

Editors' Introduction

The chronicles of the Covid 19 days and forced lockdown, have often shown us the many difficulties that schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and prisons encountered when they found themselves managing the pandemic emergency with the normality of existence, but the difficulties particularly came to the surface when the ordinary situation was already compromised by atavistic problems. This was particularly true for prison institutions, which news stories at the time of the first wave of covid denounced as being on the verge of collapse, with inmates in revolt. This was because of the complexity of managing vigilance and control along with the increasingly pressing requests on behalf of inmates, for more information and contacts with the outside world; requests which the pandemic not only slowed down in fulfilling but made even more extreme and insistent¹. Although the stories were aimed at recording situations that were out of control, they nevertheless had the task of focusing attention on and making people aware of problems that have been awaiting a resolution or improvement for too long. Let us take for example overcrowding, if it is true that over ten thousand inmates beyond regulatory capacity are estimated to be held in Italian prisons, despite amnesty and pardon. In addition to overcrowding, there is the shortage of personnel in prison officers

¹ <https://www.poliziapenitenziaria.it/rivolta-dei-detenuiti-anche-a-rebibbia-situazione-fuori-controllo/> (last accessed 23/7/2022).

and other roles of prison administration, for example socio-pedagogical staff, administrative roles and all other profiles of prison administration, such as medical and paramedical personnel. If stressors have always characterized the prison condition, they cannot be but amplified by the condition of overcrowding and lack of facilities found in many prisons. In addition to this alarming data, there is also the growing number of suicides: in fact, a recorded average of four to five suicides per month take place in prisons in Italy, without taking into account those thwarted by prison officers when they manage to intervene in time.

In recent years the attention of public opinion and politics to the complex world of prison has certainly increased, also following events such as the obsolescence of judicial psychiatric hospitals, or the recent strong stances taken, also on the part of supervisory magistrates, on the need for a reform of the penitentiary system. However, the dynamics of the organisational world of our penitentiary institutes remains far from the understanding of those outside it. Whoever has had the opportunity to work, teach or otherwise closely observe the world of prisoners and their custodians has enough understanding of the profound meaning of the diversity between those who live in confinement and those outside; the development of a progressive distance in lexis and gaze, the expansion of time and the possibility of encountering oneself at a level of depth (sometimes even frightening) that is not possible outside.

What emerges is a situation in which so many "existences on the margins" find themselves in: on the "margins" of a dignified life, of an existence unable to "flourish" after the greatest failures; this nevertheless does not mean that there is no need to be placed in the condition of being able to do so (even in extreme situations such as pandemic and prison conditions), which is what is hoped for through a philosophical, educational and didactic reflection attentive to analyz-

ing the conditions of the inmate, his borderline situation (see Jaspers 1972) marked by being held in check by the sense of guilt, freedom and suffering. Indeed, it is precisely the sense of failure that is often reported back to us by news stories (which tell us of those who return to a life of crime, of those who commit suicide, of those who cannot detoxify from alcohol and drugs...), or of clamorous cases such as of the Italian Stefano Cucchi – who had the misfortune of becoming the victim of a system of justice which didn't work, one which erased the most basic human rights, such as the right to life. Through studies, projects and daily commitment, such cases drive philosophers, pedagogues, socio-educational workers to seek proposals for a continuity between city and prison institutions; for courses of action capable of allowing a possible pathway between justice and reconciliation, punishment and rehabilitation, detention and rebuilding a life. In fact, it is necessary to realize that the violence that runs through our cities cannot be resolved through isolated courses of action. Any violence inflicted on others leaves such deep wounds in the heart of the community that it will end up undermining the relationship with those who represent and protect us if not taken charge of. For this reason it is, yes, necessary to punish but even more so, to look after and heal a situation (see Mortari 2021). After all, our Constitution states and reminds us that "penalties cannot consist of treatment contrary to a sense of humanity and must aim to rehabilitate the prisoner" (art. 27).

This is why what is important, not only in the punitive but above all rehabilitative sense, is a broader reflection on criminal justice and the many re-educational paths that can be opened. Reflection on justice can become the crucial point for opening new perspectives capable of building the relationships that the guilt/crime has interrupted. In fact, it is not just a matter of putting the reintegration of the criminal at the center, but of

taking justice back to a new point of reference, which is not made up of solely the law, solely the victim or solely the culprit, but is a new balance between these three realities; only this can allow for the rebuilding of bonds and the rehabilitation of the aptitude towards relations in each individual (Alici 2012: 13);

that is, the ability to weave healthy relationships in the family, school, work, community setting.

By succeeding, for example, in combining the efforts of school and prison, a virtuous educational community can be created. In prison, schools and the world of research, creating community means carrying out, community practices in order to overcome the temptation to give in to the violence of the office, a literal translation of bureaucracy, or namely a false neutrality which often corresponds to sterility- to be avoided if it does not seek to meet the needs of people in all social contexts, even the most disadvantaged.

In fact, it is of no coincidence that viewing the film "Ariaferma" by director Leonardo Di Costanzo inspired we three editors to create the issue Existences on the Margins: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Imprisonment, and guided us in the realization of this editorial project.

Poetic and captivating, built with attention to detail, the film manages to accompany us – with extreme delicacy – within the walls of a penitentiary, like one of the many found on national territory; a prison where the drama of the flow of life in jail is shared among all its inhabitants. Ariaferma recounts the relationship between a prisoner and a prison officer: both subjects incarcerated, albeit with different roles, but with experiences that are sometimes not very distant.

In the film, Ariaferma is understood to be a lack of vital space, interchange, flow of vital energy, possibilities. The film tells the story of tense expressions, repetitive gestures which keep the rhythm of detention inside the jail; and then something happens due to internal organizational problems and every visit, and every activity is canceled, further reducing vital spaces, exchanges – the air precisely. One evening, due to a breakdown in the electric system, the power in the entire prison goes out and inmates and prison guards are forced to dine at the same table with the little daylight left – a moment of normality, of closeness, of fallen barriers, of beauty.

The relationship between the captain Gaetano Gargiulo played by Tony Servillo and the prison camorrista Carmine Lagioia played by Silvio Orlando, allows us to deeply reflect on denied relationships and above all on distant, asymmetrical roles, found particularly in the world of gated institutions. The opportunity to possibly overturn established patterns arises when they are forced to temporarily stay in a section of the prison or eat together, while the power is out: the prison then goes from "Ariaferma" (still air) to becoming a space for life and relationships.

In watching the film, what emerges is the theme of the relationship woven by the protagonist and the captain of the prison officers, which develops gradually over time. For contingent reasons they weave a relationship that makes the difference, aids, and structures a bond which guides, accompanies and transforms the individual.

This collection of essays arises from the need to question the meaning of detention and how the microcosm represented by prisons can become the place to experiment with new educational paths in order to bring lives back to health, reconnecting them to those of others; and to ensure that the many walls built to separate and to control (Foucault 1975) become bridges across which to encounter existences through virtuous educational and participatory projects.

As a result, we are able to offer food for thought which can be useful in thinking about and implementing what we define as the community of the after, in which the idea of prison is rethought in continuity with the outside world, through moral, normative and descriptive philosophy; the contributions of social sciences; implementation of educational practices and narrative writing.

*If self-structure is intrinsically narrative, the possibility of retelling one's own story not only contributes to confirming one's identity but also to repositioning the individual in the relationship with the self, with social norms. There are limits of the possibility of a retelling of one's self in a condition of confinement (Stefania Achella, Amelia Cozzolino). We would like to shed light on some of the issues surrounding the debate on parenting in prison, in light of theoretical reflections and face-to-face meetings with detained mothers and fathers who are rethinking their experience. (Alessandra Augelli). Starting from the vision of the film *Ariaferma* directed by Leonardo Di Costanzo, we can examine the theme of the educational relationship in prison, particularly in high security areas (Caterina Benelli). The educational experience in prison offers various and interesting food for thought concerning the dynamics between teachers' and students' and new forms of teaching (Giovanni Cogliandro). Faced with the paradox of a punishment that intervenes by inflicting suffering, Paul Ricoeur not only reflects on justice and its failures, but also on the possibilities of a remedial justice and the utopia of non-violent justice (Giovanna Costanzo). In adolescence, a prison sentence is an extreme measure which aims precisely to attempt to give an educational and life-changing response, through cultural, artistic and scholastic activities. Contact with the world of education allows adolescents in prison to enter into dynamics with significant adults and experience valuable teaching-learning processes (Maria Rita Mancaniello). In his novel *Il carcere* (En. trans., *The Political Prisoner*) Pavese traces an*

existential phenomenology of life in prison, which brings to light some philosophical categories that mark living in freedom and in prison (Enrico Palma). Starting from observation, analysis and ethnographic research conducted during fieldwork in Barcelona Pozzo di Gotto Prison (ME, Italy), we can offer a reflection on the concept of prisoner and prison, which contracts and expands within different interpretative frameworks (Roberta Pandolfino). Analyzing the current living conditions of inmates held in Italian penitentiaries allows us to highlight the main issues and struggles of both convicts and those who work in correctional institutions; it also deals with the issue concerning the requests of assisted suicide in prison (Francesca Piergentili) And finally in the Focusing section: the phenomenological and anthropological reflection on the situation of marginalization and suffering at the High-security Section of the Rebibbia Prison in Rome (Emilio Baccharini).

It is difficult to give credit to the vast number of essays in just a few words, but if there exists a common denominator, it is the urgency to raise awareness on the situation of our prisons, in the conviction that the degree of civilization of a country is not understood by the majesty of its buildings, but by the conditions of its own prisons.

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