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THE DREAMING AND THE DOING: Utopian Foundations of Social Action

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ABSTRACT

The article is interested in a conceptual clarification of social action. A tripartite model of social action is presented which attempts to focus on the complex relationship between utopianism and action (the dreaming and the doing). The article then poses the question: What social action options are available to the critical consciousness? Two are considered, one active and one passive. Activism and passivism are seen on a continuum, rather than as a polarity. Passivism is seen as a latent form of activism. The role of activist is seen as either maintaining activism or realising its passive form. Sociological perspectives are brought to bear on the model via the works of Mannheim, Bauman and Levitas. The model's amorality is brought to the reader's attention in the post-script, with a conclusion that the real issue is whether the model reflects practice reality not that it could justify injustice.

We cannot ignore our utopias. They exist in the same way that north and south exist... The world of ideas, beliefs, fantasies, projects, is real whilst it is acted upon...

Lewis Mumford

Introduction

This is an article about social action. It is also an article about utopia.<sup>1</sup> It seeks to explore the area between utopia and action, with a view to strengthening the conceptual foundations of social actionists who fight injustice.<sup>2</sup> The article searches for a new formulation of social action because it is gravely uncertain about attacks on social problems that are done in the absence of: a world view, which I take to be a broad perception of society (as it is); and a utopianism, a broad perception of society (as it should/could be). Incremental assault on social problems, which the article is critical of, is referred to as issue-activism. Such lacks a long-term goal and is shy of transformative agendas.

What Hall calls 'the utopian sensibility' (1979:3) is given an action outlook in this paper, similar to the way Marx defended his new style of philosophy by reference to its revolutionary potential. Utopian perspectives are seen as

important only to the degree they complement action for social change. Utopianism's aim is to change the world not to 'offer recreational escape from it' (Hall, 1979:3).

Is the proposition that relates social action to utopianism a meaningful one? Can the essential idealism of utopianism be blended with the essential realism of social action? Can social action ever be divorced from new society images? What can social action derive from utopianism; direction? inspiration?<sup>3</sup>

In the pages ahead, an argument (encapsulating these questions) will be advanced that relies on the commonplace perception that world society is conflict ridden and its peoples perplexed about the monumental complexity of this strife. Confusion as to the roots of social trouble is matched not only with the stress of being at the butt-end of social disruption, but also with the countless disputes about how to act in order to re-dress intolerable situations. Overlaid with this, and making the situation more explosive, is a predicament of the human condition that Richardson calls 'spiritual malaise', a deep-rooted pessimism that action is possible (1977:83). What can be done? This article's existence is justified within the terms of this question. It seeks to contribute in a small way to positive social change, through a conceptual clarification of social action.

Finally in this introduction, let me mention my treatment of utopia. The article is not an academic treatise of this concept. Some work in this regard will, of course, have to be done. The article seeks to focus on the complex relationships between utopia and action; the dreaming and the doing. Having said that, I note that the idea of utopia is subject to relentless criticism. This attack is by no means co-ordinated since the meaning of utopia (like so many other sociological constructs) is beset with value and semantic controversy. Much of the contemporary criticism dates from the catastrophes of World War II, where perceptive bystanders stood by in horror as Nazism, Marxism and Liberalism fought a fierce inter-utopian conflict. Here I am thinking mainly of the work of Karl Popper. In his *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Popper returns again and again to the worrying theme that utopias cannot be actualised without violence. This 'dark side' of utopianism seems to come from a notion of historical inevitability - a proposition I have trouble accepting. Utopia in the context of this deterministic logic takes on the formidable appearance of truth. Notions about right and true paths for mankind seem all too easily to trigger hostility against those 'foolish' people building their flimsy obstacles in front of the juggernaut of historical inevitability.

My view of utopia appears independent of absolute, non-contextual notions of truth and destiny (see Note 1). While Popperian type attacks are not to be dismissed lightly, the article is more interested in the relationship between utopian perspectives and social action.

### The Trilogy of Social Action

I see social action being comprised of (i) utopian sensibility, (ii) critical consciousness, and (iii) strategies. Utopian sensibility (utopianism) refers to holistic images of desirable realities built on a positive conception of human nature and a positive abhorrence to injustice. Critical consciousness is the use of moral yardsticks available in the utopian sensibility to arrive at negative judgements about societal features (values, infrastructure) that frustrate personal and civil liberties. Strategies refer to the numerous ways of mounting a political struggle to offset injustice. It refers, for instance, to ways of mobilising human and material resources, achieving recognition, promoting liberation views and organising collective action. Figuratively speaking, social action is seen as a conglomeration of these three parts. For example, social action against poverty, I submit, requires their active presence. Social action in this regard would be: inspired by a utopianism of non-poverty; focussed by a critical awareness of poverty's existence; and effected by strategies to eliminate poverty.

The relationship between these parts was viewed lineally in the sense that (i) was a pre-condition of (ii) and so on. I have reviewed the linearity in this scheme because social action does not seem to pass from utopianism through critical consciousness to strategies in such a clear and simple way. I now hold the position that engagement of any constituent part of social action requires the engagement of the other two parts simultaneously. I have rejected linearity in favour of a tri-dimensional, dialectical approach to social action whereby all parts are inter-dependent and interact with each other within the same time frame. In so doing, any sense of hierarchy between the constituent parts is also subject to review. In schematic terms, the bonding between the parts is viewed dialectically rather than deterministically. Strategies of social action (lobbying, passive resistance, for example) are not seen as characterless instruments only given form by the texture of a particular utopianism (e.g. radical feminism). Rather, they are seen as having their own imperatives which, in turn, face back towards critical consciousness and offer it an opportunity, for example, to heighten social awareness through the public reception of selective struggle. Or, conversely, strategies could 'sour' the idealism by persistent failures, (and revert the social action back to a less developed stage that I call fatalism).

At the same time, the thumbprint of critical consciousness is pressed firmly onto social action strategies and tactics. Specht sees social action tactics on a 'soft-hard' continuum. 'Hard' options (e.g. violation of legal norms) are more related to the critical consciousness that has little or no confidence in the current array of change methods. 'Soft' options (petitioning, protest meetings) are favoured by the critical consciousness which has a reformative rather than transformative agenda (Specht, 1975:337, 341), plus an unshaken faith in the structured-in mechanisms of social change, such as those that are part of the description of liberal democracy (elections, habeas corpus).

In the same way, utopian sensibility (new society images) is not primordial in my tri-dimensional scheme. It, too, is in a dialectical relationship with critical consciousness and strategies. Mention was made above of critical consciousness as a negative judgement of society. It can influence utopianism by incorporating into it the opposite of the negative. For example, oppression, in the critical consciousness can be transferred into (a desire for) freedom in the utopianism. Utopianism then, as a projection of ideal social arrangements, operates as a form of social criticism. Idealisation springs from a here and now consciousness that all is not right in the world. This sense of unsettlement is fed into the utopianism in a way that the ideal (e.g. freedom) does not include that part of social reality subjected to critique.

These statements about interdependent relationships are meant to have pragmatic as well as schematic force. The actor's 'career' as a social actionist does not necessarily start with a utopian sensibility. All three constituent parts can prevail simultaneously. A 'bad' social action experience could have ramifications for the actor's critical consciousness, his utopianism and his strategies, at the same time. That's why I think 'burn-out' can be so devastating to the social actionist, not only is there a loss of confidence in one's strategies - idealism and critical perspective are also called up for review.

#### Social Action of Options

What social action options are available to the critical consciousness, assuming that the existence of that consciousness infers a dissatisfaction with forms of everyday life? I think there are two, one active and one passive. The latter is expressed in fatalistic behaviour, a fatalism brought about by feelings of personal and group powerlessness in the face of overwhelming social control. It is what Lewis Mumford calls the 'utopia of escape'. I recall a quaint passage from his *The Story of Utopias*:

More or less, we have all had glimpses of the utopia of escape: it is raised and it collapses and it is built up again almost daily. In the midst of the clanking machinery of a paper factory I have come across a moving picture actress's portrait stuck upon an inoperative part of the machine; it was not hard to reconstruct the private utopia of the wretch who minded the levers, or to picture the world into which he had fled from the roar and throb and muck of the machinery about him.  
(Mumford, 1962:20)

George Bernard Shaw recorded the same phenomenon but was more caustic in his appraisal of it. He once said in rebuking his Irish countrymen:

Oh, the dreaming! the dreaming! the torturing, heart-scalding, never satisfying dreaming, dreaming, dreaming...!  
(Judge, 1981:448)

That a blend of utopianism, critical consciousness and fatalism can be considered a form of social action is, however, conjectural. Marx's pragmatic view of human nature (his theory of praxis) tempts me to dispose of passive social action within this typology. I am restrained, however, for two reasons. The first concerns the subjectivism of social action goals and the absence of meta-criteria to conciliate in disputes about what is and what is not social action. A downtrodden (but critically aware) population may not perhaps participate in their own social action design. That is not to say they don't participate in somebody else's. A pre-condition for the success of an authoritarian social action agenda is the existence of an oppressed group. In the shared physical circumstances of oppression and the shared cognitive circumstances that it is oppression, what separates the activist from the fatalist is that for the latter oppression is (or can be) all-embracing, it controls and commands totally. The future holds no promise of release. Denied real liberty, the oppressed seek fanciful forms of it through dreaming. The spirit soars above the chained-in reality. For the activist, fantasising is a constituent of action. To the fatalist, fantasising is its own end. Fatalism, as a frame of mind which blocks active intervention is thus distinguished from activism, which amalgamates dreaming and doing. The second reason why I hold fatalism in my typology is that fatalism is not necessarily a permanent position. History records time and again how, when the social conditions were ripe, (e.g. the presence of a charismatic leader like Lawrence of Arabia or Gandhi), downtrodden fatalistic peoples rose up against their oppressors. Fatalism can be seen then as a latent form of activism. Likewise, as mentioned above, activism can, given sufficient opposition, revert (again for the time being) to fatalism, where no opposition or resistance is offered. Activism and passivism are fluid behavioural forms. The role of the activist (considered in more detail at the end of this paper) is to either maintain activity or realise latent forms of action.

This nexus between dreaming and doing is one of Marx's great legacies. Through his epistemological break with Hegel's idealism, Marx affirmed the transcendent power of thought. Dreaming can now be considered as the productive mental flight of the oppressed. As Solomon says: '[It] propels the images of possibility into existence as models of social transformation' (1972:73).

The bridge between dreaming and direct action can be very short or it can be a gaping chasm. The wider the chasm, the more commitment, time (and other resources) are required. The anti-slavery movement had a long history of advocacy before slavery was abolished in America, whereas Hitler required only the decade after 1923 to give his Nazi utopia an operational status. The distance between dreaming and direct action is treated here as a function of the size and power of the forces opposed to the transformative demands of the utopian. The important thing here is that the chemistry of social action depends on the existence of and the fruitful reaction between dreaming and doing. Without the doing the dreaming can only be personally fortifying not social reforming. Likewise, without the dreaming, the doing is reconstituted as a form of social robotism.<sup>4</sup>

### Sociological Perspectives on the Social Action Trilogy

What follows is an investigation of the active ingredients in social action (the trilogy referred to above) through a review of the works of three theorists: Karl Mannheim, Zygmunt Bauman and Ruth Levitas. The inclusion of Mannheim would come as no surprise to a student of utopianism. The inclusion of the other two is the result of a sense of 'enlightened' arbitrariness on my part. A literature review revealed that writings on utopianism from a sociological perspective are rare. Friedland is of the opinion that up until recently interest in utopia was 'divorced from the serious concerns of social thought' (1974:105). Due to factors like disenchantment with 'non-utopian approaches in social improvement' Friedland claims academic concern and interest in utopia has been restored. He cites the works of Buber (1950), Cohn (1957), Manuel (1966) and Kateb (1963, 1971) to support this contemporary up-surge of interest (Friedland, 1974:105).<sup>5</sup>

#### Karl Mannheim (1893-1947)

Edward Shils, by no means a Mannheim fan, tells us in a recent article that Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* has remained continuously in print since it was first published in English in 1936 (Shils, 1975:89). Shils is mystified and somewhat aggravated by what he calls Mannheim's 'persistent appeal' (1975:89). To the student of utopia, the elegance of Chapter IV of the above mentioned book is witness enough to Mannheim's important contribution to the extension of the Marxist insight into the contextual grounding of action. Some elucidation of that chapter (*The Utopian Mentality*) is in order. Mannheim starts that chapter with these words:

A state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which it occurs. (1936:173)

He explains this conflict in terms of orientation. The utopian is oriented to a state of being that does not exist at the moment. He is a dissatisfied member of a society not of his making, in a time frame not of his choosing. Mannheim warns us about the problem of generalising this position of discontent. Not all such incongruous states are utopian:

... only those orientations transcending reality will be referred to by us as utopian which, when they pass over in conduct, tend to shatter either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time. (1936:173)

This is an important point for Mannheim because it allows him then to go on and make his important distinction between ideology and utopia. Ideologies are those orientations which transcend reality yet paradoxically remain effective in the maintenance of the existing state of affairs.<sup>6</sup>

Mannheim's treatment of the possibility of perspectival transformation from an ideological orientation to an utopian one is of interest in this article because it brings social action into his logical scheme. Not until activist groups move their reality - transcending ideas into reality-transcending practice, do ideologies become utopian.

Mannheim's analysis of ideology and utopia form the basis of two case studies which have been recently published in the sociological literature. David Bouchier's analysis on the deradicalisation of the feminist movement is done through a fruitful use of Mannheim's position. Bouchier claims there were contradictory elements in the women's movement with one element eventually overpowering the other. Originally, he claims, the movement was distinctively utopianist, i.e. radical feminist groups made transformative demands on western society. They aspired to a new society through social action which sought to eliminate injustice. In this case injustice was defined as sexism and the action was focussed on the ideological and institutional foundations of sexism. After developing this analysis Bouchier asks:

What then happened to the utopia of radical feminism?  
We know that it bears little relation to the way the  
movement has subsequently developed in America and  
Europe... (1979:390)

Bouchier answers this specifically in terms of a media assault on this utopianism, and through a 'gentle' process of co-optation (largely carried out by female journalists). The media re-defined the radical movement for public consumption. This paved the way for the ideological elements in the movement to seek and achieve hegemony:

... the feminist challenge [was] rendered infinitely  
more difficult by the engagement of its own constituency  
[women] with ideological values. (1979:399 from Ash,  
1972:138-9)

He cites opposition from 'middle-class, middle-aged housewives' to the moves for equal rights, liberal abortion and gay rights in America as evidence of this. In Bouchier's words, 'ideology finally prevailed over utopia' (1979:396).

His reflection on this process of utopian collapse is quite useful because he posits a dual role for utopianism in social action movements, which is inherently unstable. On the one hand utopianist 'wings' in social action movements (i.e. those with a general theory of action) have a functional agenda to: (1) provide the theoretical justification for action to the general movement: (2) ensure that the movement is not bought out, hence neutralised by ideological interests. The tension between utopian wings and ideological wings can be considered in a power-politics context from within and outside the movement. The instability in the relationship is due to the tension created through the conflict

of world views which often leads (as Bouchier claims it did with the feminist movement) to purges. If a social action movement purges its radical utopianists, then, according to Bouchier, the movement is cut off from important theoretical inputs and from intra-movement conflicts that could have positive solidifying (as opposed to ossifying) effects. On the other hand, if a social action movement purges its moderate wing then that reduces its general appeal to the decision-making elites. This mix is unstable but its continuation critical if social movements are to stick with their reality transcending agendas.

Steven Cotgrove provides the other case study when he enquires into the relationship between social action movements that are environmentally focussed, and the concept of utopia. Mannheim's influence in Cotgrove's task of defining what are and what are not social action movements in the environmental area is obvious from the following:

A more unified category of environmental activists could be constructed by omitting those preservationist and conservationist groups whose policies constitute no challenge to the dominant value system. (1976:24)

Cotgrove prefers to focus on those environment groups who challenge the system, particularly its 'master-value' of the primacy of economic goals.

It could be said that the way Cotgrove selects out groups from the environmental movement because they squirm in the definition he uses, is probably closer to Mannheim's perspective, where he (Mannheim) discriminated (definitionally) between groups on the basis of whether they embrace a socialist utopia or not. I feel Bouchier's treatment of social action movements represents a creative advance on the Mannheim position whereas Cotgrove's is an orthodox interpretation. Bouchier makes good the tension between ideological and utopianist perspectives in the same social action. Cotgrove has no answer to Bouchier's question about where does the movement get its theoretical input from and how does it provide immunity against neutralising co-optation? Bouchier sees the importance in intra-movement conflict. That point ought not to over-shadow the way Cotgrove also is able to use Mannheim's ideology-utopia framework to characterise environmental groups according to their end-effects.

The issue of how critical consciousness is disbarred from developing and adapting a suitable 'reality transcended' action agenda is of crucial importance. Mannheim's work on this point suggests that dominant illusions play an important role. The description of social structure as being egalitarian is a forceful one because of its repetition through the socialisation process. Once incorporated into the perspective of the socialised individual, it blocks the movement from idea to action. An investigation into the causes of social action is an investigation into those sociological pre-conditions essential to trigger anticipatory behaviour on the part of dreamers. Bauman makes an important contribution to this.

Zygmunt Bauman

Bauman is one of a small band of contemporary writers who is attempting to clean up the popular image of utopia. As he says in the opening page of his *Socialism: The Active Utopia*:

The context in which the word 'utopia' appears most often in everyday discourse is the phrase condemning an idea, a project, an expectation as a 'mere utopia'. The phrase marks the end not the beginning of an argument... One can only suppose that the disrepute with which utopian thinking has fallen is that shared by magic, religion and alchemy - all those slushy parts of the errant human mind... (1976:9)

How Bauman initially tries to correct this situation is by considering the active constituents in utopianism that give it an historical role in social change. To Bauman utopias are knives with their edges pressed against the future:

They constantly cause the reaction of the future with the present, and thereby produce the compound known as human history. (1976:12)

They serve the purpose first of relativising the present. This seems to be a pre-condition for critical consciousness. A sense of absolutism leaves no space for critique. Bauman says that utopias 'scan the field of the possible' and provide critical enquiry with alternative solutions 'to the festering problems of the present' (1976:13). They also serve to mobilise hope in oppressed people. As Bauman says:

... the question they (utopians) try to respond to is neither 'what can I know?' which is the concern of philosophers, nor 'what ought I do?' which is the domain of the ideologues and politicians. It is 'what may I hope?' (1976:14)

Bauman sees hope as the driving force behind the search for utopia. Hopeful behaviour emerges from hopeless conditions.

Utopias, according to Bauman, also relativise the future. They dispel (or at least contradict) the conservative view that tomorrow is a linear projection of today:

In other words, utopias relativise the future into a bundle of class committed solutions. (1976:15)

Ruth Levitas

Levitas would probably find these descriptions of Bauman's too historically unspecific. Her thesis is that the content, form, location and social role of utopia varies with the changing realities. This contextualism allows her to treat utopias as having distinct historical forms:

From being a spatially located wish-fantasy, utopia moved through the function of social criticism to being a temporally located catalyst of social change. (Levitas, 1979:19)

Her argument about historical forms of utopia depends very much on a concept of changing perceptions of society in time, in which society's future was seen more and more as open to human influence and invention.

The historical amalgam of the French and Industrial Revolutions allowed people to consider themselves forces in their own right. The dependence on nature, dogma or monarchy for life's meaning was confronted and reduced. Prior to this, according to Levitas, social action possibilities were few. Those people caught in, say, a rigid monarchical society rarely had recourse to wishful thinking through utopias of time or place. Utopia as a catalyst for social change depended on this new development whereby the world was reconceptualised as having its own dynamic; its structure could be changed through action.

However, Levitas claims that its furtherance depends on an optimism that the future will continue to render itself to human action. That optimism is no longer there, she feels. In a recent article entitled *Crime, Punishment and the Decline of Liberal Optimism*, Ronald Bayer concurs with Levitas' appraisal:

Post-war liberalism was an optimistic [utopia] assuming the possibility of resolving the problems of the social order within the context of capitalism. That optimism has now been shattered ... the collapse of the liberal faith in the capacity of man to compel the world, both natural and social, to provide an endless series of benefits ... [has meant] the open recognition of the failure of rehabilitation ... (Bayer, 1981:169, 190)

Thinking about utopia in this fashion has returned us to the position of utopia as wish fulfillment.

Levitas defends her argument through her 'society-in-time' concept. She feels that an understanding of utopias depends less on a position in time and more on a view of society-in-time. She argues that linear time and progress are often treated as the same thing. However, she argues:

There is no reason why a linear concept of society in time should not be an image of a process of decline. (1979:26)

Linear descent (as opposed to linear ascent) would give rise to a different kind of utopia. The linear ascent model places its utopia in the future, while the linear descent model places its utopia in the past.

Hence, her critique of the functional role of utopia in catalysing social change. Dytopian projects, she feels, would not stimulate social change. Here the future is the unfolding of a nightmare, not a dream. Attempts would be made to forestall rather than foster its development.

Levitas' position is convincing. She asks us to consider different time-sociological bases of utopia. The first basis, the evolutionary one, with its notion of better and grander futures, places utopia unequivocally in the future. The second basis sees society as unmalleable to human intervention. The inability of individuals to participate in decision-making that affects them is enough to firm down this perspective. The perceived bigness of social structure and its remoteness, suggests to people that utopia has passed and the future holds nothing but an extension of the negative present. She says on the point:

The prevailing view of society is no longer that it is progressing towards utopia, but rather that it is declining more or less rapidly towards disaster, on both a national and world scale. (1979:29)

Such a view, Levitas argues, means that utopia must be placed in the past, based on a movement from confidence in the possibilities of social action to a deeply grounded fatalism:

It has not become impossible to imagine utopias, but it has become difficult to imagine utopias as possible. The problem is not lack of utopias but the lack of hope... (1979:31)

I agree that this theme of hopelessness rifts across the utopian sensibility, with the result that the sting of utopianism (in terms of its impact on future events) is moderated (neutralised?). Ernest Becker described the situation well when he said:

Man is alienated when he is not 'doing'. In order for him to 'do', he must command an effective cognitive grasp of a problematical situation. This means that he must not only 'know' what is missing, but he must also feel and believe that he has the power to act on what he knows. (1968:284)

I wonder whether Levitas' analysis puts her in conflict with Bauman? Levitas says that people have lost power to structure their worlds. This she sees as a characteristic of modern western society. This characteristic in itself is restructuring the form of utopianism into one of wish-fantasy. Bauman sees utopianism (socialism - his 'active' utopia) as giving hope to the powerless.

### Post-Script

Social action has been considered as a tripartite scheme. The social actionist confronting the sources of power and domination does so with a practice wisdom that those sources *could* be there tomorrow (and he or she could be part of it - but that's another story). The social actionist must walk a narrow path between the no-man's land of fatalism ('those sources *will* be there tomorrow') and the razzle-dazzle world of short causes (issue-activism).

Both sides of the path are seductive, they either promise easy refuge for the strife-torn activist or a false sense of doing good: (a particular hazard for those champions of short causes - social workers). What keeps a minority of social actionists on that path, dreaming ('those sources of power and domination *may be* there tomorrow and the next, but they *won't* be there forever') and doing, is as crucial a question to me as its antithesis: what finally burns out and exasperates the majority so that they end up in mill ponds far away from strife?

These issues are of such monumental status that I risk disappointing the reader in even starting to consider them. I write these last sentences with Bauman's 'knives against the future' idea seeking juxtaposition, with Levitas' 'no hope' message. Social action is in crisis because action is threatened in a very similar way to the corner store being threatened by a supermarket. Action, once local, personal, optimistic and highly rewarding, has been 'sold' to pernicious interests. Today's targets for social action are better organised, possess stronger official auspice and are far more powerful.

Social action is also in crisis because the dreaming is being forced out of a potentially productive alliance with doing. Utopian sensibilities continue to be subjugated to dominant ideological positions with the result that action, other than that for the confirmation of these positions, is hazardous. There's a paradox lurking here that could suggest that something very positive is retrievable from these negative scenarios. Maybe 'retrievable' is a poor choice of word. Marx saw history as a millennial conflict between the old (epoch) and the new. The conspicuous degeneration of the old was crucial for the birth of the new. The new was the phoenix, flourishing in the ashes of the old. This cycle of life logic can be applied to present conditions, but with a major caveat.

First the application. The western style of society owes a lot for its survival to the way its degeneration has been camouflaged. For instance, central to the continuation of social order is the requirement that people see their society as egalitarian and democratic. Misfits in such a society are challenged (and

often punished) for not 'taking advantage' of the benefits available. It is my appraisal that the critical consciousness can flourish in these circumstances. The icon-blasting facts of poverty and community breakdown can now stand in that consciousness contraposed point to point with the flattering illusions of abundance and consensual validation.

Critical consciousness is puncturing the 'official' realities. The camouflages are not working as well. They are no longer as convincing. The future, in Bauman's terms, is being relativised. However, people are at one and the same time displaying forms of Orwellian robotism (e.g. the ease with which we are convinced about internal and external threats to national security) and forms of radical (fundamental) activism (status of women, ecological conservation).

The caveat is whether western society has, Daedalean like, become imprisoned in its own marvellous invention. If this is the case then we had better hang on to our dreams, social action will be impossible.

Now that arguments on behalf of a tripartite scheme of social action have been displayed, I think it is fitting to comment on a major problem I have with it (which I suspect I can do little about). The scheme is amoral in the sense that it doesn't carry an ethical 'copyright'. If the logic that relates utopian sensibility, critical consciousness and strategies together makes sense at the practical level, then there are no embargoes on its use? Should this scheme (and others of similar conceptual ilk) carry a moral prescription allowing for its use in specified circumstances? Or is anything on? (A familiar consequence of the value-free perspective.) Can the scheme be used for malevolent intent? The answer is, of course, it can. Putting a moral 'fence' around it would not keep out that possibility.

At the risk of appearing to hedge the issue, I believe the task I set myself was an intellectual one - exploring the conceptual foundations of social action. As such, an important issue is whether it was just an academic exercise, just a 'bright idea'. The gauntlet should be thrown at the feet of this proposition, not the previous one concerning what is a good (bad) utopia, what is critical (false) consciousness, what is an appropriate (incompetent) strategy?

#### NOTES

1. The countless utopias make the presentation of yet another one (mine) a rather fruitless exercise in an article exploring the conceptual links between utopia and social action. The definition to be used is non-partisan and philologically based, rather than personal and experientially based. The word utopia was coined by Saint Sir Thomas More in 1516. There appear to be two linguistic interpretations permissible. The first one is obtained by joining the Greek words for 'no' and 'place'. The other is derived from connecting the Greek words for 'good' and 'place'. Philologically

based definitions are value-free. In this case meaning is imputed to the word through the values of the utopianist. A Christian sees heaven as his or her utopia. For the prisoner utopia could simply mean freedom. This article adopts both interpretations. As a 'good place' utopia is a view of what the world should be like - an idealised view. As 'no place' utopia does not possess architectonic features or territorial configurations. Its purpose is inspirational and goal-setting rather than physical realisation.

2. Here defined as negative social conditions occasioned by the use of force. Patterns of authoritarianism are perpetuated through the violation of democratic and cultural principles. Justice is defined in liberal terms as a characteristic of interaction which affirms social and individual right.
3. Marx paid tribute to the nineteenth century utopianists like Fourier and Owen: '... there is the anticipation and imaginative expression of a new world'. Engels likewise wrote of '... the inspirational ideas and germs of ideas which everywhere emerge... in the works of these dreamers'. Marx and Engels' attitude to utopianism is complex. They were critical of its fantastic nature while at the same time recognising the embryonic forms of action in their futuristic messages. Marx saw utopia's relation to social action (proletariat based revolution) in the same way alchemy was related to science. Solomon, from whom the above quotes have been extracted, provides a good analysis of Marx and Engels' attitude to utopianism. (Solomon, 1972)
4. S.R. Moore concludes his argument about the necessity of utopian thinking to a human social order with these words:

Without men of practical affairs, men's dreams remain only dreams and degenerate into sentimentalism. But without dreamers and visionaries, men's practical affairs reduce to Hobbes' 'war of all against all'. (1979:79)

5. Contributions not primarily of a sociological nature tend to fall into four categories:
  - (i) Classical texts based on the 'good place' interpretation, e.g. More's *Utopia*, Harrington's *Oceania*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, and their associated bibliographies.
  - (ii) Damning critiques of the totalitarianism in utopian thinking, e.g. Popper's *Open Society and its Enemies*, Michaelis's *Looking Forward*.
  - (iii) Anti-utopian (dystopian) novels that depict surrealistic nightmares, e.g. Zamyatin's *We*, Skinner's *Walden Two*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's *1984*, Forster's *The Machine Stops*, Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, and Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*.

(iv) Forecasting studies claiming scientific status (Winthrop) or short term future scenario analyses (Kahn). See reference section for more bibliographic notes.

6. Mannheim gives the example of paradise as being an ideology rather than a utopia; as long as the clerically and feudally organised mediaeval order was able to locate its paradise outside society in some other-worldly sphere which transcended history and dulled its revolutionary edge, the idea of paradise was still an integral part of mediaeval society (1936:74).

The partisan nature of Mannheim's thinking ought not to concern us here. By this I mean that for him the 'state of reality' was a bourgeois reality and his utopia was a Marxist one. His notion of utopia as having a tradition-changing (or shattering) capability is of far greater pertinence. Similarly his use of the Marx inspired perjorative definition of ideology is of less consequence here than his theorising the distinction between the way things are and the way things could be.

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