

With regard to happiness, French Revolution, data bases and computational linguistics

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Introduction of the volume *La Felicità è un'idea nuova in Europa. Contributo al lessico della rivoluzione francese* (tome 1, edited by Cesare Vetter, EUT, Trieste, 2005).

Please refer to the notes of the Italian text or to the French text

Since the second half of the Nineties I started, at the History Department of the University of Trieste, a workshop on the idea of happiness in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century. This workshop embraces researches of mine, discussions with my colleagues, confrontations with the students during the didactic activity and a broad and organic plan of dissertations.

The analysis of the idea of happiness meets the problems faced in former works. It integrates and in many ways completes the consideration on the dictatorship (1).

I have strong feelings about the fact that the idea of happiness is a preferential - not adequately patronized yet - field, in order to reconstruct the courses of the thought and of the political initiative in the modern and contemporaneous age.

The French revolution represents an essential join for the idea of happiness, as well as for other great questions of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century.

Happiness and French revolution

The ' bonheur de tous ' appears in the *Déclaration* of 26th August 1789. 'Le but de la société est le bonheur commun' the first article of the *Déclaration* of June 1793 quotes. 'Braves sans-culottes, pourquoi avez-vous fait la révolution? n'est-ce pas pour être plus heureux, foutre?' Hébert writes on number 241 of *Père Duchesne*. And then on number 263 : 'Il y a trop longtemps que les pauvres bougres de sans- culottes souffrent et tirent la langue. C' est pour être plus heureux, qu'ils ont fait la révolution'.

'Le but de la Révolution est le Bonheur du Peuple' is written in the head of the *Instruction de la Commission temporaire de surveillance républicaine* (Lyon-Ville Affranchie, 26 brumaire an second: 16 novembre 1793), the document that Soboul (2) terms the sans-culottes' manifesto and that Arendt uses as

Révolution Française.net, février 2007.

Translation, Cesare Vetter, "A proposito di felicità, rivoluzione francese, banche dati e linguistica computazionale", *Revolution Française.net, Epistémologie*, mis en ligne le 07 février 2007, <http://revolution-francaise.net/2007/02/07/107-proposito-felicita-rivoluzione-francese-banche-linguistica-computazionale>.

litmus paper to test the differences (radical, in her opinion) between the French and the American Revolution (3).

Saint-Just's statement of 3rd March 1794 ('Le bonheur est une idée neuve en Europe' (4)) is significant. It is a well-known and often quoted statement, still without close adequate examination (5). I must admit that so far, when my colleagues or students during my classes ask me for the exact meaning of Saint-Just's sentence, I feel puzzled.

My researches on happiness started many years ago thanks to the outcome of the study on dictatorship, but also to the interest for this sentence. And at the moment I'm not able to interpret it yet in a completely satisfactory way (or at least completely satisfactory to me).

The explanation that refers to the comparison with the American Revolution (6) is the easiest but also the simplest one. Also the appeals to search for the novelty in the shift from the private and individual aspect to the common one (7), in the separation from the Christian tradition (8) and in the accessibility to everybody and not only to the sages (9), don't seem very convincing. The reference to the dialectic between politics and happiness, which means to the idea of a politically roused happiness (10), seems more productive. And Jean Bart's intuition, which connects the novelty stresses with such emphasis by Saint-Just's to the idea of *bonheur commun* (11), seems even more productive.

The formula *bonheur commun* – accepted in the *Déclaration* of 1793, widely used in the year II (to tell the truth, more in the petitions and in the works which came from the clubs and from the sections than in the great protagonists' speeches: but this is a matter to go into and to examine) (12) and that will become, as it is well-known, Babeuf's motto – represents a substantial step in the transfer from the liberal concept (and when I say 'liberal' I mean the Liberalism *à la Constant, à la Mill, à la Berlin*, a Liberalism that hinges on the negative freedom and not the *libéralisme égalitaire* or *libéralisme humaniste*, I will mention afterwards) of happiness to the later adjustments in democratic, socialist and communist strain (13).

One can find it, for instance, in Mirabeau and Condorcet with different meanings from those of the Jacobinism and of the sans-culottes and much more radically different from the meaning it will have due to Babeuf.

For the Robespierriest Jacobinism (14), the Montagnards and the sans-culottes of the year II, the *bonheur commun* mainly tally with the meaning focused by Jean Bart, that is with the idea of 'un bonheur *partagé*, frugal [...] *accessible à tous*', an accessible *bonheur* one can reach through 'la généralisation de la petite propriété' (15). Mainly but not only, because more radical requests already appear in the Sansculottery of the year II and they persist in the *partage* and foreshadow Babeuf's later communist theorizations (16).

Also the *bonheur* evoked in the famous strophes of *La Carmagnole* (anonymous author, August 1792) is a more egalitarian than egalitarian (17) *bonheur*: 'Il faut raccourcir les géants/Et rendre les petits plus grands/Tout à la même hauteur/ Voilà le vrai bonheur...' (18).

For Babeuf the adjective *commun* beside the *bonheur* and the *félicité* again implies – as before for Meslier, Morelly and Mably, but not for Rousseau – the abolition of the private property and the 'communauté des biens'.

Besides, with Babeuf (and with Buonarroti) the idea of *dictature* enters the semantic field of *bonheur commun* and such a soldering will run through most of the communist theorizations of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century. The *dictature révolutionnaire* will easily turn from simple category of political thought into historically operative strength able to add fuel to hopes and enthusiasms and to guide individual sensibilities and collective behaviours, also thanks to its promises of happiness. In the paradox of the dictatorship as midwife of freedom, the idea of happiness plays an important and decisive part (19).

Mazzini hit the target when he recognized 'the right of happiness' – which (and this is my qualification) is very different from the American founder fathers' right of the 'pursuit of happiness' (20) – as the main feature of the socialist and communist ideologies (21). The eighteenth-century reactionary Catholic thought and Leon XIII with his encyclicals (22) will persist – obviously in a different strain - on the idea of happiness as the hinge idea of the genealogy of the mistake which goes through the modern age.

The pre-condition – necessary, in my opinion - to focus in an accurate and efficient conceptual way the idea of happiness in the French revolution (but the matter is obviously broader and pertains also to Mazzini's question) is the creation of a sufficiently comprehensive *corpus*, where one can use the tools and the methodology of the computational linguistics.

French revolution and computational linguistics

The *corpus* we have created at the Department of History of the University of Trieste (which cannot be made available on the web yet, due to reasons connected with publishing rights) includes the following bibliography: the *Œuvres politiques* of Marat (10 volumes, Bruxelles, 1989-1993) e other works of Marat of the period preceding the Revolution; the *Œuvres* of Robespierre (10 volumes, Paris, 2000); the *Œuvres complètes* of Saint-Just (Paris, 1984); the Journal of Hébert (*Le Père Duchesne*, 10 volumes, Paris, 1969); *Du Bonheur* of Lequinio (20 brumaire an second), maybe the most famous text on the idea of happiness of the period of the Revolution and which doesn't appear among Lequinio's material made available on the web by *Gallica*. We have obtained it through the manual transcription from the paper original of the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris and its subsequent digitalization.

We are now acquiring by scanner the articles of Babeuf (2 volumes, Paris, 1966), the second tome of the *Oeuvres complètes* of Jean Meslier (Paris 1974; one can examine the other two tomes at the internet site of the *ATILF*) and works edited by W. Markov and A. Soboul in *Die Sansculotten von Paris. Dokumente zur Geschichte der Volksbewegung. 1793-1794* (Berlin, 1957).

L' *Instruction* before mentioned appears as document number 52.

I intend to acquire (funds and strengths permitting) the *Œuvres* of Desmoulins (10 volumes, Paris, 1980), the *Œuvres de Condorcet* (12 volumes, Paris, 1847-1849; now in anastatic reprinting), the collection of the sources *Aux origines de la République 1789-1792* (6 volumes, Paris, 1991), some temporal segments of the *Moniteur* and of the *Archives parlementaires* (the ones

chosen by M. Ozouf, for his study on the war and the terror in the revolutionary matter (23)).

On the acquired bibliography (that means converted from paper document into electronic file) we have used linguistic software, which have allowed us to create lexicological processing (occurrences, co-occurrences, absolute recurrences e relative ones, expressions of sequence, concordances, temporal flow, concordances of co-occurrences). As to these aspects – on which we have been helped by our linguists colleagues (24) – I refer to the *Introduzione metodologica* by Marco Marin, my student and assistant, author of an already discussed dissertation on Robespierre (25).

I would like to notice that the computerised approach (the acquisition of electronic files and the application of linguistic software) is, in my opinion, the future of the search on the history of the ideas (and maybe of the historiographic activity itself).

The 'tournant linguistique', on which Jacques Guilhaumou often drew the attention, also with regard to the French revolution, has caused and still causes important and noteworthy results (26). There is still much to do and a significant progress will only be possible by acquiring broad *corpora*, first of all *Le Moniteur* and the *Archives parlementaires*.

It is really a pity that - with regard to the French revolution - the *corpus* provided by *ATILF (FRANTEXT)* is merely limited to tomes VI, VII, VIII e IX of the *Œuvres* of Robespierre (27). As regard to the Italian *Risorgimento*, as it is well-known, the acquisition of the *Opere complete* of Mazzini, started by the Mazzinian Domus, goes ahead quite slowly (28).

The computerised approach gives the researcher possibilities and opportunities inconceivable until not long ago. Still in 1990 Georges Labica, author of a very interesting monograph on Robespierre, complained that 'l'emploi du mot *révolution* chez Robespierre défie les possibilités (actuelles) de recensement (29)'.

Now not anymore. The activity carried out at the History Department of the University of Trieste, integrates the matter already provided by *ATILF*. By the acquisition (by us and/or by *ATILF* and by *POLITEXT*) of the eleventh tome of the *Œuvres* (which is being prepared by Florence Gauthier) the studies on Robespierre will surely be improved.

The creation of computerised *corpora* makes any paper file obsolete. I say it much to my regret when I think about my tiring and minute (but inevitably incomplete) works on the dictatorship and about the researches I keep on carrying out on Mazzini (more than a hundred paper volumes for the *Scritti editi ed inediti*) (30).

Having a computerised *corpus* enables the researcher to work on examinations with confidence and with a better intellectual honesty. The question between interpretative paradigm and empirical matter becomes clear and easy to examine. The researcher can move freely and curiously, and not be stuck to his own theories. He can avoid forcing the texts. Other distinctions – as the one proposed by Rawls – between 'concept' and 'conception' find a safer field of examination (31).

I have talked about curiosity. I'll give some examples. With the computerised tools it is possible to find out quickly when, as for Robespierre, the 'adversaires' become 'ennemis', when the expression 'ennemis du peuple'

appears for the first time, when Robespierre calls his adversaries-enemies names as 'insectes' and 'monstres', which foreshadow the language of the totalitarianisms (also Brissot, on the other hand, acts not very differently and one must take in consideration the context where the de-legitimization of the adversary and the invective are usual).

With the computerised tools it is possible (and this is an excellent didactic opportunity) to integrate the study of a speech of Robespierre in the year II with the examination of the presence in the earlier output of lexias, syntagms, stylistic elements, which can be pinpointed as particularly significant. It is possible to verify exactly, continuity and discontinuity in the positions of Robespierre with regard to the *Revolution*, the *people*, the *representation*, the institutional matters (*monarchy* and *republic*), the *death penalty*, the *liberty of the press*, the *war*. It is possible (but we haven't done so yet) to know whether in Robespierre it is present the idea of *person*, a question the research hasn't solved yet and that, besides, is a diriment question to the problems connected to the *libéralisme égalitaire* or *libéralisme humaniste* (32). It is possible – and also this matter is closely connected to the *libéralisme égalitaire* – to focus the meaning of 'propriété' (33) better. It is possible to verify whether, as Bouloiseau (34) asserted, Robespierre actually distinguishes the powers ('pouvoirs') and the duties ('fonctions'). It is possible to distinguish the political use and the social one of the term 'sans-culotte' (35) more precisely. And so on.

Obviously the computerised approach helps but doesn't solve the conceptualization. Just think – to remain in the area of the matters handled in the first tome – to the use of the term 'liberté' by Robespierre. One certainly makes progress when one identifies all the occurrences and the co-occurrences. But the material remains idle if it isn't organized in the light of the strong interpretative categories (in this case 'positive freedom' and 'negative freedom') (36). Categories which can be questionable and subject to confutation, without which, however, the researcher would fumble in the dark of the semantic areas, risking imploding. Personally, I think that the distinction between 'positive freedom' and 'negative freedom' is decisive and diriment to answer to the question whether one can justly talk about a Liberal Robespierre, with the usual meaning (37) as well as with the appealing meaning of the *libéralisme égalitaire* o *libéralisme humaniste* (38).

The negative idea of freedom – one can find in Robespierre – doesn't indicate a definite limit, which is impassable for the sovereignty (39). The political power has got – in principle – an unlimited jurisdiction on the individual. The only condition is that it must be actually interpreter of the common will. Condition, as it is well-known, impossible to verify and that – in the concrete dynamics of history – broke fresh ground to the injustices and to the totalitarian degenerations. The source is Rousseau, or at least one of the possible interpretations of Rousseau (40).

The following passage of the *Discours sur la Constitution* (10 May 1793) is often quoted (41), as evidence of Robespierre's interest for the individual freedom:

Fuyez la manie ancienne des gouvernemens de vouloir trop gouverner; laissez aux individus, laissez aux familles le droit de faire ce qui ne nuit point à autrui; laissez aux

communes le pouvoir de régler elles-mêmes leurs propres affaires, en tout ce qui ne tient point essentiellement à l'administration générale de la république. En un mot, rendez à la liberté individuelle tout ce qui n'appartient pas naturellement à l'autorité publique, et vous aurez laissé d'autant moins de prise à l'ambition et à l'arbitraire (42).

But one forgets that in the same speech the individual freedom is heavily postponed to the 'bien public':

XII. La Constitution ne veut pas que la loi même puisse garantir la liberté individuelle, sans aucun profit pour le bien public; elle laisse aux communes le droit de régler leurs propres affaires, en ce qui ne tient point à l'administration générale de la République (43).

The lexicological study on the Terror – when limited to the evidences of the computational linguistics – shows limits and inadequacies (44).

There are real traps to avoid. It is the case of Robespierre's repeated statements in favour of the 'liberté des cultes', which can mislead the unprepared leader who is not very familiar with the history of the French revolution. Robespierre's campaign, launched since 21 November 1793 (1st Frimaire II), involves the de-christianization as well as the Catholicity. Indeed, on 9th Termidor there were still few open churches all over France (45).

The consciousness of the limits and the risks doesn't hinder me from thinking that the computerised approach is becoming an irreplaceable tool of the trade, of the historian's intelligence and intellectual honesty more and more (46). A tool one can also use – where it is possible – on the filing material. It is Hébert's case, which can be studied in a comprehensive and complete way – as Jacques Guilhaumou appropriately suggests in his review (2001) of Antoine Agostini's book (47) – by widening the research to different areas from the journalistic ones: 'sections, Commune de Paris, club des Jacobins, et club des Cordelier'.

In order to go on with the examples connected with the subjects of the first tome and with the researches we are carrying out at the moment, the computerised tools can allow us to face the sacralization of the politics in Robespierre (and in the French revolution) in a much more detailed and precise way than the filing and the conventional working methods. It can help to distinguish between the sacralization of the politics and Robespierre's properly religious dimension, which – in my opinion – essentially turns out to the theism of the *Profession de foi du Vicaire savoyard* (48).

In order to give other examples, the computerised tools would allow (if one could acquire a broad and significant *corpus*, including the material produced by the sans-culottes) to reconstruct the real propagation of the formula 'économie politique populaire', proposed by some recent historiographic streams as interpretation of Robespierre's project of society (49), and to focus the appealing categories of *libéralisme égalitaire* e *libéralisme umaniste* better. If one could have at disposal broad digitalized *corpora*, it would be easier to keep Sansculottery, Jacobinism, Robespierrism, Mountain separate in the year II – as Vovelle (50) – opportunely suggests.

The computerised tools could act as solid support for a *gender history* reading of Robespierre's theorizations. For this opportunity I hope I can involve qualified people at our History Department (51).

The already published first tome proposes some results of the researches carried out so far. Lexicological and conceptual results.

As for the historiographic and scientific justifiability and the heuristic potentialities, I rely on the reader's judgement and valuations of the colleagues and friends who will join in the debate. Remarks, suggestions, considerations will be well accepted and certainly useful in order to go on with the work (the project implies the issue of three tomes).

Terror and happiness

I would like – let me paraphrase Croce – to give a personal contribution to the criticism of myself. A moment of suffering and a critical one of the first tome (actually of the first chapter) concerns the continuity and discontinuity of Robespierre's thought and political initiative. Expositive needs (not only) may have led us to an excessive stress on the elements of continuity. The question is important and complicated and – especially in the case of the Terror – implies the old-age discussion on the *circonstances*. The Terror, every Terror searches our consciences and tries our analytical abilities sorely. One has to approach the subject with passion and erudition, but also with humility and with the consciousness that the historian's progress always is – and much more in such delicate matters – *work in progress*. Personally, I share that strange and tormenting mixture of enchantment and uneasiness Claude Mazauric names when he talks about the lecture of Robespierre's speeches (52). Facing the great tragedies of history while sitting comfortably at the work-table in a quite and sheltered environment demands prudence moderation and humility.

The paragraph on the Terror in the first tome is to be considered as a provisional outline and will be resumed and developed in the third tome. When we wrote it we hadn't at disposal David Andress's (53) and Jean-Clément Martin's (54) work yet.

I will go on working on it, as I have been doing for a long time at my lectures. I want to metabolize and better understand the anthropological approach and Sophie Wahnich's (55) argumentative strategy. I want to test the heuristic suggestions (*fear* and *hope* in Spinoza and in the Jacobinism of the year II), which were proposed by Remo Bodei (56). The discussion and your suggestions, as well as the outcome of the Congress of Rouen and the discussion about Zeev Sternhell's book (57), will certainly help me.

Anyway I think – unless there is any contradiction – that the concept of 'radicalisation cumulative du discours', used by Hans Mommsen in order to study the National Socialism (1991, 1997) and re-proposed by Patrice Guennifey as interpretation not only of the French revolution but of any revolutionary process (58), cannot be quickly dismissed.

In my opinion, it is still important to remember that the Terror – in its supporters' argument and in its legislative output, apart from the behaviour and the differential initiatives of the *représentants en mission*, subject of Michel Biard's late stimulating studies (59) – punishes people not for what

they are doing or have done, but for what they are (60). The law of suspects of the 17th September 1793 and the law of the 22nd Prairial II (10th June 1794) leaves no doubts about that.

Besides, I think that the heuristic suggestions Paul Berman gave in his *Terror and Liberalism* (2003) (61) are extremely precious. Berman spots in the myth of Armageddon the load-bearing bean and the underlying theme of every totalitarian attitude. The structure of that myth is well-known. It has been studied by many people with reference to different problems and temporal extents. Among others, by Norman Cohn (1957) (62) and by André Glucksmann (1992) (63).

I will summarize it to make it clearer. There is a pure and uncorrupted people (that in the Hebrew and ancient Christian apocalyptic tradition is God's people). This people is attacked by corrupt and corruptive internal strengths, which are supported by powerful external strengths, which are corrupt and corruptive themselves. A small group of virtuous men who are led by a Saver will be able to lead God's people to the victory, by defeating and exterminating its internal and external enemies. After the final fight (the battle of Armageddon in Saint Joan's *Apocalypse*) God's people will go on living happy and pure in a perfect and harmonious society, set free from any impurity.

In the paragraph on the Terror we may have (in fact we certainly have) nonchalantly used the paradigm Berman uses to include the Islamic fundamentalism among the totalitarianisms of the Twentieth century, and we haven't tested it with due reflection.

We will do so, and a further testing ground can be the chapter on the *people* we are preparing for the second tome. When Robespierre writes (64) that in France there are two people, a virtuous one and a corrupt and corruptive one, which is in league with the corrupt and corruptive foreigners, this statement lends itself to be very well read in the way *Terror and Liberalism* suggested.

I personally believe – and it seems to me that this conviction is supported by the results of the lexicological analyses – that one cannot reach the Terror in Robespierre through the happiness. Or, if you prefer, that Robespierre doesn't reach the Terror (in proportion to the way he accepts, justifies, promotes, organizes, regulates and theorizes it) through the idea of happiness. And this is for the simple (but not at all foregone) reason that the idea of happiness in Robespierre's thought -differently from what happens with Hébert and Saint-Just and, in a different context and with different implications, with Babeuf – is important and relevant, but not decisive. It is not (as it is *vertu* for instance) a hinge notion in the dynamics of the construction of Robespierre's reasoning, apart from the frequent use in order to make the speech persuasive and support his own argumentative strategies (65), by referring to a word with an unquestioned and shared positive connotation.

The material we place at disposal in the first tome (absolute and relative frequencies, co-occurrences, all the agreements of *bonheur*, *félicité*, *heureux*.in the *Oeuvres*) can help the reader to confirm or disprove these statements of mine.

Robespierre reaches the Terror through the conceptions he has developed on the people (uniqueness and indivisibility of the true and authentic people's will (66)) and on the representatives (ethic and not procedural legitimization of the representatives (67)) but most of all through the vision of the political

fight (actually of the revolution) as a process of regeneration and moral reconstruction of the human being, as a war between Vice and Virtue, as a fight between the strengths of the Good and those of the Evil (68).

How important the *circonstances* have been is still an open question (for instance, on the death penalty the discontinuity is clear and evident). As it is open – but also in this case the lexicological analysis can improve the quality of the studies – the age-old question (see the discussion started by E. Quinet's *La Révolution*, 1865) (69) whether one can legitimately talk of *système de la terreur* (70) for the year II.

Pointing out - as we have done - already in Rousseau's *Dédicace* (late 1979) (71) the presages of the Terror is risky and willingly provoking, even though some expressions and the adjective 'inouïe' placed beside 'révolution' are signs that shouldn't be undervalued. In the *Dédicace*, *révolution* doesn't mean – as in the tradition inspired by Montesquieu – the move from one kind of government to another, nor – more generically – a change of dynasty (meanings, among other things, Robespierre referred to in his last speech on 8th Thermidor (72)). The advanced breadth - even though vague and indistinct – is much broader and more subversive, in tune with the prophetic passage of *Émile* about the approach of a century of the revolutions (73).

There is, in my opinion, an undoubted ideological drawplate which leads to the Terror. And this ideological drawplate - which has to be demonstrated and constructed with its distinctive elements also thanks to the lexicological analyses – winds through a narration in which we find all the ingredient of the myth of Armageddon. Among the various versions of this myth, Robespierre's one is one of the most suffered, disconsolate, tragic and suffering. The conclusion of the fight between the Good and the Evil progressively keeps on withdrawing and the happiness seems to elude history and earth to hide in the folds of a remote and undefined future (74).

For the right and the virtuous the consolation of a reward after death, of an otherworldly happiness remains. Robespierre deeply and authentically believes in that and on this point differs from the atheistic and materialistic streams (but also from some deistic and theistic attitudes) of the Enlightenment and of the French revolution (75). The suffering bulge (I wouldn't say pessimistic, because the expectation of an otherworldly reward for the good, the right and the virtuous is always strongly consolatory) and the assertion that the *malheur* cannot be removed from the human condition (76) reduce Robespierre's promethean and messianic aspects of the revolutionary culture, that Furet condensed in the formula - we have re-proposed in the first tome (page 30) – 'politics can do everything' (77).

Robespierre is 'un philosophe', as G. Labica rightly says (78), but he also is – to refer to the title of a book I really love (79) - 'political and mystical'. He is the combination of these three dimensions (the philosophic, the religious and the political one) that gives the complete figure of Robespierre, and in this we find the dialectic of politics and happiness.

Reconstructing Robespierre's version of the Armageddon by the tools and the techniques of the speech analysis is beyond my assistants' and my abilities. Some other people could do so, and among them obviously Jacques Guilhaumou could.

I'm not used to – and I'm not interested to – pretend to have skills I have not. My haunt with linguistics and more specifically with the techniques and the methods of the computational linguistics is still unripe. It is a growing curiosity, more than an actually acquired skill. Conscious of my limits, I take full responsibility for the linguistics part cured by my student and collaborator Marco Marin (and obviously leave every merit to him).

Meta-linguistic digressions

I have had a close confrontation with Marco Marin and some linguistic colleagues about the terminology related to the linguistic question. If you compare the linguistics dictionaries and the computational linguistics ones, you will easily realize that the definitions don't coincide and are often completely different. The use of *computational linguistics*, to denote the computerised approach to the texts analyses is controversial (80). In the specialist issues *syntagm* and *lexia* sometimes coincide and sometimes are part of completely distinct areas. For instance the expression 'division du travail', in the issue VII of the *Dictionnaire des usages socio-politiques* is denoted as *syntagm* but could as much legitimately be defined as complex *lexia* (81). In the recent volume *Des notions-concepts en révolution* «liberté de la presse» is defined as *lexia* (82) but could as much legitimately be defined as *syntagm*. *Syntagm* has lost its original attachment to the syntactic and grammatical area and is commonly used in the lexical area, too. If you then refer to the conceptual dimension (to the significatum and not to the significans), the two expressions I have taken as examples can be legitimately defined as *notions*. Even avoiding the metalinguistic details, I communicate that – in full agreement with Marco Marin- we have chosen *word* to denote the single graphic unit (*full and empty words*), *word* and *lexia*, to denote the graphic lexicalized unit (*simple lexia*), *lexia* to denote lexicalized sequence of words (*composed and complex lexia*). We have sometimes defined the sequences of words *expressions*: a generic but legitimate use. In some cases we have used *formula*. «Bonheur», in the vocabulary of the first tome is *word*, *lexia* (*simple lexia*), *term*, *notion*, *concept*, *idea*, even though it could legitimately be defined *lemma*, *address*, *lexical item* and – if is beside the article – *nominal syntagm*. For the computational linguistics it is *full word*, *word type* (83). «Bonheur commun» - again in the vocabulary of the above-said volume – is *lexia* (*composed or complex lexia*, depending on the different stress of the level of semantic integration), *formula*, *expression*, *notion*, *idea*, even though it could legitimately be defined *nominal syntagm*.

The oxymoron 'despotisme de la liberté' is *lexia* (*complex lexia*), *expression*, *formula*, even though it could legitimately be defined *nominal syntagm*. And so on.

We have avoided the use of the word *lemma* because our work hadn't faced the lemmatization yet.

Despite this simplification, there are still some doubts. For instance, how can we define 'sans-culotte'? Without the hyphen it is a *word* (composed by the morphemes 'sans' e 'culotte') but also *lemma* and *lexia* (*composed lexia*). With the hyphen it is *composed lexia*, but also *syntagm* (84). In the recurrence

lists we decided to place it among the *words*. We chose to do the same for 'contre-révolution', 'ultra-révolutionnaire', 'bien-être', ...

The material presented by Marco Marin has got an artisan outline and is still mostly in the rough. Its methods as well as its contents need to be refined and adjusted.

I considered it was useful to publish it, since it is broad and reliable empiric documentation and a precious resource for further close examinations. At the moment we are finishing the cleanness of the texts (controlling of the acquisition by scanner, eliminating the notes, choosing among the different versions of the same document ...) and we are starting a process of lemmatization of the acquired *corpora*.

I have a dream or the 'textothèque' I dream of

Soon (late 2007 or early 2008) the second tome will be issued, with more sophisticated lexicological elaborations, a revival and a development of Gabriella Valera's essay (dear and precious dialogist, who has brought and is still bringing innovative suggestions in the route of our research), further contributions from other colleagues of mine and thematic close examinations of some aspects of Hébert's, Marat's, Robespierre's and Saint-Just's thought.

Among the subjects handled in the chapters of the second tome - still with an approach that integrates the lexicological analysis and the conceptualization - I shall mention: Marat's idea of dictatorship (remake of a early work of mine issued in 1993 (85)), the routes and the social and political use of the lexia *bonheur commun* from the Enlightenment formulation up to Babeuf; Robespierre's positive freedom and negative one; the inclusive and the exclusive meaning of *peuple* for Robespierre; the notion of *sans-culotte* for Robespierre, Marat ed Hébert; the use and meanings of the word *terreur* for Saint-Just. And so on.

In the third tome I intend to go back to the matter of the Terror, to analyse the notion of *revolution* for Robespierre and to prepare a comparison between the semantic areas of *happiness* in the French revolution and those in the American one.

Obviously in the second tome we will keep on placing at disposal of the researchers further recurrence indexes, lexicographic dates, co-occurrences, concordances of particularly significant lexias we have found in Robespierre's, Marat's, Saint-Just's and Hébert's works. First of all, of course, the concordances of *bonheur, félicité, heureux.....*

The *corpus* we have created would allow us to think of complete indexes of the concordances of Marat's, Saint-Just's, Robespierre's and Hébert's works: a too difficult venture for our work team (at least for the publishing costs) and that may eventually be realized in a synergic dimension, open to the involvement of other bodies and institutions (obviously the publishing houses, which own the rights to publish the paper files we have acquired, are included). In the future we may also find electronic issues.

All in good time and at the moment I think it advisable to stop and wait until the second tome comes out.

I hope that the effort made with students and colleagues during the latest years, from which the already edited volume ensued, can not only add fuel to

the curiosities and the questions on the troubled routes that lead to the contemporaneousness, but also point out that the way to answer the curiosities and the questions laicly and scientifically (I mean with the opportunity for the user and for the whole scientific community to distinguish the descriptive and the valuational dimension clearly and to test the congruity of the interpretative paradigm and the empiric material, and consequently to verify whether the argumentative strategies are solid) necessarily goes through the acquisition of broad digital *corpora*.

In my opinion, I beg your pardon if I insist and repeat myself, it is necessary to create broad digital *corpora* (hopefully open to every researcher) for the progress and further laicization (or, if you prefer, de-ideologization) of the historical researches. Just think of the progress of the comparative researches of French and American revolution (Arendt's heuristic suggestions on the American revolution as revolution of the freedom and the French revolution as revolution of the compassion (86) the routes of transfer of the sacredness from the traditional religious dimension to the political one on both Atlantic coasts (87); the right of happiness of the French revolutionaries and the right of the pursuit of happiness for the American father founders.....) if the digitalization of all the works of the greatest protagonists of the French revolution (first of all Condorcet, but many others more...) and the digitalization of *Moniteur* and of the *Archives parlementaires* were available (most of the American father founders are already available on internet).

I have a dream. I'd love to have at disposal a 'textothèque' of the French revolution, which should be as complete as possible and could be consulted by everybody and examined by proper search engines. This dream implies huge investments of organization, coordination, labour and financial obligation. It demands courageous choices (because without immediate visibility and results) about the use of the resources.

The great institutions and the great structures have acted and still act slowly and with official stickiness, even though for the French revolution the situation is undoubtedly much better than for the Italian Risorgimento (the two areas of research I study with more application and that I know better: but the question could easily be extended, as for Italy, to the Fascism.)

That's why ten years ago I decided to work on my own and to construct a *corpus* regarding the French revolution at the Department of History of Trieste. The idea could seem bizarre and eccentric (almost megalomania) but I felt confident that a little interested and close group could be able – even without great funds – to obtain concrete and appreciable results in a reasonably short time. The scanner, the personal computer, linguistic software that are easy to acquire in the market with regular licence, will, effort and enthusiasm make the realization of projects that not long ago were only available for the great structures, practicable for the decentralized seats and for little groups. So it happened and the *corpus* we have at the Department at the moment makes a good research activity and a good didactic activity possible (actually a potentially good research activity and a potentially good didactic activity) on the French revolution.

At the right moment I intend to pour the already acquired material and the one I should acquire into FRANTEXT, POLITEXT or other interested sites.

I obviously keep on hoping that as soon as possible the bodies and the facilities this charge institutionally lies with, create the great 'textothèque' I dream of, even enlarged – but this is a real utopia – to that 'gigantesque corpus d'oeuvres (philosophiques ?) inscrites dans le temps révolutionnaire' Françoise Brunel talks about, in his beautiful introduction to Billaud-Varenne (88).

Heart, mind and Robespierre

One more reflection regards Robespierre, focus of the lexicological and conceptual analyses of the first tome and presumably focus of the passions and interests of many among you. I could bore you with scholarly hermeneutic disquisitions on the dialectic of comprehension and pre-comprehension (89) but I'd rather repeat what I wrote in the *Introduction*. These are *dal sen fuggite* words. I don't feel changing them.

With my heart I would sit – as Jaurès does – at the sun of June 1973 beside Robespierre (90), too. My heart looks at the purposes, follows the ethic of the purposes and of the intentions. And Robespierre's purposes – an egalitarian society, a community in agreement – are the same I have been cultivating during the whole route of my life. These are purposes and values that still make me anxious, full with indignation and hopeful. If we talk Rousseau's and Robespierre's language, I have always detested the «amour-propre» (91) with everything it implies in terms of competition and jobbery. I share with Rousseau and Robespierre the sympathy (the *fellow-feeling* Smith talks about in his *Theory of the moral feelings* (92)) for the «malheur» and «les malheureux» (for the entire breadth of the meanings of the French term: poor, unhappy and unlucky). I share –again with Rousseau e Robespierre – the aversion to the rich ('les riches', 'les grands'), to those who enjoy 'fortune' and 'pouvoir' and who, in the casual language of the present day, are named 'successful' (93). The agreement with Robespierre's (and Rousseau's) sensibility on the inequalities of any kind is complete. It is an emotive, immediate and natural agreement with its roots – as Bobbio says talking about the distinction between Right and Left – in pre-scientific and pre-political dimensions, in unconscious zones of ourselves, which are marked by fundamental experiences of our childhood and early life (94). With my heart I feel I am part of that 'eternal Left' Nolte (95) talks about, too. With my heart I couldn't say I am not 'Robespierrist' – together with many others, among whom Mathiez e Vovelle (96). But with my mind I cannot. The mind follows the ethic of the responsibility and – instructed by the hard repeat performances of history- finds out the unfortunate results, which a voluntaristic attitude, that wants to eliminate the imperfections and the conflict of the humane experience, leads to. The mind knows that not all the positive values and the good purposes (freedom, equality, happiness and so on) are not always and in any case compatible with each other and that they not necessarily imply one another. The tragicalness of the humane existence is also reflected in the fact that often the individual – as the community does – is bound to choose among equally good and right ideals (97). The mind knows that, in order to really help and love the others ('pour s'aider' e 'pour s'aimer

mutuellement' as Robespierre says in his speech of the 20th Prairial of the year II (98)) one has to start from what they are and not what they should be. The mind knows that, in order to construct better relationships among people and fairer societies, one has to face the 'bowed wood of mankind' (99).The tensions and the tears of my approach to Robespierre may be those of a generation facing the failure of ideologies and politics that - in the name of man, freedom and equality - have betrayed man, freedom and equality. Ideologies and politics that - following the 'big hope' started by the French revolution (the 'good news' Lefebvre (100) talks about) promised complete and total happiness - heaven on hearth - and left rubble behind. Rubble in which also the hope to be able to construct fragments of imperfect, but shared and solid happiness, is hardly rekindled.

But this is another story.