

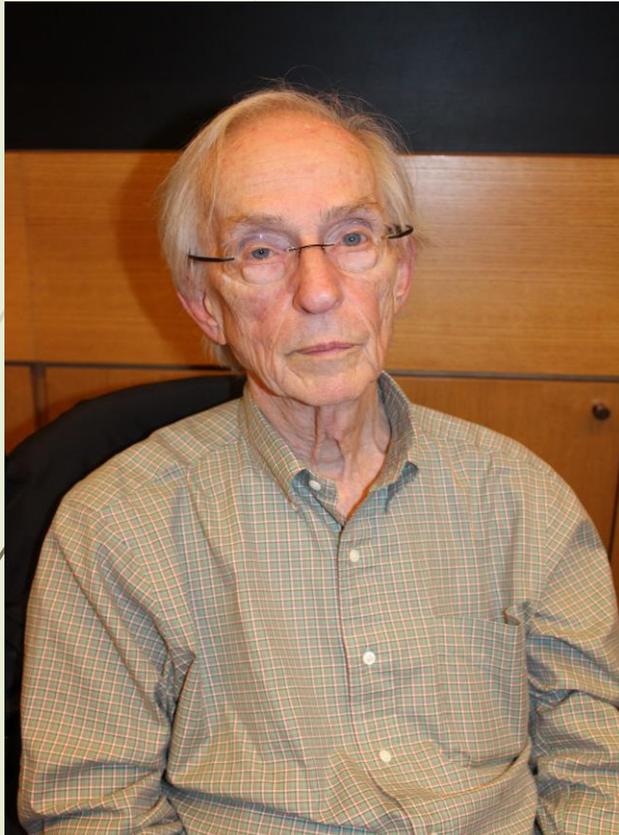


Giacomo Balla (1871-1958) and the Theosophical «Art World»

Massimo Introvigne (UPS, Torino, Italy)

University of Cambridge - March 17, 2014

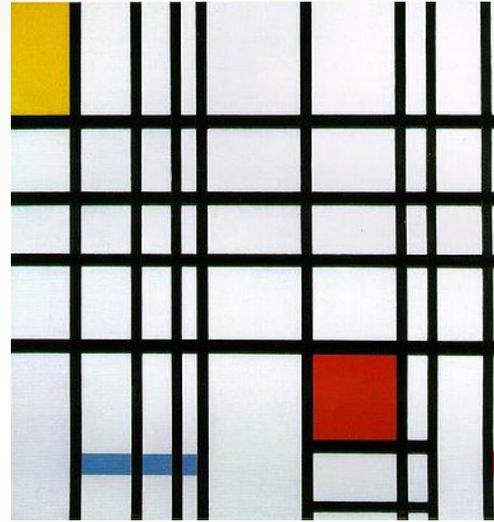
«Art Worlds»



- ▶ American sociologist of art Howard S. Becker (left) argues that art is socially constructed by «art worlds» where each work is co-produced by several agents
- ▶ His famous, if controversial, example: the butler who waked up every day the Victorian novelist Anthony Trollope (1815-1882, right), serving him tea and allowing him to start his writing, was a part of the art world that produced his novels



Theosophical Art Worlds



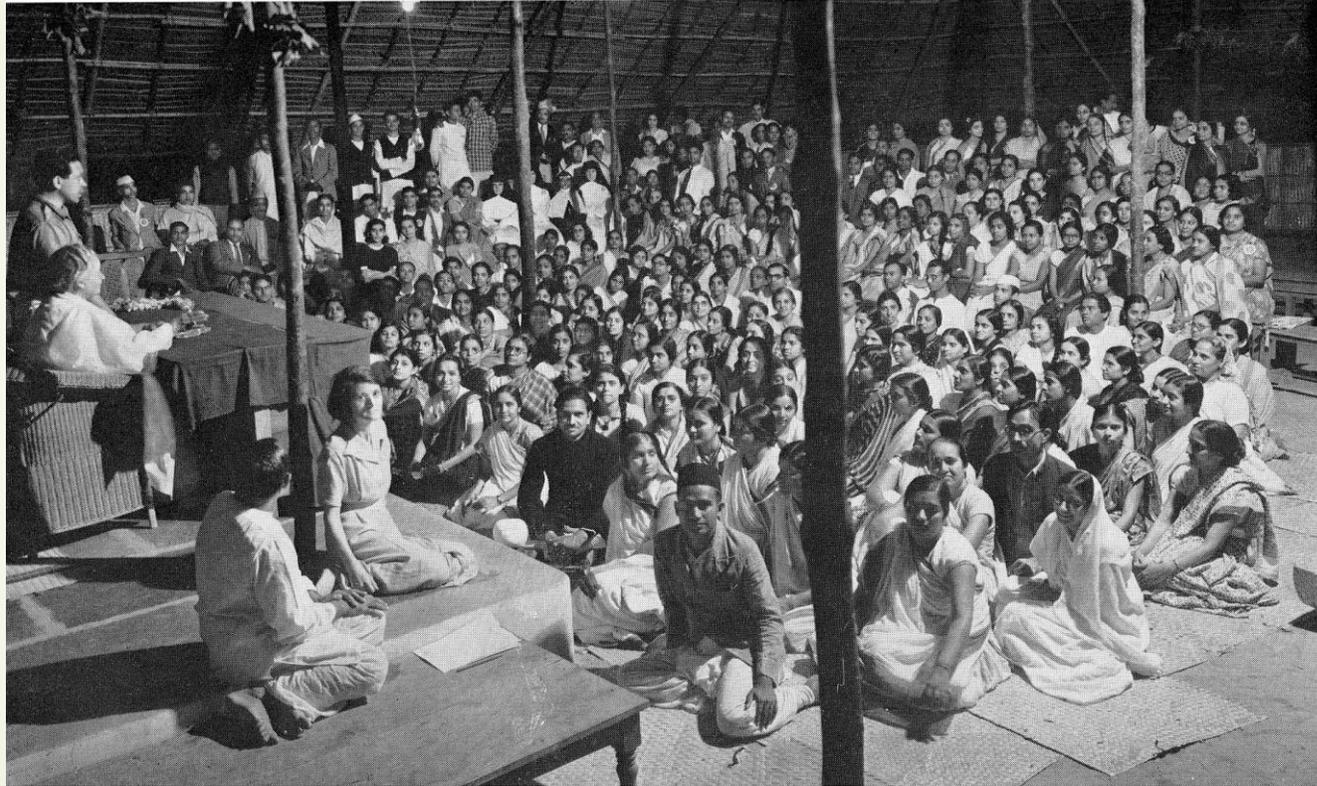
- The Theosophical Society, together with its splinter groups and a larger Theosophical milieu, has been an important part of the process creating art worlds
- Artists who were members of the Theosophical Society went from Symbolists (Jean Delville, 1867-1953, left) to pioneers of abstract art (Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944, center), and from France (Paul Sérusier, 1864-1927) to Canada (Lawren Harris, 1885-1970, right)

Theosophy in Italy



- All the early international leaders of the Theosophical Society, including Annie Besant (1847-1933), visited Italy, where Isabel Cooper-Oakley (1854-1914, left) was asked to oversee the promotion of Theosophy. British expatriates established the first centers in the early 1890s. The Rome Theosophical Association was incorporated on February 22, 1897
- On February 1, 1902 the Italian Section of the Theosophical Society was formally inaugurated in Rome at a convention presided by Charles Webster Leadbeater (1854-1934)

Maria Montessori, Theosophist



- ▶ Among the most famous members was pedagogue Maria Montessori (1870-1952), who later lectured (above) at the Society's headquarters in Adyar

Schism

- In 1905, 1907 and 1908 various group of dissidents left the Italian Theosophical Society. Some established the «Rome» Theosophical Association, that in 1910 merged with other splinter groups and formed the Independent Theosophical League, associated with the dissident group of the same name established in Benares in 1909
- The League published the influential journal *Ultra* and attracted leading Italian intellectuals. However, «participating in the activities of the Independent Theosophical League did not require an affiliation to the group, nor a profession of Theosophical faith» (Marco Pasi, 2010)



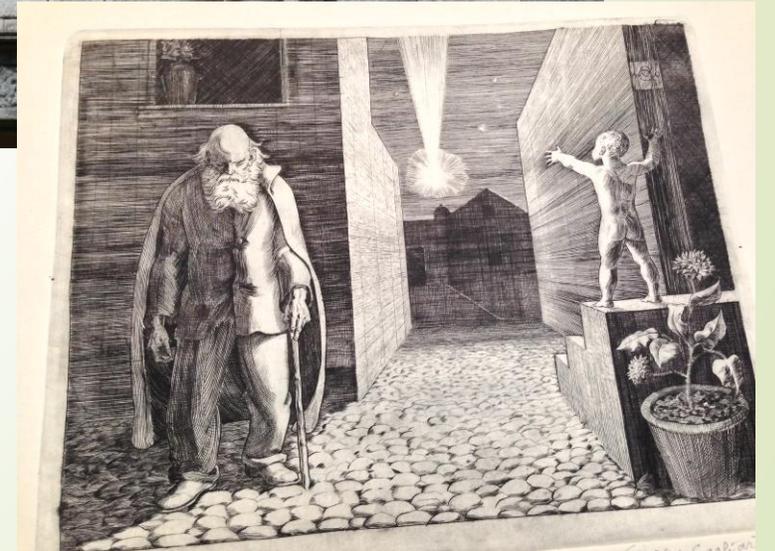
Theosophy and Italian Symbolism



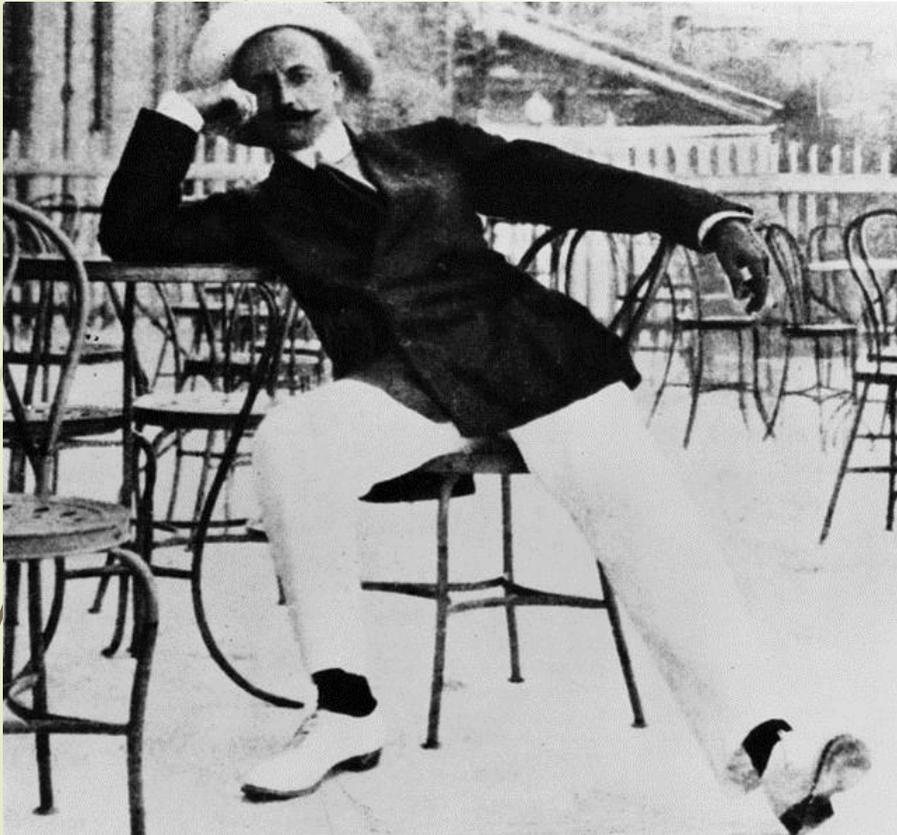
- ▶ Gaetano Previati (1852-1920) evolved from Symbolism to the form of Neo-Impressionism known as Divisionism. He attended the French Salons de la Rose-Croix where he met, and was influenced by, Belgian Symbolist artists who were Theosophists (see his *The Dance of the Hours*, 1897, left)
- ▶ Futurists spoke highly of Previati, and took notice of his esoteric leanings

Previati's Influence and Theosophy

- ▶ In Biella at the end of the 19° century Senator Federico Rosazza (1813-1899), a Masonic leader, transformed his native hamlet into a utopic town, Rosazza, decorated with Masonic and Theosophical symbols (above) by artist Giuseppe Maffei (1821-1901). He was influenced by Previati's ideas but mostly painted under the influence of the spirits
- ▶ Another artist following in the footsteps of Previati, engraver Alberto Helios Gagliardo (1893-1987, below), joined the Theosophical Society in Genoa



Esoteric Futurism



- ▶ Futurism was about progress, but regarded studying the occult as a very legitimate part of modern science
- ▶ The early Paris circle of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944, left), Futurism's founder, included Theosophists such as journalist Jules Bois (1868-1943), Édouard Schuré (1841-1929), the author of *The Great Initiates* (1889), and painter Paul Ranson (1861-1909), who provided costumes and scenes for Marinetti's *Roi Bombance* (1909). The Italian and Ranson's pupil Tamara de Lempicka (1898-1980) even conceived the plan of setting fire to the Louvre. Fortunately, nothing came of it

Thought Forms

- ▶ In 1905, Besant and Leadbeater published *Thought Forms*, where they argued that thoughts and emotions have forms and colors visible to a clairvoyant
- ▶ Although the book's importance for art has been exaggerated, in fact it influenced Italian Futurists such as Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916, see *Dispositions of the Soul*, above)
- ▶ Sounds have also forms and colors in *Thought Forms*, an idea that influenced Futurist painter and musician Luigi Russolo (1885-1947: *La musica*, below) – and many others



Futurism and Theosophy in Florence



- ▶ In Florence, an important Theosophical center, Futurism found both friends and enemies who later turned into friends. One of such was painter Ardengo Soffici (1879-1964: see his *Queer Tarantella*, 1913). In 1914, *Ultra* published one of his articles under the title *Theosophy within Futurism*
- ▶ Irma Valeria (pseud. of Irma Zorzi, 1897-1988), a Futurist writer from the same milieu, wrote that «we [Futurists] are without doubts occultists»

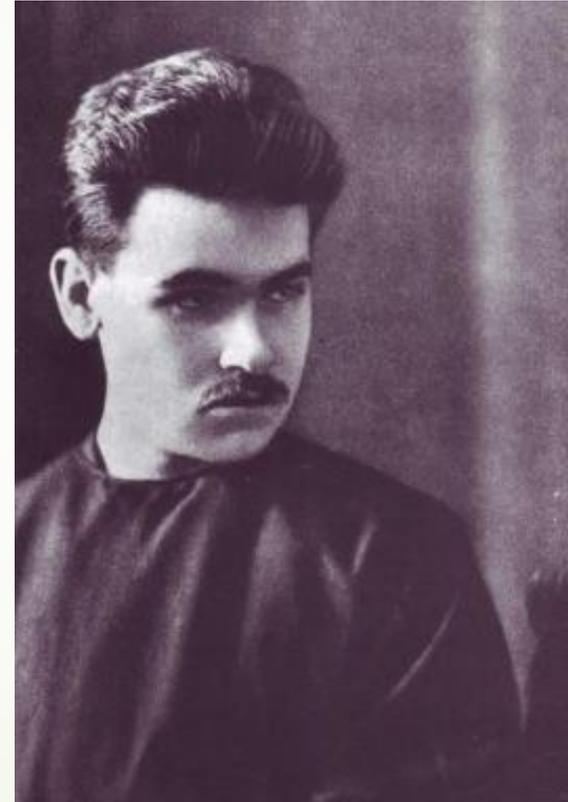
Ginna and Corra



- ▶ In Ravenna, the brothers Arnaldo (1890-1982) and Bruno Ginanni Corradini (1892-1976), later nicknamed «Ginna» and «Corra» by Balla, attended Theosophical meetings in nearby Bologna. In 1908, when Ginna was only 18, he painted *Neurasthenia* (left), one of the first European abstract paintings, and wrote with Corra *Art of the Future*, later expanded into *Painting of the Future* (1915), where he celebrated Leadbeater's influence on the arts

Gianna and De Pisis

- ▶ *Arte dell'Avvenire* was read by the early Futurists and influenced Boccioni's «esoteric» lecture on Futurism in Rome (1911). Through a common friend, Futurist composer Francesco Balilla Pratella (1880-1955), the brothers came in touch with the Futurists, including Balla
- ▶ In their Region of Emilia-Romagna Gianna and Corra had a circle of like-minded friends, including (non-Futurist) painter Filippo De Pisis (1896-1956 – right, as a «Buddhist» monk), who joined the Theosophical Society and wrote Theosophical books



Casarini and Illari



GLI STATI D'ANIMO

La sala che provoca le maggiori discussioni alla mostra d'Arte Futurista nel Ridotto del Reinach di Parma è quella degli « stati d'animo » dove sono esposti i lavori miei e di Steiner. Per i « non iniziati » credo utili questi chiarimenti. Dopo si potranno criticare i nostri tentativi che Marinetti ha battezzato « opera di poeti geniali ». Prima — con preconcetti ironia — è impossibile discutere le nostre ricerche che

IL DIRETTORE DI ROVENTE



assolutamente nuove vogliono nel campo dell'arte, con volate ardite, rivoluzionare le elaborazioni accademiche scolastiche dottrinarie.

È arte aristocratica la nostra non completa ancora (si ricordi sempre che siamo alle primissime affermazioni) e quindi destinata a continue riforme e ad incessanti miglioramenti. Arte che rappresenta uno sforzo non indifferente e non disprezzabile per dare con diagramma estremamente sintetici lo stato d'animo di un dato momento. Per dare con una linea, un punto, una parola di diversa intensità e di vario colore quel sentimento di passione + meraviglia + nota + sorpresa + dolore + gioia + eccetera che il nostro animo toccato sviluppa in seguito a quello stato specifico. A chi ci afferma di non capire niente nei nostri cartelloni lo rispondo che non importa che l'arte sia comprensibile ai più.

L'arte (anche l'arte non futurista) è una convenzione i cui termini sono un simbolico gergo furbesco comunicabile solo ad un ristrettissimo cerchio di iniziati.

Chi cercasse nei nostri diagrammi della pittura, della musica, della poesia, della plastica, errerebbe assai. Non siamo in un campo specifico, definibile con le vecchie formule dalle quali ci sentiamo di liberare, ma in un campo di assaggi che ha di tutto un poco. Sono sondamenti di antesignano i nostri, che il genio dell'avvenire — non abbandonando le nostre primis-

sime ricerche — svilupperà e perfezionerà in seguito ad una esplorazione e correzione continua. Intanto un progresso non lieve è già stato compiuto da me. Mentre Steiner nei suoi cartelloni usa solamente il nero ed il rosso quasi sempre su fondo chiaro, io — dietro ragionate ricerche — uso vari colori: rosso, bleu, bianco, giallo, verde, nero, marò, su fondo ultrascuro, incerto, chiaro, cupo, rossastro, sicuro così di dare con maggior perfezione lo stato d'animo che mi appassiona. Ne risulta che il colore del fondo (o almeno predominante) e delle linee o punti o tratti (simboli dello stato che si vuole rilevare) hanno una infinità fra di loro strettissima. Tenendo buon conto anche di ogni più piccolo elemento, che a prima vista può sembrare occasionale, il diagramma verrà compreso più facilmente e si presenterà anche all'occhio dello stesso profano di meno difficile lettura. Basti notare che la maggioranza dei visitatori della mostra ai quali ho spiegati i concetti che mi hanno informato nello studiare i diagrammi, sono riusciti a comprendere perfettamente gli stati d'animo che io ho voluto rendere.

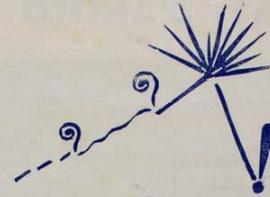
Ogni artista vale, in quanto si rivela con una sua maniera propria. Noi — abbandonando un momento il campo della poesia e della letteratura — recliniamo, alla somma comune dei valori estetici, questi tentativi assolutamente originali. Non perfetti se si vuole, ma sinceri di sensazioni e di espressioni personali dove la materia impiegata diviene puro elemento di raffigurazione simbolica condotta dalla nostra sensibilità arbitraria creativa, alla spiritualizzazione.

Così scrivevo nella Gazzetta di Parma e così ripeto oggi presentando i 4 cartelloni che ho scelti fra i meglio riusciti ed i più acclamati dalla stampa e dai visitatori della esposizione su riferita.



Nel n. 1 « il lavoro mentale di chi cerca e trova un argomento » tutto il diagramma ha il colore bleu più debole ed incerto nel principio, più forte e vivissimo verso la fine, fortissimo ed ultravivissimo nello scoppio. Il fondo del cartone è nero.

60



Nel n. 2 « il mio avvenire » le tre prime linee staccate sono di colore diverso l'una dall'altra, il primo interrogativo e la linea incerta che lo segue di colore bleu, il secondo interrogativo e la linea sicura che porta al vertice dell'affermazione di colore rosso. La linea che discende e che dice malinconia è di colore giallo mentre l'esclamativo che può raffigurare un cipresso ha il colore oscuro siccome oscuro è l'al di là. Il fondo è tutto nero perchè tenebrosa è l'atmosfera che mi vince.

Il n. 4 porta quale titolo questi versi tolti da una mia lirica:

*battuti le sorprese nella mia testa.
Battuti a martello
in una lunga interrogazione
di muta meraviglia.*



Tutto il disegno è di colore verde avendo io la speranza di scoprire i perchè delle sorprese e delle meraviglie, mentre il fondo è chiaro perchè serena è l'atmosfera di chi mi circonda e mi provoca la interrogazione.

Questi i chiarimenti. Valgano essi a provocare nei giovani di ingegno altre ricerche ed altre affermazioni in questo campo verginissimo. Sarebbe la migliore coronazione ai tentativi che noi abbiamo saputo realizzare per primi.

PIERO ILLARI

Il diagramma stato d'animo che qui riproduciamo sono incisi nei linoleum dal pittore futurista Marucco su cartoni di Illari.

Recensiremo tutte le pubblicazioni che ci verranno inviate in omaggio

- Other Futurists in the Emilia region influenced by Theosophy and Thought Forms included Athos Casarini (1883-1917) and Pietro Illari (1900-1977: see article from his journal *Rovente Futurista*, right). A Communist, Illari later escaped Fascist Italy and immigrated to Argentina

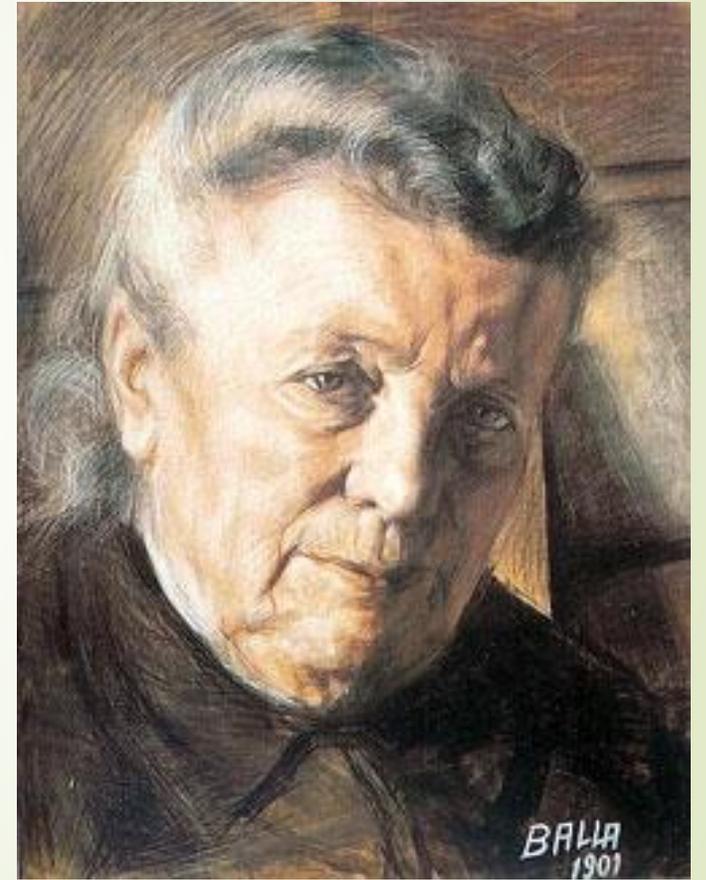
Xul Solar and Italian Futurists



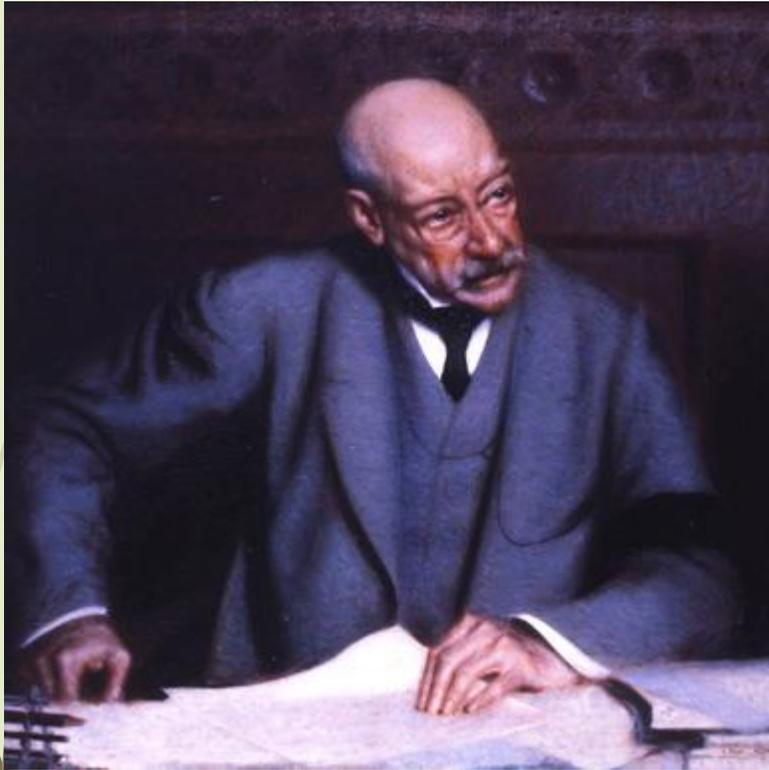
- ▶ In Argentina, Illari co-operated closely with Xul Solar (Oscar Schulz Solari, 1887-1963: *Entierro*, 1915, left), an Argentinian artist who had repeatedly visited Futurists in Italy between 1912 and 1924. Later, he became a friend of British magus Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), who called Solar «the best seer I have ever tested» and asked him to paint a series derived from the Chinese divinatory book *I Ching* (right)

Giacomo Balla (1871-1958)

- ▶ Balla was born in Turin in 1871. His mother was a seamstress, his father a waiter who later worked for a photographer
- ▶ Giacomo also worked in a photographer's shop, but the efforts of his mother (right, as portrayed by Balla in 1901) granted to him five years of artistic training at the famous Accademia Albertina – he was not an amateur
- ▶ In 1895, his mother took him to Rome, where an uncle worked as royal gatekeeper



Mayor Nathan's Rome»



- His relatives and first friends welcomed Balla into an anticlerical milieu, dominated by a London-born Jewish politician: Ernesto Nathan (1845-1921: portrait by Balla, left), Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italian Freemasonry (1896-1903) and first non-Catholic Mayor of Rome (1907-1913)
- Nathan gathered around himself those who lived Socialism as a political religion, Freemasons, followers of Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) and even some who wanted to restore the old Roman religion

The Third Rome



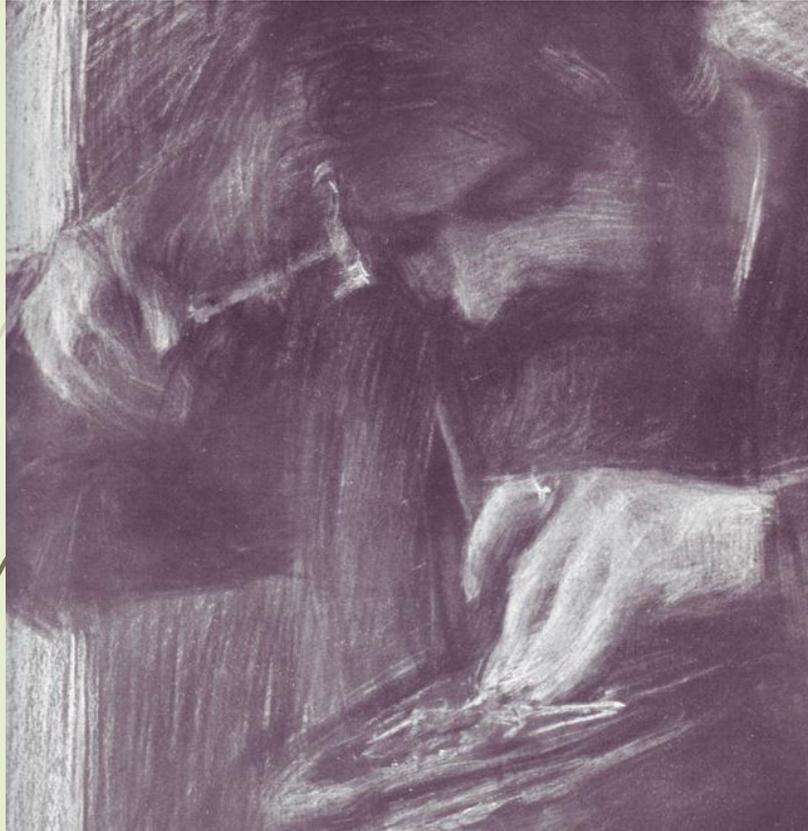
- ▶ All these intellectuals were united by the myth of a genuinely Italian and modern Third Rome, overcoming the Second Rome of the Popes, and returning to the glory of the First Rome, the Roman Empire
- ▶ A friend of Balla and a Freemason, Vittorio Grassi (1878-1958), designed for the Italian mail in 1911 a stamp celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Kingdom of Italy. The stamp portrays a Freemason in the act of sculpting an Ouroboros serpent, with the words DEA ROMA (Goddess Rome)

Balla the Socialist

- ▶ Balla worked with the Socialist daily *L'Avanti* and shared the enthusiasm for Socialism as a civil religion
- ▶ In 1902, he produced a social masterpiece, *Bankruptcy* (right). On its back, he later wrote: «This painting is of a reality that nobody has equaled! Look at it, know it; it purifies the eyes and the heart»



Best Friends



- ▶ In the 1900s, Balla became inseparable with two Rome Freemasons: artist Duilio Cambellotti (1876-1960: left, portrait by Balla) and Ministry of Instruction officer Alessandro Marcucci (1876-1968)
- ▶ In 1904, Balla married Marcucci's sister, with the bride's brother and Cambellotti serving as his best men. Nathan promptly found a home for the newlyweds. Marcucci's daughter, also an artist, will later marry Cambellotti's son. It was an endogamic milieu

The Fourth State



- ▶ They also befriended Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo (1868-1907), the Turin painter who created the Socialist icon *The Fourth State* (1901)
- ▶ A Balla family tradition maintains that the character in the center of the painting was, in fact, Cambellotti



Arts & Craft

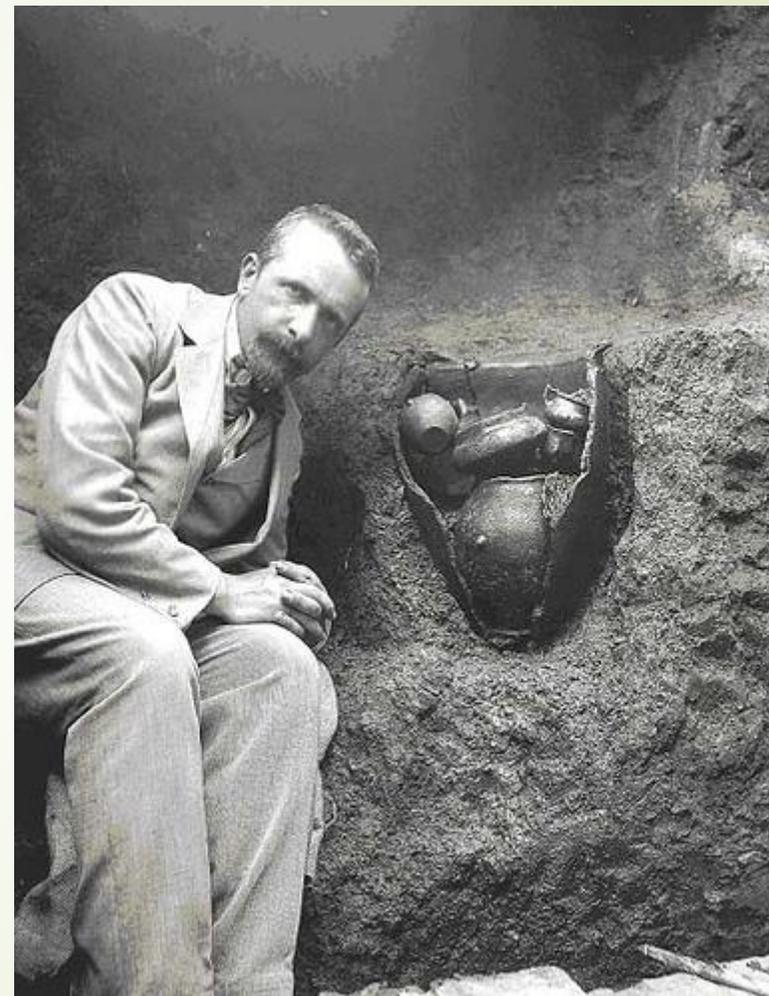


- ▶ Cambellotti and Marcucci wrote for the Rome journal *La casa*, which tried to import into Italy the Arts & Craft and Pre-Raphaelite theories of William Morris (1834-1896), known in Rome through the Anglican Church of St Paul Within the Walls and aimed at involving decorative arts in a larger project of renewal
- ▶ Balla remembered Arts & Craft ideas when he signed with Fortunato Depero (1892-1960) the manifesto *Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe* (1915), and started producing furniture, clothing, ties, wooden flowers and other artifacts aimed at a Futurist invasion of all the arts (below)



The Agro Romano Campaign

- ▶ Nathan, Marcucci and Cambellotti involved Balla in the campaign for the alphabetization of the Roman countryside (Agro Romano)
- ▶ It was a humanitarian cause: but they also believed that the peasants of the Roman countryside maintained in their physical appearance and folklore, hardly touched by Catholicism, genuine remnants of the ancient Romans of the Empire
- ▶ A leading participant in the Agro Romano project, archeologist Giacomo Boni (1859-1925, right), seriously lobbied for restoring the religion of the old Roman Empire as the spiritual soul of the Third Rome



A Roman Hut



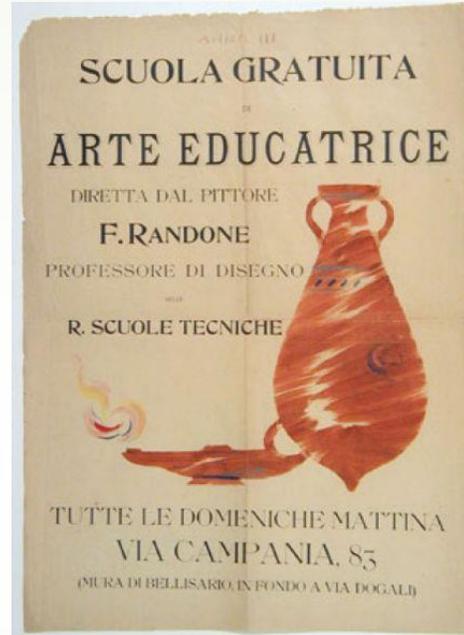
- ▶ Preparing the 1911 celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Kingdom of Italy, Boni and Cambellotti went together to the Agro Romano, and found in the huts of the local peasants their models for reconstructing the huts of the early Ancient Rome
- ▶ At the 1911 celebrative exhibition in Rome, visitors could enter one of these huts (middle), reconstructed by Cambellotti and Boni, and admire inside several paintings by Balla (above), including one of Tolstoy (below)

Roman Ceremonies

- Archeologist Cesarina Ribulsi (1892-1963) was part of the Agro Romano project, the early circle of Balla, and Roman ceremonies (perhaps as a priestess)
- She lived in the home of Camilla Mongenet (1861-1944) and served as her secretary. Mongenet was a leading member of the Theosophical Society, that she later left it in order to join the group of Giuliano Kremmerz (Ciro Formisano, 1861-1930)
- Ribulsi ended up converting to Catholicism and eventually became a nun



The Master of the Walls



- Balla soon became an art teacher, with both male and female pupils
- The latter included Nathan's daughter Annie, and Yris Randone (1888-1958), one of the daughters of the idiosyncratic artist Francesco Randone (1864-1935), the «Master of the Walls», a distinguished ceramist with a distinctive «Etruscan» style, the founder of an art school, and a member of the Theosophical Society

«Etruscan» Ceremonies



- Besides being a Theosophist, who also welcomed in Rome the Sufi master Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882-1927), Randone organized sacred ceremonies for cooking ceramics. Selected friends, including Balla, were invited through «hosts of goodness», resembling Catholic hosts and decorated with Socialist and Masonic symbols and poems
- The «three fairies» (Tria Fata: above), i.e. Randone's three daughters, dressed as Etruscan (or Tolstoyan) priestesses, invoked with the artists the spirits of fire. Then, ceramics were cooked

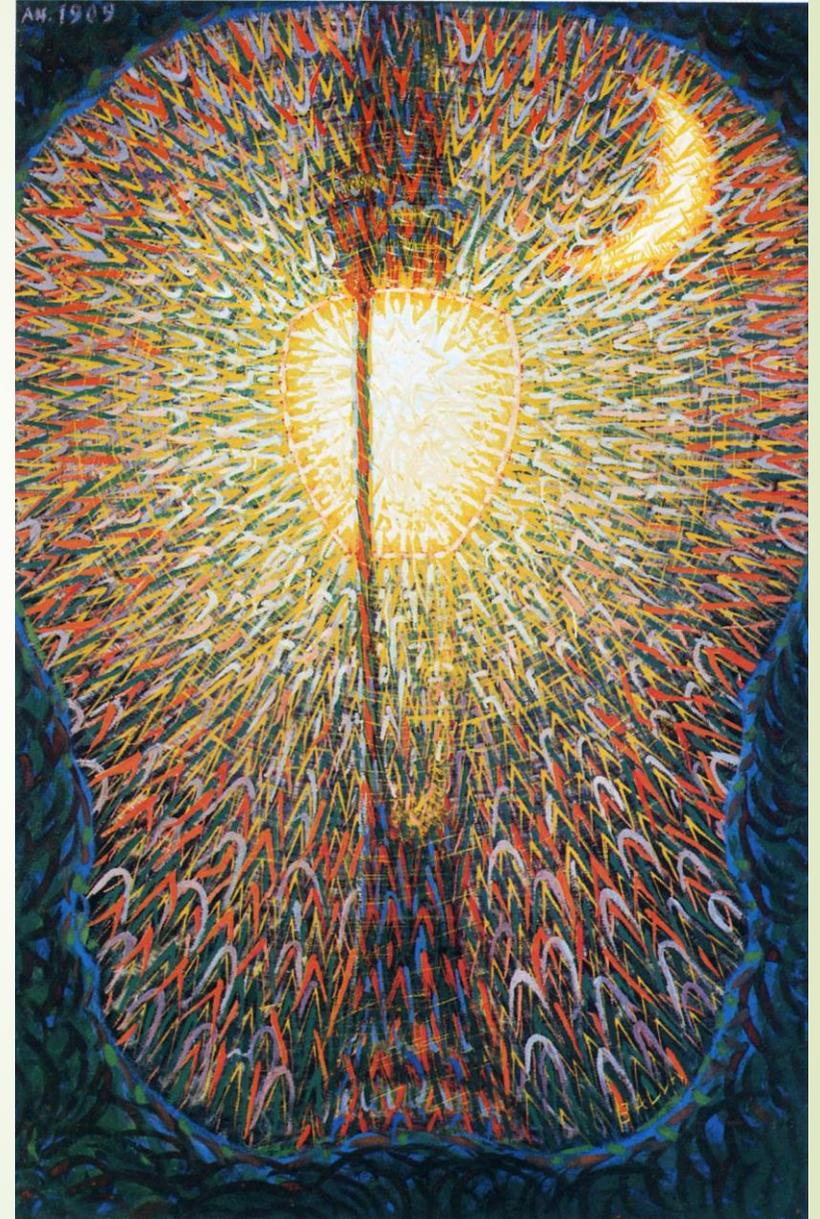
Balla and the Amendolas



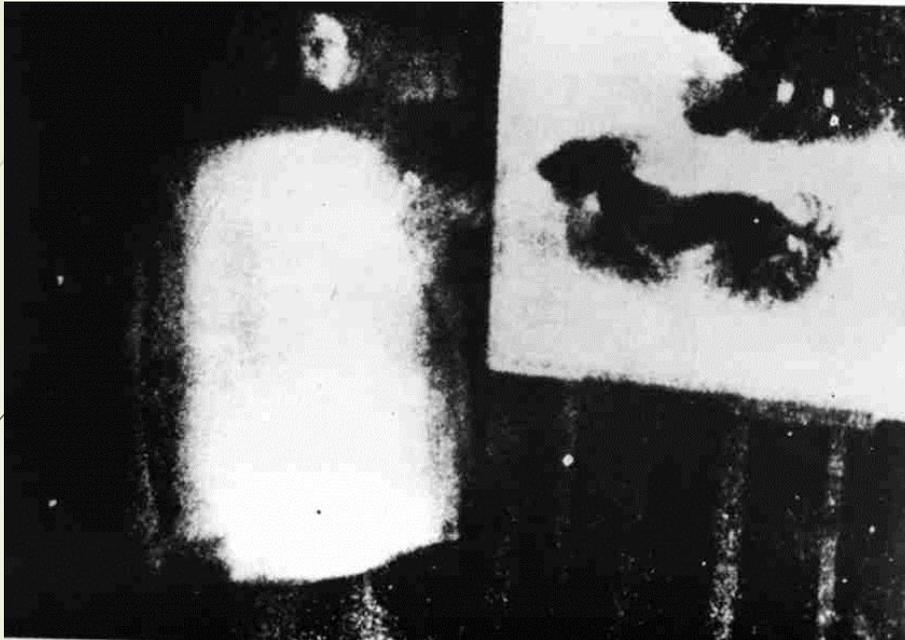
- ▶ Balla also became close friend with politician and Freemason Giovanni Amendola (1882-1926) and his Lithuanian wife Eva Kühn (1880-1961)
- ▶ Amendola joined the Theosophical Society at age 18. Eva, although not entirely persuaded, also attended the meetings. In 1904 she was, or so she claimed, publicly cursed by Besant in Rome after an argument about her and Giovanni's decision to live in chastity. As a consequence, she fell seriously ill and had to spend several months in a psychiatric hospital
- ▶ Amendola left the Theosophical Society in 1905 and finally married Eva. Their son Giorgio, left, 1907-1980, later became an important Communist leader, and wrote affectionate reminiscences of Balla

Arc Lamp

- ▶ Balla was introduced to Futurism by his pupils Boccioni and Gino Severini (1883-1966). He painted his first Futurist painting, *Arc Lamp*, probably between 1910 and 1912 (although he later claimed it was in 1909, and thus predated Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto *Let Us Kill the Moonlight*)
- ▶ Eventually rejected by the 1912 Futurist exhibition in Paris as not Futurist enough, it celebrates the victory of science. The star in the center of the painting is the star of the Kingdom of Italy and of the Third Rome, overcoming the Second Rome's Catholic obscurantism

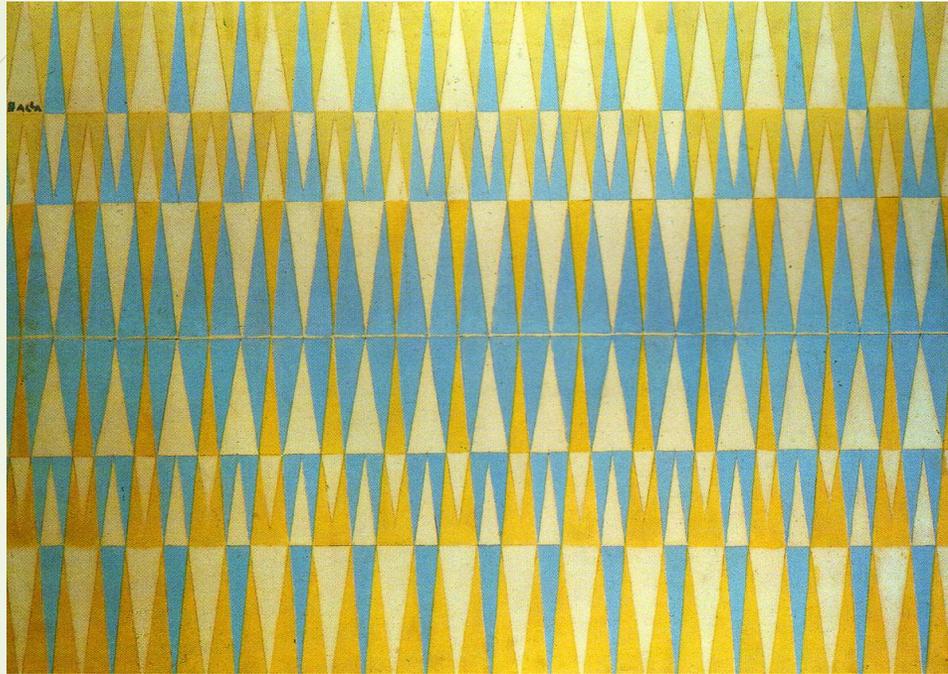


Balla the Futurist



- ▶ Balla's serious study of Futurism went hand in hand with his exposure to Theosophy and Spiritualism through Boccioni, Ginna, and others. He then proceeded to explore the hidden meanings of movement and light
- ▶ Movement: *Dynamism of a Dog on Leash* (1912, right) was the subject matter of a famous Balla «photodynamic» (left) by A.G. Bragaglia (1890-1960), a Futurist photographer influenced by spirit photographs

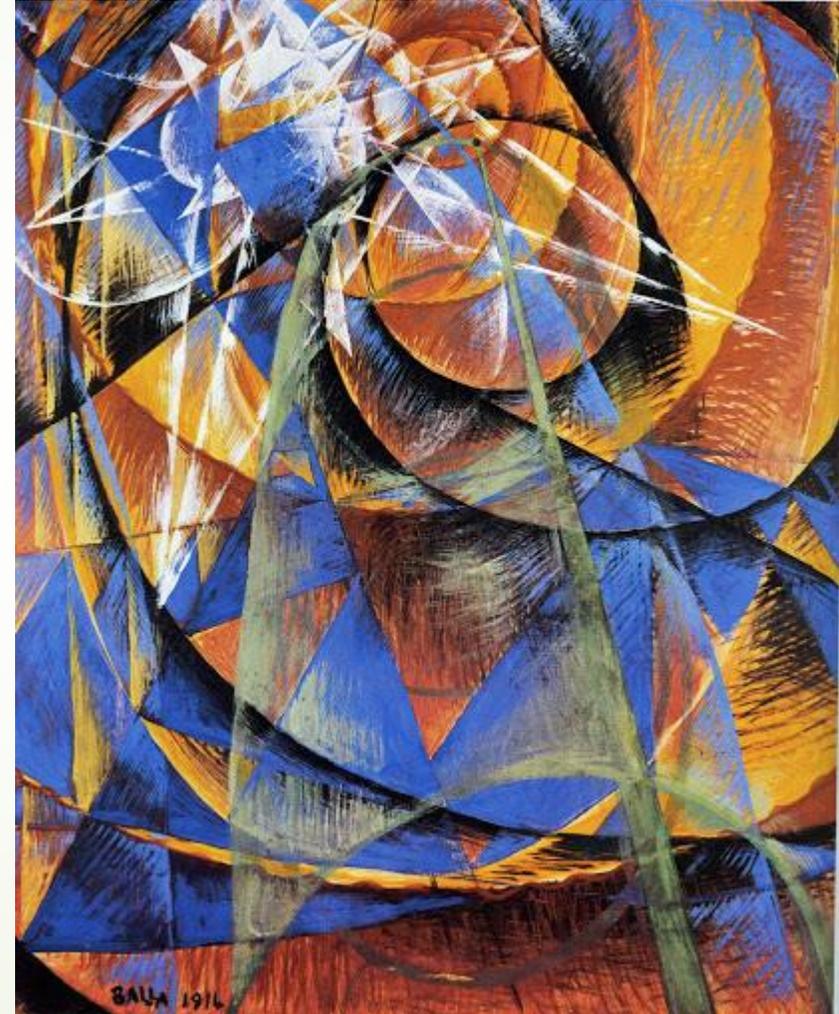
Iridescent Compenetrations



- Light: what he later called «Iridescent Compenetrations» (right) were conceived during two 1912 trips to Düsseldorf, where he learned about the ideas of the Theosophist artist Johannes Lauweriks (1864-1932), very much influenced by *Thought Forms*

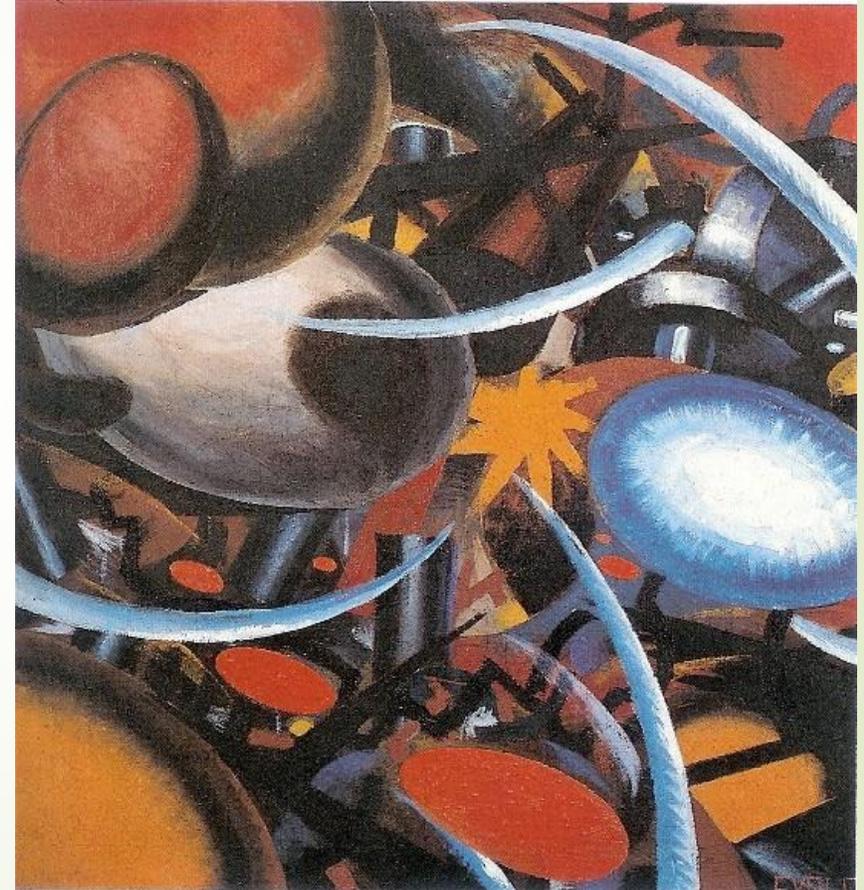
Mercury and Flammarion

- ▶ On November 7, 1914, Balla observed the partial solar eclipse determined by the planet Mercury. Later, he produced several versions of *Mercury Passing in Front of the Sun*
- ▶ Balla's reading of the eclipse went beyond pure astronomy and relied on the writings of the French astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842-1925), a prominent Theosophist who insisted on the occult meaning of astronomical phenomena



Balla and Evola

- ▶ Balla's pupils were now young artists interested in Futurism and, quite often, Theosophy and the occult
- ▶ One was Benedetta Cappa (1897-1977), who later married Marinetti. Another was a very young Julius Evola (1898-1974). Later famous as a right-wing esoteric philosopher, Evola was a Futurist painter for a few years (*Fucina studio di rumori*, right). He left after a disagreement with the Futurists' anti-German and pro-war rallies at the beginning of World War I, where Balla was even arrested

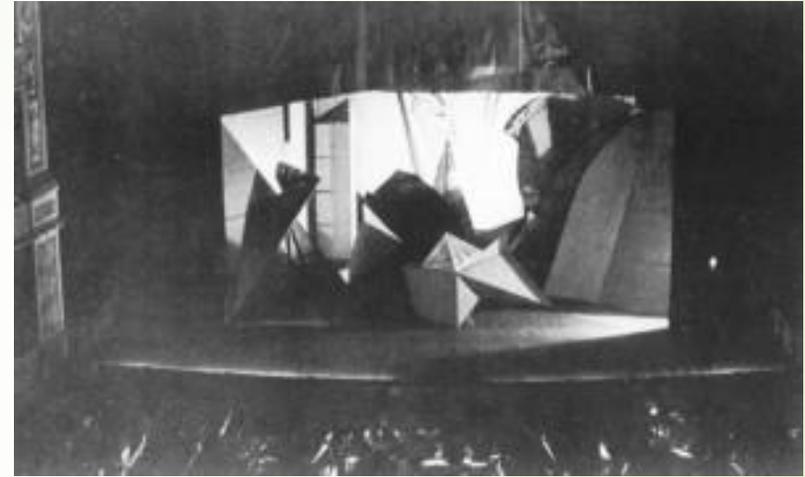


Boccioni's Fist



- Ginna mentioned discussions about «Blavatsky, Besant, and Steiner» in Balla's studio, with Evola and Boccioni
- Boccioni died in 1916 following a horse accident. Balla was very moved, and sculpted *Boccioni's Fist* (left) smashing old art and the moribund traditions of the past. Balla also created a *Fist* stamp as a trademark of sort for his paintings
- In this and other sculptures, Balla also explored the idea of a spatial fourth dimension

Feu d'artifice



- The theme of the fourth dimension emerged also in the quite sensational scenario Balla prepared in 1917, under a commission from Russian ballet impresario Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929), for the representation in Rome of *Feu d'artifice*, on music by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)
- Evola was quite enthusiastic, and even the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* took notice

General Ballatore

- Probably before 1916 – the date mentioned by his daughter Elica Balla (1914-1993) – the painter started attending meetings of the Independent Theosophical League led by General Carlo Ballatore (1839-1920)
- Ballatore came to Theosophy from Catholicism: in 1883 in Rocca di Papa he experienced a miraculous manifestation of the Virgin Mary, who saved him and his wife from a carriage accident – a small chapel commemorating the miracle still exists (right)

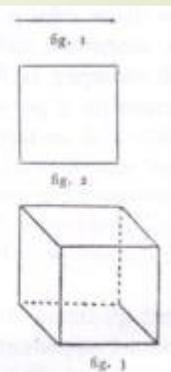


The Fourth Dimension



- Ballatore discussed at length, particularly in his 1908 booklet *The Fourth Dimension or the Hyperspace*, ideas about the spatial fourth dimension, spirits dwelling there, non-Euclidean geometries and «painting the invisible» that deeply influenced Balla

La fig. 2^a porta quattro rette, o lati, ossia il doppio della figura precedente di origine, più tante rette, o lati quanti sono i vertici (estremità, punte, angoli uguali a zero) della figura stessa, cioè della fig. 1^a. La fig. 3^a, cubo, ha pur essa il doppio delle rette, lati o spigoli della fig. 2^a, ossia della precedente d'origine, cioè, del quadrato, più tante altre rette, lati o spigoli quanti sono i vertici od angoli del quadrato stesso; ossia $8 + 4 = 12$. Seguendo la stessa norma per la successiva figura di quarta dimensione, si dovrà avere: il doppio delle rette, lati o spigoli del cubo, più altrettante rette, lati o spigoli, quanti sono gli angoli del cubo stesso, cioè, $12 \times 2 + 8 = 32$.



(1) A. BESANT. — « La Sapienza antica ».

Trasformazione forme spiriti

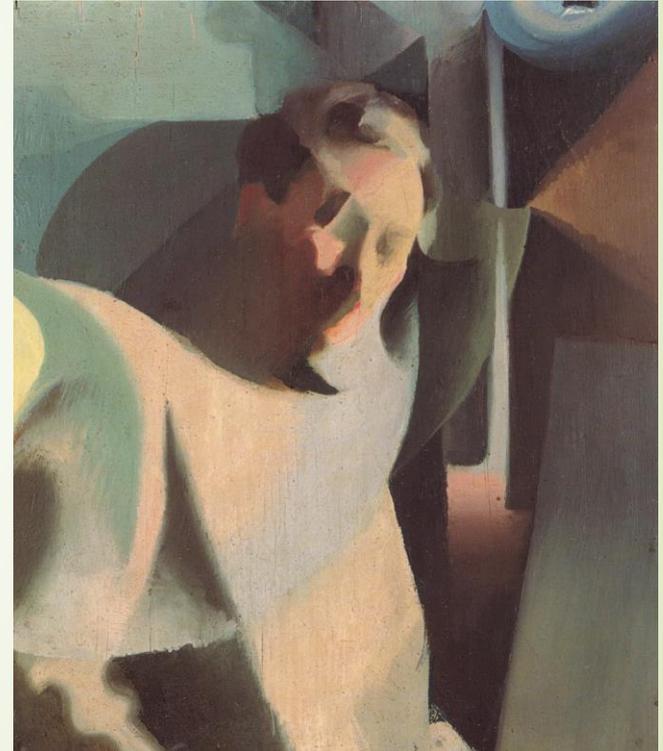


- ▶ According to Elica Balla, *Trasformazione forme spiriti*, in fact, at least three Balla paintings, produced between 1916 and 1920, derived from the Ballatore meetings. They depicted reincarnation and the ascent and descent of human souls

Spiritualist Séances



- ▶ According to Elica, Ballatore also involved Balla in Spiritualist séances
- ▶ A clear reference to these is found in the ectoplasmic painting *Toward the night* (left, 1918), (F. Benzi), while in *Autostato d'animo* (right, 1920) Balla may have tried to represent his own astral body



The Idea is Born

- Theosophical influences are most evident in three Balla masterpieces of the 1920s. They have similar themes.
- In *The Idea is Born*, 1920, the idea rises from the nondescript magma of ignorance



Science against Obscurantism



- 1920. The light of Science battles the black-red fire of obscurantism

Pessimism and Optimism



- ▶ 1923: A blue Optimism confronts a black pessimism, whose shape evokes a medieval knight

Genio futurista



- ▶ When Balla painted on a tapestry *Genio Futurista* (1925) for the Paris Exposition des Arts décoratifs modernes, he managed to put together, in «this summa of sort of his art», both «Theosophical representations» and different brands of Italian nationalism and Third Rome mythologies (F. Benzi)

Balla the Fascist



- ▶ When the Fascist regime came, Balla saw in Mussolini the best and most energetic chance to realize the Third Rome for good. In 1926, he started the non-abstract work *Marcia su Roma*, celebrating the Fascist coup of 1922
- ▶ He still signed the *Manifesto of the Futurist Aeropainting* in 1929, but left Futurism after the *Manifesto of Futurist Sacred Art* (1931), that proposed what was for him an impossible reconciliation with the Catholic Church

The Last Years

- Balla ended up repudiating Futurism and abstract art, and retreating into his family's domesticity (*The Four of Us in the Mirror*, 1945, right)
- After the War, he was rediscovered by a new generation of abstract painters including Ettore Colla (1896-1968), Piero Dorazio (1927-2005) and Carla Accardi (1924-2014), some of them Marxists. They hailed his Futurist masterpieces rather than his new figurative style. He obliged, producing «neo-Futurist» works almost until he died in 1958



Theosophist?



- ▶ Unlike Mondrian or Harris, Balla never wrote about Theosophy, nor was he specially interested in creating a «Theosophical art». But Theosophy, and esotericism in general, did interact with Balla. Theosophy was an actor, perhaps more significant than Trollope's famous butler, in the social process leading from Balla's initial inspirations to the production of works of art recognized as influential by several generation of artists