

## Leonardo Veneziani

Today a new journal was born and we have decided to call it **riti**, with the subtitle “international journal for the transformation of institutions”.

In a context where journals, websites, blogs and other forms of thought manifestation already abound, we wish to present ourselves in a ritual way giving those who read us a perspective: why a new journal? Why this name? Where do we come from and what is our horizon? And where are we aiming to go? What will you find in this issue and in the next ones?

### Why this journal and why create a new one?

In an age of continuous pursuit of novelty, where the life of companies and organisations is nourished by absolute novelties that evolve into laws or, by default, jurisprudence, enacted at the speed of lightning and ultimately read by very few, to quote Tasso's words about the Trissino (T. Tasso, *Discorsi dell'arte poetica*, 1587) we may wonder about the sense of founding a new journal.

“The Trissino, of course but who on earth was that?”...

Quite obviously for those who still read the *Apology of Socrates* and find in it answers that can be put into practice, the driving force is not novelty at all costs.

I became aware of the relevance of Socrates at a very young age, when the philosopher of science Ludovico Geymonat very socratically taught me that defining something assertively, and once and for all, is already a way of losing oneself. For the author of this editorial who began his career as a researcher and a literary critic, the image that prevails, when talking about a

journal is that of literary creation: in literature novelty has often been made by turning old into new, it has rarely started from scratch, so much so that the *contaminatio* technique (taking a main plot and merging it with a secondary plot, both having been used formerly) was not only theorised, but widely employed in Latin literature. And later on, how much did Shakespeare take up from Boccaccio or how many times has the theme of Don Juan been modified and reused?

The purpose of all this is to say that, in this journal, there is some distance with novelty, with absolute novelties and with inventors of freshly minted theories, which offers the possibility of resting on a broader, more ancient field of knowledge, tracing a continuity. After all, what do Descartes and Spinoza have to do with modern neurophysiology? And yet Damasio, who embodies this neurophysiology more than anyone else, chose these authors to dialogue with in his works, and was inspired by them. And after all, in a large company faced with a marketing campaign problem, would it be more appropriate to bring in three very recent references of questionable intellectual depth, or the debate between Descartes and Leibniz on *the whys and wherefores*?

This journal is, therefore, not blinded by its discipline and by discovery at all costs, but rather a place of encounter and dialogue of different knowledges.

Therefore, it is primarily an interdisciplinary, transversal journal. The idea for this journal came about one day as some of us were wondering where and how to submit their articles for publication. No matter which way we turned, we could not find a place that would make us feel at home and give us the assurance that we would reach our public. We found ourselves in a situation that could be likened to what Lapassade wrote about

institutional analysis (G. Lapassade, *L'analyse institutionnelle*, 1971). "Courses, practical seminars are dedicated to it in various universities this year. It is even trendy. But where can it be hosted? Everywhere and nowhere [...]. This teaching cannot -nor does psychoanalysis- fit into the old university division of knowledge (history, economics, sociology) because institutional analysis is related to all these separate *areas of knowledge*". Nor can the field of psychoanalysis, especially when it investigates organisations, fit into any traditional division.

Faced with those whose terminology, field of study and behaviour in relation to society have inspired us in our work, we felt it was important to follow this path in our own reflection. The result is this new journal. A interdisciplinary journal, since it is transversal, which has always been the case for the scope of our interventions: organisations. Talking about companies, management, leadership, psyche, emotions, power relationships implies being everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

### What about the name?

Durkheim refers to rites (E. Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, 1912): to exist, a rite needs a tribe to perform it and a myth that can give it meaning. This theme has been extensively explored by Claude Riveline, *La gestion et les rites*, 1993). This triad is largely self-explanatory. There are multiple reasons for adopting this name for the journal. Firstly, each element can be related to the three dimensions (psychic, political and spiritual) inherited from the Tavistock Institute tradition. Secondly, myth is what allows the individual and the tribe to evacuate the trauma in order to continue living and, if possible, to transform it through the rite (E. Enriquez, *L'organisation en analyse*, 1992). Finally, Riveline's research work places this triangle (irrational) in close interdependence with a second one (rational): methods, reason and teams.

The rational and the non-rational meet. When the former loses sense, the latter soon takes over. The relationship between the

two triangles is therefore similar to the one between emotions and Bion's primary task: a relationship which allows to get out of the emotional dimension and to make the group work. This is precisely the work of those who work in psychodynamics: bringing the unspeakable back into the group to allow it to work on its primary task and nothing else.

Rites are a means and we would like this journal to be one.

### What about the subtitle?

The subtitle tells our story, about where we come from. Firstly through Wilfred R. Bion and the tradition of *group dynamics*. In this tradition can be found Kurt Lewin, Elliott Jaques, Pierre Turquet, Isabel Menzies or A. Kenneth Rice and Eric Miller among others. At the same time, a number of others have contributed to shaping our horizon. I had Renaud Sainsaulieu as a professor at Sciences-Po and, with him, our approach was enriched by the methodology of the French sociology of organisations, with Crozier and many others. Hence the approach, the look, which embraces the institution, the questioning of its dysfunctions and its methods, the discovery of its rituals (precisely) which mask the effectiveness of the organisation. These two worlds brought an analysis, an understanding and some working hypotheses. This was still not sufficient. For Turinese natives familiar with Gramsci's works, the question of how organisations or institutions could be transformed remained, in order to correct their dysfunctions and thus their suffering.

One year after the meeting with Sainsaulieu came the meeting with David Gutmann, the bearer of the same questioning about transformation which he was in the process of resolving at that time, 1990. As the reader will understand, our aim is to write a story about influences and subsequent contaminations.

But let us proceed with order: Bion most certainly does not start from scratch. On the contrary, he defines his point of departure with certainty: what Freud identified but did not exploit becomes

his initial point (S. Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 1921; W. Bion, *Experiences in Groups*, 1961); Bion's Kleinian influences being evident to all. Similarly, the work of Isabel Menzies would not have been possible without the theoretical background of Elliott Jaques.

Gordon Lawrence was the first to introduce in France the work of the Tavistock and *Group Relations* on which he had already stamped his own mark. It was from this encounter that David Gutmann gave birth to the French school which was renamed school of institutional transformation in the 1990s. More than the facts mentioned above, we are confronted with a large-scale and very happy *contamination*. With great acumen he managed to combine a main plot (the Tavistock Institute tradition and the work on the unconscious life of systems in a more general sense) with a secondary one (the prospective approach, a philosophical contribution from Gaston Berger, *the man of the future's science*, whose field of investigation questions about possible futures, an approach he had begun with as a consultant).

In other words, to the understanding of group and organisation dynamics, we add the question of change and adaptation to the latter, through the term "transformation" which has become very common to all and less used at the time. The school of institutional transformation then developed over the years through Ifsi, around David Gutmann and Jacqueline Ternier-McConnico. Many colleagues participated and contributed, including Jean van der Rest, Ghislaine Lambert-Foccroulle, Jean-François Millat, Christophe Verrier, Brenda Dean, Erica Stern, Louise Edberg and the author of this editorial, among others.

Thus, Sainsaulieu, through his writings since he passed away too soon, and Gutmann, through his practice, are part of Motus' background.

There are other contaminations, beyond these two main scenarios, Lapassade and Lourau's school of institutional analysis previously mentioned, Gérard Mendel's socio-psychoanalysis,

the works of Eugène Enriquez, the very similar approach of socio-analysis by Elliott Jaques, or even the approach of social psychology by René Kaës.

We could call them secondary scenarios.

For an Italian and Turinese journal, let us recall, the field of transformation cannot be complete without referring to Gramsci's reflections and thought and the ever-present question of the transformation of society. In short, we, inspired by confluences and contaminations, produce our own in turn, with simplicity and openness to future external fertilisations.

The Franco-Italian group that created Motus contributed to the institutional transformation and Ifsi for years. Yet the **riti** project made it necessary for the two institutions to distance from each other.

When the moorings are released, those who leave take away reflections, thoughts and memories away with them. Those who stay on the dock have nourished those who go out to sea, and in return those who take out to sea have nourished those who stay behind.

It is only fair that the credit for the definition of institutional transformation be given to the one who thought it. Therefore we would rather refer to the transformation of organisations and institutions by choosing a more general field of observation than David Gutmann's effective intuition, with the hope of continuing to broaden the field and keeping it transversal.

As I said earlier, everyone takes something away with them; from the thirty years of association with David Gutmann, the last (almost) twenty of which consisted of joint work, I am taking away with me my own learnings and a few lessons including humility, with him in mind.

### **Where are we aiming to go?**

Getting to this day has not been easy; no doubt due to our limitations, certainly because creating a prototype is a thousand times harder than pursuing work on an existing product, but

that is probably not the only reason. The birth of the first issue was slowed down by difficulties linked to articles censored -or discretely withheld- by academies, unreceived or unfinished articles due to subtle anxieties, a few health issues, disagreements and separations, and as is right and proper (let's stay humble) quite a lot of indifference.

The birth of a journal always creates a stir before it can be announced as a happy occurrence because it happens in a field populated by many professionals and consultants who, for the most part, practice their profession separately, sometimes interfacing with the academy, and in a world where the academy, because of the transversality Lapassade referred to, struggles to follow and codify. This is due to the fact that the passage from an oral tradition to a written one is traumatic and calls into question many things said, done or supposed. As Le Goff would say: "societies in which social memory is predominantly oral, or those in the process of establishing a written collective memory, best manifest the struggle for the dominance of memory and tradition" (J. Le Goff, *Mémoire*, 1978).

Our ambition is to give more space to knowledge and less to domination.

First and foremost, we want a journal that offers the possibility of a real encounter between the world of academia and professional research in the field. In the tradition of *Group Relations* there has always been a strong consultancy practice aiming to understand organisational and social problems within organisations, to explain and transform them. Academic research often has the criteria and theoretical reflections to act on systems but it does not have the practical access keys. At the same time, consultancy practice, which lives in the field, directly brings the reality, facts and knowledge of the systems, but does not possess the theoretical legitimacy to undertake large-scale actions or actions whose impact goes beyond the scope of the entity alone.

It is hoped that the union of these two worlds will lead to the possibility of acting on a more impactful scale.

The choice of a language is a direct consequence of the desire for openness. A publication in 4 languages offers a strong possibility to be heard and capture international attention. This allows for dialogue between different schools of practice and thought and a greater variety of contributions and feedback. As usual, variety allows for innovation and the import of practices and discoveries applied or thought up elsewhere and adaptable in new contexts. This search for difference is the basis for a heterodox, non-standardised journal promoting the reflection and implementation of diverse findings on the field. Multilingualism becomes a basis to promote a form of globalisation based on interculturality and difference of thought, as opposed to an *international* monolingual process in support of an undifferentiated globalisation.

For the first issue, the intention was to leave contributors free to choose the topic of the article. In this way, we were able to have a representation of authors and issues coming from the three worlds that we want to bring together: research, consulting and society; each of them from different methodological perspectives or schools.

This also allowed us to have as early as the first issue, the four languages in which we wish to publish our journal.

Back when the journal project was first launched, Piero Fassino was the Mayor of Turin and it seemed important to us to symbolically take the city along with us on this journey, through him. As for the theme, it was obvious to us that, when talking about institutions and their transformation, it was important to start with an example whose numerical importance was substantial and which would lead us to reflect at a level we are less accustomed to in the consultancy or academic world: the macro level, where millions of people are involved in a transformative process. This is how the project of questioning the long transformative process of the PCI came about.

This investigation, made up of an interview and an analysis, took up a lot of space. It was a necessary choice: the macro

level requires time, space and explanations. It was also a choice of loyalty to our roots. The PCI was not born in Turin, but Turin was a fundamental constituent part of it. It was in Turin that Gramsci's thought developed, and it was also in Turin that he founded the Ordine Nuovo in 1919. Much of the history of the PCI was developed within the working class of Turin and within the working class of Piedmont, and much of the transformation process, through the relation to FIAT, took place in Turin as well. The PCI and FIAT intertwine and together they tell an important part of the history of Italy over the last hundred years.

In the history of this party, as we will present it in the journal, there have been ten secretaries or leaders, seven of whom came from within the borders of the ancient kingdom of Sardinia, as redesigned by the Congress of Vienna with Turin as its capital: Gramsci, Togliatti, Longo, Berlinguer, Natta, Occhetto and Fassino (only Bordiga, D'Alema and Veltroni have different regional origins). There is also much of our roots and history in this article.

Lastly, of course, it was important to underline the link with Gramsci and the very concept of the transformation of society. This intense work proved fertile, giving rise to Piero's desire to write the history of the PCI's path, between 1921 and 1991, in a historical and political version.

The articles by Kiran Trehan and Jean-Claude Casalegno are part of a psychodynamic vision of the world of research, both bringing a reflection on economic organisations: the micro-enterprise of ethnic minority entrepreneurship for Trehan, the question of the deinstitutionalisation of large organisations for Casalegno.

Their fields of investigation are very different, even opposed: the capacity for micro-enterprise on the one hand, and the investigation on the breaking of the institutional link between the individual and large institutions on the other. Both refer to an atomised being, alone, having to find his/her own solutions. Laurent Bibard also comes from the academic world, from a

field of investigation where philosophy and management meet. It seemed fundamental to us to be able to rely on a reflection on ethics in the exercise of our profession. Even more so when creating an interdisciplinary, transversal journal, where the landmarks and the capacity to contain are less clear and fixed, because they are no longer linked to a discipline or a practice. This reflection fits well with the fact that the individual himself/herself can assume his/her role ethically and, therefore, pursue his/her own interests with seriousness and capacity for containment.

Finally, an article written by various consultants on short conferences and the particular role of consultants in this type of event. This initiative comes from a Motus working group, where the primary task was precisely to share experiences, methodologies and questions regarding method and ethics. Alongside the work of the group of authors, the first issue was coming to life, which gave rise to a unique experience of exchanges and reciprocal contaminations between the authors. Once again, a reflection on the consultant's method and ethics seemed essential to us for our first issue. The article was written in the consultants' working language, Spanish, and it brought together North European, Mediterranean, Alpine and Latin American professional realities in a group of female and male colleagues.

The very small, the very large, the society and the weight of history, ethics and teamwork. A reflection which is both large and rich in diversity to begin our journey.

### **What about the next issues?**

I will answer this question with an invitation to provide contributions that will bring us new thoughts for future issues. In the meantime, now that the turbulence that Le Goff refers to is subsiding, I invite you to visit our website where the articles are available in the original languages and will be translated very soon.