

## Creativity in a Foreign Language: “Dare un Nome alle Cose”<sup>1</sup>

*Eleonora Farina, M.A. Linguistics*

For thousands of years, verbal thought and verbal language have been considered the primary characteristics of the human species. The Human Birth Theory (Fagioli M. , *Death instinct and knowledge*, 2019) proposes a significant revolution of this perspective, highlighting how human thought is first and foremost a thought through images, that is to say, creative internal representations of feelings and sensory inputs (visual, tactile, acoustic, olfactory, gustatory), that after the first years of life develops into verbal thought and language. By stating that the most distinctive form of human thought is the thought through images, Fagioli highlights that a creative transformation is necessary to express this thought with verbal language, and we might add that the latter will sometimes struggle to fully render the hues and subtleties of the internal images. The development of the abilities in the native language can therefore be seen as an important part of the human reality, for it absolves the fundamental function of allowing us to express ourselves in the relationship with other human beings. Nonetheless, the native language can also become a restraining code, to the extent that it can give the adult individual the superficial illusion of a perfect correspondence between thoughts and words, therefore reducing our human experience to its mere verbal representation without leaving any room for the shades of the uncertain.

The experience of learning and speaking a foreign language, however, might be evocative of our first years of life, when the sounds we used to hear had no linguistic meaning to us, but rather we tried to grasp the sense of the communication from the sensory cues and the feelings that we perceived. While striving to understand the meaning and to find the right words to express it, just like the newborn we slowly develop our new language by filling up the new words with our internal images, created through the relationships with the people who express themselves in the foreign language. Nevertheless, we are not literally newborns. Our thoughts are not exclusively non-conscious thoughts, the foreign language is not our first language. We often transpose the knowledge concerning our native language to the foreign language, but also, more interestingly, we sense in the latter the peculiarities that might be overlooked by the native speakers. By looking for the internal image behind the words, sometimes we end up discovering the images embodied in the words and finding new foreign words to express thoughts and feelings that never had a name before. The non-native perspective allows one to understand a language in an unusual way because, in the non-native mind, the relationship between internal images and foreign words is not given for granted. The non-native speaker can develop this connection in a relatively more free way because their knowledge of another language adds layers of complexity to the basic conception of a one-to-one correspondence between thoughts and words.

Given the assumption that true language only comes from the creative transformation of internal images into verbal thoughts and articulated words, we might suppose that the possibility of expressing oneself in a foreign language constitutes a further challenge for the adult identity, as well as an opportunity to break the boundaries of the linguistic categorisation of our world. It may sound paradoxical, but we could hypothesise that the more languages you speak, the less your nonverbal thoughts will be directly associated with fixed verbal representations of them. A nonverbal thought will have multiple possible verbal representations, hence possibly requiring a moment of uncertainty before expressing it with words. It is that moment of uncertainty that allows us to linger in the unknown to search for a true verbal representation of ourselves in our relationship with others.

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<sup>1</sup> «To give a name to things» (Fagioli M. , *Bambino donna e trasformazione dell'uomo*, 2013, p. 32)

On a side note, it is also remarkable how Fagioli himself made the most of his linguistic and multilingual knowledge to verbalise and elaborate his theory, to “give a name to things” (eg. *Vorstellungsvermögen*, *capacità di immaginare*, capability to imagine), and how he strived for his whole life to find the most exact words to make known the formerly unknown reality of the non-conscious mind (Fagioli M. , *Left* 2016-2017, 2019). His approach to language was utterly inspiring, especially because he never considered it a tool for intellectual soliloquy, but rather a powerful instrument to share knowledge within the context of relationships between human beings.

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