EDUCATION AGAINST VIOLENCE:
A RESEARCH PROJECT

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Summary. This paper presents the main theoretical elements of a 30-year research project on human violence, with a special emphasis on the role of education in preventing and counterveiling violence itself. Conducted at the Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies (ISTC) of the Italian National Research Council (CNR), the project was initially inspired and led by Prof. Francesco Robustelli. During his direction, and continuing after his passing, when I took over the direction of the project itself, the research evolved along multiple lines while remaining grounded on some core principles: the role of competitive life patterns in human societies, a comprehensive definition of violence, the fundamental role of education, and a broad definition of diversity.

Keywords: Competitive life patterns, education, diversity, pupils' attitudes towards cultural diversity,

In this paper, I will focus on the main theoretical components of a research project I conducted for almost 30 years in the field of human violence, with special emphasis on education against violence. The research was carried out at the Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies (ISTC) of the Italian National Research Council (CNR).

However, I would first like to point out that the main ideator and, for some years before his death, Head of the project was Prof. Francesco Robustelli, a research director of the ISTC.

In the course of time, the Project developed along various lines of research. However, since its very beginning, it mainly rested on four points:

1) the role of the competitive life pattern in our societies, which is prevailing all over the world,

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2) a comprehensive view of violence,
3) the importance of the role of education,
4) a broad definition of diversity.

Since points 1) and 2) are intimately connected, I will not deal with them separately.

A competitive life pattern

For clarity, I will first quote a few lines where the concept of "competitive life pattern" is presented and briefly discussed. They synthesize the core of our theoretical reflections on the main causes of human violence in our societies:

[…] a competitive life pattern […] implies the existence of hierarchical social structures and the tendency to exercise some kind of power over others, especially over weaker individuals. According to this model, each individual has to compete and, thus, has to find other individuals, whom she/he considers inferior, in order to dominate them and to feel she/he belongs to the group of those who hold power […].

The competitive life pattern, which is now prevailing all over the world, in one way or other affects all interpersonal relationships. As a consequence of this, in most cases, even when no actual conflict is present, people consider others as rivals, competitors, or enemies, who try to overpower them and whom, in their turn, they may try to overpower, and not as individuals they might be interested in getting to know and with whom they might cooperate. It goes without saying that the competitive life pattern mainly rests on values such as aggression and social dominance and attaches scarce importance to values such as cooperation, solidarity, respect, and empathy (Pagani & Robustelli, 2011, p. 91).

Thus, a competitive life pattern implies the existence, in various contexts, of hierarchies based on the power each individual has over others, especially over weaker individuals (e.g., the poor, immigrants, the elderly, women, children, animals, etc.). Thus, people generally consider others as rivals, competitors, or enemies, who try to overpower them and whom, in their turn, they may try to overpower, and not as individuals they might be interested in getting to know and with whom they might cooperate (Pagani & Robustelli, 2010).

At this point, in order to provide a further perspective to my presentation of the project itself, I will make a short detour. I will briefly have recourse to the so-called "narrative" as opposed to the "logico-scientific" mode of thinking (Bruner 1986, 1996; Tsoukas & Hatch, 2001). As I wrote elsewhere (Pagani, 2019), the narrative mode of thinking is basically characterized by: a) the relevance of context; b) the role of the deep relationship between the *observer* and the *system* under observation; c) the analysis of *motives* and *purposes*; d) the awareness that the observer's understanding is inevitably imperfect.

One of the consequences of these brief considerations is the awareness that autobiographical material can be integrated into a scientific dissertation. That is why I will now try to provide a historical and temporal background to our project. In fact, as we all know, behind every project there is a story. So, let me very quickly touch on the beginnings of this story.

In August 1993 Francesco Robustelli and I met Martin Ramirez in Cape Town on the occasion of the XIV CICA (International Colloquia on the Brain and Aggression) Conference "Violence and its alternatives" (26/31 August 1993 – Cape Town – South Africa). That was a period of deep changes for South Africa. Mandela had been released from prison three years before and a few months later he would be elected by Parliament as first president of a democratic South Africa. Besides, the Apartheid regime was officially ending. Participating in the Conference and, more importantly, meeting Martin Ramirez were two key events both for Francesco Robustelli and me. From that time on, a long cooperation with Martin and with CICA started and continued for many years. A cooperation that, as regards myself and CICA, is still continuing.

Martin Jesus Ramirez had been one of the signatories of the "Seville Statement on Violence". As is well known, the name "Seville" comes from "Seville University", where Martin Ramirez was professor and where in 1986 on May 16th the document was signed.

As a matter of fact, the whole story had started some years before, in the late seventies of the past century. In those days, the International Society for Research on Aggression had decided to set up a Committee, which, among other goals, aimed at organizing a number of symposia under the auspices of UNESCO. Since its constitution, UNESCO had addressed the delicate problem of the incorrect and tendentious use of scientific theories. For example, in 1981 UNESCO had organized a conference in Athens where scientists from all over the world were invited to discuss the scientific results regarding the concept of "human race" and where the biological bases of race were widely disproved. On that occasion, one of the participants, the Mexican anthropologist Santiago Genovés, suggested that something similar should be done also as far as violence was concerned. Following a period of intense preparation coordinated by Professor David Adams, during which a draft of a document was elaborated and exchanged, Martin Ramirez convened in Seville University almost thirty scientists from thirteen countries and many disciplines – psychologists, anthropologists, psychiatrists, ethologists, sociologists, biologists, neurophysiologists. Among them were Robert Hinde, Bonnie Frank Carter, José Delgado, Federico Mayor, Santiago Genovés, and Riitta Wahlström. On that occasion the Seville Statement on Violence was signed. It was, as I said above, the 16th of May of 1986.

The "Seville Statement" was adopted by UNESCO in 1989 and was endorsed by many scientific associations, among which the American Psychological Association, the American Sociological Association, the American Anthropological Association, and the International Society for Research on Aggression – Commission on Violence.

In 1991 UNESCO published the text of the Seville Statement, edited with a commentary by David Adams (Adams, 1991).

UNESCO also created an international network for the dissemination of the Seville Statement. For many years Prof. Francesco Robustelli was the Italian representative of this international network.

In a nutshell, *The Seville Statement on Violence* maintains that violence is not biologically determined and, thus, unavoidable, but that, instead, it is mainly a product of culture. As a consequence, it is possible, through specific educational action, to countervail the sociocultural factors that determine such destructive behavior. Later on, in this paper, I will provide the definition of *education* we adopted in our Project. As we will see, together with "competitive life pattern", also "education" in its broad sense, is one of the milestones of our Project (Pagani & Robustelli, 2010).

The content of the Seville Statement is expressed in the form of five propositions. I will now just focus on the fourth proposition:

> *It is scientifically incorrect to say that humans have a "violent brain". While we do have the neural apparatus to act violently, it is not automatically activated by internal or external stimuli. Like higher primates and unlike other animals, our higher neural processes filter such stimuli before they can be acted upon. How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialized. There is nothing in our neurophysiology that compels us to react violently.*

It was on this proposition that we especially focused when we addressed the problem of violence in our numerous seminars and the talks we gave for teachers and, especially, for pupils. Its message is particularly clear and direct. In sum, in very simple words, we tried to explain to them that there are some structures in our brain that enable us to be violent but that there are also other structures in our brain that allow us to decide, according to cases, whether to be violent or not.

In fact, as we said above, the basic thesis of the Seville Statement is that violence is not biologically determined and, thus, unavoidable, but that, instead, it is mainly a product of culture.

Clearly, the consequences of this document in the academia and in people's everyday life are particularly relevant. For example, the concept of "education", in its broad sense (see below), acquires a fundamental role in the efforts to countervail violence, together with the other above mentioned key concept, namely "competitive life pattern". Also, the issue of the complex semantic field encompassed by the term "violence" (see below) needs special consideration. In fact, contrary to the view expressed in the Seville Statement, where the focus is mainly on war, we proposed a "comprehensive" definition of violence. Hence, in the end, it will appear that "complexity" is the key concept embracing all our theoretical and civil efforts to address the problem of violence (Pagani, 2019; 2020).

As anticipated above, I will now address three basic issues: a) a comprehensive definition of violence; b) a comprehensive definition of education; c) a broad definition of diversity.

A comprehensive definition of violence

The theses of the Seville Statement explicitly and implicitly criticize the biological explanations of human aggression, in particular the energy models of the nervous system, the use of the concept of instinct in human psychology and the simplistic formulations of the theory of evolution. However, the Seville Statement does not provide a comprehensive definition of violence.

Since the very beginning of our project, and especially in a phase of our research work when we were deeply engaged in the study of humans' violence against animals, we repeatedly underlined the similarities of violence against humans (i.e., children, women, the elderly, the poor) and of other types of violence (i.e., against animals, a mountain, a tree, and the earth). As can be easily understood, in our view the concept of competitive life pattern is intrinsically connected with a comprehensive definition of violence:

First of all if we speak about violence against animals, children, women or the elderly we are speaking about violence against those who are generally weaker individuals in our society. Naturally this takes us back to the competitive life pattern that now virtually permeates the whole world and that in various social contexts has set up hierarchies of individuals according to the amount of power each individual has over other individuals [...]. It follows that, apart from a few cases, violence is the consequence of a general cultural attitude and one way or another it invests the whole affective and cognitive sphere of a human being, although it sometimes seems to be addressed only to specific milieus or to specific individuals (Pagani, 2000, p. 66).

The concept of comprehensiveness has thus become unequivocally necessary. It follows that violence is to be considered as a comprehensive phenomenon [...]. That is to say, in our fight against violence by force of circumstances we are compelled to concentrate our efforts each time on limited fields (violence against women, violence against children, violence against animals, violence in jails, violence in schools, etc.). Nevertheless, when we are dealing with violence in these specific fields, we have always to allow for the comprehensive meaning of this phenomenon, because only if we are aware of its comprehensive meaning, can we understand the deep causes of the various kinds of violence and hence choose the most suitable strategies to fight them. Otherwise even the battle we are fighting in the specific field we have chosen will be much less effective. [...] Finally, when "a comprehensive concept of violence can permeate the battles against the various injustices of our world, then perhaps those walls that sometimes divide groups and associations working against violence will fall. For example, [...] we should see

the end of that tendentious and aggressive dispute, which now and then resurfaces against animal rights movements, which are accused by some people of being only concerned with animals and not humans. (Pagani, 2000, p. 71)

A comprehensive definition of education and the "Progetto Migrazioni" of the Italian National Research Council (CNR)

In our research project on violence, we probably went farther than UNESCO, as we provided a comprehensive definition of education. We considered education as the sum of all the elements of reality that in one way or other affect human development (Pagani 2000; Pagani, 2019; Pagani, Robustelli, & Martinelli, 2011; Robustelli 2000; Robustelli & Pagani, 1996). Within this context, education and culture are practically synonymous. Thus, not only parents, teachers, and any other type of educators, but also society in general (i.e., state institutions, social institutions, people's behavior and attitudes, human artifacts - i.e., the arts -, nature, etc.) are involved in the process (e.g., Pagani, 2011a). The importance of education in our research work also rested on the role I had for some years as a trait d'union between the Italian National Research Council and the Ministry of Education. Within this context in 1999 we also drew up a protocol of understanding with the Italian Ministry of Education, aiming at promoting education against violence in schools.

In the early 2000s an event provided further impetus to our project. The National Research Council (CNR) launched a big project on multiculturalism ("Progetto Migrazioni" – Department of Cultural Identity, Italian National Research Council) to which many institutes, including ours, adhered. A group of researchers in our institute, including Prof. Robustelli and I, participated in the project. As a focus of our analysis, we chose a situation that is now universally accepted, at least in Italy, and in some way now almost given for granted but that in those days was new and much debated: the enrolment of immigrant children in mainstream classes in Italian schools. In the year 2003/4, 3.5% of the school population in Italy was constituted by immigrant pupils (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Direzione Generale per I Sistemi Informativi, 2004).

Our research was characterized by two phases. In phase 1 our focus was basically related to teachers' attitudes towards the enrolment of immigrant children in mainstream classes in Italian schools. The main outcome of this phase of research was our book "Pagani C. & Robustelli F., *Marek a scuola*" [Marek at school]", which was published by Franco Angeli in 2005. In its conclusion we reported the text of a short essay, written by Marek[2], a pupil of 11 years in one of the schools where we carried

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[2] Marek is a fictitious name. The essay is reported in its original form. In our research all the texts written by pupils were anonymous. See below.

out our research. He had been in an orphanage in Poland and had been adopted by an Italian family:

I am Polish and I have been adopted, when I was in the orphanage, I felt bad.

As I came to Italy I did not know where I was, and I did not know how to speak.

After a while I started going to school but I did not know anyone.

I sat next to three kids they said that I was pinching them.

I did not know how to read and how to write and I learnt thanks to hearing kids talking or reading.

As soon as I arrived, I did not feel at ease with my friends.

The first time I played with them I had so much fun because I did not know many of the games they were playing which later on I learnt and I got to know many new places I did not know so many things existed all the things I knew I had learnt by watching tv.

Now instead I have learnt many things from reality, and I have met many important and famous people.

I met many teachers.

I met a friend of mine who later on became my best friend with him I played a lot.

During the day I always go around with him by bike or we play soccer or other games, then I met other kids the first one I met right away and with whom I play a lot is David my best friend and then I met his brother and then Stefano and Mattia. (p. 129)

A broad definition of diversity

One of the theses we developed in those years (Robustelli, 2002; Pagani & Robustelli, 2005; Pagani & Robustelli, 2011) can be synthesized in these words:

[…] from a psychological point of view the logical structure of that complex process which is constituted by the understanding of others is always the same, whether we refer to the understanding between men and women, the old and the young, the poor and the rich, or between the Inuits and Khoikhoi. This means that any psychological strategy aimed at cross-cultural understanding has actually a much wider scope since, at least in its essential aspects, it can foster the understanding among human beings in a comprehensive perspective. (Pagani & Robustelli, 2011, p. 257).

The focus of our theses mainly rested on a broad definition of diversity, elaborated by Francesco Robustelli (Robustelli, 2000; 2002), which represents a milestone in

the progression of our project. In fact, we used the term "diversity" in its broad sense, that is as a synonym of "the other", the non-ego (cfr. Pagani & Robustelli, 2010). We even maintained that individuals are "other" to themselves over different periods of their life (Robustelli, 2000). Thus, humans' relationship with diversity is one of the basic aspects of our experience and human identity is the continuously evolving outcome of our relationship with diversity. Multiculturalism is a specific form of diversity, which mostly relates to cultural differences, although we are well aware that in present societies, and especially in those societies that have become the destination of immigration flows, multiculturalism often relates to socioeconomic differences as well (Pagani & Robustelli, 2010). I also believe that this concept of diversity is intrinsically connected with the concept of complexity, which later on would constitute the all-embracing paradigm of my theoretical explorations.

People's relationship with diversity can be often negatively affected by prejudices and stereotypes so that we perceive others in a distorted way, according to cognitive and affective patterns pertaining to our culture and personality. However, our relationship with diversity does not necessarily involve fear, hostility, and rejection. Curiosity, identification, acceptance, and empathy can occur instead (Pagani, Robustelli, & Martinelli, 2011).

Finally, we also adopted a broad definition of culture, as it includes not only "the traditional concepts encompassed by this term, such as beliefs, norms, values, and habits of a specific society or group, but also socio-economic factors, which […] can strongly influence psychological processes. In fact, we do not only have to do with Inuit culture or Khoikhoi culture but also with the cultures of poverty, of starvation, of unemployment, of fear, and of despair." (Pagani & Robustelli, 2011, p. 79).

Italian pupils' attitudes toward multiculturalism

The second phase of our research, as far as multiculturalism was concerned, was characterized by a study on the attitudes towards diversity and multiculturalism of pupils (aged 9–18) attending Italian schools. Also, this study was conducted within the "Progetto Migrazioni" – Department of Cultural Identity, Italian National Research Council. Our study involved 11 state schools in central Italy: 2 primary schools, 5 middle schools, and 4 high schools. All the classes of the schools were involved in the research and all the pupils of the involved classes participated in the research itself. Thus, participation was not limited to volunteering participants. We clearly informed pupils about the aims of the research and their participation was presented as one of the numerous activities of the school and as a part of the school curriculum.

We aimed to tap and analyze pre-adolescents and adolescents' attitudes towards diversity and multiculturalism. In order to do so we used anonymous open-ended

essays. The essays were written at school. Only the author of this paper, together with a young psychology student, were with pupils in the classrooms. Teachers were not present. Instead, we were present in all the schools and in all the classes. We assured the pupils that their teachers would never read their essays. Participants' age could be inferred from the grades they were attending, as their essays were collected separately from each class.

These were the instructions that each pupil received in a brief note:

Italy is a country inhabited by many Italians as well as by many immigrants. We do not know if you are an Italian or an immigrant. In any case, we are interested in what you think about this topic. Tell us about your experiences and the experiences of others, both at school and outside school.

This essay will not be graded and you will not have to sign it. All you have to do is write **F** *if you are a girl and* **M**[3] *if you are a boy on the top left of the page. It does not matter if you make grammatical or spelling mistakes. Try to express yourself in the clearest way possible. Do not worry if you have to express ideas that might be different from ours. Do not even worry if you have to report events that we might disapprove. You will not be judged better or worse for what you write or for the way you write it. We are only interested in your ideas and feelings on the topic. You have 2 hours to complete your task. Thank you.*

The texts we obtained were usually very frank, direct, and apparently sincere. We thought that pupils' confidence should be our main goal if we wanted to obtain valuable data. As a matter of fact, we aimed at building with pupils a relationship based on trust. I tried to explain to them that this situation might become a precious opportunity both for them and for us. We needed data and, most importantly, good data. Hence, we needed attention, care, and truth on their part. I also pointed out that the situation might turn advantageous for them as well. I tried to explain to them that a situation where you are allowed to express yourself completely freely, without fearing to hurt anyone and without being judged, is very rare and precious. Besides, I informed them that their teachers would not have access to what they wrote. Apparently, my recommendations, explanations, and efforts were successful.

From the total number of open-ended essays we collected we randomly selected 350 compositions (176 females and 174 males) on the basis of gender, estimated age, and school. With the collaboration of a research assistant, Francesco Robustelli and I independently conducted a qualitative and quantitative analysis of pupils' essays (i.e., Pagani, Robustelli, & Martinelli, 2011). Most importantly, we integrated content

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[3]   In the first years of the third millennium the rights of LGBTI people were not generally considered in the academia.

coding with an analysis based on the structure and coherence of the texts themselves (Wainryb, Brehl, and Matwin, 2005). Indeed, we especially tried to obtain more complex information on participants' deep feelings and attitudes. To put it briefly, we aimed at reaching not only the explicit/manifest but, above all, the implicit/latent meaning of the texts (Babbie 2001; Harker and Bates, 2007). We might even say that we examined these essays as if they were literary texts. The above quoted Marek's short composition is one of them. The detailed outcome of this research study can be found in our publications (i.e., Pagani & Robustelli, 2010; Pagani, Robustelli, & Martnelli, 2011; Pagani, 2014; Pagani, 2018; 2019; 2020).

I would like to conclude the short presentation of this line of research with another, and also in this case, very brief essay (159 words), written by a boy of 14[4].

As I came from a little town, I was scared and intrigued by a multi-ethnic city. I was scared by the rumors about immigrants and intrigued by the many cultures I was coming across. When I started living here I found out that the rumors were all wrong; instead the opposite was true.

[…]

Since I was born in a big city and then moved to a little town, the people there saw me as a stranger but then, when I came here, people coming from other countries became the strangers. I can say that the definition of stranger depends on the perspective you are seeing the situation from, so I can't really give an opinion on this subject.

These few lines perfectly describe the profound and subtle relationships between diversity and similarity depending on the different perspectives. Through his reflections the boy creates a "complex system" characterized as it is by order and disorder, with a solution in the end (the "new emergent perspective" of complex systems). Later on, we will very briefly touch on the "complexity approach" in the analysis of phenomena.

A Study on Violence against Animals
and on Human-Animal Interactions in general

In those years our research on violence and, more specifically, on education against violence, further expanded. Since the last decades of the 20th century, especially in the USA, a research area had been developing, which focused on animal

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[4]   An analysis of this text can be found in my book "Diversity and Complexity" (2019). The boy was clearly dysgraphic. His orthographic errors do not appear in the English translation.

welfare, human-animal relations, and violence against animals. In the field of animal abuse a great deal of research addressed an important issue: the connections between animal abuse and domestic violence. An eminent representative of this line of research was Prof. Frank R. Ascione from Utah State University and University of Denver (i.e., Ascione F.R., ed. 1999; Ascione F.R., ed. 2008), with whom we collaborated for many years (Pagani, Robustelli, & Ascione, 2007; 2008; 2010; 2011). Within a Short-term Mobility Programme he was also visiting Professor in our Institute in the years 2006 (title of the Project: "*The relation between interpersonal violence and violence against animals in the Italian context*") and 2008 (title of the Project: "*Exploring the nature of the relationship between bullying and animal abuse*"). Our collaboration lasted for a long time and ended only when Prof. Ascione retired.

In those years we carried out a survey on children's and adolescents' (9-18 years old) relationships with animals (Pagani, Robustelli, & Ascione, 2007; 2008; 2010; 2011). We developed a six-page anonymous self-administered questionnaire in 3 forms, according to participants age range (9-10; 11-12; 13-18)[5], which aimed to tap children's and adolescents' attitudes towards animals Participants had just to indicate their gender. Most of the data were collected in the same schools and in the same classes where we carried out our research on multiculturalism.

Children's and adolescents' contribution to our theoretical approach in this research area, especially as far as methodological issues were concerned, was enormous (i.e, Pagani, Robustelli, & Ascione, 2010).

Our questionnaires had also indicated that there are children who are very fond of animals, take care of their pets and suffer deeply when they die. Later on, I specifically addressed this important aspect of human-animal relations, namely children's benevolent and kind behaviour towards animals (see, for example, Pagani, 2011b).

Violence and Complexity

In the following years I was deeply involved in complexity studies. One of the outcomes of this new interest was an analysis of the phenomenon of violence through the complexity lens. In order to provide a synthetic view of my theoretical considerations in that phase of my scientific career I will here quote a few lines from the abstract of my paper "Violence and Complexity" (Pagani, 2015):

> *Like all the phenomena that the human mind is knowledgeable about, the phenomenon of violence should be regarded as a complex macrosystem, where systems of networks and of agents are linked and interact at different interconnected levels.*

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5   You can find a version of the questionnaire (Appendix, Questionnaire: 11–12 Year Form. A Survey on Children's Relationships with Animals), In: Ascione, F.R., (Ed). 2008. *The International Handbook of Animal Abuse and Cruelty: Theory, Research, and Application* (pp. 266–268).

This means that complexity refers to the phenomenon per se, to the various cognitive and emotional processes through which the human mind should examine and evaluate it and to the development of solutions to eradicate violence itself. It is clear that the complexity of these processes of examination and evaluation should be a requisite both of scientists and of laypeople. This does not mean that the scientist or the layperson should be knowledgeable about all the components and aspects of the macrosystem in their complex interconnections but that they should think and act on the grounds of their awareness of this complexity. One of the main issues relating to the study of violence is the definition of violence itself. In this respect, it is here suggested that thoughts and emotions, and not only behaviors, should be included in the definition of violence. […] It is also important to point out that complexity does not only refer to the explorations of the connections between systems taken from different research fields (e.g., neurology, biology, psychology, sociology, etc.). It can also refer, for example, to the theoretical premises of the research and of the questions at stake, to the scope and aims of the research and of these questions, and to the methods used in the investigation. In the same way, it is also important to bear in mind that, rooted in the theoretical premises and in the aims, are also specific views of society and life in general and that these views deeply and unavoidably affect the whole investigation process. It is clear that focusing on complexity also means opposing the fragmentation which usually characterizes the scientific study of violence and the interventions aiming to countervail it. Finally, as complexity theory indicates, through this "holistic" approach, a new conceptualization and understanding of violence could emerge so as to lead to more innovative and effective solutions to the problem of violence. (Pagani, 2015, p. 11)

Given my deep interest in art, I also examined the relationship between violence and art. To put it very briefly, I maintain that art can be instrumental in countervailing violence. In fact, in the artistic experience, power relations, which constitute the main source of violence, do not exist (Pagani, 2016). My interest in art is also testified by two chapters in my book (Pagani, 2019): "Diversity and Complexity in Literature" (Chapter 9) and "Diversity and Complexity in Cinema and in Photography" (Chapter 10).

As I said before, in those years my studies were especially characterized by my involvement in complexity theory. Among other things, this interest resulted in a reexamination of my lines of research through the "complexity lens". My book "Diversity and Complexity" (Pagani, 2019) was the main outcome of this new approach. The introduction of the book, but also chapters 3 and 4, represent a synthesis of my views as regards the "complexity approach" to the analysis, not only of the problem of violence and of other social issues, such as multiculturalism and diversity, but of all aspects of reality. This is an extract from the very beginning of my book:

In 1942 philosopher Benedetto Croce wrote an essay entitled "Why We Cannot Help Calling Ourselves Christians", which I have not read. It is just a reminiscence from school years. However, through a phenomenon of mere assonance and totally unrelated to its specific meaning, this title seems to me to aptly prompt the definition of the epistemological basis of this book, namely "Why We Cannot Help Approaching Reality Within a Complexity Framework". This means that not only I believe complexity to be an intrinsic quality, the quality, of reality, but also that I believe that reality has to be incontrovertibly approached through the complexity lens. And it goes without saying that this is true also for "diversity", which is the specific aspect of reality we are addressing here (p. xi).

The use of the *complexity* lens bears on our thoughts, decisions, and behavior in general. In short, it has a moral, and I would also say, "political" intrinsic quality. This point is clearly enunciated by Morin (2008):

Complexity is situated at a point of departure for a richer, less mutilating action. I strongly believe that the less a thought is mutilating, the less it will mutilate human beings. We must remember the ravages that simplifying visions have caused, not only in the intellectual world, but in life. Much of the suffering of millions of beings results from the effects of fragmented and one-dimensional thought. (Morin, 2008, p. 57)

Indeed, our research project on education against violence was also characterized by an intrinsic social and political motivation on our part. We believed in its theoretical assumptions and thought that, though on a very small scale, we possibly might and should affect social reality. These are the words that Francesco Robustelli pronounced at the conclusion of a Dialogue Workshop held in Brussels at the European Commission in 2002 and organized by Al-Quds University and Tel Aviv University, where Palestinian and Israeli researchers convened and discussed on conflict and its resolution:

There is a problem that is of the utmost importance. There exists a huge amount of scientific knowledge from research on aggression, empathy, and conflict resolution. However, as in other fields, most of this knowledge is not actually utilized. Scientific knowledge should not be confined within research institutes, universities, conferences, and specialized journals, but should in some way or another be made accessible to all individuals. It should become culture in the most concrete sense of the world, and in becoming culture, it should affect the individual and social aspects of everyone's lives. (Robustelli, 2003, p. 123).

Let us hope that this will happen sometime.

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