



**EMANUELE
COCCIA**
**FILOSOFIA
DELLA CASA**

Lo spazio domestico e la felicità



EINAUDI
STILE LIBERO **EXTRA**

Emanuele Coccia

FILOSOFIA DELLA CASA

PHILOSOPHY OF THE HOME

Domestic Space and Happiness

Einaudi, an essay, June 2021, 180 pages

© Emanuele Coccia 2021

All rights reserved.

Foreign rights: rosaria.carpinelli@consulenzeditoriali.it

“The idea for the book came from my experience of moving frequently, very frequently, and from a strange relationship I have with houses: I feel at ease straight away, but I can never think that I will stay there forever. Home means not only the building, the mineral outline, but a space of physical and human intimacy. It is the set of objects and people we ask to produce our happiness. A moral reality before an architectural one. Why do human beings build houses? Not only to cover ourselves from the rain or to protect ourselves from the heat, we build them even when these climatic needs are not present. The reason is that, contrary to what philosophy has partly said and what ecology would like to convince us today, we are not in immediate harmony with the world: we need to transform it in order to be happy. And so happiness is always and in any case a project of human and material transformation, involving and moving people and objects that you may choose to have with you or leave behind, and to which you may one day decide to return.

“I am trying to trace a trajectory that comes from afar and that will lead the political and social landscape to take very different forms from those known so far. Having said that, if we also look at the present, it is not me who is getting rid of the distinction between private and public, between home and city. For some decades now - the philosopher Michele Spanò has been working on this in Paris - the belief that the public is something ontologically different from the private is being replaced by the idea that the public is simply an artefact between private individuals.

“The contradiction now is between a mineral home for three, four, five people, and a digital one for thousands. The latter has exposed the need to widen the walls, and I think it will happen”.

Emanuele Coccia

From the *Introduction* of the book

Philosophy has always had a special relationship with the city. It was born there, it learned to speak there and it is within its walls that it has always imagined its history and its future. The stories of its past speak of streets, markets, assemblies, places of worship and palaces of power. Rather than a novel, its history resembles the immense map of a Grand Tour that has seen this esoteric and elitist knowledge migrate and be transmitted through the cities of different nations and continents.

In this imaginary cartographic biography, a privileged place would belong to Croton, the city of Great Greece, in present-day Calabria, where Pythagoras founded his School in 532 B.C.: it was there, it is said, that philosophy found its ironic name, which has never been translated. “Philo-sophia” in the language of the time meant something halfway between a desire to know and a declaration of amateurism by one who refuses to be recognised as an “expert”. Not far from Croton, on this ideal map, would be Athens, where Plato founded his Academy in 387 BC and Aristotle founded his Lyceum in 335 BC: it was here that philosophy found its definitive consecration, and thought of itself as a city. If in Croton philosophy it was the rule of life of a community of individuals who had chosen to live differently from others, in Athens it claims to become the material form of the relationship that binds all other human beings. It was in Syracuse, it seems, that philosophy succumbed to the temptation to seize power, to become sovereign, the source of the law that regulates actions and opinions and the guardian of all the truth that the city has the right to recognise and cultivate. In Rome this desire to become “living justice” [*lex animata*] became so radical that thinking was identified with law and right. This map should certainly include Paris, where philosophy has become the object of teaching, and Frankfurt, where it has learned to be a force of contestation that prevents all cities from coinciding with themselves.

The list of cities in which philosophy figures and claims to have lived is endless. Contrary to what one might suspect, this imaginary geography is not only Western or European. It is said, for example, that in Alexandria of Egypt, philosophy met Jewish

culture and religion and allowed itself to be hybridised with its spirit, especially in the writings of Philo, which will be just as important in the way we all continue to talk about the divinity. It was in Hippo, a city corresponding to what is now ‘Annāba in Algeria, that philosophy learned to speak in the first person, to say “I”, to embody itself fully in the everyday life of a human being: it was in this city, in fact, that Augustine wrote his Confessions. It was in Baghdad that philosophy came to be thought of as a place where cultures meet: it was here that, from 832 onwards, the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd's personal library was transformed into a “house of wisdom” open to meetings between philosophers, astronomers, mathematicians and scholars, and to the exchange of different languages, cultures and religions.

This urban autobiography of philosophy does not only include metropolises and imperial capitals. Sometimes philosophy has needed to inhabit the province or the margins. Many of the most intense and moving treatises in its history have been written in extremely modest urban centers: for example, Spinoza’s *Ethics* was composed in Voorburg, on the outskirts of The Hague, and in The Hague; Hegel’s *Phenomenology of the Spirit* in the small town of Jena, where the great protagonists of German romanticism, such as the Schlegel brothers, Novalis, Ludwig Tieck or Clemens Brentano, also lived. Each of these cities seems to have tattooed an indelible signature on the body of philosophy, making thought a single hieroglyphic capable of transmitting and harmonising the atmosphere, the light, the existence of each one.

And yet this long diorama hides something, or rather pretends to forget it. Athens or Rome, Baghdad or Alexandria are just a hypnotic and lysergic set, certainly larger and more solid than any other theatre, but with the same consistency as an immense shadow show. Whether or not they have been the theatre for the birth of philosophy, all the cities on the planet are nothing but immense stages, open-air decorations that allow us to imagine ourselves elsewhere, to hide from us the place where we really are. We all pretend not to know this, but none of us really lives in a city. No one can, because cities are literally uninhabitable. We can spend endless hours in them, live sublime or infernal moments thanks to them. We can stay in an office and wander through shops, wander through labyrinths of streets and side streets or shut ourselves away in theatres and cinemas, sit on bar terraces and eat in restaurants, run in stadiums and swim in swimming pools. But sooner or later we have to go home, because it is always and only thanks to and within a home that we inhabit this planet.

Its form is completely indifferent: it can be a hotel or a flat, a room that coincides with a sofa or a skyscraper, it can be as messy and confusing as a closet, as poor as a barn or as opulent as a princely palace, it can be made of stone or of animal skin that can be folded to the point where it can be carried around. But underneath, inside, behind the city there is always a house that allows us to live in it. Life that tries to coincide with urban space, to inhabit it without mediation, is destined to die: the only true and absolute citizen is the homeless, the *clochard*; it is vulnerable life, that, by definition, is exposed to death.

It is always and only through the mediation of a house that we are in the city: whether it is Paris or Berlin, Tokyo or New York, I have only ever been able to inhabit the cities I have lived in thanks to bedrooms and kitchens, thanks to chairs, desks, wardrobes, bathtubs and radiators.

This is not just a spatial problem. Living does not mean being surrounded by something or occupying a certain portion of the earth's space. It is about forging such an intense relationship with certain things and certain people that happiness and our breathing become inseparable. A home is an intensity that changes our way of being and that of everything within its magic circle. Architecture or biology have little to do with it. It is certainly not to protect us from the weather that we build houses, and it is not to make space coincide with the order of genealogy or our aesthetic taste. Every house is a purely moral reality: we build houses to accommodate, in a form of intimacy, the portion of the world - made up of things, people, animals, plants, atmospheres, events, images and memories - that make our own happiness possible.

On the other hand, the very existence of the practice of house-building is evidence that morality - the theory of happiness - can never be reduced to a set of precepts relating to our psychological attitudes or to a discipline of good feelings, care or a form of psychic hygiene. It is a material order involving objects and people, an economy that weaves things and affects, self and others into the minimal spatial unity of what we call "care", in the broadest sense: the home. Happiness is not an emotion, nor a purely subjective experience. It is the arbitrary and ephemeral harmony that holds things and people together for a moment in a relationship of physical and spiritual intimacy.

Yet philosophy has always spoken very little about the home. As if inebriated by the dream, for centuries associated with male identity, of shining in society, of having power and influence in the city, philosophy has forgotten the domestic space to which it is linked much more than to any city on the planet. Thus, after the first great treatises in Greek on *oikonomia*, on the order and government of the home, whose influence was unparalleled, philosophy removed domestic space from the horizon of its concerns. This neglect is far from innocent: because of it, the home has become a space in which wrongs, oppressions, injustices and inequalities have been hidden, forgotten and reproduced unconsciously and mechanically for centuries. It is in and through the home, for example, that gender inequality has been produced, affirmed and justified. It is in and through the home, and in the order of property it finds and embodies, that society has been organised in economic inequality. It is through the modern home - a space in which, with a few very rare exceptions, only human beings can stay - that the radical opposition between human and non-human, between the city and the forest, between the civilised and the savage, has been constructed and reinforced.

Forgetting the home was a way for philosophy to forget itself. Indeed, this hidden decorum has also been the incubator for most of the ideas that have nurtured the planet and its history. It is in this variable-geometry space, never identical even in the same city, that flesh becomes a verb.

For philosophy, forgetting the home has meant making oneself unhappy, and making happiness unthinkable by subordinating it to the city and politics. By abandoning the house to the forces of genealogy and property, philosophy has forced it to shrink until it adheres to the anatomical body and expels outside the walls, in the cities, everything that has to do with bliss. If happiness has become a spectacle of shadows, it is precisely because, removed from the domestic dimension - in which there was no longer room for it - it has claimed to become a political fact, a purely urban reality. On the contrary, the modern city was nothing more than the extraordinary invention of a disparate set of places, techniques and devices built in opposition to the domestic order with the task of producing the freedom and happiness that could not be generated at home. In the city, through work, consumption, education, culture or simple entertainment, people were able to overcome the strange state of naturalised negligence or unthought-of naturalness in which things did not change because they

were dictated by a presumed biological order or primary needs. For centuries, the world in which, at least on paper, it was possible to be equal to others began as soon as the door of the house was closed behind us. Schools, cinemas, theatres, restaurants, bars, museums, discos, shops, parks, streets, but also parliaments, churches, synagogues, mosques: it was outside the home that the world really became an experience; it was outside the home that it was populated by faces, objects, ideas too intense and too big to be all within the closed space of rooms and kitchens.

From Plato to Hobbes, from Rousseau to Rawls, the modern city has been philosophy's great conjuring trick: a veritable philosophical *trompe-l'œil*, an open-air dream of freedom and collective phantasmagoria whose main task was to make people forget the home, to reduce it as far as possible to a closet where something is put away to be forgotten without guilt.

In this, philosophy has never been alone. The house has been the object of theoretical neglect; over time, it is as if it has been transformed by its own will into a kind of strange machine that must collect everything we cannot talk about publicly or that we need to forget. For centuries, the house was the "rest": what remained once the show was over, the collection of everything we never managed to share with others.

Unlike cities, the houses that make up their body are places whose history we only rarely share publicly: with very rare exceptions, it is impossible to have a clear idea of who has inhabited that space, how the houses have been furnished over the decades, or what events they have been the scene of. And even where this memory exists, it is never shared in the same way as the memory of the city. The vast majority of dwellings remain publicly anonymous devices, without a name that can last over time, and identifiable only through topographical coordinates: through the address or a label that by definition must be replaceable.

A comparison with any city is enough to realise how strange it is: how would we think of cities if, instead of calling them Venice, Marseilles, Peking or Dakar, we used longitude and latitude or label-names destined to change every five or ten years?

It is as if all houses ask not to be recognised in time, to be able to burn their history in order to start another one without memory. As if the home were the machine that allows life to leave no trace. As if the time inside it could not accumulate in the form

of a history and was the repetition of awakenings of a consciousness that remembers nothing of what happened before sleep or during a dream.

In recent decades, however, something of this mechanism of marginalisation and forgetting has broken down. The cohort of objects imagined, produced and consumed by industry has been aimed at populating above all domestic spaces. The invention of television collapsed the psychic frontier between urban and domestic life, bringing public space into the home. Then, social media created a portable public space without a geographical anchor, almost entirely modelled in the image of our flats.

This invasion of the city and its spectres has radically changed the way and rhythm of living, but has not yet been able to radically alter its structure. It is as if, in striving to leave our homes to invent and find our own happiness, we have become trapped in the dream of men and women we no longer know anything about. The bathrooms, the kitchens, the corridors, the bedrooms in which we spend at least half of our lives, the very functional division of the home according to this typology, are the projection of thousands of *egos* that have not lived on this planet for centuries. The contemporary home is a sort of Platonic cave, a moral ruin of an archaeological humanity. And it is only by revolutionising the way in which we give form and content to this experience that we will be able to make the world a possible space of shared happiness again.

Philosophical modernity has focused everything on the city: but the future of the globe can only be domestic. We need to think about the home: we live in the urgency of making this planet a real home, or rather of making our home a real planet, a space capable of welcoming everyone. The modern project to globalise the city has been replaced by that of opening up our flats to make them coincide with the Earth.

It was the end of the last century. It is strange to write this, and yet it is so. I had just moved to Berlin and it was the first time I lived in a metropolis. It was freezing cold but everything was glowing. The city was going through a period of confused and exciting *interregnum*. The collapse of the Wall had freed it from division and the communist regime, making it the capital of the reunified Germany. Parliament had not yet arrived, and with it neither had the panoply of offices and bureaucratic apparatuses that accompany it and transform a metropolis into something far more guarded and orderly than it would naturally be. The streets and houses emanated a sense of enchantment, ephemeral but very intense: here people lived differently from elsewhere and it seemed possible to imagine an alternative life for the whole continent.

Here I could afford sixty-square-meter apartments for the same amount of money with which I would have rented a bed in a university college in a small provincial town in Italy. People dressed differently: at the end of the nineties Berlin was the unwitting laboratory of what would later become the New York hipster style. People ate differently and on average still very badly. Above all, the houses were different in terms of furnishings, style and layout. The most striking feature was the absence of a bathroom in many of the apartments in East Berlin: as in the late nineteenth century, the toilet was located on the intermediate landings of the stairwell. The reason was not just economic. The ordinance of the city's building police on January 15, 1887 stipulated that bathrooms should have air and light access directly from outside and not and light directly from the outside, and not always the structure, size and floor plan of large public buildings did not always allow for this. For this reason the solution ended up being the landing.

They were almost always extremely small spaces - similar to those I would find years later in Paris, here without windows or ventilation - and devoid of any element that could distract the bodies that frequented them from the mechanical execution of the function for which they had been conceived. Their bare character was not the symptom of an early and involuntary adherence to the functionalist program of architectural modernism: in those enclosed but unheated places, set in a city where in winter the temperature very often drops to ten to fifteen degrees below zero, staying longer than strictly necessary was a test of thermal virtuosity rather than the idle pursuit of pleasure. In the nineteenth century, to avoid these problems, chamber chairs existed. On Berlin nights in the late twentieth century, going to the bathroom was equivalent to an expedition to the Antarctic and, in order to the Antarctic and, in

order to survive in that open-air refrigerator, the lack of adequate equipment required improvised armor made up of three or four sweaters and more velvet pants pants, necessary to face the world of ice that opened up that opened up beyond my apartment door.

This spatial exile, however, was not a reflection of the frequent and absolutely ordinary separation (frequent and absolutely ordinary in Paris) between a space of physiological purification (*salle de toilette*) and one of hygienic purification (*salle de bain*). In these apartments there were no rooms devoted to the care of the body. With the end of the communist regime and the first wave of modernization, instead of entirely rebuilding the apartments, the toilets were left on the landings and they tried to adapt to the new customs of the population by installing showers in the only domestic space capable of accommodating their technical needs: the kitchens. I used to have one of these. Next to the sink, the oven, the dishwasher, the shelves where I kept the packages of pasta, spices and oil, there was a plexiglass cabinet for cleaning my body. It was a minimal detail, yet it was enough to transform the entire apartment into a surreal dream: the gestures that usually led me to isolate myself in the bathroom coincided dangerously with those that opened my body to my friends in the kitchen. The action of mixing flavors and smells of living beings of other species in that zoo and garden of metamorphosis that is a kitchen became inseparable from the effort to keep my body human and clean. There was something explosive about trying to make hygienic care and gastronomic desire cohabit.

After all, even Buñuel, when he wanted to overturn bourgeois moral codes in *The Phantom of Liberty*, had simply inverted the logic behind the bathroom and the kitchen, making the act of defecation something public and the act of eating a private event to be closed off in a sort of toilet. He had never thought of joining them on a spatial and gestural level.

It was not always a pleasant effect, yet it was this experience that made me understand what the rooms of a house are. Bathroom and kitchen were not just two separate rectangles in the floor plans of the apartments I had lived in: they were two imaginaries, two morally distinct universes that were difficult to reconcile.

The planimetric reshuffling of their spaces and volumes coincided with a rewriting of my customs, but also of my thoughts, of the sensations I felt every time I was at home. It was in the short-circuit produced by this chimera - the bathroom-kitchen - that I realized that designing a house means subjecting its inhabitants to a precise psychic plan: organizing their feelings, emotions, forms and modes of experience. And the bathroom, which we usually associate with the more material functions of our daily lives, is also and above all the heart of domestic psychagogy.

From the chapter *Twins*

For years it was a photo that most clearly expressed the idea of home. A black and white image, yellowed by time. It depicts two small blond children frolicking and wandering in a meadow. The children must be about one year old because their steps are still very uncertain. One, in jeans and a white T-shirt with black stripes, is right in the center of the image: he looks at the lens with an air of defiance, his arms open, as if to run better towards the observer. The other is behind him, a meter or two away, dressed in dungarees: he seems to be trying to catch up with the first, as fast as possible, but because of this he has become unbalanced and is almost on the point of falling to the ground. Far from the two children, in the background, on the right, is sitting a woman: she seems to be talking and addressing another character, who remains largely out of the picture. I have no idea where that picture was taken. It had been going around the house since I was a child. And, along with others, it was the subject of a special exercise during those strange and surreal evenings (now part of everyday archaeology) that flowed in the contemplation of family portraits, when we flipped through photo albums or projected slides of travel and the past. My parents, especially my mother, the keeper of images and domestic memory, would often pick it up to illustrate, and play with us in a sort of inverted version of the game *Guess Who?* The two children represented were actually my twin brother, Matteo, and me. If the exercise was necessary, it was because everybody always mistook us for one another, both in reality and in images. Like almost every twin, I too, for years, have been accustomed to answer indifferently to my name and to that of my brother: I was, according to the occasions and the people, Emanuele (the real one), or "the Emanuele" who had been confused with Matteo, or "the Matteo" who had been taken for Emanuele. Like almost all twins, in the gaze of others my brother and I were perfectly interchangeable. And maybe not only in other people's eyes.

If we had no problem (at least in appearance) to know who was who in reality, our certainties showed themselves much less solid when it came to images: at least as far as I am concerned, I have never been able to recognize myself in childhood photos. The exercise our mother had accustomed us to had a therapeutic function: it brought order and identity back into the mind, and rooted this order in a strict visual and morphological genealogy. Some of the advice of this strange exercise still resonate in my mind today: "You are the one with the oval face; your brother, on the other hand, has a flat nose," she repeated.

Despite the number of evenings during which it has been imposed on us, this somewhat shaky prosopography, built up with portraits of our childhood, was never effective. Each time we had to start over, to engage again in this physiognomic Lombrosian hermeneutics of the bourgeois intérieur: we had to strive once again to distinguish one face from another, to recognize ourselves in one body rather than the other, to anchor our memory in clear and distinct memories. It was a bit like a ritual celebration of the impossibility of what Lacan called "the mirror phase." According to Lacan, only when a child manages to recognize his own image in a mirror and to identify with it under the authority of the gaze of the parent's gaze, he can free himself definitively from the motor impotence and dependence on food, in order to strengthen the self through the construction of an ideal self. This ideal self will also allow the normalization of desire. In my case, this was an excessive inversion: not only was I unable to identify myself, but the gaze of my mother, after all, didn't seem to be able to limit itself to touching exclusively my image, as if it were forced to pass from one figure to the other, and to erase every time the boundaries that separated me from the rest of the bodies. [...]

"Home" in a sense was for me the name of the desperate and often doomed to failure attempt to extend, repeat, and above all radicalize the feeling, posture, and way of being that that image had imposed on me since early childhood. For a long time I thought it was a special taste for secrecy. Yet in this experience nothing was hidden, nothing was invisible. On the contrary, everything was there, in the picture, visible, clear. Neither of them could recognize their own face, combine knowledge and perception. Or better yet: they both knew too much. Because the problem wasn't knowing who I was, but being in the condition of suddenly possessing two possible self-knowledge, two possible faces, and not being able to choose between these two knowledges. It was not the experience of not being able to say I, but the experience of being able to say it at least twice. A much stranger and more difficult thing to describe. I was faced not with the disappearance of the memory of my childhood, but with its virtual doubling. I was not forced to do without my body, I did not see or feel my soul living without a body or organs: on the contrary, I found myself in the impossibility of assigning my soul to a single body or of giving my body a single soul. For me, home has always been the name of the thrill that this abyss, both ontological and moral, aroused in me since childhood.

Thrill: this image broods with an excess of possibilities and seems to make them all equally legitimate, all equally imprecise and all equally unstable. At any moment someone else, the Other and the Others, my brother and other twins, could come along and pretend to be what I think I am - in image as in reality. At any moment someone else might pretend to be me, and to be me differently than I am. At any

moment, above all (and this is the most difficult aspect of being twins), I can tell myself that the Other embodies my being, but does it much better than I do.

That image expresses something that has often been described and that the experience of twinning brings to the state of daily and intimate evidence. It is not about the injunction to open up to the other, so often repeated

with all the good intentions in the world and with a continuous background of cloying catechetical moralism. It is not even the invitation to respect the other or to love one's neighbor as oneself. It is the proof that identity, or better, the coincidence between the self and the other is an ontological fact and not a moral duty. It is the proof that this identity between self and other is much more troubling, much more surprising than I imagined. In front of this image, referring to me always means not being able to distinguish myself from the other, finding myself perfectly even in the features of my brother's face. This excess of faces and of identities is disturbing because it is actually infinite, and it forced me to rewrite a surrealist and carnivalesque version of the Cartesian cogito.

Like Alice in front of the mirror, this image has always been for me the proof of the perfect convertibility between the inside and the outside: in myself, in the depths of my intimacy, I always find the world, the external reality, of which my brother was only a piece, a sample shaped by a strange game of fate in my image and likeness.

Or perhaps I was modeled in the image and likeness of my brother, identical likeness of my brother, identical and therefore indistinguishable from the vast outside world, from all that was happening between my skin and the horizon. Here again the problem is not the lack of recognition and self-awareness, but their excess: there is a "self" inside and outside of me, and it is not possible to grasp the line that transforms introspection into perception, the organ into an instrument, the self into the world and vice versa.

The abyss is therefore not only cognitive or moral: it is like being in front of a cosmic error.

From the chapter *Kitchens*

For years, I didn't know how to cook. It wasn't a form of partial ignorance. It was a radical foreignness to the set of processes that allow certain portions of the world to become edible. I was not just ignorant of the way an onion had to be peeled and cut. I had no idea that onions were an ordinary ingredient in the dishes I ate every day: I had no idea what a *soffritto*, a ragout, a broth was.

I wasn't the only culprit. The education I had received had huge gaps in everything related to self-care and autonomy, not just food. The fact that every human individual needs to act and above all transform the matter and space around them in order to eat seemed too complex and esoteric a truth to be revealed to the socially maladjusted teenager that I was.

Those were the years of the great food industry fad: for a thousand reasons, food arrived home prefabricated, pre-cooked in boxes or colored envelopes that required minimal handling. Food had always seemed to me like something already given, like a stone, a cloud, or something that was produced spontaneously, just like the chocolates that Aunt Mimí assured me came from a mysterious chocolate tree hidden in one of the rooms of her house. No one got up to cook. This blindness, conditioned mostly by my gender, was more an act of faith than a real experience: there were people cooking around me, and more importantly there were people cooking for me, yet they were invisible.

The problem, however, was not just moral or cognitive. Not knowing how to cook means, literally, not being in the world, still being on the other side of the real relationship that binds us to everything that is part of the planet. The set of gestures, practices, flavors and ideas that we call "cuisine" are not only the expression of a desire for physical or biological survival, and are not merely an ephemeral and secondary ornament of some of the moments of our day. The kitchen is both the reality and the symbol of our relationship with the world. We can only be and become the world by radically transforming it and letting ourselves be transformed by it. We can only be and become the world by building each time what Renaissance magic would have called a "seal": a formula that makes possible and symbolizes the conjunction and transformation of a series of disparate elements.

Cooking does not only mean transforming what surrounds us, but above all establishing and preparing one's own metamorphosis through what has been cut or sliced, grated or minced, stewed or fried, boiled or grilled. It is an appointment to which one summons unrelated portions of the cosmos that will no longer have the

same appearance, the same form, the same experience. Each meal is a mutual initiation into a mystery in which the whole cosmos is called upon to participate. Onions, tomatoes, meat, wheat, olives, but also one's own body: the ingredients - literally those who enter the kitchen - will never leave in the same state as they were in at the beginning. Cooking is the transcendental form of any reality's relationship with the world and the planet for at least two reasons. First of all, the act of cooking shows that there is no relationship of purity and absolute respect with reality: we cannot have a relationship of intimacy with the world without transforming it. We are cooks of the world: we do not stop cooking it, transforming it and cooking ourselves along with what we cook. Everything is in constant mutual manipulation. On the other hand, relating to the world never means being in front of it as if in front of a show. There is no contemplation, or perhaps contemplation is only one of the ways of cooking the world. Cooking is the evidence that there can be no self-concept: there is no immediate non-transformative link with a space, a land, a place or a group of living beings. And above all, there is no pre-established order that we can rely on. In order to continue to be in the world, we must cook it: blanch it, cut it, let it stew, change its the flavor, the taste, the aroma and the shape. We must go “against nature”: against its apparent nature and against our apparent nature.

The chapters of the book:

Introduction. Home beyond the city

Removals

Loves

Bathrooms

Home stuff

Cabinets

Gemini

The white powder

Social media

Rooms and corridors

Pets

Woods and gardens

Kitchens

Conclusion. The new home or the philosopher's stone

In praise of *Philosophy of the Home*

“Emanuele Coccia starts from apodictic principles, even questionable, but he doesn't care: he takes them seriously and from there begins to articulate his reasoning with brilliance. With this path, he arrives at conclusions that are plausible, if not actually true, and in my opinion extremely useful for reading the world. He belongs to a group of thinkers who do not seem to care much about what the great philosophers have worked out before them. They start from scratch. The material he uses comes from anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, theologians. And I admire this form of intellectual arrogance. Let me give an example. Coccia has an idolatry of the artificial against the natural. If you want to make him angry, you tell him, I don't know, that there are natural foods. Here in this book he argues that the planet is a total human artefact. Which is not to say that man should exercise any form of dominion over creation: that's as far as the author goes. But if you think that today the defense of the planet is in 95 per cent of cases based on the idea of a return to nature, you immediately understand that in the end Coccia gives us an idea that is immensely more useful. An idea that is more effective than the clumsy inspiration to return to a natural state that does not exist, has never existed and has been a trick to make us take the wrong path since time immemorial. Understanding that the planet is now a common home, born from the fact that man, in connection with the whole of creation, intervenes and builds with his hands, well, all this is useful to avoid wasting decades in the daze of unreal realities, myths mistaken for a return to the heart of things”.

Alessandro Baricco