

GIUSTINO DE SANTIS - MODULAR VISION (A THEORY)

THE UNIVERSALS OF THINGS: FINITUDE, DUALITY, COMMUNICATIVENESS

Things – they used to say - are invading the physical space in a conflicting way, but they make it sensible and vital.

To be more exact, we could say that things are the premise for the space to appear, to become evident and perceptible to our visual reconnaissance. Therefore, owing to the invasion of things, space looms, comes out and is modulated and structured in every sense, but above all in the aesthetic one.

In their turn, things, when meeting space at their peripheral outskirts, give life to a perceptual phenomenon that we'll call "sign of the thing." This sign, on the other hand, describes "things" in an aesthetic-formal way, that is unique and unrepeatable, and can be received by our sense of sight.

But even what fills the 'thing' helps to determine by its more or less wide shape, the boundaries of the thing itself, so that its "sign" will become the distinctive character that makes it real in front of the surrounding things, in a silent play full of mutual aesthetic-relational respect.

Unavoidably, the action of seeing compels the eye to look only at one point of the thing, neglecting the rest of its extension which starts from that point. However, we know very well that all of this is happening only because of the physiologic structure of sight, that can focus only a point at a time. We also know that while it is impossible to look at two points simultaneously, nevertheless we don't discard a priori all other points, nor the awareness we have of

their existence and effectiveness. We can say that we are working panoramically on the “showed real” not with our eye but with our mind.

There’s no doubt, however, that every single perceived point awakens judgment at the very moment in which it shows itself, and then another point follows, in a complex game of instant references.

We must go over and over again the statement that no judgment can generate itself, if there isn’t any action or essence on which it can get its bearings. It’s impossible to imagine an alien reality, different from the one that is generated as temporary moments are rolling by. From the awareness of such a process, to the critical analysis of a given artwork hastily considered a repetition of another one with analogous layout and theme, there’s but a step. It’s useful now to observe that two thoughts can’t occupy simultaneously the same space and the same time.

Therefore, if things generate themselves and come to the attention of our senses one at a time, our observation (and consequently our judgment) has a sequential and modular behaviour, which needs an operation of synthesis to become understandable to our cognitive faculty. A triad results from this, and each phase is essential presupposition to activate the following ones: PERCEPT, CONCEPT, JUDGMENT will appear as a synthesis of action and reaction of extraordinary importance for the aware perception of the REAL. From generation to generation, man has improved his own ability to listen to and to dialogue with nature. But this can really happen only if we dwell upon one element at a time and if we are aware that there will always be something that will get unnoticed, forgotten or lost.

When we put a thought, an idea on the altar of conscious and perceptively real observation, immediately we prevent other images from generating and activating themselves. We'll say then that they'll never get any chance to come into existence; they'll never show and enter into the sphere of the active precept to become an object of *observation, conceptualisation and judgment*.

In this kind of process, much will remain in hiding, in the field of the mere possibility, making us regret not to be able to know or carefully observe what has never been.

The choice the artist makes as he formulates his own "aesthetic fact" is somehow coercive for the artist himself. He is aware more than anybody else of what he is losing when making **his own** choice among all possible alternatives.

Will he ever be able to recover those signs and images? Will he ever get the chance to somehow "fix" them, just to be able to admire and to look at them later?

Up to now, it seems that the only possibility is given by the method of serial repetition.

Everything that "shows" itself is an evidence and everything it generates is a feature of this evidence.

Everything which is revealed by evidence, is a creation and every creation is an artistic act.

Every signic, plastic or pictorial proposition is a reality, just as every incidental variant of such a proposition is a real and objective development of reality.

Every statement of thought is a truth and every opposite or variant, be it parallel, vertical or oblique, is a constitutive part of that truth.

Therefore we can infer that any elementariness, be it real or conceptual, physical or metaphysical, concrete or abstract, possesses and shows in itself and from itself the feature of truth; just as every articulation of the multiple implies and epitomizes the charisma of truth.

Those truths, anyhow, are only nucleus of the inclusive and general truth we must look for within the perimeter which includes and embrace all of them. Moreover, to be able to qualify as “**real**” a given truth, we’d need to point at a non-truth, considering that every dualism shows two antithetical but likewise worthy realities.

Both light and darkness are “truths” necessary the one to the existence of the other and both of them work together to determine reality as we know it. Neither of them can legitimately pretend to be the absolute TRUTH, as both of them are different aspects of the same “reality-truth.”

There exists also the “pre-eminent” truth which exceeds the given context, the truth that can be determined in comparison with an a priori datum that can be given arbitrarily or by universal consent and which allows the one and only “truth-aim” to emerge.

Every thing, every aspect of reality “shows” itself, i.e. exposes its own existential-configurational *status*. This *status* – which is such and not otherwise - tends to prime a series of relational functions with the outer world, that’ll be **crucial and essential** to activate the perceptive action. The perception that comes from it, doesn’t live on its own light, but is a reflect of the judgment we put into being because of the tendency to centrality of our personal viewpoint and of our particular subjective judgment.

It appears, therefore, that the suggestion which gets us to observe the infinite and minute details of things, is not inborn, but rather generated by the praxis, as external influences make one or another aspect of things increasingly conspicuous.

Reality, however, as a whole, resumed in all the different elements that compose it, is neither “beautiful” nor “ugly”: it simply is. The same concepts of “good” and “evil” become precarious, without the introduction of an external discriminating element.

If there won't be since the beginning the arbitrary power to state: Yes, that thing is beautiful, and: Yes, that other thing is ugly, in all probability we won't ever know any enforcement of judgment and we would look at things just as they *innocently* show themselves. Indeed, who can state without a shadow of doubt: Yes, this is the “objective beautiful” and that is the “objective ugly”?

It is plain, therefore, that only introducing an a priori principle, we can come to qualify and discriminate things.

(According to Christian morality, you can discriminate good actions from bad actions because they are subject to an end which can justify them. But when they are free from any end, actions can no longer be judged and are simply actions).

When we make up our mind to operate through one action rather than another, we do it autonomously because we must reach a well defined end and not because the action is in itself good or bad. Our choice can be justified and qualified only by a discriminating moral criterion. Only resorting to a so called **third point** (that is an a priori datum to reach a peculiar end) we can take our choice.

Nonetheless, when free from the **third point**, we are involved in a multiplicity of things, thoughts, actions, events, happenings, namely in a universe of pure perception and casualness.

We can say that the “finality” to which everything is submitted, endows things with an ambivalence, an existential and effectual dualism, that later becomes our presupposition to activate and introduce our judgment. But our judgment always springs from a subjective vision and, in art, we must more and more escape from the subjective.

Figural elements which will compose the work of art must draw on the universals of things in order to obtain not to be a mere reflex of a visual subjective judgment.

Even if you can create a work of art without being knowingly aware of what art is, undoubtedly every aspect of the being will be epitomized by it in all its wholeness and absoluteness. Therefore, we must take into account all the messages coming from things and not only the ones our eyes perceive at the moment of meeting them.

According to traditional artistic practice, if we want to keep on representing things, first of all we must look over them and later take our (subjective) choice among the numberless objects of nature that call our attention at the moment of our survey. We'll end by choosing objects that better answer to our esthetical sense and to the artistic trend prevailing in the moment in which we are working.

Even if it is true that artistic praxis doesn't exhaust here its limits, but comprehends and includes many other instances of cultural, psychological and emotional order in strict interdependence, even with what l'air du temps (namely the zeitgeist, the spirit that is blowing on a society in a given period) suggests, we'll end by

representing in the artwork only the equivalent of our personal vision and of our subjective ideal. In other words, the artist who in the past wanted to paint a “female nude” (unless it was the portrait of a particular naked woman), used to choose, among many possible women, the one who answered to his personal artistic idea of the “female nude” theme. Therefore, that woman had to sum up in her body all plastic qualities of particular interest, that answered to the spirit of the time of the painter and allowed him, together with his own subjective vision, to enhance **his own** artistic idea of the chosen subject.

In painting (or in figural art) it’s the objectification of the proposed theme to express the artist’s thought. Therefore, if we are to give life to a female nude, besides having to create a pictorial fact, we must first of all choose a particular woman, with a particular physical type, a particular plastic look, let alone particular anatomic peculiarities which are indicative of the singular plastic-formal appearance of that woman.

Anyway, while taking such a choice, we can’t shrink from resorting to our particular judgment, i.e. the judgment which enables us to carry out the choice.

In this way, we would unintentionally state a premise for an indication of judgment that in the end will be at least compelling for the onlookers, because it will call their attention to the outcome of our subjective point of view instead that to the objective essence of the chosen theme, to the pure vision, exempt of any subjectivity, to the graphic-plastic metaphor of universal value.

Therefore every moment, every circumstance of life must be the right occasion to check the route of art until that moment and to

revise our position in the continuous shaping of reality. It means to have a clear perception of the numberless aspects of things that surround us, among which we have to choose. Anyway, the choice must become active only where and when universals are exposed and structured. Then the vision will open genuinely to our senses, allowing us to understand and filtrate the mysterious idioms of nature and of existence in its wholeness.

It'll be enough to "strain" our conscience over things and over their metaphysical effectiveness, and immediately the thought will open to our perception the awareness that every entity, be it abstract or real, is above all a "*formal arcanum*".

From all of this, there comes the need to banish from artistic operation every representation of the objects just as they show themselves before our sense of sight, because our awareness now has changed. Before our ripe conscience, they have become works "finished in themselves", that have worn out every possibility of traditional artistic representation and will therefore suffer from arbitrary discrimination.

We must on the contrary take note of the large existential valence that all things have acquired, changing their inmost essence into a formal metaphor that allows the artist to organize and refer only their objective valences and their universal aspects.

This CHANGE will allow to abolish the age-old hierarchy of values that has been imposed on things at every time and place.

It's the time itself that points out this need.

Therefore, it must be solemnly revealed, declared and taken into count that every real, metaphysical or abstract entity, in so much as existence, keeps inside itself universals of FINITENESS, DUALITY AND

COMMUNICATIVENESS. They are so clear, distinct and conspicuous that any doubt about them will be accomplice of a pretentious cerebral attitude.

Universals draw attention on all things and things, in their turn, draw attention on them. There is a mutual interest to emerge, to show up, to qualify for the existence. Every peculiarity, every relative datum will come out defeated, humbled and ridiculous.

Going back to the example of the “female nude,” we’ll say that the hypothetical painter will choose a woman who, according to his personal vision and his cultural background, is able to sum up the concepts of subjective and arbitrary “beautiful”. But the idea of “beautiful” that is available to the painter, formed itself only because the idea of “ugly” counterpoised and rooted inside his conscience. Therefore, he will express in his artwork the subjective “beautiful” only through its opposite.

But why on earth must we represent only what we subjectively consider “beautiful” while leaving out what we believe (always in a subjective way) “non beautiful”? Is there not the risk of making a mistake, of doing a reductive action towards life and of plagiarising the beholder?

Artistic creation to be new needs to objectify itself in its essential and in its universal; the universal that permeates all things, none excepted. In this way, artistic creation will have the merit of not being partisan and of *coming out* as a unique visual reality, perfectly intelligible to every spirit.

Our age, characterised as it is by speed of elaboration, synthesis and absorption, dramatically enhances the perspective of such a problem and points at the only possible short cut: the artistic modular

representation of reality by means of UNIVERSAL METAPHORIC
ICONOGRAMS (U.M.I.)

This way, we will go beyond the purely epidermic appearance of entities in order to reach the so called absolute “truth-essences” that are ruling the unfoldment of life and of its becoming, in its unheard-of new aspects, beyond any limit of space and time. Moreover, it will put into being and enhance the “beauty” that lies in the configurational-existential absoluteness of things. This will give the artist a new value that will support him in his polyhedral action of perpetuation and enlargement of creation.

It won't be, as it could seem, a simple process of “abstraction” from the given forms (which until yesterday was the *modus operandi* of art). On the contrary, it'll be a creation *ex novo*, a unique plastic equivalent, a graphic-pictorial metaphor of every thing and every action, of every thought and every feeling, a total and mutable expression for every form and reality. And it'll be a pedagogic event, able to create a new ethical level of relationship within the world of things, an ethics that's no more arbitrary but consciously synchronic with every action of nature.

What must be “signified” by the artistic creation, is the universal, the “poetic talk” that universal is able to activate and mould.

As nature sets its basic-elements one near the other until it attains its formal axioms (atom, stone, flower, animal, planet, star, galaxy, and so on, i.e. the constituents of the visible), likewise we must work, weaving and structuring our artworks only by means of universals (I.M.U.). We'll call “poetic talks” the above described entities and we'll describe them as unique, finished and unrepeatable, studded as they are in the infinite mosaic of reality.

NATURE neither left its mark on them nor gave any sign of discrimination or judgment. Therefore, where does come from our unceasing judgment about them?

The spirit of the age warns us. HERE ARE THINGS. THEY ARE! THEY AREN'T NEITHER BEAUTIFUL NOR UGLY! THEY SIMPLY ARE.