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In order to resolve the complicated question of the relationship between modernity and postmodernity, I have for some time stressed the usefulness, if not the necessity, of acknowledging the wisdom of historical periodization found in textbooks, which we were accustomed to from our school days—at least those of us of the older generations, when learning was less methodical and one studied by rote the dates and events that were deemed most important. According to these textbooks, the modern era corresponds to the period between the second half of the fifteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century—after which follows the era known as "contemporary," indicated by a word of such extreme generality that it becomes confused at every turn with its predecessor, the modern. Why not replace it, then, with the newborn term of postmodern, no less equivocal if you will, but capable of explicitly indicating the relationship of succession to the modern?

What isn't acceptable in the traditional periodization is the concept of history which informs them: a kind of history entirely

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[Translated from the Italian by Nelson Moe]

reliant upon superficial facts and epiphenomena, connected to battles, diplomatic events, the births and deaths of great men. The modern era, for example, presumably starts with the fall of Constantinople, or with the battle of Lepanto (the second half of the fifteenth century), or with 1492, the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent, as well as the discovery of America. The modern era's *terminus ad quem* would be given by the beginning of the French Revolution, or by the Congress of Vienna, which would at the same time be the *terminus ad quo* for the beginning of the contemporary era (or postmodern era, if one accepts what I proposed above).

Against these "weak" historiographical criteria, plotted on the surface, it seems correct to stress the exigencies of a "strong" historiography, directed towards the search for transformations occurring at a greater depth, capable of operating at the structural level. I personally have employed for two decades a methodology which is based upon cultural historical materialism; materialism because it works from the presupposition that at some originary level there is an interaction between man and the environment (natural and social), and that this interaction above all depends upon material channels, material practices—the activities of working, of producing, of constructing defenses against the various threats of organic and inorganic forces. Man, however, is that particular animal which in his interactions with nature is capable of using cultural instruments, that is to say, which is capable of extending his limbs, the natural qualities of his organism, with the adoption of external, extra-organic, artificial instruments. And these adoptions, these prostheses, are transformed with the passage of time, through processes of innovation. For this reason we are dealing with a materialism which is at once historical and cultural.

But understood in this manner, culture is nothing save what we usually understand by the term technology, that is the system of instrumental adoptions which humanity, in a determinate stage of its evolution and in a certain habitat, acquires and makes use of. And so the methodology which I appeal to can be defined equally well, and perhaps even more eloquently, as a technological historical materialism. With this, however, the aim is not to entirely overthrow the reciprocal and hierarchical material relationships between "high" and "low" culture, to abjure previous mental habits according to which the term culture meant a set of ideas, of noble operations, either purely mental (the sciences) or connected to refined and aristocratic crafts (the arts). If before the concept of culture as an ensemble of instrumental practices, as

an excercise of crafts [*tecniche*], was mistakenly displaced, I do not propose now that these take absolute precedence, establishing a bond of deterministic subordination with regard to ideal-mental, or, more precisely, symbolic activities. Every sufficiently large and organic cultural system exists at both levels, the low and high, each taking nourishment from the other as if in a process of feedback. Basic technological changes are, in fact, the result of lengthy processes of study, experimentation, research, which occur in the "superior" and apparently pure, disinterested sectors of the sciences. But these in turn cannot escape the final goal of an eventual translation of their results into the concrete materiality of some technological innovation, an innovation which changes concrete modes of working, producing, transporting. If sooner or later the "ideas" or symbolic operations do not find an outlet of this kind, they remain suspended in limbo and are finally swept away, relegated to some dead corner of the history of ideas.

To put it differently, within a given cultural system, contributions originating in various ideas of activity and research (technology, science, art) are to be considered "equals," intervening at the same level, capable of entering into dialogue with one another, with continual exchanges (in describing this I often resort to the simile of communicating "receptacles"). It is difficult to grant logical or chronological precedence to a specific area, for an innovation can start out from any point in the system: it may be the artistic sector, or—and why not?—the culinary, or that of transportation, which allows for the maturation of a new instrumental use which then spreads, from receptacle to receptacle, permitting the system to reach the same level everywhere—that is, similes aside, to adjust in each sphere to the new logic which emerged first in pioneering forms in some outpost. And yet to the "receptacle" marked with the label of technololgy—and in its most obvious and tangible manifestations, bound that is to modes of working, producing, transporting—we must, in spite of everything, grant a certain precedence, neither logical nor chronological, but rather of a quantitative nature, of mass, of visibility, and therefore also of representability of a nominal order, that is, as a kind of standard-bearer. Needing therefore to find a name or title in order to map out the various systems which have emerged in the history of culture, how can we resist the temptation—or the good sense—of charting them according to their most prominent, apparent, tangible manifestation, that of technology?

In keeping with the above considerations, then, the modern era fundamentally becomes the era of machines and, in particular—

from the name of the most prominent and tangible machine, the moveable printing press, and even more so from the name of its mythical inventor—it becomes the Gutenberg era, or to say it with Marshall McLuhan, the Gutenberg Galaxy. This certainly does not mean that typography was, even chronologically, the first machine to appear on the scene. McLuhan himself takes pains to show us that the printing press was preceded by a "machine" which was active at the secondary, superior, "high" or symbolic level—or however one wishes to describe the perspective based upon the schema of the visual pyramid: a schema already widely applied by Masaccio in the Cappella Brancacci (at the end of the 1430s) and formulated in 1432 by Leon Battista Alberti in his *De pictura*. Thus "high" culture is not determined by the "low," but rather almost always precedes it, shows it the way, assumes, literally, an avant-garde role in relation to it—an avant-gardism which, however, is confirmed and legitimated only if the main corps of the army sooner or later is able to follow, to occupy en masse and with force the positions that the platoons sent upon exploratory missions had merely sighted, lacking the force to establish definitive control over them. Naturally, apart from the analogy, the cultural historian has to demonstrate that there is actually an homology between the perspective machine and the typographic machine, that there is an identity of functions, even if on different levels and for different ends; and that these are truly communicating receptacles, that is, that the metaphoric liquid of the circulation of forms, of logical solutions, actually reaches the same level, respects a single functional criterion. But supposing that such an homology is proven, it will then be difficult to restrain ourselves from calling the entire solid system by the name of the largest, most capacious receptacle. McLuhan in fact didn't hesitate to speak precisely of a Gutenberg Galaxy; it didn't occur to him instead to propose to us an Alberti Galaxy—and there would in any case have been competition between the other possible candidates for that eponymous position: Massaccio, Piero della Francesca, Leonardo, Dürer. . . .

Let's now consider that other great epochal cycle regarding the last two centuries: the contemporary era—according to the textbooks—or the postmodern era, if the terminological correction I have proposed is accepted. Clearly we will want to try extending to this period too the same method of technological historical materialism, which means that for it too we shall have to find a technological "receptacle" of great power, capable of gathering around itself a network of other, cooperative, synergetic recepta-

cles. Again McLuhan offers us a valid suggestion on this front, calling to mind the appearance of electromagnetism—a technological, scientific, and, more generally, cultural innovation which was achieved in different stages quite distant from one other (as happened by the way with the preceding modern cycle of machines—a decisive point I'll return to shortly). Thus, at the end of the eighteenth century, electromagnetism was merely a scientific curiosity, that is, at that very point where we are supposed to locate the break between the modern and postmodern era. Electromagnetism at most creates some disturbance in the "high" areas of the most sophisticated culture, with almost no influence at the practico-material level. One must wait nearly a century (until the 1860s) in order to find effective technological results from the discoveries brought about from electrology in the pure arena of experimental science—such as Pacibotti's ring—with which electromagnetism replaces thermal energy in procuring mechanical labor, that is, essentially, in powering machines. The beginnings of electromagnetism are moreover the stage of a union, of an honorable compromise—as the term itself indicates—between these two profound logics. At the same time it is worth adding that in that same decade the laying of the great transatlantic telegraphic cables takes place, with which electronics takes a step forward in assuming principal responsibility in the sector of communications. The "wireless telegraph" soon follows, the decisive step which in more concrete ways brings about the take-off of our era known also, not coincidentally, as the era of "techtronics."

This, then, in summary, is my proposal, macroscopic, elementary, scholastic: that the two great eras, modern and postmodern, are divided from one another just as the textbooks tell us, but that each is related to a "strong" foundation, traced at least at the eponymous level to the technologies which have most consistently shaped them: machinism and electromagnetism

Why does such an elementary and clear proposition cause astonishment and have difficulty in finding adherents? Certainly the inevitable reasons for the disconcertment and incredulity which always accompany propositions of too radically an innovative nature, especially if based on weak foundations, can be attributed to a critical framework lacking substantial philological proof: it's too good to be true. But among the most persistent difficulties we must also rank the fact that our recourse to the technological factor cannot neatly divide the various historical phases from one another. Whether one speaks of the cycle of machines or that of electromagnetism and its off-shoots, it is inevitable that we take

into consideration processes with much slower tempos, and with diverse side-effects, characterized also by mutual interferences, or better yet, by interpenetrations and superimpositions. Expressed in simpler terms, there are aspects of modernity which continue well into territories which should chronologically belong to postmodernity. This without doubt stacks the deck, prohibits us from playing the cards in a "straight," univocal fashion. The temptation even arises to think that the modern and postmodern are not epochal distinctions, related, that is, to historical-chronological complexes, but rather categorical differences, almost historical polarities to be viewed in their synchronic consistency instead of in a diachronic succession. In effect, the long phases of synchronic cohabitation side by side temper, if not oppose, their relationship of reciprocal, diachronic exclusion.

Let's try now to follow a bit more closely the several successive phases through which the machinism proper to the modern era has been articulated. According to the McLuhanesque historiographical framework which I have adopted, we would observe its first appearance in the fifteenth century, tied to the synergy between two machines, the "high" one of perspective (perspective as symbolic form, goes the title of one of Panofsky's most famous works) and the base-material one of typography. But machinism would seem then to have had a lengthy period of latency, finding itself surrounded by a technological universe still regulated by "'machines" fundamentally powered by animal energy, machines proper to the classical and medieval eras, or in any case to a phase which is certainly premodern. We have to wait until the seventeenth century to find the introduction of machinelike devices at the "high," epistemological, scientific level (in Cartesian rationalism, for example, not so distant in effect from Anglo-Saxon empiricism, to which it is conjoined, homologous, intercommunicating on the basis of a common element, an insurmountable dualism). Only at the end of the eighteenth century do machines in the real sense of the word arrive on the scene, powered by thermal energy and capable of setting off productive and locomotive processes which can be termed fully and distinctively modern. Here then we have a highly disturbing element with respect to the proposed periodization. For the modern era would seem to enter its most mature phase of development, aided by the structural support of the technological practices of the day, just when we should be pronouncing its end and passage from the scene in favor of a contrary principle.

And yet that is precisely what happens: the various epochs

in a certain sense have a porous interior, enabling them to invade one another. One epoch can play its first chords, announce its distinctive leitmotif, when the other is far from having achieved its maximum level of orchestration. In this regard the analogy in terms of galaxies offered by McLuhan is worth recalling: the interior of each of these is characterized by a high level of rarefaction, so that it is possible to belong to one of them without even being aware of it. It appears to us that we belong to the Milky Way even as we maintain a relationship of exteriority to it, almost as distant spectators; and double affiliations are possible as well, membership in two galaxies which in large part interpenetrate one another.

Let us say then that the hundred years between the end of the eighteenth and the end of the nineteenth century are like a vast neutral territory, a battlefield in which modernity and postmodernity meet and clash with one another, coming into ambiguous relationships of cohabitation of exclusion. Modernity, at the level of technology, and that is in terms of a real "machine civilization," has yet to take off when electromagnetism appears on the scene, unable however of achieving anything for the moment at an effective material level. There is thus an exchange of prerogatives: modernity is already in its adulthood, if not senility, with respect to its symbolic forms, its ideational processes (philosophy, literature, art), and in such conditions is ready to try out the new suggestions which the mysterious continent of electrology offers it. This responds moreover to the consummation of that enormous disturbance which goes by the vague and ambiguous name of Romanticism. Romanticism, however, is too far ahead of its times, lacking in sufficient support from a technological base (can you imagine, this technology still has to go through the entire cycle of machinery!) and is therefore destined to dry up, vanishing like an early spring.

In this way we can understand why the middle decades of the nineteenth century evolve entirely under the sign of modernity: at the low-material level there is the complete triumph of mechanical production (mechanical-textile industries, locomotion, then the compression engine); at the high-symbolic level we witness the rehabilitation of renaissance perspective (perfectly illusory and specular, allowed to follow and achieve the objective of the "open window"), which momentarily takes back the terrain lost through the disturbing avant-gardist experimentations of Füseli, Blake, Goya, Flaxman. . . . Instead we find the grand chapter of realism-naturalism, which flows happily and ponderously until its logical outcome in Impressionism: a chapter which is

wholly inspired by the rules of modernity.

Beginning in the 1860s the roles tend to be reversed, in the sense that modernity is no longer the dominant force at every level. Postmodernity becomes a certainty even in the material sphere of technology, no longer limited to that of avant-gardist anticipations, risky by nature, provided by those active in the sphere of symbolic forms. In that moment both electromechanics and electronics gather substantial momentum, as I noted above, destined to grow continuously and to restrict the room for maneuver of mechanical-type technology. And at the same time homologous solutions articulated by artists, writers and philosophers appear with equal clarity. I have insisted on numerous other occasions on reading the early Cézanne as a perfect, if unaware, traveling companion of the incipient electronic revolution, determined to abolish Albertian perspective and replace it with a conception of curvilinear space, or, better (given the suitability of using solid figures in order to express multidimensinality), of a space that can be likened to a spheroid, where the very bodies present themselves alternately in enlargement and shrinkage, as if they were the successive contractions and expansions of a wave movement, thus offering an effective visualization of electromagnetic waves. The members of a later generation, headed by Gauguin, who was just barely the youngest brother of the Impressionists, insisted on relying upon a system of that kind, curvilinear, sinuous, rounded-off, borrowing models of a more subterranean nature, given that they were not yet lucid and aware enough to borrow them from electromagnetism itself, barely understanding the intimate link between artistic propositions and technological devices. And thus we have all the typical styles of the *fin-de-siècle* (Symbolism, Art Nouveau, Liberty, Jugendstil, in large part convergent with one another), which in turn takes up motifs analogous to the ones which had appeared in the previous *fin-de-siécle*, in Füseli, Blake or Flaxman, demonstrating that we have a later point on the same trajectory, or the return of a leitmotif which reappears with heightened intensity as it succeeds in detaching itself more cleanly from other competing, if not antithetical, motifs.

But the dispute between the modern and postmodern was far from finding a definite resolution, which shows all the more how the question involves phases which penetrate one another, even if in varying degrees. And the case of Cézanne demonstrates this perfectly. In fact, the interpretation which sees in Cézanne a forerunner of the postmodern and of its morphology based on the fluid, the wavelike, the sinuous, and so forth, is verified by

his youthful paintings, those precisely of the decade we discussed above, 1860-70. Immediately afterward, the provençal painter undergoes a structural conversion which leads him to adopt his noted multifaceted, segmented, splintered style, in which an anticipation of Cubism is evident, or a least the laying down of an axis of continuity which leads to the solutions which Picasso and Braque will reach in 1907-08. Thus the partisans of a modernity which finds its elective location in the twentieth century can draw from this facct a valid element of support. This is confirmed too by parallel developments in the field of technology, where, at the beginning of this century, systems of mechanical production are far from becoming obsolete. Heavy industry, rather, is yet destined to know great cycles of expansion, until the last, most complete and intense of them all—the cycle following World War II, and particularly during the sixties, which corresponds to the period of our so-called boom and of an advanced industrial society based on consumerism, on the abundant flow of commodities.

It is therefore nearly inevitable that in homology with these pronouonced cycles of expansion of an industrialism based on machines powered by thermal energy, by hydrocarbons (or also by electromagnetic energy, produced however by power plants running off thermal energy, which therefore doesn't greatly affect this point), there should be phases of "mechanomorphic" art. In this sense Cubism is central, becoming also the point of diffusion for analogous movements (Dutch Neoplasticism, Constructivism, Russian Supremism, and in part Italian Futurism), and worthy of nomination as the "modern" style par excellence. And this remains true even if it is possible to assert that Cubism had already accepted a certain postmodern inheritance insofar as it had freed itself from reliance upon the system of renaissance perspective. In fact the cubes and other solid figures—simulated through graphic or pictorial means or even directly presented as autonomous plastic concrete objects—are not subjected to the framework of the visual pyramid, conditioned by the singularity both of the point of view and the vanishing point. And so much less are they tributaries of the Cartesian axes, but rather are freely positioned in a multidimensional space, a space which is plural and discontinuous, heterogeneous, anisotropic, and so forth. Basically, we can say that "mechanomorphism," even while present in evident and tangible forms in Cubism and related styles, is nothing but a sheet of surfaces there where the underlying logic traces itself in spirals, energetic movements, loose dynamisms. It too, therefore, inherits the legacy of the early Cézanne, and it is worth noting that Cézanne

himself in his mature period, with its dihedral forms, by no means abrogates that earlier fluidity but only frames it in a more rigid fashion, without, however, changing its basic significance.

The fact remains that the grammar of "point-line-surface," of an assembly of strictly geometric forms, be they flat or solid, seems to have won the contest in the first decades of this century, moved also by a coherent, expansive thrust aimed at affecting every corner of the social world and at extending its vocabulary in every direction. In effect, the radical movements were not so much the ones in the field of painting as those who continued and propagated their work in the applied and macro-instrumental sectors of architecture. Gropius and Bauhaus, and Russian Constructivism in more or less direct correspondence with the October Revolution, are its beneficiaries, its convinced, zealous and systematic proselytizers. And it is not by chance that climate received the trademark of the Modern Movement par excellence, that is, in its most intensive and pregnant manifestation, leaving a legacy which would be drawn upon even after the ruins of World War II, carried over, almost without continuity, into the last phase of expansion of heavy industry in the 1960s which I referred to above.

It is true that the antagonistic forces of postmodernity (read: of a more or less conscious and explicit homology with electromagnetism and electronics) by no means stood still with their hands at their sides but, rather, returned each blow. In this regard the role of the Italian Futurists stands out. They were ambiguous and uncertain as to whether they should follow the steps of the older French Cubists and make use of dihedral figures, or whether rather to develop a morphology of solid forms deriving from the rotation of curved lines. In practice, Boccioni and his companions offered a compromise between these opposing, though conspiring, vital forces. And jumping ahead to the next and bolder step taken by Dadaism, and above all by Duchamp, it is worth noting that this step consisted in discovering the possibility of doing without solid and material bodies, confronting instead the realm of ideas and thoughts, of linguistic practices, in which the importance of the signifier (the physical base of the communicative process) diminishes in relation to the importance of the signifieds put into play. We find then the perspective which, to say it with one of Lyotard's favorite terms, leads to the progressive and irresistible triumph of the "immaterial," in perfect collaboration with a technology which gradually abolishes the tools of paper-based, typographic documentation as it increasingly relies on tapes, records, optic fibers, computers. In this sense the Ducham-

pian revolution responds best to the spirit of postmodernity, is that which represents it, enacts it in the most incisive and direct manner—and in years much closer to our own, the need will be felt to take it up again and to extend it. In fact, when it was first proposed during the 1920s and 1930s, it seems not to have been understood very well, or had difficulty in establishing itself in a complex force field in which, as I noted above, the offensive of the Modern Movement was under way. Even other forces which were open to the electromorphic tendency diluted it with elements of naturalism—a nature that was profound and cellular, as if under microscopic slides, which at that time was cultivated by a line of expressionism beginning with Kandinsky and culminating with the more automatic and gestural Surrealists like Masson and Miró. It thus happened that the bold Duchampian Dadaism had to wait until the late sixties, and precisely until the mythical 1968, for it to experience a phase of expansion, of the conquest of power (at the level of free experimentation), that is, in order to enjoy what I term a process of normalization and of widespread implementation, which is without doubt what such phenomena as Italian *Arte povera*, or Land Art, Body Art and above all conceptual art were.

These last assertions merit some additional commentary. And at the same time we must have the courage to state that there is nothing more profoundly homologous to the postmodern than Dada itself, above all in the rigorous and subtle version of it practiced by the author of the *Grande Vetro*; and this is because the passage from matter to energy, from inert bodies to undulating phenomena of irradiation, are its central, distinctive characteristic. For some time I have called this absolutely constitutive ganglion an "explosion," with the obvious metaphoric—but not only metaphoric—connotations that point both to phenomena of a rough, macroscopic, ballistic nature and to those of microphysics, or of particle physics, taken in turn on a vaster scale from those of astrophysics. There was then an "explosion" which occurred more than half a century ago, immediately contained, limited by antagonistic forces, so that its definitive, full effects were achieved only recently, after 1968 and during the seventies. In this context we could proffer a minimal definition of postmodernism, taking it as a symptom of phases of this kind, of retarded, "autumnal" diffusion, tremendously long and drawn-out, but with greatly reduced coefficients of intensity and quality in comparison to the earlier "historic" phases which appeared on the scene in much more heroic fashion. If we take a quick glance at the sector of literary studies, we find that the use of the term postmodern which has been current in them, above all due to the American

critic Ihab Hassan, fits well with such a definition. Hassan in fact considers postmodern writers like Beckett who exasperate, normalize, carry to the extreme, the technical discoveries that emerged from the historical avant-gardes.

In any case, it is not by chance that I propose the term of explosion for the radical experimentations conducted by historical Dadaism; it is a term which dialectically invokes its polar opposite, implosion, which takes on the obvious connotations offered by macro- and microphysics as well: implosion as a process in which energy returns to the condition of matter, to its "mass." The most surprising and seductive analogy may be the astronomical phenomenon of black holes, those concentrations of matter so dense and compact that nothing can escape from their gravitational attraction. Even light, the strongest form of energy known in our universe, cannot free itself from its fatal embrace—and thus these whirlpools of matter are "black" or blind by definition.

The pair explosion-implosion irresistibly reminds us of another, more tried and true polarity proposed by the art historian Wölfflin, which consists in the noted opposition of open and closed. And with this we can now see how the postmodern divides into two equal, while contrary, sides, strictly bound to one another like the two-faced Janus: on one side the open face of progressive and uncontainable explosion, at the end of which we no longer have works of art with a physical consistency, but only conceptual, "immaterial" processes, in the name of the definitive triumph of a normalized Dadaism; on the other side, the closed face of implosion, which leads us to the realization that the sphere of artistic or literary creation is by no means infinite, but on the contrary quite finite, destined to exhaust itself, at least if we wish to enlarge it in a linear fashion, by adding new inventions onto those already recorded. It is instead necessary to come to terms with what we might call our destiny as astronauts, prisoners of an enormous black hole which corresponds to the history which has been assembled and recorded in museums, archives, libraries (today there will increasingly be data banks, nerve centers, depositories of cassettes and videotapes), constrained to pass again and again over the stations already visited by humankind, or at least by different cultures. The only way to save ourselves from the destiny of epigones, of those who passively repeat, is to maintain—or better to practically exercise—the clear awareness of such a fate, thus applying distancing devices, quotation marks, with regard to the objects we recover.

It is certain that postmodernity, read from this negative, re-

trospective and, if you will, levorotatory angle,* appears as the age of revivalisms, of multiple repetitions, of programmatic citationism. It was like this too in its beginnings, on that fateful terrain of the late eighteenth century where the premonitory explosions of Turner coexisted side by side with the museumish recoveries of the antique, the archaic, the manneristic of Füseli and company. Similarly, today we shouldn't be surprised if next to such stubborn champions of the progressive liberation of immaterial energy as Lyotard we find scholars like Jean Clair or Maurizio Fagiolo (to mention just a few participants at this conference) who are ready to dive into the historical dimension and appreciate the periodical "calls to order" that have occurred in the postmodern era, worthy of attention precisely because they are profoundly inscribed in the very structural necessities of this era.

But then if, to use Pirandello's expression, "the game's been understood," it will be wise to avoid pronouncing excommunications or prohibitions. In particular it is necessary to someone like Jean Clair, who champions a tendency of more or less magical Realism, not to promote his position, by no means lacking in legitimacy, in the name of a renunciation of the presumed errors of modernism: as if there were a sure, solid, classical and traditional manner of making art, of painting, in relation to which every destabilizing and "explosive" experimentation is viewed as a step into prevarication and fraud.

As for the rest, if Duchamp can be taken as the legitimate, eponymous hero of the explosive face of the postmodern, there is an artist who can be invested with a diametrically opposed role, Giorgio De Chirico. This juxtaposition eloquently manifests how the two reigning champions of that dialectical opposition, which is an essential feature of postmodernism, have their origins in a quite distant time, in the territory of the historical avant-gardes. Postmodernism then cannot be viewed as a recent phenomenon, born yesterday; if anything, what is recent are the phases of its extensive and normalized expansion. In fact, just as the tendency of Duchamp has triumphed in the decade of conceptual art, of the death of art, of performances and happenings, so the legacy of De Chirico has been affirmed through phenomena like the New-new, the Anachronists, the Transavantgarde, with the same

*The term used here by Barilli, *levogiro*, or levorotatory, is defined in the Random House Dictionary in the following manner: "*adj. Optics, Chem., Crystall,* turning to the left, as the rotation of the plane of polarization of light in certain crystals and compounds; levogyrate" [trans.].

character of a recovery of diminished intensity, but increased in frequency and extension.

But if the course I have proposed here is followed, the point will not be to tag postmodernity with exact and limiting stylistic labels (what has been articulated here is in fact the most that can be validly attempted along these lines), but rather to comprehend the reasons for, and the profound, structural features of this lengthy epochal complex; after which the consequences, the effects, the manifestations in various areas of the cultural scene will follow as corollaries.