

SUMMARIES

L. BOVONE, *At the centre of post-modern culture: the new cultural intermediaries.*

It seems useful to call contemporary culture postmodern because it marks the end of absolute certainties of the modern world — such as the myth of technological economic progress, the faith in the ability of everyone to agree on a rational social project and the faith in the need to organise life and society around work — and the beginning of a kind of cultural syncretism which has neither centre nor certainties, but which is tolerant even of the obsolete elements from the past which may be at loggerheads with one another. Bombarded by an excess of information and incapable of arriving at any kind of consensus, contemporary culture lives with ambivalence, setting up for itself a provisional rationality, engaging in a process of self-reflexion through which it continually alters itself, pushes itself to a crisis point and then recuperates itself. On an individual level, this translates into the perception of a multiplicity of different available choices which lack any guiding principle, a situation which could lead either to stasis or to hyperactivity, but which in any case favours ongoing reflexivity. The new cultural intermediaries are professionals in the field of communications, intellectuals involved in popularising, artists who create images for mass culture, and the purveyors of good taste linked to the logic of elite culture and the logic of the market, to conservation and innovation. They thrive in the ambivalence of postmodern culture and nurture the means of communication, which in turn give breadth and power to the cultural elaborators of the intermediaries themselves. They are the greatest experts of a complex system, the people responsible for large fragments of social reflexivity, and on them largely depends whether and to what extent the surplus of communication can become a vehicle for confrontation and emancipation rather than the instrument for levelling and self-exclusion.

I. VACCARINI, *Towards an existentialistic critique of postmodernism.*

The existentialist philosophy developed during the '20s and the '30s — which reaches its topic point in Heidegger's *Time and Being* — is able to furnish an analytical device suitable for a critique of postmodernism. In particular, from this point of view, it is possible to denounce the closure in the limited horizon of everyday life which constitutes the core aspect of a postmodernist view of the world.

E.M. TACCHI, *Educational systems and complex environments: towards an ecological perspective.*

Moving from a case-study in public secondary school, the author analyzes the main characteristics of educational institutions in Italy. First of all, the link between the educational system and its environment is assumed as the most meaningful variable, to understand the organizational culture and the politics of personnel management. In consequence of this statement, the performances of educational systems are valued in terms of efficiency and effectiveness: in the first case, the internal processes of the system are emphasized; in the second case, the stress is placed on the ultimate environmental goals attained by the system. A reasonable conclusion is that school managers careers should be reformed, in order to master the skills in planning and programme the development of new educational goals.



A. CAFORIO, *The collective return of the dead: some hypothesis.*

In this article the Author analyzes some hypothesis concerning the collective return of the dead. Moving from the contribution of eminent anthropologists such as Tylor and Frazer, results from the most recent empirical research are discussed. The mythical issue of the apparition of the dead is linked to its ancient historical origins. Moreover, the way in which this believe is transformed by the reinterpretation within the catholic religion is discussed. At last, the popular tradition of the return of the dead is taken into consideration.

A. MASSA, *Towards the Euro-manager.*

European managers in the '90s are coping with a business environment getting more and more involved in multicultural issues. Nowadays in Europe there are two main trends, facing each other a trend towards integration, visible at the UE institutional level but also in the uniformation of Europeans' way of life, and a trend towards the maintainance of national peculiarities, both in law systems and in business practices. The basic assumption of the article is that, according to many authors, both in the sociological and managerial field, a new model of manager able to face the European multicultural challenge, the «European manager», is gradually emerging as a distinct one from the American and Japanese models. The article focuses on the education, the skills, the career-pattern and of Euro-managers. They are seen as a special kind of international managers, working for transnational organizations and are expected to be open-wide minded, able to understand different cultures and to speak many languages, and to be multicultural groups leaders.