

Lost project: journalism studies and the Italian way to its conversion into a science during the Fascist era

Projeto perdido: os estudos de jornalismo e a via italiana para sua transformação em ciência durante a era fascista

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ABSTRACT

This article reports for the first time to the Portuguese-speaking academic community the origins, theses and fortune of the initiative that sought to create a science of journalism during Fascist Italy. The study is both historical and analytical. At first, it makes a summary contextualization of the subject and informs about its origins and propositions. Examining Paolo Orano's and Francesco Fattorello's ideas, the following sections reveal how the proposal to develop a theory supposed an invocation to history of journalism and the ways its science was theoretically organized into a detailed research program. The conclusion shows how the whole project was aborted with the fall of Mussolini.

Keywords: Journalism studies, Italy, newspapers science, theories of journalism, fascism

RESUMO

O artigo relata em primeira mão, para a comunidade acadêmica de língua portuguesa, as origens, as teses e a fortuna da iniciativa que pretendeu criar uma ciência do jornalismo à época do regime fascista italiano. O estudo é histórico e analítico. A primeira metade procede à rápida contextualização do assunto e apresenta informações sobre seus antecedentes e formulações mais genéricas. Examinando as ideias de Paolo Orano e Francesco Fattorello, a segunda revela, primeiro, como a proposta de desenvolver a teoria supôs a história do jornalismo e, depois, os termos com que se estabeleceu o programa de estudos da sua ciência. A conclusão fornece indicações sobre como o conjunto do projeto foi abortado com a queda de Mussolini.

Palavras-chave: Estudos de jornalismo, Itália, ciência do jornal, teorias do jornalismo, fascismo

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THE SWISS, CZECH AND FRENCH cases are proof that the studies of journalism with a pretension to acquire academic autonomy emerged in the first half of the last century and were able to claim or admit hermeneutical foundations for liberal content and democratic perspective (Rüdiger, 2017, pp. 22-43). The examination of the subject, however, also reveals that the main efforts to convert such studies into a science have occurred in countries where, in the same periods, regimes of a collectivist and totalitarian kind triumphed (Rüdiger, 2017, pp. 85-201).

In spite of not having played a role as the radiating centre of this movement, commanded by German academics, Mussolini's Italy illustrates this point. We know that the country did not remain untouched by the process that, from the turn of the century, put into crisis the old bourgeois, liberal order (Barbagallo, 1995). The war of 1914, the economic contrasts, the class conflicts, and the advance of the extremist movements reverberated in national life (Duggan, 2007, pp. 338-403). Public opinion has become more comprehensive and influential during that epoch but at same time it passed to be contested by forces whose common denominator was the radical challenge to individualism, liberalism and democracy. In short, Italy experienced the ideological imposition of a new set of values, grounded in political principles like collectivism, dirigism and authoritarianism (Gregor, 1969).

Once the Fascist regime was in place (1922), these trends began to influence the press directly. There was a profound change not only in the political framework but also in the way journalism operated (Forno, 2005). The country also saw the emergence of new thought concerning the press, influenced in part by the experience of war, but also by the diffusion of Bolshevik doctrine (Gentile, 1996). Appeared a conception of journalistic activity (Pedrezza, 1937) in which the project of converting it into an object of science circulating for several years in Europe was accepted and encouraged by the Fascist intelligentsia (Rüdiger, 2017, pp. 40-43).

This article presents a first-hand historical and analytical summary on what constituted that initiative. For this, the first section proceeds to a concise contextualisation of the subject. The following section relates the origins of its problematic. The next step shows how the proposal to develop the theory supposed an epistemological acknowledgement of the history of journalism. The fourth one inversely synthesises the passage from the latter to the theory of journalism.

In conclusion we show how the epistemological reflection on the science of journalism emerged in that scenario and report in a few lines on the fortune of the academic project that was the science of journalism promoted during the years of Italian Fascism.

It should be noted that we do not speculate here about the relations, visceral or not, hypothetically entertained by the aforementioned project with the political system during Italian fascism. This article points out only what the sources consulted authorise. Criticism towards it was also avoided in virtue of the evident anachronism of large parts of the subject in focus. This was enough to make it a preferential object for historiographical approach. Our focus, on the critical side, goes as far as the matter allows it: that is, up to the point of polemics arising within fascist journalistic thinking. Arguing about what is still live for journalistic studies in our time only makes sense from the establishment of information about the subject and knowledge of the repertoire of concepts and questions bequeathed by the pioneers of Italian theorisation¹.

FASCIST ITALY AND ITS CONCEPTION OF THE PRESS

After its political unification (1870), Italy witnessed a period of expansion of the periodical press which, although modest, due to the high poverty and illiteracy rates of the country, led to the consolidation of a model of journalism characterised by political partisanship and literary essayism (Forno, 2012, pp. 21-58; Murialdi, 1996, pp. 59-87). It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that, among Italians, journalism was, at the time, identified as a literary genre with a political accent and everyday character, in which the dominant form was the chronicle, and the broader social meaning was essentially that of education (*formazione*). In short, journalism was understood as a mixture of partisan tribune and literary practice, political and intellectual activity charged with the mission of spiritually forming Italian public opinion (Barbieri, 1942).

Entering the 20th century, the business aspect of journalism was highlighted. Concerns to increase revenue and expand business emerged in big cities. The prospect of market expansion opened a space for the exploitation of the tabloid chronicle. In the main, however, literary content did not lose its hegemony, since circulation did not advance much outside the intellectual segments of the population. The newspapers diversified themselves with the emergence of the popular parties of the left and the right, which, through them, promoted the radicalisation of political discourse in the public sphere. Nevertheless, the press stayed relatively sparse among the people, given the persistence of poverty and the lack of education of the masses (Forno, 2012, pp. 59-88; Murialdi, 1996, pp. 89-131).

Inspired by the Soviet communist regime, Fascism came to power amidst this situation with the pretension of restoring the original mission of journalism, rather than repressing it (Forno, 2005; Murialdi, 1980). The time had

¹ Whenever feasible with documents, the contradictions and debates that emerged in the midst of this phenomenon and thus helped to define their contours will be shown to the reader. Given the lack of specialised literature on the subject, she or he, on the other hand, will not find a revision and/or an arbitration of historiographic questions. Apart from the study by Isnenghi (1979), towards which this one intends to be more informed, there seem to be no other secondary sources on the whole subject (but see notes 8 and 11). Pierluigi Allotti (2014) confines himself to situating the studies carried out at the time in his historiographical synopsis on the subject. On the School of Journalism (1930-1933), founded by Amicucci, there is a detailed monograph, the results of which are not disputed here, written by Gallavotti (1982). His book presents some information on the Italian science of journalism (pp. 108-114).

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²For reasons of space, the problematics of Italian Fascism, presented laterally in the course of our argument (see references), is outside the scope of discussion in these pages. De Felice (1978) made a critical review of the perspectives which appeared up to 1970. After the synthesis proposed by Mandel (1974/1987), it is a fact that a new point of view emerged. Following the relativisation of the class analysis initiated by De Felice, its broader development can be accompanied the works of Gentile (1982, 1993, 1996, 2002).

³To be interpreted as culture, human action, in modernity, tends to demand the care of what would be most essential in favour of what essentialises itself as the most powerful. "It lies in the essence of culture . . . to nurture itself and thus to become politics of culture" (Heidegger, 1938/1995, p. 76).

⁴"Italy was not a country with a mass reading public . . . newspaper reading was not widely diffuse. Communication was linked to physical action and to conversation, and not to the impersonal vehicle of print" (Berezin, 1997, p. 248).

⁵Among many fascists, propaganda activity soon became a kind of art for art, an autotelic, narcissistic, in itself gratifying practice, whose efficacy was secondary or irrelevant, but led to the emergence, in part, of a true cult of publishing, as one contemporary analyst observed: "Every ambitious young fascist thinks it is his duty to have its own journal, and as matter of fact the government fills a large percentage of its jobs with journalists who have succeeded in making a loud and loyal noise" (Schneider, 1928, p. 237; cf. Berezin, 1997, p. 96-100).

come to restore its educational character. Their leaders believed that this way they could have an instrument with which they aimed to put into practice their project of creating a new man and developing a new civilisation (Gentile, 1982, 1993; Zunino, 1985)². The movement promoted a kind of modern secular cult over the state and nation that reverberated in everyday life and should not be reduced to a set of actions aimed only at controlling alienated and defenseless masses through propaganda, as argued by earlier interpreters (Calamandrei, 1944/ 2014; Cannistraro, 1975).

According to Michael Mann (2008), "Italian fascism was not a unitary movement", encompassing "the most diverse tendencies and factions – socialists, trade unionists, statistas, nationalists, conservatives, radical squadristi and agrarian reactionary" (p. 184). The support given by the traditionalist forces conflicted with the plans of others to modernise the state and the country. Journalism, we shall see, illustrates this. The regime included a modernisation project that sometimes strained internally many institutions to the point of preventing its reduction to a form of reactionary political system.

Singular to all totalitarian movements has always been the fact that they, more than to use, tended to confuse themselves with propaganda machines. There was in Italy, however, a problem with the latter term, still closely linked to the religious proselytism done by the Catholic Church. Therefore, the Ministry of Press and Propaganda created by the regime in 1935 did not keep the name for long. Two years later, it would call itself the Ministry of Culture (Amicucci, 1938, pp. 93-102). As Heidegger observed, to make cultural policy intrinsic to the state was common, in varying degrees, to all great totalitarian states³.

From this perspective, more than the press, Italian fascists used architecture, sport, the factory, the school, the cinema, the rallies, etc. as a means of propaganda (Zamponi, 2003). Due to the problem of illiteracy, which the regime intended to eradicate, the Italian press had comparatively little mass appeal (Sangiovanni, 2012, pp. 163-228)⁴. Influencing the intellectualised circles, it was nevertheless strategic for the Fascist leadership. Dealings with it, the party used both incentive and control, rewards and punishments⁵.

A political movement formed, at its core, by intellectuals (Isnenghi, 1996, pp. 127-148), Fascism intervened in journalism in a polymorphic way that needs to be seen without simplification.

Thus, on the one hand, there was the abolition of freedom of the press, the closure of opposition organisations, the violences against unruly journalists, the official control of the profession, the censorship of news and other repressive measures (Forno, 2005, pp. 7-73; Murialdi, 1980; Talbot, 2007, pp. 77-104).

On the other hand, it should be remembered that there was no shortage of sponsorships and incentives to the financial and industrial development of the enterprises, to the expansion and improvement of editorial activity, to circulation and reading of periodicals, the protection, organisation and preparation of professionals, etc. (see cf. Allotti, 2012; Amicucci, 1938; Drespi, 1933; Forno, 2005, pp. 75-120; Murialdi, 1980).

Despite the emergence of Fascist groups defending the nationalisation of the activity (Zerbi & Marzo, 1936), the internal debate inside the party led to victory the fraction supporting the maintenance of the press in the hands of the private sector (Assante, 1937). Mussolini had made clear the doctrine of the regime concerning this matter by stating in a celebrated conference with the directors of the country's leading newspapers and magazines ("Journalism as a Mission", October, 10, 1928, in Pedrezza, 1937, pp. 86-95) that the era of irresponsible freedom and subjectivism in journalism had lagged behind. The Great Council of Fascism had decided that in Italy this would be a public service offered to the nation by private enterprise under the supervision of and, eventually, direction by the state. Through state policy, the time had come to regenerate the mission which journalism, under the impact of plutocracy and Bolshevism, had lost during the liberal era (Orano 1939, pp. 189-288; cf. Allotti, 2017, pp. 49-83; Forno, 2005, pp. 121-168).

This meant that the regime would maintain the former principle according to which journalism was daily literature of an educational character, whilst renewing it with the thesis that, as a force that should serve the nation, only state power would guarantee in its integrity (Mazzatosta, 1978). In Italy, we can see, journalism had assumed the status of secular propaganda:

When we talk about the educational function of the newspaper, we are obviously referring to the "ideal" element of the newspaper. If the newspaper has the power to educate . . . it only can do this insofar as it develops . . . propaganda work, influencing the mass of readers. (Barbieri, 1942, p. 41)

To the detriment of the country, liberal and plutocratic democracy would have imposed on journalism moral and ideological anarchy. Fascism would rescue its essence, that is, the chronicle of national life, the daily account of its dramas and progress, by suppressing private interest and banning alien partisanship (Grazia, 1981).

The intrinsic tendencies of business activity and the Americanisation of local life which began at the end of the war had fueled the exploitation of fait-divers by the press. Reports had lost part of their literary accent, while

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news had seen an increase in variety and extension. News was acquiring a more objective stamp, distancing itself from the classic and beletristic format of the chronicle.

Perhaps to gain more legitimacy among conservative Italians, Fascism exhibited itself publicly as an enemy of the journalistic tendency to convey *abnormal facts* and to cultivate the *daily morbidity*, fought the growing sensationalism contained in this process, stimulating the refreshment of the educational function of the press, supposedly giving back to it its *national and political function* within the state (Fattorello, 1929b; Talbot, 2007, pp. 81-82).

The official policy of a moralising accent, however, did not halt the advance of news and modern formats of journalism. The directions of the periodical press motivated conflicts and tensions between the political agents of the regime (Marzo, 1932; Rivoire, 1932). Information journalism, though criticised by some wings of the ruling party, had, in spite of an authoritarian bias, support among the modernising factions (Ben-Ghiat, 2001). The fact that a growing number of newspapers and magazines used the news style was something not to be simply condemned in their view. News format and other technical forms of reporting of Anglo-Saxon origin were to be partly adapted, and further improved - put at the service of the development of the Italian press, according Fascists like Ermanno Amicucci (1928)⁶.

In summary, it can be argued that, during the Fascist era, newspapers improved in graphics and business terms. Overall, however, journalistic and editorial protocols did not progress. In essence, they remained stuck in the “national tradition”, which demanded from journalism “the prominence of intellectual and political values over those strictly [technical,] economic and business”.

In Italy, modern newspapers, so-called information newspapers, have not been as successful as in other countries, because the reader has an interest in politics, and continues to look for an interpretation rather than a simple exposing of the facts in his newspaper; this characteristic of the Italian reader and the need for Fascism to use the daily press as an instrument of propagation of his doctrine and criticism of opposing ideas have allowed our journalism to avoid the excesses of purely informative, American-style journalism without being imprisoned in the journalism of opinion and party that marked the last century. (Fattorello et al., 1933, p. 206; Pedrezza, 1937, pp. 38-45)

Ideally Fascist journalism would be a technically agile and modern means by which the supposedly anarchic or subjectivist tendencies of liberal-minded

⁶ Another signal originating from this wing of the Fascist movement in the area addressed here was the receptivity, albeit selective, given by its subjects to the methods and technique of public opinion research invented in America (Rinauro, 2002, pp. 105-184).

public opinion, responsible for the generation of unproductive discussions and irresponsible criticism of the past, would be superseded by a private service subordinated to the national cause embodied in the construction of a state machine capable of facing the enemies and imposing itself on the world (Rassak, 1927, pp. 167-191).

ORIGINS AND MEANING OF JOURNALISM STUDIES IN ITALY

As a result of this, the emergence, in this context, of an interest in academically studying journalism has remained aloof or distant from the problem of the professional training of journalists⁷. There was, however, a compensation for this, since it determined a withdrawal of journalism from the epistemological sphere of literary studies. Pioneering academic initiatives to deal with the subject began with Luigi Piccioni (1870- 1955), a professor at the University of Turin. Yet before the war, he gave courses on journalism and published some works about it, beginning with “Literary journalism in Italy” (1894). This was followed by a “Historical Review of Journalism”, a series of articles he published in *Revista da Itália* (1913-1917) and the *Rivista Nazionale* (1917-1927). They aimed to alleviate the problem of “the few positive results that research had given to history of Italian journalism” (Piccioni, 1920, p. 6).

Advancing the Fascist regime, the academic interest to legitimise its conception of journalism and preparing personnel to monitor and, whenever necessary, intervene with specialised academic knowledge in this territory revealed something more than the concern to train professionals (Gallavotti, 1982); it appeared that, in accordance with a historical approach, it was necessary to develop not only a theory but, keeping the idea attuned to the European projects of the time, a science of journalism, as it was put by Francesco Natoli (1934).

A pioneer in approaching the subject, Piccioni (1910) had been, from the outset, a strong voice against this movement, arguing that the term science of journalism would be illegitimate: journalism could not be the subject of a specialised science. Literary studies and political sciences could account for their study, without having to make inventions in the university field. For the author,

there is no reason why the study of a newspaper or the work of a journalist, its transformations, its tendencies, its spirit at a certain historical moment should be conducted with methods different from those followed by the study of a political event or a literary work. (Piccioni, 1939, p. 147; cf. Barbieri, 1942, pp. 13-15)

⁷ Moreover, we must remember that, according to Mussolini, “journalism is above all an instinct . . . one is born a journalist” (in Berezin, 1997, p. 96).

Impacted by the official endorsement of the new area of study and the encouragement of the bi-national development of academic cooperation that emerged after the signing of the pact between Mussolini and Hitler, the climate in the academy had, however, changed.

Who [now] doubts that knowledge of the historical development of the press, its essence, its influence and the influence exerted on it by politics and economics cannot, should not be part of a general culture in the same way that they take part in history and literature? (Fattorello, 1940, p. 58)

As Natoli (1934, p. 71) observes, Fascism was not far behind in comparison to the Germans and the French in recognising that, having become a *modern force*, journalism was waiting a *theoretical systematisation* able, in a second moment, to make it the object of a new science. The creation of a chair for the history of journalism in the Fascist Faculty of Political Science inaugurated by Mussolini at the University of Perugia in 1927 was an unquestionable proof of this. The regime had defined the institutional framework for the treatment of the subject by establishing the counterpoint between liberalism and totalitarianism. The next step would be, of course, to bring the subject to the academy with the aim of first developing the political rather than the literary philosophy of journalism and then initiating its scientific study (p. 76).

From Perugia had departed the march over Rome and, for this, it would also be the start point of “the march of the Fascist idea”. The peculiarity of the Fascist Faculty of Political Science lay in the fact that it was the first to emerge with the function of not only scientifically elaborate the legal, political and social ideas of Fascism [as] also of preparing the fascists to occupy the most important positions of the state, whether in corporations, in administration or in diplomacy as much as in politics and journalism. (Di Nucci, 2011, 82, citing the Rector, Sergio Panunzio [1928])

From this it resulted that the introduction of journalism as a subject of university education would not have to engage with preparatory teaching for the exercise of professional journalism in the market.

Concerning this, the purpose of a study center is to subject the journalistic phenomenon to a systematic and scientific discipline; to put the results of this study at the disposal of the general culture [of all interested, not just journalists]. (Fattorello, 1940, p. 57)

Professional training, it had been accepted, was important: to report on the facts and to promote the intellectual preparation of the nation were now a civic mission; the literary talent, there was consensus, was significant: without it journalism would lack ties with the nation. But it was also agreed that the promotion of specialised knowledge and the scientific and philosophical preparation of personnel to take care of the subject at the command posts and state careers could not be neglected in the new régime (Natoli, 1934, pp. 74-75).

Talbot (2007) helps to clarify the matter by noting that “Mussolini understood how to run a newspaper and surrounded himself with newspaper men, promoting former journalists and press officers to positions of great power within his government” (p. 77). After the creation of the Ministry of Press and Propaganda, these people “moved the focus of the press office [Ufficio stampa] from monitoring and preventive censorship to propaganda and productive censorship, shaping the news agenda” (p. 80). According to a spokesman for the category, “being journalists, we are also children of time, we cannot escape the understanding of our time: on the contrary, we must inexorably incarnate it”. The key point was, therefore, professionals to assimilate that:

Journalism has lost its traditional physiognomy of an easy job, it has become an apprenticeship of responsibilities, not only politically, but also morally. . . . The time when the sensationalist news [*cronacs nera*] and slander were enough to make a newspaper was left behind. Defining vital, social, and patriotic concepts on essentially ethical grounds, fascism became the soul of new, great, and original values. For one who wishes to write, there is no shortage of matter today, but there is no more room for evil and empty spirits in the function. (Rizzo Vitale, 1934, pp. 44-45)

Amidst the confrontation between democracy and totalitarianism, the newspaper had become a “amplifier for the ideas in struggle”. Journalists took on more serious responsibilities. So schools could be “centers of irradiation of a [strategic] profession”. Universities, however, had to go further. They needed to equip themselves with “a method, a doctrine that must inform [the journalism] according to the highest ideals in which each country is inspired” (Fattorello, 1939, p. 10). The fact that journalism had an essential political function, in terms of an impact on the formation of public opinion, “touching on history and state” was a sufficient reason to justify the critical and erudite study of all aspects of the matter at university (Natoli, 1934, p. 76).

JOURNALISM AS AN OBJECT OF SCIENCE OF STATE – PAOLO ORANO

Appointed for the position of chair opened in Perugia, Paolo Orano (1875-1945) did not follow this program integrally. For this he even became a target of criticism from intellectual sectors of the regime. Some of them wanted a more objective and technocratic approach to journalism. Others wanted it to remain within the context of moral and educational bias from the past (Marzo, 1932; Munello, 1931; Rivoire, 1932). An old militant of the party, Orano preserved the world vision of Fascism, but articulated a much more sophisticated journalistic thought than their officers intended to develop (cf. Orano, 1939, 1940).

According to his perspective, the study of journalism was to be understood as “political discipline, chair of propaganda and polemic, with the mission of deepening the analysis of the relations between publicism, that is, journalism, and power” (Orano in Dresler, 1939, p. 8). Scholarship could not be inert: more than mere understanding, the study of the subject should also be a militant preparation for intervention in journalism. “The Fascist and well-nourished vision of journalistic manifestations within modern society [by us defended] must become an intellectual weapon” (Orano, 1928, p. 456).

There was much more, however, in his teaching, responsible for the articulation of a thinking in which antinomic tendencies converged⁸. Influenced by organicist doctrines of romantic origin, his program included the idea that the matter should be studied in relation to “the connection between fact and idea, between fact and judgment, between need and illusion, between public opinion and political power, between mentality and collective conduct, between interests and idealities; in short, between soul and life” (Orano, 1928, p. 471). This meant, in his view, that journalism must be thought about historically, because it originated in human conversation and developed with the conversion of the chronicle into an increasingly regular, systematic and disciplined activity through which opinion is disputed and the subjects involved try to control the public.

Although he took history and culture into account, it is noteworthy, however, that the foundations of his theory were presented by him in another epistemological register. For Orano, journalism was a study of political science, interpreted by him as state knowledge. The reason for scientifically treating it was that “modern, essentially political journalism develops to the utmost in efficacy as public opinion becomes a power with which government, the political regime, must deal with and in front of it can even succumb” (p. 457).

Looking only at his inaugural lecture (Orano, 1928), some readers intended to oppose the doctrines of Orano and Fattorello, arguing that while the

⁸ About Orano, a long-time polygraph, there seems to be little specialised literature. Cf. Battini (2016, pp. 111-144): “The Dark Core of Italian Civilization – Fascism and the Path of Paolo Orano”. We lacked access to the thesis of Cesar Maraglio: *Il Fascista Paolo Orano, giornalista and primo storico del giornalismo* (1919-1945), presented to the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Milan (2001).

first understood journalism as a kind of social and literary function present throughout time, the other restricted the term to the time of development of the printing press. Rodolfo Mosca (1930) was one spokesman in this group, arguing that journalism was an essentially modern phenomenon, that emerged with the rise of the press and culminated in “the contemporary information diary”. It would therefore be necessary to avoid their identification with other forms of “judging the world” and “expressing themselves publicly” (Mosca, 1930, p. 532; ver Panella, 1930; Piccioni, 1931; Ragnetti, 2015, p. 5).

Croce (1908) postulated that journalism is something different from poetry as much as from systematic knowledge. He argued that we would do well to avoid its identification with literature as much as with science. Mosca (1930) apparently agreed with him when he stated that “the history of journalism should not be so prolonged as to be completely confused, without residue, with the history of culture” (p. 533). The study of journalism should be restricted to those cultural expressions which are at least public and current (p. 534).

However, it is enough to consider that Orano judged Julius Caesar a journalist (1933, pp. 59-66) and the Crusaders as reporters (1935, pp. 181-190) to see that a rigid opposition between his approach and Fattorello’s one is not sustainable. Orano repudiated the pretensions of the Fascist theorists who wished to reduce journalism to its educational function (Munello, 1931). He argued that it may also have an aesthetic sense⁹, be a kind of everyday and popular art, although not despising what had been called “public personality” by the German scholar Emil Dovifat (1931/1959).

⁹ Orano was the author of a conference entitled “The newspaper as a work of art” (Gallavotti, 1982, p. 48).

According to Orano, the origin of journalism is collective; it resides in what he called chronicle, namely: the reporting of facts at a given moment, the report of the lived experience we present to each other, the narrative of the present with which a community fills an anthropological need for conversation and conviviality. Humanity lives always in the midst of a mixture of fears and desires, curiosities and fears, knowledge and mystification. The chronicle of the episodes that punctuate this experience was the first of the many “manifestations of social and affective relations between individuals to which the newspaper appropriated [to being invented]” (Orano, 1933, p. 7; 1935, pp. 155-177).

Journalism is something embryonic in mythology and literature, waiting for the emergence of a more comprehensive means of advertising to acquire its own expression. In fact, the work of the press is this: to set journalism apart as a genre, to the point of making it the main shelter of those others ones considering their social impact and scope. The popular pedagogy that

journalism exerts periodically is a proof of this, not only because it creates a bridge between high and low culture, but also because it cannot fail to influence morally and, later, politically the public opinion arising through its development.

The chronicle gave birth to myth and literature, possessing a poetic force that modern journalism could not suppress by letting itself be influenced by political movements and becoming a way of expressing opinion and trying to influence public awareness. The author's view was that journalism is a form, although increasingly rationalised, of literature. The fact that journalism became, with the advent of modern times, influenced by political philosophy did not lead to the complete elimination of poetry and chronicle. The chronicler became more individualised and rational with it, but this does not mean that it completely lost the dialogue of the race and the elaboration of its tensions that would underlie their narratives (Santangelo, 1933)¹⁰.

¹⁰ This equally essential part of Orano's thought retains many similarities with the foundations of the Japanese theories of journalism from his contemporaries Hasegawa and Tosaka (Rüdiger, 2017, pp.191-194).

Although he did not use the term, Orano saw in journalism a historical way of life and, as such, an institution formed by different layers, of which politics, as Fascists had come to understand, became the most relevant from the point of view of public opinion. For Orano (1928), chronicle had always been a judgment of the facts and, therefore, journalism could never be summarised in terms of information gathering and diffusion of news: it is influenced by national historical currents and exerts a political power. "Journalism is not to publish periodically, although it presupposes this": above all, "it is a manifestation of criticism and control" that, as a weapon of struggle, "influences in the formal and substantial destinies of power [in a nation]" (p. 457).

The phenomenon possesses but cannot, therefore, be reduced to its literary function, just as it cannot be given as understood referring to its informative function only. Fascism and the political science embodied in it recall that political mission is essential to it. "Journalism is a polemic, propagandist, proselytizing activity, it is a warning for action" (Orano, 1928, p. 456); journalism "is apology or condemnation, it is a pretension of truth and aims to dominate public opinion" (Orano, 1935, p. 181).

In Orano's view, public opinion is an individual aggregate of a psychological nature derived from the dissolution of the originary communities. It is an institution born with modernity, which journalism, in one way or another, synthesises and brings to consciousness. It was not by chance that in 1940 he formed a group with Federico Perini Bembo (1909-2009), a lecturer in the history of journalism at the University of Rome, in order to create a research institute that, in the post-war period, would convert journalism into an object of study of the so-called demodoxology (demo-doxa-logy). That is, the science

that would study the formation of public opinion and its intervening variables, such as journalism, from the point of view of the state.

Orano attributed to the theory of journalism the task of legitimising its Fascist conception. He used political philosophy and historical analysis to invalidate his liberal claims, mainly in terms of the right to criticism, its polemical pretensions and its institutional independence. All this gave life and made fortune to journalism, but now it is time to put these features aside.

The national crisis that it had helped to provoke would have taken away its former justification, establishing a need for a new coordination. “The triumph of public opinion, of freedom of the press, of excess rights, of freedom, of the powerful press – all this amounts to a denial of [national] power” (Orano, 1928, p. 451).

Despite his historicist view, Orano (1928) was not safe from the myth of all-powerful journalism claiming that, amidst democracy, “a simple article can bring down a regime” (p. 461). Except in the totalitarian regime, no government would have a way to defend itself from the big press if their lords united and refused to negotiate. In the liberal regimes, he maintained, the press, once conquering influence among the masses, possesses “the political power originated from a public opinion made party” (p. 466).

Class struggles, whenever they fall into disagreement with the interests of the mainstream press, can lead newspapers to defend the government or even to let the latter rule them (Orano, 1928, p. 462). The nation, however, cannot depend on its whims. “Journalism is a force that can transform itself into an armed and decisive action against political power”, especially if it is an incarnation of the national will, which the state “must overcome as if it were an enemy” (Orano, 1939, p. 212).

Journalism has the power to expand our knowledge, streamline human relations and contribute to the improvement of our actions; through it, there is a diffusion of the arts, letters and sciences, the enrichment of human consciousness, the promotion of intelligence and civilisation, etc. The problem is that, subject to political and mercantile speculation, it rarely fulfills this mission. The tendency, then, is to contribute to the demotion of political activity, to cultivate cheap celebrity and to foster a privatist mentality; to serve a liberal regime which, in turn, rips out the press from its popular roots, depriving it of its national mission (Orano, 1928, pp. 465-469).

In the old days, the plastic and narrative form, the chronicle, tainted its dry and objective form, the news, imposing the influences of popular content and national design on the news. When more specialised agencies began to influence a press that was becoming a business, its harmful aspects became worse. There

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Lost project

emerged the illusion that the news would correspond to the facts, fostering the hopes to manipulate public opinion maintained by all political forces in liberal society. According to Orano, “the news never is information in a neutral and objective sense, meanings virtually incomprehensible in journalism, but rather appreciation, a way for the reader to evaluate and understand [what is being referred to]” (Orano, 1928, p. 470).

Admitting the inevitability of its presence, another newspaper theorist of that period claimed that the press:

On the one hand, has to reproduce what occurs in the life of the people, the city, the audience to whom it is intended; but from another [always] it uses the news to present them reasoning and discussion, extracting from them anything that can summarize or justify its ideological stance and enable its . . . propaganda work. (Barbieri, 1942, p. 32)

Orano deepens the idea by clarifying at his inaugural conference that:

Information has in itself an evaluative aspect; is a way of understanding and evaluating [the subject matter] . . . Readers [in general] accept and make their own the way the news is written . . . The printed news differs from that communicated directly from one to another . . . The formulation of the news, the space of the newspaper in which it is published, its presence/absence, the style of the newspaper editorial – everything has great importance [in its assimilation]. (Orano, 1928, p. 470)

Journalism is always dangerous, more than being good or bad. The nation can only be safeguarded by the submission of the press to the state’s command. The duties of the press are always more relevant than their rights. The news must be controlled by the public power for the welfare of the nation. Experience teaches the theory that freedom of opinion leads to nihilism and weakens national power (Orano, 1928, p. 471).

Based on anthropology and history, the political science of journalism is ultimately doctrinal: “it aims to clarify how it can be converted into a responsible and integral auxiliary of the national institution [represented by the state]” (p. 455). A supposedly neutral and objective sociology offers no better knowledge about journalism than the subjectivism that, outside authoritarian regimes, tends to dominate it. Freedom of the press does not help in the formation of public opinion that the nation needs in order to meet its challenges and, therefore, journalism is an institution that can only be well evaluated from the point of

view of its guardian: the state. “Political power must prevail over the power of the press” (p. 474).

FRANCESCO FATTORELLO - EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE SCIENCE OF JOURNALISM

Paolo Orano founded, historically and theoretically, at the University of Perugia the political science of journalism that Fascism intended to develop in order to encourage studies on the formation of public opinion and the role of the press in its development (Gaeta, 1938; Perini, 1938). Appointed as a professor of journalism history at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Rome (1936), Francesco Fattorello (1902-1985) proposed to complement this work, partly by advancing the history of the press, by sketching a systematic framework for the knowledge of the subject. Journalism had become, in practice, a tool to the service of the state – it was now necessary to “fit it into a doctrine and subject it to science”, he stated (Fattorello, 1938, p. 10)¹¹.

Fascist Italy had “established a new responsibility for journalism” by breaking with the principles it obeyed in the liberal era. From now on, it would take on “his political and national strength, entering into the vast picture of the state” (Fattorello 1936, p. 13). The university, of course, should take part in this – but one should not think that, in relation to journalism, its task would be training professionals. In fact, its role was different and nobler, to do with the promotion of knowledge about journalism (Fattorello, 1939b).

As Fattorello said in the first issue of *Il Giornalismo*, “the greatest organ of the regime’s self-consciousness about journalism” (Isnenghi, 1979, p. 585), which he himself founded in 1939: “it is not certain that both, journalism and the university, must remain separate, it is not said that they cannot collaborate and that one should not bring one from the other elements necessary for their own functioning” (Fattorello, 1939a, p. 73). However, their natures and objectives are different. Fattorello was attuned to Orano by reiterating that his teaching would not have a professional character, would centre its focus on theoretical formation and that, as a horizon, it would have the progress of knowledge about an institution that helps to define the Fascist state (cf. Milan, 2012).

Leaving aside technical education and professional training, the objective of the studies would be to know journalism in its elements and interrelationships, to deepen the theory and history of journalism, to develop “the science of journalism as it appears in the work of Italian and foreign scientists” (Fattorello, 1939a, p. 1). Very promising prospects concerning this had even opened with

¹¹ About Fattorello, the academic literature, excepted a mistake, boils down to the article by Ragnetti (2015): Biography of Francesco Fattorello, extracted from Ragnetti (2014).

the signing of the alliance between his country and Germany in 1936 (Ragnetti, 2015, p. 7; cf. Valori, 1942).

Paolo Orano had begun cooperation with the last, receiving Karl d'Ester and Adolf Dresler in Perugia. Fattorello (1941), supporter of the project to create a European association for the study of the newspaper that the Nazi scholars got to plan, continued it. He traveled more than once through the Reich and met several of its academic institutes of journalism. It was necessary to respond to the criticism made by German scholars that, although “the future of the Italian press” had largely become “a function of raising the level of the Italian science of the press, there were no conditions to educate a new generation of journalists in the existing centers”. According to the diagnosis of the Germans, the specialised knowledge and theoretical training of Italian journalists still would not have “been able to go beyond what existed before the appearance of that science” (*Zeitungswissenschaft* in Hamburger, 1939, p. 115; Isnenghi, 1996, p. 311-314).

Inspired by the German model, Fattorello thus established that there would be an introduction to the general notions and theoretical principles governing the activity with which those newspapermen interested in scholarly works could eventually associate their immediate experience. The university would not negate its responsibilities towards science and its tasks. Relative to journalism, it would produce, deepen and order knowledge, develop theoretical principles and, finally, establish a science of journalism.

Orano had stated that the history of journalism was also the “philosophy of history”, because, Hegelianly viewed, it is history that reveals and provides journalism with its doctrine. Fattorello saw it, at first, as a purely historiographical discipline, a branch of political and literary history. Faced with the advance of an international movement interested in developing a science of the newspaper, he nevertheless recognised the convenience of including it into an epistemologically wider framework. Journalism proved its importance as an object of history. “The demand to study history nevertheless gave rise to a new demand: that is, to know the science of journalism” (Fattorello, 1938, p. 2).

Fattorello had established in the inaugural lesson of the course that he had offered in Udine (Fattorello, 1929) the understanding, shared with the Germans (D'Ester, 1928), that journalism was not necessarily linked to the press. Associating it with what other Germanic colleagues called publicism (*Publizistik*), he rather identified journalism as the public expression of ideas, whatever their content and objective support.

In his view, journalism academically was an object of history, and this, for him, included a study of all the means and instruments with which human

beings express the psychological phenomenon of public opinion through time. Fattorello (1929a) assimilated Amerigo Namias's (1922) thesis that "the press, especially the daily press, is the interpreter as much as the artificer of public opinion" (p. 149). We have only to remove the temporal clause present in this proposition, which links the function to a modern invention, to distinguish between the press and journalism. "Public opinion was for a long time been something unfeasible, imponderable" (p. 148), as the sociologist affirms, but this – which in part continues to be valid today – as remarks Fattorello, ceases with the widening of its publicity, with the emergence of what he, Fattorello, calls journalism.

Fattorello shocked intellectuals and caused controversy by postulating that journalism transcends the printed sheet, as this much more than what was understood at the time as a newspaper. For him, the phenomenon was not necessarily related to a paper and could manifest itself in multiple forms. Considered in their social circulation and public repercussion, literature, art and science are no less journalism than pamphlets, magazines and newspapers (Fattorello, 1930). Journalism, as old as society, coincides with intellectual history insofar as the publicity or circulation of ideas is at stake. Literature and the arts merge with it as they circulate and provoke public reactions in their auditoriums. Journalism is much more than a mere record of news; it is an expression in which an "entire spiritual and political system" (Fattorello, 1929) is articulated¹².

Fattorello worked from the beginning and more clearly than Orano with the thesis that journalism is a literary activity, not necessarily linked to the press, through which public opinion, a psychological state, at the same time acquires expression and is submitted to influence. The study of journalism is not restricted to the newspaper, including all forms and instruments of manifestation and control of public opinion. For him, public opinion, which his colleague admitted only for modern times, is always subject to journalistic manifestation. Public opinion is a transhistorical category which, however, only manifests itself through what the scholar called journalism. According this view, Roman speakers and medieval travelers would no less be journalists than the professionals working in a modern newsroom.

Before beginning his teaching in Rome, Fattorello was already the most important national authority in the field of the history of journalism, having published several monographs on its origins and development in Italy. He made history already before founding *Il Giornalismo* (1939-1942), when he transformed the *Rivista Letteraria* he created in Udine (1929-1938) in the main vehicle for dissemination of scholarly works done in the area. In 1941, he conceived the publication of an ambitious trilogy telling all the history of his country's

¹⁴ Giuliano Gaeta (1946) endorsed the perspective, arguing that the history of journalism would be the branch of history that studies the "journalistic phenomenon"; that is, it is the study of how ideas, no matter the material medium, acquire historical relevance, become public opinion, based on certain "collective needs".

journalism, but he could not go beyond the first volume, relative to its origins, previously published (Fattorello, 1937).

Key to his trajectory, in what concerns us in this article, is the text “For a science of journalism” (1938). According to the author, the French and Germans would be teaching the Italians that, in order to study journalism, one must go beyond the literary and historical approach. History is just a chapter in the science of journalism. “Journalism is a complex phenomenon that needs to be studied not only for what it was, but also from the point of view of what it is: we need to know how it presents itself in each historical moment” (Fattorello, 1938, p. 8). For this, the literary aspect also cannot be privileged, as it was still being vogue among his countrymen. The function of journalism is not to serve literature: newspapers, at most, enlarge its diffusion. Journalism needs to be studied in its general connection with all life, of which literature is only part, because journalism is, above all, a human action, one which makes public what was private or secretive before its intervention (Fattorello, 1939b).

To affirm that “journalism is a social phenomenon, because it contributes to forming public opinion and, at the same time, respecting certain limits, is influenced by it” (Fattorello, 1938, p. 8), however, does not clarify the nature of the examination of the subject – it is just a starting point. Fattorello was aware that he was not making much progress in establishing such a point, but we must acknowledge his merit in thinking science according to what, today, we call the interdisciplinary paradigm (cf. Franklin et al., 2005, p. 128).

In his view, journalism could not be studied from a single point of view, being an object of knowledge obtained through the convergence and eventual synthesis of many disciplines. Newspapers needed to be studied by political science, because they are instrumentalised by parties and governments; by the legal sciences, because the authorities legislate on the press and it influences legislative and judicial actions; by economic science, because they may depend on industrial and commercial organisations, etc.

An institute that proposes to develop studies of journalism cannot do this without an organizational structure where all those and other branches of knowledge are represented and can give, each in its own way, a contribution. (Fattorello, 1938, p. 9)

As for methods, research must, on the one hand, resort to statistics, because there is no science without data, without knowing for sure what are and how many newspapers exist, where and in what volume they circulate, who and how many are their readers and listeners, etc. On the other hand, research

must proceed too with what we would call hermeneutics, since it is equally essential for science to know the causes, objectives and effects, that is, the action of journalistic works.

Science must ask about how the newspaper objectively behaves and functions, as well as what the forces and parties are which it represents, the meaning of its actions, and the effects it can have on its audience. The final task is systematic and consists of discovering “the laws by which the press helps to shape public opinion” (Fattorello, 1942, p. 15) and, as announced years before, determining “the logic to which its various transformations obey” (Natoli, 1934, pp. 76-82).

Theoretical investigations are not excluded from that project, as shown by his reappraisal of the meaning of journalism and the revision of his disdain concerning the presence of information in the press after the beginning of the Second World War. World War was showing that the science of journalism must not fall apart in the face of the challenges put in front of its object and also that it had a duty to collaborate with the armed forces in its development, “providing teachings and information useful to the exploitation of the press and propaganda [by government]” (Fattorello, 1942, p. 14; cf. Sangiovanni, 2012, pp. 227-304).

Protesting against the fact that, at this juncture, the press had given up its educational role, he recognised that, under the circumstances imposed by war, the right way to be followed was to reinforce its informative bias. After 1922, the 4th power of society was politically converted into a service rendered by private enterprise to the nation. Twenty years later, occurred that the concerns with the fact that many people may reveal enormous impressionability to the news¹³ determined a change in that doctrine. News had become a means of war against his country, imposing on science the need to develop a new type of study: that is, discovering how to manipulate the information and, thereby, collaborate to transform the press into a fourth weapon of the state (Arnold, 1998; Corner, 2012, pp. 201-287; Fattorello, 1942; Isnenghi, 1980).

According to Fascist theorists, journalism was, by definition, the exercise of a political point of view, through which facts would, in one way or another, be presented to and evaluated for the public. The objective account of the events which it sometimes purports to be is not something within its reach, for information, whatever it may be, is never without effect for its recipients. News always elaborates and distinguishes that events, comment and situate them in an ideological environment, committing their subjects to a “politics of truth” that is ever present in every moment of history, as stated by the editor-in-chief of *Corriere della Sera* and propaganda officer of the regime, Aldo Valori (1942).

¹³ The growing distance between the successive investments of the regime in propaganda and the popular reactions to its stimuli regarding the facts of national life has been generally neglected by Italian scholars, beginning with Cannistrano (1975) and Murialdi (1980). Although it exaggerates in the opposite direction, as early as 1939, the intelligence services report that “People take what foreign radio stations churn out to be absolute truth and laugh at the articles in our papers, which no one believes any longer” (Corner, 2012, p. 234).

CONCLUSION

If we had more space here, it would be a case of developing, in a final section, the way by which a Fascist scholar such as Michele del Vescovo tried to deepen the epistemological outline of the science of journalism proposed by Fattorello. Besides Orano in Perugia and Fattorello in Rome, some other scholars received the right to give lectures on the history of journalism in Italian universities (Trieste, Ferrara, Padova¹⁴) at that time. All this led to the creation of a small academic community in the science of journalism within which flourished an interest in the epistemology of the field too.

As we have seen, Federico Perini Bembo, a disciple of Orano, began to propose with his master and others that this science was, in fact, what in 1940 they had begun to call demodoxalogy: that is, the study of opinion and its intervening factors (from the point of view of the state). During the war, they perceived that it had become strategic not only to analyse the press but, through fieldwork with disguised personnel, to “listen to the masses” too: it was necessary to “know to inform and inform to form” (Zarzaca, 2007, p. 1; cf. Rinauro, 2002, pp. 105-184).

Giuliano Gaeta (1904-1988), a militant of the anti-Fascist resistance after 1943, had studied, in Trieste, the way in which the First World War had impacted on the relationships between the press and Italian-speaking public in the then occupied region of Friuli (Gaeta, 1938; Predonzoni, 1940; Tuono, 1940). Perini-Bembo raised in the introduction to his study project on the Venetian press in the era of revolutions (Gaeta, 1940; Perini, 1938; Piccioni, 1939) the thesis that, like governments, revolutions are always the work of a minority that, however, can only triumph if they obtain popular support: in this case, if they know how to handle the press to get their objectives.

Founder of the Italian Social Movement (1946) and for some time a representative of the neo-Fascist legacy in the Italian parliament, Michele del Vescovo (1915-1993) was, as Perini Bembo, part of Orano’s group, among which he diffused the idea that it was time to formalise the scientific study of journalism. For him, the theory of science “should give to the [scholar of] journalism a unitary [conceptual] structure that allows him to adequately judge all its social phenomena and express them according to the purpose of the state organism in which they occur” (1938, 1939a, p. 38, 1939b).

Inclined to epistemology, Vescovo argued that there is no science without the proper “general theory” about that matter: without this kind of theory, research can reveal a heap of facts, but it cannot offer us real scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge must be systematic, otherwise it is something diverse, a simple aggregate of facts. Influenced by the philosophy of Gentile and, through

¹³ Also part of the area was the Catholic University of Milan, where since 1928 Giuseppe della Torre (1885-1967), director of the *Osservatore Romano*, gave periodically introductory courses to journalism. It should be noted that the reinvigoration of scientific autonomy for the journalism studies was not consensual among its practitioners (Barbieri, 1942, pp. 13-14, Gaeta, 1946).

him, by Hegel, the author pointed out that this knowledge does not hover in the void, it exists in history – what, regarding the science of journalism, means its mediation by the spheres of economy, state and ideology (Vescovo, 1938, 1939a). The conclusion, then, would be that the scholar of journalism must confront the real and the ideal: in this case, the way the press (Hegelianly thought) conforms or not to the doctrine implanted or not by the types of state dominant in each period of history (Vescovo, 1941).

At that time, however, it was the praxis itself that was responsible for undermining the bases on which Italian scholars developed the principles of their science of journalism. As the war advanced, the country was forced to face the destruction of the facts and institutions that Fascism had tried to impose on it. After Mussolini's departure and the proclamation of the Italian Social Republic (1943), *Il Giornalismo*, delayed in its publication, did not come to the fore again. Fattorello suspended his courses in Rome and returned to Udine. In Perugia, the Fascist faculty was closed (1944). Paolo Orano was eventually detained in a concentration camp, dying one year after his release. Viewed as a work of Fascist Italy, academic journalism came out discredited from the time of War.

Fattorello escaped post-war political depuration and returned to the university of Rome, but went on to dedicate himself to a new discipline: the so-called *pubblicistica* (Fattorello, 1953, 1961; De Gregorio, 1960/1966). Director of an antisemitic newspaper during the war, Carlo Barbieri (1907-1985) became lecturer in journalism in the same establishment; however, he redirected the teaching towards propaganda analysis (Barbieri, 1967).

Perini Bembo was arrested for investigation and threatened with a firing squad by the allies. Yet he was able to escape, obtained an acquittal and returned to the University (Rome), starting to work with journalism within the scope of the aforementioned *demodossology*. Michele del Vescovo became a professor of the same area at Pro Deo University (Rome), opened in 1946, with funds from an American intelligence agency, to counter the advance of Communism by the Belgian Jesuit Félix Morlion (1946), a specialist in psychological warfare and political propaganda.

Leaving the clandestinity in which he had been forced to enter after a short period of imprisonment, Giuliano Gaeta remained lecturer at the Faculty of Political Science in Trieste in the post-war years, but limited his activity to traditional historiography (Gaeta, 1951-1955). He founded, in that city, in 1951, a National Institute for the History of Journalism. Generally speaking, the university's contribution to the teaching of journalism would be restricted for

a long time to offering complementary professional training and specialisation courses on current affairs (Fattorello, 1960).

From the Italian project of building, on an interdisciplinary basis, a science of journalism, nothing remained; it seems that everything was lost. Claims which aim to ground it theoretically in a political doctrine of a totalitarian state imploded when the country returned to democracy. As in Germany, its former subjects sought to disassociate themselves from a knowledge whose image, in part, came to be viewed as tied to a dark period and, in another, never appeared as legitimate to either the professional journalists or the more traditional academic intelligentsia.

In order to fill this gap, new catchwords began to appear. Academics started talking about advertising and information, since the term *publicistica* did not gain acceptance. Around 1970, boosted by the Americanisation of their institutions, they began to explore the term “communication” (Truppia, 1992). ■

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