

Editorial

In writing this introduction to issue 19 of the Italian Psychoanalytic Annual, I would like to begin with some observations put forward by Stefano Bolognini in his article entitled “Reflections in Perspective on the 2026 SPI Congress in Genoa”, published on the Spiweb website.

Bolognini argues that the Italian Psychoanalytic Society is one of the most vibrant, diverse and numerous psychoanalytic societies in the world. He goes on to emphasise how our Society is characterised by the presence of many voices, as for many years the SPI has exhibited a polyphonic nature determined by its multi-centred history and the branching out of theoretical choices made by its various components.

We have sought to give space to this polyphony and articulation of the many voices of Italian psychoanalysis by selecting the most significant contributions published in the *Rivista di Psicoanalisi* in 2025 and compiling them in this volume to make them available to the international psychoanalytic community.

Italian psychoanalysis remains strongly linked to the clinical dimension and keeps its roots firmly anchored in tradition, whilst at the same time opening up with curiosity to the unknown and the uncharted. It is a form of psychoanalysis capable of renewing itself and questioning its tools of understanding and intervention in order to address the forms of psychological suffering that emerge from the rapid changes in the historical, social and technological contexts in which we find ourselves living.

We hope that our international colleagues will find, in the selected articles, evidence both of the theoretical richness and diversity, and of the variety of topics of interest and inquiry that characterise the current Italian psychoanalytic landscape.

I shall now guide the reader in more detail through the journey, made up of the selected articles, that this issue of the Annual takes us on.

The group of analysts from Pavia, led by Michele Bezoari, presents an interesting study on the use of the concept of countertransference in Bion's thought. Through a careful examination of the author's writings, it is highlighted that there is a discontinuity between Bion's early and later works regarding the con-

ception of countertransference. It shifts from being regarded as a valuable tool for understanding the patient's inner world to being viewed instead as an interference stemming from the analyst's unconscious that requires analysis. Bion's conception of countertransference thus shifts from a position close to the theories of Paula Heimann (who was his supervisor) to one much closer to Freud's thinking. Finally, the authors offer some theoretical hypotheses to explain this change in the conceptualisation of countertransference in Bion.

In the work by Lucia Fattori and Gabriella Vandi, Freud's controversial relationship with religion and mysticism is explored. The authors offer a series of interesting reflections on what they define as Freud's "denied mysticism". By this term, they refer to that overwhelming sense of eternity and boundlessness that would torment the founder of psychoanalysis until the end of his life. Fattori and Vandi begin their investigation with some posthumous notes, discovered after Freud's death, entitled Results, Ideas and Problems, in which he writes: «Mysticism: the obscure self-perception of the world that lies outside the Ego, the Id». Starting from attempts to interpret this cryptic Freudian statement, one can follow the authors on an exciting journey of exploration into Freud's thinking on mysticism and religion, which winds its way through his correspondence with Romain Rolland and the concept of the oceanic feeling, leading to a "Memory Disorder on the Acropolis" and concluding with some thought-provoking reflections by the authors on the possible connections between the oceanic feeling that forms the basis of the mystical experience and the pillars of analytical treatment, namely free association and freely floating attention. In this compelling work, Fattori and Vandi guide us in a reflection on the various factors that complicated Freud's relationship with mysticism and observe, in particular, how Freud's difficulty in acknowledging the significance of his relationship with the feminine and the maternal hindered his emotional understanding of the experience of the "oceanic feeling" proposed to him by Rolland.

Valeria Pezzani explores the theme of the perversion of meaning in relationships. Drawing in particular on the work of Masud Khan, the author regards perversion as a defence against depressive anxiety and dependency in relationships, which manifests itself through the use and subjugation of the object. A clinical case is presented which demonstrates how the psychoanalytic approach can bring about, through careful management of transference and countertransference dynamics, a transformation of this psychopathological structure, facilitating the patient's contact with depressive anxiety – which is necessary for

recognising one's own limits and destructiveness. The patient can thus be helped to overcome the schizoparanoid position and that of the idolised child.

Giuseppe D'Agostino takes us back to Winnicott's thinking on playing and the potential space of the analytic couple through an original reflection on language. In his essay, the author examines the interplay between the analyst's words and playing in the analysand's room, and regards this interplay as a metacomunicative structure that occurs at a limited and opportune moment. D'Agostino suggests that the most significant aspect of the playing of language consists of a process of deconstruction within a paradoxical communication. Through the presentation of three clinical vignettes, he develops the idea that the analyst's linguistic playing, if it occurs, takes place within the potential space between analyst and patient and therefore pertains fully to the intersubjective dimension. The author shows us how the linguistic act of playing has analytical value only if it arises and is exhausted within the potential space between analyst and patient, that is, if it is created/discovered by both subjects. It allows the analyst to marvel at themselves and allows the analysand to be a co-protagonist in an experience between living subjects. It thus constitutes a testimony to the vitality and creativity of the unconscious that is experienced and lived by the analytic couple.

In his comprehensive and dense work, rich in metapsychological references, Giuseppe Stanziano addresses the theme of violence and ideality. Following the intuition of the philosopher Balibar, expressed in his 1996 work entitled "Violence: Ideality and Cruelty", the author brings the two terms together to reflect on the mutual implications of the two concepts. From a psychoanalytic perspective, a careful reflection is made on the superego and the processes of identification. Through a brief presentation of some clinical sequences drawn from interviews with patients detained in a prison setting, it is highlighted how, in some cases, identification with the ideal can lead to a destructive structure, which manifests itself in rigid forms of ideal, radical and violent identity. In these patients, a particular characterisation of the paternal bond also emerges in the fantasy of "a father being beaten", in which the ideal can cause and reinforce scenarios of violence. Finally, the themes of the ideal and violence are related to the context and clinical dimension of the psychoanalytic situation.

Sandra Maestro introduces us to the fascinating subject of "The Psychoanalysis of the baby". This work addresses a topic of fundamental therapeutic importance and, in my view, also of preventive significance with regard to the

infant's psychological development. Maestro describes the psychoanalytic therapy of the mother-infant dyad in cases of prematurity and traumatic perinatal experiences. Through the presentation of the various stages of psychotherapy conducted with a baby named Antonio (a prematurely born child) and his mother, the author shows us how the therapeutic space can become a placental space within which therapeutic bonds, likened to arteries, can irrigate and nourish the dyadic mother-child relationship. Therapy can thus help the child and the mother to restore that relationship of healthy mutual narcissistic investment necessary for the growth and health of relationships. Particular attention is also paid to the analyst's countertransference and to the importance of contact with the primitive aspects of mental functioning, which are activated in the work in these clinical situations, and which stimulate interest in the origins of thought and the roots of psychic life.

With Roberta Di Nardo and Stefano Monetti, we move from child psychotherapy to adolescent psychotherapy. In their interesting and highly topical essay, the authors attempt to identify the elements of continuity and change in adolescent psychoanalytic practice brought about by the emergence of new technological tools, primarily the internet and the smartphone. Two clinical cases are presented, illustrating how, on the one hand, there remains a continuity with the ways in which adolescents symbolise their experiences, achieved in part through new media such as social media, blogs and manga, through which they seek to construct shareable narratives of themselves. On the other hand, it is highlighted how the speed and fragmentation of digital stimuli promote a quality of experience more closely linked to immediate and repeated excitement than to elaboration. This situation lies at the root of the new forms of psychopathology frequently encountered in the analysand's room. The clinical vignettes presented, drawn from the analysis of two adolescents, clearly show how the relationship with the smartphone in the first case and with manga in the second can be both a defence against unthinkable anxieties and an opportunity for symbolic transformation. Here we can discern a continuity between the thinking of these authors and that expressed by the South Korean analyst Sun Ju Chung in her paper entitled "Transformative Encounters: A Bridge between Cyberspace and the Analytic Space" (presented at the 54th IPA Congress in Lisbon in 2025 and published in issue 2/2025 of the *Rivista di Psicoanalisi*). Finally, Di Nardo and Monetti draw on Bollas's concepts of extractive introjection and refractive thinking to analyse these patients' experiences, thereby demonstrating how

psychoanalysis can offer tools to provide meaning and understanding and to treat the new forms of suffering experienced by adolescents.

With Marina Montagnini, we return to Freud. The author addresses the theme of the plurality of the unconscious in Freud's thought. Through a careful and original examination of the well-known diagrams of the psychic apparatus from 1922 in The Ego and the Id and from 1932 in Lecture 31 of Introduction to Psychoanalysis, as well as the lesser-known ones from 1899 in The Interpretation of Dreams, the author formulates a tripartite conception of the unconscious and concludes that the psychic is unconscious. An interesting clinical case is also presented, illustrating psychic transmission from the patient's unconscious to the analyst's unconscious, whereby the analyst feels what the patient feels and can think it on the patient's behalf when the latter is unable to do so. Finally, through a comparison with the related fields of neuroscience and cognitive science, a possible analogy is suggested between the non-repressed unconscious and implicit memory.

On the occasion of the recent publication of the PDM-3, we felt it appropriate to highlight the much-debated topic of psychoanalytic diagnosis. We have therefore decided to conclude this issue of the Italian Psychoanalytic Annual by including the Research and Method section dedicated specifically to the PDM-3.

Rachele Mariani, editor of the section, describes the PDM-3 as a "renewed tool of narrative scientificity". The PDM-3 does not merely classify and label, but situates the diagnosis within the therapeutic relationship. The formulation of the case thus becomes both a narrative and a scientific act. A space is created in which observation, theory and experience can be integrated. The PDM-3 revitalises the tradition of clinical cases inaugurated by Freud by proposing an observational framework capable of accommodating the subjective specificities of each clinical history. The return to the formulation of the clinical case and the subjectivity of experience become the foundation of clinical and diagnostic work. Whilst maintaining elements of continuity and compatibility with the DSM and ICD classification systems, the PDM-3 allows for an understanding of psychopathology within the context of personality: it incorporates the subjectivity of the lived experience of the symptom and accounts for the idiographic specificity of the case formulation. It takes into account the individual's resources as well as dysfunctional and psychopathological elements, and provides useful information for planning a treatment tailored to that particular patient.

This is followed by contributions from Laura Muzi and Annalisa Tanzilli, who illustrate the use of the Manual through two clinical cases: a woman with an eating disorder co-occurring with a depressive disorder, and an adolescent with a depressive disorder and suicidal ideation.

I conclude this editorial by reiterating my hope that readers will find in this issue of the Italian Psychoanalytic Annual the atmosphere of creativity and vitality that permeates our Psychoanalytic Society, which has recently celebrated its centenary.

Davide Elos