

Art and the 'scandal' of interpretation

The present number's topic is situated, as in the previous ones, on the slope of the applied hermeneutics, investigating the possibility and, eventually, the opportunity of interpretation in the field of art. Such a problem is philosophically legitimated in the circumstances of investing the art experience with a 'truth' susceptible of being 'revealed' through a 'deep' reading. The aesthetical-hermeneutical optimism is shared in some theories of interpretation like those promoted on the European continent, in the spirit of speculative philosophy, by M. Heidegger, H.-G. Gadamer, G. Vattimo, U. Eco, but also A. Danto, N. Goodman, R. Schusterman, St. Fish – in works of analytical and pragmatist nature.

The last century's hermeneutics responded to the demarches of associating the 'aesthetic conscience' with the reductionist patterns of the modern scientism, of Kantian inspiration, which separate art from the exigency of truth, reducing it to the status of an experience away from any form of interest. Considering art as a privileged place of 'supervening' of truth, Gadamer claims the acknowledgement of the interpretative character of the whole human experience. The truth experience specific to art is like the transformation process that engages all the implied instances – author, work and receiver, each of them getting, under the condition of engaging an adequate interpretation, an extra of

edification in cultural, historical and personal frame. The 'deep interpretation' (Arthur Danto) is different from the superficial one through its rigorous, specialized character of the assumed demarche. The necessity of such an application is also claimed by the thesis of assuming art in artifactual terms, as symbolic language (Nelson Goodman), meant to be deconstructed by critical attitude. From this perspective, the art criticism is presented as a particular type of applied hermeneutics, mobilizing on its side interpretative skill, erudition, good control over aesthetics vocabularies, canons and theories, explanatory subtlety, competence in articulating speeches, persuasive talent and argumentative sagacity.

As pendant to the 'amiable' hermeneutical mood towards art a methodological radical skepticism is promoted, according to which any interpretation defalcates the art demarche from the exigencies of an ideal reception. Severe critics against the abuse of interpretation in art are explicitly formulated by Susan Sontag in the already famous *Against Interpretation* (1964). Interpretation, as the American critic writes, is 'the revenge of intellect upon art'; it 'poisons sensibilities', 'grows the world poor', 'empties' it, is only 'a compliment that mediocrity pays to the genius'. The nowadays art should run from the 'arrogance of interpretation', from its 'aggressivity', dischar-

ging itself from the terror of the 'content' for the profit of a rehabilitation of sensorial acuity. "The function of critics should be that of showing us *how it is what it is* and even that *it is what it is*, rather than showing us *what it means*" – Sontag believes. To the 'totalitarian' claims of hermeneutics is opposed an 'erotics of art', emblematic for what could constitute 'the new sensibility' of a world eased of intellectualistic whims.

Though, more and more, contemporary art refuses the separation from philosophy. The conceptual art, the *performance* experiences, the sociological art, the aesthetics of communication, the network art, net-art bring in subtle, subversive messages that, uninterpreted, would miss their target. The public itself is invited to involve in interactive artistic projects, articulated on ideas and not on a facile 'tasting' of ephemeral beauties.

Which would be, hence, the advantages of interpretation in art? Accretion of edification and comprehension, of educating the aesthetic taste, of critical reasoning and of the 'spirit of

refinement', of handling competent and specialized keys of 'reading', of grown accessibility of the public to the message of art, of making more and more possible, the associative imagination and personal heuristics, censorship of subjective prejudices... What disadvantages could be? Excessive rationalization, atrophy of receptive sensibility, exposing the author's intention and demystification of the creative 'aura', sacrificing the essential for the profit of detail, of emotion for the profit of reflection. The lack of any interpretation, instead, sends art outside culture. The philosophical splinting of art, along with making the philosophical problems more 'aesthetic', encourage the conjunction (mutually profitable) of the idea with the sensibility of artistic nature.

The authors of the studies of the present corpus come from different 'worlds': philosophers, aestheticians, hermeneutists, literary theoreticians, visual artists... all of them preoccupied of shortening the real, possible or necessary connivances between art and interpretation.