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An Italian Commemoration of Jules Bemporad

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Jules was a dear friend of mine, and a stimulating intellectual partner. In this short commemoration I shall not attempt to speak of all his many achievements, but shall limit myself to some personal recollections. I shall mention two of his scientific contributions with which I was particularly involved.

I first met Jules in New York City in 1963, nearly fifty years ago. I went there as Clinical Fellow of New York Medical College, to study with Silvano Arieti, who was then Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at the College – a position which Jules himself would later occupy. Together with my wife, I attended all the lectures of the first-year residency course, as well as many other lectures, and Jules was one of the first-year residents. When we first arrived, we stayed at the Hotel Paris in the Bronx. Then we met Jules, who was very friendly, and suggested that we move to a residential hotel, the Greystone – now no longer existing – on Broadway and 91st Street, where his parents were also staying. This proved to be a very helpful suggestion. From there, every morning we would take a very convenient cross-town bus on 96th Street to the Metropolitan Hospital, where the lectures took place. Jules showed his brilliant intellect in his comments at the lectures, the case conferences and the Journal Club, conducted by Arieti. Like his older cousin, Arieti, when Jules used to speak to us in Italian, he would display his beautiful Tuscan accent, which he had retained from his country of origin.

After we returned to Italy, I kept up a correspondence with Jules for many years, until shortly before his death this year. I cooperated in making him come to Milan in June 1980, with a Fulbright grant, as Visiting Professor in the Department of Psychiatry where I had studied. On June 17 of that year I arranged for him to give a talk on “Depression in the course of development”. After he published *Severe and Mild Depression*, his joint book with Arieti (Arieti & Bemporad, 1978), my wife and I translated it into Italian. In this book, Silvano and Jules alternated chapters. In my opinion, among his many valuable contributions to this book, an important one is the second part of Chapter 16, where Jules compares anthropological data on two cultures, the Eskimos and the Hutterites. The Eskimos “believed in total sharing and equality” (p. 390). “The Eskimo baby was welcomed into the tribe as the return of a departed loved one. He was satisfied in every way, even being nursed on demand until four years of age” (ibid.). The Hutterites, on the contrary, are “a highly puritanical and duty-oriented community which has been found to have an extremely high rate of depressive disorders” (p. 391). Families have



ten to twelve children. Jules suggests that the different incidence of depression in these two cultures is due to their different socio-economic basis, with the resulting differences in child-rearing patterns, and that the Eskimo pattern is more attuned to our inborn needs.

In 1980 he recommended I should read *Humankind*, by Peter Farb. I found this a very useful book, which called my attention to the importance of the agricultural revolution in our history.

When Jules was Editor of the Journal of the Academy, from 1992 to 2001, I published some papers of mine in the Journal. In 1998 I was Guest Editor of a Special Section of the Journal on “Contemporary Psychoanalysis in Italy”, to which various members of OPIFER contributed. In 1999 a Special Section on Arieti appeared, with contributions from both of us. In 2001 I was struck by a paper on “The complexity of evil”, which Jules published on the Journal (Bemporad, 2001). In this paper he reviews various studies of large-scale violence, ranging from Goldhagen’s discussion of anti-Semitism in Germany to Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking*. Jules finally uses Milgram’s famous experiment as a paradigm unifying these various examples. In Milgram’s study, as many will recall, experimental subjects were instructed to apply what they thought were painful stimuli to others, and to increase the stimuli, notwithstanding the simulation of pain on the part of the alleged victims. Jules believes that two main factors characterize the behavior of the subjects: (1) the dehumanization of the other, and (2) obedience to authority (Bemporad, 2001, p. 169). This paper stimulated me to write a paper of my own on violence, which was published three years later, also on the Journal of the Academy (which by this time had become the Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry) (Bacciagaluppi, 2004).

Finally, since 1999, Jules cooperated with Joan Tolchin in organizing the yearly Joint Meetings between the Academy and OPIFER. This was for him a way of maintaining a link between his adoptive country and his country of origin. It is sad that he is not with us today, for the Thirteenth of these meetings, to which he contributed so much.

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