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Cultural competition in the Italian Left: Mario Spinella and the beginnings of *La scienza nuova* book series

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ABSTRACT

Between the 1960s and the 1970s, Marxism reached its maximum success in Italy, but that phase also corresponded to the crisis of the Italian Communist Party’s cultural hegemony, challenged by both the attacks coming from the New Left and innovative readings of Marx’s works. Marxist historicism, on which the Italian Communist Party had based its cultural policy after the the Second World War, consequently suffered heavy attacks. This article illuminates one of the responses to historicism’s decline, providing an account of the book series *La Scienza Nuova*, issued by the publishing house Dedalo in Bari and edited by the communist intellectual Mario Spinella, who was able to remain loyal to his party demonstrating, at the same time, cultural autonomy. Also grounding on archival documents, the article posits that Spinella’s aim was to attract New Left readers by selecting books on topics and by authors that were in fashion in Italy and abroad, but incorporating them into a theoretical framework based on Marxist historicism, in order to preserve the latter in an evolving cultural environment.

KEYWORDS

Marxism

Historicism

Italian Communist Party

Mario Spinella
Raimondo Coga

1. The reference framework

The great industrial and economic development that took place in Italy in the 1960s¹ combined with a strong push towards the consumption of cultural products—specifically non-fiction books. Following the 1962 school reform and the expansion in the number of students, book series disseminating high quality essays in all fields of knowledge were much in demand among university and high school students.² This article provides an account of the early years of one of these book series, *La scienza nuova* (from now on: *LSN*), issued by the publishing house Dedalo in Bari. *LSN* was independent from the PCI (Italian Communist Party) but was edited by Mario Spinella, a faithful PCI official; it was created in 1967, at the height of an auspicious period for Marxism, since new readings of Karl Marx’s works were emerging internationally³ at a time of restlessness in Europe.⁴ This investigation – which has made use, along with the books in the series, of Spinella’s numerous critical and philosophical interventions, published mostly in the party press, and of the documentation preserved in his personal archive in Pavia and in the PCI archive in Rome – accounts for one of the ways that Italian Marxism tried to foster new cultural trends in a contact space between the PCI and the growing New Left milieus, confirming what historiography has established, namely that the PCI, in order to achieve cultural hegemony, was willing to open itself up to a ‘multiform universe of schools, approaches, criticisms’, sometimes (but not in this case) even showing ‘a substantial indifference to the programmatic content of the

* All translations from the Italian are the author’s.

¹ Giangiacomo Nardozzi, ‘The Italian “Economic Miracle”’, *Rivista di storia economica* 19, no. 2 (2003): 139–80; Valerio Castronovo, *L’Italia del miracolo economico* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 2010).

² This was obviously a long-term process, as shown in Irene Piazzoni, *Il Novecento dei libri. Una storia dell’editoria in Italia* (Rome: Carocci, 2021), 208–36, 259–79. For an introduction to Italian society and politics in the 1960s and the 1970s, Guido Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano. Culture, identità, trasformazioni fra anni Cinquanta e Sessanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 2003); John Foot, *The Archipelago: Italy since 1945* (London–Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2018), chapters 1–3 (Kindle edition); Simona Colarizi, *Un paese in movimento. L’Italia negli anni Sessanta e Settanta* (Bari–Rome: Laterza, 2019).

³ For an overview see Frédéric Monferrand, ‘Reading Capital in 1968’, in Alex Callinicos, Stathis Kouvelakis and Lucia Pradella, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Marxism and Post-Marxism* (New York: Routledge, 2020), chapter 22 (Kindle edition).

⁴ Martin Conway, *Western Europe’s Democratic Age 1945–1968* (Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020), 255–93; Terence Renaud, *New Lefts. The Making of a Radical Tradition* (Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 138–275.

analytical contribution offered'⁵ by the currents of thought it came into contact with. My thesis is that *LSN* was an attempt to bridge the gap that had been opening between the PCI – hegemonic in the post-war national cultural panorama – and the new extra-parliamentary Leftist movements and groups of young people moved by a libertarian, radical and revisionist spirit.⁶

In relation to the post-World War II period, historiography has so far studied the PCI for its cultural politics, and Marxism predominantly as its official doctrine⁷. When Marxism has been considered independently of communist cultural politics, the focus has been reserved for specific areas, e.g. literary criticism⁸ or historiography,⁹ whereas in the recent and important book edited by Giuseppe Vacca¹⁰ it is examined from the point of view of the history of philosophy, so that the theme of the lack of Marxist cultural hegemony and the rapid dissolution of Marxism itself in Italy between the 1970s and 1980s appears to be central. From a philosophical perspective, therefore, everything revolves around the theme of the subject, since it is stated there that 'Italian Marxism in the 1970s and in the following decade fell prey, without appreciable resistance, to the fascination and appeal of anti-subjectivist instances that acted profoundly on its theoretical fabric, causing the very problem of the subject to fade away.'¹¹ Given this undeniable interest in theoretical Marxism, there is still a lack of analysis concerning, as a whole, the history of publishing and the organisation of culture in the years of the great

⁵ Michele Prospero, 'Dalla transizione alla complessità. Marxismo e filosofia politica negli anni Settanta', in Giuseppe Vacca, ed., *La crisi del soggetto. Marxismo e filosofia in Italia negli anni Settanta e Ottanta* (Rome: Carocci, 2015), 71 (digital edition 2021, doi: 10.978.8829/007653).

⁶ Alexander Höbel, *Il PCI di Luigi Longo (1964–1969)* (Naples–Rome: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2011), 443–81.

⁷ Nello Ajello, *Intellettuali e Pci 1944–1958* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 1979); Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali. Storia dell'Istituto Gramsci negli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1992); Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali. La politica culturale dei comunisti italiani (1944–1964)* (Rome: Carocci, 2014).

⁸ Marco Gatto, *Nonostante Gramsci. Marxismo e critica letteraria nell'Italia del Novecento* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016).

⁹ Paolo Favilli, *Marxismo e storia. Saggio sull'innovazione storiografica in Italia (1945–1970)* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2006). As a general reference, Gilda Zazzara, *La storia a sinistra. Ricerca e impegno politico dopo il fascismo* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 2011).

¹⁰ Vacca, ed., *La crisi del soggetto*. See also Giuseppe Bedeschi, *La parabola del marxismo in Italia, 1945–1983* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 1983).

¹¹ Silvano Tagliabue, 'Gli effetti della sottovalutazione della svolta epistemologica del 1970', in Vacca, ed., *La crisi del soggetto*, 28.

development of Marxism in Italy. What is proposed in this article is precisely to make a contribution in this direction, emphasising the role played by cultural mediators rather than the one played by philosophers, in order to show that the production of thought counts as much as its dissemination, and to challenge the idea that there was no ‘appreciable resistance’ in favour of historicism and anti-subjectivism.

In order to understand the intellectual significance of the *LSN* book series, an introduction to post-war Marxism in Italy is necessary. After the Second World War, the PCI had become the strongest force opposing the moderate government led by the Christian Democratic Party, and it virtually monopolised any readings of Marx; the PSI (Italian Socialist Party) was mostly (but not entirely) overshadowed by it.¹² With reference, above all, to the work of Antonio Gramsci as interpreted by the PCI secretary Palmiro Togliatti, the party supported a particular form of historicism, based on the need for an interpenetration between historiography and politics and a dialectical approach, which allowed for the identification of progressive elements within Italian culture’s democratic tradition. This Marxist historicism was intended to be attentive to reality rather than abstract and teleological, and served as a platform for the ‘Italian Road to Socialism’ established by Togliatti from 1944.¹³ Indeed, it was functional in Italy’s Cold War role as a Western bloc country with an electorally strong Communist Party, allowed for the rejection of the most disturbing aspects of Soviet dialectical materialism, and favoured the creation of a sympathetic environment for many intellectuals.

After 1956, with the denunciation of Stalin’s crimes at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the repression of the Hungarian Revolution, it became harder to tie leftist intellectuals to the PCI and many broke from the party. Furthermore, at the turn of the 1960s, the philosophical debate around Marx was no longer configured as a mere theoretical discussion, but had become a dispute about which form of Marxism was capable of responding to the challenges of contemporary capitalism. Indeed, with Italy’s unprecedented and chaotic industrialisation, mass migrations to the North, and a first wave of protests and strikes

¹² Mariamargherita Scotti, *Da sinistra. Intellettuali, Partito socialista italiano e organizzazione della cultura (1953–1960)* (Rome: Ediesse, 2011)

¹³ Marco Albeltaro, ‘Il marxismo come storicismo (1944–1956). Appunti su Togliatti, Gramsci e lo sguardo sulla storia dei comunisti italiani’, *Filosofia italiana*, no. 1 (2021): 63–71.

against harsh working conditions in factories, Marxist historicism entered a crisis¹⁴ because it proved inadequate for solving the new problems faced by the workers' movement, having been oriented towards historical and literary analysis (suffice it to mention neorealism in novels and films) for a mostly agricultural country that no longer existed.

The philosopher Galvano Della Volpe set everything in motion, proposing Marxism as a positive science and a materialistic sociology, rather than as historicism or a totalising ideology;¹⁵ but it was mainly the New Left, despite not being a unitary movement, and particularly Workerism [*operaismo*]¹⁶ that challenged the PCI. This was the case both on a philosophical level, regarding Marx's interpretation, and on a political level,¹⁷ through its emphasis on the direct participation and self-management of the working masses, which obviously called into question the role of the PCI. As a consequence, the party was forced to open up to the themes of scientific research and new Marxist thought (even when subject to heterodoxy) in place of the old strands of Communist cultural policy (historiography, cinema, figurative arts).¹⁸ The cultural hegemony of the party had waned, in any case, precisely at a stage that Marxism (especially with Adorno, Marcuse and Critical theory) was developing and circulating in journals and publishing that were independent from Communist control.¹⁹ The *LSN*

¹⁴ Giulia Dettori, 'La crisi del marxismo come storicismo dopo l'«indimenticabile '56»', *Filosofia italiana*, no. 1 (2021): 73–89.

¹⁵ Franco Cassano, ed., *Marxismo e filosofia in Italia (1958–1971): I dibattiti e le inchieste su «Rinascita» e il «Contemporaneo»* (Bari: De Donato, 1973); Cristina Corradi, *Storia dei marxismi in Italia* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2005), 95–148; Francesca Chiarotto, ed., *Aspettando il Sessantotto: Continuità e fratture nelle culture politiche italiane dal 1956 al 1968* (Turin: Accademia University Press, 2017), <https://books.openedition.org/aaccademia/1610>, part II.

¹⁶ Adelino Zanini, 'On the "Philosophical Foundations" of Italian Workerism: A Conceptual Approach', *Historical Materialism* 18, no. 4 (2010): 39–63; Cristina Corradi, 'Panzieri, Tronti, Negri: le diverse eredità dell'operaismo italiano' and Sergio Bologna, 'L'operaismo italiano', in Pier Paolo Poggio, ed., *L'altronevecento. Comunismo eretico e pensiero critico*, vol. 2, *Il sistema e i movimenti. Europa 1945–1989* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2011), respectively 223–47 and 205–22; Fabio Guidali, 'Intellectuals at the Factory Gates: Early Italian *Operaismo* from Raniero Panzieri to Mario Tronti', *Labor History* 62, no. 4 (2021), 454–69, doi: 10.1080/0023656X.2021.1955095.

¹⁷ Albertina Vittoria, *Storia del PCI 1921–1991* (Rome: Carocci, 2006), 107–20; Massimiliano Marzillo, *L'opposizione bloccata. PCI e centro-sinistra (1960–1968)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2012).

¹⁸ On cultural matters within the PCI see Ajello, *Il lungo addio*, 3–99; Gregorio Sorgonà, 'La direzione dell'Istituto Gramsci e la politica culturale del Partito nuovo', in Gregorio Sorgonà, ed., *Alessandro Natta intellettuale e politico. Ricerche e testimonianze* (Rome: Ediesse, 2019), 41–61.

¹⁹ Ermanno Taviani, 'Il Pci e la cultura italiana dal miracolo economico agli anni Ottanta', in Silvio Pons, ed., *Il comunismo italiano nella storia del Novecento* (Rome: Viella, 2021), 287–306.

book series fit exactly into this evolving picture, and was a way of trying to manage the centrifugal forces and preserve a place for Marxist historicism.

2. The protagonists: Spinella and Coga

The biographical and intellectual profiles of the main proponents of the book series are compelling. Mario Spinella (1918–1994) had participated in the anti-fascist resistance and joined the PCI, training in the Stalinist interpretation of Marxist-Leninist doctrine like many other militants of his generation. An official on whom the party could always count, but without making the most of him (as was regrettably admitted),²⁰ Spinella directed the party school in Bologna in the early 1950s and then the authoritative Institute of Communist Studies in Frattocchie, near Rome,²¹ though maintaining reservations about the management of internal collective discipline.²² He also contributed to circulating the interpretative paradigm of Marxism endorsed by the PCI, as demonstrated by his popular editorship of Gramsci's works.²³ At the same time, he was active in highbrow intellectual circles, editing the communist philosophical journal *Società* after the 1956 crisis. This assignment showed the party leadership's confidence in Spinella's loyalty to the line,²⁴ and he effectively contributed to the de-provincialisation of the journal by opening it to sociology. He was also active as a critic and reviewer in the pages of the PCI's weekly *Rinascita*²⁵ and took on literary writing with a certain success – publishing his first

²⁰ Fondazione Gramsci, Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Rome (henceforth FG, APC), Partito comunista italiano, 1969/CL/234/M-Z, busta 78, letter from Alessandro Natta to Mario Spinella, 10 March 1969.

²¹ Anna Tonelli, *A scuola di politica. Il modello comunista di Frattocchie (1944–1993)* (Bari–Rome: Laterza, 2017). On Spinella's role, passim.

²² Andrea Pozzetta, «*Tutto il partito è una scuola*». *Cultura, passioni e formazione nei quadri e funzionari del Pci (1945–1981)* (Milan: Unicopli, 2019), 190–95.

²³ Carlo Salinari, Mario Spinella, eds., *Antologia popolare degli scritti e delle lettere di Antonio Gramsci* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1957); Antonio Gramsci, *Elementi di politica*, edited by Mario Spinella (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1969).

²⁴ On *Società* see Michele Ciliberto, 'Cultura e politica nel dopoguerra. L'esperienza di «Società»', *Studi storici* 22, no. 1 (1981): pp. 5–25; Chiara Meta, 'I comunisti e gli intellettuali: gli anni di «Società»', *Historia Magistra* 5, no. 13 (2013): 76–89.

²⁵ For a selection of his literary reviews, see Mario Spinella, *Scritture del secondo Novecento. Interventi su «Rinascita»*, edited by Andrea Gialloretto (Novate Milanese: Prospero, 2018).

novel in 1968 and later winning the prestigious Premio Viareggio for his novel *Lettera da Kupjansk* in 1987.

What characterised Spinella's intellectual activity was his desire for cultural renewal and cultivating intellectual relationships. In the 1960s, several episodes confirmed this. It was Spinella who signed a cordial and encouraging article to celebrate the first year of *Quaderni Piacentini*, an iconic New Left journal.²⁶ He also tended the relationship with the literary avant-garde; his introduction to an issue of the journal *il menabò* dedicated to experimental literature was a sign of openness, but also of upholding a Marxist viewpoint. In fact, he interpreted literary experimentalism as aligned with the most advanced cultural trends and a challenge to capitalism, since it was charged with subjectivity and was therefore intrinsically opposed to the transformation of the individual into an industrial commodity.²⁷ This generous reading was a bold step, because communists generally considered that kind of literature to be a product of capitalist industry, and experimentalism was seen as a return to political disengagement.²⁸ Moreover, Spinella was attentive to the dialogue between the PCI and progressive minorities within Catholicism;²⁹ although himself not a major player in this relationship, he discussed the progress of the exchange between Christianity and Marxism³⁰ and reviewed, for example, the Polish philosopher Adam Schaff,³¹ who was attentive to existentialist thought and was, uncoincidentally, a much-published author in the *LSN* book series in the 1970s.

Spinella was, therefore, always found where it was necessary for the PCI to create bridges with intellectuals outside the party, to listen to other positions and to demonstrate a lack of sectarianism. Even before launching the *LSN* series, he had experience in seeing what was most modern in the cultural panorama and trying to assimilate it into a Marxist discourse,

²⁶ Mario Spinella, 'Una voce dalla provincia', *Rinascita* 20, no. 3 (1963): 27.

²⁷ Mario Spinella, 'Un'ipotesi di sociologia della letteratura', *il menabò*, no. 8 (1965): 14–36.

²⁸ See Gian Carlo Ferretti, 'L'ottavo "Menabò"', *Rinascita* 22, no. 35 (1965): 28.

²⁹ Daniela Saresella, *Catholics and Communists in Twentieth-Century Italy: Between Conflict and Dialogue* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 85–105.

³⁰ See, for instance, Mario Spinella, 'Esperienze del dialogo', *Rinascita* 22, no. 19 (1965): 11; Mario Spinella, 'Gramsci al San Fedele', *Rinascita* 23, no. 15 (1966): 8.

³¹ Spinella reviewed Schaff's *La filosofia dell'uomo* in *Critica marxista* 1, no. 4 (1963): 186–91.

smoothing out its eccentric elements. The fact that he did not turn to the party's publishing house, Editori Riuniti,³² was clearly due to his desire to keep this new cultural venture from total identification with the PCI.

A more elusive protagonist of this article is Raimondo Coga (1935–2015), founder in 1965 of the publishing house Dedalo [Daedalus], whose name referred to its first location, «a small, narrow and tortuous office»,³³ like the Cretan labyrinth, in the centre of Bari. The capital of the Puglia region experienced a period of economic growth between the 1960s and 1970s, rare for a city in southern Italy,³⁴ and on a cultural level it boasted not only the historic Laterza bookstore, but also its university and a cultural life in which the PCI was well-rooted, especially due to young intellectuals who engendered the so-called 'école barisienne'³⁵ and, in 1970, to the De Donato publishing house.³⁶ In this lively context, Coga immediately made a decisive business choice: he refused to publish literary works (which could have guaranteed a more stable financial situation) and devoted himself to the humanities, hard sciences, architecture and urban planning, sensing the climate of the time, in which books were seen as tools for struggle and emancipation, not entertainment. The first book series that Dedalo launched on the market was *LSN*, which fully responded to this logic³⁷ and was unmistakably characterised by its intense yellow binding.

It was not possible to locate documentation attesting to the occasion when Spinella and Coga met and agreed to work together, since in the handful of archived letters the new book series appears as already planned. However, it is interesting to underline that Spinella, deciding to make himself available to direct the new editorial project, was setting out on his own for the first time without asking permission from higher-ranking PCI officials. Indeed, there is no

³² Elisa Rogante, *Un libro per ogni compagno. Il PCI editore collettivo (1944-1956)* (Pisa: Pacini, 2021).

³³ Claudia Coga, 'Il labirinto dei saperi', *PreText*, no. 16 (2021): 36, <http://www.ilscmilano.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/PreText-16-web.pdf>.

³⁴ Giandomenico Amendola, '1960–1980: gli anni della «belle époque»', in Francesco Tateo, ed., *Storia di Bari*, vol. 5, *Il Novecento* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 1997), 335–56.

³⁵ Valerio Vetta, 'The *École Barisienne*: A Cultural and Political Endeavour after 1968', *Modern Italy* 21, 3 (2016): 273–87, doi:10.1017/mit.2016.27; Onofrio Romano, 'L'ambigua potenza del marxismo all'alba del neo-orizzontalismo. Il caso dell'*école barisienne*', in Vacca, ed., *La crisi del soggetto*, 445–61.

³⁶ Luca Di Bari, *I meridiani. La casa editrice De Donato fra storia e memoria* (Bari: Dedalo, 2012).

³⁷ Raimondo Coga, Oscar Iarussi, 'Un modello editoriale chiamato Dedalo e "il manifesto" 1969', *Belfagor* 60, no. 359 (2005): 583–88.

reference on the matter in the PCI archive, in contrast to the journal *Utopia*, also published with Dedalo three years later, when Spinella did present the project of the new periodical to the PCI political directorate.³⁸ This independence was probably made possible by the high cultural capital that Spinella had accumulated over the years and by the fact that the new endeavour officially had a purely cultural character, unlike the more ideological *Utopia*.

A letter from Coga dated 1 October 1967, close to the publication of the first book, narrowed down the title proposals for the new series, which were all problematic due to possible overlaps with other series: *Il labirinto* (The Labyrinth: there was a series by the publisher Longanesi with the same name), *Il filo* (The Thread: the publisher Il Saggiatore issued the series *Il filo di Arianna*, Ariadne's Thread), *La Nuova Scienza* (The New Science, the same name as a sociology series by the publisher il Mulino). The third proposal was Coga's favourite,³⁹ however it is not possible to ascertain who suggested inverting the adjective and the noun to give life to the title *La Scienza Nuova*. This means that the allusion to the philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) and his work *Scienza nuova* was not explicitly pursued at that stage. Vico, although never mentioned, was nevertheless a relevant reference: as an opponent of scientific rationalism and Descartes, he was convinced of the possibility of true knowledge taking place through history. The role of history as an instrument of knowledge would be one of the cornerstones of the entire book series.

The division of roles between Coga and Spinella is also impossible to define accurately. Spinella probably took care of the whole publication process, from book proposals to the appointment of editors and translators,⁴⁰ though Coga was closely involved. For example, one of the publisher's letters to Spinella expresses the former's dissatisfaction with a translation.⁴¹ Since Dedalo was still a small artisan publishing house, Coga's concern and care were understandable, but were also a sign of how much both had invested in their collaboration.

³⁸ FG, APC, Partito comunista italiano, 1970/CL/278/N-Z, busta 111, letter from Spinella to Natta (PCI Direction) 15 September 1970.

³⁹ Comune di Suzzara, archive on deposit at Università di Pavia, Centro Manoscritti, Fondo Mario Spinella (henceforth CM, FMS), letter from Coga to Spinella, 1 October 1967.

⁴⁰ For instance, he had to manage the delay in the translation of Ruth Benedict's book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. See CM, FMS, letter from Ferdinando Mazzone (translator) to Spinella, 28 November 1967.

⁴¹ CM, FMS, letter from Coga to Spinella, 6 August 1967.

3. Books as statements: Gabel, Lanternari, Berque

The first volume of the *LSN* series, *La falsa coscienza. Saggio sulla reificazione* (*La Fausse conscience. Essai sur la réification*, 1962) by Joseph Gabel, was a declaration of intent. Translated by Anna Backhaus Righini, the book attempted a convergence between clinical alienation such as mental illness (schizophrenia) and social alienation from a Marxist point of view. Gabel deals with Stalinism and racism as cases of false consciousness, arguing that alienation is the abandonment of dialectics on a collective scale. He intended to explain that a society in which man is extraneous to his products (socio-economic alienation) is a society in which man is extraneous to other humans (psychological alienation).

This is the only *LSN* book that carried an editorial note – and, significantly, not a sole preface to the volume – signed by Spinella,⁴² which allows us both to understand the kind of reader the series was addressing and to highlight some of its characterising themes. Spinella wished to locate the book series at the confluence of three great disciplines, namely psychology, sociology and Marxism and aimed at readers who were familiar with Marxist terminology, but were also attracted to unconventional sciences in the Italian university, such as anthropology and ethnology. He even stated that psychological and psychiatric studies constituted one of the fundamental moments of a modern humanistic education at that time.

The reference to Marx was central to Spinella's editorial note. By specifying that the question of false consciousness itself was due precisely to the anthropological and sociological discoveries of Karl Marx, he intended to legitimise the whole *LSN* editorial operation, forcing a traditional reading of Marx to the point of affirming that the historical-scientific definition of man's conscience was at the heart of Marxist investigation. Marx and Engels had considered false consciousness to be the intellectual process that makes pure representations – that is, apparent driving forces – appear rational⁴³ and was therefore considered as an error of those who

⁴² Mario Spinella, 'Nota editoriale', in Joseph Gabel, *La falsa coscienza. Saggio sulla reificazione* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1967), 7–14. The text was appreciated by Gabel, too. See CM, FMS, letter from Gabel to Coga, 4 October 1967.

⁴³ See Friedrich Engels's letter to Franz Mehring, 14 July 1893, online https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1893/letters/93_07_14.htm.

prioritised ideas over reality and the conflicts in which people were involved. Gabel, however, took the analysis a step further, stating that false consciousness was the inability to understand reality in its dialectical process, hence its reification. Elaborating on Gabel's vision, Spinella captured two aspects. The first concerned reification as a loss of the sense of history: this was a reference to historicism and to its necessary preservation, which would be revisited in later *LSN* volumes. The second regarded the importance of Gabel's book as a contribution to the revival of interest in phenomenology and existentialism and, more particularly, in reflections on psychological issues. In fact, referring to the rationalistic positivism that productivism imposed on factory life, Spinella insisted on the psychological cost of the capitalist use of machines. In this respect, he showed a sensitivity to issues that a part of the Italian New Left had raised since the early 1960s, also asserting the struggle against the 'one-dimensional' man produced by factory life, with direct reference to Marcuse.

The publication of Gabel's book, edited by a Communist militant such as Spinella, was not to be taken for granted: Gabel's Marxism was *sui generis*, as demonstrated by his main reference, Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*, a controversial work repudiated by its author, as well as Karl Mannheim and scholars in the field of psychiatry (Eugène Minkowski, Ludwig Binswanger). Starting a series with an author who rejected Marxist dogmatism and who declared that «political Marxism is false consciousness»⁴⁴ was a sign of autonomy from Spinella. Through Gabel's book, Spinella made assertions on non-schematic and dialectical readings of reality that could not please dogmatic Communists careful to defend the orthodoxy of a political position, but that certified his independence and highlighted common ground with the New Left rejecting the PCI. The intention of this operation is apparent: beside the editorial note, one should consider that Gabel's book finished printing on 30 September 1967, while the second volume of the series, *Occidente e Terzo Mondo* [The West and the Third World] by Vittorio Lanternari,⁴⁵ had already been printed in July 1967, meaning that, even if the processing times of the former had turned out to be longer than expected, Spinella must have insisted on beginning the series with Gabel.

⁴⁴ Joseph Gabel, *Prefazione*, in Gabel, *La falsa coscienza*, 16.

⁴⁵ Vittorio Lanternari, *Occidente e Terzo Mondo. Incontri di civiltà e religioni differenti* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1967).

Lanternari's volume was further evidence of the search for readers close to the New Left. This collection of essays originally published between 1954 and 1966 about peoples that the author defines as «frustrated» (that is, oppressed) in Africa, Australia, India and the United States (Black Muslims) was conducted from a purely historical and cultural point of view, with particular attention to religious, social and political facts, such as the consequences of urbanisation, industrialisation, and the introduction of Christianity. Preceding the apex of postcolonial studies, Lanternari's essays may appear simplistic today, claiming an equivalent value for all cultures and asserting that the civilisations of developing countries did not passively accept Western culture. However, it was fully part of Spinella's editorial project: not only did it delve into Third Worldism,⁴⁶ but it was also a study in ethnology as a history of traditional cultures. Lanternari only began his field research in 1971,⁴⁷ but his historical and comparative method and the book's remoteness from structuralism made it attractive for the series. It was not by chance that the back cover text (which was written by Spinella or was at least approved by him) of the book was elucidated in Marxist terms: it may have attracted young, New Left militants because of its subject matter, but it would also have taught them some important cornerstones of Marxist historicism.

The third *LSN* volume closed the thematic triangulation around which the series was founded. *Verso una cultura mondiale* [Towards a World Culture, originally *Dépossession du monde*, 1964] by the sociologist Jacques Berque, translated by Miro Silvera, dealt with colonialism as the «deprivation of one's individuality, reduction to a servile state of conscience», as the book cover blurb described. The term dispossession (*dépossession*) referred both to being possessed in a magical-religious sense and to the condition of colonised individuals, therefore the thematic link with the volumes of Gabel and Lanternari was provided by the theme of alienation. The consistency of the first three volumes of the series, published between 1967 and 1968 and all interpreted in the light of the tradition of Marxist historicism, was therefore conspicuous.

⁴⁶ Guido Panvini, 'Third Worldism in Italy', in Stefan Berger, Christoph Cornelissen, eds., *Marxist Historical Cultures and Social Movements during the Cold War. Case Studies from Germany, Italy and Other Western European States* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 289–308.

⁴⁷ Maria Ariotti, 'Dal lavoro da tavolino al lavoro sul terreno. Ricordo di Vittorio Lanternari', *La Ricerca Folklorica*, no. 65 (2012): 143.

4. Competition with the New Left: Tynyanov, Lukács, and the ethnic-anthropological current

In April 1968, Yury Tynyanov's *Avanguardia e tradizione* [Vanguard and Tradition] was published, translated by Sergio Leone and edited by Mario Marzaduri.⁴⁸ This collection of essays, many of which were previously unpublished in Italy, signalled an extension of the series to literary issues and responded to the evident growth of interest in Russian formalism that was taking place at that time.⁴⁹ The formalists, rejecting the eclecticism of the academy and the metaphysics of the symbolists, focused exclusively on literary work, believing that its particularity was not to be found in the psyches of the author or the reader, but rather in the work of art itself. Formalism was assonant with structuralist studies, which focused on pure texts, however, it is significant that Tynyanov, who engaged with the hierarchy of literary genres and their change over time – that is, the dynamic relationship between the old literary phenomena and the norms they engendered – was the one formalist to be published in the *LSN* series:⁵⁰ Spinella wanted to intervene in a field – studies on Russian formalism, which was very popular during those years – accentuating its historicist aspect against the stiffening of textual and structural analysis.

The sixth volume of the series, *Utopia e prospettiva in György Lukács* [Utopia and Perspective in György Lukács] by Tito Perlini, an expert in German culture, also dealt with an author who was experiencing a moment of great attention in Italy and who had been a key reference in Gabel's book.⁵¹ Perlini touched on themes that the Italian New Left was also examining: there are, for example, long pages about Thomas Mann, Balzac and Joyce – that is,

⁴⁸ Jurij Tynjanov, *Avanguardia e tradizione*, introduction by Viktor Šklovskij (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1968). The author's name was transliterated into Italian.

⁴⁹ In 1966 Victor Erlich's *Formalismo russo* (by Bompiani publishing house) and Roman Jakobson's *Saggi di linguistica generale* (by Feltrinelli) had been published; in 1968 Einaudi issued the anthology *I formalisti russi. Teoria della letteratura e metodo critico*, edited by Tzvetan Todorov, and il Saggiatore published *Il problema del linguaggio poetico*, translated by the poet Giovanni Giudici and Ljudmila Kortikova.

⁵⁰ David Duff, 'Maximal Tensions and Minimal Conditions: Tynyanov as Genre Theorist', *New Literary History* 34, no. 3 (2003): 555.

⁵¹ Tito Perlini, *Utopia e prospettiva in György Lukács* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1968).

‘bourgeois’ novelists of the 19th and early 20th century – which was precisely what Alberto Asor Rosa, a leading workerist critic, was analysing at that stage.⁵²

To understand the importance of Lukács’s presence in the *LSN* book series we must remember that Spinella had previously interpreted the work of the Hungarian philosopher in an anti-workerist key, in particular the re-edition of *History and Class Consciousness*.⁵³ In the PCI weekly *Rinascita*, Spinella had paid particular attention to the book’s new introduction, in which Lukács criticised the strongly anti-bureaucratic tones of his own work written over forty years earlier. In this regard, Spinella highlighted the theme of party militancy, «which today is fashionable to discredit»,⁵⁴ just as workerists did, since they claimed to rediscover unmediated workers’ militancy. To a reader attentive to ideological questions, underlining, together with Lukács, the essentialness of the party of the working class (i.e., the PCI) meant entering the debate on the role of the party, which had reached its peak the year before with the publication of Mario Tronti’s milestone work *Operai e capitale* [Workers and Capital].⁵⁵ Once again, the *LSN* series was the scene of a dispute over ideological heritage between the PCI and the New Left, particularly Workerism.

The competition with the New Left was confirmed by two volumes on an ethnic-anthropological theme published in the *LSN* series between 1968 and 1969. The first was *Il crisantemo e la spada* [*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*] by the American anthropologist Ruth Benedict, who had been assigned by the Military Intelligence Service to study Japanese culture during the Second World War with the far-sighted objective of understanding the nature of the people the US was fighting.⁵⁶ The book had been an international bestseller, being of a scientific nature but with a glossary and few notes, hence capable of attracting a wide audience, so much so that it had «framed both American and Japanese—and, by extension, global—

⁵² Fabio Guidali, ‘Transitioning Culture from Apparent Death to Reawakening: Alberto Asor Rosa’s Political Conceptions in the 1960s’, *History of European Ideas* 47, no. 5 (2021), 785–800.

⁵³ György Lukács, *Storia e coscienza di classe*, translated by Giovanni Piana (Milan: Sugar, 1967).

⁵⁴ Mario Spinella, ‘La prefazione del 1967 a “Storia e coscienza di classe”’, *Rinascita* 24, no. 36 (1967): 19–20.

⁵⁵ Mario Tronti, *Operai e capitale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966; for its most recent edition, Rome: DeriveApprodi, 2019).

⁵⁶ Ruth Benedict, *Il crisantemo e la spada. Modelli di cultura giapponese*, translated by Marina Lavaggi and Ferdinando Mazzone (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1968).

perceptions of Japan».⁵⁷ The *LSN* edition, however, was characterised by its purely political objective: on the back cover, the book was described as «a sign for a society, the North American, willing to leave no stone unturned in order to achieve total domination, through the atomic bomb or napalm or anthropological investigations of the countries it is going to ‘protect’». The book had, therefore, to expose the dimension of US imperialism in Asia, deconstructing its cultural strategy: again, the series was part of the discourse on cultural domination that was developing in the New Left and was a major topic in Marcuse’s work, in which the theme of «repressive tolerance» and investigation on the mechanisms of social control were pivotal.

In the same vein, another volume of the *LSN* series was added, *L’afriicano solitario* (*The Lonely African*, 1962) by the anthropologist Colin M. Turnbull.⁵⁸ Using individual profiles, the book tells the tragedy of the African man as deriving from having lost his own values, since he has moved away from tribal traditions without being welcomed by Europeans. Turnbull took a severe stance towards Europeans and Christian missionaries, indiscriminately described as destroyers of African cultures, so much so that an American critic had reproached the author for considering traditional African culture «a paradise lost».⁵⁹ Turnbull’s work may be a slightly superficial critique of colonisation, but it was certainly effective and was part of the *LSN* series, like Lanternari’s book, because it took the point of view of the ‘oppressed’, dealt with purely cultural aspects, and judged all cultures as equivalent, although somewhat simplistically. The alternation of books concerning strictly cultural topics with a political undertone and books of an ideological nature was therefore the model for the series’ publication, as if to attract and persuade readers from the New Left. The first group worked as bait for readers attracted by the topicality of the books, the second group conveyed ideological messages. Historicism, elsewhere in trouble, was the glue in the series.

⁵⁷ John Lie, ‘Ruth Benedict’s Legacy of Shame: Orientalism and Occidentalism in the Study of Japan’, *Asian Journal of Social Science* 29, no. 2 (2001): 249.

⁵⁸ Colin M. Turnbull, *L’afriicano solitario*, translated by Liana Bertoldi (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1969).

⁵⁹ Ethel M. Albert, ‘The Lonely African by Colin M. Turnbull’, *American Anthropologist* 65, no. 3 (1963): 715.

5. A new beginning with socialist humanism and psychoanalysis

In 1970, the *LSN* series did not publish any new books, but Spinella had not stopped working on the series in the absence of an outcome, as we can infer from the correspondence kept in his archive. It is probable that he voluntarily froze its public collaboration with Raimondo Coga: in fact, between June 1970 and early 1971 Dedalo published the monthly *il manifesto*, which was the first real case of dissidence within the PCI that had become public. Communist officials and intellectuals such as Lucio Magri, Rossana Rossanda, Aldo Natoli and Luigi Pintor, who were its founders, represented the anti-moderate left of the PCI.⁶⁰ The soon-to-be-expelled group had not found the support of major publishers such as Einaudi or Feltrinelli, which had refused to back their journal so as not to break with the PCI, while Coga took the risk. By printing the monthly and distributing it not only in bookstores, as foreseen by its creators, but also at newsstands, he contributed to making it a relevant political fact, selling 50,000 copies of its first issue – a very high figure for a political-intellectual periodical in Italy.⁶¹ In April 1971 *il manifesto* transformed itself into a daily newspaper after twelve issues, thus ending its connection with Dedalo. Only later was Spinella, who was unrelated to *il manifesto*, evidently able to resume his activity with the series, doubling his efforts: from January 1971, the ideological magazine *Utopia* would also be published with Dedalo, but this time Spinella felt, as previously mentioned, the urge to communicate to the PCI leadership his commitment with the publishing house, considering the delicacy of the moment and the content of the new periodical.

The letter Spinella wrote in September 1970 to the PCI political directorate to inform it about the new journal project is the only internal document that elucidates his basic intent: to contribute to the linking of humanistic and classical culture to Marx's thought, especially targeting young people. The new phase in the life of the *LSN* book series began under the auspices of Marx in a more straightforward way than before. Spinella had just edited the Italian

⁶⁰ For an outline see Claudio Natoli, 'La sinistra del Pci negli anni Sessanta', *Studi Storici* 55, no. 2 (2014): 449–79. See also Antonio Lenzi, *Il Manifesto tra dissenso e disciplina di partito. Origini e sviluppo di un gruppo politico nel Pci* (Reggio Calabria: Città del Sole, 2011); Valentina Casini, *Gli anni della contestazione. Il Sessantotto e la questione del «manifesto»*, in Soragonà, ed., *Alessandro Natta intellettuale e politico*, 63–80.

⁶¹ Lucio Magri, *Il sarto di Ulm. Una possibile storia del Pci*, (Milan, Il Saggiatore, 2011), 256; Rossana Rossanda, *La ragazza del secolo scorso* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005), 373; Valentino Parlato, *La rivoluzione non russa. Quarant'anni di storia del manifesto*, edited by Giancarlo Greco (San Cesario di Lecce: Manni, 2012), 11–12.

translation of *Marx vivo* [Marx Alive], a multi-volume work published in November 1969, which collected essays deriving from an international symposium held the previous year on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Marx's birth. Spinella's preface to the first volume is the key to understanding how he intended to consider Marxism and to anticipate subsequent publications in the *LSN* series. In fact, Spinella did not fail to assert his positions, for example opposing structuralists, of whom he said that, while they declared themselves the heirs of Marx, they fell «into what he considered pure metaphysics, referring to an 'original' structure, or at least postulating it», while Marx's thought is dialectical and the relations of production are in all respects historical. Spinella was also convinced that all of Marx's work was «a largely successful attempt to found a new cognitive approach that is both history and science: that is, that does not rationalistically sclerotise the former into the latter, nor dissolve, irrationally, the latter into the former». Finally, he defined Marx's ability to move along the «very thin razor wire of historical-social knowledge» and his constant attention to the «complex and ever-changing link between economic structure and institutional and cultural superstructures» as his «genius». ⁶² This interpretation of Marx as the standard-bearer of historicism would recur over the following years in the *LSN* series.

The resumption of publication began with *L'umanesimo socialista (Socialist Humanism. An International Symposium, 1965)*, edited by Erich Fromm and printed in August 1971. This can be considered as the start of a new phase, characterised by a stronger international inspiration. The book collected essays by authors from Eastern Europe, such as Veljko Korać, Ivan Sviták, Mihailo Marković, Adam Schaff, Bronisław Baczko, Gajo Petrović, Rudi Supek, and Predrag Vranicki, not all particularly well-known in Italy, along with contributions by Marcuse and, among the Italians, Umberto Cerroni, Danilo Dolci, and Galvano Della Volpe. As the book's editor, Fromm highlighted how humanism emerged as a reaction to the nuclear threat and how this feeling was common to all beliefs—Marxist or liberal, Catholic or Protestant—from which the authors came. In his essay, Fromm also claimed that, for Marx, dealing with the material aspects of existence was a way of dealing with the spiritual needs of man in response to

⁶² Mario Spinella, 'Prefazione', in Mario Spinella, ed., *Marx vivo. La presenza di Karl Marx nel pensiero contemporaneo*, translated by Elena Baffi, Silvano Corvisieri and Mario Spinella, vol. 1, *Filosofia e metodologia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1969), 10 and 12.

alienation, without relying on mystical or religious solutions. Therefore, in Fromm's opinion, «Marxism is humanism and its purpose is the complete revelation of the potential of man».⁶³

Although Spinella did not write a preface in this book, he reviewed it in the Communist daily newspaper *l'Unità*,⁶⁴ which is intriguing, considering that he had shifted his opinion on Fromm over time. In fact, Spinella had previously critiqued Fromm's alleged ideological errors in reading Marx,⁶⁵ while now he published his work in the *LSN* series and promoted it in the PCI's press. This meant that Fromm's position was functional to the discourse Spinella wanted to pursue at that moment. Indeed, Spinella certainly appreciated Fromm's ecumenical approach, as did the intellectual circles within the PCI, which in the post-war period had considered itself a pole of attraction for all progressive intellectuals, even non-Marxists. Secondly, Fromm was a psychoanalyst who denied the deterministic influence of economic aspects on man's conscience, and his presence in *LSN* marked the growing interest for the series in the field of human sciences.⁶⁶ Thirdly, this book was also part of the logic of attracting an audience composed of New Left readers: since the early 1960s the themes of alienation, human desire, and oppression had been present in the journals of young independent left-wing intellectuals,⁶⁷ and Socialist or Marxist humanism (or 'open' Marxism) insisted on Marx's writings concerning alienation and focused on ways of life, individual experiences, and symbolic systems of meaning. Fourthly, Fromm defended a vision of Marxism that had nothing to do with the anti-humanistic version that had gained ground in the 1960s, particularly in Structuralism, Louis Althusser and his theoretical and abstract Marxism, and the works of many representatives of the New Left, including the workerists, for whom all that mattered was the identity between economic and political struggles. Fromm was, therefore, an author who fell within the political-cultural intent

⁶³ Erich Fromm, 'L'applicazione della psicoanalisi umanista alla teoria di Marx', in Erich Fromm, ed., *L'umanesimo socialista*, translated by Silvana Cassio Abbrescia (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1971), 255.

⁶⁴ Mario Spinella, 'Umanesimo e comunismo', *l'Unità* 49, no. 300 (2 November 1972): 3.

⁶⁵ Mario Spinella, 'Le buone intenzioni di Erich Fromm', *l'Unità* 50, no. 208 (30 July 1963): 6.

⁶⁶ Luca Basso, 'Il marxismo nelle scienze umane: psicologia, psicoanalisi e antropologia', in Stefano Petrucciani, *Storia del marxismo*, vol. 3, *Economia, politica, cultura: Marx oggi* (Rome: Carocci, 2015), 129–69.

⁶⁷ Fabio Guidali, 'Culture and Political Commitment in the Non-Orthodox Marxist Left: The Case of *Quaderni Piacentini* in pre-1968 Italy', *History of European Ideas* 46, no. 6 (2020): 862–75, doi: 10.1080/01916599.2020.1756892.

of *LSN*, and, as a Marxist thinker who drew inspiration from utopian socialism, anarchism and liberal thought, he displeased dogmatists.⁶⁸

The book edited by Fromm was also an opportunity for the *LSN* series to introduce various authors from the philosophical Yugoslavian journal *Praxis*,⁶⁹ which followed the perspective of Marxist humanism. Linked to the periodical was the Korčula summer school, active between 1963 and 1974, when *Praxis* was closed by the authorities due to growing tensions with the Yugoslav Communist Party. Instead of giving space to the need for action and radicalism by young people, who at that stage were looking for revolutionary models and were confusingly absorbing Maoist or Marxist-Leninist theories, Spinella preferred to provide an intellectual platform that he interpreted in harmony with the tradition of Marxist historicism developed in Italy and that did not want to break with classical patterns of militancy. This, too, was symptomatic of his political and cultural motivations.

This line of publication was strengthened a couple of years later through an important contribution by Giuseppe Semerari, professor of theoretical philosophy in Bari and linked to the Korčula school. In his book *Filosofia e potere* [Philosophy and Power], Semerari showed himself opposed to any dogmatism («‘Open’ Marxism then means self-criticism and permanent self-problematisation of socialism as an alternative to capitalism and bureaucratism»)⁷⁰ and dedicated an entire chapter of his book to the philosophers Spinella had just rediscovered. Semerari underlined several aspects that were in tune with *LSN* publications, in particular, with reference to Petrovič, the coincidence of the humanist and emancipatory character of Marxism and, with reference to Kosič, historicism. Semerari also criticised Althusser, who «rejects humanism» and «assumes Hegelian history as a process without a subject».⁷¹ Semerari disagreed with the Althusserian interpretation of man as simply a function of an absolute system: according to so-called ‘open’ Marxism, indeed, Communism is not a system to be established or an ideal to be

⁶⁸ Neil McLaughlin, ‘How to Become a Forgotten Intellectual: Intellectual Movements and the Rise and Fall of Erich Fromm’, *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 2 (1998): 234.

⁶⁹ Gerson S. Sher, *Praxis: Marxist Criticism and Dissent in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).

⁷⁰ Giuseppe Semerari, *Filosofia e potere* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1973), 157–8.

⁷¹ Semerari, *Filosofia e potere*, 159.

pursued, «but the real movement that gets the current system out of the way».⁷² Semerari also supported the rediscovery of the subjective fact on a scientific basis, according to an opening to the new human sciences,⁷³ always on the basis of Marxist humanism.

In this second phase, the volumes on psychoanalysis and psychopathology in the *LSN* series took the place of the anthropology studies that had characterised the series up to 1970, probably because now decolonisation processes were seen as less urgent. The rediscovery of Sigmund Freud and radical reflection on the use of the body, a distinguishing feature of the 1970s at an international level, were, for the series, a way of introjecting the humanist critique of capitalism and of the bourgeois world, which was now addressed not to external reality (especially colonised peoples), but to inner reality. Spinella was evidently convinced that only by facing one's own ghosts and one's mental and social structures was it possible to advance towards Communism. For example, the *LSN* series published an analysis on family relationships by Sergio Finzi and Virginia Finzi Ghisi,⁷⁴ members of the working group of *Utopia* (and, from 1974, co-founders with Spinella of another of Dedalo's endeavour, the journal *Il piccolo Hans*). Two years later, a philosophical and critical-literary reflection on the limits of reason by Sergio Finzi was issued,⁷⁵ dedicating an important investigation to the figure of the Marquis de Sade, who was a recurring reference both in *Utopia* and in Maurice Blanchot's book *Lautréamont e Sade (Lautréamont et Sade, 1963)*,⁷⁶ in which the two authors were united by their disruptive radical behaviour. Roger Bastide's *Sociologia e psicanalisi (Sociologie et psychanalyse, 1963)*⁷⁷ and Mario Manfredi's *L'irrazionale vissuto* [The Lived Irrational]⁷⁸ were also part of this rich trend. Yet, the most indicative book of the series in the early 1970s was probably *Apocalisse e*

⁷² Semerari, *Filosofia e potere*, 173.

⁷³ Alberto Altamura, *Marxismo aperto. Giuseppe Semerari e l'umanesimo socialista tra destalinizzazione e Sessantotto* (Bari: Stilo, 2018).

⁷⁴ Sergio Finzi, Virginia Finzi Ghisi, *Un saggio in famiglia* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1971).

⁷⁵ Sergio Finzi, *Il principe splendente* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1973).

⁷⁶ Maurice Blanchot, *Lautréamont e Sade*, introduction by Tito Perlini, translated by Marina Bianchi and Renata Spinella (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1974).

⁷⁷ Roger Bastide, *Sociologia e psicanalisi*, translated from the first edition by Tullio Aymone and Ursula Soergel, updates on the second edition by Ettore Catalano (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1972).

⁷⁸ Mario Manfredi, *L'irrazionale vissuto* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1972).

rivoluzione [Apocalypse and Revolution] by Giorgio Cesarano and Gianni Collu.⁷⁹ It posits «biological revolution» and anticipates many core themes of biopolitics. In fact, the idea emerged that the revolution must start from the reappropriation of one's own body, according to a vision already present among the New Left, but also in socialist humanism as the re-evaluation of the human.⁸⁰ Under Spinella's gaze, the area at the crossroads between psychiatry and existential philosophy was now being valued not from a specialist perspective, but in a broader cultural sense.⁸¹

Despite this attention to less traditional disciplines and innovative approaches, the *LSN* series did not forget historicism, publishing a volume by Karl Mannheim.⁸² Furthermore, the few books referring to cultural interests that had been stronger at the beginning of the series, such as the anthropology of decolonisation, were presented in the light of historicism.⁸³ However, historicism was always problematised, as is evident with the publication of a collection of essays by Gaston Bachelard, *L'intuizione dell'istante*⁸⁴ (from the title of one of them, *L'intuition de l'instant*, 1966). A philosopher with a solid scientific background, Bachelard had set himself the goal of enhancing the contribution of science to philosophical reflection and entrusted an epistemological value to the history of science, opposing the positivist idea of linear history in favour of a history characterised by continuous dialectics. Even the book by the young philosopher Valeria Novielli *Scienza, linguaggio, esperienza* [Science, Language, Experience] was described on the back cover as a stance «against the 'idealistic' and 'objectivistic' concepts of science», because knowledge finds «its genesis in historical praxis».⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Giorgio Cesarano, Gianni Collu, *Apocalisse e rivoluzione* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1973).

⁸⁰ The theme was taken up again in Giorgio Cesarano, *Manuale di sopravvivenza* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1974).

⁸¹ For this reason, books that placed art at the centre of their analyses were also published, such as Stefan Morawski's *Assoluto e forma. A proposito della filosofia dell'arte di Malraux*, translated by Marina Bianchi (1971), Gaston Bachelard's *La poetica della rêverie*, translated by Giovanna Silvestri Stevan (1972), and Franco Fanizza's *Libertà e servitù dell'arte* (1972).

⁸² Karl Mannheim, *Sociologia della conoscenza*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti, translated by Marina Gagliardi and Tina Souvan (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1974).

⁸³ See for instance Anouar Abdel-Malek, *La dialettica sociale* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1974).

⁸⁴ Gaston Bachelard, *L'intuizione dell'istante. La psicoanalisi del fuoco*, translated by Antonio Pellegrino and Giovanna Silvestri (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1973).

⁸⁵ Valeria Novielli, *Scienza, linguaggio, esperienza* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1973).

The second phase of the *LSN* series after the break in 1970, therefore, focused on the need to not separate Marxism as a science from Marxism as historicism, giving great attention to socialist humanism and to philosophers from Eastern Europe (so much so that Ágnes Heller also turned to Spinella because she recognised him as an important cultural mediator in Italy),⁸⁶ to psychopathology and to the theme of corporeality. Not only were human sciences now claiming increasing attention in the *LSN* series, but also science *tout court*, as for example with Bachelard, but it was always considered from a Marxist perspective, that is, it was anchored to a historically determined praxis. Therefore, if historicism had been the cornerstone of the series from the beginning, it was confirmed as indispensable against dogmatic materialism.

6. A new place for philosophy of science

Around 1974 the beginning of a third phase in the life of *LSN* can be identified, mainly relating to the people involved in the book series. In fact, Giuseppe Semerari's circle in Bari and in particular his pupil Augusto Ponzio, but also Maria Solimini and Giovanni Cera, acquired increasing weight. Moreover, one of the authors of note in those years was Adam Schaff, a stand-in for all that mattered for *LSN*: anti-dogmatism, the centrality of human action, interest in psychology, and the humanistic conception of Marx's thought. Augusto Ponzio's book on Schaff⁸⁷ retraced the reasoning of the Polish philosopher and argued that existential problems were the basis of Marx's ideas. Ponzio also collected texts of a debate between Schaff and Lucien Sève on the relationship between Marxism and humanism.⁸⁸ In 1977 and 1978, he also edited three other volumes by Schaff under the title *Saggi filosofici* [Philosophical Essays],⁸⁹ confirming Dedalo as the leading mediator of the Polish philosopher in Italy.

⁸⁶ CM, FMS, letter from Ágnes Heller to Spinella, 28 November 1973.

⁸⁷ Augusto Ponzio, *Persona umana, linguaggio e conoscenza in Adam Schaff* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1974).

⁸⁸ Adam Schaff, Lucien Sève, *Marxismo e umanesimo. Per un'analisi semantica delle «Tesi su Feuerbach» di K. Marx*, edited by Augusto Ponzio (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1975).

⁸⁹ Adam Schaff, *Teoria della conoscenza, logica e semantica. Saggi filosofici/1*, edited by Augusto Ponzio, translated by Maria Sinatra (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1977); Adam Schaff, *Che cosa significa essere marxista. Saggi filosofici/2*, edited by Augusto Ponzio, translated by Giuseppe Mininni and Augusto Ponzio (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1978); Adam Schaff, *La questione dell'umanesimo marxista. Saggi filosofici/3*, edited by Augusto Ponzio, translated by Giuseppe Mininni and Mario Regina (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1978).

In this context, the publication of a volume dedicated to Althusser, who had been criticised over the years by many authors hosted in the book series, might at first appear out of place. Yet, French sociologist and philosopher Saül Karsz's *Teoria e politica (Théorie et politique: Louis Althusser, 1974)*,⁹⁰ though having been judged as a weak attempt in France,⁹¹ analysed the political implications and social practice of Althusser's theory. It was, therefore, an original reading of Althusser's writings, which highlighted the link between theory and practice and, in a broad sense, the question of political engagement. The impression gained from this book is that it was no longer possible to avoid Althusser, probably the most prominent Marxist scholar of the time, but the *LSN* series did so without taking his positions for granted and by inserting his work into historicism.

Not surprisingly, the other predominant theme in the mid-1970s became philosophy of science. In 1975, the series proposed three volumes by Gaston Bachelard, two of which, *Il materialismo razionale*⁹² (*Le matérialisme rationnel*, 1972) and *Il razionalismo applicato*⁹³ (*Le rationalisme appliqué*, 1969), concern the philosophical implications of contemporary science and the imprint of history on scientific knowledge, since «all thoughts bear the sign of the thinking being and a chemical analysis is *also* an analysis of thoughts».⁹⁴ On the one hand, the series was moving towards the philosophical reflection on science that had always been in its title and that would increasingly become the characteristic aspect of the entire Dedalo publishing house. On the other hand, asserting the historical and philosophical implications of science was also a way of inculcating a certain method of reflection and analysis (for example the principle of falsifiability) among the readers of the series, who were predominantly humanists. It is not possible to establish exactly who was responsible for these choices, since there are no documents indicating when the collaboration between Spinella and Coga for the *LSN* series ended, but the

⁹⁰ Saül Karsz, *Teoria e politica: Louis Althusser. Con quattro testi inediti di Louis Althusser*, translated by Alberto Cairoli (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1976).

⁹¹ See the review of the book in 'Comptes rendus'. *Archives de Philosophie* 38, no. 2 (1975): 345–6.

⁹² Gaston Bachelard, *Il materialismo razionale*, translated by Livia Semerari (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1975).

⁹³ Gaston Bachelard, *Il razionalismo applicato*, translated by Marisa Giannuzzi Bruno and Livia Semerari (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1975).

⁹⁴ Bachelard, *Il materialismo razionale* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1972), 7.

communist intellectual had definitely shaped the publishing enterprise. The enhancement of local skills and the growing organic link with the university of Bari, however, were probably promoted by Coga, and were fundamental in keeping the publishing house afloat through the academic market at a time of a general crisis in Italian publishing due to high production costs and the restriction of consumption.

Although no data is available on the commercial aspects of the early years of the *LSN* book series, its continuity over time alone confirms its success in a phase that was a true crucible for left-wing publishing in Italy. Moreover, some of the books in the series were reprinted in later years (e.g. those by Benedict, Turnbull and Bachelard), demonstrating the ongoing demand for at least some of these volumes. *LSN* remained an enterprise in which the ideological and commercial aspects were closely intertwined, and also for this reason a very interesting one: it seized a felt need in Italian society and was not merely a response to a precise cultural policy demand.

In the mid-1970s, the role of the extra-parliamentary leftist movements was changing. They had proved politically propulsive but largely unelected, therefore less worrisome for the PCI. Many New Left intellectuals were even returning to an appreciation of the PCI, which was at the height of its electoral power and was therefore liable to be a true agent of the transformation of society. On an intellectual level, the internal split on the left was now perceived as a challenge and an opportunity for confrontation, no longer constituting a real danger for the PCI. This is why Spinella could invite to a seminar on Marx figures such as his friends Finzi and Finzi Ghisi, but also leading workerists such as Mario Tronti and Massimo Cacciari, and an historicist philosopher like Nicola Badaloni.⁹⁵ The time of harsh competition was possibly past, in the name of a renewed and now truly intergenerational Marxism.

7. Final remarks

In a time of evident crisis in the Italian left, the *LSN* book series, as conceived of by Spinella, could no longer perform the same function it had in the previous years. It had been, after all, a

⁹⁵ CM, FMS, letter from Spinella to Italo Calvino, 5 January 1978.

secondary presence in the Italian cultural and editorial landscape between the 1960s and 1970s, but a significant one during a phase of political encounters and clashes, in which culture was understood as a political fact, as crucial as economic and class issues. Each book had been inserted within a coherent setting and had subtly tried to convince already politicised readers that the ideological and cultural visions of the PCI were modern and not dissimilar from those of the New Left. Unlike as happened, for example, with another independent publishing house, De Donato, which was active in the same city and in the same years as Dedalo, the *LSN* series did not set itself the goal of a genuine reorientation of Italian Marxism, but rather to its maintenance through wider engagement; not a redefinition of Marxism, but its conservation. It was a contribution to seeking a way out of the crisis of historicism not by actively philosophising, but by making use of books as cultural and political tools, in the spirit of the time, and by breathing new inspiration into Italian Marxism through translations and the recruitment of young scholars. The point is that these proposals seemed to have no place in the true nerve centres of Italian philosophy and in the PCI's activity,⁹⁶ and this confirmed the marginality of Spinella himself within his own party. While a general crisis of Marxism on a theoretical level was approaching, which, in Italy as well as in France, was initiated by a liberal-democratic revision starting in the mid-1970s⁹⁷ and which paradoxically took the form of «Marxist cultures not only very different from each other [...], but also antagonistic»,⁹⁸ *LSN* had exhausted its philosophical mission and adapted to the change, becoming a point of reference above all for reflection on the philosophy of science, so much so that it is even still active today, with the aim of bridging the 'two cultures' (the humanistic and the scientific ones) with books on anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, mathematics, physics, history of science. From 1977, it was another series published by Dedalo – not accidentally called *Nuova Sinistra* [New Left] and edited by the historian Stefano Merli and

⁹⁶ See indeed Giulio Azzolini, 'Lo storicismo marxista nell'Italia degli anni Settanta', *Filosofia italiana*, no. 1 (2021): 91–107. For the following evolution of Marxism in Italy, see Francesco Fistetti, *La crisi del marxismo in Italia. Cronache di filosofia politica (1980-2005). Un abbozzo di storia degli intellettuali* (Genoa: Il melangolo, 2006).

⁹⁷ André Tosel, 'The Development of Marxism: From the End of Marxism-Leninism to a Thousand Marxisms – France–Italy, 1975–2005', in Jacques Bidet, Stathis Kouvelakis, eds., *Critical companion to contemporary Marxism* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008), 40–78; Giulio Azzolini, '1983: Marx nell'Italia della «crisi del marxismo»', in Francesco Giasi, Marcello Mustè, eds., *Marx in Italia* (Rome: Treccani, 2020), 221–43.

⁹⁸ Giulio Azzolini, 'Culture marxiste e politiche culturali', in Pons, ed., *Il comunismo italiano nella storia del Novecento*, 260.

the philosopher Pieraldo Rovatti – that picked up *LSN*'s legacy with a stronger historical, but not historicist, component.

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