

Foreword

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Childhood memories often have no other origin; in general they are not fixed and repeated starting from the episode experienced, as happens with the conscious memories of adulthood, but taken up again at a later time when childhood is already over, and then modified, falsified, put at the service of later tendencies, so that in general terms they cannot be distinguished from fantasies. There is probably no better way to illustrate their nature than to think of how historiography arose among the ancient peoples. As long as a population were small and weak they certainly did not think about writing their history; they were concerned with farming the land in their country, defending themselves from neighbors, conquering their territory and getting rich. It was an era of heroes not of historians. Then another age arrived, an age of reflection: they felt rich and powerful and with this they felt the need to learn where they had come from and how they had become what they were. Historiography, which had begun to keep a progressive record of the events of the present time, also cast its gaze backwards towards the past, collected traditions and legends, clarified the survival of ancient times in habits and customs and thus created a history of remote antiquity. It was inevitable for this prehistory to become more an expression of the views and desires of the present than a reproduction of the past, since many things had vanished from the people's memory, others had been distorted, more than one aspect of the past was tendentiously interpreted in the sense of the present, and in addition history was certainly not written out of the objective desire for knowledge, but because people wanted to influence their contemporaries, spur them on, exalt them or offer them their own reflection. Now, the conscious memory a man has of the events of his maturity is absolutely comparable to that historiography (which is the chronicle of the events underway), and his memories of childhood actually correspond, both in origin and in reliability, to the history, later reordered tendentiously, of the primitive era of a people. (Freud, 2001, pp. 229-230)¹

On 17 March 1861, in Turin, a law was made assigning to Vittorio Emanuele II of Savoia, king of Sardinia, the title of king of Italy. And it was this legislative act – whose content marked the birth of a nation, crystallising at the same time the problems and contradictions of the *Risorgimento* – that was the focus of the celebrations organised for the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the unification of Italy and of the initiatives managed and financed by the ministerial committee and its local branches, as well as those without any official sponsorship: conferences, films and documentaries, concerts, publications, parades, exhibitions, theatrical performances, guided tours, debates in the north, center and south of the peninsula, all bear witness

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¹ Freud, 1910. Our translation.

before anything else to a desire for knowledge of the national past, starting from a pressing demand for reflection on the present².

In the School of Specialisation in Psychoanalytical psychotherapy, we have worked on the national identity on two occasions, in line with the cultural content of the curriculum's history module. We firstly held a training weekend in Turin; a journey through the institutions of the museum and psychiatric hospital of the first capital of Italy: exhibitions and museums set up or re-set up for the prestigious anniversary (in particular, the national museum of the Risorgimento in Palazzo Carignano and the exhibition *Making the Italians* housed in the fascinating spaces of the Great repair workshops), Cesare Lombroso's museum of criminal anthropology and the ex-psychiatric hospital of Racconigi, of which the documentation is now undergoing a major reordering which is giving back to the psychiatric hospital the status of a place of memory and history (Levra, 2011; Caffaratto, 2010). Secondly, we were involved in organising a study day on the relations between national identity and psychologists' professional identity in the period from the seventies to the present day; more specifically, on the influence that the history of the republic in the last forty years has had on psychologists both as citizens and as professionals.

Relations between psychologists and history during the whole twentieth century mark, on the one hand, the path taken by the two disciplines and their respective internal evolutions; on the other hand, the ways in which – during a century periodically shaken by scientist temptations – the *social* sciences have positioned themselves, in defining their status, compared to the *natural* sciences. Without going into the merits of a relational pathway of which it would be useful to map the general movement as well as the single elements that have given it life, it is enough to recall the “scientific paradigm” outlined by Carlo Ginzburg back in 1979 (Ginzburg, 1979); a paradigm that asked us to form alliances to make an epistemological reflection that does not reduce scientificity to scientism, questions of method to positivism, or people's richness to individual invariances.

In the pages that follow, we present the first results of a project based on this disciplinary alliance. One axis of this alliance is time: in a perspective that is active, open to the present and not self-referential, we have tried to talk about identity as a construct that does not anticipate but that emerges from contexts and the relations that are established in them. For this reason we consider it is useful to publish the contributions to the study day of 18 June 2011 and, through them, to open a space for debate and reflection about the construction of identity.

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² Awaiting the final balance of the celebrations of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the unification of Italy. Cfr. De Luna (2011).

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