No one said the "East" or the "Reds" or the "Soviets" or the "Russians" any more. That would have been too confusing, since some of Them weren't of the East, weren't Reds, Soviets and especially not Russians. It was much simpler to say We and They, and much more precise. Travelers had frequently reported that They did the same in reverse. Over there They were "We" (in the appropriate language) and We were "They"

(I. Asimov, *Let's get together*, «Infinity Science Fiction», 2, 1957: 66-7).

The question I ask myself about the Us vs. Them polarisation is apparently simple. The phrase is certainly a divisive and adversial but: can it only mean a desire to overcome and subjugate, or is it possible to remark on differences between groups of people without necessarily assume conflict and abuse? In the quoted short story, Asimov wrote:

At the beginning, it had been called a Cold War. Now it was only a game, almost a good-natured game, with unspoken rules and a kind of decency about it (*Ibidem:* 67).

In sports and in playgrounds, the meaning of "Us vs. Them" is straightforward: teams competing to win a game. Sometimes the competition is fierce, but it is always regulated by precise rules, and characterized by mutual respect. Teams can be assembled, disassembled, and reassembled without any negative consequences on the single members of either team: it is matter of agonism, not antagonism. Except for *The Paul Street boys* – but that was a war game. And in wars competition is violent and the opponent is an enemy to be killed, as well as defeated.

We do not need to quote Machiavelli or Lionardo in the *Libri della famiglia* (*The Family in Renaissance Florence*) by Leon Battista Alberti, to note that some traditional games for boys have been interpreted as a preliminary exercise to prepare for war.

My question is, therefore: can a group of people feel different from another group of people without necessarily feel superior? Or is any difference implicitly – if not openly – discriminatory? When does equality in difference become inequality, and how? Is this inevitable?

Social psychology studies about diversity and prejudice offer no univocal answer. Many theories analyse stereotyping processes according to the cognitive-motivational approach. Some focus on the contrast between a deeper prejudice (someone could describe it as *innate*, but I prefer *implicit*) and controlled beliefs. Patricia Devine pointed out the phenomenon of ambivalence (see Devine 2012). Acknowledging the existence of implicit prejudice even in those individuals who deliberately refuse prejudice – be it racial, sexist or homophobic – is a necessary step to develop containment and control strategies. Devine and Cox, who prefer to define the implicit bias as *unintentional bias*, try to demonstrate «that unintentional bias is like a habit that can be broken with sufficient motivation, awareness, and effort». Moreover «the habit-breaking intervention produces enduring changes in peoples' knowledge of and beliefs about race-related issues». And about bias reduction strategies they write: «We believe … that the prejudice habit-breaking intervention causes its recipients to recognize bias and its consequences for minorities, then address it in the world around them» (Forscher, Mitamura, Dix, Cox, Devine 2017). If biases are as manageable as habits, they can be overcome just like bad habits.

Social Dominance Orientation theorists seem less optimistic: according to them, in hierarchical societies, such as modern industrial and post-industrial societies, individual minds are permeated with prejudice (Sidanius-Pratto 1999). The Social Dominance Theory, developed in the '90s, recently experienced a revival in relation to the migration phenomenon. The SD theory maintains that in groups – and between groups – there is a kind of predisposition to inequality, confirmed by the wish to maintain hegemony by those higher up in the hierarchy. The SDO seems to be pervasive in contemporary society, albeit in different degrees depending on gender and personality. It is strictly connected with conservative policies and social attitudes, with racism and sexism – «ideologies that promote or maintain group inequality are the tools that legitimize discrimination» (Pratto-Sidanius 1994: 741).

Susan Fiske states that cultural biases and sterotypes are the base for the Us vs. Them polarization and the resulting discrimination, where the other group – "Them" – is dehumanized. Fiske hopes for the scholars' focus to move from discrimination to a search for balance in diversity (Fiske 2000). This is what she said in a public debate:

It's only human to be comfortable with people who you think are like you; there's nothing

wrong with that. In fact, it gets us through a lot of stress – to be attached to our in-groups is our backup system. But the downside is that you're then excluding people who are not in the in-group (Smith 2013).

The trouble is: if in feeling part of the "US" we find *warmth, trustworthiness, and friendliness*, what happens when we feel "THEM"? What are the individual and social consequences of these processes?

It seems useful to approach the problem from another point of view: e.g. from a sociolinguistic perspective. The purpose is to find a method to analyse interpersonal and public communication in order to identify the traps of essentialist differentialism – gender, culture, people, nation – and its heavy social repercussions.

The research carried out by Teun van Dijk about *ideological discourse structures* could prove particularly useful at this time in the history of European societies – our history – when national revanchism seems dominant.

Ideology

The topic is complex. It refers to the long history and different meanings of the concept of *ideology*, starting from the lucky lexical invention by Destutt de Tracy in *Élémens d'Ideologie* (1825-27). We have been experiencing a "crisis of ideologies", involving views of the world on which political establishments are founded. However, *this does not imply* the end of ideology as a system of thought and behaviour.

Ideologies can be expressed through all forms of communication – verbal, gestural, visual. We shall focus on verbal communication, limiting our field of research to discourse, both as written text and oral expression.

Van Dijk started studying verbal communication of racist ideology in the '80s, identifying in the opposition *us/them* one of its typical discursive structures. It must be noted that Van Dijk describes ideology as a cognitive and social structure. Thanks to this definition of

ideology, Van Dijk can carry out his investigation at a macro level – groups and societies – as well as at a micro level – individual interactions (Van Dijk 1998).

«Ideologies, then, are the overall, abstract mental systems that organize such socially shared attitudes», he wrote in his *Discourse Analysis as ideology analysis* (Van Dijk 1995: 18). In other words, ideologies are a group's defining characteristics. Ideologies affect the cognitive construction of mental models organizing experiences and actions of both individuals and groups.

For those who wish to study the matter more in depth, Van Dijk developed a complex multilevel system for the analysis of the relationship between ideology and discourse – social, cognitive, and communicative. His intuition is apparently elementary: ideologies control social interactions, text and talk. The opposite is also true, however: social interactions convey social notions – i. e. ideologies.

Discourse Analysis can thus be described as *ideology analysis*, with well known applicative results in the social and ethic fields (see also Van Dijk 1985). This is nothing new, if we think about the way news are offered in newspaper headlines.

Scientific Ideology

Considering Discourse Analysis as a tool for ideology analysis – actually *the* tool for those who deal with communication – I think that to analyse at a macro level the way the US/THEM, inclusion/exclusion issues are expressed, the premises to the work by epistemologist Georges Canguilhem on the definition of scientific ideology could still prove very useful.

The ideological use of science – or, rather, the supposed scientificity of ideology – plays an important role. Canguilhem wrote:

Is the notion of scientific ideology relevant? Is the term a suitable one to designate and properly delimit the whole range of discursive structures claiming to be theories, the whole

variety of more or less consistent representations of interphenomenal relations, and the whole spectrum of more or less permanent structures in terms of which men have interpreted their everyday experience? In short, is it a useful way of denoting those pseudosciences whose falsity is revealed solely by the fact that a genuine science has been established to refuse their claims (Canguilhem 1977: 35)?

Discursive structures claiming to be theories: what closer connection between ideology and discourse?

As far as discrimination is concerned – in particular, racial or ethnic discrimination (see Amselle-Bokolo 1985) – we can say that science no longer supports discriminatory ideology. But it remain in public opinion.

Aliens

To better explain the above considerations on methodology, I would like to illustrate a case study about the US/THEM issue – and, ultimately, racism – in the past and nowadays, from scientific discourse to media debate.

Recently Italian media and social networks have been arguing about "Italians were migrants, too!". From *L'Orda. Quando gli Albanesi eravamo noi,* by journalist Gian Antonio Stella (2002) to anthropologist Marco Aime's lectures, the "*We were migrants, too. We were illegal, too*" argument has proved rather controversial (for the debate in USA see Stapinski 2017). In 2018 migration stopped being a crucial issue for both media and politicians, but racial ideology, attitudes, and expressions, as van Dijk would say, remain widespread.

The following passage was broadcast by Italian Rai News24 between 2009 and 2011, and circulates on the Web, widely commented by fact-checking professionals and amateurs:

They are usually short and dark-skinned. They don't like water. Many of them smell because they keep the same clothes for weeks. They build huts for themselves out of wood and

aluminium in the outskirts of cities and towns, very close to each other. Whenever they move towards the city centre, they rent out dilapidated flats at high prices. They come in pairs, usually, and look for a room and a kitchen. After a few days, there are four of them, six, ten.

They speak unintelligible languages, probably ancient dialects.

Many children are sent out begging, while in front of the churches women in dark clothes and old men ask for pity in whimpering and irritating tones.

They have many children, whom they struggle to support, and are very close-knit. They are said to be prone to thieving and, if confronted, violent. Our women ignore them not only because they are wild and unattractive, but also because they are said to attack women who walk home from work along empty streets and rape them.

Our authorities have opened the borders to too many people, without checking whether they were coming to our country to work or to live by expedients or even illegally.

I suggest preference is given to those who come from Veneto and Lombardy, as they are more willing to work, although slow of understanding and uneducated. As long as their families can be together, they are willing to live in houses where Americans would refuse to stay, and do not negotiate for higher salaries. The rest of them – on whom this first report largely focus, come from the South of Italy.

You are requested to check where they come from and to send back as many of them as you can. Our security must be our first concern.

This is proposed as a passage from a Report by the US Congress Inspectorate for Immigration into the United States dated October 1912. Actually, it is a popularisation of some pages of the *Reports of Immigration Commission* – the famous Dillingham Commission, named after its chairman, Republican Senator William P. Dillingham – which from 1907 to 1910 studied immigration to the United States, collecting data and developing recommendations.

The *Reports* consist of 41 volumes, now available on-line: the summary on Italian immigrants quoted above is quite reductive. Reading the original documents is very interesting for those who study migrations, but also for statisticians and sociologists. The *Reports* are indeed a thought-provoking example of scientific ideology and political discourse, with more or less obvious social repercussions. We cannot analyse the issue in depth, here, but I would like to point out a few points in the *Reports* which show the ambiguity in passing from scientific ideology to public discourse and, therefore, to social bias.

I recommend reading a few pages of Volume 5, *Dictionary of races or peoples*, Volume 36, *Immigration and crime*, and Volume 38, *Changes in bodily form of descendants of immigrants*, published by the Government Printing Office, Washington, in 1911. The *Abstracts of Reports* and *Recommendations* in Volume 1 and 2 will help us draw a few general conclusions.

Dictionary of races or peoples

This *Dictionary of races or peoples* (by anthropologist Daniel Folkmar, "assisted" by Elnora Cuddeback Folkmar) originated from a need for study and classification explained in the *Introductory*. Following the new ethnical factors resulting from immigration to the US from Eastern Europe, it was felt that the true racial status of most immigrants was unknown. It was not clear what race those new aliens were. Before 1899, immigrants were recorded only according to their countries of birth, with no indication of *race* or *people*. Under the Bureau of Immigration, there were 45 races or peoples, 36 of which were European. Under the *Dictionary*, there are more than 600 *subjects*!

The Commission's survey was not for ethnologists, but rather for those who studied migrations, and its purpose was to collect sources and data and to promote «a better understanding of the many different racial elements that are being added to the population of the US through immigration» (*Dictionary*: 2).

Given the «present imperfect state of science» and having decided to classify by race – there

being 3 races according to some scholars, 15, 29 or even 63 races according to others – the authors adopted Johann Friedrich Blumenbach's classification of human races. The father of physical anthropology had identified 5 groups: "Caucasian, Ethiopian, Mongolian, Malay and American, or, AS FAMILIARLY CALLED [my capitals] white, black, yellow, brown an red races".

The *Report* compilers were clearly aware that the various possible classifications were not objective, and chose the one that was best known in the US. It was a communication decision, a political, rather than scientific effort. The fact that the new "races" introduced in addition to the original five were based on linguistic differences – cultural parameters – further proves the scientific inadequacy of these divisions claimed by physical anthropology.

Let's stop here. However, one cannot help but wonder: what was the ratio behind this racial (racist?) classification of immigrants, if the authors themselves specified that it had little practical use, since inspectors in the Immigration Office had no time to classify each new entry as dolichocephalic o brachycephalic (*Dictionary*: 4)? As we'll see later, an answer can be found in the recommendations on "ethnically" restricted migration policies – dangerously close to eugenics and "biopolitics".

As far as it concerns US closely, wrote the author. Well, as far as it concerns *us*, here, we'll deal with the *Italians* (*Dictionary*: 82 ff.). The Bureau of Immigration divided them into two main groups: Northern Italians and Southern Italians, different in looks, language, temperament and geographical distribution. The former lived in the river Po basin, the latter in the rest of the peninsula and the islands. Even the Genoese were considered Southern Italians.

It is the same distinction drawn by the famous Italian anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi, who "invented" the Mediterranean race. According to Sergi, the Mediterranean race originated from the Kamits who lived in the highlands of Ethiopia, who were not «true Africans», notwithstanding «some traces of infusion of African blood in certain communities of Sicily and Sardinia» (*Dictionary*: 82). While according to Sergi the Mediterranean race was mainly an alternative to the Arian explanation of the origins of European peoples, in a crudely simplified version it could be used to confirm that Northern Italians were not only different from, but also superior to, Southern Italians.

If complemented by the results of another Italian anthropologist, Alfredo Niceforo, such physical and psychic distinction between the two ethnic groups would show the “decay” and “degeneration” of Latin peoples, especially from the South of Italy. Finally, statistical data indicated that Italy had the highest crime rate as regards offences against the person, in the South more than in the North (Bosco 1891). In the *Report*, Italy was described as «one the most illiterate countries in Europe», with 48.5 % of its population who could not read or write – 78.7 % in Calabria, as we can read.

For the compilers of the *Dictionary*, the number of Italian immigrants in itself showed that Italians, especially from the South, were a problem – 2,284,601 from 1899 to 1910, 1,911,933 of whom from Southern Italy. Just in 1907, out of 297,000 immigrants to the US, 240,000 were from Southern Italy – definitely the most numerous race. It was a significant data, compared to the overall number of Italians who emigrated that year: 415,000. Most of them were from Sicily and Calabria, the least productive and most poorly developed regions. The quoted number of immigrants from Liguria, South Italian in race, is higher than the number of immigrants from the whole North of Italy – it is a figure we find difficult to believe.

Italian immigration was a problem as it continued, because of its high birth rate, even when people from other countries stopped emigrating to the US (*Dictionary*: 84). Southern Italians were the most numerous race in absolute terms, followed by Jews, Polish, German and Scandinavian people. The problem, therefore, was their demographic weight in the whole immigrant population.

Immigration and crime

Notwithstanding the migratory *waves* from Southern and Eastern Europe (the language is not that different from that used today) the author of the *Report on Immigration and crime* is determined to disprove the preconceived notion that there is a causal link between immigration and crime. In the *Introduction,* Leslie Hayford maintains there is no evidence of the fact «that immigration has resulted in an increase in crime disproportionate to the increase in adult population. Such comparable statistics of crime and population… indicate

that immigrants are less prone to commit crime than are native Americans» (*Immigration and crime*: 1).

The uneven distribution of immigrants, however, who lived mainly in cities and towns in the North-East, caused the author to wonder: «is the volume of crime in the United States augmented by the presence *among us* of the immigrant and his offsprings?» And «If immigration increases crime, what races are responsible for such increase» (*ibidem*)? These questions assume there is a link between immigration and crime, even though no evidence is provided to support it. It is obvious that immigration affected crime, increasing the number of offences against the person, public policy and chastity, even though more crimes were committed by Americans than by immigrants.

It is clear that the purpose of the survey, albeit patchy and incomplete was to emphasize «the change of character of crime in US which had resulted from immigration and the crimes peculiar to various races and nationalities» (*Immigration and crime*: 9). Italians ranked high in in blackmail, extortion, kidnapping, kidnapping of minors, homicide and offences against public policy, at least in the 5 districts of New York (*Immigration and crime*: 17-18).

The only data from the Bureau of Census that could be used to draw such conclusions refer to alien prisoners and juvenile criminals. Two graphs show that in 1904 the largest percentage of aliens under sentence for murder and attempted murder were Italian (*Immigration and crime*: 26), while in 1908 Southern Italians were at the top of the list (over 2000), followed by the Irish, Polish, German, and Northern Italians (less than 500, see *Immigration and crime*: 180).

Notwithstanding Hayford's determination, the above connections between specific crimes and races could not but have a political and social impact.

Recommendations

The first repercussions concern the *Recommendations* set forth by the Commission.

Immigration laws in force and recommendations resulting from the research concerned mainly the physically and morally *unfit*, but it is stated that future laws would have to be based primarily on economic or business considerations touching the prosperity and economic wellbeing of «our people» (*Abstracts*: 45). A slower industrialization would have been preferable to the rapid process implemented through high numbers of workers imported from abroad, who lowered the American standard of wages and conditions of employment (*ibidem*).

American society should first of all be protected against *unfits*: any immigrants convicted of serious crimes within five years after they arrived just like those who became a public charge within three years should be deported. Aliens trying to persuade immigrants not to become American citizens were also subject to deportation. Aliens having no intention to become American citizens and unskilled single labourers should be excluded, as well those who were considered undesirable because of their personal qualities and habits (*Abstracts*: 47). Exclusion could also depend on race: the authors suggested that the Chinese continue to be barred, as they had been since 1882.

Considering that the recent massive immigration, mainly from Southern Europe, had caused worse working conditions for natives and older immigrants (*Abstracts*: 500ff), decreasing the number of aliens in those areas would be beneficial. Some aliens used forms of economic and social control often leading to exploitation and abuse: the "padrone system" was widespread among Italians and Greeks (*Abstracts*: 29).

The best – and most feasible – way to reduce undesirable immigration, according to the majority of the members of the Commission, was to introduce of a reading and writing test (*Abstracts*: 48). As many Southern Italians were illiterate, such test was deemed a good method to reduce their number.

Assimilation

The stated purpose of the Dillingham Commission was to promote the assimilation and naturalization of immigrants, and their possible settlement in farming states.

In a context where physical anthropology was so important, assimilation implied physical changes in immigrants' offspring: «even the racial physical characteristics do not survive under the new social and climatic environment of America». *Changes in bodily form of descendants of immigrants* by Franz Boas, an anthropologist whose theories were never based on the concept of race, contains a number of tables illustrating the changes occurring in American born descendants of Bohemian, Jew, Sicilian and Neapolitan immigrants – weight, stature, but also headforms (*Changes*: 500-509). The American environment apparently made some a little less brachycephalic and others a little less dolichocephalic. Such observations, adequately documented, would undermine racial fixity.

Assimilation, however, could be achieved only in certain conditions: immigrants must be healthy, literate, skilled labourers, with a family and a spotless record. Those who did not fit these criteria should be sent back. In particular, surveys and data collected showed the rather problematic situation of immigration from Southern Italy (and from Liguria).

Migration policy, scientific ideology and prejudice

What were the consequences of such a description of hundreds of thousands of Southern Italian on migration policies? What was the impact on the public opinion of "natives" (that is American-borns) and "older" immigrants?

The Emergency Immigration Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924 introduced quotas in a free immigration system – a restriction policy.

However, our concern here is: to what extent did this «statistically obtained situation» contribute to the "Us vs. Them" polarization, to racial stereotyping and prejudice? Could the ambiguous absence of judgement in a survey whose scientific grounds were doubted by the same authors, the scientific ideology of racial classification, have turned into social ideology?

Those who collected data and wrote the *Reports* were not a homogeneous group. A cultural anthropologist like Boas must have introduced elements of historical and environmental

analysis into the general race perspective: significantly, Boas specified in his *Report* he had chosen the word *type* but the Commission changed it into *race*. This, however, does not alter the perspective. If the new immigrants from Eastern Europe (Hebrews were the "problem") e from Southern Europe (here the "problem" were Southern Italians) were incapable of proper assimilation and could not become *US* (American and "us") they had to be barred. If not, they would continue to be "them", a threat to the living conditions of the "natives" (i.e. the descendants of 17th – 18th century settlers, not "native Americans"). The only alternative was to adopt inclusive and support policies as suggested by Leslie Hayford, the author of the *Report* on *Immigration and crime*, who, as secretary of the North American League for Immigrants in Boston, promoted public schools for immigrants' children to encourage assimilation.

Despite these oscillations, the contrast "Us vs. them" in the *Reports* generally means that certain *races* have traits which the writers deemed incompatible with the American way of living to the extent of compromising proper assimilation. So it can justify discriminatory policies, not only, but increase a discriminatory ideology, racist in Van Dijk's sense, what we can find in the Dillingham Commission and in the contemporary public debates.

A similar approach, albeit without any scientific pretence, can still be found in day-to-day discourse, as well as in the political discourse of those who believe in the superiority, identity and non-equality of US.

How can we react positively? How can we deconstruct the divisive polarization and discrimination? Is it enough to use positive metaphors in order to find the "warmth" Susan Fiske hoped for?

May be something else is required – non-discriminatory ideologies, i.e. systems of thoughts and social practices. Perhaps we should not remove differences, but stop classifying them as values or axiologies. As Baroncelli said in his *Il razzismo è una gaffe* (Racism is a blunder).

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