

*The Meaning of Luciano Moggi*

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1. The Trobriand islanders of Melanesia do not know – or at least they did not know at the time when Malinowski visited them and wrote about them – an organic system of rules and sanctions<sup>1</sup>. There is instead a “clan tradition” which shows itself in habits, precepts and taboos, and is therefore closer to our concepts of education and civilization than to our idea of law. In such an environment one would expect to find a very strong social control, capable of preventing or seriously hampering any violation of the custom thanks only to the strength of opinion and of tradition; something similar to what happens in the Puritan communities. Nevertheless, as an episode reported by Malinowski shows, things are not exactly like this. «One day», he writes, «an outburst of moaning and a great stir told me that somewhere in the neighbourhood someone had died» (p. 110). The person who has died is a young man of the tribe, aged just sixteen, who has fallen down from a coconut palm. At the funeral, Malinowski perceives an atmosphere of great tension between the members of the clan. He questions the inhabitants and little by little he finds out how things went. The young man committed suicide. For quite some time he had been having an affair with a woman of the clan, one of his cousins; this, notes the scholar, «had been well-known for a while and disapproved by everybody, but nothing had been done about it until the man refused by the woman [...] took the initiative», insulting the rival in public and accusing him of incest. In order to defend his honour, the young Mima’i had climbed on the top of a tree, explained the reasons of his act to the people present and thrown himself down.

The offence was a serious one. The young man had broken «one of the cornerstones of totemism», i.e. the prohibition to have sexual intercourse with women belonging to the same clan. Malinowski observes that this «is the ideal of the native law» (p. 111) and that nonetheless there is in practice, in the Trobriand society, a wide margin of tolerance or – as in the case of Mima’i – of intentional ignorance. Everyone was aware of the affair; everyone knew that «the facts did not agree with the ideal of behaviour». Even so, «public opinion was neither offended in any way by the consciousness of the crime, nor reacted directly: it had to be mobilized by a public denunciation of the offence and by the insults directed to the culprit by the party concerned». Which means that the criminal, him who contravenes an ethic precept unavoidable in abstract terms (the «cornerstone of totemism»), can count on the tolerance and hypocrisy of public opinion, *as long as* things are done, Malinowski explains, «with a certain dignity», and provided that *what everybody knows* will not become, literally, *of public knowledge* – as in the case of a member’s accusation –, so that it *cannot*

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<sup>1</sup> B. Malinowski, *Diritto e costume nella società primitiva*, Roma, Newton Compton, 1972.

*be ignored anymore.* «If, on the contrary, the scandal outbreaks, everyone will attack the guilty couple and, through the ostracism and the insults, one or the other must be pushed to suicide» (p. 112).

The conclusion drawn by Malinowski is that the rules of the primitive law, hard and fast in abstract terms, mitigate in practice much of their rigour and are subject to interpretations, distinctions, negotiations, just as it happens in the public life of civilized countries. Above all, just as for most of the citizens in highly civilized societies, there is not among the primitive Trobriand islanders that perfect introjection of the moral norms which would make the formulation of a code of laws and sanctions unnecessary: «in a community where rules are not only occasionally infringed, but systematically circumvented through well-established methods, one cannot talk about a “voluntary” obedience to the law, of a supine adherence to tradition. Since this tradition covertly teaches men how to eat away some of its most severe commandments» (p. 113).

2. In the recent football scandal the main actors – those under investigation and the investigators – behaved in line with their roles. The former tried to win *by all means*. To win by all means is, in actual fact, the aim of anyone seriously undertaking any entrepreneurial activity; this is, one could say, what the market asks a person to do. If he does not do so, if he does not resort to any means, whether legitimate or illegal, it is just because of the fear of a punishment or for his own, completely unwarranted (i.e. not functional, in fact contradicting the logic that the system asks him to adopt) moral scruples. Nevertheless, both the moral scruples and the fear of a punishment do not have a strong hold over the managers of Italian football, and the reasons for this are easily explainable. For what concerns the ethics of the capital, it belonged (and still residually belongs) to a Weberian bourgeoisie of ancient wealth that either considered doing business in sectors such as football unworthy of itself, or (this is the case of the Agnelli family) that looked at football not as an area of investment but as a tradition or a private entertainment that did not have necessarily to return a profit. Mostly, those who manage football in Italy today do not belong to this class anymore. Instead, they are self-made tycoons who come from nothing or almost nothing, eager to appear on screen and on the newspapers, not just for personal vanity but also for a lucrative “return of image”. For these people football is, in short, a way to conquer fame and prestige, just as institutions, universities and hospitals are in other countries. They are opportunists who appear and disappear in a few years, trying to earn as much money as possible. They are in the end, especially in the obscure abyss of the minor leagues, mere criminals.

It does not make much sense to expect these people to have moral scruples; on one hand, their success comes in most cases precisely from this lack of scruples; on the other hand, such

scruples would contradict their immediate interests, i.e. the only ones that really count in the entertainment and in the sport field. Industries producing goods must work out plans for the medium and long run; otherwise, they will not be able to satisfy the demand of the market and to meet competition. The football industry does not need to cast its mind farther than the next season, and all its plans are constantly nullified by the whim – i.e. usually by the thirst for money – of the players and of the coaches. It is no accident that the long run planning, called “breeding-ground”, holds less and less prominence in the life of the big teams. Since everything, everywhere, can be bought, one might as well use the market as breeding-ground. It is a logical process, if the logic is that of the profit; but in a few-decades time it caused the football teams to lose almost completely their rootedness in the cities. Born as town business, hence with an often positive social role, they act by now from any point of view as multinationals that respond only to their board of directors. The fact that the managers and the coach of Juventus complain for the poor affection of the Turin people towards the team of their city is, hence, the most eloquent mistake: they appeal to local patriotism after having effaced any memory of their local character. Around these managers and directors there is an army of attorneys, attendants, advertising agents, selling a *brand* whose only interest is the growth of the amount of business, whatever the way in which the business is conducted. The person who enters this *arengo* “with good manners” (as Della Valle seems to have done in Florence) has got two choices: either to lose everything (like Gazzoni in Bologna) or, as the unforgettable former manager-trainer of the national team Lippi said in the debate with Zeman, to accept the rules of the system.

Regulations and controls are a second drawback from “winning by all means”. The problem here is that the inspectors are not a disinterested “third party”; they are instead people that belong or have belonged to the same world they should now control: former players, former referees, former attorneys or, in the best hypothesis, state *grand commis* that have successively held every position available in that small world. Those who are controlled and those who control are therefore, rather than next to each other, identical: they are the very same persons, who have known each other for years “of football” and of business around football, that go to the same restaurants, the same banks, the same television programs. One of the most striking things when reading the telephone interceptions issued by *L'Espresso* in the *Libro nero del calcio italiano* is precisely this: the impression that there is nobody who does *not* know everyone else; that everyone is aware of the opinions, of the personality, of the vices of everybody else and that, in the rare case of two people speaking for the first time, the shift from not knowing each other to intimacy – which at this cultural level means usually vulgarity – is quite immediate. Jus as it happens among kids, or in those closed worlds which exist on the fringe of the good-manner civilization: the criminal clans, the prisons, the

brothels. Obviously, every association has its own self-government, conducted by the members of the association themselves: the architects manage the architects, the judges manage the judges, and so on. Nonetheless, no other association is likely to have at its disposal so much money, amassed in such a few hands and handled somehow or other by such a few people. Most of all, in very few other associations the cultural and human qualities of the managers are, for the reasons just mentioned, so low. This identity, this being all on the same side, has simplified the task of those under investigation, that acted according to their nature and according to the tacit or explicit requests of the system in which they were integrated: they tried to win by all means, and the quickest means was the corruption of the inspectors.

(It is hardly necessary to say that “winning by all means” has, in Moggi’s opinion, a very different sense from that of the banner shown by some Juventus supporters at the Delle Alpi stadium, a few days after the scandal broke out: “The end justifies the means”. For Moggi, “winning” meant money – i.e. first of all objects: «See, we have to make them pay the ticket if they want to see that television!» he says to his wife who had told him they had just been given a Sony ultrathin television as a present from the Faenza group (p. 344 of the *dossier*) – and power. For the cunning supporters at the stadium, winning meant enjoying the victory of their favourite team, which they themselves admit to be fraudulent. This is not about the venial sin one commits when rejoicing at an undeserved victory; this is about rejoicing for a stolen victory, and not because the victory brought us money or power, but simply because we won. Which explains why football has become so important in our national life and at the same time so sad: because it is clear that many of its fans do not consider it as a cheerful break from the seriousness of everyday life, but rather as the only very serious chance to get substitute gratifications – *my team* – in place of those that everyday life does not allow: to win, at least once a week, in what has ceased to be for quite some time a game or a sport).

On the opposite side of those under investigation, the magistrates and the *carabinieri* have done their duty as well: the results of the investigations are before our eyes. During an episode of the television program *Ballarò*, one of the guest journalists criticized the fact that it had taken the magistrates so long to ascertain things that everybody, more or less, could foresee; and among everybody he himself, the guest journalist, that a few weeks earlier had interviewed Moggi, without saving him the trouble of the most inconvenient questions. Changing channel one could see again, in fact, the interview; the inconvenient questions, though, were as such: «You were referred to as the grand old man of Italian football». Answer: «Not really; if anything, the young one...». Smiles, next question. Had it been for such journalists, the Moggi-system would have lasted forever, with everyone’s full satisfaction. The investigators, instead, worked well, in an investigation that one

imagines long and difficult. Beyond the penal relevance of a few events, the hundreds of pages of telephone interceptions tell us, with all the desirable clarity, what a pitiful farce Italian football has been in the last (five, ten, twenty?) years.

3. Thus, those under investigation and those investigating acted according to the script and to their vocation. What about the witnesses? Among the Trobriand islanders of Melanesia shame and punishment are the consequences neither of a crime, nor of the intervention of a judge, nor of the spreading of the secret. Shame and punishment are the consequences of an accusation: someone denounces the crime out loud, at which point neither the culprit nor the members of the clan can pretend nothing happened. In civilized societies, this informing task is given to the journalists; their number and their power are justified exactly in the name of this controlling function. A complex society – in which the most varied interests meet and clash, in which the stakes are always so high both for the parties involved and for the citizens – must be matched by a serious and articulated informative system. The Moggi affair is precisely a judgment about this. Not about the human and Italian inclination for getting round the rules of the game, or about the connivance between controllers and controlled people, or again about the weakness of a system producing and consuming billions, managed by semiliterate people who exploit the moral misery and the desire for escaping of other semiliterate people. All these things – just to repeat once again the key-sentence of the whole issue – *are known*. The Moggi affair, instead, tells us something about the condition of information in Italy.

Everybody knew, in actual facts; nonetheless, it was the magistrates, not the press or the televisions, to denounce aloud the fraud, so that it would be impossible to ignore it any longer. Sure, in the past years there had been sporadic – and therefore even braver and more praiseworthy – reports: an episode of the program *Report*, a couple of books. However, on the magazines, on the sport newspapers and in the television programs about football, these claims did not cause a great stir. There are at least three reasons for this. The first one is that the readers of the sport newspapers, of *Domenica sportiva* or of *Controcampo*, would not have any interest in seeing clearly into such matters. The *media*, by now, tend to present football as pure entertainment, in which the borderline between truth and artifice is weaker and weaker. The supporter can perfectly ignore (and actually often ignores) everything about the sport he is a fan of; instead, he will know everything about the spectacular world surrounding it that the *media* feed him with: commentators, female assistants, transfer seasons, television fights, etc. The matches are now just one of the elements of the show, and often not the most essential one; hence, it is obvious that the audience follows with much more interest a report on the wedding between Totti and Ilary Blasi than a boring investigation on the

masters of football (unless the inquiry is conducted on the plane of gossip or of the idle talk: «You were referred to as the grand old man of Italian football...»). The second reason is that the majority of the sports journalists is not able to conduct an inquiry about anything at all. Even if they have fairly good studies behind them (and this is a condition that must occur more and more seldom by now), their routine assignments make a clear sweep of any serious interest or aptitude: recording and interpreting the often irrelevant opinions of football players, coaches, managers; picking up pieces of gossip about their private lives; giving an account of the manoeuvring throughout the transfer seasons or in the behind-the-scenes of the matches. During the world championship in Germany, one of the most intelligent among the sports journalists described on Radio DeeJay the pathetic show he had been part of just a few hours earlier: a group of Italian newspapers and televisions correspondents were absorbed in deciphering through the “labial” the words that Lippi was addressing to Totti during the training. Should we ask such humiliated people the “truth about football”? The third reason is that between the journalists, sports ones or not, and those who manage the football-business there is not such a distance, such a clear definition of scope, without which it is impossible to have a correct information. Of course, a certain (interested) confusion of roles exists in similar environments: nonetheless, those unprofessional conducts that are, one would imagine, an exception in the economical journalism or in the entertainment and cultural columns, seem instead to be the rule in the sports journalism.

In the *dossier* of *L'Espresso*, in the section concerning the relationship between Moggi and the journalists, several degrees of contiguity and connivance are pointed out. There are meetings at the restaurant that end up in a gift (from Moggi to the journalists: among them, some of those who have protested with the greatest indignation against the Moggi-system in the weeks after the scandal). There are dialogues between Moggi and journalists who simply carry out his orders, taking it upon themselves to defend the cause of Juventus on the TV and to show the other teams in a bad light. There is finally some rich material about the *Processo di Biscardi*. Born a quarter of century ago as a program of in-depth analysis on the football championship (and called *Processo del lunedì*), this program has been constantly falling off in quality, and ended up being a grotesque parade, without any informational content whatsoever; a laughing-stock for its own protagonists and avoided by the competent sports journalists. One of its most striking features, and one of the reasons for its success, has been its ability of drawing from the *commedia dell'arte* and from the slapstick comedy the dynamics of the fixed roles. As in these comedies there are the fat man, the elegant lady with the hat and the bumbling waiter, in the same way on the *Processo di Biscardi* there have been the boisterous Roman, the arrogant Milanese, the refined lawyer and also, as in any

other circus, the scantily dressed female assistant – in place of whom one evening the Italians had the satisfaction of seeing, during a pre-electoral program, their Prime Minister.

Obviously, trashy TV is not just Italian as an issue. In a system of free competition, it is almost inevitable: the level of the product is lowered in order to capture the less educated audience (this is why, most of all, we need stricter rules to regulate the competition and, as a consequence, to improve the quality of the programs). The *Processo di Biscardi*, though, was a different kind of trash from that of the afternoon and Sunday “containers”. Comments about the *Processo* frequently point out that nobody really took it seriously, neither the people who would make it, nor those who would watch it. Hence, this program consciously did not belong to the sphere of journalism, but rather to that of the variety show: a harmless game whose rules were known by everybody. One episode has been mentioned quite often with regard to this: how Biscardi defended himself from an action in court by saying essentially that the complainant had no reason to be upset for the insults and the slander, since they were jokes. This claim, though, is based on a very serious mistake. The manager of this television *cabaret* had in fact, in the TV network where he worked, a prominent task: he directed programs that were and had to be, without inverted commas, journalistic; hence, one assumes that he would take decisions and guide “real” journalists (not stand-up comedians) influencing their training, their ideas and careers. On the other hand, the thought that the variety show, in its own form, would present itself openly as such reflects regrettably the point of view of the *élite* or, more modestly, of the experts in the field; in something that – and it should be clear – a culturally unsophisticated mass perceives and interprets in a completely different (and much more serious) way. In reality, the use of the “moviola”, the faked arguments, the discussions about nothing, the gratuitous factiousness, the whole display of nonsense on which programs such as the *Processo di Biscardi* are based does not lead to any “ironic” interpretation on the part of the common viewers. Sure, they understand the situation; they see that it is not about sport anymore, but about pure entertainment; they enjoy the exaggerations, and they are in short conscious victims of the fraud. Nonetheless, they remain victims. Moggi, a man whose culture is not much higher than that of the average audience of the *Processo di Biscardi*, knew this very well; this is why it was very important for him to manipulate the images and the opinions that during the *Processo* were, in a manner of speaking, expressed; this is the reason for the phone calls in-between the friendly and the threatening, of the gifts, of the small favours towards journalists willing to turn a blind eye and who, the day after, would agree to manipulate the opinions of millions of “not-ironic” viewers.

Some of these manipulators did it for money, or in order to have a greater visibility (i.e., indirectly, more money). Some others, not recruited by Moggi, did it for vanity or for mere fun. This is precisely what constitutes the specific feature of the *Processo di Biscardi*, what

distinguishes it from many other low-level television programs; the fact that, beside the variety show character-actors, more and more often the *Processo* would host journalists and, chiefly, television reporters among the most famous and important (important not for their competence or *curriculum*, but for the role they had and have got in the organizational charts of their companies). One of these, Lamberto Sposini, was interviewed by the *Espresso* correspondent Denise Pardo:

D. «What can you tell me about the meeting at the restaurant Tullio in Rome on the 13 of December 2004 culminated, according to the documents of the public prosecutor's office, with a shadowed Moggi giving you a blue pack? Was it a gift of worth?».

R. «He was passing through Rome and he asked to see me before Christmas. We met at Tullio's and we exchanged greetings. The gift of worth? Three Marinella ties».

D. «The interceptions reveal a quite friendly relationship between you and Moggi».

R. «Moggi was not Bernardo Provenzano. He was the general director of Juventus. Journalists would talk with him in flocks, if only in order to get some news. I used to call him as well and ask him: "Who are we buying? Who are we selling?". Nobody thought to be dealing with a person who seems to be the boss of Piovra».

D. «It seems, though, that the line to be taken with regard to Juve at the *Processo di Biscardi* was agreed with Moggi».

R. «As a Juventus supporter I made my profession of great factionalism and partiality, starting from the *Processo di Biscardi*, where the game is uncovered. There were many of us journalists and politicians as more or less regular guests: me, supporting Juve, Maurizio Mannoni, supporting Inter, Sandro Curzi and Clemente Mimun, fans of Lazio like Francesco Rutelli. And then Paolo Cento, supporting Roma, Alfredo Biondi, supporting Genoa. Each of us was there to support the faith in his favourite team. I did not need Moggi's go-ahead in order to claim certain things, since I was already on the side of Juve. If Moggi then told a supporter like me: "Have you seen what Paparesta has done?", he would state the obvious».

In another interview for *La Repubblica*, Sposini explained that the interplay of roles was so shameless that at the end of the program he and his colleagues would laugh together at the idea that someone, at home, could be so silly to take them seriously.

Every single sentence in these interviews leaves the reader bewildered, and the most puzzling thing is that, clearly, Sposini considers all of this to be instead perfectly normal. Besides the Marinella ties, Sposini and his colleagues therefore think they can work six days a week as journalists or television reporters and, on the seventh day, they can rid themselves (Machiavelli again) of the «royal and courtly» clothes of their profession to become «rascals» at the Bar Sport on the *Processo di Biscardi*. This is, though, an absurd demand. The journalistic profession does not allow these breaks, this voluntary giving up credibility; unless credibility has already been

abandoned, either because these people are subjectively inadequate, or because the company they work for does not have an interest anymore in asking its employee for it. Because of this, the issue of the double role Sposini thinks legitimate to interpret is in reality, on a much bigger scale, the problem of the function that the television journalists, and not only the sports experts, have been taking during these years within the information system.

In short the impression is that, in the selection of the television reporters and of the anchor-men, culture, qualifications, professional and moral rigour have less and less importance with respect to other requirements that are, in the best case, one's charisma and the ability to entertain; in the worst one, the mere attractiveness: employed (also and mostly) for one's beauty. In a recent quiz conducted by Mike Bongiorno (June 2006), the anchor-man of a Mediaset television news answered «zolfiera» to the question «what is the name for a sulphur mine?»; he answered «Led Zeppelin» (the rock band) when asked «what were the most famous German dirigibles called?»; and he could not answer the question «where is the *Traviata* set?». In another quiz conducted by Gerry Scotti (2005) some anchor-men of Rai and Mediaset, who were taking part in the game for charity, were asked the dates of Garibaldi's feat of the "Mille" and of the march on Rome; nobody could answer. This means that some of the most well-known and exposed television reporters, who every day explain reality to millions of Italians, ignore notions that any mediocre secondary-school student should know. This is obviously wrong, since those who form the opinions of the citizens, who set the tone of the public debate, are not by now the leader writers of the newspapers but precisely these television reporters and mostly, among them, sad as it may be, the omnipresent sports journalists and commentators. Nevertheless, such evil has an explanation and (for a few people) its own utility. Credibility and professional consciousness are useful and recommendable until when the journalists are asked to carry out their traditional role of control and denunciation. But in the *infotainment* world, credibility and scruples are completely superfluous, and can actually be counterproductive when everything the system asks is an effective ally in the fabrication of success or a brilliant entertainer. *Ai confini dell'informazione* is the title introducing the interview to Sposini on *L'Espresso*: it is precisely the growth of this infinite borderline where information fades into entertainment, the issue one should seriously meditate on.

4. After the attack that in April 1995, in Oklahoma City, destroyed an FBI building killing 168 among men, women and children, Gore Vidal dedicated a long article to the man who turned out to be, apparently, the only one responsible for the massacre: *The Meaning of Timothy McVeigh*. Police and the media, Vidal observed, had solved the case in the easiest way: «one man of incredible innate evil wanted to destroy innocent lives for no reason other than a spontaneous joy in

evildoing. [...]. Iago is now back in town, with a bomb, not a handkerchief»<sup>2</sup>. Things, though, were not this simple. That outburst of violence had been preceded in fact by another, planned, outburst of violence, two years before, in Waco, when the FBI had exterminated dozens of members of a peaceful religious sect, in what «proved to be the largest massacre of Americans by their own government since 1890». Witness of the slaughter, McVeigh – as he himself declared in front of the court that sentenced him to death – *followed the example* of what the FBI had done in Waco, and answered that evil with a greater evil.

Less tragic, but not less alarming for what it tells about the deterioration of our public life, the meaning of Luciano Moggi does not lie in the fact that the investigations on him brought to light such a wide network of dishonesty and connivance. Dishonesty and connivance have always existed, and thrive most of all where big amounts of money combine with the lack of ethic discipline. Considered the width its business have reached and the average quality of its managers, football is the ideal environment for such kind of abuses; if the speculation goes on at this rate – if money does not stop flowing, at least in part; if the media themselves do not stop exploiting the football industry – in a few years everything will silently go back to what it used to be. Like McVeigh, Luciano Moggi is not «one man of incredible innate evil»; rather, a man who acted the way in which, with their terrible example, the football and media industries have suggested him to do. If it would be naive to cherish vain hopes with regard to the football industry – a machinery whose one aim is to produce money, and that one way or the other manages to do it –, a greater hope could maybe be nursed towards the well-paid professionals that, before and more than the judges, had the duty to ensure that the rules of the game were respected. Instead, the placid nonchalance with which “highly-considered journalists” agree to take part in programs such as the *Processo di Biscardi* or even in worse ones about “costumes and society” (i.e., mostly, mere gossip) show how principles that the past generations considered natural (for example the one according to which it is necessary to give objective and true information, not to mix serious things with trivial ones, not to defend any side, political or sports) today are not part anymore of the professional consciousness of many.

It is likely that most of the television journalists do not find anything wrong in the progressive slipping of the information into the entertainment. On one hand, there is no doubt that “people want this”; on the other, what they gain from it is a great personal profit: there is a big difference between the salary of a good journalist and that of a very bad entertainer; obviously, to the entertainer’s advantage. In this state of things, the possibilities that the profession could self-amend are very little. It is not just the system that “wants them like this”. It is the fact that the

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<sup>2</sup> G. Vidal, *The Meaning of Timothy McVeigh*, in *The Last Empire. Essays 1992-2001*, London, Abacus 2001, p. 272.

journalists propose themselves and propose to the audience with full awareness completely different models of behaviour from those that the classic journalism recommended its trainees. The title of great journalist is given nowadays either to “great communicators”, who deal more with propaganda than with information, or to mediocre people, noteworthy not for what they have written or for what they write but only for their constant presence on the television. The principle according to which «if you are really important, you will be at centre of the mass attention, and if you are at the centre of the mass attention, then for sure you must be really important»<sup>3</sup>, once expressed as an hyperbole, is today *literally* true. The proof lies in the fact that the media have extended their legitimating power beyond the journalists, the politicians and the protagonists of the show-business to any social role and profession, from the physicians to the philosophers, from the art historians to the novelists. In exchange for this impressive increase of their power, though, the media (or better, the users of the media) had to pay a very high price. More and more involved in the *creation* of reality, in its transformation into *romance*, or in the manipulation of the opinions, the media perform less and less the task of critique and control they had been created for. To the magistrates, not to the media, we have to be grateful for throwing light on the fraud and scandals of the last few years, from the “Mani Pulite” affair to the business of Vittorio Emanuele di Savoia, up to the illegal activities within the world of football. In fact, with a very few exceptions, newspapers and televisions are not, for those holding power, a counterpower that must actually be feared. They can annoy, for their curiosity about the private life of famous people; they can ruin reputations, rightly or wrongly, mostly at random, (as one of the peaks of television disgrace, *Striscia la notizia*, has done and still does): but they are too negligent and controlled to represent a real deterrent to illegality. This is why, beside the unworthiness of a few or many, the Moggi-affair encompasses a highly negative judgment about the whole Italian media system. Since this is a structural issue, linked to the distortion of the roles the newspapers and the televisions have in our society, it would be naive to think that the virtue and the earnestness of a single individual could change the situation. Still, while waiting for the structures to collapse, or to improve, it would do no harm if those who can (provided that someone still can) would recall the individuals to that modicum of seriousness and virtue that define decency.

*Post scriptum (agosto 2006)*

It was not for unpatriotic spirit if some Italians gave a cool reception to the victory of their national team at the world championship. The regret (which does not exclude the satisfaction for

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<sup>3</sup> P.F. Lazarsfeld e R.K.Merton, *Comunicazione di massa, gusto popolare ed azione sociale organizzata*, in *L'industria della cultura*, Milano, Bompiani 1969, pp. 199-223 (a p. 206).

someone else's joy, most of all of those who deserved it, playing and training well) had at least three reasons. The first one is the fear that, for an unfair though understandable confusion of the levels, in the end the victory would cause the scandal to be forgotten and its gravity to be diminished in the eyes of the audience. The fear was well-founded, since already the day after the final match the political representatives of the majority party and of the opposition were observing that in the light of the events it would have been appropriate to award not an amnesty, but rather, so to say, a proper consideration of the virtue of the players whose teams had been involved in the scandal. Could this national wealth go wasted? Could these world champions be forced to play in B or C leagues, or abroad? If on one hand those who advanced such proposals show to have a weird sense of justice (what if the national team had lost, or if it had come in third, fourth, last position? Would there have been reductions of the punishment in proportion to the result? And then by what right do some MPs interfere in the problems of the *sports* justice?), on the other hand they see the problem clearly. In fact, football in Italy holds by now such a position for which it requires its problems – like the purchase of the matches or the financial subterfuges – to be managed and solved according to different parameters from those used for the normal administration of justice. The only thing missing, in these perorations, was the appeal to the popular will; however, in a few days we had that as well. One of the judges of the federal court commented this way the second-degree verdict which revoked most of the punishments administered in the previous process: «[D.] Could you explain us where your being in favour of granting pardon comes from? [R.] From all that happened in the past two weeks. This sentence must be historicized. The victory of Italy in the world championship, then the harsh condemnations, the revolts in the squares, the mayors supporting the affected teams, the cross-party debate... And the pardon, I was forgetting about the pardon in the Parliament. A magistrate is a man and I believe it is right to interpret the law prefiguring the consequences of one's decisions [...]. We tried to interpret a collective feeling. We listened to the common people and tried to put ourselves on the same wavelength»<sup>4</sup>. From which one can draw the image of an ethics and justice (were they just a sports ethics and justice) which are managed, literally, by popular acclaim. They take for granted, among other things (in this staggering *other* one must include such a right and humanly understandable scruple – in someone who comes from the same region of Falcone and Borsellino – as that of a judge weighting up «the consequences of one's decisions» and, done this, deciding otherwise) two facts that are not obvious at all. First, that it is necessary to submit to popular acclaim. Second, that there is such thing as a popular acclaim, or a widespread one; while instead it was just a few rowdies, backed up not only by the managers of the societies involved and by the usual journalists willing to turn a blind eye, but

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<sup>4</sup> Interview to Mario Serio by C. Zunino, «Salvati perchè la gente voleva così», «La Repubblica», 27 luglio 2006, p. 20.

also by some mayors unworthy of their positions. While instead, the more civilized part of the population – the «common people» the court assumes to be attuned with – would have wanted exemplary punishments.

The second reason why some did not celebrate is that the importance of football in Italy today is too much in accordance with reason, justice and good taste. There is too much money going around, too many interests – legitimate or unlawful – that grow around this environment, too much attention from the media, too much passion with which one part of the audience follows the matches and, above all, the boundless gossiping around the matches. The rhetoric of the media wanted the success of football to help solve the economical and social problems of a city (for example Maradona's Naples) or, today, of a country. Of course, the opposite is true. Between the victories of football and real life there is no relation whatsoever; instead, it is clear that the former have become, or have always been, a good way to mask or defer the solution of the latter. So much so that the governments safeguard the city teams well beyond the lawful, tolerating fraud and acts of violence that would not be forgiven to any other *private* association or profession, to avoid that the 'square' (i.e. those thousands of victims of the socio-economical difficulties, or of the bad example run by the media, that «hardly manage to make ends meet and, nonetheless, buy a ticket to go to the stadium»<sup>5</sup>) robbed of its 'dream' (another key-word of the sports marketing, which sooner or later should be given back its literal meaning of illusion, lie) will get upset: «don't take the ball from me and I won't bother you anymore», says a song by Articolo 31, and one could not say better.

The third reason is that joy and popular mourning (such as in the occasion of Pope Wojtyla's death) have become too clearly manipulable by the media, and too frequent, in order for someone to actually feel something similar to emotion in front of them. In the television studios the audience claps on command, or stands up devotedly in front of the guest of the day (who is refused today that pathetic, over-rhetoric homage that is the standing-ovation?); and in just a slightly less automatic way the subject of the *test* replies to the order given by the media of getting in the streets and screaming with excitement, or with pain. Those who preside over this ritual are the sports journalists, the former football players and the court of guests, players' girlfriends, commentators expert on nothing on whose moral and cultural tone we have been writing in the previous pages; the victory of the national team offered them, for the days and weeks to come, thousands of new opportunities, mostly on Rai, after the partial eclipse (or the low-profile) that followed the scandal. The ritual consists in sanctifying the winning team and in rousing the passion the victory has generated; which can be right from time to time, but becomes less respectable if the exception is

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<sup>5</sup> Luciano Moggi, interviewed by C. Bonini and G. D'Avanzo, «La Repubblica», 17 luglio 2006, p. 22.

promoted to norm (that is to say that the parade with the flags is all right when a team wins the world championship, but not when it beats Ghana two-nil in the qualifying round). This is why not all the good patriots were happy, in the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> of July.