

PRELIMINARY NOTES

Utopia is a thought of hope. In the global crisis it represents a philosophical strategy of resistance and a way to organize pessimism. Defining utopia is not simple because it is a method and a concrete description of a better world. Utopia is a paradox: it starts from an absence that connotes the present; it exists and it doesn't exist. Dealing with the human transformation of the world, Utopia is an impulse against immediacy and a path towards transcendence. Utopia is situated in the gap between necessity and probability, it goes beyond theory and praxis. Far from being only a spatial concept, it deals with an idea of history interpreted as a dynamic process. In the word 'U-topia', time and space blend together.

Despite its etymological origin which refers to the absence of a determined place, from the time of some of its earlier formulations by More, Campanella, and Bacon, Utopia has generally been used as a geographical concept with defined borders. Utopian visions are not only naïve projections, but they are inverted worlds in a Hegelian meaning because they have the power of negation by making sense of the world through unrealistic scenarios. Fiction is speculative when it has a critical and philosophical content which concerns both present and future. As a rejection of the status quo, Utopia has a subversive power, and, as a dream addressed to society as a whole, it is directly related to inter-subjectivity, which is why it is essentially politics.

Language and Politics are the poles of every utopian project, which stand in a dialectical relationship with each other; every political change is a linguistic revolution and every political revolution is a linguistic change. Utopias and Dystopias are connected to a semantic shift and to a different use of language, which is a pedagogical tool and the foundation of a new order of society. If every transformation of reality is always political, its

fulfillment is possible only through language. The word of Utopia is like a promise of happiness.

The purpose of this issue of *Azimuth* is to investigate the relationship between linguistic and political aspects in order to provide a broad overview of the different utopian narratives from Modern Times to the present. Starting from the classics of utopian thought the authors were asked to disentangle the relationship between language and power, adopting an original perspective drawing from different authors ranging from Thomas More to the latest experimentations of utopian poetry.

The approach privileged in all contributions is at the same time theoretical and historical. The reconstruction of some specific aspects of utopian thought – in the contributions of Schoelderle, Cambi and Layna – is accompanied by a broader reflection on the relationship between utopia and reality faced by Macherey, who interpreted utopia as a need of reality, and from Fatima Vieira who investigates the practical and anthropological consequences.

The rhetorical manipulation of the language in the dystopias is analyzed by Ceretta, while Mao highlights the connection between *non-lieu* and ethical significance in Levinas's philosophy. Combining insights from utopian thought and gender studies, Nicole Pohl examines the imaginary voyage in women's writing of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth, in particular an unpublished *Manuscript* by Mary Hamilton.

A careful consideration on utopias and language has to go through poetry, that is language *par excellence*. Block de Behar's analysis of the endless Utopia in Borges' writing reveals a spatial loss between history and literary fantasy, while Vitiello interprets the poetry of Paul Celan as an utopian attempt to save the language. At the end of the issue there are two poems by *Poeti der Trullo*, who were asked to describe an utopian city in order to provide guidelines for establishing a living connection between politics and language, reality and fancy.

Hoping you enjoy reading this issue, we invite you to look forward to next issue of *Azimuth*, due in October 2014, dealing with *Ratio mundi. Possible cosmologies between narrative and logic*.

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