

MARC TEÒRIC

Letteratura e epistemologia illuministica
(*Literature and Enlightenment epistemology*)

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This talk has two parts: in the first the concept of “Denkform” (form of thinking) of the Enlightenment developed by Cassirer in *The philosophy of the enlightenment* (1932) is explained. In a further step the process is defined that makes out of a specific type of literature of the age the typical “enlightened literature”. In the second part Diderot’s first novel, *Les bijoux indiscrets* (1748) is analyzed as a paradigm of the specific relationship established between Enlightenment and literature.

According to Cassirer, the way of thinking of the Enlightenment is characterized by the substitution of a hypothetical and deductive way of thinking by an empirical and inductive one, even though this does not question “die grundsätzliche Ordnung und Gesetzmäßigkeit des Tatsächlichen selbst” (the fundamental order and regularity of what really exists). In this context, it is determinant that such a fundamental change in the way of thinking, according to Cassirer’s analysis, is not reduced as in Foucault to a superficial phenomenon, so that the Cartesian construction of systems and Voltaire’s deconstruction of them should not be attributed to the same episteme.

It will be furthermore analyzed how enlightened literature makes this change in the way of thinking explicit in the structure of the literary texts as a fundamental epistemological change, thus proposing a new epistemological habit. The key point of the talk is not that the Enlightenment literature, as in other ages, is based on the same epistemological foundations as the universe of discourse of the period as a whole, but that it aims to get rid of a previous episteme and to create a new one; in other words, the epistemological configuration is no longer the unsurmountable presupposition of literary discourse, but its object of reflection.