The Use of Emotions in Italian Politics between the Creation of Leadership and the Construction of Consensus[1]

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Abstract: In the last twenty years, Italian politicians have played *with* their own and *on* the electors' emotions, using them as tools of communication and persuasion. This essay analyses the social acting of some Italian political actors, who must deal with the public management and manifestation of their emotions. I argue that there is a tendency on their part to use emotions strategically in their public performances, with the aim of acquiring, or maintaining, consensus. Through a sociological analysis of the subjects' publically manifested behaviours, I will focus on both the forms of leadership emerging from the use of "micropolitics emotional tactics" and the forms of construction of consensus put into practice.

Keywords: Sociology, Emotions, Social construction of consensus, Matteo Renzi, Beppe Grillo.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ever since antiquity emotions and politics have intertwined, albeit with significant differences with regards to the degree of publicizing of individual emotions, varying according to historical epochs and social contexts (Nussbaum 2013; Ansart, Haroche 2007; Koziak 2000).

It is, however, possible to affirm that politics and politicians are usually "playing" *with* and *on* the electors' emotions, often using them as tools of power, communication and persuasion of citizens: as a kind of seductive language (Heaney, Flam 2015).

I would like my analysis to focus on the social acting performed by political actors, that is to say those contemporary professional politicians who are forced – despite themselves? – to deal with the management and public manifestation of their emotions (or those they want to make appear as such) and therefore with the symbolic dimension of their use in daily life practices (Demertzis 2013; Ahmed 2004; Braud 1996; Balandier 1994;). As such, knowing how to handle one's emotions, using those most appropriate to one's circumstances, becomes crucial in order to increase one's positive effect on the electorate: it is a decisive factor in achieving victory in the next electoral competition.

My proposition/argument is that professional politicians tend to strategically use their emotions in their public performances with the aim of gathering consensus or maintain the consensus they have already achieved. There are emotional tactics, and consequently a rational project which establishes and dictates which emotions will be transmitted in a specific social situation and towards specific subjects to interact with. Often, such emotional tactics are put in practice by the politician's staff, who carefully study the moves and the parts to be performed by the subject on the stage, as I could recently observe in the course of fieldwork developed by a participant observation (Iaccarino, Cerulo 2011). Other times, it is the politician himself who, considering himself capable of emotional management, improvises on the scene showing himself as sad, angry or happy according to the circumstances.

Professional politicians seem to display an integrated use of emotions and rationality in their behaviours.

Their social acting is therefore characterized by a marked ambivalence: on the one hand one would seem to be before subjects who are not afraid to show emotions in public and to share with the citizens what they intimately feel, as if they were not worried about unveiling what the professional politician's mask can conceal. On the other hand, however, it is possible to discover how often, behind such warm intimacies, that is to say seemingly rather emotional behaviours, subtle tactics for the acquisition of consensus are unveiled. I shall review some recent examples in support of my argument, focusing on the contemporary Italian context.

2. MIRROR EMOTIONS

If positive emotions are experienced and shown in a public speech, the majority of the audience will feel empathy towards the speaker. The telling of private vice to the public will also generate such empathy, as the spectators' understanding – and their awareness that none of them can throw the first stone - will follow an initial sense of wonder. Such examples belong, nonetheless, to the 'therapeutic politics' which sees the subject in power sharing his private vices in public and asking the audience for help (Furedi 2013). This is the first of the five 'micropolitics tactics' (Clark 1990), five modalities through which emotions, far from being purely natural and uncontrolled, can be built on the basis of the social situation and used in an intelligent manner, functional to the politician. Summing them up, we discover that: 1) expressing negative emotions and withholding positive ones has the aim of inducing fear or shame in the interlocutor, putting him at a disadvantage; 2) viceversa, by expressing positive emotions and withholding the negative ones, the other subjects will be inspired to express feelings of sympathy and solidarity; 3) managing to control the other's emotional level (for example by making him lose his temper through a cold and detached behaviour) has the result of making one feel displaced and uncomfortable; 4) by provoking in the interlocutor feelings of loyalty and a sense of obligation, there will be a non-conflictual relationship on the latter's part (another way of defining the *do ut des* relationship which characterizes Italian politics); 5) by expressing positive emotions which signal one's superiority and the other's inferiority, an attitude of condescending superiority towards the other can be adopted.

Berlusconi's rallies held in 2010 calling his party "the party of love", only concerned with the nation and the citizens' welfare, consequently labelling his rivals as those who generate envy, hostility, unease, show Berlusconi's mastery of this last tactic.

The others, his political rivals, are accused of being those painting a dark social reality, always talking about problems and never about "beautiful things". In other words, they do not worry about "lifting the mood" of the citizens. Berlusconi, on the other hand, represents the party that thinks about love and its spreading, that does not spare jokes in public, that makes a show of its high society life – trips, villas, parties, holidays, clothing – in order to convince the citizens that the state of things in Italy is not as worrying as "certain parties" depict it (Boni 2008).

Such attitude is amplified by the attack against Berlusconi in Milan in December 2009 when, while greeting the crowd, his face is hit by a blunt object. The reaction to this incident is to highlight positive emotions, both in terms of public poses and speeches, with the aim of diffusing a somehow distorted image of the social reality. In the declarations released in the following days, as in the majority of public appearances in the following months, phrases such as "love always wins over hate" are repeated with an almost cathartic-hypnotic attitude, even leading to the publication of a book by Berlusconi himself, titled *Love always wins over envy and hate.* As if to say: no matter how much the others (political exponents) talk about crisis, unemployment, fiscal pressure, everything will resolve in the best of ways and voting for the party of love means having a positive and optimistic vision which can only be good, both on an individual and collective level. This is supported by the fact that, even when facing a similar event, Berlusconi continues to address his adversaries with respect and not encouraging hate as the rival parties had previously done with him (Portanova 2010; Luzi 2012).

Seemingly peaceful behaviours however conceal subtle tactics. In more strictly sociological terms, Berlusconi employs two of the micropolitics emotional tactics highlighted by Clark: 1) by manifesting or channelling positive emotions he encourages the same emotions to emerge in the public listening to him, both live and through the media ("mirror" function of emotions (Sinigaglia, Pizzolatti: 2006)), thus earning estimators-electors; 2) consequently, by branding his rivals as the ones who are not very keen on smiling, enjoyment and thus conveyors of negative emotions as sadness, grudges, melancholy, as well as hatred towards him, he addresses them with an attitude of condescending superiority.

With Berlusconi, we witness a tactical management of his own emotions with the aim of obtaining political and social consensus. A smile, laughter, a joke and a pat on the back as social placebo and potion to be dispensed to the listeners. Furthermore, as it has been highlighted, by manifesting such emotional behaviours, Berlusconi marks the passage from politics-performance to the politicization of performance, from media as object to media as subject through which power is channeled and manifested (Susca 2006; Mancini 2010).

The image of the politician as histrion, halfway between a magician and a shaman, who has the gift of thrilling the citizens, listeners and audience and the ability to drag them into the realization of social rites, appears. Through the use of studied proxemics and a rational management of the emotions to be shown, manifested and shared according to the social context and the goal, the politician discovers the art of stage-like emotional persuasion (Apter 2006). It is an improvisation on a theme. The aim is to tell the citizens what they expect to hear. It is building a setting that is adequate to the circumstances in which the speech takes place. It creates empathy towards the listeners which could prove crucial in the construction of consensus.

3.   THE FAST REACH OF EMOTIONS: RENZI'S TURN

In Europe, Berlusconi's successor in terms of presence and emotional involvement is another Italian, Matteo Renzi. If there is someone who seems to have learnt the rules of emotional management and communication by heart in order to construct consensus, that is the ex-mayor of Florence, who became at thirty-nine years old, the Italian republic's youngest Prime Minister.

Renzi represents the bringing up to date of the decisive role of emotions both in face to face and mediated politics. If only the 2013-2014 years are considered, it is possible to highlight a series of behaviours and actions by Renzi (and probably thought and agreed upon together with the members of his staff) which proved successful in the acquisition of consensus. Let us analyse some examples.

He appears on the covers of glossy magazines such as *Vanity Fair* – here he is portrayed with half-closed eyes, a conciliatory expression, white shirt with folded sleeves, intent on tying his tie and, in the lower part of the cover, the title "Italy's Rescuer" – or *Chi* – in which he imitates Fonzie, from the legendary American TV series *Happy Days*, wearing a leather jacket.

He accepts the invitation to participate as a guest on TV shows which, up until that moment, are considered a taboo by politicians, for their superficiality. I am referring to the Italian talent show *Amici*, presented by Maria De Filippi and broadcasted on *Canale 5*, in which talented young singers and dancers compete against one another. Renzi, still as the mayor of Florence, accepts the invitation and appears on TV wearing the same black leather jacket which he wears on the cover of *Chi*, a black t-shirt and casual trousers. He greets an audience giving him a standing ovation, repeatedly wishes the competitors good luck and is not sparing with the thumbs up sign of approval towards the audience. He speaks for a few minutes, enough to tolerate a politician's speech within a talent show.

But in this case we are in the presence of a politician *sui generis*. In those few minutes, Renzi:

1) manifests his evident ability for emotional communication. He talks about hope and immediately states that "politics" is a "bad" word, but it can help, when done with one's heart to realize the dreams of a nation and reward talent.

2) He rebukes the colleagues who criticized him for choosing to take part in the show, defining them "those not very happy politicians" and asking the audience to "forgive the politicians who polemicize on talent shows but to forgive not those who want to erase talent," by endorsing recommendation.

3) He does not hide the difficult conditions Italy finds itself in and asks for help. He asks the audience to believe in the "Renzian" generation which should herald a new way of making politics, as well as a *pax construens* between citizens and representatives in order to start again and build something new.

In five minutes, Renzi summarises Bill "Bubba" Clinton's communicative abilities and Berlusconi's transmission of positive emotions, without forgetting how to move on the stage as an experienced actor.

If we specifically analyze such messages, we notice the passage from show to character, from word to image. And, above all, the obligation to transmit positive emotions

First consideration: Renzi appears on the stage of a talent show in a sporty, casual outfit. Result: the audience of *Amici recognizes* him. He may start thinking he is one of them, who is dressed like them, who uses common and appreciated gestures (winks, thumb ups, kisses and hugs with the show presenter – the latter rather expected in that context, as shown by all the other guests and the eliminated contestants). In other words, the politician detaches himself from the classic image of the politician – he gets rid of the jacket-and-tie, or even pullover, outfit – and uses a quick, straightforward and young communicative approach towards young people.

Second consideration: Renzi speaks little but he says much. In any case, his statements move the audience. A politician who only speaks for only five minutes is an already striking event, but the point is that he does it using a language not in the least technical, immediately stating that politics, at least as it appears today, is bad and that in order to do it well he needs everybody's help. The rules of the politician-citizen communication are turned upside down: the politician is not the one dictating in a univocal relationship of communication and discursive power; instead, the audience is asked to give the politician a hand. A sort of 2.0 politics not even Berluscon had yet thought about. Furthermore, staying on the stage for a few minutes in order to talk, Renzi recognizes his role as guest and shows respect towards the purpose of the show, not stealing the space of the young contestants.

Third consideration: Renzi re-proposes the Berlusconian attitude in the manifestation of positive emotions. He states that the "other politicians," those who criticized his participation to a TV show, are "not very happy." Again, Berlusconi's example: manifestation of positive emotions and highlighting of the negative ones which characterize his colleagues-rivals. Inevitably, also following Clark's scheme, this translates into an invitation to the audience to not forgive (that is to say, not to vote) those politicians who ignore talent endorsing recommendation. This could translate into an attitude of condescending superiority towards the "other politicians," which however inspires security and strength towards the majority of the audience.

Language, posture, gesture. These three elements, in Renzi, continuously express emotions. They are usually positive. Aware of being recognized (and in a way also awaited for) by the citizens, he takes care to appear affected by emotions, to sentimentally participate to the issues and problems which are submitted to him, to share and to feel together with the citizen. And this happens because, in an increasingly emotionally addicted society (Turnaturi 2007), he must respond adequately to the emotive demand of the public opinion. He cannot refrain from showing himself as human, empathetic and propositively participating.

Not only the politician has to show his emotions. He must also deal with those that the others – citizens, electors, colleagues – direct to him. And react to them.

Considering the example provided by Renzi, it is possible to reflect on the politicians' relationship with videointerviews or TV presence. To release a statement on a current issue is crucial for building the reputational capital which is fundamental for the politician's political survival (regardless of his knowledge of the specific issue: there will always be a collaborator who will update him via text message or by handing him a tablet displaying a website ready with information on the issue). This is because videopolitics influence the construction of consensus[2]: to be filmed (or to film oneself) while one is releasing a statement (TV channels, youtube, facebook, instagram, other social networks) means to enter the spectator's (a probable elector) subconscious. It means to deviate the spectator's attention to the image rather than the words, to gestures rather than the content of the speech, to the emotions that that particular picture or video convey.

I defined such use of media as a 'political-mediatic dramatization of emotions' (Cerulo 2009). There is always a scene and behind-the-scenes that the politician and his staff build in order to offer the spectator images and performances meant to appear realistic, although they are often the result of a skilled scenic and emotional management, as I had the chance to observe in the course of ethnographic researches (Cerulo 2012; Iaccarino, Cerulo 2011).

On this topic, the analysis carried out by Meyrowitz proves extremely reliable:

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[2] «Political images acquire an overwhelming force and a diffused power which cannot be found in any past society. Images become part of the everyday; this means that they are made banal and continuously transmitted, which implies a frequent renewal or the creation of novelty effects» (Balandier 1985: 106).

There is an inherent "vanishing truth" paradox in the use of television to give us a close-up view of our politicians ... Whenwe observe them as they respond to spontaneous interviews or as they grow weary from a day of work or campaigning, we do not simply learn more about them. By searching behind the fronts of performers, wealso change the roles that can be performed and perceived – as well as the images that high status performers have of themselves ...The strength and clarity of a particular onstage, or "front region," performance depend on isolating the audience from the backstage, or "back region." Rehearsals, relaxations, and behaviours from other onstage roles must be kept out of the limelight. The need to shield backstage behaviours is especially acute in the performance of roles that rely heavily on mystification and on an aura of greatness – roles such as those performed by national political leaders. (1985: 168; 270)

The aura of greatness Meyrowitz talks about is evident in the political communication carried out by Renzi's team. And Matteo, forced to face, and instructed on, the dynamics of media logic seems to feel comfortable when cameras and photographers are present. Berlusconi and Renzi are stage creatures: they perform their role by heart, show their passion for the topic under discussion, they know the rooms in which they are performing in detail, they wear the mask that their position provides them with easily and naturally, they adapt – as novel Zeligs – to the contexts they find themselves in. They move from the stage to the backstage with studied lightheartedness, the result of an accurate work which, as personally observed (Cerulo 2012), is carefully curated by the politician'a staff members (for example: spin doctor, emotional coach etc.)

The image channelled towards the audience is taken under great consideration. The themes are less important than the emotional posture towards the audience. After all, as previously seen, tears and a smile are much more immediate than the best project explained in political jargon. Emotion is direct, and it is always faster reaching than reflection.

The subject, therefore, does not manifest his emotions with the intention of merely sharing them or to respond to the public's emotivity and create empathy with his electors, rather to keep the elector himself under control.

I believe it is possible to argue that through such micropolitical emotional tactics he is using emotion in three ways:

1) a tool for power and maintenance-increase of status;

2) a way to draw those electors who, tired of oppressive speeches, unkept promises and constant scandals, projects steeped in technicality, have increasingly less time to spend in the evaluation of the candidate and will to stay and listen to his speeches in political jargon;

3) a vehicle to affect and show himself in social circles many other colleagues would not dare to step in (*Vanity Fair* readers, the *Amici* audience).

But what happens when the politician decides to play with negative emotions in order to build consensus? When he relates to the citizens-electors by employing the latter as the battering ram to open a breach into their opinions?

4.   THE FEAR MOVEMENT: THE CASE OF GRILLO

Following Clark's thesis, it can be argued that even displaying a negative emotion - fear, for example - it will be possible to instill that same emotion in many of the listeners. This is the mirror emotions discourse. With fear, the major negative emotion, however, the discourse becomes more articulate, as fear is hardly completely manageable. That is to say that, if I will start transmitting forms of fear with regards to social life, daily life, the present and the future, emphasizing the world crisis, the lack of employment, theft and corruption and negative behaviours, I could draw an end-of-the-world picture, appearing as the bearer of an anarchical vision and instill in the listener the desire to escape rather than to be close to my party or my political vision.

This is what happened in Italy to the Grillo phenomenon and the 5 Star Movement founded by him. I am referring to the May 2014 European elections when the movement had an unpleasant awakening going from likely being the hypothetical first Italian party to occupying the second position, at a sidereal distance from the Democratic Party (nearly a difference of 20 percentage points). How could this gap in terms of vote come about, if until a few days before the elections the surveys had reported minimum distances between the two parties?

There are two explanations, in my opinion. The first one is methodologic: the survey is a *science sans savant* as demonstrated by Pierre Bourdieu, an inaccurate science, because too many are the uncontrollable variables in its

anticipatory mechanism (first of all the inadequate sampling with regards to the electors actually present at the urns, as well as the fact that it takes a snapshot of an intention of vote at a certain time, and not the actually given one (Bourdieu 1972, 1987). For a few years until now, Bourdieu's predictions of the unreliability of the survey technique have proved true. It would therefore be more appropriate to put this research technique aside or consider it with great caution. However, I shall not linger over this point here.

The second explanation is theoretical and it concerns the role played by fear in social interaction. In order to articulate it, I shall compare Beppe Grillo's last two electoral campaigns.

The Grillo phenomenon – a comedian-actor who becomes a blogger as well as the founder and frontman of a political movement – shows us with brutality the appearance of emotions in the political field. Both his blog posts and the rallies held in public – it should be noticed that Grillo does not give TV interviews with a very few exceptions, as in the case of his participation to the show *Porta a Porta* some days before the vote for the European elections – are characterized by a rather marked emotional language. Shouts, insults, swearing and not particularly elegant gestures, accompanied by an almost absolute criticism, often contemptuous of the other political adversaries, identified as the old ruling class which betrayed the electors' trust. Many analysts of the Grillo phenomenon spoke of *qualunquismo* (indifference and mistrust towards politics and the political system). Surely, by using increasing negative emotions, from the disappointment towards the representatives to the rage for their often illegal behaviours, Grillo has swollen the waves of antipolitcs, creating a group or movement in which millions of Italians, in the political elections of 2013, have recognized themselves. This way the 5 Star Movement became the third party in Italy.

Antipolitics is the set of ideas, actions, projects against the instituted forms of representative parliamentary democracy – centred on mass parties – and politics of interests. In general, we define as antipolitical those citizens disgusted or disappointed by some aspects of politics itself. The criticism that this category of citizens directs towards politics in its entirety is aimed at the arrogance and narrow-mindedness of political parties, politics' autoreferentiality, politics understood as profession, the privileges enjoyed by the members of the political class etc.

In the case of Grillo we can talk about a form of antipolitics from above. Representing himself as an outsider from politics, he is at some advantage in striking the note of anti-party criticism and of political professionalism towards the millions of tired Italian citizens, who are disappointed and no longer willing to accept the state of affairs. In a way, Grillo gave life to the prediction that Carlo Galli made in 2007:

The distance of politics from society implies and actually reveals the risk of its failure on the level of legitimacy: indeed, the lack of democratic transparency – of the power ideology, always visible because it has nothing to hide, and of the always accessible politicians, always available for citizens, always renting Palaces which belong to the people, and therefore always evitable –, the politicians' making a caste of themselves, the locking of the heavy doors which shield them, excluding them from the gaze and control of the profanes, are almost no longer perceived as phenomena with a political meaning. [...] Towards politicians there is no real political rebellion, in the public opinion, in the citizens, there is, instead, the irritation, the rancor, felt towards private citizens who cunningly infiltrated pleasant places, enjoying undeserved privileges. The private use of the public House struggles to find a political answer. It is as if the distance which separates politicians from citizens could hardly be interpreted; as if the non-fulfilment towards democracy of the Palace dwellers could imply, as a punishment, not so much a revolution – and not even a velvet revolution as that of *Mani Pulite* – but a sneer, and the possible sacking for irrelevance and uselessness: undoubtedly two fair causes, but not political; as if what is around the corner were less an explosion than an implosion. The dialectic of closing and opening seems to turn itself off in a disappointed cynicism. The truly impending risk, in other words, is that today's disdain of politicians is resolved in treating them as common rascals: this would imply not so much that it is a caste what is not being taken seriously, but politics itself; and that in the long transition towards a political equilibrium different from that of the First republic, politics itself has gone lost, by now on the verge of succumbing to antipolitics. Having generated in Italians the illusory conviction that politics is irrelevant and that its end should be favourably greeted would then be the most serious responsibility of the current dwellers of the Palace, much more serious than their arrogance. (Galli 2007).

The emotions transmitted by Grillo in the electoral campaign, such as disgust, resentment, aversion, antipathy, forms of repulsion and loathing towards the "old" political representatives, had the effect of catalyzing a considerable number of electors who, sharing (or believing to do so) those emotions, manifested their electoral preference in favour of the

Movement. Electors who have embraced the above highlighted antipolitics and that ended up generalizing, treating many politicians as "common rascals," as foretold by Galli.

I would like to underline the fact that the electors' sharing of the Movement was emotional and not the sharing of a program – here is the strength and the intuition of the Genoese comedian - in the sense that Grillo did not make efforts, in his apparitions on the public stage, to present programs or government projects, to talk about new laws or decrees, as his main target has always been to create what I would define as a certain collective effervescence, a sort of Durkheimian *corrobori* in which the group is fortified, united and amplified through the identification of a common enemy: the political class in power. An old form, sociologically speaking, of power management: by identifying an enemy who is external to the group, the latter will become compact in fighting him.

Personified negative emotions – let us think of the sweating and panting Grillo on the stage – which are transmitted and received by a public of objectively tired citizens, exhausted by years of socio-economical crisis. And so, as an avalanche which becomes bigger as it advances, the negative emotions transmitted and personified by Grillo breach into the minds of millions of Italians. The analysis carried out by Durkheim over a century ago, on the rituals of the Australian tribal populations, results rather relevant and adaptable to the emotional dynamics of Grillo the speaker: the agglomeration which acts as a stimulant of exceptional power. As soon as the individuals gather, from their coming closer a sort of electricity rapidly transporting them to an extraordinary degree of exaltation originates. The initial impulse becomes greater as it reverberates, just as an avalanche becomes bigger as it advances. As passions which are so alive and uncontrolled cannot help but spread out, violent gestures, shouting, deafening sounds of any type, which contribute again to intensifying the state which they manifest, begin to appear. The unrestricted passions are so impetuous that they do not allow anything contain them: one is so far out from the ordinary conditions of life, and with such a sharp awareness of them, as to feel the need to put oneself outside and above ordinary morality (Durkheim 1912).

Within such assizes – face to face and on line, through Grillo's blog – the participants to the assemblies or discussions which take place on the web can fully manifest their emotions, abandon themselves *in toto* to their emotional state, entering a new empathetic relation especially functional to the leader of the Movement.

Such discourse can, however, function for a short time. Transmitting negative emotions is dangerous as it can, in the long run, lead the subjects experiencing them to become tired of them, as they are generators of forms of daily suffering and existential *malaise* (Turner 2011). Defence mechanisms must therefore be employed so that negative emotions do not overflow, turning into violent actions. Rather than repressing them, work should be done to transform them into positive emotions.

This is exactly what Grillo does not do. Continuing with the same behaviour in the twelve months in which the Movement's exponents are, and in a considerable number, the representatives of the Chamber and Senate, it is as if Grillo's path aimed at making his new electors' emotions become gangrenous while they, instead, probably expect a proposal, an action from the government, perhaps an institutionalization of the Movement. It is not so, and there are many occasions in which the 5 Star representatives create a collective effervescence – I am using an euphemism – in the Parliament as well: from showing posters to shouting, to choirs of abuse or scorn towards other colleagues, even occupying the seats of the Chamber.

And yet it seemed that also in the European elections of May 2014 Grillo's strategy could work, judging by the surveys. But the Genoese blogger's mistake was, in my opinion, to force his hand and imprint the speeches and public appearances of the last weeks before the vote with fear. The fear that the crisis may be at its final stage, ready to sweep Italy away, the fear that the European currency may no longer be bearable, the fear that unemployment would submerge young people for good, the fear of environmental pollution and the consequent spreading of cancer. All once again caused and produced by the imprudent management of public affairs on the part of the previous ruling class.

What Grillo is not considering is that

1) the ruling class, or in any case the Parliament representatives have been, for 12 months, many exponents of the Movement;

2) that fear is not to be played with, as it is the major negative emotion causing the subject's estrangement from the interaction he finds himself in.

While the previous year Grillo had presented himself as a novelty for the Parliament, the one who represented and gave voice to the negative emotions perceived by the citizens and could therefore be given trust, twelve months later Grillo created fear in the nearly three millions of Italians who decided to no longer vote for him. And that is not all. Fear turned against him also through another channel: the one employed by his rivals – Renzi and Berlusconi – in convincing the citizens to feel fear and distrust of a politician who, after a year of institutional representation, continues to shout out accusations and insults from a stage or a blog, proposing little in terms of institutional concreteness. The fear transmitted to the citizens by Grillo's rivals is that he is only a destroyer, useful to shake Italy off its sleep and the apathy in which it drowned, but no longer necessary today in order to set in motion and consolidate that process of construction and positive emotional sharing so dear to Renzi. Furthermore, continuing with the method of fervent and shouted assemblies and with the blog posts characterized by a strong aggressiveness, the political rivals of the Movement were at some advantage when accusing Grillo to be a dangerous interpreter of new forms of Fascist action squads or a xenophobic, antieuropeanist attitude.

Grillo then forgot the deep relationship between the power and the status which are held and the emotions which are felt. The sociology of emotions teaches that the social actors interpret subjectively their and the others' positions in relation to the dimensions of power and status: the increase of the latter leads to the manifestation of positive emotions and vice versa (Collins 1990; Kemper 1978, 1990). If we think again of Renzi's words on TV and mentioned earlier – and which, successively, were obviously repeated in other contests and on other stages – it is possible to notice how the Florentine politician, asking the audience for help, gave it importance and the power to influence (or rather, made it believe to have it) and thus generated the creation of positive emotions such as understanding, sympathy, solidarity, participation. On the contrary, by labelling Grillo as the one who continued destroying rather than creating, criticizing without proposing, the other political leaders – Renzi and Berlusconi *in primis* – have in a way deprived Grillo of power and status in the eyes of the citizens, instilling in him an increase of negative emotions which the Genoese blogger in turn transmitted to his audience.

After all, Italian citizens demonstrated to search for, and privilege, a leadership providing security, strength, courage, that is to say a series of positive emotions from which to start and build again after years of difficulty.

Negative emotions and fear in particular – transmitted by Grillo to the citizens and by his political rivals to him – have instead created a boomerang effect towards the Movement which, however resulting the second party in Italy, almost reached a *débâcle* considering the loss of three million electors and a distance of almost 20 percentage points from the Democratic Party.

Probably, if Grillo had tried to start a transformation of negative emotions into positive ones, through the construction of a shared and supported project, the electoral results would have been different. Because the transformation of negative emotions into positive ones implies work on oneself and the surrounding world, and it involves others, creating participation, sharing and ripening of discourses and reasoning.

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