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The Normative Space of Resilience

SUMMARY

This paper intends to provide a way for reflecting on the normative space of resilience with the goal of creating a fruitful cross-disciplinary dialogue on well-being and health. I will point to the epistemological and temporal bias of resilience as two necessary problems that need to be tackled when considering resilience as a dynamic life process. I believe that this is timely research given the several attempts currently being pursued to shape the notion of health and well-being as it pertains to resilience (Rockström et al., 2009).

Keywords: Ostensive, Operationalization, Normative, Resilience, Metamorphosis.

Introduction

This paper intends to provide a way for reflecting on the normative space of resilience with the goal of creating a fruitful cross-disciplinary dialogue on well-being and health. I use the word "normative" to question the value judgments and expectations that the definition of this term would imply (Kripke, 1980; Douglas, 2009; Elliot, 2017) whenever applied to individuals, communities, and organizations; while the word "space" is used to avoid referring to the term with a solely epistemological connotation. In fact, as this paper will show, the normativity of resilience seems to be connected to two main biases: one epistemological and one temporal. On the one hand, social theorists criticize the meaning of resilience when it is instrumentally used to convince poor people to remain poor (Davidson, 2010). In doing so, they show how the epistemological content of resilience points to a theory of knowledge that actually goes against the interests of those who should show resilience. On the other hand, scholars from various disciplines question resilience as exclusively studied within a static third-person temporal framework (Britt et al., 2016; Kossek &

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Perrigino, 2016). This means that the degree of resilience is measured on a spectrum of time that does not allow for change or expression of intimate personal feelings. This impersonal moment in time comes to be stretched into the future and is used as a comparative point for appreciating the degree of resilience achieved. In order to overcome the biases relating to the normative space of resilience, I propose to reinforce the narrative of the resilient person(s) in order to center the temporal experience of the resilient person(s) and to operationalize[1] the term resilience into an ostensive category capable of informing about its criteria of applicability as it dynamically unfolds. I believe that this is timely research given the several attempts currently being pursued to shape the notion of health and well-being as it pertains to resilience (Rockström et al., 2009). In the next session, I will give a brief account of the history of resilience as it appeared in its earliest bibliographical sources, though given the space and scope of this article, it would be impossible to exhaust the wide literature on the topic.

A genealogy of resilience

Resilience is a word whose meaning evokes a story of multiple beginnings. The genesis of this word, in fact, finds its roots in philosophy, ecology, psychology, and engineering (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). From an etymological point of view, the Latin root of the word *resilire* also seems to point to a bi-local birth: *resilire* means bouncing back, recoiling, rebounding, while at the same time, the word *resilire* is itself a compound of the prefix *re* and the verb *salire* which refers to the fast movement of jumping back (Oxford Latin Dictionary, 1980).

Stephanus Chauvin's *Lexicon Philosophicum* mentions how an anonymous philosopher explained resilience, used until 1600 only under the Latin *resiliens,* as the adaptability of materials to absorb energy by contraction or to come back to their own original shape after being pressured.[2] Between the 17th and 18th centuries, the terms *resilientia* and *resilire* were used in an epistolary exchange between Descartes and Mersenne. In this case, the French *rebondir* (to rebound) was translated with

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1   By operationalization, I mean to define resilience in terms of the operations that can be used to determine its effects on the subjects to which it applies. For more information on this praxis, see Campbell (1920). As Campbell explains, operational definitions provide meanings of a specific notion by processing, testing, or observing the reference to the notion emerging from the trial. Operationalizing definitions narrow the scope of a concept and make it more controllable—more on this point in section 5.

2   "Est regressus, aut reditus corporis alteri allidentis. Cuius reditus causam vir illustris repetit ex eo, quod paries v. g. cum non opponatur motui pilae, sed solum ulterior eius progressui, non impedit quin moveatur, sed solum quin alterius progrediatur: unde corpus allidens parieti, pila puta, regreditur seu resilit. Nuper aliam causam assignavit insignis philusophus. Nempe supponit (quod subinde non uno probat experimento) corporibus omnibus inesse vim elasticam, id est, qua non modo suae figurae tenacia sunt, sed etiam cum ab ea dimota fuerint, in illam sese restituunt, tanto majori impetu, quanto fortior fuit ille quo dimota sunt" (Chauvin, 1713).

resilientia to express the physical property of elasticity of objects and the reflecting quality of sounds (Descartes, 1668). In the 16th century, English seems to have been the first language to adapt Latin into the vulgaris *resilience*; in his *Sylva Sylvarum*, Bacon uses resilience to describe the property of the echo sound to rebounce. It was in Italy that the philosopher Genovesi used, for the first time, the term "*resilienza*" in 1729 to indicate both the elastic property of materials as well as the characteristic of human passions to push back.[3] Hence, the psychological and physical qualities of the word resilience had not been introduced, as usually claimed, in the last century, but instead, its origin dates back to much older philosophical roots. Centuries later, in 1982, the Italian poet and writer Primo Levi would also use the concept of resilience in a psychological and physical manner: "Crushed under the weight of the masculine body, Line twisted, a tenacious and resilient adversary, to excite and challenge him"[4] (Levi, 1982, 139). Before him, though, it seems that the English and Italian languages had tried to spread out this bi-focal meaning of the term through scientific divulgation and journalism.[5]

Another beginning

When in 1973 the Canadian ecologist C. S. Holling used the word resilience to name a specific elastic property of materials to rebounce, the scientific world welcomed this term seemingly as new (Walsh, 1995). Similar to his predecessors in modern philosophy, Holling's scientific article (1973, pp. 1-23) explains resilience as both the time and energy that it takes for the impacted material to return to an equilibrium and the capacity of that material to absorb variances while reorganizing its structure. In 1982, Emmy Werner published a work that she began decades earlier in which she employed this same term in psychology for a longitudinal study of children and youth (Werner, 1982, 1995, 2001). By resilience, she meant the ability of human beings to absorb the effects of a traumatic change and reorganize their resources into new strategies. Through over 40 years of study, she measured the resilience potential of Kauai students to succeed in reaching a satisfactory quality of life despite the social and economic poverty of their life conditions (Werner, 2001). Via the Health Realization Model proposed by Mills and Schuford (2003), resilience became a psycho-physiological concept considered as innate and intrinsic of human nature:

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3 "Quella forza deve essere non solo direttiva, ma coattiva altresì; perché la sola forza direttiva, per la nostra uguale ignoranza, per la ritrosia della nostra natura, e per la forza elastica e resiliente delle passioni, non basta per unirci e mantenerci concordi, almeno per lungo tempo."

4 "Schiacciata sotto il peso del corpo mascolino, Line si torceva, avversario tenace e resiliente, per eccitarlo e sfidarlo" (Levi, 1982, p. 139).

5 See on this point for example: *Independent* di New York in 1893: "The *resilience* and the elasticity of spirit which I had even ten years ago" (Oxford English Dictionary) and an article in 1986 dedicated to Sam Shepard whose characters are defined as very elastic and resilient.

our heart pulsing, our eating and digesting functions; within humans are wired resilient functions, and the task of good educators is to humor these innate functions when the system is under pressure.

In that sense, the psycho-physiological connotation of resilience conserves its original meaning by referring to a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development (Masten, 2001). Hoffman (1948) argues for a generalized concept of resilience that finds its essential meaning in the ability of something to return to its initial state before the disturbance occurs. In the current psychological literature, the concept of resilience has been broadened and used within pediatric and adult psychology to explain how adults deal with psychological stress and trauma (see, e.g., Bonanno et al., 2007; Herrman et al., 2011). Despite resilience scales (Oshio et al., 2003; Sinclair and Wallston, 2004; Wagnild and Young, 1993) that seem to have been applied to individuals, over the last three decades of research, the interest has moved towards the resilient environment. "Cultural resilience", for example, has come to indicate the key-function that a community or an entire cultural system can play in absorbing external pressures and helping the members of the community reorganize themselves while under the pressure of a disturbance (Healy, 2005). Resilient re-organization seems to retain the distinctive quality of preserving one's own identity as it was before the distressing event. Community resilience studies (Chandler, 1998; Lalonde, 2005) have emphasized how resilience increases in self-governed communities that are allowed to speak traditional languages. Yet, I believe that before applying resilience on either the small or large scales of individuals and communities, respectively, it is helpful to clean the room of theoretical biases. In that sense, looking at the philosophical roots of the word can contribute to clarifying the theoretical core of resilience.

The philosophical roots of resilience

Both the psychological and the ecological uses of resilience point to a relapse to the *status quo ante* the disruptive event. Looking at resilience through the lens of the history of philosophy shows how the normative expectation of "recoiling" to the *status quo ante* the disruptive event implies a law of formal permanence that leaves no space for real change to occur in the life of the individual. In other words, the positive value we attach to resilience is measured on one's ability to "jump back" (Latin: *resalire*), so to speak, onto that very boat that had capsized and left us in the water. The word resilience, as it is used today, implies that real healing is only possible through recoiling to the *status quo ante* of the disruptive event. The philosophies of Plato and Nietzsche, instead, present an effective model against the form of empty normativity implied by this use of resilience.

Although under a different term, in philosophy the notion of resilience had already been expressed by Plato and, later on, by Nietzsche. In his *Politeia* (IV, 430b), Plato describes as θυμοειδὲς (*thymoeides)* a courageous person whose strength does not come from carelessness or lack of awareness but from a deep connection with their true soul. In the dialogues of his *Republic* (book IV) and *Phaedrus* (246a-254e), the *thymoeides* is described as the part of the soul that aligns with the rational part (logistikon) of the soul without being tempted by the appetites of the ἐπιθυμητικόν (*epithymetikon*), the desiderative part. Being *thymoeides* means to possess a moral virtue that stems from a sentiment (συν+θυμός) of connectedness (συν) with one's own thymos (θυμός translatable with courage, spirit). The courageous person is the one who sees with clarity and in an essential way (*eidos,* the past of ὁράω to have seen and therefore to know) their own spirit and has the strength to connect with it without being tempted by contingent needs. This does not imply that the *thymoeides* has to permanently resist in order to express its courage; it is possible for a metamorphosis to occur that allows actual strength to flourish.

In a similar way, Nietzsche developed the notion of resilience by reflecting on courage and identity. In the last year of his mental clarity, Nietzsche wrote a sentence that would appear in both *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1889/1983) and the famous collection *Der Wille zur Macht*: "From the school of the war of life - What does not kill me, makes me stronger" (Nietzsche, 1980, p. 26). This sentence became so famous that the echo of its popularity left behind any trace of its actual author and his intentions. Yet, in May 2009, Nietzsche's name appeared on the pages of the *Intensive Care Medicine* magazine, and from there, his popularity started growing in different journals dedicated to resilience.[6] These two articles were the official recognition of the contribution of philosophy into the debate on resilience. Nietzsche's contribution to resilience theory (Lecomte, 2002) has been associated with the understanding of post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) and the enrichment of meaning (Cantoni, 2014; Neenan, 2009) that follows a resilient event.

Both in Nietzsche and Plato, resilience is described as a process, that if undergone, would make you stronger because, even though events may be painful to endure, it

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6   The article was entitled "Post-traumatic Growth in Parents After a Child's Admission to Intensive Care: Maybe Nietzsche Was Right?" (Colville & Cream, 2009). In 2010, Mark Seery published his article "Whatever Does Not Kill Us: Cumulative Lifetime Adversity, Vulnerability, and Resilience" (Seery, Holman & Silver, 2010) in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*; then a year later, another adjacent article published in *Current Direction in Psychological Science* (Seery, 2011) made Nietzsche's name a primary source in investigating the meaning of resilience. *The Telegraph* published an interview of Seery in which it is cautiously stated that, after all, Nietzsche was right. *The Telegraph*'s "Nietzsche Was Right: Adversity Makes You Stronger" was followed by the Daily mail's "So Nietzsche WAS Right: What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger, Scientists Find." Retrieved from: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/8964844/Nietzsche-was- right-adversity-makes-you-stronger.html and http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2075908/So-Nietzsche-WAS-right-What-doesnt-kill-makes-stronger-scientists-find.html.

is this pain that allows you to discover your true self and to be in contact with it. The resilient human being is a warrior who heals the vulnus of its own soul and comes back to life as a new person who is now above its usual limits, an *Übermensch*.

Scientific relevance

In 1948, the World Health Organization endorsed a definition of mental health that did not reduce well-being to simply being free from mental illness. It was hoped that this would invite a more comprehensive notion of health. They wrote that well-being is "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2006). Rutter (2000, pp. 651-82) criticizes this definition as "elusive and value-laden" because it sets expectations for how a person should integrate within society in order to be considered normally healthy. As Huber and colleagues remark, this definition would leave the majority of us unhealthy given the absoluteness involved in the word "complete." A new definition is needed. Various proposals have been made to ameliorate the present one, among which the most prominent came from the Ottawa chapters, which put the emphasis on the social and personal resources as well as the physical ones. In general, the tendency has been to propose a notion of health that is resilience-based: "Just as environmental scientists describe the health of the Earth as the capacity of a complex system to maintain a stable environment within a relatively narrow range, we propose the formulation of health as the ability to adapt and to self manage" (Huber et al., 2011, p. 3). Therefore, resilience scales and gradients became the model on which our society bases its sense of well-being and health. These and other attempts (Rockström et al., 2009) have shown how important it is to reflect on the meaning of resilience and its philosophical roots so that we may be able to free it from its major biases.

The normativeness of meaning

The analysis provided by Nietzsche and Plato points us in a direction that considers the strength of resilience to be the ability to reconnect with one's own self after a traumatic event occurs; if this self is replaced by empty expectations, then resilience becomes a source of growing unhappiness and uneasiness. However, this way of interpreting the notion of resilience often clashes with the way human science defines resilience. It seems, in fact, that we define a person or a system as resilient if it recoils (*resalire*) to its *status quo ante* the traumatic event.

Concerning the normative expectations that scientific definitions can elicit in our lives and the way in which science should handle those expectations (a wide debate whose

literature I cannot fully mention here), Douglas (2009, 70-73) argues that scientists have the responsibility to take an ethical position in relation to the direction that the specific content of their research is going to take. The value-free ideal of science should be rejected on moral grounds because science is, after all, there to point us in a specific direction – a position that I support because it allows us to acknowledge the implicit biases connected to useful notions.

As Saul Kripke (1980) remarks, some definitions, especially those relating to natural kind terms, specify the real essence of that which is defined by setting normative expectations. He gives the example of the way in which a name is attached to a newborn baby. Defining a person or a system as resilient would frame them in a specific set of actions and values that the term evokes. Following Kripke, a description that proposes a certain definition sets the requirements that a person or thing has to meet in order to belong to that definition. The problem is that the meaning of natural kind terms changes as science proceeds, although their categories remain somewhat fixed (Thorén & Persson, 2015). Ian Hacking's famous argument on "human kind" (1986) shows how that can apply to resilience, too. Hacking, in fact, argues that certain kinds of people thematized by human sciences are made so because of the scientific research applied to them: alcoholics, violent partners, the unemployed, the resilient people, and so on. The very scientific quest aimed at classifying and describing human kinds results in a definition that itself makes up the category while altering the flow with which the content of the study expresses itself.

This is what McDowell would call the "normativeness of meaning" (1984, p. 336). Resilience comes to represent an ought that defines what is necessary for individuals and communities to achieve in order to be considered resilient (and hence capable of integrating with the rest of the society). Being the definition of individual, communitarian, and material resilience connected to the *status quo ante* the cause of distress, the ethical and social expectation implied by this definition is that resilient individuals or communities are those who can readjust to their status as it was before the traumatic or stressful event. Yet, if we accept this definition, we would undermine the possibility of actual healing because, as the analysis of Plato and Nietzsche showed, resilience is only possible when the actual connection to personal needs and values occurs. Resilient persons and communities are those who have the courage to go through traumatic events without losing touch with inner pressing values. In that sense, true resilience involves, at times, a complete metamorphosis of the *status quo ante,* the emotional (or structural) breakdown of the individual (or system) to the point that all that was before the event is no longer recognizable.

The norm of feeling good

The normativeness of resilience shows that there are at least two problems – one temporal (Hill et al., 2018), the other epistemological (Hamborg et al., 2020) – that need to be cleared out in order to reconnect with Plato and Nietzsche's use of resilience. Creating a centered narrative about the experience that the resilient person has to undertake can help to operationalize the notion of resilience and overcome the biases.

Several scholars have argued that the lack of sufficient epistemological definitions of resilience has led to the failure of a fruitful cross-disciplinary dialogue (Cote & Nightingale, 2012; Endress, 2015; Olsson, Jerneck, Thoren, Persson & O'Byrne, 2015; Persson, Hornborg, Olsson & Thorén, 2018; Ruppert-Winkel, Arlinghaus, Deppisch, Eisenack, Gottschlich, Hirschl, et al., 2015; Stone-Jovicich, 2015). A reflection capable of proposing an alternative way of overcoming these biases would represent an opportunity to re-establish a fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue that would contribute to a viable resilience-based definition of mental well-being (Thorén & Olsson, 2015).

The epistemological problem

The critique that the social sciences and critical theory have moved against resilience insists on the epistemological problem implied by the normative effects that this shortcoming would have on social organization (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Van Breda, 2017).

Today, being resilient is the key to fulfilling one's full potential; it is what allows an individual to express and achieve what matters most in life. Yet, it is sometimes true that repeatedly jumping back onto that unstable boat from which we were initially jettisoned would not lead us anywhere; it might be that the boat is simply broken or cannot bring us to the place we desire to go. Outside metaphor, being overly resilient is seen as a deterrent to living a healthy life. According to its detractors, this form of over-compensating resilience might be encouraged by the way in which resilience is usually defined. Among the most common definitions of resilience, the term is described as the ability to absorb negative events and to reorganize them, the ability to return to the usual shape, or fighting back from a losing position to win a game (Hornby, 1995). These definitions seem to have lost their connection to the philosophical root of its meaning and, accordingly, no space for a metamorphosis is left in these meanings.

In the wrong situations, resilience might lead a person to continue pursuing something that is not worthy of pursuing in a sort of syndrome of false hope (Polivj,

2001). Resilience at work, for example, might mean to putting up with unfair conditions that actually need to be changed (Duchek, 2020). Moreover, in a personal relationship having a high level of resilience with an abusive partner would negatively impact the lives of both since the problematic core at the basis of the relationship needs to be addressed.

In a recent study, Treglown and colleagues (2016) showed how resilience might negatively impact one's emotional life due to overestimating the limits of our tolerance in adverse circumstances and thus becoming an easier target for burnout and other impairing psychological conditions. The most common definition of resilience seems to be an encouragement for the individual to not let go and to resist change – which is not always a healthy suggestion. As Neocleous (2013) remarks, when resilience becomes a norm or an expectation, it does more harm than good. In a documentary on resilience James Redford (2016) attributes to resilience a hegemonic quality that benefits institutions more than individuals while reinforcing and intensifying the very systemic issues it claims to solve. According to the Global Mental Health Program of Columbia State University, this rhetoric of resilience might be one of the factors keeping down low-income and disadvantaged communities (Alegría, NeMoyer, Falgàs Bagué, Wang & Alvarez, 2018). For this reason, resilience seems to have a dark side that does not appeal to social science and critical theory (Davidson, 2010; Olson, Kemper & Mahan, 2015) because it seems to provide a normative excuse for the poor to remain poor and to let concepts like solidarity slip into oblivion (Vrasti & Michelsen, 2017).

The temporal problem

Another difficulty implied by the normative meaning of resilience is the ought of time (Britt et al., 2016; King et al., 2016; Kossek & Perrigino, 2016). In defining resilience, time is often taken as a still snapshot, a sort of a fragment of eternity to which any other adjustment of status will be compared. Yet, that snapshot is often taken from a third-person perspective after the occurrence of the actual trauma to which the resilient behavior is responding; additionally, this snapshot rarely takes into consideration the personal or systemic sense of time. In that sense, reconstructing one's own narrative can help keep a hold on the diachronic unfold of events without giving in the pressure to – figuratively speaking – jump back on the boat if it is too early.

Coming back to that snapshot, recoiling to that original *status quo* is the ought for displaying successful resilience. Yet, it is quite arguable that the conditions preceding the traumatic event can be taken as a reference point for actual psychological recovery. These pre-conditions might have changed through time, and an elastic recoiling to

the *status quo* would be more harmful than helpful. Recoiling, jumping back, or returning (*re-salire*) are not viable methods for actual healing if the time is crystallized and not sufficiently thematized. Even though time has been described as "perhaps the most pervasive aspect of our lives" (Ancona & Chong, 1992, p. 166), "a basic dimension of organizations" (Schriber & Gutek, 1987, p. 642), and "a fundamental aspect of organizational life" (Palmer & Shoorman, 1999, p. 323), the role that time plays in the reorganization of resources for resilient individuals and communities has been neglected. In that sense, we can use time as an instrument to recollect our story and build a narrative in which we feel seen and understood.

There have been studies on resilience that have focused on the time structure of resilient people in order to measure, for example, through the use of longitudinal and diary-based designs with multiple repeated measurements (Almeida, 2015), the capacity of the individuals to utilize conflict management at work (Martinez-Corts et al., 2015). Journaling is an efficient way to reconstruct our own narrative, center one's own experience, and reconnect with the meaning of one's own life without giving in to external normative pressures. These studies show that it is possible to include time in the structural meaning of resilience and its related outcomes according to a temporal context. I believe that any research on resilience would profit from taking into consideration the time dynamics that structure the ontological and epistemological status of resilience. It would appear I am not alone in this belief (Bryan, O'Shea & MacIntyre, 2018; Galli & Pagano, 2018). In that sense, I think it is useful to look at the constitution of time through a phenomenological lens as presented in Husserl's manuscripts (1918, 1928, 1929-1934). When measuring resilience and trying to grasp its definition, it is, in fact, important to understand what reference point the resilient system needs to return to — is it the first, second, third-person perspective of the reference point or all of them? In phenomenology, Husserl (1928, 2006) presents three forms of time: living present, linear, and phenomenological. The mundane linear version of time does not coincide with the inner organic time of the individual, which knits together the various nows of the material world in a living present. Eternal and phenomenological time are interwoven. Phenomenological time, which is the way in which we live as a first-person experience, has a structure that can be explained in the series of protentions and retentions. By definition, protentions protend toward what is about to happen, while retentions retain what has just passed. Each now constitutes the *substratum* or the light through which what comes to evidence is made luminous (Husserl, 2013, p. 45, 301). Each now, a "*lebendige Gegenwart*" (living present), is an impressional stream[7] that continuously fills intentions/protentions. "It is a creative

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7   "This primal impressional flowing present of the concrete originally presence has then the following quite universal structure: a) the phenomenological residuum of the proper perceivable side of mundane realities etc., namely the sensation-hyle, the originary hyle in its own temporalization; b) the I with all open and concealed

primal presenting" (Hart, 1992, pp. 25-26). This form of time organizes itself in the mundane form of time perceived by the subject in a chain of before-afters. I believe this is the time that counts in the definition and measurement of resilience, and it is possible to describe this time as it is lived in first-person perspective or as an alterity in second-person perspective and not only as a third-person external point of view. In Husserl (2006), time is not a category or a predicate but is a *systatical*[8] *function.* Systatical, a term borrowed from physics, indicates a synthetic activity that organizes data in dynamic categories. From Husserl's perspective (1928, 2006), the eternity of time is organized in these dynamic categories of which we make sense through the linearity of time. Describing the *status quo* to which we need to come back and on which we measure the gradient of our resilience as a snapshot of linear time described in a third-person perspective leaves no space for a metamorphosis to happen.

Time can be said to possess a threefold structure that allows us to have a synchronistic relationship with the material and life-worlds.[9] Describing resilience within the frame of immanent time depicted in a third-person perspective would be limiting because it would exclude the core flow of ongoing decisions, recognized or unrecognized, whereby we determine our own matter.

A direction

I believe that the philosophical roots of resilience can be helpful for overcoming the temporal and epistemological biases present in the most common definitions of this notion. In fact, if the transformative power of resilience is duly internalized, then the epistemological and temporal reference to the *status quo ante* would become less binding and, accordingly, its definition less biased.

Moreover, in the form of a proposal for future research, it could be helpful to improve the theoretical understanding of resilience by operationalizing its definition through ostensive categories, which can test at each time if and when the reference to resilience is sound. As Wittgenstein explains, "the ostensive definition explains the use—the meaning—of the word when the overall role of the word in language is clear. Thus, if I know that someone means to explain a color-word to me, the ostensive definition "That is called 'sepia'" will help me understand the word. (...) One has already to know (or be able to do) something in order to be capable of

egological components, belonging there: all components of the worldly apprehension, all components of the worldly "reference", of what is essentially according to a horizon [Horizontmäßig], of the worldly representations and so on" (Husserl, 2006, p. 110).

8   I borrow this term from Gebser (1962).

9   As in Sartre's elucidation (1943, 1992, p. 309) of the need for the world to appear to me in order is necessary, yet totally unjustifiable. He states, "Order is me" and there "should be this order".

asking a thing's name. But what does one have to know?" (Husserl, 2001, section 30). The use of ostensive categories that inform about the criteria of applicability of the defined term (Kotarbinska, 1960) could help to control the normative space of resilience and overcome biases when they occur. Moreover, as Strunz shows (2012), vagueness in science can be a tradeoff for creative and pragmatic problem-solving. Even if traditional philosophy of science stresses the importance of precision and conceptual clarity when it comes to definitions, in the case of resilience and other elusive concepts applicable in our practical life, vagueness can help us to avoid creating notions that are too rigid and which risk making up human kinds (Hacking, 1986) that in reality do not exist. Thorén (2014), too, shows us how in the attempt to find precise definitions of resilience, we get stuck in core understandings that are often highly abstract and incapable of broaching interdisciplinary connections. For this reason, operationalizing resilience would allow us to run its meaning through testing and processing that would enable us to point at it and say: "that is resilience!". In addition to operationalization, ostensive concepts are equally important in science and daily life because they allow us to construct validity (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955) in a way that is rooted in the life-world (Husserl, 1989). This allows us to explain the concept as it is lived in the first-person perspective of the subject, as well as in the third-person perspective as the observer involved in the experience. "Constructing an ostensive definition is one way to establish a first link between the world of theory and the world that we observe" (Thorén & Olsson, 2015). Ostensively defined concepts are inherently provisional, but their meaning is connected to the structure of the world. Hence, instead of establishing a notion of resilience that is either normative or ontologically charged (Thorén & Olsson, 2018), it could be useful to use ostensive categories (Thorén & Persson, 2015) capable of capturing the transformative essence of resilience and, accordingly, its ever-changing nature.

An example

An example of this operationalization and consequent use of ostensive categories would be the study of resilience in people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who try to engage in romantic relationships. Scientific literature has often described people on the spectrum as not interested in or capable of romantic connections (MacKenzie, 2017). Failing in creating a romantic connection was considered a sort of traumatic accident whose gradient of resilience would be measured on the basis of the ASD's ability to come back to its status of disinterest. The epistemological way in which we recognize resilience in action would have pointed us towards considering recovery when the individual had come back to the *status quo ante* the romantic accident. That translated into a form of expectation that has been extended for years on most of the individuals on the spectrum. This expectation, more than their actual potential,

has created a tremendous amount of solitude for individuals on the spectrum. In fact, the reality is that every person on the spectrum behaves differently; they are tremendously capable of love and deep connections (Dewinter, Graaf & Begeer, 2017); defining them in a happy but isolated life would be a limiting condemnation.

The single event of engaging in a romantic relationship might feel traumatic and confusing, but this event works in time in a way that is different from the way in which the third-person observer can measure it. Some ASDs might perceive time in a peculiar way (Allman, 2011; Allman & DeLeon, 2009). If we want to appreciate their resilience, we cannot take a third-person perspective view on a fragment of time in which the traumatic experience occurred, a rejection, for example, and extend the meaning as it appears to the observer in the linear time of the subject. We cannot do that because, as we saw above, the living presence of time as it is perceived in the first-person perspective expands in a way that is different from the observer's perspective. We do not really know what the now of the ASD is retaining at that moment or where it is protending. We do not even know for how long that time will last for the individual. Hence, we cannot measure an individual's resilience in the observable behavior in time of any individual, even more so in ASD. It might take a long time for an individual affected by ASD to try to date again or come back to their normal routine, but that does not say anything about the living time of the individual experiencing the event (Allman, 2011; Allman & DeLeon, 2009). Yet, if we overcome the temporal bias of defining time as a static event observed in a third-person perspective without taking into due consideration how time intimately changes us and the meaning we acquire while knitting together the nows of the different experiences, and if we overcome the epistemological definition of what a person on the spectrum should look like and how they should react to romantic approaches, then we would be able to truly appreciate what resilience in people on the spectrum looks like. Using ostensive categories that run as a test for verifying at each step if the person actually feels more in line with itself can be a useful path to understanding resilience. Resiliency in ASDs is a function of the vast variation seen in etiology and outcome (Szatmari, 2018). As science proceeds, the way in which we can grasp the lifeworld changes tremendously. Since resilience is a pivotal concept for one's notion of well-being, I think it is important to keep its content "vague" and "ostensive", and to run it through operationalization that verifies the temporal and meaning reality of the systems involved.

I do recognize the importance of preparing the ground for good resilience to occur, especially in relation to the current attempts to define well-being. For this reason, this paper has had the primary focus of recognizing and developing a pattern of "good" resilience for individual and communitarian growth.

Concluding remarks

Resilience is an important interdisciplinary notion for understanding the nature of well-being. Reflecting on the problems connected to its normative space is necessary for properly addressing fitting criteria in defining health. I believe that blindly connecting resilience to epistemological and temporal normative expectations would give resilience a structure that is not respectful of an individual's personal narrative and needs. The transformative quality of resilience can be fully expressed when the epistemological expectation to *re-salire* (jump back) to the *status quo ante* the traumatic event is replaced by the possibility of choosing multiple directions of recovery and when the temporal expectation of recovery time is considered according to a centered narrative that takes in account the personal sense of time of the individual(s). As a direction that future research should take, a lived-experience-based approach can support the operationalization of the term in such a way that the epistemological and temporal biases connected to the definition of resilience could be overcome and its transformational power emphasized.

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Normativni prostor otpornosti

SAŽETAK

Članak nastoji pružiti pravac za promišljanje normativnog prostora otpornosti s ciljem stvaranja plodnog međudisciplinarnog dijaloga o dobrobiti i zdravlju. Ukazat ću na epistemološku i vremensku pristranost otpornosti kao na dva neophodna problema s kojima se treba pozabaviti kada se otpornost razmatra kao dinamički životni proces. Vjerujem da je ovo pravovremeno istraživanje s obzirom na nekoliko pokušaja koji se trenutno provode kako bi se oblikovao pojam zdravlja i dobrobiti u odnosu na otpornost (Rockström i sur., 2009).

Ključne riječi: ostenzivan, operacionalizacija, normativ, otpornost, metamorfoza.