

# THREE PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS, MOVING FROM A (QUADRUPLE) WORK OF DIEGO ESPOSITO

1. Visible/invisible. *The Visible and the Invisible* is the title of the last, unfinished essay by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Therein, among other things, the philosopher expounds an innovative speculation on perception. So innovative, in fact, that it required the introduction of an as yet unheard concept, that of “flesh”, as a substitute for notions such as body, perceptible world, aesthetic experience and so on, which have all been compromised by the metaphysical dualism that, from Plato onwards, has severed the perceptible from the intelligible (the visible from the invisible). The concept of flesh expresses primarily the reciprocal belonging of world and body, and shows that the threshold where both are expected to face each other like separate elements, is rather a zone of reversibility between the perceiver and the perceived, between the seer and the seen.

If Merleau-Ponty is right, as I believe he is, then the invisibility of the composition linking the four installations Diego Esposito has thus far placed in Prato (2001), Shanghai (2007), Cordoba (2010) and Lima (2011) – with more to come – in such a way that no actual gaze could embrace the composition as a whole, must not be understood as a simple negation of the act of seeing. Such a composition should rather be understood as the “fleshy” unity of the gesture of com-posing (from the Latin *com*-together, and *ponere*-to put), which has need of a gaze, but not just a gaze, and not just a single gaze. It is a gesture that contains, holds together, the four pieces in a unitary work, while at the same time legitimating its increase and expansion, even its dissemination. But isn't a disseminated composition a paradox, so to speak? Surely it is, yet it is the foundational paradox of Diego Esposito's dispersed and unitary work.

2. Thing/work. We are struck by the intense thing-like quality of the four installations I just spoke about. Four imposing blocks of raw, heavy, impenetrable stone, white or coloured, on whose upper surface a lenticular, metallic eye opens its clear gaze towards the sky, or better, towards the light and the pure resplendence of colour with which painters have sometimes captured the light. Once we agreed upon the fact that Diego's work consists, as I said, in an act of com-position, what brings me to assign to its single pieces a “thing-like” quality? The answer lies in a thought of Martin Heidegger, who invited us to make experience of the “thing” primarily as a relation between the different elements assembled in it (earth and heaven, mortals and gods). The consonance between this Heideggerian thought and the four pieces of Diego Esposito's com-position is so intimate as to embarrass.

But we will not serve either the artist or the philosopher well if we limit ourselves to noticing such an intimate affinity and linking it to a fleeting wonder. That the “thing” is a plexus of relations is less important than the experience it allows us to have. Thus the question is: what kind of experience would be put at stake by the four “things” gathered into the com-position whose long, patient and as yet unfinished gesture has been devised by Esposito? The answer, it appears to me, is this: not just the relation

between the powerful mass of stone and the lofty region of light and pure colour, but also, and most importantly, the spatial condition that simultaneously separates and connects one piece to the other; the travelling that was required in order to dislocate the pieces one by one; the time that the travel, the selection of stone, the execution and the placement of pieces inflicted, each in its turn, on the “fleshy” gesture of com-posing four (as of now) pieces so distant one from another.

3. Space/spatialization. So, an experience of the space? Definitely. Yet not of a space already given and then occupied, or articulated, or adorned in some way. According to what I have noted thus far, one would say instead that through his compositional operation Diego brings into play an experience of active and autonomous spatialization, akin to forging a path in the depths of a wood, or along a steep rock face, or through a thick layer of snow; akin to making a river traversable by building a bridge between the two banks; or, better still, akin to opening a path that allows diverse regions to communicate with one another, not only under the profile of a conventional conception of space (isotropic, Euclidean), but also under a profile of their ontological status, like an interface, to use today's language, between diverse elements regarded as irreconcilable, if not opposite. (And we already know some of them: the visible and the invisible, the composed and the dispersed, the displacing and the gathering, etc.) It seems to me that the spatializing interface is at work in the alphanumeric strings identifying the four pieces of the composition, according to the coordinates that locate them on the terrestrial surface by use of a common electronic device. As I just wrote, they “locate” them. But is this really the case? Have we inadvertently returned to a conventional conception (in this case cartographic) of space? Not at all, if it is true that the notation of the coordinates acts here as an interface; that is, if it is true that it hints towards a “fleshy” zone of contact and interchange between elements as different, and perhaps opposite, as the weighty integrity of the stone and the brightness of light on the one hand, and the inert rigour of the alphanumeric string automatically generated by a technical device on the other hand. This seems to me the astonishing intermediate region, the peculiar “inbetween” of *physis* and *techné* that Diego Esposito's compositional gesture actively spatializes, rendering it experienceable in space through its eminently paradoxical and problematic, yet nevertheless peremptory and sovereign form, which I have tried to delineate in this contribution without the pretension to make it appear.

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