live in the symbolic and *non-empirical* sphere. The rite is therefore important for the transformation of institutions because it forcefully brings us back to the third dimension of systems' lives, to which *Group Relations* are referring to: the spiritual dimension. This dimension, non-religious, illustrates what, for each of us, gives meaning to our life, what becomes essential for us and carries an existential meaning (*sacred*, in a secular and individually introspective sense). This is why, for us, rites are fully part of systems' lives, and understanding their meaning and usefulness helps to better understand the paths of their transformation.

The psychoanalyst Claudio Widmann (2007) tells us -: *The rite belongs to no specific sphere of existence. It is exclusive neither to the sacred nor to the profane;*

*it is the prerogative neither of the religious man nor of the secular man; it is not a solely subjective phenomenon, nor a solely collective one; its aim is not solely propitiation, nor solely gratitude. The rite belongs to normality and pathology; it is present in archaic cultures and in the post-industrial civilization; it is practiced by naïve and superstitious people, as well as intellectual and rationalist ones. The rite is of man :-.*

He even adds that rites are part of the superfluous; they are not essential to the accomplishment of the primary task but act as a complement, belonging to our collective unconscious as something indispensable (2019).

If these definitions clarify the field of investigation and the usefulness we get from it, we must now overcome a second difficulty: the one anthropology calls the problem of *interpretation*, which could also be called the question of the meaning of rites. Many actors do not know how to give meaning to what they do through a rite and do not know how to interpret what they do.

Many of the authors of this journal's issue have encountered rites they might have described as useful and transformative (since they are explainable and thus carry discernment), while others took on a blocking role, their meaning frozen in time due to repetitive and *meaningless* patterns. How, then, to interpret what seemed to be truly transformative, vital, useful, and meaningful, and what, on the contrary, seemed to be sclerotic, resistant to transformation, and devoid of meaning?

Several of them therefore expressed the wish for this editorial to provide a brief clarification on our subject.

As we said, in anthropological literature, the problem arises at the level of *interpretation*. Few, when practicing the rite, can explain its ritual meanings and interpret the reasons why they follow it (Lewis, cit.). This could be explained if all rites were initiatory; in reality, the *interpretative* difficulty exists even for rites that contain nothing initiatory.

This observation is corroborated by our studies of systems: whether in volunteers of philanthropic institutions, political parties, family businesses (in the relations between family members themselves or between employees, who are outside the family circle, towards the latter), highly vertical organisations, and everywhere highly formalized processes exist. It seems that a large proportion of individuals decide *to be free* not to understand, and to let themselves be guided by those who are more expert, older, or more brilliant, as if ignorance contains something salvific or useful, and as if ignorance offers

a form of freedom (or, on the contrary, of submission) towards those *who know...* It would be a fight&flight behavior. In this context, these observations have a purely descriptive value; nevertheless, they contain many analogies with what Bion told of his experience at Northfield :- *the behavior of a leader who neither attacks nor flees is hard to accept* :- (1961, p. 41).

To this induced or desired ignorance (depending on the systems of belonging) is added the phenomenon of tradition, where the only explanation of our actions comes from customs, from the repetition of inherited patterns. All these phenomena are far from any rationalisation. How, then, to interpret this phenomenon from the point of view of our discipline? In our opinion, when rites are justified by tradition, conventions, norms or conformism, they appear as a simple formalism devoid of meaning, an observance.

All this is explained by the introduction of the term *ritual*. In Italian, and in the languages used in the journal, *rite* and *ritual* are two terms that overlap and become confused. Anthropology has worked on these aspects; we therefore refer you to the texts of reference and will limit ourselves to developing the reasoning useful to our field of investigation.

Semantically, the ritual is what belongs to the rite; more precisely, Fortes identifies it in the sphere of action, it :- *does not identify itself to the whole system [...] but is, so to speak, the executive arm of that system* :- (1966, p. 411). To take up an axiom dear to Leibniz, one could say that the rite concerns the *why*, while the ritual concerns the *how*.

Anthropology, through the concept of ritualisation (and related studies in the animal field – see Huxley, 1923; Gluckman, 1963), identifies a process by which actions become fixed, distinctive, and recognizable and, as such, ritual acts. In this way, the link between actions and intentions fades. Similarly, Skorupski tells us that the codification of interactions has the function of standardising and communicating certain meanings (Skorupski, 1976, pp. 76–115), and finally, Maurice Bloch (1974) teaches us that the formalism inherent to ritual can lead to a loss of meaning.

This loss of meaning can, over time, lead to confusion in the possible interpretations of the rite. How to integrate these concepts? Using an analysis linked to the becoming over time, Bloch (1986), Burke (1978), and Comaroff (1985) develop an analysis of the rite in its historical becoming to understand how it transforms and how it is possible to conceive that the rite can, in certain conditions, evolve into sclerosis determined by the ritual forms that

accompany it, its formalisms, and that the actors (not the authors, since they are mere repeaters) come to no longer know how to interpret the meaning of the rite, that is, of their actions. In terms of transformation, we would say that the particularities of the system have imprisoned it in a cycle of repetitions from which it does not know how to escape.

This would support the idea of distinguishing, from the transformation point of view, two families of rites: those that have meaning and an interpretation, and those that are devoid of meaning, whose actors no longer know how to interpret. The first ones are (or can become so through discernment) drivers of transformation; the second ones are sclerotic and block transformations. Semantically, we therefore propose to our readers a distinction at the level of the term *ritual*. For us, Ritual designates the components of the rite, while ritual designates the rites devoid of meaning, whose actors no longer know how to explain and that therefore remain prisoners of the sole ritual that composes them. The reader will find this distinction in some articles that refer to this clarification.

### **The content of this second issue**

The central theme that the authors embraced is **the transformation of society**. The aim is to study, from very different angles, the systemic dynamics – both conscious and unconscious – that come into play in the transformation of society. The scope of the issues addressed in this issue is broad, ranging from public services and their policies, to a major global company such as Olivetti, to the difficulties faced by emerging countries in achieving transformation, and finally to a working hypothesis on the psychic obstacles encountered by contemporary societies in confronting climate change. The studies are multifaceted and diverse, thus allowing every readers to explore this topic according to their own interests and preferred fields of investigation.

In order, we present an article by Anne Pässilä and Russ Vince on public service policies for young people, viewed through the particular lens of *perplexity* (the term that gives the study its title). This can be defined as an affective state of confusion, a source of hesitation, inaction, and avoidance. This study is extremely interesting both for its content and for the research methods that were utilised. Furthermore, in our view, the concept of *perplexity* opens up new perspectives for works in other fields, for example in any organisational situation characterized by misunderstanding and uncertainty.

We therefore deemed it important to also translate this work into French, in order to broaden public access as much as possible and to promote greater awareness of what is presented, since one of the fundamental aims of this journal is to foster mutual understanding between Anglo-Saxon and Francophone schools, or those of other languages, in order to enrich the exchange.

Jean-Claude Casalegno then worked on a text that questions our society's difficulty of taking the climate emergency into account, examining it from the angle of psychic resistance. The result is a study that takes into consideration the difficult intergenerational dialogue and addresses our mythical constructions and founding traumas, illustrating the difficulty we face in getting out of our systems-in-the-mind. The article primarily relies on the models of the group dynamics French school. This is why we are also preparing an English translation, to make the reverse journey and foster this exchange of thought between two very active schools that are not always ready to get to know one another.

The section dedicated to emerging countries arose from the fact that several contributors and members of our scientific committee had conducted research and studies on the transformation of society in such countries. The result is an in-depth study presenting numerous complementary viewpoints and covering a large number of countries and continents (including Latin America, Africa, and Mediterranean Europe).

*Riti* has thus confirmed a methodological capacity that is becoming a way of exploring psychodynamic reality. As it had already been done in the first issue's section on the transformation of the PCI (a study that, three years later, allows us to continue studying and exploring the transformation of major institutions), the starting point is historical reality – facts seen and studied for what they are, with historical accuracy – but also making sure to understand their emotional impact at the moment they occur, and how they then continue to shape reality. This requires to know a historical process, to examine it with precision, and then to attempt to develop working hypotheses starting from historical facts considered as pieces of evidence. The Dossier provided an opportunity to better understand the relationship between the fundamental theoretical elements of the transformation of institutions and large systems.

Finally, there is the large company, referring to the Olivetti studies mentioned earlier. The circumstances and events were explained, and this issue's preface, signed by the directors of *Riti* and the AASO, allows us to grasp the scope and

beauty of the challenge. Together with Giorgio Nepote Vesin, we will continue our work on this subject in future issues, further broadening and specialising our fields of investigation.

Our second issue is therefore composed of this wide-ranging material drawn from such diverse topics, and we are happy and honored to present it to you.

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