

# The Italian way to gymnastics: the psycho-kinetic theory of Baumann

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**ABSTRACT:** The present paper aims to demonstrate how the gymnastics theory elaborated by Emilio Baumann differentiated itself from the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century theories about Physical Education – hygienic, ludic and neo-educational gymnastics – (Bonetta 1990). Of central concern is the fact that Baumann gave to gymnastics a «psycho-kinetic, that is educational and spiritual» purpose: in other words, he meant that gymnastics should have overcome the lack of will and character shown by Italian people. As a consequence, Baumann referred to his theory as «Italian gymnastics» in order to «distinguish it from the other forms of gymnastics, which have different methods as well as different aims» (Baumann, 1907). The focus of the current paper is the analysis of gymnastics literature written to support or contrast Baumann's theory in order to collect evidence of the contribution of «Italian gymnastics» to the development of common values and moral will between Italians.

**EET-TEE KEYWORDS:** Gymnastics; School; Educational Theory; Principles of Education; Italy; XIX Century.

## 1. *Sport history and historiography in Europe: the Italian case*

In 2011 Mark Dyreson claimed that the underdevelopment of Italian sport history was due to the absence of strong national theories during the development phase of gymnastics. The current paper aims at confuting this argument through the analysis of Emilio Baumann's work.

In *Mapping Sport History and the History of Sport in Europe* (2011), Dyreson affirmed that in the Anglo-Saxon countries sport history had developed more than in the Mediterranean ones thanks to the work of some «apostles of gymnastics», who «produced histories that promoted the public

policies they advocated»<sup>1</sup>. As a consequence, modern methods of teaching physical education were elaborated in the Anglo-Saxon countries, while in Southern Europe «where systems of gymnastics failed to take root [...] this early scholarly brand of sport history in the service of physical education never emerged»<sup>2</sup>. Dyreson concluded that where «the gymnasts failed to migrate, the history of sport was a retarded bloomer in Clio's garden»<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, the most important educational models – i.e. the *Turnverein*<sup>4</sup> and *Sokols*<sup>5</sup> – took root in Northern Europe, whereas in Italy, in spite of the fact that «potential for research into the nation's sporting history is considerable [...], its progress has been the result of the efforts of a dedicated minority of sport rather than social or cultural historians»<sup>6</sup>.

Christopher Young and Alan Tomlinson have recently pointed out the existence in Europe of four specific «clusters of sport with varying physical forms and cultural meanings across the twentieth century: the British, the German, the Scandinavian, and the Soviet. [...] These clusters are “ideal types” in the Weberian sense, i.e. characterizations of significant patterns of cultural phenomena, which contribute to the ongoing process of theory-building»<sup>7</sup>. According to the authors, other geo-historical identities originated from the typical features of each group, as for example the so-called «Latin identity». It was typical of Spain, Portugal, France and Italy and resulted from the combination of «the politicizations of sports due to the interference of political parties and the Catholic Church; the importance of cycling culture; and the proximity of Fascist, pro-Franco, Vichy and pro-Salazar sports policies»<sup>8</sup>. In each of the four countries, these characteristics were then conditioned by local social, cultural and economic context.

Even though the great influence of German, Swedish and English historical and educational cases on the Italian sport model is recognised<sup>9</sup>, it is worth noting that the result of this hybridisation process was deeply conditioned by specific national needs. Indeed, the Italian sport model aimed precisely at «training a health and strong body, suitable for national duties»<sup>10</sup>. As Gaetano

<sup>1</sup> M. Dyreson, *Mapping Sport History and the History of Sport in Europe*, «Journal of Sport History», n. 3, 2011, p. 401.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 401.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> See G. Lachmann Mosse, *La nazionalizzazione delle masse*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> See C.E. Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914: Training for the Nation*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> S. Martin, *Italian Sport and the Challenges of Its Recent Historiography*, «Journal of Sport History», n. 2, 2011, p. 402.

<sup>7</sup> A. Tomlinson, C. Young, *Towards a New History of European Sport*, «European Review», vol. 4, n. 19, 2011, pp. 493-494.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 495.

<sup>9</sup> See D.F.A. Elia, *Lo sport in Italia. Dal loisir alla pratica*, Roma, Carocci, 2009, pp. 23-94.

<sup>10</sup> A. Magnanini, *Il corpo fra ginnastica e igiene. Aspetti dell'educazione popolare nell'Italia di fine Ottocento*, Roma, Aracne Editrice, 2005, p. 12. All quotations of Italian authors are Elia's

Bonetta wrote, the Italian pedagogical model of gymnastics was «at the service of “national will”», since it aims at forming a viable sense of identity for Italians, «integrating the *animus italicus* with bourgeois and capitalistic ideal of *homo oeconomicus et industrius*»<sup>11</sup>.

It is notable that gymnastics was included among schools subjects in Italy only after a long legislative process. At the beginning, Obermann's «educational gymnastics»<sup>12</sup> was taught, then a new culture of body emerged and modern gymnastics teaching took place since 1893, with the publication of new school programs. They were written by a Committee designated by the Minister of Public Education Martini, under the influence of Angelo Celli<sup>13</sup> and Angelo Mosso<sup>14</sup>, and the programs were based on the idea of giving a rational basis to gymnastics teaching. According to the Committee, gymnastics teaching had to aim at training healthy men, who would be «able to actively contribute to their society and defend their homeland when in danger»<sup>15</sup>. The school programs of 1893, even though highly disregarded<sup>16</sup>, were an important reform of gymnastics school teaching in Italy. They resulted not only from the work of the Committee, but also from the debate between the four school of thought existing in the country between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the basis of their arguments, the four gymnastics schools can be listed as following: 1. the so-called «hygienic school», which promoted a Swedish-like gymnastics and paid a great attention to hygienic issues; 2. the so-called «Italian school», developed by reformers of «natural gymnastics» who emphasised spiritual and psychological elements; 3. the so-called «ludic school», which took English and Swedish gymnastics as examples and suggested that schoolboys should play games at school; 4. the «school of Turin», which followed the tradition of systematic muscular training (the so-called *ginnastica ordinativa*)<sup>17</sup>. The discussion between these four schools of thought promoted the publication of medical, gymnastics and pedagogical essays, which dealt with the respect, care and improvement of human body. Several experts affirmed that it was

translations unless stated otherwise.

<sup>11</sup> G. Bonetta, *Nelle palestre del Regno*, «Lancillotto & Nausica», n. 1, 2009, p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> See Rudolf Obermann, *Della ginnastica. I. Prime nozioni sulla ginnastica*, «Lecture di famiglia», vol. 50, n. III, 1844, pp. 402-403.

<sup>13</sup> On Angello Celli's life and work, see G. Alatri, *Celli Angelo*, in «Dizionario Biografico dell'Educazione» (henceforth DBE), 2 vols., Milano, Casa Editrice Bibliografica, 2013, Vol. I, pp. 318-319.

<sup>14</sup> On Angelo Mosso's life and work, see G. Chiosso, *Mosso Angelo*, in DBE, Vol. II, pp. 212-213.

<sup>15</sup> *Letter of President of the Committee to the Ministry of Public Instruction, 18<sup>th</sup> November 1893*, «Bollettino Ufficiale del Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione» (henceforth BUMPI), vol. 2, 1893, p. 4095.

<sup>16</sup> See A. Arisi Rota, M. Ferrari, M. Morandi (edd.), *Patrioti si diventa. Luoghi e linguaggi di pedagogia patriottica nell'Italia unita*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2009, p. 108.

<sup>17</sup> G. Bonetta, *Corpo e Nazione: l'educazione ginnastica, igienica e sessuale nell'Italia liberale*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1991, p. 140.

necessary to respect «the needs of the body with regard to movement and games, discovery and freedom»<sup>18</sup>.

Provided that there was such a debate and gymnastics teaching in schools was of central concern for Italian educators between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is possible to confute Dyreson's claim that in Italy «apostles of gymnastics» interested in promoting gymnastics teaching and able to draw a historiographical attention toward gymnastics did not exist. Instead, the underdevelopment of Italian history of sport should be explained in light of different elements of academic discrimination, as Bonetta, Ferrara<sup>19</sup> and Pivato<sup>20</sup> pointed out during the last thirty years. As Bonetta denounced in 1989, in Italy sport history was neglected due to «a form of hatred displayed by ethical and political historiography – despite the fact that it was itself differentiated and confused – and the defence of the cultural, even before than historical, category of “politics” as the privileged space of historical memory»<sup>21</sup>.

To overcome the gap existing between Italian and European sport history, it seems necessary to analyse the debate that took place among the four national gymnastics schools, which highlighted the dialectic between conservation and innovation. This public debate dealt indeed with two main issues: on the one hand, reflections on the idea of an armed, militarized body, which should be subservient and at the service of the country, on the other the understanding of body care as an essential part of human education, which had psycho-physic well-being as its aim<sup>22</sup>.

Following these premises, the current paper aims at demonstrating how Emilio Baumann's (1843-1916) gymnastics theory differentiated itself from the hygienic, ludic and Turin school. Baumann considered indeed physical activity as the whole of body movements that served the education of the human spirit<sup>23</sup>. The opinions of the members of the Italian gymnastics school are analysed in comparison with the other national schools of thought, through the investigation of the rich and articulated discussion that took place on the most important gymnastics journals of the time. Therefore, the analysis uncovers the ambitions of the Italian school to promote the development of a national moral character and a strong will that were expected to make Italians healthy and valorous citizens and soldiers<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> F. Cambi, *Immagini del corpo moderno: riflessioni educative*, in A. Mariani (ed.), *Corpo e modernità: strategie di formazione*, Milano, Unicopli, 2004, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> See P. Ferrara, *I «Luoghi» e i «Perché» della documentazione sul tempo libero nelle carte della pubblica amministrazione tra Ottocento e Novecento*, in S. Pivato (ed.), *Tempo libero e società di massa nell'Italia del Novecento*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1995, pp. 37-49.

<sup>20</sup> See S. Pivato, *Le pigrizie dello storico. Lo sport fra ideologia, storia e rimozioni*, «Italia contemporanea», n. 174, 1989, pp. 17-27.

<sup>21</sup> G. Bonetta, *Dalla ginnastica allo sport*, «Italia contemporanea», n. 179, 1990, p. 347.

<sup>22</sup> Magnanini, *Il corpo fra ginnastica e igiene*, cit., p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> E. Baumann, *Psicocinesia*, Roma, Tipografia Salesiana, 1913, p. 131.

<sup>24</sup> E. Baumann, *Ginnastica e scienza, ovvero la ginnastica italiana e le scienze affini (anatomia,*

## 2. *The origins of Baumann's «Italian gymnastics»*

Baumann called his psycho-kinetic theory «Italian gymnastics» in order to «differentiate it from other theories, from which it is different with regard both to its methods and purpose»<sup>25</sup>. He considered his theory a «new version of German and Swedish [gymnastics], which aims especially at strengthening moral character but is adapted to the deprived context of our country»<sup>26</sup>. However, writing to Sen. Antonio Allievi (1824-1896) to present his work at *Regia Scuola Normale di Ginnastica* of Rome and explain that his approach was the application not only of his own theories but also of other suggestions, Baumann affirmed that his gymnastics resulted from the efforts of all Italian theorists. He mentioned in particular Costantino Reyer and Pietro Gallo<sup>27</sup>, who had been the first to introduce gymnastics in the primary schools of Venice after the Third Italian War of Independence (1866)<sup>28</sup>.

Mirella D'Ascenzo has recently published an essay on the origins of Baumann's Italian school. She pointed out that gymnastics teaching in Bologna stemmed mainly from hygienic reasons (such as the treatment and prevention of chilblains), and pedagogical ones, that is to say the idea of physical education as a means to improve schoolboys' knowledge and awareness of their bodies<sup>29</sup>.

The main critics of Baumann's approach were Obermann's disciples, who strongly supported a connection between gymnastics and military training, since «every gymnastics exercise had to be integrated with military movements, even the most simple»<sup>30</sup>. The followers of military gymnastics thus rejected the idea of a multifunctional gymnastics and its civil practice<sup>31</sup>. However, they quickly attracted adverse criticism coming from Baumann and Reyer's new way of interpreting physical activities, which was particularly widespread in the area of Veneto and Romagna. Reyer's influence on Baumann was essential to persuade him of the opportunity of «natural exercises», opposed to the

*fisiologia, igiene, meccanica umana), con riferimenti alla ginnastica medica, ortopedica e pedagogica*, Roma, Tip. Salesiana, 1910, p. 501.

<sup>25</sup> E. Baumann, *La ginnastica italiana: manuale per uso degli insegnanti elementari e di ginnastica, delle scuole normali e dei Corsi complementari*, 2 vols., Roma, Tip. Salesiana, 1907, Vol. I, p. XII.

<sup>26</sup> Arisi Rota, Ferrari, Morandi (edd.), *Patrioti si diventa*, cit., p. 107.

<sup>27</sup> On their lives and works, see S. Dorigo, *Gallo Pietro*, in DBE, Vol. I, p. 610 and C. Desinan, *Reyer Castagna Costantino*, in DBE, Vol. II, p. 405.

<sup>28</sup> E. Baumann, *Programmi di ginnastica vigenti e futuri. Relazione del Dottor Baumann Emilio Direttore della R. Scuola Normale di Ginnastica*, Roma, Tip. Di Mario Armani, 1885, pp. 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> See M. D'Ascenzo, *Alle origini delle attività sportive nella scuola italiana: la ginnastica «razionale» di Emilio Baumann (1860-1894)*, in R. Farné (ed.), *Sport e infanzia: un'esperienza formativa tra gioco e impegno*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2010, p. 213.

<sup>30</sup> *Verbale della riunione della commissione istituita il 26 ottobre 1861*, in the Central State Archives (henceforth ACS), Ministry of Public Instruction (henceforth MPI), General Secretariat (henceforth GS) 1861-1894, Gymnastics and Shooting Sports (henceforth G), b. 63, f. 159, ins. 5.

<sup>31</sup> See Bonetta, *Corpo e Nazione*, cit., p. 92.

«artificial» movements promoted by Obermann. Baumann explained his idea of «natural exercises» in *Ginnastica e scienza*, published in 1910.

In this book, the author criticized the contemporary society and system of education, which «[...] forcing people to a sedentary life damage children, boys, young people not only because they [society and system of education] prevent them from using their muscular system, but also due to the fact that they cause damages to all their organs and hinder the performance of all their body functions»<sup>32</sup>. In contrast to Obermann's gymnastics, which Baumann considered prejudicial to children's resistance, manual dexterity and strength of character<sup>33</sup>, Baumann thought that gymnastics had a «psycho-kinetic aim, i.e. it must educate human spirit»<sup>34</sup>. This approach to physical activity was called «Italian gymnastics» and consisted in «all movements that must be promoted or inhibited to educate young citizens»<sup>35</sup>. Due to the educational value of gymnastics, Baumann concluded that the training of the teachers had to be innovative and require «knowledge of human anatomy, physiology, hygiene, general pedagogy and physical activity pedagogy»<sup>36</sup>.

Another difference between the two schools regarded the use of equipment: Obermann favoured big pieces of gymnastics equipment<sup>37</sup>, while Baumann thought that using such tools caused exercises to be artificial and useless. Therefore, he invented small pieces of equipment – as for example the balance beam – which favoured certain patterns of natural movements over others «to enhance the best human potentialities instead of humiliating them and help the athlete to achieve greater self-awareness»<sup>38</sup>. A specific criticism against Obermann's theory was that his big pieces of equipment did not train the entire body with all the muscles being stimulated in one workout, since educational gymnastics separated each muscle group and neglected «the anterior compartment of thigh and calf muscles, abdominals, liopsoas, sartorius, tensor fasciae latae and pettineus muscles, extensor muscles of waist and hands, spinal muscles»<sup>39</sup>. As a result, Obermann's followers did not achieve the harmonious development of the body.

<sup>32</sup> E. Baumann, *Ginnastica e scienza*, Roma, Scuola Tip. Salesiana, 1910, p. 499.

<sup>33</sup> E. Baumann, P. Gallo, *La risposta del dott. Emilio Baumann e Pietro Gallo alle osservazioni del maestro Felice Valletti sui programmi di ginnastica proposti per le Scuole Elementari del Comune di Venezia*, Venezia, [s.n.], 1873, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Baumann, *Ginnastica e scienza*, cit., p. 500.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 501.

<sup>36</sup> M. Di Donato, *Storia dell'educazione fisica e sportiva: indirizzi fondamentali*, 2 ed., Roma, Studium, 1984, p. 179.

<sup>37</sup> Big pieces of gymnastics equipment (*grandi attrezzi*) were defined as «those which were fixed on the playground and used to play gymnastics without moving them» (L. Todaro, *Trattato di educazione fisica: ad uso degli istituti magistrali superiori e per guida ai maestri elementari*, Catania, G. Crisafulli, 1940, p. 103).

<sup>38</sup> P. Ferrara, *L'Italia in palestra. Storia, documenti e immagini della ginnastica dal 1833 al 1973*, Roma, La Meridiana, 1992, p. 90.

<sup>39</sup> Baumann, *Ginnastica e scienza*, cit., pp. 504-505.

### 3. *Gymnastics at school*

In addition, Baumann paid great attention to a form of gymnastics existing in Italy only, that is to say gymnastics practiced inside classrooms. Instead of doing physical activities in gyms, Italian schoolboys usually practiced among their desks: Baumann highlighted that even in this situation body movements «must be performed collectively and under the command of the teachers»<sup>40</sup> so that gymnastics became a form of education of Italian people. Schoolboys were forced to practice gymnastics in classroom because of the lack of equipped spaces for physical activities.

Anyway, Baumann himself was aware that inside-classroom gymnastics was limited in scopes: «it cannot promote alone muscle growth throughout the entire body, nor develop courage [...]. However, several teachers have a too narrow view of it [inside-classroom gymnastics] and do not achieve all the possible benefits»<sup>41</sup>. With this observation Baumann took part in the controversy over the usefulness of inside-classroom gymnastics. Baumann refuted Gallo's assertion that *ordinativi* exercises – that is to say exercises through which pupils grew in self-control, learning to move in an orderly fashion respecting the positions assigned to them – had to be preferred to *cadenzati* exercises – that is to say rhythmic activities that required keeping a beat<sup>42</sup>. While Gallo maintained that rhythmic activities damage schoolboys' health and disturbed schoolwork making too much noise<sup>43</sup>, Baumann argued in favour of them.

Nevertheless, both theorists contended that inside-classroom gymnastics was a sort of military training: Gallo remarked that, even in a simplified form, it had to teach pupils «military obedience»<sup>44</sup>, Baumann emphasised instead its role in transmitting discipline and good order. To achieve this goal, schoolboys had to be compelled to practice a military gymnastics workout<sup>45</sup>, performing each exercise with rigour and blind obedience to the teacher's instructions<sup>46</sup>. The debate between Baumann and Gallo about indoor gymnastics indirectly fuelled the argument between the Italian school and the school of Turin too. The members of the latter took Baumann's claims to the extreme and dismissed

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 501.

<sup>41</sup> E. Baumann, *Ginnastica fra i banchi: maschile e femminile*, Bologna, Tip. Militare, 1880, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Baumann defined *ordinativi* those exercises which «establish an *order*, i.e. fix the place of each pupils, each thing or action done by the movements of the body». Instead, the exercises that «train to rhythm or *cadenza* through steady beats» were called *cadenzati* and those which required simple movements of body joints were called «*elementari*». *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> «Indeed, the hands grew [...] and were disfigured [by exercises]. In addition, the noise of beats greatly contrasted with the gentle playfulness to which pupils have to be educated». P. Gallo, *Bibliografia – La ginnastica fra i banchi maschile e femminile del dott. Emilio Baumann*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 4, n. XIV, 1880, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> See Baumann, *Ginnastica fra i banchi*, cit., p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

indoor gymnastics stating that it was useless<sup>47</sup>. According to the Turin school, once it had been recognized that outdoor gymnastics was more effective than indoor gymnastics, reflecting upon the benefits of indoor exercises was totally pointless.

However, several teachers continued to endorse inside-classroom exercises, using the same arguments concerning hygiene that Baumann had previously presented<sup>48</sup>. It was the case of Pasquale Re, who suggested that teaching should alternate, for example, moments of literature mnemonic learning with moments of indoor gymnastics to improve schoolboys' concentration. Indeed, physical activity had good neurobiological effects, since it enhanced blood flow, facilitating brain refreshing and reducing stress. Consequently, thanks to repeated exercises, the quality of the learning process improved<sup>49</sup>.

#### 4. *The Scuola Normale of gymnastics in Rome*

In 1897 Italian government established with R.D. 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1879 that, in order to become a gymnastics teacher, it was necessary to obtain a degree from one of the *Scuole Magistrali di Ginnastica*<sup>50</sup>. Through these nationally accredited schools, teachers could become licensed after a three-year education program. The *Scuole Magistrali di Ginnastica*, however, licensed too many teachers and did not provide them with an adequate preparation. As a means of addressing this problem, Felice Valletti, general inspector of gymnastics, suggested instituting the *Scuola Normale di Ginnastica* in Rome<sup>51</sup>: the only school accredited to recruit, prepare and certify gymnastics teachers. According to Valletti, the *Scuola Normale* had to admit a limited number of students, at most 30<sup>52</sup>, who were supposed to receive a military education. This was considered essential since teachers had to «instil military spirit into students» and could succeed only if «themselves educated in a military fashion»<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> See P. Re, *La scuola in azione – La Ginnastica fra i banchi*, «L'Educazione Fisio-Psichica» (henceforth EFP), vol. 10, n. II, 1912, p. 2 and D. Marchetti, *Il Comm. Romano Guerra ispettore centrale per l'Educazione Fisica*, «EFP», vol. 11, n. II, 1912, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> «[Inside-classroom gymnastics] helps to increase blood flow form brain, improve breathing, relax brain and prevent the damages of bones». E. Baumann, *La Educazione Fisica nelle scuole specialmente elementari proposta dal dott. Emilio Baumann*, Genova, Tip. del R. Istituto Sordo-Muti, 1873, p. 29.

<sup>49</sup> P. Re, *La ginnastica applicata allo studio*, «EFP», vol. 20, n. II, 1912, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> See «Maestri di ginnastica», circular n. 569 of the Ministry of Public Instruction, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1879.

<sup>51</sup> See W. Cesana, *Valletti Felice*, in DBE, Vol. II, pp. 623-624.

<sup>52</sup> See F. Valletti, *Progetto sulla Scuola per la formazione di maestri di ginnastica del novembre 1882*, in ACS, MPI, Sg. 1861-1894, G., b. 2, f. «Affari Generali» (henceforth AAGG).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*



The idea of founding the *Scuola Normale di Ginnastica* was based on Baumann's theory too. Indeed, in 1873 Baumann wrote that the Italian government was in charge of creating such an institution, in order to educate «specialist teachers able to teach well gymnastics and hygiene in schools and to contribute to in-service professional training of general Primary school teachers in provinces»<sup>54</sup>. Francesco Ravano had also supported this idea in 1872<sup>55</sup> and Gallo strongly proposed the idea again publishing a letter addressed to the Minister of Public Education on the columns of the magazine «La Ginnastica». Gallo wrote to Minister Baccelli warning him that the suppression of *Scuole Magistrali* would have deprived Italy of a «breeding ground» of qualified gymnastics teachers<sup>56</sup>.

In 1884 the *Scuola Normale* was instituted and Baumann became director despite the forecasts<sup>57</sup>. His followers interpreted his appointment as a sign of change: «the appointment of Baumann, leader of physiological gymnastics [i.e. Italian gymnastics], as director of the *Scuola Normale* in Rome is [...] the emancipation of Latin genius from the foreign bonds»<sup>58</sup>. In spite of these auspices, Baumann's direction did not promote the innovations expected by the members of the Italian school. After one year, in the columns of «L'Educazione Fisio-Psichica» an article denounced the interferences of the Ministry during the final exams. Under the influence of Valletti, who was contrary to Baumann's methods, the Commission established to evaluate the exams «adopted [...] criteria for assessing students' abilities different from those used during the courses, expressing consequently a very negative assessment of the work done by the Directory Board»<sup>59</sup>. Valletti himself clarified that things could not be different. As he wrote some years later to the Minister of Public Education, none of the members of the Examination Commission agreed with the theories of the Italian school. The Commission appeared incapable of assessing the skills of candidates who «trained in exercises different from those adopted by the Government, under the hypothesis [Baumann's hypothesis] that they are more rational and effective to develop physical capabilities»<sup>60</sup>. As a result, the experimental program adopted by Baumann in Rome was rejected. Valletti

<sup>54</sup> Baumann, *La Educazione Fisica nelle scuole specialmente elementari*, cit., p. 31.

<sup>55</sup> See F. Ravano, *La ginnastica: considerazioni e proposte*, Genova, Stab. degli Artisti tipografi, 1872.

<sup>56</sup> P. Gallo, *Lettera a Sua Eccellenza Guido Baccelli*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 3, n. XV, 1881, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> «It is clear that there is someone destined to manage and teach, and anybody should understand that». G.B. Bizzarri, *Le disposizioni ministeriali*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 11, n. XVIII, 1884, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> C. Reyer, *Agli amici!*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 12, n. XVIII, 1884, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> [Anonymous], *Il sistema Spiess e la ginnastica razionale*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 12, n. XIX, 1885, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> Valletti's letter to the Minister of Public Education (henceforth MiPI), *Scuola Normale di ginnastica (henceforth SNG) di Roma, Napoli e Torino – Relazione a S. E. il Ministro*, Roma, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1892, in ACS, MPI, Sg. 1861-1894, G., b. 5, f. «AAGG».

strongly condemned the director and all the students of the *Scuola normale*: «[Baumann] is always ready to tease his superiors in the presence of his subordinates and the students do the same. There is clear evidence that all the gymnastics teachers punished by the Ministry had studied in Rome»<sup>61</sup>.

Anyway, the negative evaluation of the Examination Commission was not the only obstacle to Baumann's innovations in the *Scuola Normale*. In 1888, Baumann asked the Minister of Public Education to support a study abroad program, since he was interested in visiting gymnastics schools in Stockholm and Madrid. Thus, he said, it would have been possible to decide whether «confirming the *military* and *educational* address of our gymnastics programs or adding to our courses *medical* and therapeutic orientation»<sup>62</sup>. However, the opportunity to compare Italy, Spain and Sweden was denied to Baumann, since the Minister, in agreement with Valletti<sup>63</sup>, replied that it was «first necessary to focus on the improvement of gymnastics teaching as always done» and «to wait for the approval of the bill which institutes [formalizes the existence of] the *Scuola Normale*»<sup>64</sup>.

In 1909, with Law n. 805 12/26, the *Scuola Normale* changed its formal structure and became an *Istituto di Magistero*, i.e. a school of education, and Baumann was appointed as headmaster. However, his role was officially confirmed only three years later. According to his followers, the delay was due to Sen. Lucchini, already president of the Vigilance Committee of the institute, since he had refused for a long time to call the board in spite of the Minister request. Finally, the Committee was renewed under the insistence of Hon. Credaro and Hon. Casali became the president of the Committee. In 1912 an overwhelming majority among the members of the new board supported Baumann's candidacy and the Minister appointed him. The Editorial Board of «L'Educatione fisio-psichica» commented on the event writing that it was «a good act of restorative justice»<sup>65</sup>.

## 5. The agreement of 1886

The contrast between the Italian school and the school of Turin clearly emerged in 1891, when Hon. Rodolfo Rossi accused the Ministry of Public Education of opposing reformation and progress in gymnastics teaching because

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Baumann's letter to the MiPI, *no object*, 19 aprile 1888, in ACS, MPI, Sg. 1861-1894, G., b. 4, f. «AAGG».

<sup>63</sup> F. Valletti, *Relazione al Sig. Sottosegretario di Stato*, 24 maggio 1888, *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> MiPI's letter to Baumann as headmaster of the SNG of Rome, *Studi sull'ordinamento degl'Istituti ginnastici di Stoccolma e di Madrid*, 31 maggio 1888, *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> [Anonymous], *Riparazione ottenuta «EFP»*, vol. 5, n. II, 1912, p. 1.

he favoured the obsolete theories of the school of Turin<sup>66</sup>. Nevertheless, during the second half of the Eighties the two schools had shown a tendency towards an agreement, since Sen. Allievi, a follower of the Turin school, had been appointed as president of the Committee for the Reform of 1886 Gymnastics School Programs. In July 1886 Valletti and Baumann wrote together an article in the journal «La Ginnastica». They declared to share the same goals and that they had understood how the opposition between the two schools had damaged gymnastics in Italy. Therefore, the two groups had reached an agreement to cooperate in the planning of school programs and find «a desirable middle between the two more important [theoretical] systems in Italy»<sup>67</sup>. The new deal was confirmed by the publication of the journal «Il Ginnasiarca», founded in 1887 by Baumann. Valletti and Baumann wrote several articles on this journal to persuade the public opinion of the fair compromise reached the previous year. In an article appeared in the second issue of the journal, Valletti affirmed even that «the fundamental principles of his [Baumann's] reform were completely shared by all the members of Committee for the Reform of Gymnastics School Programs»<sup>68</sup>. Baumann, meanwhile, underlined that the appeasement between the two schools was not only a means to promote «gymnastics as anyone is free to interpret it»<sup>69</sup>, but could also achieve more important results. It could indeed benefit all gymnastics teachers, since the two groups intended to cooperate in order to improve their moral and material condition, which was unbearable in our times<sup>70</sup>.

Thus, the reform seemed to be succeeding, although many problems remained unsolved and the Committee was reduced to three members (Valletti, Baumann and Allievi), as careful observers noted<sup>71</sup>. Reducing the numbers of the Committee's members appeared necessary, as Allievi wrote to the Minister of Public Education, to avoid any negative impact of a bottom-up reform on the Ministry itself. If several teachers had shared the responsibility to elaborate the reform, according to Allievi, the Ministry would have been forced «to accept instead of dictating school programs»<sup>72</sup>. As a result, the Ministry would have been held in low esteem. Allievi aimed at decreasing the visibility and influence

<sup>66</sup> «There are two main school of thought in Italy about physical education: that of Obermann's disciples, already called "school of Turin", and that of Baumann's disciples, already called "school of Bologna". Obermann's school expresses tradition, or even backwardness, because it is based on the founder's *ipse dixit*; Baumann's school express progress, instances of reform, and is based on study, experiment, science». R. Rossi, *Promemoria al MiPI*, 14<sup>th</sup> September 1891, in ACS, MPI, Sg. 1861-1894, G., b. 4, f. «AAGG».

<sup>67</sup> F. Valletti, Emilio Baumann, *Le Concessionari*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 7, n. XX, 1886, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> F. Valletti, *Il metodo d'insegnamento*, «Il Ginnasiarca», vol. 2, n. I, 1887, p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> E. Baumann, *Importante*, «Il Ginnasiarca», vol. 4, n. I, 1887, p. 22.

<sup>70</sup> See *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> At the beginning, the Committee was formed by Allievi (president); Baumann; Duce; Pezzarossa; Rubiola; Tedeschi; Viti. See *Decreto del Ministro Coppino*, 21 febbraio 1885, in ACS, MPI, Sg. 1861-1894, G., b. 3, f. «AAGG».

<sup>72</sup> Allievi's letter to the MiPI, *Relazione*, 6 ottobre 1885, *ibid.*

of the different tendencies emerged among gymnastics teachers and the Minister promptly adopted his plan<sup>73</sup>. However, the train of events disappointed those who intended to reform gymnastics in a democratic and progressive way, such as Gallo. He claimed that «writing good gymnastics programs without consulting the majority of teachers»<sup>74</sup> was impossible and denounced that the alleged «reformed gymnastics» was in fact the result of patching up new and old ideas so that good and bad suggestions were mingled in an unsatisfying way<sup>75</sup>.

Considering all these shortcomings, the failure of the agreement seemed likely. By the middle of 1887 «Il Ginnasiarca» closed, mainly because of the lack of interest – or even the explicit dissent – shown by teachers and gymnastics associations toward the agreement<sup>76</sup>. In addition, Baumann and Valletti split up in 1890, when the Ministry designated a Commission in charge of writing a *Teachers' guide to gymnastics in Primary, Secondary and Normal Schools*<sup>77</sup>. At the beginning of the Commission's works in 1891, Hon. Rodolfo Rossi questioned the Minister's decision of designating, out of the eight members, four from Obermann's school, two supposed to be neutral but easily influenced by Valletti<sup>78</sup> and only two, Gallo and Baumann, standing for the Italian school<sup>79</sup>. Given that the Commission had been set up in this manner, there was every chance that the «modern school» – as Rossi called Italian gymnastics – would have been defeated. One way of solving this problem was appointing other members, choosing them from the Teachers' Association founded by Baumann in 1882<sup>80</sup> or from the «Bologna group»<sup>81</sup>. The Minister refused Rossi's suggestion, arguing that the composition of the Commission could not be changed after the beginning of the works and the two tendencies were equally represented (implying that the two neutral members shared Baumann's views). Moreover, adding new members could raise a storm of protest by private associations – such as «Pro Patria» and «Forza e Coraggio» from Milan – which had previously asked to participate and had been excluded<sup>82</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> MiPI's letter to Allievi, *senza oggetto*, 8 ottobre 1885, *ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> G.B. Bizzarri, P. Gallo, *I nuovi programmi III. Programma per le scuole elementari femminili urbane (continuazione e fine)*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 12, n. XX, 1886, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> [Anonymous], *L'anno passato: sguardo retrospettivo a volo d'uccello*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 12, n. XX, 1886, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> See L'Amministrazione, *Avvertenza*, «Il Ginnasiarca», vol. 11-12, n. I, 1887, p. 65.

<sup>77</sup> See MiPI's letter to Guerra, La Pegna, Baumann, Cesarano, Gallo, Bertinotti, Valletti, *senza oggetto*, 20 agosto 1891, in ACS, MPI, Sg. 1861-1894, G., b. 4, f. «AAGG».

<sup>78</sup> See Rossi, *Promemoria*, cit.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> See Letter of Italian Association of Gymnastics Teachers to the MiPI, *no object*, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1891, in ACS, MPI, Sg. 1861-1894, G., b. 4, f. «AAGG».

<sup>81</sup> See Letter of «Virtus» Gymnastics Society to the MiPI, *no object*, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1891, *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> See MiPI's letter to Rossi, *no object*, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1891, *ibid.*

## 6. Race and risk of degeneration according to the Italian school

Even though Baumann's gymnastics rejected the artificial traits of the school of Turin, it was not less boring or criticised<sup>83</sup>. Indeed, Baumann's insistence on a series of educational exercises ended up causing repetitiveness and his method for improving fitness and moral character of the Italians appeared too strict.

Meanwhile, the issue of the degeneration of the Italian race was of central concern for the members of Italian school from its beginning. Gallo and Reyer<sup>84</sup> had had an important role in founding the Italian school. Writing on «La Ginnastica», Gallo highlighted that a poor physical condition of the Italians greatly damaged the country, because as long as the Italian people were so weak, Italy could not «occupy the seat of honour that has been given to it until recently, when it was a light beacon of civilization for the whole world»<sup>85</sup>. Gallo's aim is clearly nationalistic: training the Italian youth through physical education seemed the only way to avoid humiliations like those inflicted by the Austrians during the Third Italian War of Independence. He wrote: «those men coming from the land of hundreds of nationalities [the Austrians] would not anymore be able to call us *heart of wood* [fearful], since Italians would have not only battleships but also armed chests, so that mean insults would not be shouted because it is easy to ward them [insults] off»<sup>86</sup>.

Taking into account these facts, it seems easy to understand that Baumann reflected several times on the necessity of promoting physical education in order «to render the citizen, at the age of conscription, a good soldier, that is to say a man who needs just to become used to live in the barracks»<sup>87</sup>. Indeed, Baumann thought that gymnastics was the most important educational factor both for mind and moral character. He explained that «each pupil must listen to the teacher word by word and translate words into action, because every instruction has to be followed by the right movement and, when it does not happen, the teacher immediately sees a lack of attention»<sup>88</sup>. As a result, gymnastics trained both mind and body.

It is worth noting that Baumann had previously advocated the institution of «martial gyms» promoted by the «Lega per la Nazione armata» (League for

<sup>83</sup> Several years later, Pietro Romano wrote: «Baumann's works on physical educations may appear questionable and partially overtaken by theory and practice of gymnastics and sport, which enlarge the field of physiological education». P. Romano, *Storia dell'educazione fisica in relazione coll'educazione generale*, 2 vols., Torino, G.B. Paravia, 1924, Vol. II, p. 530.

<sup>84</sup> See B.[aumann], *Ginnastica militare I*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 11, n. XV, 1881, pp. 2-3.

<sup>85</sup> P. Gallo, *Il carattere cittadino e la ginnastica sociale I*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 10, n. XIV, 1880, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> P. Gallo, *Muoviamoci!*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 8, n. XX, 1886, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> [Anonymous], *Una festa ginnica a Venezia*, «La Ginnastica», vol. 3, n. XIX, 1885, p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> E. Baumann, *Progetto di regolamento generale per l'attuazione della Legge 7 luglio 1878 su la obbligatorietà della ginnastica*, Roma, Tip. Salesiana, 1905, p. 67.

the armed nation)<sup>89</sup>. Even though this approach did not achieve any result<sup>90</sup>, Baumann went on to affirm that body training was necessary to educate the human spirit. This opinion was strengthened also by the nationalistic orientation shared by all the four schools of gymnastics existing in Italy at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In *Psicocinesia, ovvero l'educazione dello spirito mediante quella del corpo*<sup>91</sup>, published in 1913, the influence of the 1912 war between Italy and the Ottoman Empire clearly emerged, since the war was considered an opportunity to redeem Italy from the colonial failures of Crispi's age. However, Baumann always thought that gymnastics had to be part of school life, because war was not the only way to develop moral qualities. In the course of an argument with German general Helmuth K.B. von Moltke, who affirmed that war was the only way to trigger a moral improvement of Italian people, Baumann indeed wrote: «were our soldier not valorous during the Libyan war, did they not give many examples of courage, self-denial and sacrifice, even though none of them had gone to war before?»<sup>92</sup>. Thus, psycho-kinetic education aimed at forming men able to defend their country, even though it did not deny the necessity of an educational contest, that is to say the school environment. In addition, Baumann did not consider psycho-kinetic education to be the only way to improve moral character of citizens, since teachers also had to «instil in pupils' spirits a *sense of devotion to duty* mainly ignored [...]; otherwise [...] school will never educate, and will limit itself to occasionally instruct»<sup>93</sup>.

When «La Ginnastica» closed<sup>94</sup>, Baumann went on to express his opinions writing for «L'Educazione Fisio-Psichica». On the columns of this journal, he rejected the proposal to entrust army captains with the task of teaching gymnastics in national boarding schools, because he worried that such a solution would have produced an increasing militarisation of Italian school<sup>95</sup>. According to Baumann, school had to be in charge of the development of the Italians' moral will, as happened in other European states, like for example in Belgium. Indeed, Belgian school regulations stressed that physical education had a strategic role in educating children, «since it assures the harmonious development of the body, proportionally strengthens the organs, contributes to the regulation of muscular strength and brain work to produce maximum

<sup>89</sup> Arisi Rota, Ferrari, Morandi (edd.), *Patrioti si diventa*, cit., p. 107.

<sup>90</sup> See E. Mandrioli, *La Gazzetta dello Sport – Un Apostolo della Ginnastica – Le onoranze di Bologna ad Emilio Baumann*, «EFP», vol. 3, n. II, 1912, p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> This title was chosen to distinguish the book from the essay on «psycho-kinesis» published by Baumann in 1890, *Psico-cinesia ovvero l'arte di formare il carattere*, Roma.

<sup>92</sup> Baumann, *Psicocinesia*, cit., p. 133.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>94</sup> See [Anonymous], *Nota*, «EPS», vol. 3, n. I, 1911, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> See D.F.A. Elia, *Una fonte storica per lo studio della figura dell'insegnante di ginnastica: «L'Educazione Fisio-Psichica» (1911-1914)*, «Nuovo Bollettino CIRSE», vol. 2, n. VIII, 2013, pp. 95-102.

results with the minimum effort»<sup>96</sup>. Baumann suggested that Belgium should have been taken as an example with regard to its colonial successes too. The conquest of Congo had indeed aroused the admiration of those who thought that it had been possible because of the Belgians' tolerance for the equatorial climate due to a great moral resistance, which was itself the result of an appropriate physical condition. Therefore, military and colonial successes, physical training and school education were bounded together.

### 7. Which should be the role of ludic activities in schools?

At the end of the Eighties gymnastics teaching in school was at a turning point. Valletti provided ample proof that lessons were given in a totally inappropriate way and were taught without uniform teaching standards<sup>97</sup>. In March 1982 the physiologist Angelo Mosso, already president of the Società Ginnastica Torinese, was the first to show a sign of change. He followed the method invented by the Swedish Peer H. Ling, who considered the study of human anatomy the basis to promote a complete physical fitness<sup>98</sup>. In an article published on «Nuova Antologia», Mosso suggested that indoor training had to be substituted by outdoor playing<sup>99</sup>. He thought that gymnastics should be complementary to Physical Education<sup>100</sup>, as Herbert Spencer had written in *Education: intellectual, moral and physical*<sup>101</sup>. According to Mosso, games as cricket, rugby or foot-ball would have moulded the model citizen, who would have respected discipline and fair play in sport competitions as well as in daily life<sup>102</sup>. As a consequence, Mosso became the founder of a new tendency in gymnastics theory, that is the ludic gymnastics.

However, his suggestions seemed too radical to some observers, since reducing the importance of gymnastics or even excluding it from school education was considered the beginning of the end for military aspirations, as Michelangelo Jerace denounced<sup>103</sup>. Other thinkers, such as Baumann and

<sup>96</sup> E. Malfatti, *I deboli si sentono dipendenti, i forti sanno valere (Spencer)*, «EFP», vol. 4, n. IV, 1914, p. 31.

<sup>97</sup> See F. Valletti, *Relazione sull'insegnamento della ginnastica nelle scuole del Regno*, in ACS, MPI, Sg. 1861-1894, G., b. 4, f. «AAGG».

<sup>98</sup> See Tanga, Gori, *Linee storiografiche*, cit., p. 80.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

<sup>100</sup> See Mosso, *La Riforma della Ginnastica*, cit., p. 261.

<sup>101</sup> See H. Spencer, *Education: intellectual, moral and physical*, London-Edinburgh, William and Norgate, 1861.

<sup>102</sup> See Mosso, *La Riforma*, cit., p. 263.

<sup>103</sup> «The reformers of gymnastics might well promote the diffusion of gymnastics games [...] but they must remember that games will not satisfy their patriotic aspirations». M. Jerace, *La ginnastica nei suoi rapporti con l'arte greca*, Torino, Bocca, 1899, p. 146. Jerace was a follower of Obermann's theory.

doctor Alberto Gamba<sup>104</sup>, who was one of Obermann's disciples, slightly agreed with Mosso's proposal of paying more attention to games. Anyway, Baumann maintained that ludic activities had a recreational value, while gymnastics an educational one<sup>105</sup>. In 1893 the new school programs were published as a compromise between Mosso's claims and Baumann and Abbondati's theories, which underlined more the educational traits of gymnastics.

To understand the criticism to ludic activities voiced by the members of the Italian school, the general context of their objections has to be taken into account. Indeed, they refused every activity that did not aim at teaching «order» and «discipline» as gymnastics did<sup>106</sup>. Baumann accused those teachers and theorists who supported physical games of eliciting indolence and feebleness<sup>107</sup>. In addition, he thought that playing games in Italian schools would be really difficult, since there was a lack of equipped spaces, and criticized the fact that those people generally less involved during a game were exactly those who needed to move more, that is to say weak children and swots<sup>108</sup>. In conclusion, Baumann did not reject the idea of playing games itself, so much so that he included in gymnastics for school both systematic gymnastics exercises and games<sup>109</sup>.

### 8. *Against Anglo-Saxon sports*

While the Italian school did not deny the value of ludic activities, it completely rejected sports, which lacked any educational purpose, as Giuseppe Monti<sup>110</sup>, headmaster of Girls' Magistero<sup>111</sup> in Turin, explained. He wrote: «we have stepped aside when money-grubbers and managers started taking part in races, competitions and records: it was “the great sport” and no longer gymnastics,

<sup>104</sup> However, Gamba explained that games were not suitable for pupils who suffered of kyphosis or scoliosis. Children suffering of these medical conditions had to practice both physical activity and therapeutical exercises. See A. Gamba, *La riforma della ginnastica. Note ed osservazioni*, «Gazzetta Medica di Torino», n. 20, 1892, p. 400.

<sup>105</sup> See E. Baumann, *La ginnastica ed i giuochi nelle scuole*, Roma, Valle, 1892, p. 5.

<sup>106</sup> «“Italian gymnastics” did not fit to modern games and sport, since “Italian gymnastics” required strong discipline and quick execution of instruction, while tactic and individual initiative were the essential qualities privileged by modern sport». Arisi Rota, Ferrari, Morandi (edd.), *Patrioti si diventa*, cit., p. 107.

<sup>107</sup> «It is easier to look at pupils' games instead of maintaining the order, command them and give them an example rich in charm and grandeur». Baumann, *Progetto di Regolamento Generale*, cit., p. 22.

<sup>108</sup> See Baumann, *Ginnastica e scienza*, cit., p. 504.

<sup>109</sup> See G. Monti, *Coi piedi nelle scarpe... degli altri*, «EFP», vol. 7, n. IV, 1914, p. 52.

<sup>110</sup> See D.F.A. Elia, *Monti Giuseppe*, in DBE, Vol. I, pp. 197-198.

<sup>111</sup> «Magistero» had different meanings in the history of Italian education. Here, the word stays for the high school at the end of which students became certified Physical Education teachers.



so it was no longer our concern»<sup>112</sup>. Denouncing the negative effects of sport became the central issue of «L’Educazione Fisio-Psichica» during the Tens of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and director Francesco Bruno declared that there should be no confusion between sport and physical activities, since they were substantially different: «We strongly reject the use of the label “physical education” with regard to such a counterfeit [i.e. sport]»<sup>113</sup>. This negative attitude was due to the fact that sport had gained in popularity on media during Giolitti’s age<sup>114</sup> and was increasingly confused with physical education. The theorists of physical education considered the overlap between the two activities dangerous because «only resolute practitioners»<sup>115</sup> played sports, while physical education was suitable for all people, despite their age and physical condition. As a means of forestalling such an occurrence, in 1906 Romano Guerra proposed to continue teaching gymnastics as always in schools and, at the same time, to start practising it as a sport in private associations<sup>116</sup>. However Baumann’s followers strongly refused this proposal. Writing to a colleague from Pavia, Bartolomeo Preve worried that introducing sport in Italian schools might cause negative social effects: «it would open the doors to anarchy. Anarchy in the army, in teaching, anarchy between the purpose [of your proposal] and physiological effects, anarchy [...] which will invade, damage [...] all the organisms of the school»<sup>117</sup>. Preve argued that sports were suitable for northern people, who were «cold, calm, tenacious and disciplined by nature, due to their ethnic character»<sup>118</sup>. Conversely, Italian gymnastics was suitable for Italians because it «strengthened will, tenacity, self-confidence [...], i.e. all those qualities that improve moral character»<sup>119</sup>. Sports might be practised to maintain a regular exercise and reverse some symptoms of aging, but young people had to practice Baumann’s Italian gymnastics to avoid the risk of race degeneration. The degeneration of Italian race was the central concern of educators<sup>120</sup> and could be prevented only by following Baumann’s theories, which «as German and Swedish gymnastics, aimed at producing hygienic movements too, but especially at educating human spirit and above all our will, that is to say educating moral character»<sup>121</sup>.

<sup>112</sup> Monti, *Coi piedi nelle scarpe...*, cit., p. 52.

<sup>113</sup> F. Bruno, *Il monopolista*, «EFP», vol. 12, n. I, 1911, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> See D. Cherubini, *Sport e giornalismo in Italia dal Risorgimento all’età giolittiana*, in S. Battente (edd.), *Sport e società nell’Italia del ‘900*, «Quaderni della Rassegna di diritto ed economia dello sport», Napoli, ESI, 2012, Vol. 5, pp. 343-356.

<sup>115</sup> P. Foà, *Per l’educazione fisica*, «EFP», vol. 14, n. III, 1913, p. 1.

<sup>116</sup> See Elia, *Una fonte storica*, cit., p. 98.

<sup>117</sup> B. Preve, *Ancora gli errori di uno scienziato (Al Prof. Monti di Pavia)*, «EFP», vol. 3, n. IV, 1914, p. 3.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> See F. Bruno, *Il nostro programma*, «EFP», vol. 1-2, n. I, 1911, p. 2.

<sup>121</sup> [Anonymous], *Istituto Nazionale per l’incremento dell’educazione fisica*, «La ginnastica italiana: bollettino ufficiale della direzione della R. SNG», vol. 2, n. I, 1907, p. 3.

### 9. Baumann's last years: the increasing influence of nationalism on physical education

After the publication of the 1893 Italian school programs, the gap between games and gymnastics appeared impossible to bridge. By that time, games had developed as sports and were played under the guidance of private associations, while gymnastics was practiced in the general framework of a nationalistic physical education<sup>122</sup>. Given this opposition, 1893 school programs became extremely difficult to apply. The question indeed arose whether private associations had to be financed by the State<sup>123</sup>, since «fencing, cycling, rowing, skating, mountaineering, running and jogging, boxing, athletics, sailors' gymnastics [*ginnastica marinaresca*]<sup>124</sup> were practiced only thanks to them, while gymnastics was the only physical activity left to school practice. As a result, Physical Education in schools «lacked any ludic and sport traits, in addition to those aspects most closely connected to civilization from a sociological perspective»<sup>125</sup>. Italian State seemed concerned only with teaching pupils and students to defend their country<sup>126</sup>.

Several contemporary observers denounced that gymnastics teaching had reached its lowest point. In 1905 doctor and hygienist Saverio Santori<sup>127</sup> published on «Nuova Antologia» a polemic article that parodied a famous piece written ten years before by Ferdinand Brunetière to condemn the failure of science. Santori reused Brunetière's idea of the «bankruptcy of science» and applied it to gymnastics, writing that the problems were «wages, low teachers' esteem, the distressing scene of daily mediocre school life. Gymnastics is not a subject tested on exams, so that no bad grades will punish [...] laziness and low diligence»<sup>128</sup>. According to Santori, a possible way to remedy this situation was to separate school and physical education, improving children's physical activity in private associations. This idea would be finally realized during the Fascist age, when the Minister of Public Education Giovanni Gentile founded

<sup>122</sup> See G. Vidari, *Il nazionalismo e la scuola*, «Rivista pedagogica», vol. 1, n. IV, 1911, p. 11. See also G. Chiosso, *L'educazione nazionale da Giolitti al primo dopoguerra*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1983.

<sup>123</sup> See Todaro, *Lettera*, cit., p. 30.

<sup>124</sup> *Relazione della Commissione*, BUMPI, vol. II, 1893, p. 4104.

<sup>125</sup> Bonetta, *Corpo e Nazione*, cit., p. 139.

<sup>126</sup> See G. Baccelli, *Educazione nazionale ed esercito*, «Bollettino della Federazione Ginnastica Nazionale», 1897, p. 42.

<sup>127</sup> See S. Santori, *L'educazione fisica nelle scuole italiane*, «Nuova antologia», n. 117, 1905, pp. 545-549.

<sup>128</sup> A. Scotto di Luzio, *Corpo politico e politiche del corpo nella storia dell'Italia unita. Le vicissitudini della «ginnastica» a scuola*, in G. Bertagna (ed.), *La pedagogia e la didattica delle scienze motorie e sportive tra riforma della scuola e dell'Università*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2004, p. 56.

the National Institute for Physical Education. Since 1923, the Institute obliged schoolboys to attend sport associations<sup>129</sup> in order to improve their physical training.

For his part, Baumann always opposed the exclusion of Physical Education from school programs, since he remarked that modern gymnastics had stemmed from «the institution and universalization of elementary education»<sup>130</sup>. Moreover, he strongly maintained that other school subjects had to contribute to realize the same objectives of gymnastics and that a common social and educational environment was necessary «to instil in pupils' spirits a high sense of duty, a strong conviction of it»<sup>131</sup>, which constituted the faith in their own country. Baumann concluded that the principal aim of school was «to teach the duties and rights of citizenship, and this is why school must be free and the full cost of it paid by the State»<sup>132</sup>. Therefore, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, school became «a modern gymnastics gym», which aimed at training healthy men and valorous soldiers<sup>133</sup>. Ludic activities and English-like games were forbidden, since they might have instilled aspirations to freedom and individualism<sup>134</sup>. Conversely, all scholastic subjects were reformed to achieve educational «nationalistic» aims<sup>135</sup>.

### Conclusion

Even one century after Baumann's death his contribution appears to be one of the most important to the study of Physical Education in Italian school. Today as well as at Baumann's time we can list among the aims of Physical Education the achievement of «the value of corporeity to form a well-balanced and stable personality, the ability to understand and control individual and group dynamics, the right and precise use of neuromuscular skills and the consequent competence to use the skills acquired [through physical training] in daily life [...], self-control and improved social consciousness»<sup>136</sup>. Baumann's

<sup>129</sup> See Varese, *L'ordinamento*, cit., p. 41.

<sup>130</sup> Baumann, *La Ginnastica italiana*, cit., Vol. I, p. 2.

<sup>131</sup> Baumann, *Psicocinesia*, cit., p. 130.

<sup>132</sup> Baumann, *Ginnastica e scienza*, cit., p. 501.

<sup>133</sup> F.G. Prampolini, *Forza, sanità e carattere: sinossi di ginnastica razionale ad uso delle scuole normali d'ambo i sessi, redatta sulla guida delle migliori opere*, Messina, Tip. D'Angelo, 1912, p. IX.

<sup>134</sup> See M. Cardini, *L'educazione fisica nella vita nazionale*, Modena, A.F. Formiggini, 1911, pp. 482-483.

<sup>135</sup> See G. Bonetta, *Scuola e socializzazione fra '800 e '900*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1989.

<sup>136</sup> E. Turrini, *150 anni di educazione fisica. Il contributo pedagogico del mazziano Emilio Baumann*, «Note Mazziane», vol. 4, n. XLIV, 2009, p. 238.

main limits, instead, seem to be his militarism, which damaged «the greatness of his philosophical thought»<sup>137</sup>, and his incapability to reconcile the progress of human species with its negative effects on mind and body. In his preface to *Psicocinesia* Baumann wrote:

Anyway, I have persisted due to a lucky circumstance, that is to say reading that for human beings posing a problem is far more difficult than solving it. Since then I have thought that, even though I will not be able to solve my problem, one of my readers might be, or his son or his nephew. Somebody will. This strong and unrelenting opinion has sustained my writing, despite the fact that my pen is tired by now, as the reader will see<sup>138</sup>.

<sup>137</sup> Ferrara, *L'Italia in palestra*, cit., p. 93.

<sup>138</sup> Di Donato, *Storia*, cit., pp. 201-202.