



MELÉTE TÒ PAN
MARIA LUISA CATONI

Maria Luisa Catoni is fixed-term Professor (Professore Straordinario) of Ancient Art History and Archaeology at IMT (Institutions, Markets, Technologies – Institute for Advanced Studies Lucca) and Coordinator of the Ph.D. Program in Management and Development of Cultural Heritage. She has taught Iconography of Ancient Art at Pisa University and held a researcher appointment at the Scuola Normale Superiore, where she received her education in Classics and Art History. Her research interests center on four main areas: 1) The status of artefacts, images and texts as documents that historians and art historians use to reconstruct specific social interactions and contexts in Antiquity. 2) The reuse and manipulation of ancient values, ideas and images in post-ancient Western civilization and art. 3) The history of protection of cultural heritage in a comparative European perspective. 4) The comparison between ancient Greek theories of mimesis and contemporary theories of perception based on neurophysiology, evolutionary biology and psychology. Publications: *Bere vino puro: Immagini del simposio* (2010). *La comunicazione non verbale nella Grecia antica* (2008). *Schemata: Comunicazione non verbale nella Grecia Antica* (2005). – Address: Scuola Normale Superiore, Piazza dei Cavalieri 7, 56126 Pisa, Italy. E-mail: m.catoni@sns.it

Melète tò pan (Take care of the whole) is a sentence of one of the Seven Wise Men that seems to me to guide the Wissenschaftskolleg. A very short while after my arrival at the Wiko, I began wondering how the people who work here are selected, whether with the aid of some secret tool or whether, rather, they all merge here spontaneously, led by some hidden, mysterious, magic spell. It gradually becomes clear that they are the tuning fork,

a discrete almost hidden one: They set the pitch, creating a harmony where rigour, lightness, professionalism, humour, seriousness, helpfulness, intellectual involvement, genuine curiosity, immense patience, continuous and generous attention, build an ensemble of rare gracefulness. Grace is what describes the Wissenschaftskolleg at best.

Every imaginable need – for discussion, for exchange or for practical help – is met with great friendliness and simplicity: nothing seems to bore, bother or surprise the people working here, not even after a year of the same questions, awkwardness, neuroses, obsessions, lack of competence. *Meléte tò pan* applies to a whole that includes the Institute itself, its wonderful library “with no walls” (made extraordinarily efficient by the competence and passion of the people working in it), the other institutions in Berlin, the institutes devoted to research that the Wiko promotes around the world. The wonder is an unusual care for details, no matter the dimension of the context the Wissenschaftskolleg gets involved in.

Again, it must be a magic spell wafting on the Wiko that makes it, in a way, a mirror of the city of Berlin. A pleasant, surprising discovery for me: the intense energy of the city – with its museums, exhibitions, concerts, lectures, with its construction sites, stations, S-Bahn, U-Bahn, buses, with its universities, embassies and administrative buildings – makes a strange contrast with the silent, friendly streets of the city-centre districts, which one can bike through, especially when the intense smell of the trees hits again, along with a daylight one is no longer used to, after those long, dark winter days – yet beautiful, as I realized once they have passed by; or with the long walks around the lakes or along the Spree; or with the monumental space of Treptower Park or the overwhelming silence of Weißensee.

This intense mixture of energy and calm, sound and silence, nature and buildings is inflected at the Wiko in a special way: the many activities going on in or made available to the Fellows by the Kolleg (lectures, concerts, colloquia, lunches, discussion groups, conversations) mix with the intense, silent concentration one can enjoy; the location of the offices and apartments produces a suspension between isolation and interaction and, most importantly, the freedom to enjoy both.

Conversation and exchange matter for real, here. And this gives a refreshing feeling, which revitalizes the trust in and the love for research. I often found myself engaged in furious discussions, which allowed me to get to know my Co-Fellows and compelled me to read books I never thought I would read in my entire life.

Informal conversations – happening in the most casual ways and places – have been particularly involving and stimulating for me, especially the ones with my Co-Fellow scientists. In general, the way different disciplines face and address the relationship between general conclusions and/or preconceptions, on the one hand, and empirical data, on the other, has become increasingly problematic for me during this year. Increasingly clear to me has become also the problem of the separation of disciplines on which the academic systems I know are based, a separation that unnecessarily and absurdly affects the way research is carried out. The former problem has been a crucial ingredient in the collapse of my initial hypotheses related to my research project on women in Antiquity, which changed its entire physiognomy during this year. It basically lost its exclusive focus on Antiquity, after I realized that the modern history of the problem has had a substantial role in shaping the very physiognomy of the problem itself. In this context, the discussions with Yehuda Elkana, Luca Giuliani and Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus have been instrumental. The result will be a series of articles on Euripides' *Hippolytos*; on two passages of a treatise on women included in the Hippocratic corpus; on an iconographic formula attested on a group of funerary stelai, which permits a methodological reflection on iconographic innovations; and a study on how the problem of women in Antiquity has played a role, since the 18th century, in addressing much bigger, pressing political issues.

The second problem, my increasing intolerance for the separation of disciplines and the effect it has on research, was channelled to a constructive scope by the discussion group I had the chance to participate in for the whole year, on the Reform of Universities' Curricula, organized by Yehuda Elkana and coordinated by Manfred Laubichler and Yogendra Yadav. Thanks to their concrete and factual approach, a number of concrete experimental institutional initiatives and two documents have been produced.

The relationship between the Wiko and the outside world is something I discovered little by little. I was given the precious chance to present and discuss my works on Schemata in Antiquity, on ancient Greek vases, and on the Greek Symposion both at the Wiko and at other Institutions: the result has been that I developed a new interest in topics I considered, by then, rather remote from me; most importantly, I gained precious interlocutors, such as Horst Bredekamp and some of the Fellows of the Kolleg-Forschergruppe "Bildakt und Verkörperung" at the Humboldt University, whom I find challenging and inspirational.

As far as my project on the Greek Symposion goes, when I arrived at the Wiko I had already finished a book on the subject, which had already gone to the Italian publisher.

But the Wiko habit of discussing struck again: I engaged in an incredibly valuable, challenging, harsh and energizing discussion with Luca Giuliani on some specific pieces analyzed in the book on the Symposium; I could discuss with my Co-Fellows working in the field of law, Ellen Katz, Daniel Halberstam and Wolfgang Hoffmann-Riem, on topics such as the relationship between norm and violation as reflected in law; I was given an invaluable contribution by Dieter Thomä on the notion of negative ethics and its potential significance. The result was a delay in the publication of the book, which will come out only next October, but in a form that treasures many invaluable contributions I received at the Wiko.

Also a new project took shape during my stay here: thanks to Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus I was able to visit the Bibliotheca Classica in St. Petersburg, and thanks to the invaluable help of Alexander Verlinski I was able to look at some objects in the Hermitage, which will make an important contribution to my research on Greek painting, which I started last year.

Apart from some specific effects on my research that I can see, name and list, the discussions I enjoyed at the Wiko have been a continuous source of inspiration, curiosity and learning: discussions ranging from social insects to schismatic wasps, from morals and customs to constitutional differences, from aurality and literacy to Myron's discobolos, from the language of the great apes to the power of images to the power an author has over his narration, from the predictability of the future in physics to the Tzeltal verbal and nonverbal language, from the concept of greediness to the performance of irony in music.