

Review of: "Elvio Fachinelli — Psychoanalysis of Dissension in Italy"

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This article brings us back to the golden age of dissent and protest that ran through Europe in the 60s and 70s, an era fertile of that particular kind of generative creativity which can only result from rebellion towards authority in all settings: politics, academia, humanities, art, and of course, psychoanalysis. Beyond the theoretical points analysed and eloquently illustrated and explained, the main reflection triggered is: would this creative vitality derived from a rebellious spirit be still possible nowadays? Would discussions about the use of the analyst's body, maternal cuddles, and physical contact between patient and analyst be allowed in the modern culture of complaints and litigation, safe spaces, and political correctness? Recently, one of my colleagues received a complaint from trainees because during a group supervision, she had allegedly failed to ask the group "how are you all feeling?" enough times. The body is becoming taboo and a battlefield between opposing identity politics (gender identities, esthetic identities, social identities, racial identities, religious identities), and the increasingly powerful movement of the perpetually offended is a considerable threat to the unveiling of uncomfortable truths, the very bread and butter of psychoanalytic work. Can any of us label oneself a "wild psychoanalyst," and to what extent can we exercise criticism against mainstream theory before being threatened by disciplinary actions and expulsions by our regulatory bodies? And is it by chance that in this overall cultural climate the popularity of those treatment approaches aimed at adapting to the status quo is increasing? Meditate, breathe, diarise your negative emotions and put them in your bedside drawer, be grateful for three things every day, distract yourself, and take part in mandatory corporate mindfulness sessions, so you can stay afloat and things in your life can continue as they are. The revolutionary, liberating power of psychoanalysis is being eroded day by day from different fronts: evidence base, cost-effectiveness, and a general cultural climate where being pain-free and stress-free is the ultimate goal (the painkillers abuse pandemic in many western countries is just one aspect of this). Institutional violence is out of fashion as most trainings in psychotherapy aim at the acquisition of competencies and techniques, rather than a critical spirit. Renewing the attention to authors such as Fachinelli, Basaglia, Fanon, and their more than ever newness and actuality in the current cultural climate has an intrinsic value.