

Utopia e contro-utopie Utopia and counter-utopias

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Introduzione. Delle maniere inusuali nel trattare argomenti insoliti

Antonio L. Palmisano

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Introduction. Unusual ways to treat unusual arguments

Abstract

All those social and political projects aiming at the promotion of justice and morality have been labelled “utopia” – even if they will not be realized – after the publication of Thomas More’s work. But a specialist of rhetoric, and *a fortiori* an able rhetorician such as More, connected the word *topoi* first of all with the meaning *loci communes*, just like Aristotle, Cicerone and Boezio: recurrent arguments, organized in a conventional shape, even stereotyped and functional to the construction of the oration. The persuasive tale realized by the rhetorician. And the island of More, to More’s own eyes and to the eyes and ears of his readers and listeners, was anything but a recurrent argument or stereotype, and still less an dialectic argumentation: it actually was a “non-*topos*”. The article also suggests that it is essentially thanks to its non dialectic style of argumentation that the actual history of utopia and utopian thought settled between philosophy and fiction, theology and politology, economy and sociology, science and science fiction.

Utopia im 18. Jahrhundert in Frankreich

Meslier und Morelly in sozialwissenschaftlicher Sicht

Brigitta Benzing

p. 15

Utopia in XVIIIth century France. An anthropological approach of Meslier and Morelly

Abstract

Utopia is here understood as an important part of the freedom of mind and thought. In dogmatic, especially religious systems of thought, utopia cannot flourish. In France, utopian thoughts in political philosophy, in literature and fine arts developed in the Renaissance period and became stronger in the pre-revolutionary period.

The utopists hid behind a recognized well-known personality. Meslier as a catholic priest elaborated through his lifetime a (later so-called) atheistic manifesto. Three handwritten copies were available posthumous; one was published by Voltaire under the title “Extraits des sentiments de Jean Meslier” in 1762. Morelly’s “Code de la nature” of 1755 was attributed until the 19th Century to Diderot. Both utopists, Meslier and Morelly, show very different inclinations: Meslier could be qualified as humanist, though materialist in his thinking, because his philosophy sees nature in a holistic way and thus combines material and moral values. Morelly favours the idea of progressive development through an egalitarian government whereby he is convinced of the economic foundation of the society.

These two utopists were later manipulated by their readers and adepts in different ways: some endeavoured to see them as early utopist socialists, some as egalitarians, some as deists. With regard to Morelly several authors stressed the horror vision of a planned state in which every individual is firmly placed and controlled. These two antagonistic visions of what society could look like had followers in the 18th and early 19th century in France and elsewhere.

L'Arte tra distopie e utopie

Roberta Cafuri

p. 33

Art between dystopia and utopia

Abstract

After defining the meaning of dystopia and reconstructing the theoretical model of social and natural dystopia through the analysis of two texts: *1984* by George Orwell and *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells, the author confronts these texts with Michel Foucault's philosophical thought in order to analyze the various control techniques used by power which are illustrated by different types of dystopia. Walter Benjamin's reflections are useful as a stimulus to rethink the basis through which a utopic version of the future can be imagined. Some of his pages on collective dream written in the 30's contain illuminating indications about a different use of imagination which could be made in order to analyze the present reality through dialectic and to claim a better future through art. Art can play a key role in order to avoid that the future resembles the past too much as happens with dystopia.

The author will then analyze the use of imagination in contemporary Aboriginal Australian art which has drawn its inspiration from the Dreamtime in order to awaken both the indigenous people and the non-Aboriginal elites from sleep. The rediscovery of the importance of collective dream in connection to the cultural heritage that tells the origin of the continent and of its population has in fact been used to claim the rights to the land from which the Aboriginal had been expropriated by the colonizers. In this case the recovery of the past is a utopian vision of the future.

About the relationship between past and future the author will refer to Adorno's reflections and will then consider some Italian exhibitions about utopia in contemporary art as well as the utopian conception of the museum. Always conceived as an architectural space, as a static container of natural and socio-economic history, the conception of the museum was revived by the African artist Meschac Gaba in the shape of a travelling museum which was open to the future. According to the author, the reflections about utopia and dystopia concerning the world of museology and contemporary art lead to the awareness that criticism of the present should be open toward the past and the future.

Gli esperimenti di "utopie concrete" con gli indigeni dell'America nel XVI secolo: Vasco de Quiroga e Bartolomé de Las Casas

Antonino Colajanni

p. 59

The experiments of "concrete utopias" with the indigenous of America in the XVI century: Vasco de Quiroga and Bartolomé de Las Casas

Abstract

This essay begins with some considerations about the diffusion in Europe, during the XVIth and XVIIth centuries, of many philosophical-literary writings imagining some perfect societies located in spaces and times very far from the actual environments. Those writings represent a series of radical and irreducible criticism to the characters of contemporary societies. Thomas More, the first and most important representative of the "utopian thinking", affected with his celebrated work *Utopia* (1516) the philosophical and political ideas of the period. His fundamental book influenced also directly the intellectual formation as well as the activities and the writings of some ecclesiastic figures of the time engaged in the corrections and modification of the European presence in the Americas (missionaries, theologians, and reformers of the strategies of evangelization), who dedicated years to the concrete realization of some ideas and projects related to utopian thinking. This essay thoroughly examines two important figures of the time: Vasco de Quiroga, Bishop of Michoacán (Mexico), and the well known Dominican theologian and jurist Bartolomé de Las Casas (in the second part of his life Bishop of Chiapas), great adversary of the Spanish Conquest of Latin America. In different ways, and more or less inspired by utopian thinking, these missionary authorities renowned as "defenders of the Indians" proposed and partly realized some projects of radical transformation of the entire life (material and spiritual as well) of the indigenous populations of some regions of Latin America. The author proposes to make a sharp distinction between Quiroga and Las Casas. He thinks that they possibly could best be defined as "social reformers" inspired by utopian thinking rather than as "concrete utopians".

Suggerimenti utopiche sugli orizzonti della crisi

Fabio Corigliano

p. 79

Utopian suggestions about the horizons of the crisis

Abstract

The article focuses on the contemporary crisis, which, besides being economic and financial is primarily a crisis of thought. In this climate, which position is accorded to utopia? The analysis is approached from the perspective of philosophy of law, through the reflections of Carlo Michelstaedter and Giuseppe Capograssi, who have both expressed a way of thinking in which the struggle against the crisis coincides with a critical exposition of the conditions of the crisis.

Spazi e dimensioni nella letteratura utopica vittoriana

Marianna Forleo

p. 103

Space and dimension in the Victorian utopian literature

Abstract

In the last centuries, the relationship between science and literature has had numerous manifestations. One of the most interesting aspects was the use of the scientific language in utopian Victorian texts. The analysis of *Flatland, a Romance of Many Dimensions* by Edwin Abbott is a starting point for the description of utopian cities, where literature uses science as a technical tool for the explanation of the world. Science becomes a clear metaphor of a rational organization and strategic element for spreading “subliminal” messages. The combination between utopia and science can seem exclusively a theoretical and philosophical relationship, but in reality, it is only a tool to approach the utopian practice. The main feature of utopian texts is its criticism of society, which is made possible only if hidden in metaphorical terms. Indeed, *Flatland*, as many other mathematical utopias, presents itself as a multidimensional text. The use of geometric structures for the description of utopian spaces allows several interpretations. Science and literature intertwine throughout the text but nevertheless keep their own distinct features.

Human development and social justice: necessity and utopia

Vitantonio Gioia – Simona Pisanelli

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Abstract

This article intends to focus on the importance of two kinds of inequality that increasingly characterise contemporary society, where in addition to the widening of the traditional economic gap there is also an unequal distribution of ecological risks. Our thinking on these issues sprang from the consideration of a twofold aspect: a. the analysis of the mechanisms that have created such inequalities and that continue to determine our current model of growth; b. a comparison between the outcomes of the dominant model of development and the expectations that have emerged since the Enlightenment about the capitalist economy's ability to lead to a society based on the general improvement of material well-being and on a gradual process of achieving a “perfectionnement de l'espèce humaine”.

As far as the first aspect is concerned, it has been shown that unless the automatic market mechanisms are politically corrected in the direction of a fairer sharing out of resources and social wealth, they tend to accentuate economic inequalities (both within advanced societies and between advanced and backward societies) and to offload the environmental risks onto the poorer areas of the planet. As for the second aspect, the recovery of certain important analytical approaches from the Enlightenment period has revealed major differences between the category of economic and social development, studied by theoreticians like Rousseau, Chastellux, A. Smith, Condorcet etc., and the concept of growth typical of mainstream economics. The rediscovery of the analytical orientations of the Enlightenment (apart from some of their typical limitations) today seems undoubtedly useful in order to bring out a critical attitude to the dominant model of development, to enable the intellectual and political constraints of the “single way of thinking” to be overcome and to establish possible paths towards a “realistic utopia” that can stand up to the challenges of the present.

Un nuevo mundo de ciudadanía intercultural

Guillermina Herrera Peña

p. 139

A new world of intercultural citizenship

Abstract

Thinking about a utopia for Guatemala in the XXI century implies that one should take the different ethnic composition of the Guatemalan population into consideration. During centuries, Guatemala was seen by local political planners as a country that had to look for a melting pot process in order to erase the ethnic differences. The Guatemalan melting pot dream was rather more cultural than biological. It was named “ladinización” and implied a change of culture for the indigenous people: they had to renounce their languages and ways of life to adopt Spanish language and Occidental culture as prerequisites for development and better conditions. Notwithstanding this terrible situation, the indigenous people have continued to cling to their culture and to fight for recognition and respect. A way to utopia points toward educational issues in order to prepare young people to accept ethnic differences and the positive values of diversity.

Marx et Engels, quelle politique?

Michel Kail

p. 159

Marx and Engels, which politics?

Abstract

Under the cover of the crisis, the European media and intellectual milieu shows a renewed interest for Marx and Engels’ analyses. In order to integrate them in the omnipresent economic liberal thinking, these analyses need to be submitted to a process “economization”. There is an undeniable tendency toward “economization and “naturalization” in the works of Marx and Engels which helps to legitimize their critical project. But this “naturalization” process also leads to the confusion of reality with necessity and to the overlapping of the concept of the “ought” on the concept of “being”, while critical thinking actually distinguishes these two levels and questions their articulation. In the Manifesto of the Communist Party, the proletariat bears a project of emancipation since it expresses an inner contradiction of the capitalistic system. The proletariat is therefore stimulated by a determination which is outside the capitalistic system. This kind of conception does not leave any room for politics and in order to avoid this, one should not consider determinism as a principle of explanation but rather as an imperative of domination. The being of the proletariat is not determined, “essential”, but rather “relational” within a relationship of domination. It is not the essential being of the proletariat to spur struggle against capitalism but rather the struggle of the proletarians which historically qualifies being proletarian.

Istituzione e utopia

Note a margine di una conversazione tra Jean-Paul Sartre e Franco Basaglia

Raoul Kirchmayr

p. 171

Institution and utopia. Marginal notes on a conversation between Jean-Paul Sartre and Franco Basaglia

Abstract

In the “Presentation” of his volume *What is Psychiatry?*, published in 1967, the Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia debated with the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre about a strategic issue in the contemporary social sciences: at what conditions could psychiatry transform itself from being historically an instrument of exclusion and repression into a *praxis* of emancipation. While Sartre was expressing his opposition to the term “utopia”, that he judged too culturally compromised to be employed as a tool in the critical discourse, Basaglia defended the use of the formula “utopia of the reality” (*utopia della realtà*) that he created and by which he pointed out the possibility of a deep and revolutionary modification in the so-called “total institutions” (asylums, jails, etc.).

This utopian force can operate a real change. The welfare landscape in Italy underwent profound changes after the approbation of the so-called “Law 180” in 1978, and, after the dismantling of the previous

psychiatric system Basaglia reflected on the epistemological status of the revolution accomplished in psychiatry. What he left as his own legacy (he died shortly after, in 1980) is to consider the fecundity of the “void” produced by the critical discourse in psychiatry as a scientific discipline. This “void” gave room to the subsequent revolutionary action which had been a form of empirical radicalism. The authentic signification of “real” utopia seems to stem from both the negation of the existing reality (equivalent to ideology) and from the revolutionary “bet” that locally subvert the order of things.

La verità scientifica

Marco Mazzeo

p. 193

Scientific truth

Abstract

A scientific theory is not a speculation. On the contrary it is based on facts and observations. Nevertheless the facts and the observations are unable to show us the truth about the world. Indeed to understand the facts or even to discover them through experiments we need a starting theory about the world. Therefore the world is not only discovered by us, but we can say that it is created by our brain. Facts are the constraints for the possible theories and theories are creations of our minds to understand the facts. There are no facts without a theory in mind, and there are no scientific theories about the world without facts. It is obvious therefore that science cannot give any absolute truth but “only” temporary truths which will change with new discoveries and theories. The scientific truth is therefore unstable: after few decades the concepts become unable to explain the news discoveries and become old, but the new concepts will include the old ones. This is called science progress. In this work we analyze all these points discussing the historical creation of the gravitational theory from Aristotle to Newton.

L’utopia urbana

L’immaginario spaziale moderno e il sogno di una nuova società

Monica Musolino

p. 219

Urban utopia. The modern spacial imagination and the dream of a new society

Abstract

The present work intends to analyze Modernity’s spatial imaginary, understood as a cognitive scheme (*episteme*) that synthesizes social conceptions and practices in which an epoch conjugates its relation with the lived (dwelling) space. Such analysis is developed according to the particular perspective of urban utopias. In fact, starting from the work of More (1516) up to the end of the 19th century, I will consider the urban utopian perspective as a privileged path to underline a conception of the social and technical action on space founded on its representation and rational manipulation. This process will culminate into a true strategy of power which organizes and defines the urban habitat in a systematic way. Yet, this dystopian metamorphosis of bio-power utopias finds an oppositional push, coming from some experiences in the setting of the habitat, sponsored by social agents, such as the *cohousing*. Similar phenomena are presented here more as “tactics” than as new forms of contemporary utopia. Indeed, though consolidated (at least in some “historical” cases) in stable forms of organization, they never become the main type of dwelling and community structure, but rather they posit themselves on the track of phenomena of opposition to and subtraction from invasive techniques of bio-political control.

E l’utopia si rivelò...

Antonio L. Palmisano

p. 237

And utopia revealed itself...

Abstract

Financial economy reigns over the contemporary world and powerfully and overwhelmingly transforms organizations and social structures. It is about a world organized *more geometrico* – which is almost chorally constructed in successive phases that are analytically described in this article by the author – in which

quantitative and mathematical relations go hand in hand with decision making devices which are highly verticalized and automatized: this new order is the order of the financial markets which, by now, sets itself up as the representative of the current rule of law. The language of measure and *res extensa* permeates the daily life of contemporary societies, modifies the actual languages in both their lexicon and syntax – through an outrageous exaltation of the subject-object relation – and establishes a factual consensus to this antique utopia which is finally realized. Everything that intends to escape the hegemony of the *res extensa* – above all persons, local and descent groups, societies – looks for space in the dominion of virtual reality where the social actor who tries to break free from the sole part of consumer and from the attribution of protocol identities. Anthropology is therefore called upon to elaborate a critical thought as a contribution to the foundation of a new *res-man* relationship and therefore also of a new man-man relationship in the context of an ongoing apocalypse. The duty of the anthropologist, as the author suggests, does not consist in the trivial although sophisticated practice of a *tekhne* anymore but rather reveals itself as the practice of testimony and demand for the right that every society should have to signify the axiological beginning of world eschatology. The duty of the anthropologist should then consist in the practice of a “different way to think” the history of man.

Dimensione spaziale dell’utopia

Livio C. Piccinini, Ting Fa Margherita Chang, Mario Taverna

p. 265

The spatial dimension of utopia

Abstract

This paper is dedicated to the spatial dimension of utopia. We are not going to discuss urban planning and utopia since it has already been thoroughly studied by architects and planners, and investigated from the beginning by many utopians in their descriptions of perfect small worlds. We will rather explore the abstract spatial forms of utopia and their dystopias. By dystopia we do not only mean the extreme consequences of mistakes in human trends which lead to unnatural or undesirable worlds, but also the conflicts between different utopias or between utopia and the real world.

Some spatial considerations will be made in the first section in order to overcome the long lasting dystopia between town and country; at present, as it was pointed out by Gottman in his celebrated *Megalopolis*, fusion, mixture, dissolution of boundaries are the new rule. The second and third sections deal with two opposed forms of spatial utopia, namely order as separation, seclusion, distinct overlapping layers, and totality as access, polymorphism, holism. The dream of totality often leads to the lack of roots and identity, to a large grey zone where every person becomes interchangeable, while the dream of order leads to the loss of the global view in the meanders of *minutiae*. Section four is dedicated to the physical and mathematical utopia of dimension change, to the jump from one to two dimensions and, most appealing, from two to three dimensions. But utopia is also the long known problem of fractional dimensions that in these last years have been made popular by Mandelbrot’s fractals. Finally the last section deals with nets, both material and immaterial, where the limits of dimension can be overcome, and total knowledge seems to be reachable. But new problems arise, since no hierarchy survives and structures are in continuous, chaotic transition through a sequence of *disequilibria*.

As Calvino taught us in his unforgettable book *Le città invisibili*, the utopia of total knowledge and total order contains in its hidden depths the chance of new forms of freedom.

Ontogenesis of the Utopian Quest

Ron Reminick

p. 287

Abstract

Evidence from the ethnographic record and data from a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, psychology, gerontology, philosophy, and evolutionary theory, suggests a way of life that creates new possibilities for the human condition and the environment we inhabit. That environment is one of a grounded environment that respects the laws and principles of evolution and survival in community.

In contrast to the ideal characteristics of people and environment it is useful to compare this on a theoretical level with those conditions that have created unhappiness, conflict, and violence at all levels of social and

cultural complexity.

Specifically, we find that the universal personal qualities of spirituality, the ideal characteristics of the healer, recent research findings on happiness, and the conditions of longevity, here labelled orthogeriatrics, all dovetail and reinforce each other creating a synergy of high human potential. An evolutionary perspective on these various qualities suggests an orientation and direction for citizens of the human species to consider in their contributions to a new world order; a utopia that grows from within the heart and spirit of each human being.

Utopia and Fascist foundation cities. The case of Torviscosa

Maurizio Scaini

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Abstract

The foundation cities were the principal expression of Fascist urban planning that was linked to the industrial urban utopias of the 19th century. This construction pursued a new social model that envisioned harmonious co-habitation among the residents, the relative end of class conflict, the promotion of autarchy, the organisation of the new anthropological model of a radiant society in which the dichotomy between city and countryside would be superseded. In this article, we analyse the case of the town of Torviscosa, founded in the lower Friulian plain in 1937, amidst swampland subject to reclamation whose economic activity, the production of viscose, was a response to international sanctions that were applied to Italy after the invasion of Ethiopia the preceding year.

Utopie am Abgrund. Anmerkungen zum Aufstieg Ernst Blochs

Bernhard Streck

p. 325

Utopia in the abyss. Remarks on the rise of Ernst Bloch

Abstract

The essay wants to deconstruct the genre of utopias so popular in the 20th century political writings. Human history shows manifold respect to stories about non-existent worlds which mix reality and non-reality, but outside the area of Abrahamic beliefs there was rarely hope for a future. The secular version of such eschatological teachings begins with Karl Marx in the 19th century and culminates in the prophetic as well as revolutionary writings of Ernst Bloch around the terrible wars of the 20th century. This philosopher succeeded in both parts of post-war Germany and is still venerated inside and outside the academies. Compared with the so-called dystopias of Max Weber, Aldous Huxley or George Orwell the political visions of Bloch lack any sense of reality and seem to be quite useless to the understanding of present tendencies in world politics.