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No End to Utopia: Eight Theses

by
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1. Not since Karl Mannheim has it been possible to speak of utopia without referring to its ideology as the justifying affirmation of the existent. This cannot be complete and for this reason it requires criticism: first of all of its apologetic maintenance of the term “ideology.”¹
2. To a certain extent it has been consistently claimed that not only utopia but ideology as well has come to an end since 1945 (and reinforced as of 1989). And it is no accident that it happened in a way that allows for a convergence of utopia and ideology.² Apart from that, the fact that precisely the claimed “property law” of technocratic provenance is only poorly utopian and highly ideological points to the fact that the “new world order” does not make reference to human rights. To even think of human rights was considered purely utopian for thousands of years—despite a complicated prehistory that can be reconstructed thanks to its richness. And the complete execution of these “basic rights” has remained utopian. Or rather: hardly anyone would be a greater ideologue than the one who claimed that they would be fulfilled somewhere at some time. It is not an accident that the classical critique of ideology (of the young Marx) begins with the reference to—*rebus sic stantibus* (all things remaining the same)—a necessary divergence from the explanation of human rights and their implementation.³

3. The fact that a thoroughly dialectical, rescuing critique of a natural rights is being practiced is certain (this is so even in Bloch's later writings)⁴—aside from the fact that natural law cashes in on the means of production. Its remaining Protestant character is fully recognized and its argumentative value is not underestimated.
4. What does “the international” claim to be fighting for? Human rights law. And what did it widely betray? The same thing it claimed to defend. But where ideology becomes renewed does the famous line attest to the ethical and utopian basis of socialism (including the “scientific,” which believed it was possible to bid farewell to utopia). Ethics are utopian from the outset. This is because of their self-contained character of the *ought*. Ethics are only mentioned to ask the main adversaries of utopia if they are immoral.
5. Kant was fully aware of the utopian character of his *Practical Reason* and spoke therefore all too modestly of its “regulative ideas.” But he never shied away from pointing to the religiously suitable character of the practical-rational postulates—up until he spoke in the affirmative of “philosophical chiliasm” (and thereby anticipated Bloch)⁵—Kant had already attested to the narrow and inextricable link between a non-castrated (Jewish-Christian) religion with philosophical utopia.
6. Rigorous anti-utopians are therefore also anti-Christian and anti-Jewish and in certain circumstances also anti-Semitic.⁶ If they are actively racist then they are so in a way that is also utopian, in the most negative sense of the term. What is important is not this inherent contradiction—here one could also mention the fetishizing of a boundless addiction to setting records, unconditional will to perform and the striving for profit—but there is a philosophical-anthropological insight to add,

that the human being, whether he wants to or not, is a transcendental being in the literal sense of the word. This is what distinguishes him. His condition is *the conditio humana*.

7. As mentioned earlier, this human being can and will always continue to be reproduced in an ever more abject manner the longer it is reproduced. But even the menacing or fulfilled negative utopias in the vein of Orwell's *1984* or Huxley's *Brave New World* scream for positive and rescuing utopias. At least in the form that they demand their negation in analogy to negative theology: the negation of negation.⁷
8. Precisely when *the* (western) theologian, St. Augustine, claimed it was impossible for a human being not to want to be happy.⁸ America's "Declaration of Independence" with its "pursuit of happiness" has also drawn its consequences from it. Along similar lines, Walter Benjamin's *Theological-Political Fragment* argues that "the order of the profane must organize itself on a notion of happiness."⁹

Notes

¹ cf. K. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*.

² cf. last but not least, F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*.

³ Cf. K. Marx, *Early Writings* and N. Chomsky, *War Against People*.

⁴ cf. E. Bloch, *Natural Right and Human Dignity*.

⁵ cf. I. Kant, *Werke*, Vol. XI. *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik I*, Frankfurt/M. 1964.

⁶ cf. R. Faber, "Antijudaismus—Antisemitismus," *ibid.*, *Erbschaft jener Zeit. Zu Ernst Bloch und Hermann Broch*, Würzburg 1989, 123ff.

⁷ This is how it is understood in the editors E. Fillmann and K. Billarck Werner Krauss's posthumous novel, *Die nabellose Welt*, Berlin 2001.

⁸ cf. A. Augustinus, *Bekenntnisse*, Frankfurt, Hamburg 1955.

⁹ W. Benjamin, "Theological-Political Fragment," *ibid.*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. R. Tiedemann, R. Schweppenhäuser, Vol. II, 1, Frankfurt/M. 1977, 203.