

The revenge of the south: vitality and creativity

Extract of Michel Maffesoli speech on the occasion of the meeting *Creatività dell'Arte per una Politica InterMediterranea*, organised by Love Difference il 28 settembre 2002, Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto

'Quid novis sub solem'? What new thing under the sun is there, therefore, when speaking of the relativism of the Mediterranean? Nothing. So I'm saying nothing new, but I am saying it 'newly': it is a matter, therefore, of an archaic perspective, when nomadism wrote itself into a similar archaic framework. Hence the Dionysian idea, at the opposite pole of what I have just described, the idea of 'reliance' [bond, link] - that is the term I have suggested - that sends us back to the Latin etymology of the word 'religare', 'that which binds me to', just as this sea, as the Mare Nostrum, this sea that unites with softness and at the same time precision. Here then the notion of bond, there where work divides something is born that has to do with creativity.

But now for the second term relevant to this conference: the 'creativity of the everyday': A holistic - if we want to use a term in fashion at present - perspective, and the concept of "holistic" is an interesting concept, it covers every aspect of life, but once again, it is a matter of something that has its roots in the everyday. Poetising of reality, reality bestowed, culturising of nature, naturalising of culture wherever this great separation existed. You see this therefore is the perspective of union between the material and the immaterial. And it is this logic of conjunction - here again the idea of bond - that binds us to the earth, to the other, that unites all the different element that in some way compose a given reality at a precise moment.

From my point of view, Dionysus represents pagan wisdom - 'paganus' in Latin means 'countryman'. Dionysus is at bottom a figure of the earth, as I said, 'cthoniac' in a dimension of 'universitas', of universality in the simple sense of the term, in the etymological sense of the term: something that reunites what was split. Art is no longer a sure action, as I said before, but an invention, once again in the etymological sense of the term - in Latin 'invenire' means 'make arrive', 'make stand out'.

If I come back to two terms that I cited at the beginning of my speech, we have not to think that the good is a little more remote, but to see the potentiality of beauty in the 'vulgus', in the 'humus', in order to make existence something novelistic.

The novel of people, the novel that speaks to people (and once again we come back to the theory of the bond), the surrealism of the banal; one does not ask oneself the question whether the real and the unreal exist or not, but a surrealism borne by an embodied art, art of the banal, art of the everyday which, for my part, I have always found in the work of Pistoletto. In conclusion, it seems to me there is a true subversion of values and, I repeat, the idea of the subversion of values is not political (at least for me). And it is interesting to analyse the expression 'subversion of values', borrowed from Nietzsche who, more precisely, speaks of subversion of values as of a sort of marvel of the world, a world newly enchanted. It seems to me that it is this that happens, in some way, in the aesthetisation of every instant of the existence, not a separate life, but a life lived with the intensity of the 'here and now': what I call an 'eternal instant'.

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