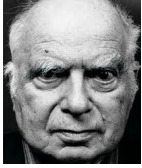


## Ricordo di Gianni Giannotti

Scritto da Norman Birnbaum  
Venerdì 05 Luglio 2013 17:35

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Qualunque testimonianza anche quando "autentica", è relativa, tanto ognuno di noi è complesso, mutevole, ignaro a se stesso - tuttavia vi sono gradi diversi di intimità alla e di conoscenza delle, cose e "persone" - e quando qualcuno cui teniamo viene a mancare si cercano le tracce anche lontane che ha vivendo lasciato per arricchirne la figura nell'immaginazione, nel ricordo,

*quasi*

per colmare il dolore per

l'assenza. Così alla prematura morte di Gianni Giannotti avendo saputo dai suoi stessi racconti dei suoi rapporti con il Prof. Birnbaum, scrissi a quest'ultimo, per comunicargli la notizia e chiedendogli una breve testimonianza, che egli, partecipe, non negò. E che qui viene pubblicata per la prima volta.

Luca Carbone

I first met Gianni in 1971, when I came to the Fondazione Agnelli as a guest scholar for some months. I found him to be intellectually receptive to new ideas, curious about the US, and an utterly realistic observer of Italian life and politics. As I came to know him better, personally, it was clear to me that he was a remarkably perceptive observer of human foibles, a man who could have been a considerable novelist or playwright or essayist. There was an undercurrent of human sympathy in his sharp portraits of persons around us, which had nothing to do with sentimentality and everything to do with his appreciation of our common fate.

As we came to know one another, he told me about his family and above all his father, who came from Sicily to Tuscany and worked for many years at the travel agency CIT in Firenze.

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That story was also a social commentary, and one much more vivid than the usual studies of class and culture, north and south, in Italy. One of my most treasured memories is of a visit to Gianni at Lecce, where I saw the warmth and respect in which his colleagues and students accorded him.

After my stay at the Fondazione (until the spring of 1972), we kept in touch. The Fondazione decided later in 1972 to launch a project on "The Future of Industrial Society" and did me the honour of asking me to lead it. Gianni came to the US to visit me (I was then teaching at Amherst College in Massachusetts) in his capacity as the Fondazione's direct liaison to the project, and we subsequently had a marvellous sequence of trips through Europe to recruit collaborators, who included Thomas Bottomore, Hans-Peter Dreitzel, Leszek Kolakowski, Klaus Offe, Richard Sennet, Alain Touraine, Jean Ziegler. Our meetings were at Turin, Paris, London, Turin again.

In this setting, Gianni showed remarkable personal tact, good political judgement, and again, unfailing sympathy and great personal loyalty. Problems in the Fondazione, not connected to the project, led to the Fondazione's rather abruptly breaking it off. I regret that circumstances did not bring us together again, was always aware of how much of my knowledge of Italy's complexity I owed to Gianni. My association with him remains a splendid memory of a very considerable human being.