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Jeannette Windheuser
Monica Ferrari
Matteo Morandi
(Hrsg.)

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The *Scuola Normale Superiore* of Pisa: Between the French Model and Autonomous Choices (1810-1923)

by Paola Carlucci and Mauro Moretti[1]

It is necessary to start with dates and from well-known political and operational choices to clearly define the perimeter within which we will need to move. And these preliminary indications should also be used to distance oneself from some simplifications, that is, from some optical illusions. It is necessary to be wary of the identification of destinies and defined outcomes from the germinal phase, and the reference to a presumed 200-year continuity could be illusionary in various aspects.

1 The *Scuola Normale*: from Napoleon to a united Italy

The *Scuola Normale* of Pisa was established by order of Napoleon Bonaparte with the Decree of 18 October 1810 concerning public education in Tuscany. This strongly defined origin does not constitute the starting point of linear institutional evolution. The *Scuola Normale* was initially conceived within an imperial educational organisation. Although canceled by the Restoration, the *Scuola Normale* was reopened in 1846-1847, a few years after an important university reform that had given a new structure to the university. The context was now the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, with a visible change of scale compared to the initial setting. Although it was reinstated and resumed its teaching activities after the revolutionary uprisings of 1848-1849, it was now working within the context of the school and cultural policy choices that the Tuscan government made during the second Restoration, which was also marked by a new and traumatic university reform. After the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy, the *Scuola Normale* underwent the first reform in 1862. It was now part of the new national university system and played a particular – though initially not well-defined – role.

The original purpose of the *Scuola Normale*, which had come to characterise its identity over a long period, is obviously what was evoked in its designation of Habsburg origin, that is, to train teachers who were destined primarily for secondary schools. Consequently, the *Scuola Normale* was conceived as an institution with a functional and sectoral purpose – one consistent with the needs of that time – for new professionals that were certainly not lacking in importance and prestige. And perhaps, from this point of view, a given permanence of ideal inspiration could be emphasised, taking into account the shift towards the higher levels of school professions that characterised the experience of many of those who studied there, while the Italian educational system was expanding and consolidating.

To better understand the events that took place, it is worthy to mention several other general elements that had a long-term impact. While far removed from its Parisian origins, the *Scuola Normale* has always maintained an organic link with the University of Pisa. The *normalisti*

1 Mauro Moretti authored the first section of the paper, and Paola Carlucci wrote the second section.

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were – and are – part of the University of Pisa, who complete special and complementary studies at the *Scuola Normale*. Moreover, for quite some time, it did not have its own faculty, except for some internal teaching assistants. The majority of the courses offered at the *Scuola Normale* were entrusted to the University of Pisa's teaching staff. It was around the work carried out within the *Scuola Normale* that a long and important tradition of scientific training was developed over time. It was a gradual process that owed more to practical developments than to adherence to an organic plan, which constituted the true nature, on a cultural level, of the 'normalistic' experience. No one has better described the sense of this development than Giovanni Gentile, as seen in the following beautiful description, which was to a certain extent tendentious as well as marked by precise motivations of educational policy:

> 'Thus, the *Normale* created by itself, in defiance of regulations, what the spirit that lived within it destined it to be. The creation of the Annals, which came to be a warning and a promise to the new students of the school, clearly and energetically determined the institution's new program, which affirmed what it had spontaneously become, a scientific seminary rather than a pedagogical seminary. From the outset, the eminent professors who directed it could feel that all the time money and effort would be wasted on that conglomeration of minute exercises to which the regulations reduced the work of the school because it was the most talented youth from the high schools who went to the *Normale* of Pisa, for which all these exercises were largely useless, if not annoying. Continued training in Latin and Greek was more or less necessary since everyone felt the need and the advantages of this, and, for this, an assistant professor was enough. But the faculty professors needed to be doing something more during the 'normalistic' conferences'.[2]

The *Scuola Normale*, however, has never had an institutional strength comparable to that of the Parisian model. For example, its students were not formally recognised as a particular position regarding state administration and public functions, with the partial exception of the short period of the Grand Duchy School. Another general and contextual aspect is the lack of a 'collegial' dimension in the history of contemporary Italian universities. There have not been many active university colleges in Italy in the last two centuries, and only recently has there been a revival of collegial structures with an outlook toward the so-called 'excellence' in higher education. While there were indeed university colleges in the nineteenth century, e.g. in Pavia and Turin, they lacked the features and didactic functions of the *Scuola Normale* – which, even from this point of view, was unique. Here we cannot dwell at length on this aspect, which is deeply rooted in the history of higher education in Pisa. Immediately after Italian unification, the need for a boarding school was being questioned: the seminars held at German universities, which began to be considered as an important and innovative practice in the field of higher education,[3] did not contemplate the cohabitation of the students. The abandonment of this educational model would have also been justified by the political opportunity to break away from the long and vigorous tradition linked to the work of religious orders. Amongst others, it should have been the responsibility of the Minister of Education, Carlo Matteucci, to defend the collegial solution, highlighting the fundamental difference between a strongly vocational institution, with access regulated through selective examinations and a precise professional purpose, and the colleges of ancient origins, which had no admission standards and was comprised of a generic and undifferentiated student body subjected to archaic disciplinary rules. These were colleges, and other higher education institutions, that were 'no longer appropri-

2 Gentile 1908/2015, p. 83.

3 For this point, see Marin 2010, pp. 205ff.

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ate for the education of our time, and which, perhaps also in the past, have never served to reawaken in young people the feeling of dignity and responsibility of their acts, as is required of true education'.[4]

For this reason, attention would no longer be paid just to the *École Normale* in Paris. Pasquale Villari, who immediately before taking over the management of the *Scuola Normale* had completed an official study mission in Great Britain, would rather look to other colleges – explicitly referring to Eton[5] – and different educational models that animated the students to learn: 'It is a matter of not only instructing but of educating, and this is done only by following nature, trying to make life as pleasant as possible, and turning pleasures into good. This uniformity, which we seem to want to start with, led by France, dries up the mind and the heart'.[6]

After a brief but very intense period of work dedicated to the reorganisation of the *Scuola Normale* of Pisa, in 1865 Villari – who broke with the grand-ducal tradition, especially through a drastic laicisation of the *Scuola Normale* – strongly emphasized this idea, almost making the educational mission take precedence over the scientific-educational approach of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*:

> 'The undersigned does not believe that we must or we can leave too much leeway for freedom in a boarding school; but in two years of experience I have been profoundly convinced that, having set certain natural and indispensable limits on freedom, for which it is never necessary to compromise, the most generous feelings and the noblest characters are those who acquire dominance and regulate the general direction also of a society made up of young people [...]. I have sought and found the most solid foundation for discipline in the most generous sentiments of the young. It is very desirable that this School should present itself to the country one day as a source of progress in the Arts and Sciences; but it will be more fortunate if it is referred to as the educator of noble and generous personalities'.[7]

During the Napoleonic period, the *Scuola Normale* of Pisa was technically speaking set up as a branch of the Parisian École Normale Supérieure (reorganised in 1808), and its strict regulations were modeled on the French rules, with two-year courses in the faculties and internal lessons and repetitions at the *Scuola Normale*. Pisa was chosen due to the transformation of the university into one of the Academies of the Imperial University, and following with the linguistic policy adopted by the emperor. The use of the Italian language in the official legal documents of the Tuscan departments was maintained, and the *Scuola Normale* had to train teachers, '*pour les pays où l'usage publique de la langue italienne est autorisé par nos décrets impériaux*'.[8] The activity of the *Scuola Normale* began in November 1813, after Napoleon's defeat in Leipzig, and was therefore short-lived. Twenty-four Tuscan students, chosen via a competition, comprised the first and only class of the *Scuola Normale* of Pisa during the Napoleonic period. On 18 November 1814, the restored Grand Duke would grant these young people a subsidy to continue their studies in the ancient and restored college of Sapienza in Pisa. The Napoleonic experiment was too short-lived to derive conclusions about its functionality concerning to its stated objectives. Based on some interesting private documents relating to this first 'normalistic' season, however, some significant traits can be discerned. One feature was the strict level of discipline, which was at least formally in force, and is described in the following

4 Matteucci 1863, p. 92.
5 Cf. Villari 1872/1979, p. 158.
6 Villari 1864, p. 167.
7 Villari 1865, p. 119.
8 Art. 14 of Decree 18 October 1810, in: Il Palazzo dei Cavalieri 1932, p. 109.

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quotation: 'now, the Regulation is in force and we are more confined than the Capuchins'.[9] The daily routine of the students was punctuated by repeated religious practices with morning Mass and a common prayer after dinner. Attendance of university lectures was mandatory, and the 'separateness' of this microcosm, as was obvious at the time, was decidedly masculine. 'One cannot receive visits except during the hour of break and in the visiting room as the nuns must do'. Furthermore, the student's situation was to some degree equivalent to being in the military. Freed from the obligation of conscription – a very coveted concession to young students – the students had to work for the government for ten years upon graduation. After the Italian unification, Villari, the director of the school, tried to reinstate this privilege, but the reply from the Minister of Education, Michele Amari, was rather blunt: 'I declare that I will never give it a thought. Conscription forms the foundation of Italy, so I would love to exchange a couple of students and a dozen secondary school teachers for a foot soldier. Call me a barbarian all you want'.[10]

The problem of 'forming good teachers [...] by teaching them the best methods of Education, in which the sublime truths of Religion and the principles of the most severe morality hold the first place'[11] was then also presented in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. After the university reform of 1839-1841, which reintroduced the Napoleonic structure of the faculties, the *Scuola Normale* was reopened. This was done without any mention of the previous school, and the initial idea regarding the creation of a nobleman's boarding school was rejected. A three-year study programme was established, including university attendance and internal lessons. Arts and literature students lived in the college, unlike their colleagues in the sciences, who were considered aggregated students. Paying students were also permitted to attend the *Scuola Normale*; and this possibility, as well as different categories of students, was continued into the first phase of the Italian *Scuola Normale Superiore*. With just nine students, the *Scuola Normale* opened on 15 November 1847, and it was almost immediately caught up in the revolutionary events that soon followed. At the end of 1849, a very restrictive regulation was adopted, which also affected the political and religious levels. With the passage of the Tuscan School Law on 30 June 1852, further defined by another provision on 16 April 1854, the function of the *Scuola Normale* of Pisa was strengthened concerning the qualification and access to teaching in public schools, with the recognition of the qualifications of the diploma issued by the school.[12] The need for uniform criteria in the training and selection of teaching staff was dealt with in this way, not to mention the need to have political control over the teachers themselves. The *Scuola Normale* thus began to function regularly, even though, following the Counter-Reformation of 1851, the University of Pisa could no longer teach various subjects that were considered dangerous, such as history and history of philosophy. And it was this concrete consolidation during the 1850s, with the educationalist, Gaspero Pecchioli, serving as Director of Studies,[13] that later ensured that the *Scuola Normale Superiore* had a special position in the university system of the new Kingdom of Italy.

9 See the letter by Niccola Braccini to his brother, 8 November 1813, in: Nannipieri 2009, pp. 94f. All the quotations in the text are from the same letter.

10 Michele Amari to Pasquale Villari, 21 May 1864, in Moretti 2008a, p. 61.

11 G. Boninsegni, *Rapporto inviato alla Soprintendenza agli studi dalla Commissione incaricata di studiare l'organizzazione della Scuola normale toscana*, dated 5 June 1846, in: Il Palazzo dei Cavalieri 1932, pp. 123f.

12 Tomasi/Sistoli Paoli 1990, pp. 66ff.; Gaudio 2001, pp. 234ff.

13 This position was assigned by the right to the professor of pedagogy according to Article 7 of the Grand-Ducal Motu Proprio Decree of 28 November 1846.

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These are indeed the years of the 'black legend' in the history of the *Scuola Normale* during the second Restoration, as indicated in some harsh and well-known Carduccian testimonies. Of course, the climate inside the *Scuola Normale* was strongly affected by the burden of a double disciplinary and confessional pressure, which the positions previously mentioned, such as that of Pasquale Villari, wanted to distance themselves from. But the student data that is available regarding their professional trajectories[14] demonstrate certain effectiveness when it came to meeting the aims the institution had set out. When looking at the grand-ducal period up to the 1862 Reform, of the 57 qualified students, 43 were in the Arts and 14 in the Sciences. This imbalance remained intact for a long time, and it was related to the structure of the secondary educational offerings. Of these, in 1871, six students went on to teach in higher education. For another six, no data is available. One former student disappeared, and four others became private instructors. The others went on to become secondary teachers, mostly concentrated in Tuscany. While this was to be expected, given the original regional framework into which they were embedded, the dynamics of a national professional context were already visible. Given that these young people now had less time to receive an education and to develop their careers from 1863 to 1871, the professional opportunities of *normalisti* between 1863 and 1869 are also visible. Only one former student, Ulisse Dini, who was a great mathematician, had attained a university professorship until 1871. Following the reform, the ever-stricter selection process meant a reduction in both the number of applicants and those admitted to the programme: 20 of 31 applicants were admitted in 1862, 8 of 25 in 1863 and 6 of 27 in 1864. Of the 41 graduates, two from the science class did not find employment, one became a university professor, and the remaining 39 went on to become teachers. Of the 39 teachers, 25 came from the Arts and 14 from the Sciences, with initial recruitment and professional destination now on a national scale.

While it would be very instructive to gather and elaborate broad and systematic information on the regional and social origins of the students, adequate prosopographical studies on nineteenth-century *normalisti*[15] are still lacking. They were generally from the modest professional bourgeoisie, who were also attracted to the material advantages offered by the college accommodations as well as for their scientific and professional careers. The number of students was always very small. To prevent a significant number of new graduates from entering the national secondary schools at once, despite the intentions that emerged during the first post-unification debates, only 17 were admitted in 1882 and 16 admitted in 1891. In contrast to how the great majority of teachers in the decades following Italian unification were assigned teaching posts, this new approach was, if anything, a work of dissemination. It was a proposal for a different type of teacher compared to the teaching body that was still very non-homogenous, hurriedly assembled and occasionally recruited. The young graduates from the *Scuola Normale Superiore* do not seem to have encountered difficulties finding employment. However, their entry into high schools raised doubts and protests in more than one case. As Marino Raicich observed, the *normalisti* 'were seen by the older teachers as a threat to their careers'.[16] From a school that was by no means considered marginal, such as the Parini High School in Milan, a far less negligible complaint against the 'normalistic students' reached the Ministry of Instruction that

14 The following information is taken – and roughly summarised – from the conclusive part of the precious contribution by Betti 1871. See also: Al-Kalak/Mondini 2011.

15 For a later period, see Mondini 2010.

16 Raicich 1995, p. 50.

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the young, makeshift, impromptu teachers were disliked by the 'old teachers', who were disgruntled 'about these appointments to the detriment and discredit of their seniority'. But the headmaster went deeper into the complaint, indicating the tendency of these young professors, on the one hand, to make their teaching overly 'scientific', while, on the other, 'neglecting above all the aesthetic study of the authors and drying up the minds of the young'. Seizing on what was a precise institutional dynamic in progress, the following assessment was provided: 'Primary and secondary schools are paved with *normalisti*, who are a real army by now, a coterie of normal schools, academies, colleges, universities, which will soon be a ministry outside the Ministry'.[17]

In this passage, the precision of the institutional specifications is quite striking. And instead of relating the often-told story of the first Italian *Scuola Normale*, it seems appropriate to take the cue offered by the Milanese headmaster for a kind of periodising consideration. In 1871, one could speak of normal schools in the plural. The Royal Decree of September 1869 established one in Naples.[18] The *Accademia scientifico-letteraria* in Milan was founded by Article 48 of the Casati Law. The Istituto di Studi Superiori in Florence was founded by the provisional Tuscan government in 1859.[19] The university, probably, at that time, in Padua, had a pedagogical seminar of Germanic origin. Especially in Milan and Florence – more precisely, the philosophy and philology section of the Institute – the focus was on teaching qualification. This was done to give body and institutional purpose to university-level schools with few students. In other words, a specific institutional area had emerged, one distinct from the ordinary university faculties, that was mainly oriented to the preparation of teachers. A few years later, as I have already pointed out, a political change took place in this area: the establishment of the so-called magisterium schools, which were complementary courses placed in the second two-year period of the Faculties of Letters and Sciences and intended for future teachers:

It is at this time that the uniqueness of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* is defined in the Italian university scenario. In essence, and quite simply, the few university colleges then existing in Italy did not have recognized or specific didactic assignments, whereas the university faculties – and also the institutions in Florence and Milan – had financial aid grants to be allocated to the students, but they had no colleges.[20]

2 The *Scuola Normale Superiore* and the *Scuole di Magistero* (teacher training schools)[21]

In the period immediately following unification, the structure of teacher training was polycentric and separate from universities; therefore, it was destined to be overcome by the creation, in the mid-seventies, of the *Scuole di Magistero*, teacher training schools in the Faculties of Letters

17 For the letter from the headmaster G. Vollo, ibid.

18 Cf. Royal Decree of 23 September 1869, n. 5300, *Presso l'Università di Napoli è istituita una Scuola normale superiore per formare insegnanti degli istituti ginnasiali e liceali e ne è approvato il regolamento*.

19 For an overview, with a great deal of specific information on these issues, see: Decleva 2001, Moretti 2010, Rogari 1991, Soldani 2016 (pp. 56ff. for data and information about the first career opportunities in teaching comparable to those in Pisa).

20 Cf. Moretti 2011b, p. 31.

21 Here, an initial reconstruction of the relationship between the *Scuola Normale* and the *Scuole di Magistero* is specified and enhanced: see Carlucci 2012, *passim*.

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and Sciences. In the second two-year study programme, the *Scuole di Magistero* were attended by those students who wanted to obtain teaching qualifications.[22]

Following this significant innovation, as previously stated, the exceptional nature of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* was affirmed, which occupied a very unique position within both the Italian and European educational landscape. It was both a school and a boarding school, with specific didactic responsibilities and with an institutional task: to train teachers for secondary schools, which was also the basic task managed by the *Scuole di Magistero* within the University of Pisa. The relationship of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* of Pisa with the *Scuole di Magistero* is crucial because it touches the heart of the vocation and of the fundamental contradictions that marked the Pisan institution in the unified Italy. Its progressive evolution towards an increasingly distinct scientific vocation owes much to this relationship as well.

This relationship can be divided into three phases: the initial period, up to the 1880s, in which the *Scuola Normale Superiore* tried with difficulty to adapt to the new reality of the *Scuole di Magistero*. Then came the intermediate period, during the late nineteenth century, which was characterised by a clash of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* with the University of Pisa regarding the management of teacher training schools. Finally, the last period, between 1908 and 1920, saw an important clarification of the purposes of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* and concluded with the suppression of the *Scuole di Magistero* – a suppression that had, at least initially, a very negative impact on the *Scuola Normale Superiore*.

In the first period, therefore, immediately after the creation of the *Scuole di Magistero*, the question arose of how to link the new mode of teacher training with the structure and operations of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*. After the university regulations were issued in 1875, Minister Bonghi heavily promoted a new set of regulations for the *Scuola Normale Superiore*. On this basis, the two sections comprised of Arts and Philosophy and Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences, as established by the Matteucci Regulation of 17 August 1862, n. 771,[23] were divided into various subsections (Italian Literature, Latin and Greek Literature, History and Geography, Philosophy, Pedagogy as the first grouping; Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Natural Sciences as the second), corresponding to the sections in the *Scuole di Magistero*. This organisation was also reflected in the *Normale*'s Board of Directors, the governing council to which all the administrative and educational decisions were delegated, which was joined by two special directive councils for each section, so that in the relevant rules they were referred to in the plural as 'Boards of Directors'.[24]

22 The *Scuole di Magistero* were created by the Minister of Education Ruggiero Bonghi, with two regulations for the Faculties of Sciences and Letters, which, in addition to the reorganisation of the degree courses, were instituted only at the faculties that met certain requirements: Royal Decree 11 October 1875, n. 2742 (Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d'Italia, 2 November 1875, n. 255) and n. 2743 (ibid., 3 November 1875, n. 256). The *Scuole di Magistero* represents a field of study that is still open. Important references in the texts are mentioned in Note 17; see also: Santoni Rugiu/Santamaita 2011, pp. 47ff., 60ff.

23 As previously stated, the Matteucci regulation was the founding act of the unitary *Scuola Normale*: Il Palazzo dei Cavalieri 1932, pp. 154ff.

24 The new regulation aimed at the *Scuola Normale* was issued in Royal Decree 26 October 1875, n. 2748 (Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d'Italia, 8 November 1875, n. 260). Art. 25-28 established that the Boards of Directors were presided over by the director of the *Scuola Normale* and composed of the 'presidents of the respective subsections and of the internal professor of the same section'. It was then specified that 'the professors of the subsections are the same ones who are designated to compose the corresponding sections of the *Scuole di Magistero* established by the regulations of the university faculties of the Letters and Sciences. The presidents of the subsections are appointed each year by the respective Faculty'. Looking through the minutes, one sees that the convocations of the 'special'

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However, it was an arrangement destined to be modified often in the years that followed. Already in 1877, Bonghi's successor, Michele Coppino, proposed another regulation for the Pisan institution, in which he again intervened on the link between the *Scuola Normale Superiore* and the *Scuole di Magistero.* Among other things, a modification was arranged for the Literature Section, which was divided into philological, historical and philosophical sections, while the scientific section remained unchanged.[25]

Beyond the structural changes, which certainly did not facilitate the trend, the concerns within the *Scuola Normale Superiore* were of a more substantive nature and concerned the function and the ultimate objective of the Pisan institution. These concerns were clearly expressed by its director, Enrico Betti, who, even with the creation of the Annals of the Arts and Science, had increasingly emphasised the scientific vocation of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*.[26] In a session of the Board of Directors, Betti had emphasised 'that it intends to preserve the *Scuola Normale Superiore* as it is and without removing the *Scuole di Magistero* from the University. The *normalisti* will continue to receive their qualifying diploma, the *Scuola Normale Superiore* will keep its traditions, while the students in the *Scuole di Magistero* will receive the simple certificate that enables them to teach'.[27] Betti, as Secretary-General of Public Education of the Bonghi Ministry in the two-year period from 1874 to 1876, had essentially succeeded in his intention: the regulation of 1875 introduced a distinction between the diplomas for the qualification of *normalisti* and the students of the *Scuole di Magistero*, a distinction which remained unchanged in 1877.[28]

However, Betti was not able to avoid the problems created by this overall complex and unclear organisation.

This difficult situation necessitated continual adjustments in the years to come. But not only that. In an effort to distinguish itself from the *Scuole di Magistero*, the *Scuola Normale Superiore* made its scientific vocation increasingly explicit, which had already been affirmed by Betti

Board of Directors alternated from 1875 onward – of which, also due to gaps in the documentation, it is difficult to verify the actual functioning in practice – with those of the General Board of Directors. For the composition of the Board of Directors over the years, see Annuario della Regia Università di Pisa. On the progressive definition of those in charge of the management of the *Scuola Normale*, Moretti 2011a; especially for the period after the Second World War, Carlucci 2012, *passim*.

25 The Coppino Regulation was issued in Royal Decree 23 June 1877, n. 4002 (Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d'Italia, 12 September 1877, n. 213). This provision was also important because it further defined the leadership of the *Scuola Normale*, in which the position of deputy director was established.

26 On Betti, who 'almost without realizing it' place the scientific training of the *normalisti* in the foreground rather than educational training, Berengo, 1992/2004, p. 39. Betti succeeded Villari and held the position until his death in 1892, with the exception of the two-year period 1874-1876, which will be mentioned later. A mathematician of international renown, Betti taught in Pisa from 1857 as a professor of higher algebra and then, in 1864, succeeded his teacher Ottaviano Mossotti in the Chair of Mathematical Physics. For an overview of Betti, see Virgopia 1967.

27 Archivio storico della Scuola Normale Superiore, Verbali del Consiglio direttivo, 23 November 1876; also 16 November 1876.

28 Art. 10 of the Bonghi Regulation of 1875 stated that 'young people in the normalistic years follow the rules laid down by the regulations for the Faculty of Letters, for Philosophy and for Sciences, in those parts concerning the schools of teaching, in as much as the rules themselves agree with those established by this regulation'. Furthermore, in Art. 11, it was emphasised that the students from the *Scuola Normale* would receive 'a Diploma of qualification for special teaching in Classical or Normal Secondary Schools, signed by the rector of the Royal University and the director of the school'. As mentioned in the text, these provisions were completely incorporated into the Coppino Regulation of 1877.

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himself, its 'diversity' with respect to those disputed and confused preparation courses for teachers.

The main testing ground in this sense were the conferences of the *Scuole di Magistero*, the lectures given by the professors in the faculties that the students, both the real *normalisti* and those simply enrolled in the *Scuole di Magistero*, had to attend in order to obtain teaching qualifications. However, in the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, such conferences 'presupposed a serious and profound study preparation' and, 'as happens in all the *Scuole di Magistero,* they did not have as an actual basis the same high school culture reinforced by the reading of some scholastic manual'.[29] The desire to be controversial in Gentile's 1908 essay has already been mentioned.[30] However, another important student of the *Scuola Normale*, Gioacchino Volpe, who shared at least part of the 'normalistic' experience with Gentile,[31] confirms that the 'normalistic' conferences should be of a high standard.

In 1904 Volpe temporarily assigned at the Pisan teaching position and replaced his master, Amedeo Crivellucci, while he went to Rome to complete research.

A valuable testimony by Volpe dating back to this period is contained in one of his letters to Alberto del Vecchio, who at that time was director of the Archivio Storico Italiano. Therefore, it is a private testimony and, because of this, it is in all probability devoid of the provocative spirit of Gentile. With regard to conferences of the *Scuole di Magistero* that he held in place of Crivellucci at the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, Volpe then wrote:

> '[...] Was Villari not very edified that day at the conference? Quite the worst of the three, that one who intervened! But I too was not very happy. And to say that here at the conferences, in the place of Crivellucci, I care about the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, and I sometimes speak a whole hour with a clarity and a mastery of myself, which even I welcome!'.[32]

At the end of this paper, we will return to Volpe's statement in order to highlight a more general meaning that it takes on in light of the fate of the *normalisti* within the Italian schools.

First, however, it is worth reflecting on the second period of the relationship between the *Scuola Normale Superiore* and the *Scuole di Magistero*, which took place during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, characterised by the clash with the University of Pisa.

Enrico Betti's successor was Alessandro D'Ancona, director of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* from 1892 to 1900.[33] Having served, among other things, as long-time member of the Boards of Directors, he had a profound knowledge of the structure of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* and of the progress it had made.[34] Over the course of his tenure there, D'Ancona was never

29 Thus, recalling his personal experience as a visitor to these conferences, Gentile 1908/2015, p. 94.

30 See section 1 of the present paper. Gentile intended to compare the 'normalistic' model with the *Scuole di Magistero*, which he wanted to abolish.

31 As is well known, Gentile had been a student at the *Scuola Normale* in the period from 1893-1897 and Volpe in the period 1895-1899.

32 Archivio storico italiano, Carteggio, f. Volpe Gioacchino, [Pisa 1904]. As commonly known, Volpe had studied with both Villari and Del Vecchio during his specialisation at the *Istituto di Studi Superiori* in Florence.

33 Born in 1835, D'Ancona held the Chair of Italian Literature in Pisa starting in 1860. On D'Ancona's teaching at the university, see Floriani 2010, pp. 142ff.; on his teaching at the *Scuola Normale*, Gonelli 2011; I refer to these texts for further information concerning the extensive bibliography on D'Ancona.

34 D'Ancona always intensely participated in debates within the *Scuola Normale*. As an example, see his speech in the discussion of the Board of Directors concerning the temporary replacement of Betti, who, while he was Secretary of Public Education from 1874 to 1876, was replaced by Ulisse Dini. On that occasion, D'Ancona supported the decisions of the Direction of the *Scuola Normale* while ignoring the criticisms made by the representatives of the

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confronted with structural changes to the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, except for a thorny issue related to the *Scuole di Magistero*, in which the *Scuola Normale Superiore* was opposed to the University of Pisa. A telling story of the constant struggle between the *Scuola Normale Superiore* and the University of Pisa to defend or extend its own spaces of power but which, in this case, assumed a more general value that was linked precisely to the question of control of teacher training.[35]

Based on the Regulation of 29 November 1891,[36] the Ministry of Education wanted the *Scuole di Magistero* to become further integrated into the *Scuola Normale Superiore* by introducing a fourth class of students. At the *Normale*, there were already three categories of pupils: free boarders, paid boarders and aggregates (with or without financial aid). It was a limitation to the 'pure' collegiate model, which allowed, for example, the opening of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* to women, as will be seen shortly. Whereas the students of the *Scuole di Magistero* would have been admitted to the *Scuola Normale Superiore* simply by means of registration, all categories of *normalisti* had to pass the institution's own admission exam.

The debate within the *Scuola Normale* was very lively and marked a very tense comparison, at times, with the University of Pisa.[37] In the end, based on a proposal made by Ulisse Dini, the magisterial students were admitted by the Board of Directors after hearing the opinions of the respective faculties of origin. There was once again a great deal of insistence on the difference between the diploma awarded to the students of the *Scuole di Magistero* and that of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, provisions that were later ratified by the regulatory amendment of 9 May 1895.[38]

Accepting the introduction of a further category of students, 'although not considering it appropriate', D'Ancona decidedly rejected any proposal aimed at further modifying the composition of the Board of Directors or at removing from the *Scuola Normale Superiore* control the student admissions from the *Scuole di Magistero,* entrusting the question to the faculties, which wanted to check admissions, alongside with the ministry.[39]

From this episode, and generally speaking, the *Scuola Normale Superiore* policy emerges with respect to the *Scuole di Magistero*. Everything was done to distinguish their students from those of the teacher training schools. Nevertheless, the Pisan institution did not want to lose control over their management because they guaranteed an important flow of funds into the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, above all, due to the funds for the *Scuole di Magistero* conferences mentioned above.

University of Pisa, of which, at that time, it was an integral part, Archivio storico della Scuola Normale Superiore, Verbali del Consiglio direttivo, 20 November 1874.

35 The question of the relationship between the *Scuola Normale* and the University of Pisa is central to understanding the events and the evolution of the Pisan School. On this point, in addition to the considerations set out in the first paragraph of this paper, see Carlucci 2012, *passim*.

36 The regulation of 29 November 1891 was issued by Villari, Education Minister from 1891 to 1892 in the first Di Rudinì government, in an attempt to accentuate the didactic character of the *Scuole di Magistero*, which the Neapolitan historian, in general, considered an ineffective instrument for teacher preparation, Moretti 1999, pp. 240-241.

37 For this comparison, which did not disappear even with the regulatory change referred to in the following note, Archivio storico della Scuola Normale Superiore, Verbali del Consiglio direttivo, from 22 June 1895 to 4 May 1896.

38 The creation of a fourth class of students at the *Scuola Normale* was established in the Royal Decree 9 May 1895, n. 347.

39 Archivio storico della Scuola Normale Superiore, Verbali del Consiglio direttivo, 4 May 1894.

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In 1900, D'Ancona left the direction of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* and was succeeded by Betti's student, Ulisse Dini, who was another great mathematician destined to seal the fate of the Pisan School.[40] The era of Dini, unlike the years of D'Ancona's direction, was marked by very critical voices, which also testified to a general 'downsizin' of the weight of the University of Pisa on the national scene.[41] Beyond the controversial positions, signs of anxiety undoubtedly emerge in the chronicles of the *Scuola Normale*. In particular, the original purpose of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, that is, to prepare students for teaching, was seriously called into question. In 1904, the problem mainly had to do with the significant number of students who, after graduation, did not take the qualifying exam.[42] Later, in 1911, one student, after studying mathematics for two years as a non-paying boarder, decided to pursue engineering studies instead, thus failing in his 'moral obligation to continue his studies for the teaching career'.[43] These problems were very close to Dini's heart.

Between 1910 and 1914, Dini, as president of the Royal Commission for the reorganisation of higher education, had the opportunity to talk at length about the 'relationship between university experience and 'professional' training'.[44] The Royal Commission, chaired by Dini, was one of the final stages in the great debate on education that had been widely discussed for almost a decade and had seen significant interventions, such as those by Gaetano Salvemini, in particular, with regard to the status and preparation of secondary school teachers.[45]

The *Scuola Normale Superiore*, given its history and its institutional vocation, could not fail to be affected by this climate of ferment. Signs of restlessness were also registered with regard to the scientific vocation of its students. Here the long-standing rivalry with the *Istituto di Studi Superiori* in Florence was strongly felt.[46]

However, the memory of a closed and provincial environment, constrained by strict rules, must be partially reconsidered. The *Scuola Normale Superiore* under Dini certainly deserves a less unilateral evaluation.[47] From an institutional point of view, it should be kept in mind that Dini's management was characterised by a new and important regulation of the school, in force with the Decree of 12 October 1908, n. 649, which represented a turning point in the history

40 Like Betti, Dini was also a significant political figure, both in Pisa and at the national level. He was a member of parliament starting in 1882 and later senator starting in 1892. Moreover, he played a prominent role in educational policy, as will be touched upon shortly. For an overview of Dini, see Menghini 1991.

41 Cf. Pertici 2000, pp. 64ff. for a very acute reconstruction of the normalistic environment in the first decade of the twentieth century. As commonly known, the criticisms of the *Scuola Normale* were initiated in particular by Adolfo Omodeo, who was a student of the *Scuola Normale* for a short time, and by Ernesto Codignola, who attended the *Scuola di Magistero*.

42 Cf. Archivio storico della Scuola Normale Superiore, Verbali del Consiglio direttivo, 1 February 1904. In an attempt to counter the phenomenon, it was decided that the graduation theses of the students who had not taken the qualifying examination would no longer be published in the Annals.

43 Ibid., 18 November 1911: words from Director Ulisse Dini.

44 In the end, Dini would share, albeit with 'more pronounced reservations and caution', the orientation of the author of the final report of the commission, the classicist Luigi Ceci, who was favourable to the affirmation of the 'primacy of the scientific function of the university' and, conversely, the need for the introduction of the state examination to regulate access to the professions, Moretti 1994, p. 295. We will soon see what consequences the actual introduction of the state examination for teaching qualification would have on the *Scuola Normale*.

45 For a preliminary reconstruction of this debate, see Raicich 1981, pp. 326ff.

46 For example, Bernardino Barbadoro, who went on to become a historian, was initially admitted to the *Scuola Normale* but then opted for the Florentine Institute, Archivio storico della Scuola Normale Superiore, Verbali del Consiglio direttivo, 23 December 1908. There were other significant cases like this.

47 Gentile had just spoken of Dini's directorial abilities in very positive terms (Cf. Gentile 1918/1988).

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of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, as well as a further clarification of its complex relationship with the *Scuole di Magistero*. On that occasion, it was affirmed by law what had already happened in practice. Namely, the *Scuola Normale* aimed to achieve a double goal: the preparation of secondary school teachers was combined with the aim of 'promoting, with advanced studies, high level scientific and literary culture'.[48] It was an innovation called for by the same Minister of Education, Luigi Rava, who, on 18 December 1907, had written to the management of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, reporting how the Italian Council of State, despite having expressed a favourable opinion on the new regulation, had stressed that perhaps it would be:

> '… better to clarify the high aims of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, which, while it proposes to train young people in secondary education, educates them to push toward further investigation into the field of scientific studies as well as in philological culture, therefore, it would be appropriate to modify the draft of the first article, which, as it had been formulated, does not exactly express the noble task that the well-deserving institute proposes for itself'.[49]

Accordingly, in Article 2 of the Regulation of 1908, it is stated that 'in the school there are two categories of students. The first category is made up of students who tend to reach both aims that the school proposes. The second category is made up of students who tend to reach only the first goal'. This last statement clearly refers to the students of the *Scuole di Magistero*, to whom three articles of the regulation were specifically dedicated (Articles 25-28), which provided for their admission by simple registration and reaffirmed as usual the 'diversity' of their diploma compared to the students in the first category (who, in turn, continued to be divided into boarders and aggregates).[50]

The regulation of 1908 finally simplified the confusing rules related to the Board of Directors in that it eliminated the two special directive councils introduced in 1875 and established a return to a single body, composed of the Chancellor of the University, the Director of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, two internal professors as well as one professor for each of the sections in which the *Scuole di Magistero* were divided and who was elected each year by the respective faculties.[51]

In this background of continuous regulatory reorganization, which contributes to progressively clarifying the aims of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, it is worthwhile to include some considerations on the career paths of *normalisti* students and on how the dual vocations of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* – school teaching and scientific research – are reflected in their personal and professional lives. D'Ancona, in a precious list of the students of the *Scuola Normale* from the grand-ducal refoundation onwards, wrote:

> 'We like to point out that there were a total of 339 students who graduated from here at the end of the academic year [1894-1895]: of which half of one hundred went into university teaching, and

48 The regulation was issued in the Royal Decree of 12 October 1908, n. 649 (Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d'Italia, 3 December 1908, n. 283).

49 Archivio storico della Scuola Normale Superiore, b. 13, Corrispondenza 1902-1909.

50 As far as the students of the so-called first category were concerned, the possibility of 'a fifth year of post-graduate studies, practical studies and training in middle schools in the city' was introduced (see Art. 7): effective implementation of this provision should be verified. A fifth year of scientific specialization (*perfezionamento*) was introduced in 1927 (cf. Carlucci 2012, pp. 50f.).

51 Cf. Art. 29 and 2: it should be emphasised that in the latter article the term 'Classes' of Letters and Philosophy and of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences – still in current use – appeared for the first time in place of the previous 'Sections', a definition that was now used for the previous 'subsections' of the *Scuole di Magistero*.

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> another half of one hundred were school superintendents, headmasters of High Schools, assigned to the central administration and to libraries. The remaining, except for a few, on whom no research was done, indicated that they have teaching positions in secondary school, technical and high school education'.[52]

It is worthwhile to further disaggregate the data provided by D'Ancona to fully understand his considerations. Of the 339 students mentioned by D'Ancona, 57, as mentioned in the first paragraph, attended the grand-ducal *Normale*. Consequently, the students from the *Scuola Normale Superiore* up to 1894-95 were 282, divided as follows: 179 were enrolled in the Class of Letters and 103 in the Class of Sciences. Among the latter, there were as many as 21 university professors (including Vito Volterra and Federigo Enriques). Therefore, a much more significant percentage resulted than that half of one hundred university professors who came out of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* and mentioned by D'Ancona, considering that the number of scientists at the *Normale* was for a long time much fewer than the literary figures.[53]

A first distinction, of a purely disciplinary nature, must be made: the future *normalisti* university professors, if scientists, mostly entered directly into their instructional career as assistants, without the years of school teaching commonly required of the 'humanist' graduates. One need only think, as far as scientists are concerned, of Vito Volterra and Ulisse Dini for the period prior to the establishment of the *Scuole di Magistero*, or of Federigo Enriques and Mauro Picone, for the next period.[54]

For two future university professors in the humanities, however, the situation was completely different. Both Amedeo Crivellucci and Giovanni Monticolo finished the course of study in 1874 and went on to become important historians and professors at the University of Pisa and Rome. They both taught for several years and in various cities in secondary schools. Crivellucci taught for a total of eight years – moving from Siena to Sassari and later from Palermo to Rome – before attaining a university chair in Pisa in 1885.[55] Monticolo was a teacher in secondary schools from 1874 to 1892, teaching at first Latin and Greek and later History and Geography in the State High School of Naples (Umberto I), Arezzo, Potenza, Pistoia, Florence (Galilei), and in Rome (Visconti).[56]

An important professor of Education, Saverio De Dominicis left the *Scuola Normale Superiore* in 1867. Also due to conflicts with the Ministry of Education, he taught for several years in secondary schools from Venice to Bari. Finally, he attained the university Chair in Pedagogy at the University of Pavia in 1881.[57]

Even the greatest historian to emerge from the Pisan school of Crivellucci, Gioacchino Volpe, did not immediately enter academic teaching and required, after further academic experience

52 Elenco degli alunni 1896.

53 The number of students of the Letters were significantly superior to those of the Sciences until the second post-war period. Only at that time was there a substantial equalisation and finally a real 'overtaking'. For more information on this, see Al Kalak/Mondini 2011, p. 228.

54 For synthetic biographies of Dini, Enriques and Picone, see Dizionario biografico degli italiani, ad voces. On Volterra, some important biographical works exist: Guerraggio/Paoloni 2008, in part. pp. 15-44 for the period he spend in Pisa; Goodstein 2007, in part. pp. 48-60. On mathematicians from the *Scuola Normale* and for more in-depth bibliographical references, see Pepe 2011.

55 For a rich profile on Crivellucci, see Tangheroni 1985. In general, for the importance of his teaching and his work, Artifoni 1990.

56 There are various commemorations of Monticolo, who died in 1909; one of the most interesting is Manfroni 1909-1910.

57 For a biographical profile of De Dominicis, see Cambi 1987.

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gained in Florence and Germany, several years of teaching in secondary schools: first in Città S. Arcangelo in Abruzzo and then in Pisa from 1900 to 1903. In 1904, Volpe temporarily replaced Crivellucci in the university chair at Pisa, and that period dates back to his eye-witness accounts regarding the *Scuole di Magistero* conferences that he held at the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, and of the intellectual stature of the same, which was stated earlier in this article.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to verify the impact on the Italian secondary school of young scholars of this level. For many of them, these early years were also among the most fruitful periods of their intellectual production. But even with regard to other so-called 'minor' scholars, the dialogue between teaching and research, however, emerges clearly, even in a rich production of school textbooks. Those textbooks certainly did not have the same influence as the books authored, among others, by the directors of the *Scuola Normale,* Betti and D'Ancona.[58] Nevertheless, they did represent a notable production in any event.

Regarding this 'minor' production, we will only refer to two cases concerning two *Normale* female students in order to emphasise the importance of the presence of women in the post-unitary period of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*. While this choice is somewhat arbitrary, both spatial constraints and the need to highlight this significant point are the reasons behind this selection.

Admitted to the *Scuola Normale Superiore* starting in 1889 as aggregate students – therefore not part of the college, but with regard to course and study obligations equal to male students – women played a significant role within the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, a role that is to be further developed. Some scientists also succeeded in pursuing an academic career.[59] Among the *normalisti* who, as teachers in secondary schools, also produced significant scientific textbooks, Luigia Lanzani stands out. Together with her sister, the famous antiquarian Carolina, she published numerous successful volumes on history, Latin and Italian in her lifetime. Furthermore, the historian Evelina Rinaldi, who was a pupil of Amedeo Crivellucci, is also worth mentioning: a prolific author of various works ranging from modern history to the Risorgimento. She also co-authored an anthology of readings for lower secondary schools, which was reprinted many times during the first twenty years of the 20th century.[60]

The simple outline provided above deserves further research in order to investigate how the interlacing between school teaching and scientific vocation influenced the evolution of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*. Regarding the *Scuole di Magistero*, in 1920 the Minister of Education Croce's decision to abolish them certainly aggravated the already difficult challenges

58 Betti, together with Francesco Brioschi (another of the leading mathematicians of the time), translated and commented on *Gli elementi d'Euclide: con note, aggiunte ed esercizi ad uso de' ginnasi e de' licei* (Firenze 1867); there were re-editions of this text up to 1900: Ceccuti 1987, pp. 112ff. For the reconstruction of the events of the very successful Italian literature manual by D'Ancona-Bacci, which was first published in 1892, see Raicich 1989/1996.

59 Cf. Paoli 2011; in general, on women enrolled at the University of Pisa, Galoppini 2011. For more information on women at the *Scuola Normale*, see Carlucci 2012, pp. 38ff., where, among other things, reference is made to the two 'normaliste': physicist Rita Brunetti and mathematician Maria Pastori, both of whom succeeded in obtaining university chairs.

60 For information on the life and works of Lanzani and Rinaldi, important documentation, among other things, can be found in the Archivio storico della Scuola Normale Superiore, Anagrafica, *ad nomen*: it is a collection of testimonies on the fate of the *normalisti* initiated by Gentile and then continued through to the 1950s. Regarding the history in a united Italy, see various works by Casalena, in particular Casalena 2003, p. 299 for Lanzani, p. 336 for Rinaldi. Also, Casalena 2016.

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confronting the *Scuola Normale Superiore* in the aftermath of the First World War.[61] The suppression of the teacher training schools, in fact, resulted in the loss of the *Scuole di Magistero* conferences for the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, which served as an important and necessary source of funds to pay the professors of the faculties responsible for holding the conferences. Moreover, in the regulation of 1908, a clause stated:

> '… the School's Board of Directors will be able to propose to the Ministry, by means of the Director, other teachers of the two faculties to be paid as the previous ones, but to be appointed for only one year, with the assignment of special conferences and assistance to first category students [i.e. the *normalisti*] in their studies and carry out exercises at a higher literary and scientific level'.[62]

In addition to the economic loss, the closure of the *Scuole di Magistero* involved a significant impoverishment of the normal didactic offer. Therefore, one can understand the concerns of Luigi Bianchi, the great mathematician who succeeded to Dini in 1918. In November 1920 Bianchi on behalf of the Board of Directors, became the spokesman at the ministry to point out the necessity that the conferences 'naturally inherent in the character of the Institute'[63] be continued. A month earlier, Bianchi had also written to Gentile, urging him to intervene in this matter, above all emphasising the financial aspect.[64] The *Scuole di Magistero* conferences were replaced by the exercise courses provided for in the Croce Regulation of 1920, and the Faculties of Letters and Sciences at Pisa had the task of deciding 'which exercise courses should be held at the School'. These courses, however, lacked state funding. The Board of Directors of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* continued to insist, in vain, that the Ministry should restore the conferences and entrust this task to 'appointees, chosen by the respective faculties' and paid regularly by the Ministry.[65]

What is certain is that the 1920s were years of crisis for the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, with much uncertainty about what path to take. The *de facto* abolition of the secondary school teaching qualifying character of the *Normale* in 1923, due to Giovanni Gentile's introduction of the state examination, was a further significant blow.[66] However, as is widely known, it was Giovanni Gentile himself who re-established his beloved *Scuola*, where he first became an extraordinary superintendent and later director. At that point, the prevailing scientific vocation of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* was now a fact, a vocation that asserted itself ever more clearly, especially in comparison to the 'mass university' during the second half of the twentieth century. However, that is another story – one about which much has recently been written.[67]

61 On the abolition of *Scuole di Magistero*, Santoni Rugiu/Santamaita 2011, pp. 82ff. On the Minister of Education Croce, see Tognon 1990. On the difficulties of the *Scuola Normale* in the aftermath of the First World War, see Carlucci 2012, pp. 43ff.

62 *Regolamento* 1908, Art. 39.

63 Archivio storico della Scuola Normale Superiore, Verbali del Consiglio direttivo, 16 November 1920.

64 Guerraggio/Nastasi 1993, p. 118.

65 Archivio storico della Scuola Normale Superiore, Verbali del Consiglio direttivo, 17 March 1921 and 17 February 1922. It is probable that among the new courses established after the suppression of the *Scuole di Magistero*, the common seminars between the *Scuola Normale Superiore* and the university faculty must be identified, which in the 1930s are referred to in Moretti 2008b, p. 24.

66 Cf. Carlucci 2012, pp. 48f.

67 Ibid., for more extensive bibliographic references on the *Scuola Normale Superiore* of Gentile, especially pp. 54-78.

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