

Each year the Lyceum chooses a theme to which all the Sections must follow, inspiring their programming.

This year, the theme is light.

All sections have inspired their activity on this theme, facing it with different languages and from different perspectives.

This is the common general presentation, written by the President herself.

«In the beginning, God created heaven and earth. The earth was shapeless and deserted and darkness covered the abyss and the spirit of God hovered over the waters. God said, "Let there be light!" And the light was»

In this very short phrase, *Fiat lux* (Gen. 1: 3), referring to the first act performed by God immediately after the creation of heaven and earth, when he ordered that light be made, because above the face of the abyss were still darkness, a journey into Sacred Scripture begins, up to the debate on the metaphysics of light in the Middle Ages.

And beyond.

In all civilizations, light passes, in fact, from physical phenomenon to symbolic archetype, endowed with an endless spectrum of metaphorical iridescences, especially of religious quality.

The primary connection is cosmological in nature: the entrance of light marks the absolute beginning of creation in its being and existence.

Even in ancient Egyptian culture, the radiating light accompanies the first cosmic dawn and, similarly, the central element of light returns in the archaic Indian theology of the Rig-Vedas, in Buddhism, in Islam.

It is the Bible, which has generated a fundamental ideological and iconographic "lexicon" for Western culture, to offer a general exemplary systematic paradigm, according to which God himself is light.

This is the way to understand the statements that occur in the New Testament writings attributed to the evangelist John. Christ himself is "the light of the world", the *Lógos*, the Word-Christ, is "true light that illuminates every man". Light becomes the symbol of God's revelation and of his presence in history.

It is no coincidence that the date of December 25, the pagan feast of the sun god, was chosen for Christ's Christmas, in the winter solstice, which marked the beginning of the rise of light, first humiliated by the winter darkness.

And as the Pythagorean tradition imagined that the souls of the righteous deceased were transformed into the stars of the Milky Way, in Christian sepulchral inscriptions, the deceased will be defined "son of the Sun", to the point of establishing a sort of theological solar system.

Christ is the sun; the Church is the moon, which shines with reflected light; Christians are stars, illuminated by the supreme celestial light, up to the last biblical book, the Apocalypse, in which, in the description of the ideal city of the perfect eschatological future, the new and heavenly Jerusalem, it is said that "There will be no more night and they will no longer need lamp light, nor sun light, because the Lord God will illuminate them "(22: 5).

The God of the liturgy, *sol salutis*, which shines on the golden background of painting and mosaics, also illuminates the third Cantic of the Comedy: from Hell "place of all silent light", a process in the sign of light, understood in its value higher, in a dimension of verticality, in an immaterial ascent towards the vision of God.

Even in a more secular approach, that of Ugo Foscolo in the *Sepulchres*,
The man's eyes seek dying
The Sun: and all the breasts
send last sigh to the fleeting light.

Light and lights: whether they are lanterns, fireworks, fires or northern lights, lights also have a fundamental role and meaning in the plot of works of art.

It is a green light that Gatsby sees at the bottom of the bay and which represents Daisy and with her the unattainable American dream.

It is the faint light that Holmes and Watson see in the moorland of *The Mastiff of Baskerville*, and which will lead them to solve the mystery; they are the flashes of fire in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, symbol of a safe haven for Jane, which turns into a fire and Bertha's death and Rochester's misfortune.

It is a vial of light from the star of Eärendil, which the elven lady Galadriel gives to young Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien, because it is a light in dark places.

And if Fra Filippo Lippi was the first to study chiaroscuro effects on isolated pieces of drapery, inspired by the sculpture, to which Leon Battista Alberti, in *De pictura* (1435), invited to look to learn how to portray the passages of light, from Verrocchio to Leonardo is the "folding of the cloths" that immerses you, in a search expressive that crosses time and space and also conquers the pentagram, with Debussy's music and Satie's minimalism, where each musical note is comparable to an "en plein air" brush stroke, made of light harmonies and delicacies that are sometimes imperceptible.

The light makes possible the three-dimensional perception with the shadows, attributes quality to the surfaces, creates chiaroscuro games, which enhance or cancel the modeling of the volumes, playing with its amplitude, its power, with its dominant colors ... from the masterpieces of history of art, through the modules of architecture, up to contemporary Light painting.

Lux and *Lumen*. Eye-lighthouse and eye-trap. See and look.

The theory of vision is constantly crossed by this reflection, which embraces both philosophy, as well as physics and optics, in a challenge that involves, in particular, the scientific world of the seventeenth century, up to, in very recent times, to the therapeutic applications of light, from the solar one, for children affected by rickets, to Phototherapy, in the treatment of the depressive phase of the seasonal affective disorder, up to the photothermic, photochemical and photomechanical use of the laser and the very recent applications of Photodynamics.

And Ariel's statement in Goethe's *Faust* can be made ours: *Welch Getöse bringt das Licht!* "What turmoil the light brings!" (II, act I, v. 4671).

In fact, light is a glorious and vital sign, a sacred and transcendent metaphor, but it is not completely harmless, as it generates tension with its opposite, darkness, transforming itself into a symbol of a moral and existential clash.

Its irradiation, therefore, from the cosmos passes into history, from the infinite descends into the finite and this is why humanity yearns for light, as in the final cry attributed to Goethe himself, *Mehr Licht!*, "More light!": in a physical sense due to the veiling of the eyes in agony, but also in a profound and spiritual sense, of yearning for a supreme epiphany of splendor.

Donatella Lippi