

Summary

Luciano Cafagna

Comparison and contemporary History.

Comparison in the field of historiography has complex characteristics connected to the very nature of historical discourse, inevitably made up of the interweaving of evaluative («valutativi») and non-evaluative («avalutativi») elements.

If the process of comparison can in any way help one's not getting caught in a closed circuit, it is then useful to define more exactly its functions and its heuristic value: for example, it pertains to the *explanation*, or to the *signification*, of the processes being studied. A particular example of *parallel* comparison is that practicable in analyzing the processes of «modernization», which the article deals with in a specific manner that leads once again to the more general problem of the cultural history that lies behind every great problem of comparison.

Francesco Benigno

Anglo-Saxon Models and the Mediterranean Family.

Modern studies of the European household («nucleo familiare») have strongly suffered from the influence of a tradition of studies that, from Hajnal to Laslett, has tended to underline forcibly the distinctive characteristics of the model household, based on late marriage, prevalent in north-western Europe. This has led, on the one hand, to a more rigid characterization of the image of other types of household present in Europe and, on the other hand, to mistaken generalizations regarding what, for example, the Mediterranean household is. A critic of this model must not stop, however, at only correcting the distorted results that it has produced, but he must question the categories that determine the view of it, such as the concept of the «household formation system». As a consequence, it is necessary to reformulate on new bases the comparative-historical analysis of the household. After further discussing the prevalent formulation of the relations between the household and fixed sets of demographic and economic values, the article shows the necessity of giving attention to the major environmental, demographic and socioproductive considerations in the midst of which the single variables take on sense.

Alberto Mario Banti

Southern Italy Entrepreneurs between Rationality and Context.

Up to now the current literature about the entrepreneurs in southern Italy (19th-20th centuries) has emphasized the culturally backward patterns of behavior which have characterized these subjects. Nonetheless recent results of historical research

allow us to formulate a different set of hypotheses which are discussed in this article. Considering the shape of the internal and international markets in the 19th C. «Mezzogiorno», the author argues that it is possible to underline three relevant features of them (uncertainty, high transaction costs and lack of trust among the different economic operators) which could help to explain why southern entrepreneurs have been so cautious in building up their investment strategies. The author assumes that this particular market configuration could have led to an «adaptive formation of entrepreneurial choices», pointing out also several areas of research which could bear up or refute such an interpretative proposal.

Angela Liberatore

Robinson in the Forest: Limits of the Rational Choice Theory.

The article criticizes the model of perfect and maximizing individual rationalism advanced by the theory of rational choice and calls attention to the internal and external limits of human rationality and the relational character of rationality itself.

The considerations of J. Elster, F. Hayek, N. Luhmann and H. Simon and the different implications, at the levels of politics, ideology and ethics, that emerge from the recognition of the limits of rationality are analyzed from this perspective.

After an examination of the limits of a theory based on the undervaluation of limits, the theory's explicative capacity, above all in the historical sphere, is questioned; and the suggestion is made that it be considered rather as an «ideal-type» that can be used for normative purposes.

Simona Laudani

«Li posti de li mangani»: Notes on Sicilian Silk in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.

The article individualizes and examines in depth the reasons for the slow but inexorable crisis in Sicilian sericulture, which, after having long been one of the main items favorable in the island's balance of trade, heavily suffered, event at the end of the Eighteenth Century, from the competition of the silk industry in Piedmont, Lombardy and the Orient, until it finally disappeared once and for all from the island's productions soon after the Unification of Italy and the infestation in Sicily, in 1862, of pebrine. The article develops along two principal lines: analysis of the internal modalities and the particular structural characteristics that the process of silk production had assumed during some centuries in Sicily; and discussion of the economic and productive transformations that accompanied its decline. The island's silk crisis, certainly induced by a low level of investment and technology, had its profound roots, in fact, in the great capacity of that sector of the island's agriculture to respond to the new demands of the international nineteenth-century market by substituting and recycling its own cultural possibilities.

Silvio Lanaro

1910-1920. The Many-souled War of the Nationalists.

From many standpoints, none of them negligible, twentieth-century European culture seems to appear as a «culture of war»: a culture that considers war as a positive value or as an irrepressible necessity.

The propensities of such a cultural attitude as well as its reasons are different: the crisis of evolutionist positivism and the individualization of «discontinuity» as a positive value, the conservative aspiration towards the restoration of the traditional and neo-corporative assets of communitarian life, and also more general and subterranean motives that cannot be attributed to univocal explanations.

Nationalism accomplishes profoundly different tasks in the various countries of Europe; appearing in Italy as the substitute for a liberalism precociously deprived of energy, it proves capable of seriously altering all interpretations and justifications of war, including those elaborated according to distant cultural coordinates.

Carlo Trigilia

The Paradox of the Region: Economic Regulation and Representation of Interests.

In what way can the sociological consideration of interests help to define the role of regional government? The article focusses attention on a sort of paradox that concerns the regions of Italy. On the one hand, the exigency of regional government seems to increase in terms of «collective interest»; on the other hand, this exigency is not expressed to a sufficient degree in explicit requests and in a system of efficacious representation. The hypothesis is advanced that the difficulties that the regions have in occupying the potential space that has now been given them come not only from institutional constraints in the form of the division of authority and of the interventions conditioned by the «center», but that they are connected to a significant degree to the very weakness of the system of regional representation of interests. In the first part, economic and social phenomena that lead to an increase of regional regulatory problems are analyzed. The prevalent reference is to the questions raised by economic development in the more general context of advanced capitalistic societies. In the second part, on the other hand, attention is given more specifically to the actual situation in Italy. Focus is put on the system of representation of interests in its relations to the region as institution. Finally, some implications of the prospect regarding a strategy of valorization of the regional government of development are discussed.

Cesare Annibaldi

Fiat and Southern Italy.

The interview with Cesare Annibaldi, director of external relations of Fiat, Italy's biggest private industry, deals with some of the problems relating to the by now historical presence of this financial group in Southern Italy and with problems of future industrial growth and possible social transformation in this area. The interview touches on a large number of questions that range from the original motives that induced Fiat to invest in the South (to the extent that it is now the South's largest private industry) to the choice of the geographical and social areas in which the factories were located; from the relations between the enterprise and its local context to the real advantages offered by special legislation for entrepreneurial undertakings in the South. At the same time, internal relations between enterprise and trade unions, the dynamics put into motion by the appearance of industry in a rural context, and the problems of scientific research and of the formation of technical personnel are also carefully and attentively considered.

The result is a very detailed picture that, on the one hand, shows from the inside the criteria and the reasons that inspired the strategy of expansion of a great enterprise in the South, and, on the other hand, shows the particular and interesting point of view of the biggest Italian private enterprise regarding the present questions and the prospects of this weak area of Italy.

Adian Lyttelton, Paolo Pezzino, Biagio Salvemini and Lucetta Scaraffia
*The Élite, Families and Entrepreneurial Strategies in the Nineteenth Century:
Books by Banti and Macry.*

A group of historians discusses the two books of P. Macry and A.M. Banti that, with different methods and strategies of research, deal with somewhat common historical themes and realms: the internal dynamics of the bourgeois nineteenth-century family and the social and political behavior of the élite in the different realities and contexts within which they operate. Both the Neapolitan families studied by Macry and the groups of professional and land-owning bourgeoisie of Piacenza studied by Banti are subjected to concise critical discussion that clarifies points of scientific disagreement as well as of consensus.

Macry's book, the merit of which is acknowledged because it is based on very original and suggestive sources, is criticized by Lyttelton and Salvemini for having given excessive importance to the internal logic of the family in determining, or not, behavior in the coherently bourgeois sense of individuals, and by Pezzino for its lack of greater investigation of the concept of modernization. Regarding Banti's book, considered by some as exemplary for the way in which it reconstructs the formation of a bourgeois élite, Scaraffia points out the slight interest it shows in the logic and mechanisms inside the family.