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«Metafisica. Quaderni della Fondazione Giorgio e Isa de Chirico» n. 1-2

*Speech by Professor Maurizio Calvesi (Art Historian, Emeritus Professor of La Sapienza University, Rome)*

This voluminous and scientifically impeccable publication (n. 1-2), entitled 'Metafisica' (Metaphysics), has come out whilst an exhibition on Metaphysics is currently underway at the Scuderie del Quirinale (Rome). I shall not dwell on this exhibition which undoubtedly contains beautiful paintings, although scientifically-speaking, it is a little muddled. It demonstrates that interventions of a scientific approach are urgently needed for de Chirico, without giving in to the advertising pull of his name.

A similar thing is happening with ancient art for Caravaggio. Every five minutes there is an exhibition on Caravaggio; but then the things (exhibitions) that really carry the matter forward are undoubtedly fewer in number. In this case, the publication (directed by Professor Picozza) is most welcome, because it provides scholars who are seriously interested in de Chirico's work the opportunity to participate and discuss various matters.

One of the things that I find most "unjustifiable" in the present exhibition is this insistence of keeping de Chirico stationary at 1919, as a tribute to André Breton's opinion. In reality, he was a humanly questionable and overbearing character. He said and wrote that de Chirico died in 1919 when he returned to classicism, which was, according to him, a step backwards that abandoned Metaphysics. This idea was then embraced for a long time in Italy and asserted to till the end even by illustrious people such as Giuliano Briganti. Briganti particularly stuck to this theory following the donation of a series of very important de Chirico paintings to the National Gallery of Modern Art (Rome). Among these were *Mother* (1910), as well as works of the 1920's, 1930's and 1940's.

It is understandable that donations can annoy antique dealers as they replace

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sales. But in the case of Briganti, it was more a question of heredity, which was passed down to him from his teacher, Roberto Longhi. The latter had always been opposed to de Chirico in every way imaginable. Therefore, once the greatness of metaphysical art was recognised, there remained nothing for him to do but agree that Metaphysical art was acceptable although only up until 1919, after which point de Chirico collapsed. Consequently, we see a series of painters in the exhibition (even including De Kooning and Picasso), who in reality had nothing to do with de Chirico. They are represented by works that should show the influence of de Chirico on others. In fact, the only one not to demonstrate de Chirico's influence following metaphysical painting was de Chirico himself because there isn't any.

This is undoubtedly something which needs to be obstinately opposed. As Paolo Picozza writes, the Giorgio and Isabella de Chirico Foundation follows the very simple truth that there is only one kind of metaphysics by de Chirico (from 1910 until 1978, the year of his death), and that the keys (to understanding) are plentiful. They are numerous due to the ramifications of him being a multi-branched artist, as Picozza defines him.

Another point that Picozza rightly touches upon in his *Introduction* is the very delicate case surrounding the issue of forgeries and the prejudices which are connected to it: "Different perspectives regarding the interpretation of de Chirico are renewed from its foundations with the age-old issue of fakes. We are presently checking this fresh outbreak of forgeries which have always created an alarming aura about the artist. We still continue to hear about the *Leitmotiv* which de Chirico supposedly invented in order to be awkward about a series of forgeries which had actually been documented in collectors houses, or during the 1920's (such as Doucet's *Revenant*) in journals of the 1920's («Selection»), or during the 1940's («Almanacco Bompiani»), etc.

The problem is above all a cultural one. One needs to establish that which is not de Chirico and that which polluted his painting - a task of real philological restoration. It is a problem that originated around the middle of the 1920's, continuing throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, up until the latest and most recent forgeries.

For this reason, there are forgeries linked to the surrealist circle, and even fakes originating from the fascist ambit. Therefore we hear "a kind of *cantus firmus*", as Picozza puts it, "which acts out a series of scornful judgments on de Chirico as both man and artist: hypochondriac, impossible, mercenary, and so forth. Today, one century on, the *cantus* is being repeated in an identical manner. Fully aware of this, as well as his fondness for an ideal 'son' in art which he would never have, we see that de Chirico left

things alone for a long period. A period which, however, came to a definitive end in 1946 with his famous 'negation' of forgeries on display at the Allard Gallery in Paris." As Picozza writes, "In my opinion (...) in the end it only serves to give further clarity." And this is particularly so and correct. Professor Picozza's *Introduction* is followed by Jole de Sanna's substantial essay by Jole de Sanna which deals with this problem of forged works, starts with the painting *Revenant* (at Jacques Doucet's house), which de Chirico declared a fake. I myself tried to demonstrate its falsity with my critique on Baldacci's monography, who alternatively published it with arrogant confidence. He considered de Chirico to be a swindler and a sort of buffoon whose directions should not be taken into account.

I myself had already noted that the real *Revenant* had to be a painting prior to 1918. Professor de Sanna rightly indicated this with the better known painting *Le cerveau de l'enfant*. De Sanna continues with a useful chronological reconstruction regarding de Chirico, Breton and Eluard, as well as on the basis of a rich collection of letters from de Chirico to André & Simon Breton and Paul & Gala Eluard, as well as from James Thrall Soby to Paul Eluard.

I quote de Sanna's conclusion on page 61: "(...) one talks about the Allard Gallery and the famous exhibition which instigated de Chirico's protests (...) Twenty forged paintings by Oscar Dominguez were on display, and de Chirico caused a scandal in the newspapers. One of these forgeries, a *Trovatore* (Troubadour), which apparently belonged to Eluard, was intended to be displayed at the exhibition of metaphysical paintings at the 1948 Venice Biennial. The exhibition jury comprised of Carlo Carrà, Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, and Roberto Longhi, de Chirico's "historical" enemy in Italy from the 1920's onwards."

I should add that the prize that year (when the Biennial held the exhibition on metaphysical painting) was given to Giorgio Morandi, a painter as sublime as de Chirico. However, for an exhibition that dealt with Metaphysical art, it should clearly and undoubtedly have gone to de Chirico. This gives an idea of the profound and strong hostility towards this great painter which was inherent in many cultural ambits. Particularly interesting studies follow on from hers, such as the one by Fabio Benzi regarding the de-Chirico-Signorelli correspondence. It highlights the painter's classical beginnings between 1918 and 1919 when de Chirico recaptured ideas from the classical culture, focusing on the under-evaluated production of 1919, the transition year which in fact marked the beginning of de Chirico's classicism. An intelligent study by Laurent Busine on de Chirico's last ten years (1968-1978) discusses, among other things, a work left unfinished in the year of the

artist's death - the copy of Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo*. At the moment, it is currently on display at the Pantheon, in celebration of Pope John Paul II's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is a moving painting due to its unfinished state, demonstrating de Chirico's both proud and humble desire to rank himself alongside one of the great master's such as Michelangelo. Busine has dedicated other studies to the "New dechirichian Metaphysics" – a Metaphysics that was more playful and strangely in harmony in agreement with the atmosphere of the 1960s, which de Chirico produced during the 1960's and 1970's. Then there is a piece by Ralph Schiebler on de Chirico and the 'Theory of relativity'. Schiebler defines de Chirico's paintings as "the waiting rooms of time", making comparisons with Einstein, for whom rest and motion were important concepts. I must say that I did not understand it very well. Perhaps my friend here Salvini might be able to explain it better. There is also the text by Leo Lecci which highlights the influence of a painting by Charles Cottet on de Chirico's *Processione sul monte* (Procession on the Mountain) which brings in my hypothesis regarding the possible influence of Plinio Novellini. And lastly, a collection of unpublished writings by de Chirico results in some very zestful and entertaining reading.

A work, which is entitled *Nascita di un manichino* (Birth of a mannequin), does not discuss the creation of the first mannequins, but rather the changes the mannequin underwent during the Twenties, when it was no longer standing but seated. He writes, "...I abandoned the representation of the standing mannequin (alone or with another mannequins) because, despite their undoubted metaphysical meaning, they were too similar to the poetry of the marionette and the *duo* of old Italian melodrama. These seated characters are humanised in their own way, and have something warm, good and attractive about them, like a donkey or an ox, and some dogs. Moreover, there is a particularly elusive (and mystical) and enigmatic feeling which attaches itself to the seated figure."

Amongst other things, this demonstrates that there is a continuity of speculative thought surrounding de Chirico's Metaphysics and with this theme of mannequins. This means, therefore, that de Chirico was not at all dead in 1919. It was simply that his imagination had evolved.

*Speech by Professor Giuseppe Basile - National Institute of Restoration (Ministry of Cultural Heritage)*

I only wish to touch very briefly on the issue which Maurizio Calvesi skipped over because he was sure that I would discuss it.

In the publication which we are presenting today, there is a very short, almost telegraphic and very dense article by Jole de Sanna regarding a very

important work by the artist, *Bagni misteriosi* (The Mysterious Bathers), executed thirty years ago by him for the Milan Triennial Exhibition (*News on the restoration of the Bagni misteriosi fountain at Parco Sempione, Milan*).

The importance of this article resides in the fact that she informs us that (thanks to the Foundation's ceaseless work and especially thanks to the input of Jole de Sanna, might I add) the *Comune di Milano* (the Milan town council), the work's proprietor, has finally decided to do all that is required in order to plan its restoration.

It has therefore set up a board of experts (including myself) and those involved with the conservation of cultural works, with the aim of preparing a restoration project for the artwork.

Those present know just how extremely difficult it is to restore a contemporary work of art is, above all if one is not dealing with a manufactured good which fits into the canonic divisions of genres and classes.

In the case of the *Bagni misteriosi*, as with others, and in particular the fact that the work is situated outdoor, was certainly created for the outside and therefore should not be brought into a closed environment. On the other hand, everyone knows that contemporary works of art, perhaps more so than ancient works (or perhaps it is better to call them pre-contemporary works), the problem of conservation becomes necessary in an increasingly pressing manner.

The rather 'naïve' old concept that contemporary works of art are immune from ruin, damage or deterioration because it is new, has had its day.

I can briefly relate a personal experience of mine a few years ago, when (in 1985) only seventeen years after the casting and execution of Pomodoro's *Sfera Grande*, in the large open space of the Farnesina (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), it was discovered through scientific investigations and our observations that the work was in such a degraded state, that unrestorable (at least 90% of it), despite the fact that it was made of a bronze, a material that by definition is durable.

Unfortunately, both the casting and execution had been done in such a way as to not ensure its permanency which, fortunately, despite wars, attacks and many other similar disasters, enjoyed by *Marcus Aurelius* and other important, even older, monuments.

From here stems the dramatic problem of what to do: does one safe-guard the formal identity of the work, leaving aside the fact that the material make-up will deteriorate inexorably with time?

Thus, the truly dramatic problem we had to face was what to do: safeguard the identity of a work as such, leaving it to deteriorate over time? But this was certainly not de Chirico's intention, and in any case, we know that even

if it had been the artist's aim, it is our duty as conservators of historical documents and signs to not follow such intentions.

If we were to bring it indoors?

That would have been, and would be, an absolutely unacceptable treatment of de Chirico's intentions. If one adds that the work in question is of an extreme complexity, given that architecture, painting and sculpture co-exist and unite with one another etc., the necessity of organizing a committee board (which I mentioned at the beginning) is more than justifiable. I should say that fortunately, after relatively little time, we are already possess scientific research and other elements which allow us to put together a preliminary project of intervention. Everything obviously needs to be checked but I already think that this is very important. I believe it most significant that this publication has taken onboard the importance of the conservation of contemporary works of art and consequently hope that this small opening, so to speak, becomes a window which can systematically bring to light, as far as possible, important information relating to de Chirico and possibly other artists.

I confirm that the occasions in which one can speak about the conservation and restoration of contemporary art are absolutely lacking and rare.

Maurizio Calvesi will remember, like me, that the last convention on the protection of contemporary works of art (which followed on from a previous one three years ago) dates back to years ago, October 1997. It was not by chance that we held it at 'La Sapienza' University (Rome) in the ambit of a global project of a strongly didactic content, as well as scientific and operative. It took this form as it foresaw the study, cognitive investigations, discourse and intervention on the university's two most important works of art: Arturo Martini's *Minerva* (which was restored specially for this event) and the large wall mural *L'Italia fra le arti e le scienze* (Italy between the Arts and Sciences) by Mario Sironi in the *Aula Magna* (the Magna Room). A complete artistic and analytic cognitive dossier is to be presented on the latter, which also discusses the possible operative ends). From then onwards, it has not been possible to report other similar initiatives, at least in Italy. I therefore believe that this publication can also be a very important instrument in the following two directions: firstly, the gathering of first-hand information on the material make-up of de Chirico's works (and possibly not just his) with the aim of creating a data bank without which one is unable to do anything of serious worth (it is clear to me that the de Chirico Foundation is equipping itself in order to guarantee the full credibility of such information); and secondly, in order to feed the debate which is neither occasional nor epidemic, nor stale in the way

in which it proposes such complicated problems. One often runs into such problems with regard to contemporary restoration.

*Speech by Professor Pietro Rescigno (Jurist and member of Accademia dei Lincei)*

The reason for my presence is thanks to the Foundation and the Board members who voted for me during a board meeting. I was immediately gripped with the idea of not only presenting this publication but the proposal of its location, at the Accademia dei Lincei. This proposal was accepted by the good-will and generosity of Vesentini, which has today as its President, Giovanni Conso, friend and colleague. The presence of a jurist at the presidency of the academy after more than half a century, the associates of this category, is a further reason of satisfaction for us. Why choose a place such as the Academy, which by definition, is therefore a meeting place of cultures and in particular, of two cultures? It is precisely because de Chirico, as we shall learn, above-all those of who are more remote and profane (to use this word of abuse), truly belonged to a history of culture and cultures – plural in the full meaning of the word. In this issue, one announces that the next issue will contain a further discourse relating to the relationship between Einstein and de Chirico, with the problem of Relativity. No-one better than Giorgio Salvini can tell us particularly useful and profitable things today in order that we understand this theme. But other 'cultural' names who have made their mark on the past century also appear within the pages of the publication. In the first pages, one speaks of Gadamer, ermeneutica, which really means that we are dealing with a character who has links with all of last century's happenings. Consequently, there is no more apt a place than an academy which is open to cultural discourse.

The initiative of this publication and indeed of a Foundation, is a further reason to reflect and invite the jurist in the first place, but once again with a topic that is enthralling for everyone, regarding the meaning and value of the foundation as a legal institution and, thus, as something that originates above all, even exclusively, on a historical level thanks to the private initiative. It nevertheless supplies an invaluable service to the general public, even when (and it is amongst the tasks of the Foundation) it takes on the honour of documenting and discerning the truth from the false in an activity that is as extensive in its temporal dimensions of importance on the level of the artistic event as was the work of de Chirico.

Both the direction of the Foundation and the publication produced is intended to bring to light (which after all, was the way in which de Chirico considered himself) not only the complexity which is typical of the artistic pro-

duction of all great genius' but also, at the same time, the unity and continuity of this work. Therefore, aside from that common place of an artistic death, which happened at a certain historic moment (1918-1919). Then the birth and fact that it was survived by a different subject (the bearer of new conceptions, ideas and facts in his artistic life from *Metaphysics* to Classicism). One wants to light the awareness of who has lived such an experience, and also the continuity of this artistic experience, as almost always happens in the life of every man. Thus, if not the total lack of criticism, certainly one intends to put it into perspective and give it a precise meaning of various temporal phases.

This breaking off also led to the onset of themes of a decidedly juridical character which I have already mentioned, those themes that are already present in the first issue of the publication of *Metaphysics*: like authenticity and forgeries, which has a certain urgency perceived by the artist himself. However, this was also provoked by the conflicts of interest that arose around him and his work, starting from the post-war period that witnessed its specific expression in a judicial case – an episode which is accompanied here (in the publication) by a precise commentary and documented by means of publishing the judicial sentence. This judgement of the first degree (unfavourable to de Chirico and given very widespread publicity by the press of the time) was dropped by an appeal sentence which, alternatively, was not given equal prominence.

This indication of a particular position (if not of a definitely critical aversion) has also been discussed in Calvesi's review – and like this, a whole series of clichés about his character, the way in which he also set forth with the art market. The artist's life also means the encounter, the creative moment, the requests, the speculations and conflicts which are brought about by the art market.

Therefore, this first issue of the publication is already a (reflective) mirror, not only of the cultural background which counter-marks the life of every artist and in particular of such a representative man of the century that has just ended. It also documents those minor episodes (if we want to qualify them as such) which is certainly the theme of law which, however, is a theme present in the artist's life. As I have already tried to record in terms of the authenticity of a work, possible disputes, declarations that come from the artist himself, and which are therefore certainly in line with the most reliable principles, experienced disputes, decisions of judges etc.

From this point of view, I also believe that this publication presents an important document which adds other pieces to this image – to the already very rich and complete image that Calvesi has given us.

The problem of the relationship between de Chirico and Savinio is also useful in putting the perhaps excessive re-evaluation of Savinio into perspective - artist and painter - instead of restoring him to his rightful place in the field of literature. With regard to this area of knowledge, this man undoubtedly occupies a worthy place which should to be more fully enhanced. Consequently, this is a publication abound in suggestions from which the jurist can also draw from, with invaluable use. And therefore he also expresses his thanks, a statement of approval, interest, curiosity and good luck.

*Speech by Professor Claudio Strinati (Special Director of Museums in Rome)*

Like Professor Calvesi, I have also been struck by the coincidence between the publication of the first issue of the Foundation's publication entitled *Metaphysics* and the inauguration of the exhibition *Metaphysics* at the Scuderie del Quirinale, which if not totally perfect, is practically perfect.

It is not particularly strange that the titles coincide with one another. I can not see how a Foundation dedicated to de Chirico could name its periodical differently. Similarly, I do not see how an exhibition dedicated to the theme of *Metaphysics* could be entitled differently.

However, if follow on from several observations explored by Calvesi, this coincidence is not only a terminological coincidence, but is in fact interesting from a critical terminological point of view. Sharing the same title, it is possible to note the implicit re-proposing of a historical debate which, in fact, has lasted since de Chirico's debut. It is worth saying that the way in which this artistic phenomenon is viewed, (one that is judged by all to be interesting) as being truly important and worthy. One notes that there seems to be a tendency amongst scholars, experts, as well as the public, to view this phenomenon from radically opposite starting points.

In fact, if we read all of this publication's contents with a critical eye (which Calvesi has widely talked about), and we read, for example, the exhibition catalogue for *Metafisica*, which has been curated by various authors, we notice that they seem to discuss two different subjects. And in reality, the objects being discussed are more or less the same, at least with regard to the exhibition for some.....However, their approach is almost radically opposed to one another, and this opposition – bearing in mind that this publication originates from a man of juridical culture – we could say that it is in *re ipsa* ie. within the concrete historical dynamics of de Chirico's life. In fact, it is fully explained (in the publication), the Giorgio and Isa de Chirico Foundation was founded and develops in abundant force, in order to safeguard both its owns patrimony (ie. that which the Foundation conserves, paintings, testimonies, written work) and that of the historiographical reality

of de Chirico's life, as far as it can. By "reality" I mean the reality of the documents, the reality of interpreting these documents. From this point of view, I consider Prof. Picozza's (the Foundation's President and lawyer – a man of the law) idea an excellent one – to dedicate the final part (of the publication) to the very entertaining story of the law suit produced from a memorable episode in 1946, when de Chirico judged a painting depicting an Italian piazza square as a fake. Picozza had the idea of not only writing an essay spurred on by the article (which was recently published in «Art Newspaper» by another lawyer-art historian, Fabrizio Lemme). As they know, that forgery, unexpectedly, after legal proceedings, an appeal, two sentences (one unfavourable to de Chirico and one unfavourable to his theoretical argument) ie. the declaration of the work's falsity, the painting was judged a fake (and here the term is 'juridical'), appeared in an auction many years later as an authenticate work.

There then followed an indescribable row which undoubtedly would have made the Maestro smile a lot – scholars and jurists provided a series of interventions testifying to the work's authenticity once a again – a type of continuous wheel that turns forever.

Picozza published the sentence. In short, here is the Foundation's institutional purpose: to give material to scholars, enthusiasts and those who love this subject - materials available to examination, in order to spur on reflection of a really difficult subject matter. To tell the truth the difficulty, dear colleagues, lies not so much in recognising a fake as in recognising the mental dynamics which led to this type of problem becoming so significant, so important. An example of this are the contents of the catalogue for the current exhibition on Metaphysics.

The first goes in the direction which Calvesi himself has called "elucidation" – the illumination of the obscure, complex, and problematic which rotates around Metaphysics.

Alternatively, the other goes in the direction of confirming the fact that the argument inherent to metaphysical painting is obscure in itself. It is true, and therefore more than explainable, more than clarified, it is to be encouraged, translated into a language of high literariness that does nothing more than expand like an echo, like lots of circles in the water when something falls to extreme limits in which this measurement loses that mysteriousness, in the vagueness ingrained in this type of art.

Something very interesting can be seen in the de Chirico-Breton correspondence, namely that the problem of forgery is not a tragicomic puppet theatre in which surly, aggressive characters with economic self-interests emerge – of a great meanness of human beings in general. Instead, it is a

problem that arises and develops through a real suffering on de Chirico's part who sensed a progressive attempt to disintegrate his work by a whole series of cultural and social forces - like a sort of Orpheus mangled and torn to pieces on the theory, on the basis of which he would die at a certain moment in his biological life. It was this part of the problem that was sensed by de Chirico. He realised it during the course of the 1920's, roughly from 1924 up until the beginning of the 1930's, when this situation also became factual, economic. The artist was in desperate straits. He had financial problems between 1930 and 1932. He was disadvantaged.

This continuous state of psycho-physical difficulty became more and more acute, because the Maestro realised that the support which he had succeeded in obtaining in the very cultured French circle (many years earlier as his contact with André Breton dates back to the second decade of the century) was, in reality, upsetting him more and more. The indicator, the clear sign in this documentation, was the problem of the works titles. We know that in the history of art, in general, the problem of figurative artwork's title is a very interesting problem in itself. Figurative works of art (a fresco, a painting) were not given a title for centuries because for centuries the entitling of a figurative work of art was felt to be extrinsic to the work itself, whilst it is intrinsic to literary and philosophical works. In fact, it is significant that Dante Alighieri entitled his poem *Commedia* (Comedy).

But no one can truly maintain that Botticelli entitled his painting of Spring *Primavera*. Botticelli never gave a title to any of his paintings. The ancient historian says that he did a painting depicting Spring. This is profoundly different. In reality, the title of a figurative work of art as a critique, is used by the artist for the first time during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, which is not that long ago. Perhaps this practice originated with historic painting, the so-called "History Painting", for which the painting not only represented the *I Vespri siciliani* (Sicilian Vespers) but was also entitled *I Vespri siciliani* (Sicilian Vespers).

De Chirico arrived at a moment in art history when the entitling of a work of art was a discriminating, fundamental point, because it was a way in which the 'true' reading of a work could be grasped.

In fact, de Chirico complains a great deal in this book. This is very clear with regard to the Surrealists, if we schematise a bit, after having used him almost as a teacher who guides the way of expressing oneself in the figurative field. They changed the titles of his works, giving no importance as to how the work was entitled. This is the forgery, rather than making the umpteenth version of a painting or, after many years, producing another Italian piazza square. In reality, the Maestro realised that his work was being ideologically forged and that he was being crowded out, personally experiencing (and this

is true, at least I believe it's true) the distressing feeling of a great creator who has traced a path and now finds himself being ostracised, set aside, and questioned - not in what he had actually done, but for what they wanted to make him do. Living with this and having a very long and extremely complex experience, this fact was also reflected in the practical fact, namely the reproposal of given themes, reformulating certain paintings. Calvesi is right in saying that it has no critical sense to declare that Metaphysics began at a certain point and ended on a certain date. Metaphysics was de Chirico's creative dimension, which then articulated itself during a series of stages. Something similar occurred to another great person during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Stravinsky. Reaching mental clarity in his career between 1909 and 1913-1914.

In reaching the mental clarity of his composing between 1909 and 1913-1914, culminating in the famous *Sacre du printemps*, who lived until c. 1971, (more or less like de Chirico, who died in 1978), he was thereafter accused throughout his creative life (formidable until his last day) of having lost his great telluric inspiration of the very early days. Furthermore, he was accused of not having done anything else but rework his previous languages, no longer having his creative power.

By now, musicologists have widely demonstrated that this theory lacks any basis. The same thing happened to de Chirico. This publication offers contributions, above all by Benzi, who returns to investigate the very famous episode of the epoch-making attack which Roberto Longhi made on de Chirico in February 1919. In his very well-known article, *A dio ortopedico* (An orthopedic god) he tore apart de Chirico's exhibition held at the Braglia gallery, publishing this poisonous piece on the very day that the exhibition closed (when there would have been no way of answering back. Apart from this incident by Longhi, it is interesting how Benzi studies this moment of great transition for de Chirico in Rome between 1918 and 1919, through correspondence with Olga Signorelli. It is also interesting how de Chirico's conscience, in fact, expresses his anything but banal evaluation of the dynamics of the avant-garde at that very moment. His relationship with the avant-garde could and should be a keystone in understanding Calvesi's theory of "clarified Metaphysics". This can and perhaps should still be pursued now, contrary to interpreting de Chirico which tends to blur the very clear articulations and motivations behind his activity.

*Speech by Professor Giorgio Salvini (Physicist-theorist, ex-President of the Accademia dei Lincei)*

I was told that my task was to comment on de Chirico's relationship with physical science, and in particular, with Relativity. This places me in a diffi-

cult position – one of great ‘distance’ but yet of great human ‘proximity’. I shall attempt to tell you the reason firstly behind the ‘distance’, and secondly behind the ‘proximity’.

During the last century, physics and especially the concepts of the relative physics and quantum mechanics were conquered with difficulty - almost cruelly excavating away with surprising and unexpected experimental results, accompanied by genius – a type of genius conceded to a very select few, pushing logical and mathematical knowledge to its extreme limits. To understand their capability is a work of great commitment, and mathematical and laboratorial nights.. The world of physics can be entered only with extensive study and profound enthusiasm. I want to confess that (for those of you who do not already know) that I myself, not being a theorist but rather a physicist who achieves experimental results in the laboratory, have done this all my life. I must often leave the analysis and interpretation of the results to mathematical and theoretical specialists.

The justification of my presence in this arduous physical science is a dedication to the cause of understanding, together with my knowledge in the use of instrumental techniques and choice of devices. In this age, all, or almost all, of us physicists have known the humility and pleasure of not arriving alone at the final result, whether we are talking about a new particle, the nature of the muon, or the super conductivity of atomic vortices. From what I have read of Giorgio de Chirico's written works, I do not believe that he ever entered into the subtle labyrinths of these physical sciences, or thought to associate himself with physics in order to enjoy the subtle and necessary scientific research for foretelling, for dominating these facts.

The essay on Relativity by Ralph Schiebler which is included in the publication *Metaphysics*, explores de Chirico's interest in the reality of time, its passage, its coming to a halt during the arcane moments of painting.

In 1915-1916, whilst in military hospital at Ferrara, he finally had free time to think, “to think about art and the things in our minds which seem to fix together the last purposes of our human adventure”. During his most profound metaphysical period, he painted those large Italian piazza squares interrupted only by the penetrating whistle of a train engine which he recalled with the variant of sound in order to create the *Doppler* effect – the variant of time, the only mobile element within the stationary picture: a *Doppler* effect which is so much a part of classical and relativistic mechanics, indeed of all mechanics.

This pleasant sentiment certainly exists, as Calvesi said: we must not confuse this with the profound, gripping, intimate fascination of mathematical speculation.

With regard to the *Doppler* effect, whilst I was reading these modest notes this morning, verses which are also metaphysical came into my mind. They too have a rambling voice in the immense quiet, even if there is no *Doppler* effect. These are the verses of Giacomo Leopardi “...*un canto che si udia per li sentieri lentamente vanire a poco a poco, già similmente mi stringeva il core... o mi mordeva il core*” They are bonds, but they certainly do not go beyond a certain level, which are deeply immersed within us beyond every possible level.

It would perhaps be unjust to beyond the limit of these very fine intuitions go with de Chirico. In our business, we have to work in specialised fields which I do not believe great artists and humanists ever practised, with a consideration if anything for artists not of the paint brush but of the pen. Goethe comes to mind who dealt with colours, optics and natural sciences.

Having said this about great and insuperable distance, I come to the other part of the matter: I refer to human proximity. I refer to Art and the results of great sculptors, painters and musicians. The relationship with all men is continuous and intense, and certainly with scientists of specialist subject-matters which I previously mentioned.

Every sensitive man talks with a work of art and particularly with figurative art. He talks to it in an immediate form without the intermediary of culture, of regular grammatical preparation: I would say without a conditioning logic. I went to the lovely exhibition *Metaphysics*, and I remained enchanted in front of several works which I had already been acquainted with for some time: those *Pesci sacri* (Sacred Fish) of de Chirico's are a work of art to be meditated upon. Their pictorial mastery of an extraordinary craftsman (which he also was) enters inside me as if he were directly offering me a gift. The same happens when I admire several of the loftiest mathematical somersaults which have led us to demonstrate the *Fermat Theorem* - somersaults which I did not follow right to the end, or the problem of the four colours.

But then, in my imagination, de Chirico's *Pesci sacri* (Sacred Fish) also take flight for an arcane metaphysical space, as do the mannequins, the red tower and the absolutely immobile horses pawing at the ground. I spoke of proximity, of human and spiritual contact between even differently oriented minds... maybe I didn't put it badly.

At our Accademia dei Lincei, where all human enthusiasms and interests can be encountered, even if expressed by members who are no longer that young, I know scientists who are meticulously attentive of their own scientific problems, but are irresistibly tied to the voice and fascination of Art. I cite my friend and colleague, and apologise for doing so without his authorisation: Giorgio Careri.

He is a famous physicist who has achieved very well-known results in the field of condensed matter, but I know that he senses the value of Art and of modern pictorial art also in its most audacious forms, the more demanding arcane ones. “But what does he see inside it? I see only a crooked bottle! An apple, the wall of an unadorned room”. We can be astonished at his admiration, and some may even wonder if he is completely honest with himself.

Well this is the point: Giorgio Careri, and I and many others in the so-called specialist sciences, are honest with ourselves and accept the truth of Art, enjoying its continuous presence in the human past and present. At times, a line, a nuance of the Masters is enough to re-awaken in us an agreement, a faith in their feeling. I should add that Giorgio Careri is also a sculptor.

This is to emphasise the proximity; but I should immediately add that this proximity in Art has its quality of association of connections, and is perhaps superior to the very unity of science. I mean the continuity of time over the centuries, indeed in the millennia of our passing. I am thinking about de Chirico's portraits and his mannequins, and I feel in them a melancholy which is associated with the melancholy of Phidias and Polycletus' portraits, the melancholy of Dürer, of Picasso's *Guernica*, the desperate angry signs of many tormented young people in recent decades.

Yes, perhaps these arcane bonds reaffirm amid huge differences. Our quality of being men is in continuous tormented progress, united also by our suffering for evil that we inflict upon ourselves, and by our desire and curiosity to understand more.

Our contradictions and desire to emerge lead us to a meditation of metaphysics. Or better still, I would like to recall a thought of Erwin Panofsky here, recalled in the publication *Metaphysics*, regarding the general difference between the natural sciences and the humanistic sciences. Erwin Panofsky, whose son (and friend of us physicists) is also a renowned physicist, said: “...scientists of nature force themselves to reveal unchanging laws and distinguish between the diversified flow of things. As Einstein once said, “...*Politics is for the day-time, but an equation is for eternity.*” Historians seek to bring past facts back to life, just as the work of an artist does, which fixes time in eternal images, like de Chirico's paintings, as Panofsky says. He follows the affinity between the artist and the scientist at least from the point of view of their attitude towards time. There is a strong temptation to understand and explain (as I said at the start) that great distance between specialist sciences and this great human proximity to Art.

Someone may seek a justification in some person or authority that is superior to us, and at times supervises us. Others may think that we are without a

guide in this adventure of ours, and that we must fend for ourselves in order to understand who we are, what we want and where we can arrive. I shall humbly try to say something on this point: Renzo Tramaglino's feeble opinion of *I promessi sposi* (Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed*) comes to mind. The spectacle of Nature, animals and Man, even more so after the great Darwin, is fascinating. We learnt to write six thousand years ago. In accordance with Cavalli Sforza's estimates, the art of speaking was possibly born fifty or one hundred thousand years ago. The awareness of the ego began in the last millennia, and is still in progress. A few revolutions of planet Earth in a few years, therefore; a planet Earth calmed of its planetary disruptions by now. A few revolutions have permitted the passing of time to create man as we presently are.

But can we think of having many thousands of millions of revolutions and of years to come for our small planet still in front of us, in order to progress and arrive at extraordinary and unpredictable goals. Naturally, we can think that the human species will finish first, perhaps killed off by our own hands. I cannot exclude this, but I do not believe it. We will perhaps have other calamities, but we will resume our journey. All this will go ahead. Everything will continue and continue well.

In short, you have understood: next to melancholy, suffering and this word "Metaphysics", that perhaps I find it a bit tiring. I see a blossoming of hope in our poor planet. The hope of what we will be able to understand to become in the coming millennia. What we will be able to be transcends our present awareness. Think of what men knew three thousand years ago, and compare it with our knowledge today. There is an abyss of things, concepts, scientific conquests...

But still in speaking of our universe as science sees it, it is not at all stable in our thoughts and our representation. Only twenty years or so ago, we could think that it was made up of protons, neutrons, photons, and little neutrons? Today, we know almost with certainty that there is much else in the form of particles. We know how the sense of the word *reality* has changed over the years.

Our image of the universe has evolved almost even more than what runs between the Metaphysics of 1919 and our artistic thoughts today - things that our great-great-great grandparents could absolutely not know, just as we are unable to conceive how our great-great-great-grandchildren will live in a thousand years' time. I certainly can not do it. But why did I say this? I said it in order to support my inability today to reply to the problem of the bonds between Art and Science. Let us limit ourselves to the here and now, and not claim to understand and know right to the end.

The “here and now” is an expression that covers not only the Catholic belief, but all the limits of our knowledge. Let us leave the eminent Einstein and the great de Chirico to fly independently. A day will perhaps come when we will find a greater unity and understanding within ourselves, but that day is slow in coming. Perhaps millions and millions of years will be necessary. Well I am a bit tired of sitting (on stone). I feel a bit like a mannequin, too. I see them going past. Someone turned and waved at me. I do not know if we will see each other again, but it has been nice having been men and not gods and lichens and not oak trees, not dolphins.

I finish by recalling Guttuso and de Chirico. Guttuso said about de Chirico that he was the only Italian painter who said new words to people through things. In my opinion, along with Picasso, he remains the only modern painter worthy of being seated alongside the Muses and the ancient painters. And now I recall de Chirico for that magnificent brief work about the Mannequin which my colleagues mentioned a short time ago.

De Chirico said: “The seated mannequin is destined to live in rooms, but above all in the corners of rooms, because it is above all there that the mannequins feel at home, who pour out and generously lavish gifts of their ineffable and mysterious poetry, are really at home.... This mysterious side of the rooms and the room corners which I expressed in numerous paintings”, continues Giorgio de Chirico, “is also a phenomenon of great metaphysical interest, but to speak about it now would require too much time, and then there are cases and moments in which we can truly be philosophers” says de Chirico. And I add poets and painters – only maintaining the silence.

*Speech by Professor Giovanni Conso (Jurist and President of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome)*

I cannot say no after such a kind invitation, especially after the many important things that we have heard. I will summarise my thinking: this publication is magnificent. It is exciting for the way in which it is constructed, for the wide variety of written works, letters, poems, pictures and drawings, which are all very well devised.

After such a brilliant start, I ask myself what will be the future of this publication, a future which we hope will be successful. In all honesty, I do not think that it will be an easy thing, as there is not an infinite source of ingenious, or in any case stimulating, unpublished writings. The debate needs to be opened up. Our head speaker Prof. Salvini has given us an outline: those setbacks between Art and Science, and between Literature and Science. It would be a mine, and I believe that the exploitation of this mine would allow one to answer the question which I ask myself in an easier way.

In fact, there is much to reap among these tracked-down messengers during Giorgio de Chirico's life history. I have examined many of them in the past few days, and one has particularly struck me. When the unpublished manuscript, *Monsieur Dusdron*, is placed before one's eyes, one notices that it was originally written in French whilst the definitive version is in Italian. The initial original text is interesting, not only as the starting point for the definitive edition (how many great writers, how many great painters, have sketched, tried to draw lines, done sketches or rough drafts, before realising their magnum opus or their favourite painting?), but also because – and this is the thing that amazed me the most – the manuscript of *Monsieur Dusdron*, written in French, was written in pencil on twenty-four sheets of notebook paper, totalling forty-eight pages. Writing in pencil is always tiring, also because it is accompanied by the risk of erasing itself out more easily. In any case, it remains less vivid. It really is admirable, first of all for the youthful command of the language used with the pencil, which in turn is an instrument of union between the Painter and the Writer: as painters use pencil especially for sketching, could there not also perhaps be a pictorial reflection in this writing effort on the whole discipline?

This brings a further suggestion to mind. Now that the computer is used so much, are the relationships between Art and Science, and Literature and Science, changing or will they change? Is there the same spontaneity and naturalness of the painter's pen-stroke with the computer? Or in the mark of the writer? I doubt it, and I therefore allow myself to suggest that this new publication studies these new aspects in depth, comparing the most modern instruments of language (particularly those technological ones with the classical ones), in order to see the effect regarding the problem of relationships between Art and Science.

*Prof. Giorgio Careri (Physicist and member of the Accademia dei Lincei)*

I will start with a very short sentence by Leonardo da Vinci, (which is) perfectly relevant: "Painting is mental material". Here there is already that which we call the metaphysical system, of which art critics are certainly well aware. What is metaphysics for me? I completely reject the philosophical question. Everyone knows that metaphysics is part of philosophy, an integral part of Aristotle etc., but for some reason this aspect has never interested me. The mental issue, on the other hand, common to both Art and Science, is typical of human nature and only human nature.

To emphasise and comprehend the mental issue is to understand metaphysics, no longer in a philosophical sense, but as I see it, in a modern sense – of this day and age.

Naturally, we are here to honour de Chirico. But “metaphysics” is a thing more wide-ranging than de Chirico. Physics are involved, starting with Newton. Newton still remains the greatest physicist, because it was he who introduced elements that couldn't be seen: the force of gravity. Have you ever seen the force of gravity? No, you see its effects. He introduced “non-visible” elements in order to explain the visible. This strangely reminds one of Klee, the famous treatise we all know: “Art does not reproduce the visible but makes visible”.

Visibility is the word “non-visibility”, not regarding mystery but rather the mental processes which allow the mind's eye to see things and to grasp their meaning.

The meaning is not only within us or only within things. It is in the encounter between us and things. These are words from Buber, a philosopher of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, words which are worthy and valid for all. The sense is not only within us and neither in that which is outside: it is we, through thought, who give a meaning to things.

Philosophy does not search for things: it only looks at the mental question in itself.

That which de Chirico did, as first or amongst the greatest of those who have considered metaphysics in this way – a way of conceiving metaphysics – that I would call de Chirico's way.

Be careful not to say that it is “Metaphysics”, otherwise there will be great confusion with the philosophers: it's inevitable.

Consequently, de Chirico conceived metaphysics in making visible (we will consider his paintings because we see them) those preoccupations which are clearly (part) of our mental make-up, of our thought. This is his greatness, and perhaps this is the greatness of all the great men.

This is not my speciality, but I would like to say that all Art is characterised by this type of process and not only Art but also Science. Therefore, with this very demanding name “metaphysics”, you have taken on a task which makes one tremble in a certain way, because it is not the metaphysics of philosophers. It is a new metaphysics of which de Chirico is one (a great one of course) of the first to conceive its nature.

This makes all that I have said to you possible, that is, the overcoming of the issue of the two cultures.

There is not a humanist culture and a scientific culture. There simply exists that which one sees and that which one does not see. That which is not seen is not meant to be cultivated as mystery, but rather, is to be made visible and to be recognized as the fruit of our thought.

Nowadays, there is a new branch of science: “Cognitive Sciences” which is

born from the encounter of psychology, sciences (in the normal sense of this term), computer science, neurology and so on.

I would like to suggest that the writers who have taken on this noble task, allow themselves to open up to the cognitive sciences, because, only in this way, can they clarify their function, which is not only that of making new philosophy (you can imagine perhaps how many periodicals are probably already called 'Metafisica' around the world), but in order to clarify their nature, their state.

*Speech by Prof. Jole de Sanna (Scientific Director of the Giorgio and Isa de Chirico Foundation)*

Thank you for the profoundly moving observations that I have listened to. If I may be so bold as to propose my point of view, inevitably congruous to that of Prof. Careri, in contraposition to the great authority Head speaker Salvini, to recall that for us – the humble servants of Art History – de Chirico's regard for a fundamental figure of universal history as Leonardo can not go unnoticed. For de Chirico, Leonardo was a source of inspiration, as the top-most theoretician of painting as a liberal art, at a time when painting assumed the role of a cognitive universe.

In the final analysis, no matter what de Chirico actually achieved, his stance authorises us at the Foundation to proceed with an instrument: the periodical «Metafisica», which aims to be an eye on the face of the scientific, cognitive, philosophic and artistic polyhedron of his time.

It is unlikely we would try to demonstrate that de Chirico anticipated tendencies or that he was the first to arrive at the goal of absolute pictorial forms etc. What always interests us is to understand exactly the position from which he was listening to humanity's psychological state.

This is our task. As the professors have explained, this process has no specific time frame but continues to percolate along the course of de Chirico's existence.

Of course, in this first edition, we could not cover a wide range of subjects; we dealt with the bare essentials. I sincerely hope that we will also have the opportunity to take a look at de Chirico as a political man, a protector of society, and not only as a transmitter of late Symbolist philosophy and Nietzschean thought. Although these notions are true and exact, we also need to look at de Chirico as the judge of society during the tremendous times through which he lived: the First and Second World Wars. Inevitably, these are things de Chirico was attentive to and in regard to which he formulated judgments. In the same way, as a free man – and therefore a theorist of humanism – he formed judgements on science. In fact, we consider

de Chirico a maestro in that he paved the way for the study of human sciences. It does not matter if he was the best politician or if he understood the maths and science of his time better than others: although he *did* endeavour to do so. And we in turn and with fewer tools than he had, will see what we can achieve, but he actually *did* endeavour to be the mirror of his humanity: to accomplish his duty as a liberal painter.

Naturally, I would like to offer at least a basic outline of the publication and then, after Professor Calvesi who has honoured us with his wisdom, I will pick up Professor Basile's discourse once more. I would like to say that the publication is of itself, an instrument of conservation in that it helps to continually restore the tools of examination and analysis to working order, and thus serves the purpose of conservation. In regard to conservation as a direct operational device concerning artwork, evidently de Chirico, in the intentional re-evaluation of his role, wanted to conserve the concept of art itself. He is a man who revived the concept of art. He can be seen – as if by looking through a reversed telescope – in the artists of today who impose upon us, prompt us and urge us to look at him again, to reawaken his thought and restore de Chirico's image.

I would like to bring my lengthy discourse to a close by calling our attention to the packaging of the object of our discussion. The cover of this publication is the work of a contemporary artist, a young artist who endeavoured – though we are unaware to what effect – to bring a shade of green back to life, the green in the background of the Apollinaire portraits, the absolute green of de Chirico. He constructed this green arduously, going against the production chain of computer-designed colour. He mixed the colour directly in the typography workshop and created something new, something unprecedented, which we hope has acquired a greater freshness by the hand of one of Art's youth.

*Translated by Victoria Noel-Johnson*

*(with the exception of Prof. de Sanna's speech by Katherine Robinson)*