

Call for papers

Itinera, 22 (2021) *Diderot: Space and Movement*

Newton and modern science, especially Mathematics and Physics, have completely changed the concepts of space and movement. Unlike other thinkers of that century, among whom Immanuel Kant stands for his remarkable thought, the new concepts of space and movement don't seem to have influenced Diderot's thinking effectively.

In his analysis about ontological and representational elaboration of these concepts in Diderot's works, François Pépin has pointed out that the philosopher didn't reject the universal and abstract conception of space claimed by mechanism and Newtonianism. Space wasn't a central notion in Diderot's materialistic philosophy. In fact, in his works there is an elaboration of that concept which can be defined as *aside*. Space is not a neutral physical space but it is more similar to something dynamic, concrete and plural.

Jean Starobinski has shown that, in aesthetic field, XVIIIth century represents a moment of overthrowing the hierarchical organization of space, which was a typical and central perspective of Art in the previous centuries. Multiplication of points of view and variation of the movement of the scene are emblematic of this period, also on a symbolic level. In Diderot's considerations upon Arts there are elements close to that conception of space and movement.

Moreover, in his *Salons* Diderot seems to consider paintings as dynamic and crossing spaces experienced through description and imagination. Many questions arise connected to this statement: in what way the rhetoric figure of *ekphrasis* used by Diderot contributes to this effect? How does the philosopher conceive space in paintings? And in sculpture? What is the relation between space and movement in visual Arts? Just to list a few examples.

The reflection about space and movement does not only concern visual Arts, it comes to light even in the pages dedicated to dramatic Art and in literary works.

It is known that Diderot's reflection about theatre represents a fundamental contribution for the innovation of the scene and of the genres, particularly with the introduction of the new bourgeois' drama. There are some interesting philosophical elements about space and movement's conception even in this field. For example, the conception of the theatrical scene as a succession of pictures or the concept of movement as gesture and pantomime. It can be considered also the decisive debate of that time about the role of theatre in society and the different idea of the theatrical space conceived by Diderot and Rousseau.

Finally, space is a crucial element also in novels and tales where it is integral part of the interactions between characters. Especially in *Jacques le fataliste et son maître*, the characters are constantly moving and this aspect can be seen through a philosophical point of view. How has Diderot envisaged the places that the protagonist passes through or stays in? What is the relation between characters and places? How space and movement are represented in others novels and tales? The answers to these questions bring out new aspects that have not been touched by literary critics yet.

Topics include but are not limited to:

- The concept of space in Diderot's works of aesthetics (painting, sculpture, architecture, theatre, literature, music);
- The concept of movement in Diderot's works of aesthetics (painting, sculpture, architecture, theatre, literature, music).
- The relation between space and movement in Diderot's works of aesthetics (painting, sculpture, architecture, theatre, literature, music).
- The comparison between Diderot's concepts of space and movement in aesthetics and other contemporary authors.

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