Anthology of Italian Psychiatric Texts

Edited by Mario Maj and Filippo M. Ferro

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Juan José López-Ibor and Driss Moussaoui

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PREFACE

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"One cannot know completely a science
without knowing its history"

Auguste Comte (1798-1857) - *Course on positive philosophy*

History is a voyage that brings its own pleasure, by imagining others and how they dealt with universal difficulties through the knowledge we have of their times. It would be, for example, useful for us to remember what were the conditions for the patients and for the carers in the asylums of the previous centuries. How did they deal with agitation, delusions, chronicity and other challenges psychiatrists still face today? Philippe Pinel in his *Traité médico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale* (1809) described what existed during his time in Spain: "We envy a nation close to ours for the example it gives and which should be widely advertised; this example does not come from England or Germany; it comes from Spain. In one of its cities (Saragossa) exists an asylum open to patients, and even more, to lunatics (*aliénés*) of all countries, of all governments, of all religions, with this simple inscription: Urbis et Orbis...The founders of this institution wanted to find a balance-weight to the aberration of soul of the lunatics, by attracting the inmates to the charm of cultivating fields...In the

morning, one can see some cleaning the house, others going to their workshops, and most of them, divided into groups, under the supervision of intelligent and enlightened guards, proceed cheerfully to a vast land to cultivate all kinds of fruits and vegetables." The main questions of psychiatry are contained in this paragraph: how to help a mental patient recover from his or her suffering? How to behave in a humane and ethical way with the patients? How to deal with other nationalities and cultures? The problems are the same, only the implementation of solutions differs from an epoch to another.

Needless to say, we learn from travelling in the past of psychiatry, because the situation is different, and because the concepts and approaches are also not similar to ours. In fact the history of psychiatry is to some extent a branch of trans-cultural psychiatry, since obviously, we deal in the same country with different perceptions and behaviours, and hence different cultures.

History allows a distance towards the certitudes we all have in order to perform in the best interest of the patients. What is hard science today might reveal itself to be merely a partial understanding of a much more complex phenomenon than expected. This is why history is a useful tool to validate our ways of dealing with the challenges we face in our respective institutions and in psychiatry worldwide.

This is the reason why the World Psychiatric Association decided to launch in 1999 a series of anthologies of classic psychiatric texts translated from their original language into English, the most widely used scientific language in the world. A first book was published in 2000 during the Jubilee Congress of the World Psychiatric Association in Paris: *Anthology of French Language Psychiatric Texts* by François-Régis Cousin, Jean Garrabé and Denis Morozov. A second volume was made available in 2001 during the International Congress of the WPA which took place in Madrid: *Anthology of Spanish Psychiatric Texts* by Juan José López-Ibor, Carlos Carbonell, and Jean Garrabé. Here is the third volume of the series, encompassing classic texts from Italy, under the editorship of Mario Maj and Filippo M. Ferro. For the coming years, other anthologies are in preparation: the Japanese, the German, and the Greek. An electronic form of all these books will be available in the future.

The interest of such a series is not only a duty of memory towards those who fought with energy and creativity, despite the scarce resources they had, to alleviate the suffering of their patients, though they deserve all our esteem and respect. By making these texts accessible to all psychiatrists in the world, our hope is that they will be a source of inspiration, leading to new hypotheses, new ideas of research, and hence to new ways of helping the patients and their families. In this regard, a symposium has taken place in Yokohama during the World Congress of Psychiatry entitled "The old and the new in psychiatry: role of classic texts in psychiatry". The aim of this symposium has been to set new ways of reading classic texts enabling us to extract more from these historical items. In short, we want the past to serve more the future.

We would like to thank Jean Garrabé for his continual interest and help in the development of this series. On behalf of the World Psychiatric Association, we would like also to thank very much Sanofi-Synthélabo, and especially Dr. Mireille Cayreyre and Marie-Christine Bouri for their relentless effort to make this series the best possible. We hope that the support for this important endeavour will continue, and we look forward to a continuing collaboration for the coming anthologies.

PRESENTATION

Specific attention began to be paid to mental disorders in Italy as far back as the 16th century. By comparison with the European tradition of the madhouses, the initiative of the Spanish Fathers in Santa Maria dei Funari a Roma, the original nucleus of Santa Maria della Pietà, appears very different, because the sympathetic approach to the patients' needs prevailed, at least for some time, on the custodialistic attitude. The "*ad insaniam curandam*" project was quickly backed up by the medical descriptions of Tommaso Garzoni. In the 17th century, while the Barberine Rules codify the internment —as was soon also to be made by Louis XIV in France—a significant interest in psychopathology can be noticed in medical consultation reports, and this was to continue in the 18th century.

Obviously, it was necessary to wait for the Age of Enlightenment and the birth of clinical practice for psychiatry in the modern sense of the term to emerge.

With Valsalva and Morgagni, we begin to see a systematic concern over mental disorders, and it is important to emphasise how this attention was the result of an attempt to outline anatomical-clinical correspondences, or also of reflections on possible alterations of a physiology still obscurely defined.

We have chosen Sementini and Chiarugi to open this anthology. In spite of the considerable differences in their positions, their common merit was in the proposal of a specific clinical framework for madness and the indication of parameters for the cure and handling of it.

Vincenzo Chiarugi followed the lines laid down by Valsalva and Morgagni: his case histories moved constantly between the detection of clinical facts (signs and course, often noted down using

the style of traditional classifications) and a rather summary autopsic examination. His clinical activity in San Bonifazio in Florence is important, with the introduction of the principles developed by Philippe Pinel in Paris.

The views of Antonio Sementini, exponent of an intellectual class, the Neapolitan one, which was in the forefront in Europe, were more modern, in that they anticipated physiopathological interpretations, though with some perspectives which appear a little fanciful. He concentrated his attention on the "fluid" of the nerves, "the matter of human fantasy", and in the alterations of these vital dynamics he perceived the development of the "anxieties of the soul" and the "passions", and finally, of mood disturbances.

To complete the horizon of emerging Italian psychiatry, there was also a line that took up a distinctly 'alienistic' position, with physicians and non-physicians considering mental disorders by anthropological and social criteria. In 1813 in Aversa, near Naples, the Reale Morotrofio (Royal Asylum) was opened on the initiative of Giovanni Maria Linguiti, for the purpose of carrying out 'moral treatment'. And in 1824 Pietro Pisani in Palermo became the leading exponent of a new style of approaching and dealing with mental suffering. Pisani looked towards Pinel and Esquirol, and especially Willis and Tuke. His *Instructions for the New Royal Home for the Insane*, laid down in 1827, show signs of true radicalism, which were to re-emerge in the late 19th century discussions on no-restraint and more recently in the work of Basaglia. This institutional leitmotiv was to become one of the strong characteristics of Italian psychiatry, even though it is not easy to highlight this in an anthology such as this one. Among the experiences in the promotion of psychiatric care by means of modern and rational principles are those of Gualandi in Bologna and Massari in Perugia.

The works of Pinel and Esquirol reached Italy early, as did the updates on 'romantic' German medicine. Taking their inspiration from these European models, a number of authors proposed to organize clinical experiences and to set up models of mental illness. And biological perspectives were soon to prevail, which were inviting to the extent that they tended to free concrete clinical practice from the 'moral' standpoints common in the alienistic position, in accordance with the proposals that were soon to be put forward by such innovators as Georget and Griesinger.

Phrenology was illustrated by Giovanni Antonio Fossati, who actually worked in Paris, as he was a political refugee, and by Luigi Ferrarese and Biagio Miraglia in Naples. With his *Treatise on Phrenology* of 1853, Miraglia became a leader in this approach, which he taught at the University of Naples. Setting aside the reductive interpretations and inferences, the phrenologists undoubtedly had the merit of opening up research into 'localizations' of mental disturbances.

In this sense, we should recall the contemporary observations by Luigi Rolando on the "*sulcus*" and the adjacent motor centres. In this line of research, an Italian route to neuroanatomy was opened up, with the Lombardy-based scholars Verga in Milan and Panizza and, later, Golgi in Pavia. While this 'positive' position early characterized Italian psychiatry, the antithesis between the 'organicists' and 'romantics', which was prevalent in Germany, can also be found in the heterogeneous panorama of the Italian states, which with several difficulties merged in 1861. And we can see how this tension coherently fitted the traditions of the various cultural areas of the country.

A highly refined 'spiritualist' position can be found in the Papal state. Within a vitalist framework, a philosophic vision of man was developed, and the soul, the vital principle, was seen as the expression of both the 'physical' and the 'moral'. This was interpreted in the Marches by Benedetto Monti, and then by Girolami before he moved to Rome. But the true protagonist of this approach was Francesco Bonucci, who continued the work of Carlo Massari in Perugia. Clinician and university lecturer, Bonucci opened up significant horizons in the treatment of mental illness, outlining projects for the reconstruction of the disturbed faculties of patients, and brought to light the influence of civilisation on mental disorders.

At the same time, the 'positive' trends were becoming increasingly consolidated. In Milan, Giovan Battista Fantonetti applied the philosophical doctrine of Brown, sustained by Rasori, to mental disorders, while in Turin Stefano Bonacossa mantained that madness is an "essentially cerebral" illness (1851).

Highly influential figures in this period were Andrea Verga (1811-1895) and Carlo Livi (1823-1877), who were to become the fathers of Italian psychiatry due to the autonomous definition they were able to impose with respect to medicine and the signif-

icant attention they dedicated to the organisation of both basic and clinical research and the framework of the discipline.

Verga developed the Milanese School in close connection with Pavia. In 1863 he founded the journal *Archivio Italiano per le Malattie Nervose e più particolarmente per le Alienazioni Mentali* (Italian Archives for Nervous Diseases and especially for Mental Disorders) as an appendix to the Medical Gazette. He wrote significant clinical reports, organised scientific research in psychiatry and was concerned with the law on the mentally ill. He actively promoted the reform of hospital structures, and in this activity he was followed in Milan by Serafino Biffi and Castiglioni.

The Tuscan Carlo Livi was the typical intellectual of the generation which built up the unification of Italy and expressed its "positive" enthusiasm. He made San Lazzaro Hospital in Reggio Emilia a crucial centre of research and set up there the *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria* (Experimental Journal of Phreniatry) (1875), emphasizing questions of forensic psychopathology.

To complete the atmosphere of the positivist movement, the anthropological work of Cesare Lombroso is significant. Interested in the social framework of psychiatric suffering, he soon began to concern himself with "degeneration". His studies of criminals, prostitutes and social outcasts were highly relevant in a city such as Turin, where the industrial growth was intense. These interests developed around the journal *Archivio di Psichiatria, Scienze Penali ed Antropologia Criminale e Scienze Penali* (Archives of Psychiatry, Criminal Anthropology and Legal Sciences) (1880), and polarised on forensic questions, social interpretations and all the disciplines related to human sciences in an original manner. Alongside the strict followers of the Lombroso school (Marro, Roncoroni, Cardona and Ottolenghi), other scholars of anthropology emerged, with the development of a genuine interdisciplinary atmosphere around the psychiatric sciences. Among those who made the greatest contribution to the development of this positivist ideology, we should remember Paolo Mantegazza, who founded the *Archivio per l'Antropologia e l'Etnologia* (Archives of Anthropology and Ethnology) in Florence (1871); Giuseppe Sergi, also known for his studies in palaeontology; and Scipio Sighele, a brilliant interpreter of collective psychology with his *La folla delinquente* (The Delinquent Mob) (1891).

Alongside these 'founders', there also emerged figures who played a determining role in the development of this richness of

ideas and research, and in the consolidation of the doctrine behind the discipline.

One important figure is the tireless student of Livi, Augusto Tamburini (1848-1919), who reinforced the teaching and scientific link between the mental hospital and the university, with the result that in 1874 the San Lazzaro Hospital became the site for lectures in psychiatry of the University of Modena.

Also trained in Reggio Emilia was Enrico Morselli, who created an important bond between the scholars of Emilia and the Turin School. His *Il suicidio* (Suicide) (1879) had reverberations at the European level, and his epistemological vision aiming to integrate clinical practice and social phenomena is highlighted in the *Rivista di Filosofia Scientifica* (Journal of Scientific Philosophy), that Morselli promoted from 1881 to 1891.

These lines of research, which paid close attention to European developments, but were also intensely original as they reflected the complex cultural reality of Italy, were influenced by the work of Kraepelin only up to a certain extent. While the first translation of the *Compendium* by Tamburini was precocious (1885), the Italians, like the French, did not easily fall into line with the notions of the German clinician. His work was subsequently promoted by a number of important figures, such as Jacopo Finzi and, above all, Eugenio Tanzi. It was Tanzi, founder together with Morselli of the *Rivista di Patologia Nervosa e Mentale* (Journal of Nervous and Mental Pathology), and a sensitive interpreter of the Italian climate, who divulgated the work of the German clinician in his Treatise, then expanded into two volumes in the 1914-1916 edition with Ernesto Lugaro, even though the Kraepelinism which was proposed was a revised, softened one.

The various 'positivistic' trends, although in their own peculiar and autonomously developing ways, contributed to the creation of a strictly organicistic climate. The attention to psychological factors and to the histories of the patients was reduced. There was also an affirmation of the already significant trend to reduce psychiatry to an aspect of neurological studies. The success of the histological studies of Golgi, for which he was awarded the Nobel prize, promoted a lively ferment, and international recognition was also received by the studies of Luciani, Raffaele Vizioli and Leonardo Bianchi in Naples, and Giovanni Mingazzini in Rome. In 1905, the Italian Neurological Society was founded.

It was within this atmosphere that the law on the mentally ill was passed, thus completing a process that had been started in the early 19th century at the regional level and had been then re-proposed after the unification of Italy at the 9th Congress of Italian Scientists in 1874. Thus, in 1904, put forward by Leonardo Bianchi, the law sanctioned the now dominant trend, revealing its spirit of custody rather than treatment.

However, although within the substantial dominance of such reductive positions, the positivistic culture had set up a highly developed clinical profile, with the result that the 'psychological' approach remained in place, through a variety of stimuli.

A pioneer in this sense was Gabriele Buccola, a follower of Wundt (translated in 1900), Fechner and the early Kraepelin, who dedicated his short life (1854-1885) to rendering psychopathology scientific and objective. Trained with Tamburini in Reggio Emilia, Buccola visited Kraepelin in Munich, worked on "psychic time", and published *La legge del tempo nei fenomeni del pensiero* (The Law of Time in the Phenomena of Thought) (1883).

Precise attention to the psychological sciences can be also noticed in the work of Francesco De Sarlo, who in 1903 founded the first laboratory of experimental and academic psychology in Florence and published *I dati dell'esperienza psichica* (The Data of the Psychic Experience). In 1906 the first chairs in Psychology were set up. The psychiatrists trained in Emilia, such as Buccola, maintained their links with psychology, and in 1905 Giulio Cesare Ferrari founded the first journal of psychology, while Enrico Morselli, who had gone to Genoa after his years in Turin, continued to retain an interest in psychology.

Italian psychiatry began to encounter real difficulties when the First World War detached it from the other European cultures.

This led to a long period of inertia in the discipline. If one looks at the journals (one example is the prestigious *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria*, in which the proceedings of the national congresses were also published), one can see neurological interests dominate the scene. After a series of reports dedicated to the post-traumatic disturbances caused by the war, for more than twenty years the published studies concerned neurological cases and anatomical and biological matters (at times also at a certain distance from the areas of neurology and psychiatry), and clinical and psychopathological studies even of a traditional type were rare.

Indeed, there seems to have been a certain embarrassment in putting forward the positions of classic psychiatry. The French reaction to positivism, with the works of Bergson and Minkowski, was barely registered. Equally weak was the reception of the German-speaking authors, such as Bleuler and Jaspers, Husserl, Heidegger and Binswanger. In spite of the critical balance of dependency, made by Lugaro on the wave of anti-Austrian feeling, a static Kraepelinism survived, leaving its mark on clinical practice and the management of mental hospitals up to 1945 and beyond.

It was only the lectures at the congresses that tended to describe the general perspectives that were developing. On such occasions, it was possible to note a certain difference between the contributions of basic research and the reports providing updates or general reflections.

For the promotion of lines of reflection destined to remain active, the tradition of psychological studies was of decisive importance. These were initiated by Buccola, developed by Ferrari, and confirmed by the emerging schools of thought (Kiesow, Benussi in Padua, the Gestalt theorists in Trieste, and Gemelli in Milan). Like Buccola, Vittorio Benussi (1878-1927) was also sensitive to German psychology, and published *La percezione del tempo* (The Perception of Time) (1913) and *La suggestione e l'ipnosi come mezzi di analisi psichica reale* (Suggestion and Hypnosis as Means of Real Psychic Analysis) (1925).

Precocious also was the reception of the new psychoanalytical ideas, including the proposals of Jung and Freud. In Trieste, Edoardo Weiss created a direct offshoot of the Viennese environment, and it is equally significant that Sante De Sanctis considered the Freudian views in his original research on the infantile world and on dreams. Marco Levi Bianchini explicitly referred to Freud, and the Freudian position aroused interest in the university world, as proven by the synthesis on psychoanalysis by Enrico Morselli (1925).

The attention paid to psychology and psychoanalysis led, for example, to invitations to Gemelli and Weiss to speak at the national congresses held in 1921 and 1925, respectively. De Sanctis and Morselli took action to stimulate this interest and, with their support, psychiatrists made a timid attempt to bring themselves up to date on the revisions that had taken place in France and Germany regarding the positivistic positions.

In truth, openings of this kind were reduced around 1925. The idealist choices of Croce and Gentile clashed with the theoretical claims of psychology, which was considered as a 'handmaid to philosophy'. And the hopes of De Sanctis and Gemelli were dashed by the separation of psychology from medicine, which led to the involution of De Sanctis and the withdrawal of Gemelli to the Catholic University. As far as psychoanalysis was concerned, the dialogue with psychiatry was weakened by the ongoing differences of opinion between Morselli and Weiss, followed by the death of Morselli, isolated among academics in a discussion along these lines of research. And yet, psychoanalysis continued to be singled out for special attention, as in the interpretation by Treves of the epileptic experience, parallel to the work by Freud on Dostojevski.

In this situation of stagnation, the inclinations of isolated psychiatrists capable of applying their intuition to European questions emerged. With a certain caution, updates on German psychiatry were produced. There was a move towards personologic theories, and more specifically the new ideas by Kretschmer and his new vision of "*Charakter*" and the "*Korperbau*" somatic structure, taken as a 'unitary' hypothesis and hope, were well received. This was a revival of psychopathological culture, even though this approach frequently underlined the somatic aspect, also taking into account the contemporary discoveries of metabolic and endocrinological research.

The approaches to the latest developments in psychopathology were more aristocratic. It is interesting to note the very limited discussion on the new ideas of Bleuler and on the difficulties encountered by the Kraepelin system. A rare sign was the title of the journal founded by Rizzani at Racconigi, *Schizofrenie* (1931). Within the context of this indifference, the studies by Morselli and Berlucchi appear surprising. G.E. Morselli profitably interpreted Bleuler, and Carlo Berlucchi, again in the light of Bleuler, entered into discussions with de Clérambault (1931). These were only a few voices in a rare but tenacious line, destined to bring about a fruitful union of psychology and psychopathology. It is interesting to note that both these authors intervened on the problem of hallucinations, on which a contribution of international resonance in the opposite direction had been made by Augusto Tamburini - *Sulla genesi delle allucinazioni* (On the Genesis of Hallucinations) (1880). It is equally important to note that they

tackle the problem by means of the concept of dissociation, after reading Bleuler.

These ideas were destined to remain active, even if in a dormant manner, to be recovered several years later, in practice after World War II, and to become decisive in the 1960s.

In the meantime, political events accelerated a move away from international contacts and restricted original positions. In 1938, the race laws removed a number of important figures from this promotion work, including Enzo Bonaventura, Cesare Musatti, Edoardo Weiss, Marco Levi Bianchini, Emilio Servadio and Silvano Arieti.

The reduction of psychiatry to neurology became even more clear-cut in the years prior to the Second World War. This was the time of shock therapy: in 1937 Ugo Cerletti introduced, with Bini, the innovation of electroshock.

The scenario after the war was immediately pervious to a new circulation of themes. The confirmation of the invention of electroshock at the Paris Congress in 1950 coincided with the clinical introduction of neuroleptic agents, which were destined to shake up a lazy clinical practice.

Within this desire for the new, some lines of thinking and clinical research help to drag Italian psychiatry out of the drought of crystallised, obsolete Kraepelinism towards a living personologic vision.

Of significance in this regard is the lesson of psychiatrists sensitive to phenomenology and to the philosophies of existence. Agostino Gemelli contributed to catalyse the relationships between these scholars. A strong point was the interpretation of Ludwig Binswanger by Danilo Cargnello (1942), but Heidegger and the existentialists were also read (Michele Torre). G.E. Morselli continued to be creative. In this way, an original strain of Italian phenomenology was defined (Callieri, Bovi, Calvi), and this new way of understanding experiences produced a new way of approaching patients (Basaglia).

Equally positive in producing changes of vision was the widespread reception of interpersonal (Sullivan) and dynamic theories. Psychoanalytical thinking in particular was revived: Cesare Musatti collected in a volume the lessons held in Padua in 1933-35, and psychoanalytical centres sprang up in various places, promoting a widespread modification of psychopathological culture.

It was upon these cultural bases that the profound transformation of the institutions promoted by Basaglia took place. Within this radically new vision, the attention to phenomenology and the thinking of Sartre merged with the proposals of English social psychiatry. From Parma to Gorizia and Trieste, the Basaglia movement rapidly extended to change the profiles of mental hospitals, introducing an open, community management of mental disorders.

In this way, in the sixties Italian psychiatry refounded its identity at a number of levels. Within the space of a decade, this movement led to profound results—a new law modernised the regulations of 1904, psychiatry returned to the general hospitals and to community centres, and at academic level a distinction was drawn between psychiatry and neurology.

These events led to new models of culture and training, brought the psychiatrists back to medicine, encouraged the flourishing of ideas and vitalised research. In these years, recently reviewed by Carlo Lorenzo Cazzullo, several figures were active that are still involved in the field, and that therefore cannot be considered with the critical distance necessary to history. However, with the exception of the particular nature of the institutional models, these authors tend to be involved in a dialogue that goes beyond national "specificity".

Mario Maj and Filippo M. Ferro

ANTONIO SEMENTINI (1742-1814)

Sementini was born near Caserta, at Mondragone, in 1742.

At the age of 17 he started studying medicine in Naples at the Incurabili Hospital as a pupil of Domenico Cotugno. At the age of 23, he completed his studies and became assistant physician at the same hospital. In the same year he published his *Breve delucidazione della natura e varietà della pazzia* (Short Explanation of the Nature and Types of Insanity), which documents his early interest for a physiology explaining behaviour and *passions*. Physiology, mainly organized as neurophysiology, is the foundation of correct clinical practice, which in turn confirms its concepts: "*Regarding physiology I have widely shown in my Institutions that I am convinced that the main agents in animal life are the nerves.*" In his *Short Explanation* Sementini states that he wants to found "*the... observations on combinations of evident and irrefutable Phenomena*" and advances physiological hypotheses able to overcome the sterile limitations of "*ocular observations of the corpses of the Insane.*"

In subsequent developments of his physiological doctrine, *passions* will also maintain a close connection with *physics*: in the scheme of Sementini, passions and actions can be significantly represented as the outcome of an intercommunicating *network*, which he believed actually existed in the body. This hypothesis explained the complexity of behaviour, which was thus described as the result of the co-operation and sum of elementary acts all deriving exclusively from the *physical* body. Nerves appear to have a *liaison* function that is even more important than the one of vessels: "*It is evident that both nerves and channels spread qualities of life that are present in the whole body: the latter have subordinate functions that depend on the functions of the former.*"

The description of the course of psychopathological syndromes

follows. Up until then only static descriptions of these had been made; he proposed their interpretation in physiological terms. From this standpoint the slow formation of melancholic delusions, for instance, is not inevitable right from the start, but occurs following a dynamic alteration of the Fluid, whereas the establishment of *"incurability"* depends on a chronic and irreversible obliteration of the nerves. Mental sanity, distinguished from insanity by labile boundaries, is guaranteed by "*the free exchange and communication between rooms*", i.e. the co-ordination of the various components of the brain. Harmony is altered by *"fixation"* on a topic (melancholic delusion) with no relationship with other parts: from an organic point of view there is a dissociation within a complex and co-ordinated function.

These neurophysiological concepts are picked up and developed in the *Institutiones Physiologiae* of 1794: "*Therefore, the site of excitability i.e. of vital qualities, is in the nerves...*" The nervous system is the foundation of the "*the phenomena of life*", subdivided into three orders: those that are absolutely vital and the direct expression of the vital principle, such as sensations, voluntary and involuntary movements of the heart and arteries; those that are secondary and dependent on vital functions; finally, the functions that are dedicated to reproduction. The vital principle remains, as in 1766, the "Fluid" of the nerves: a physiological hypothesis that does not differ from the beliefs of Tissot, a well-known clinician in Pavia in contact with the Neapolitan environment.

Sementini subdivided nerves into voluntary and involuntary and believed that both types are widespread throughout the body. The voluntary or involuntary nature of movements depends on the prevalence of the former or the latter: sensory qualities are contiguous and co-operate functionally with involuntary motor qualities and the organs that are subject to involuntary movements are susceptible to *"the troubles of the soul"*. Thus, external stimuli can interfere with the delicate internal equilibrium, from which derives, starting from the blood, the vital principle subsequently delivered to the nerves.

In 1783 Sementini was appointed Deputy Professor at the chair of Anatomy of the University of Naples and from 1789 to 1810 he taught Physiology. He was subsequently also given Pathology as a subject.

His greater interest for physiological than for pathological phe-

nomena is present in all his works and makes him more of a physiologist than an alienist. Pathology is mentioned continuously as the indirect demonstration of physiological concepts. His early interest in insanity led him to single out *fantasy and consciousness* as fundamental leading themes in all his works. In fact, in his *Short Explanation* he began to investigate the "*ideas and images of things, the material of human fantasy*" and, a few years later, he was astonished when he contemplated the tenuous junction where identity is located and is lost in insanity, without finding any explanation for it: "*... this junction where actions converge, so as to form a unit, as well as the sensation of personality, so that each person uses I in conversation.*"

The positivistic-clinical approach considers psychopathological syndromes and, although it does not expressly discuss their nosography, it leads to novel nosologic and therapeutic concepts from a point of view that is singularly parallel to that of Brown. It is not by chance that in 1803 Sementini edited *Pathology,* translated from Latin, with "*a review of Brown's system and the reasonable influence of the same on practice.*"

The therapeutic indications are also submitted to positive-clinical verification. Sementini, in contrast to the alienistic practice still popular at that time, was skeptical about the use of *"cathartic"* agents, because "*no faithful observations have demonstrated up to now that abundant evacuations or the induction of varicose veins has healed diseases.*" He questions the validity of cold baths and denies the validity of bloodletting as treatment for *"frenzy"*, referring to Hippocrates. Regarding bloodletting, it should be noted that the opinion of Sementini was shared a few years later by doctors who did not practice psychiatry exclusively and specifically, such as Alessandro Flajani in Rome, Chiarugi and Pinel, whereas pure alienists were attached to this practice, which was still recommended by Fantonetti in 1830.

Sementini's clinical practice and teaching do not appear to be importantly influenced by political changes, which occurred in very different directions in those years. In 1812 his health became poor; there was talk of an "apoplectic episode", probably a stroke during the night of 3 June 1814. He died in his home in Naples five days later and was buried in the church of S. Sofia. In 1828 a monument was dedicated to him in the church of the Incurabili Hospital.

Giuseppe Riefolo

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Breve delucidazione della natura e varietà della pazzia. Giaccio, Naples, 1766.

Institutionum medicamentorum partis prioris, quae est theorica exercitatio secunda physiologia. Raymondiana, Naples, 1781.

Institutiones physiologiae in usum Regi neapolitani Archigymnasii. Morelli, Naples, 1794.

La patologia, ossia della malattia in generale e delle sue varietà, per servire di preliminare all'arte di curare le malattie e preceduta da un saggio di esame del sistema di Brown. Coda, Naples, 1803.

Prospetto analitico di una istituzione di fisiologia preceduta da un discorso preliminare sulla vita. Morelli, Naples, 1807.

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