

Reviews

Conference at the University of Florence on the 70th Anniversary of the death of Enzo Bonaventura (1891-1948)

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Abstract. On April 13, 2018, in the anniversary of his assassination, a meeting was dedicated to Enzo Bonaventura at the *Aula Magna* of the Department of History, Archaeology, Geography, Art and Performance (*Dipartimento di Storia, Archeologia, Geografia, Arte e Spettacolo* [SAGAS]) of the University of Florence, Italy. Enzo Bonaventura was Professor of Psychology at the University of Florence (Department of Literature) until his expulsion under the racial laws of 1938, and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Keywords: Enzo Bonaventura, University of Florence, Racial laws in Italy.

On 13 April, the anniversary of his assassination, a day of study was dedicated to Enzo Bonaventura, Professor of Psychology at the University of Florence (Faculty of Literature) until his expulsion under the racial laws of 1938, and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, at the *Aula Magna* of the Department of History, Archaeology, Geography, Art and Performance (*Dipartimento di Storia, Archeologia, Geografia, Arte e Spettacolo S.A.G.A.S.*) in Florence.

Numerous institutions were represented by speakers including: Cristina Giachi, Deputy Mayor of Florence; Luigi Dei, Rector, University of Florence; Sandro De Bernardin, Ambassador and President of the Italian delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) who emphasized the need for remembrance and the importance of collective memory to counter negationism and banalisation of the Shoah; Daniela Misul, President of the Jewish Community of Florence; Andrea Zorzi, Director of S.A.G.A.S. Department; and Professor David Meghnagi, curator of the conference and Culture Councillor for the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI).

The first address, given by Bonaventura's granddaughter Helly Bonaventura Snir, focused on the memories of his family and the attempt to understand why a man who had played such a central role in the history of psychology, first in Italy and later in Israel, had been so forgotten. She described how she had come to know about the importance of her grandfather's work only through his rediscovery by Professor Meghnagi. His books had lain untouched on the shelves of the family library, part of a far distant world. Bonaventura's research methods required opening dialogue between the different schools of thought of the scientific environment, which certainly made it

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convenient to put the man's work aside. This was accompanied by the closing of his department at the Hebrew University, the last place he studied.

The presentation by Professor Patrizia Guarnieri (University of Florence), who curate the conference with Professor Meghnagi, illustrated the importance of Bonaventura's research, the void that was created with the expulsion of professors of the "Jewish race" from universities under the 1938 Racial Laws, the development of Professor De Sarlo's laboratory in the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy where Bonaventura carried out his experiments, his transfer to Israel on a term contract, his return to Italy in 1947 for a year's sabbatical and, finally, his death on 13 April 1948 in Israel during a terrorist attack. Her address, the result of years of research, is particularly significant for its preeminent focus on demonstrating the effects of the decades of Fascism on the study of psychoanalysis in Italy, which was forced to follow the guidelines of Father Gemelli and Giovanni Gentile.

The technical aspects of Bonaventura's work and the results obtained in a laboratory setting were explained by Professor Caterina Primi (University of Florence) in a detailed and precise report which shed light on innovative and experimental aspects, including an overview of the instruments invented and used by the researcher himself.

Professor Ersilia Menesini (University of Florence) complemented the information by presenting Bonaventura, the developmental psychologist; referencing his work with disabled and vulnerable children whose intent was to create the men of tomorrow. Bonaventura revealed key elements in understanding the dynamics of development in children, through his pathological study of the delayed evolution of conscience and behaviour. This research was completed with the publishing of "*Manuale della psicologia evolutiva*" in 1930.

Dr. Michele Sarfatti (Fondazione CDEC, Milan) concentrated on the damage created by the expulsion of the Professors of the "Jewish race" from Italy's universities and the void thereby created whose consequences are still felt today.

A common theme, recurring in all the speakers' presentations, was Professor Meghnagi's work of historical reconstruction which, leading to the rediscovery of Bonaventura, has once again brought the attention of the scientific community to his contribution to the study of psychology in Italy, in all its complexity and innovation, and, in so doing, has reinstated that which had been removed.