

PRESS RELEASE

International scientific conference
on "Death Instinct and Knowledge"
by psychiatrist Massimo Fagioli
18-19 November 2022, Rome, Italy

*A discussion of the psychiatric and socio-cultural implications
of the book that unveiled the Human Birth Theory, fifty years after its publication*

The publication of *Istinto di morte e conoscenza* [Death Instinct and Knowledge] by the psychiatrist Massimo Fagioli (1931-2017) dates back to 1972. The book was the first theoretical text of a trilogy that upended the organicist approach which was predominant in psychiatry at the time and undermined Freudian psychoanalysis, introducing a new psychotherapeutic psychodynamic approach.

The 50th anniversary of its publication will be marked by an **international scientific conference, "Fifty years of Death Instinct and Knowledge – The Human Birth Theory and its implications"**, organized by Fondazione Massimo Fagioli at the Teatro Olimpico in Rome on **18-19 November 2022**.

The focus of the conference will be Fagioli's **Human Birth Theory**, its implications for the study and treatment of mental illness and the socio-cultural impact of the new anthropological vision it proposes. The conference will be an important occasion for scientific discussions and for addressing multiple current emergencies, especially after the World Health Organization raised the alarm on the need to strengthen mental health services after two years of pandemic.

Istinto di morte e conoscenza [Death Instinct and Knowledge] (L'Asino d'oro edizioni, Rome, Italy), which in 2017 reached its 14th edition, has been translated into German, English and French, while the Spanish translation is going to be published in February 2023. It is the work where Fagioli explains his discovery of the dynamics of the Human Birth Theory as the neurobiological founding event of mental reality: the beginning of thought as the newborn's biological reaction, which becomes its psychic reaction as light stimulates the brain by passing through the retina. In the book, where the "disappearance fantasy" and the "annulment pulsion" are mentioned for the first time, Fagioli examines the origin and development of the psyche and the dynamics that leads to mental illness, laying the foundations for treatment and healing. Fagioli's work has deeply marked the history of psychiatry, with the unique group psychotherapy of Analisi collettiva (1975-2016), the training of hundreds of psychiatrists, the psychiatric research published since 1992 in the journal *Il sogno della farfalla*, the conferences, the university lectures, his column in *Left* weekly magazine, up to the establishment of *Bios Psichè*, the school in dynamic psychotherapy, in 2018.

The conference, promoted by Fondazione Massimo Fagioli, will encompass three thematic areas: **psychiatry, neonatology and bioethics**, and current socio-cultural contexts. Tens of reports are scheduled as a result of the conference call for papers which registered several submissions.

Alessandro Hinna (President of Fondazione Massimo Fagioli), **Marcella Fagioli** (President of the scientific board of the foundation) and **Francesca Fagioli** (President of the International Conference) will be introducing the event, which will be live-streamed with simultaneous English translation.

Participants will consist of psychiatrists and psychotherapists as well as researchers in the fields of art, history, philosophy, and teaching/training from Italian and international institutions. The speakers include **Joanna E. Chambers** (M.D., psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, Indiana University School of Medicine, Indianapolis), **Paolo Girardi** (M.D., psychiatrist, former university Professor and Director of the School of Psychiatry of "Sapienza" University, and former Director of U.O.C. Psichiatria [Complex Operational Unit of Psychiatry], S'Andrea Hospital, Rome), **Natalia Solovieva** (psychologist and psychotherapist, UK), **Eirini Karyotaki** (Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam), **Luigi Cancrini** (M.D., psychiatrist and psychotherapist, founder and President of "Centro Studi di Terapia Familiare e Relazionale", Rome), **César A. Alfonso** (M.D., psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at Columbia University, New York, and co-director of the Journal *Psychodynamic Psychiatry*).

The scientific committee includes 34 psychiatrists, scholars and researchers in various disciplines, coordinated by **Ernesto Longobardi**, Professor Emeritus of the University of Bari, Italy.

Massimo Fagioli had a medical degree and a specialization in neuropsychiatry. He was a psychiatrist in the psychiatric hospitals of Venice, Padua, and Ludwig Binswanger's Bellevue clinic in Kreuzlingen. After several years of study and work, he proposed that psychosis be treated with psychotherapy. In 1972 he published *Istinto di morte e conoscenza* [*Death Instinct and Knowledge*], where he presented the results of his training and practice.

The Human Birth Theory was confirmed in the next two books, *La marionetta e il burattino* (1974) and *Teoria della nascita e castrazione umana* (1975). A few years later he published his fourth book, *Bambino donna e trasformazione dell'uomo* (1980). From 1975 to 2016, Fagioli conducted at the University of Rome and later at a private practice a unique type of group psychotherapy, *Analisi collettiva*, which benefited thousands of patients. He also helped train hundreds of psychiatrists, who currently work in the public and private sectors, in Italy and abroad. Notably, the psychiatry and psychotherapy journal *Il sogno della farfalla*, which was inspired by Fagioli's theoretical work and practice, was founded in 1992; moreover, in the 1990s and 2000s numerous meetings devoted to psychiatric research were held at the *aula magna* of "Sapienza" University of Rome.

From 2002 to 2012, Massimo Fagioli taught Dynamic Psychology at the University of Chieti, Italy. From 2006 to his death in 2017, he wrote the column *Trasformazione* in *Left* weekly magazine. In 2018, the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research licensed a new school of psychotherapy, the dynamic psychotherapy school *Bios Psychè*, inspired to Fagioli's theory and work. Massimo Fagioli published 32 books with L'Asino d'oro edizioni, Rome, Italy.

For further details

<https://massimofagioli.com/>

<https://www.aspi.unimib.it/collections/entity/detail/459/>

The **Fondazione Massimo Fagioli**, a third sector organization, was set up in 2021. Its aim is to further civic and solidaristic endeavours of social utility through the protection, preservation and diffusion of Massimo Fagioli's work in Italy and in the world, in all its scientific, political, cultural and artistic

expressions. It also aims to continue his research work and his theoretical and practical training with emphasis on their applicative aspects, hence on the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders.

For further details <https://www.fondazionemassimofagioli.it/>

Bios Psyché, the **school of dynamic psychotherapy**, is founded on a well-established psychodynamic-relational approach based on Massimo Fagioli's theoretical and methodological work and on the tenets of phenomenological psychopathology and of research on the non-conscious mind. Its rigorous scientific framework includes Psychodiagnostics, Developmental Psychology, Dynamic Psychology, and Psychiatry, which together provide the theoretical and clinical basis of the four-year course.

For further details <https://biospsyche.it/>

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