

Donatella Di Cesare, *Utopia of Understanding: Between Babel and Auschwitz* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 2013).

Utopia of Understanding is a book written in Heidelberg in the years in which Di Cesare was conducting her research at the Institute of Philosophy at Marsiliusplatz. It is therefore affected by that period in which an extraordinary period of continental philosophy was drawing to a close, characterized by the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida. Of that constellation is also the testimony. The comparison between hermeneutics and deconstruction, the attempt to highlight their affinities, ties, unacknowledged understandings, despite the basic differences, seems to me even more valid today, considered from that distance that helps to focus better.

Already in the title *Utopia of Understanding*, this book aims to link the question of language and that of politics. Therefore, it represents a turning point in her path since it recapitulates previous works, largely inherent to the philosophy of language while inaugurating further themes and perspectives. At the juncture between different horizons, it effectively marks a transition, or rather, a return to politics. It is no coincidence that from these pages, which she has repeatedly taken up, subsequent books and articles were born.

Translating, interpreting, understanding mark the stages of a hermeneutic that is distant in many respects from the Italian versions, in particular from weak thinking which, hypostatizing the interpretation and following a nihilistic vertigo, has ended up giving rise to many superfluous misunderstandings and sterile contrasts. The question of understanding, in its links with translating and interpreting, remains the basic knot of hermeneutics, that is, of a post-foundationalist philosophy that starts from the decisive role of language.

The knot of understanding, which emerges here in the Hebrew watermark of the text, is put to the test in two limit situations, two concentrationary universes, which constitute the ends of the itinerary: the construction site of Babel, where the totalitarian project of a single language and a single will had led to ignoring the value of human life, and Auschwitz, a twentieth-century re-edition of that project, where the "total language barrier" is, according to Primo Levi's testimony, the device of power that marks dehumanization in the concentration camp.

Revised in the light of the anarchist readings of Gustav Landauer and Paul Celan, utopia, that place that no longer exists, is not there yet, but will still be there, stands out across the border, in the "revolution of breath" that it breaks the silence, in the opening of a word, which is not a fixed abode and is not static, but is nomadic, migrates, is a precarious and insecure tent, the only refuge in planetary exile and the desert of promise. This meeting tent, already the challenge of another living, is the word of the conspiracy.