

Two collective books (*Effetto Italian Thought*, edited by Enrica Lisciani-Petrini and Giusi Strummiello, pp. 268, € 22, and *Decostruzione o biopolitica?*, edited by Elettra Stimilli, pp. 142, € 18) start the series "Materiali IT" of the Italian publisher Quodlibet. They have the ambitious project of «recognizing the importance of contemporary Italian thought in international philosophy». The project is closely related to Roberto Esposito's philosophical texts, and manifests three main directions. First, it tries to formulate a more rigorous definition of what goes by the name of "Italian Theory", a category that emerges from the international success of few Italian thinkers, mainly coming from the trend of post-operaismo. Even if it does not preclude other links, *Italian Thought* seems to focus on the philosophical discourse that refers to Mario Tronti's operaismo and intersects with Michel Foucault's later research on biopolitics. Similarly, *Italian Thought* reaches out to the trends in modern European philosophy that address immediate political issues, and makes specific choices. Within French post-structuralism, for instance, *Italian Thought* relates more closely to Michel Foucault than to Derrida or Deleuze. Furthermore, *Italian Thought* also addresses its historical course, and therefore reaches into that considerable section of Italian philosophy that focuses on language and on the orientation towards political action. It therefore forms a genealogy that starts with Dante, goes through Machiavelli, Bruno, Vico, and finally reaches Mazzini, Gramsci, Croce, and even Pasolini. It is a "philosophy of impure reason", according to the terms of Remo Bodei's initial formulation.

Precisely the orientation towards political action defines the terms of comparison between Derrida and Foucault (and Agamben). Simona Forti remarks that «in now way can life be separated from the apparatuses that seize it and take it away also from itself, simply because, for Derrida, thinking about a integral life, saved from its continual deferral from death» is pure profanity. Later, she concludes that «the philosophical conflict is not between biopolitics and deconstruction, but, still today, between the pretension to extol life's power and dispel death, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the conviction of the inevitable coexistence of life and death». Almost in an affectionate tone, Roberto Esposito nowadays seems to take leave of deconstruction («it was our youth») and recognizes that «in front of a world falling into pieces, deconstruction is no longer enough». It looks like a sensible decision, especially in the light of those Italian deconstructionists who cynically accepted securitarianism with no reserves.

The reference to the «world in pieces» indicates the political tone of Esposito's proposal, but also propels his confrontation with Toni Negri. In front of «globalization's first ingent political crisis», the «crumbling of the imperial paradigm also invalidates the two categories that dialectically derive from it, i.e., "multitude" and "common"». Negri would be excessively optimistic, if cognitive capitalism were to cause the conditions of its own overcoming: a positiveness that, as in Deleuze's case, is grounded on a radically affirmative ontology and excludes «the determination related to the reality of the negative». Esposito's plan therefore becomes some kind of "second operaismo" that recovers Hobbes and a dialectic of the negative, oscillating between early and late Hegel. Hegel, in any case, and not Marx. Here come the problems, as Negri highlights in his reply. These problems are there already in the definition of the field. Speaking of post- or second operaismo, in some way, implies accepting Mario Tronti's gap between militant praxis and thought right after *Operai e Stato*. Negri would therefore say that, in fact, there has been only one operaismo, of which Tronti and others took leave. In the eighties, that was the choice of the "right rib" of *Centauro*, parallel to "pensiero debole". However different their putative fathers were (Schmitt and Hobbes for the former, Heidegger for the latter), both groups led the thought that once belonged to class fight into academia's more reassuring enclosure. In this move, Lisciani-Petrini, about "pensiero debole", supposedly recognizes «a healthy desecration of a row of sclerotized intellectual practices». However, Negri's concepts are not dialectical deductions, but figures of the real. The "Common" does not spring out of the philosopher's mind, but is «the product of common action». Similarly, an understanding of the fights in times of cognitive capitalism "from inside", and not from the surface of books, shows that the subsumption of the cognitive and creative heritage by financial capitalism

is not at all pacific, smooth, or devoid of conflict. However, «transforming the cognitive worker's habitual hegemony into actual power, across all classes of workers» is not a conceptual exercise, but a political task that, *pace* current populism, involves the whole society as workforce. More than some "theoryâ" (or "thought"), it requires globally organized militance. Otherwise, the call to praxis ends up recalling the worst Gramsci, the one à la Togliatti, and the intellectuals proclivity to play Phaedrus fly instead of getting their hands dirty within praxis.

Hence a series of doubts: does it make sense to conjure up such a genealogy that includes Croce (but not Leopardi nor Italian feminism) and bundles together both subversive thinkers and those that were within the hegemony of the nation's ruling classes? Does it make sense – in front of the multifarious philosophical intersections from which, eclectically, but always within Marx's compass, Negri and (unprefixed) operaismo originate – to shrink the scope of alliances, and therefore to renounce to Deleuze's constructivism and ignore Guattari, the author of the reflections on language in their four-handed books? It does indeed make sense, if the aim is theoretical coherence, and not the risk of a real impurity; but if, in the end, the dialectic negative ends up on the shores of Žižek and Lacan, is it still worth? Is it really to be taken for granted, as Bazzicalupo asserts, that Oedipus problem has been overcome in a control-based society? Or is it not true that the forms of control manifest the production of despotic signifiers – coming from that Oedipus that is produced – that Deleuze himself perceives, in his brilliant piece on control society, relating Foucault's thought (no ordinal numbers given) to the topics of *The Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*?

In synthesis, it seems that it is at least questionable that this field of thought, built around Roberto Esposito's reflections, might have enough consistency to perform the task assigned, which is too vast to be accomplished only in theory, and without rolling up one's sleeves, in every sense.

[translated by Andrea Malaguti]