

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Ernesto Bozzano: An Italian Spiritualist and Psychical Researcher

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Abstract—Ernesto Bozzano (1862–1943) was a luminary in psychical and spiritualistic studies in Italy, to which he contributed numerous publications that were also distributed abroad, and for more than forty years he tirelessly defended “human survival after death” against its critics. This article, after a brief look at the studies dedicated to him, furnishes a profile of the life and thinking of Bozzano, paying particular attention to the events that brought him to the eyes of the international community of psychical researchers.

Keywords: Ernesto Bozzano—Italian psychical research—spiritualism—survival research

Introduction

Ernesto Bozzano (1862–1943) was probably the most important Italian representative of psychical and spiritualistic studies before the 1940s, as well as one of the few to emerge on the international scene, thanks to his numerous publications which gained him the esteem of scientists, philosophers, and psychical researchers. He was at the center of an intense network of correspondence with Italian, European, and American intellectuals, receiving an average of 200 letters a month, and was furthermore one of the few Italian scholars to have been named an honorary member of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR), and the *Institut Métapsychique International* (IMI). Despite the fact that the academic historian Bruno Di Porto (1933) wrote a description of him for the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Di Porto),¹ an element which testifies to his relevance, Bozzano is completely unknown in Italy to those who do not deal with the history of psychical research. However, this did not prevent Italian scholars from continuing to remember him (e.g., Biondi, 1988, Inardi & Ianuzzo, 1981, Macaluso, 1972, Orlandi, 1971) or his works from continuing to be reprinted, even recently, in journals or by specialized publishers (e.g., Bozzano, 1948a,

1957a, 1967a, 1972, 1975, 1982, 1998a, 2001, 2008). Still cited in France (e.g., Clauzure, 1983, Dumas, 1973), Bozzano does not appear in some important historical accounts of Anglo-Saxon psychical research (e.g., Beloff, 1993, Inglis, 1977) but does appear in the bibliographies of various authors of the same linguistic group (e.g., Stevenson, 1977, Van de Castle, 1977). Only beginning in 1982–1983, coinciding with the fortieth anniversary of his death, did some historians of psychical research begin to study him in more depth (Biondi, 1984, Iannuzzo, 1982, 1983a, 1983b, Ravaladini, 1983). From this renewed interest, there were only two critical volumes regarding Bozzano taken as a whole (Iannuzzo, 1983b, Ravaladini, 1993a), and some more recent articles that examine specific aspects of his biography or works (Alvarado, 1986, 1989, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, Biondi, 2010, Caratelli, 1998, Cellina, 1993, Cugnaschi, 2002).

In addition, there are the first biographical articles written by his disciple Gastone De Boni (1908–1986) (the main ones being De Boni, 1941, 1946, 1947). There are also some autobiographical articles written by Bozzano in his old age, which are usable with reservations (Bozzano, 1924c, 1930a, 1938a, 1939). For a more in-depth study, it is however indispensable to refer to unpublished primary sources, among which the correspondence between Bozzano and De Boni is indispensable for reconstructing his life.²

The present article has, as its objective, a brief presentation of the life, works, and thinking of Ernesto Bozzano.

Biographical Profile

Ernesto Bozzano was born in Genoa on January 9, 1862, the fourth son of a lower-middle-class Genoese family, but we know very little of his childhood, in reality of his entire life up to 1928; by his own admission, that part of his life was without relevant biographical events, so much so that the only information conserved regards his intellectual life. He had an early vocation for study for which he received no support since, when he was fourteen years old, he was taken out of school in order to begin a commercial career. Other than this brief experience of work in his youth and a similar brief journalistic collaboration with the Genoese daily newspaper *Il Secolo XIX* around 1893, of which there is no trace, he never needed to work. Since he lived with his brother Vittorio (1860–?), and was in part economically supported by his well-to-do brother Adolfo (1859–?) and probably had a small income sufficient to maintain a secluded lifestyle, Bozzano was able to dedicate all his time to studying and writing. In fact, he managed to study by himself, dedicating himself first to poetry and literature, then to the sciences, and finally to philosophy, his great passion. He became a supporter of positivism and a fervent follower of the British philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) who, in the 1880s, was

his habitual correspondent together with William James (1842–1910), Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913), Théodule Ribot (1839–1916), Jean-Marie Guyau (1854–1888), and Henri Bergson (1859–1941) (Letter from Savona, 7 May 1941, unpublished, in Bozzano & De Boni, 1930–1943).

The biographical and autobiographical articles present Bozzano's interest in spiritualism and psychical research as a philosophical and rational conversion from materialism (a total negation of phenomena) to demolition of his misoneism and, finally, to spiritualism (e.g., De Boni, 1941:14 and on), but numerous other data do not correspond to these facts. On the basis of Iannuzzo's studies (1983b) and mine, it is much more probable that Bozzano was already inclined toward spiritualism in 1890 and that his presumed conversion, completed in 1893, was, in reality, reached after three years of psychical and spiritualistic readings, but, above all, after three years of going to a mediumistic Genoese club whose culminating event had been the apparition of his dead mother in a seance in July 1893.

Independently of the problem of this conversion, what is certain is that, until 1943, Bozzano never stopped dedicating himself to psychical research, or *metapsichica* (*métapsychique* or metapsychical research) as it was called in continental Europe, understood as a single science capable of demonstrating the existence of the spirit and its survival after bodily death as opposed to religion, which was too dogmatic, and official science, which was too materialistic. Bozzano's methodological approach was specific and comparable to that of an eighteenth-century naturalist; he did not carry out experiments or directly gather testimony because he did not feel the necessity of proving the existence of the psychic, but he summarized the accounts of the phenomena present in the literature (which he patiently classified during his entire life) as immediately valid natural phenomena, and he inserted them into an inductive process based on comparative analysis and convergence of proofs; in other words, he pointed out all the likenesses of a certain class of phenomena and reached specific conclusions. Therefore, his monographs were created in order to

collect an adequate number of events . . . , carefully selected from the point of view of their authenticity as facts, in order to then classify, analyze and compare them, and deduce the laws which govern them." (Bozzano, 1972:228)

The monograph *Dei Fenomeni di "Bilocazione"* (*The Phenomena of "Bilocation"*) (Bozzano, 1934) can furnish a concrete cross-section of his procedural method. In this monograph, Bozzano held that the phenomena of bilocation "assume decisive importance for the experimental demonstration of the existence and survival of the human spirit" (Bozzano, 1934:7) since it would prove that, in the somatic body, an etheric body exists, capable of making oneself autonomous, often carrying along with itself consciousness,

memory, identity, and its own other supernormal faculties, thus ending up with independence of the spirit from the body and subordination of the brain to the mind. He reached this conclusion after having analyzed four categories of phenomena. The first included the cases of sensitivity in amputees and hemiplegics; discarding the neurological explanations, Bozzano believed he was dealing with the initial levels of bilocation. In the second, we find the cases in which a subject would see his own double; although accepting the possible pathological explanation with reserve, for Bozzano these cases represented, as a general rule, the second level of incipient bilocation, the transition between being both inside and outside one's own body. In the third group, he placed all the cases in which consciousness would be completely transferred to the etheric double which verified the sensation of seeing reality from a position external to one's own physical body. Finally, in the fourth group, there were the cases in which the etheric double was seen by one or more people. Considering all the categories cumulatively and taking the cases of this last group as crucial proof of their intersubjectivity, Bozzano thought he had scientifically deduced some conclusions from some facts that were evident for him but which were often not "self-evident facts" but rather an "interpretation of the cases he considered" (Alvarado, 2005:228). In any case, in order to understand his methods, a quotation from his work can be useful:

As soon as the processes of comparative analysis are applied to hundreds of similar episodes in which all the gradations which employ this phenomenology are represented, [there can no longer exist any doubts regarding the] objectivity of the phenomenon itself; in the sense that the "dreamlike" and "hallucinatory" hypotheses must be excluded and they are also the only ones which are opposed to the phenomena. (Bozzano, 1934:124)

If, for Bozzano, the phenomena of bilocation represented the passage from animism to spiritism, the phenomena of transcendental music dealt with in the monograph *Musica Trascendentale (Transcendental Music)* (Bozzano, 1982) were instead of clear spiritual genesis. In this monograph, he subdivided the phenomena into six classes, even if, dealing with animistic phenomena, he dedicated less space to the first two (musical mediumship and transcendental music with telepathic externalization). The classes of transcendental music of haunting origin, of music perceived without a relationship to events dealing with death, music at the deathbed, and music which is manifested after an event dealing with death would instead be, cumulatively taken, reliable testimony of spiritual intervention. In fact, from the moment that musical phenomenology was often externalized together with apparitions of the dead person at the deathbed, in such a way as to prove the spiritual identification of a dear deceased person who comes to assist the dying person, because of the numerous cases in which music

was heard by everyone present and, sometimes, by all of them except the dying person, and as a result of the cases in which the music was heard on fixed dates after the death of someone, Bozzano was certain that, thanks to his demonstrative process, the hallucinatory and psychometric explanations as well as suggestion and telepathy among the living could be discarded in favor of the spiritual explanation of the phenomenon. Also in the case of transcendental music, the gradual exposition of the phenomenology permitted Bozzano to exclude the antagonistic hypotheses step by step and to guide the reader, by means of the convergence of the proofs, to understand how “the numerous branches of metaphysics (. . .) all converge as a center toward the experimental demonstration of the existence and survival of the human spirit” (Bozzano, 1982:156–157).



Ernesto Bozzano, at about forty years old.

Bozzano, therefore, understood science as a process of researching truth, carried out rigorously starting from the facts, and capable of rationally demonstrating conclusions using comparative analysis and the convergence of proofs. It is understood that, on the basis of this assumption, *metapsichica* also, at least as he saw it, was to all effects a science, and that Bozzano the spiritualist and Bozzano the psychical researcher were one and the same.

In 1899, in Genoa, Bozzano and the writer Luigi Arnaldo Vassallo (1852–1906) founded the Circolo Scientifico Minerva (Minerva Science Club), which had as its aim the scientific study of mediumistic phenomena and the promotion of debates and publications regarding them (Minerva, 1899). Many people of the Genoese middle class joined, including without a doubt Francesco Porro (1861–1937) the astronomer and Enrico Morselli (1852–1929), the celebrated psychiatrist who, for his honest and impartial attitude regarding research, compared this Club to a small SPR (Morselli, 1908:vol. I, 174). The principal activity of this Club in 1901–1902 was to study the medium Eusapia Palladino (1854–1918), which led to various publications by its members (the most important were Bozzano, 1903, 1904, Morselli, 1908, Vassallo, 1992). In 1904, the Club was dissolved as a result of disagreement among the members.

Since, from 1890 on, Bozzano followed the developments of his discipline

with attention (he dedicated notable energy to constant reading, writing, analysis, and critiques of numerous publications), many of his writings took the form of critical reviews of his colleagues' texts, many of whom were also friends, thus generating small disputes, always carried out with logical strictness and politeness. Their common characteristic was that of wanting to nip in the bud the theories contrary to the hypothesis of human survival. Among the most relevant debates, we recall that which took place with Morselli and went on from 1899 to 1917; since Morselli denied the spiritual hypothesis, Bozzano opposed Morselli regarding the phenomena of the etheric body, of apport, of identification of spiritual personalities and reincarnation, challenging him many times to deny that, from these facts, the existence of a soul surviving a body and the intervention of the deceased was able to be deduced (Gasperini, 2010). Nobel Prize winner and psychical researcher Charles Richet (1850–1935), who, by upholding the hypothesis of the *cryptesthésie* (cryptesthesia), a faculty of superior cognition but at the human level, was not, according to Bozzano, able to explain many undoubtedly spiritual facts, such as the phenomena of telekinesis at the deathbed, those of haunting, those of transcendental music or the cases of identification of deceased people unknown to the medium and those present at the seances (Bozzano, 1922a, 1922b, 1922c, Richet, 1922a, 1922b, 1922c)³. There was also biologist and psychical researcher William Mackenzie (1877–1970), advocate of the polypsychical hypothesis used to explain the mediumistic personalities without resorting to spiritualism; for Bozzano, the fact that, notwithstanding the constant changing of participants at the seances, the mediumistic personalities maintained their own identity was more than sufficient to hold that the opposing thesis was destroyed (Bozzano, 1923a, 1923b, Mackenzie, 1923a, 1923b). And psychical researcher René Sudre (1880–1968) explained the phenomena of intelligent mediumship with the *prosopopèse-métagnomie*, that is attributing them to the latent subconscious personality in the mind of the medium, capable of producing anomalous facts. Elaborating on the theories of Richet, Bozzano disproved the hypothesis of the *prosopopèse* using the same reasoning advanced against *cryptesthésie* (Bozzano, 1926, Sudre, 1926).

The majority of the debates were carried out in the journal *Luce e Ombra (Lo)*, which from 1900 on became the principal publication of Italian spiritualism (Alvarado, Biondi, & Kramer, 2006). From 1906 to 1939 when *Lo* was made to close by the fascist regime, Bozzano was the principal contributor to the journal with his contribution of almost 4,000 pages, thanks to which he acquired considerable notoriety, above all abroad; starting in 1920, he also regularly published articles in the most important English, French, American, and South American spiritualistic and psychical journals. In Italy, he published approximately 90 volumes that, starting from 1920, were translated into nine

different languages, such as English, French, German, and Turkish (Alvarado, 1986, De Boni, 1941, Ravaldini, 2000) and reviewed critically in the most important psychical and spiritualistic journals. Although agreeing that Bozzano was one of the greatest scholars in the field of psychical research, the reviewers often criticized his methodology, e.g., Troubridge (1919) accused him of accepting too quickly the reality of the phenomenon whose existence he had to demonstrate; Wilson (1933) repeated the same argument, while Saltmarsh (1938) judged his reasoning with regard to the biological evolution and the independence of the spirit from the body to be completely erroneous. Collins (1939) criticized him for assuming as proven some facts that could be defined as arbitrary, and, in *Nature*, the spiritistic hypothesis of Bozzano was defined to be of scarce interest for the skeptics but merited in-depth study for the enthusiasts of psychical studies (Review of *Discarnate Influence in Human Life*, 1938). In France, Quartier (1927a, 1927b) described Bozzano as a sage of the pre-scientific era because of his non-use of the experimental method, and even Count Cesar Baudi de Vesme (1862–1938) criticized his esteemed colleague, so certain of the reality of psychical phenomena and the explanatory value of the spiritistic hypothesis that he never doubted it, for omitting, among other things, in an unfair manner, topics that were contrary (de Vesme, 1934, 1936).

From 1927 to 1929, Bozzano was called on to cover the role of expert in noted mediumistic experiences, such as the seances of Millesimo; these were a series of seances held in the ancient castle of Millesimo, a picturesque town not far from Savona (Italy), and presided over by Marquis Carlo Centurione Scotto (1862–1937), Senator and medium, during which numerous direct voice and apport phenomena were supposedly verified, culminating in the presumed dematerialization and successive materialization of the Marquis himself, occurring on July 29, 1928 (Ferraro, 1989). Thanks to accounts published in *Lo* by Bozzano (Bozzano, 1927b, 1927c, 1928a, 1928b, 1928c, 1928d), which were then collected into one volume (Bozzano, 1929b) and disseminated abroad also thanks to his collaborators (e.g., Bozzano, 1928e, 1929d, 1929e, 1930e, Hack, 1930), the seances obtained vast visibility, throwing the international research community into turmoil. Officially, he upheld the veracity of the happenings and the unquestionable intervention of the disembodied entities,⁴ drawing upon himself first the criticism of psychical researcher Rudolph Lambert (1866–1964) (Bozzano, 1929a, 1929c, 1930b, 1930d, Lambert, 1929, 1930) and then that of the exponent of the SPR, Theodore Besterman (1904–1976) (Besterman, 1930). The answer to the English scholar was given for him by an indignant Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), who dismayed by the attacks that his Italian friend was undergoing resigned from his role as honorary member of the SPR (Doyle, 1930), taking with him 77 members (Mauskopf & McVaugh, 1980:28).

The seances at Millesimo, together with those with Palladino at the *Circolo*

Scientifico Minerva about thirty years earlier (Bozzano, 1903), were the only two experiments worth noting in the course of his research, which was otherwise carried out almost exclusively in written analyses of books and articles. Space does not permit the chronicling of the eloquent and detailed accounts of the seances that Bozzano published; however, according to those who have written about it, it seems that the scholar went to the seances, on both occasions, already profoundly convinced of the reality of the facts to which he would have attested, and of the authenticity of the mediums. This can be deduced by his lack of doubts and from his critical tone against the skeptics (e.g., Bozzano, 1903:362–363) as well as from the clearly demonstrative presentation of the events narrated, not simple events to explain to readers and to assess critically, but compelling results of experimentation demonstrating the intervention of disincarnate intelligence. Our affirmation is also supported by the weight Bozzano gave to the evidence of the facts and, in particular, to psychological control: To whoever contested the lack of verification of the mediums at the seances of Millesimo, he responded that their psychological profile, namely being aristocrats, cultured, and rich, meant therefore automatically that they were not interested in committing fraud, as well as the clear evidence for paranormal phenomenology could not but render clearly truthful all his accounts and exempt him from subjecting the mediums to humiliating anti-fraud verification (e.g., Bozzano, 1929a). Let us be clear, we do not want to insinuate anything nefarious regarding the Genoese psychical researcher and his honesty, but simply to demonstrate how his behavior could seem suspect, or at least naïve, to many of his contemporaries.

Thanks to the wide dissemination of his writings, Bozzano managed to begin a correspondence and friendship not only with Conan Doyle but also with many other psychical researchers, scientists, and philosophers of that era, such as William Crookes (1832–1919), Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900), Oliver Lodge (1851–1940), Camille Flammarion (1842–1925), and James Hyslop (1854–1920), with the Italian philosopher and psychologist Angelo Brofferio (1846–1894), with Italian psychiatrists Enrico Morselli and Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), and also with many others (Letter from Genoa, 6 October 1942, unpublished, in Bozzano & De Boni, 1930–1943). But he also received a lot of letters from non-scholars who were greatly consoled by him and the doctrines he proposed. Unfortunately, almost all his correspondence has been lost (Ravaldini, 1993a:73–76).

But, as the Gospel says: *nemo propheta in patria* [never a prophet in his own country]. In fact, in Italy, the works of Bozzano were not very well-known outside the circle of readers of *Lo* or its staff; of these, positive comments on his works came, other than from De Boni (e.g., De Boni, 1946, 1947), from two important Italian psychical researchers, Emilio Servadio (1904–1995), who

extolled the argumentative force of Bozzano (Servadio 1931, 1934), and from Antonio Bruers (1880–1954), who was certainly more cautious regarding the Genoese scholar in accepting the evidence of some alleged spiritualistic facts (Bruers, 1929, 1930). The situation greatly improved when De Boni made an agreement with the publisher L'Albero of Verona (Italy) and began publishing the *opera omnia* of Bozzano⁵; the first volume *Popoli Primitivi e Manifestazioni Supernormali (Primitive Cultures and Supernormal Manifestations)* in 1941 (Bozzano, 1941)⁶ was a big success and attracted the attention of a goodly number of Italian intellectuals, above all anthropologists and religious and oriental historians such as Giuseppe Tucci (1894–1984), Raffaele Pettazzoni (1883–1959), and Ernesto de Martino (1908–1965), who critiqued it in newspapers and specialized journals (e.g., de Martino, 1941, Gasperini, 2011) and began a brief correspondence with Bozzano (unpublished correspondence). Outside of Italy, an enthusiastic reader of *Popoli Primitivi* was Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) (De Boni, 1949).

Bozzano died on June 24, 1943, from circulatory complications, and his death was mentioned in Italian and French spiritualistic and psychical journals (De Boni, 1947, Necrologie, 1946, Weissenbach, 1949).

Outline of the Metapsychical Philosophy

Between 1922 and 1943, Bozzano produced and updated his most important monographs which, together with his articles, permitted the reconstruction of the central points of his thinking and the ordering of them into a scheme, something which he had never formally done.⁷ As Iannuzzo (1982) also noted, that which seemed to emerge when studying Bozzano's works, was the attempt that he made, probably based on the body of Spencerian philosophy, to create a "metapsychical philosophy" capable of interpreting and coherently connecting paranormal phenomena, above all considering the demonstration of human survival, the topic which interested him primarily, but also secondarily deriving some notions of metaphysical and cosmological order of the general guiding hypotheses with which to return and compare the psychic phenomena in order to justify and organize them in a wider perspective, namely that of the spiritual evolution of the universe (Cognaschi, 2002). Indeed, the latter subject rarely emerges from his writings and certainly does not distinguish itself for originality from a conceptual point of view, but it is equally an unpublished mixture of Spencerian philosophical tenets and paranormal phenomena assumed to be empirical data.

At the root of his metapsychical philosophy, Bozzano posed his "Spiritistic hypothesis" which was not immediately synonymous with spiritualism, but rather a criterium of the interpretation of paranormal phenomena which only later on pointed to the veracity of spiritualism. With this hypothesis, he maintained

that paranormal, physical, and intellectual phenomena were products and proof of the existence of a spirit as well as an active and immaterial principle independent of the body, and which due to these characteristics cannot help but survive them inasmuch as the spirit is incarnate by life to certain phenomena (telepathy, clairvoyance, telekinesis, etc.) which Bozzano called “Animistic” (or psychobiodynamic) and since the spirit is disembodied from life in the other categories of phenomena (communication with the dead, apparitions at the deathbed, transcendental music, etc.) which he called “Spiritistic” (or transcendental). As Bozzano wrote in a work expressly dedicated to this subject,

supernormal phenomena (. . .) are the effects of a single cause and it is the human spirit which, when it is manifested fleetingly during the incarnate existence, determines Animistic phenomena, and when manifested under conditions of disembodiment in the world of the living it determines Spiritistic phenomena. (Bozzano, 1967a:295)⁸

All in all, the spiritic hypothesis is quite simple; the vast amount of the writings and subjects that he produced to support it is, if anything, magnificent and is Bozzano’s real contribution to psychical research. Above all, the discourse on the autonomy of “subconscious supernormal faculties,” namely the faculties of the incarnate spirit which is positioned in the subconscious, is, to all effects, the reservoir for psychic phenomena. For example, the fact that telepathy and clairvoyance emerged on rare occasions of severe physical and psychical weakening, as the mediums and people in the state of mesmeric sleep demonstrated, for Bozzano meant that they were completely useless in this life since the potential senses of the incarnate spirit would become real only when this spirit would have passed through the crisis of death (Bozzano, 1899, 1924d). For Bozzano, another strong proof in favor of the autonomy of the bodily spirit was the evident independence of supernormal faculties from the laws of natural selection, based on their uselessness in the struggle for life (Bozzano, 1923c). Bozzano resolved the mind–body problem utilizing the concept of the etheric body which envelops the incarnate spirit linking it to the body but is also capable of breaking off, bringing with it the individual consciousness and the integral subconscious memory contained in the etheric brain, the true seat of thinking for which the somatic brain only serves as an interpreter of physical sensations (Bozzano, 1930c, 1931).⁹

From the preceding considerations, together with the conviction that the spirit is also present in animals, with them having the same subconscious faculties as man (Bozzano, 1975), and the belief in the faculty of thought and willingness to mould the subject which, according to Bozzano, appeared to emerge from the phenomena of ideoplasty and ectoplasmy (Bozzano, 1967b, 1967c), Bozzano deduced a cosmological theory reconstructable from some

writings that went beyond pure psychical research. In summary, he believed that the universe was in continuous evolution and that the true evolutive motor was the spirit which had to pass through all the inferior animal forms until reaching man in order to finally reach a perfect state of existence in the spiritual sphere (Bozzano, 1967b); the evolution of the individual spirits falls within the end of the evolution of the great universal spirit, God or Absolute or Unknowable, which is both intelligence tinged with material reality and the material itself, constructed and supported, thanks to its most fundamental material expressions: Force, Motion, Energy, and Ether (Bozzano, 1924b). For Bozzano, this form of idealistic and evolutionist pantheism was not only, as was said, a working hypothesis used as a theoretical framework but also, together with all that happened after the birth of spiritualism, a new form of rational religious revelation not antagonistic to Christian thinking (Bozzano, 1927a).

Although implied in all his writings, the theme of survival after bodily death is the specific object of the controversial monograph *La Crisi della Morte* (*The Crisis of Death*) in which Bozzano attempted to demonstrate human survival, speaking about the environment and the conditions of spiritual life using transcendental communications, namely all that copious information received directly from the dead by direct writing or mediumistic dictation right from the beginning of the spiritualistic movement (Bozzano, 1998b). Bozzano believed that communication is an instrument indispensable for proving the reality of disembodied entities since these can furnish information regarding their own identity and, vice versa, information regarding their identity proves that communication was taking place with a dead person. We are dealing with very slippery ground and even Bozzano (1996) understood this; exactly for this reason, he stated a list of proofs in favor of the spiritualistic hypothesis he held to be unattackable by countertheories: the existence of subconscious supernormal faculties free of biological evolution, time, and space; bilocation; apparition of the dead at the deathbed; premonitions of accidental death; cross-correspondence between mediumistic communications received by mediums who are not together and cannot communicate; apparitions of the dead.

Implicitly, this list was an invitation to globally consider paranormal phenomena since only globally would they have furnished an incontestable demonstration of the spiritualistic hypothesis. Bozzano was loyal to his own intention since, with his monographs, he collected all paranormal phenomenology, thus constructing the empiric base and the construction of indirect proof (psychic phenomena) and direct proof (spiritualistic phenomena) he required. For example, among the most important monographs dedicated to psychic phenomena, we find the one dealing with the phenomena of bilocation (Bozzano, 1934),¹⁰ that dealing with clairvoyance (Bozzano, 1947a), that dealing with telepathy (Bozzano, 1946a), and the triptych dealing

with premonition in which he also espoused his solution to the ancient determinism–free will dilemma (Bozzano, 1947b, 1947c, 1948a). Regarding the spiritualistic phenomena, he dealt with telekinesis phenomena in relation to the crisis of death which he attributed to the participation of the dead (Bozzano, 1948b),¹¹ experiences of an auditory nature at the deathbed as well as cases of transcendental music (Bozzano, 1982), the apparition of the dead at the deathbed (Bozzano, 1947b), haunting (Bozzano, 1936), and also polyglot mediumistic phenomena (Bozzano, 1946b). At the end of each monograph, he stated with certainty that had reached logical and necessary conclusions regarding the existence of supernormal faculties independent of the strict dictates of time, space, and natural selection with regard to the existence of disembodied spirits capable of interfering in the daily events of the living.

The thirst for proof brought Bozzano to also devote himself to phenomena which took place at other times and places; he wrote to reaffirm the veracity of the events of some precursors of the spiritualistic movement (Bozzano, 1957a, 1957b, 2001), to demonstrate the hand of the spirits in the composition of the supposed works dictated psychographically or produced by direct writing (Bozzano, 1998a), and he concluded with the grandiose attempt of complete recognition of the paranormal on the part of primitive cultures (Bozzano, 1941).

Conclusion

Bozzano was deeply convinced of his Spiritistic hypothesis and therefore spent 50 years of his life collecting his immense paranormal record of cases in order to demonstrate them scientifically, so that no one could any longer voice doubts about them. He built a solid reputation as a psychical researcher, but it is evident that the image which has survived is that of a spiritualist (Fodor, 1933:36). If we keep this in mind, together with the fact that, since the 1930s, parapsychology has moved on different tracks from those of Bozzano and has, above all, become a discipline conducted in the English language (e.g., Mauskopf & McVaugh, 1980), and that in Italy this area of study is languishing, we can form a rough idea of why the conclusions of Bozzano have not recently been taken into consideration.

In effect, the methods of Bozzano, which Iannuzzo (1983a) defined as observational and naturalistic and which we can also call bibliographic, must have seemed rather simplistic to the parapsychologists of the experimental school. In fact, he not only made exclusive use of qualitative sources but refused to adopt the experimental method, believing that it was not worthwhile (Ravaldini, 1993b:129), and, as was contested so many times (e.g., Di Porto, no year, Inardi & Iannuzzo, 1981), by taking the facts reported in the literature as immediately valid, he ended up assuming an uncritical attitude toward his own sources.

Nevertheless, from a historical point of view, he symbolically epitomized the interest of his time and place for spiritualism and psychical phenomena, and to study him permits, if nothing else, a more in-depth reconstruction of the Italian situation, in general suffering from a historiographic void on this subject. From a more straightforward parapsychological point of view, some attempts have been made to recover the case records and conclusions set forth by Bozzano in his monographs, which could still be rich in suggestions and ideas for research (e.g., Alvarado, 2005, 2008, Biondi, 2010).

Notes

- ¹ The *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (acronym: DBI) is a work of highly respected scientific value edited by the Institute of the Italian Encyclopedia, begun in 1925 and still not completed; its aim is to gather approximately 40,000 biographies having rich bibliographies and edited by scholars, of as many illustrious Italians. Paper publication has been interrupted, and it is now possible to consult it online at <http://www.treccani.it/Portale/ricerche/searchBiografie.html>
- ² His collection of letters is conserved at the Bozzano–De Boni Library Foundation in Bologna (Italy) and includes 450 letters, of which 275 are unpublished. Those from 1928 to 1936 have been published (De Boni, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978), and while those from 1930 to 1936 have been published, with, however, some letters missing, the bulk of the unpublished correspondence is from 1937 to 1943. In addition to the published writings of Bozzano, approximately 150 binders of additional unpublished material are conserved at the Foundation among which much other correspondence and various collections of notes, citations, drafts of articles, and monographs never published and even manuscripts of some of his most important publications are found. The Foundation, which also publishes the journal *Luce e Ombra* and is one of the most important Italian libraries of the history of spiritualism and psychical research, is the only association which is involved in keeping the memory of Bozzano alive. For further information, see <http://www.bibliotecabozzanodeboni.it>
- ³ Richet and Bozzano shared a professional friendship as is seen by their letters which have been conserved. Thanks to these letters, we know that the French scholar frequently sent his own publications dedicated to Bozzano, and many times he proposed publishing a collection of all Bozzano's works at his own expense; furthermore, initially antispiritualistic, Richet attributed his attraction to the spiritualistic hypothesis to reading Bozzano's works. See Bozzano (1924a) and unpublished letters: Richet–Bozzano, Paris, 14 May 1935, Paris, 31 May 1935, Paris, 28 June 1935.
- ⁴ Utilizing the unpublished material of the Bozzano–De Boni collection of letters, Biondi (2009) strongly questioned the honesty of Bozzano and De Boni regarding the events at Millesimo, quoting, in particular, their involvement in keeping secret the Centurione Scotto fraud in the seance on July 29, 1928, and that of George Valiantine in successive seances with the group of Millesimo, whose accounts have never been published.
- ⁵ Although De Boni (1941), with regard to the complete edition of Bozzano's writings, indicated 15,000 pages in more than 50 volumes, in the end he chose 17 writings,

those more theoretically important which had been updated with new material by Bozzano between 1939 and 1943 (De Boni, 1946). Until the 1970s, De Boni did his best to enable everybody to see the light, relying on various Italian publishing houses, also including *Editrice Luce e Ombra* which was refounded by him in 1967.

- ⁶ The majority of Bozzano's books are monographs, specific studies on a category of metapsychical phenomena, but *Popoli Primitivi* is one of the few writings to veer away from his usual theme; with this, he attempted to shed light on the entire paranormal phenomena of the cultures which the anthropology of that era defined as primitive, principally African peoples, but also including Indians, Aborigines, and Maori, in order to find the occidental case records (generated not by mediums but by yogin, shamans, and medicine men) and the solution to the question of the origin of religions (the observation of spiritualistic facts).
- ⁷ The only vaguely systematic work, written in 1938 (the definitive and quite different edition was published in 1967), and for this reason definable as the clear synthesis of his 50 years of work, is *Animismo o Spiritismo? Quale dei Due Spiega il Complesso dei Fatti?* (Bozzano, 1967a). The 1938 work was also translated into English as *Discarnate Influence in Human Life* (Bozzano, 1938b).
- ⁸ For the formulation of this hypothesis, Bozzano was greatly inspired by the work of Aksakof (1890) which he read in French in 1895 (Aksakof, 1895). There, in fact, we find (I consulted the Italian translation: Aksakof, 1912) the complete formulation of many of the points of Bozzano's metapsychical philosophy, such as the distinction between animistic and spiritistic phenomena, the theory according to which animistic phenomena reside in the subconscious and are proof of the existence of an immortal spirit free of the body, and also the importance of spiritualistic communication with cases of identification of the deceased as the main proof in favor of survival.
- ⁹ For a more in-depth study of Bozzano (1931), also in relation to the most recent reports of a *life review* in parapsychology events, see Biondi, 2010.
- ¹⁰ In the category of the phenomena of bilocation, Bozzano inserted a class of facts corresponding to today's out-of-body experiences, which, although not being classified as such and explanations of which resorted to hypotheses of the ethereal body and survival, had been studied for a long time. For a close examination of this history which also deals with Bozzano from the nineteenth century until the 1980s, see Alvarado, 1989. For a specific study of Bozzano and the phenomena of bilocation, see Alvarado, 2005.
- ¹¹ For a historical summary of these and other phenomena linked to near-death experiences, see Alvarado, 2006. For a specific study of this monograph of Bozzano, see Alvarado, 2008.

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