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# Abstracts

**Luis Villoro**
**The Triple Confusion of Utopia**

The problem with utopia is that it lends itself to a form of idolatry which creates a confusion between the order of values sought and the historical event. In trying at all costs to become reality in the here and now, the dream turns into a nightmare. The confusion is threefold: confusion between the utopian objective aimed at but not yet realized and the end situation resulting from an action; confusion between the imaginary representation of an order of values and a particular social situation; and finally confusion between the rule of conduct and a mandate to bring about the ideal society no matter what the odds. So utopia, transformed into an ideology, leads to a frightening mode of thought: justification of absolute power in pursuit of the supreme good.

**Lyman Tower Sargent**
**In Defense of Utopia**

Even though utopias are potentially dangerous, we nonetheless need utopian visions. Loss of hope and utopia means loss of humanity. But how can we stop utopia turning into dystopia? Utopia thought of in terms of perfection, purity and exclusivity imposes its version of a better life as the only possible one. On the other hand the utopianism of opposition does not seek perfection, or removal of opportunities for evolution. Its goal is progress and not repression of human beings. It is not utopianism that is at fault, the problem arises rather from the conviction that a particular utopia can bring about the only correct way to live.

**Gianni Vattimo**
**Utopia Dispersed**

If utopias in the western cultural tradition owe their model of ideal, final, unitary order to the objective basis of metaphysics, have they not, like metaphysics, undergone a dissolution in Heidegger's sense of *Verwindung*? Insofar as the very notion of

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unity, like that of an ultimate metaphysical foundation, now reveals its violence and will to domination and as we are interested instead in thinking utopia as a 'project for emancipation', the author suggests replacing the unity that was hitherto characteristic of utopia with a multiplicity that is defended as a value and not as a phase of 'confusion' to be overcome.

**In-Suk Cha**
**The Mundialization of Home:**
**Towards an Ethics of the Great Society**

Like any construction of the human mind, ideologies and utopias are products of reason and social imagination. The human interactions they feed off are nowadays being intensified by processes of globalization. Utopian projects, which are by nature ambitious, consist of dreams of freedom and equality but the voluntarist character of their implementation very often takes them far from their declared objectives. Thus utopia frequently tips over into ideology. In order to survive, utopia has to go through a process of 'universalization' that allows ideas from different cultures to develop and mature in contact with one another. By forging bonds between individuals and cultures, this process could define the outlines of a constantly evolving global civil society. Universalization of conceptualizations that transform and motivate us, such as the global inclusivity of human rights, freedom and justice, builds an ethic of peace for the emergence, beyond frontiers, of an extended society such as that envisioned by the American philosopher John Dewey.

**Fernando Ainsa**
**The Destiny of Utopia as an Intercultural and *Mestizo* Phenomenon**

In the face of the alienating effects of the current globalization it is appropriate to assess the brutal historical experience of Spain's conquest and colonization of America. From that confrontation were born innovative mixtures, unanticipated metamorphoses and the polymorphous reality to be seen in today's Latin-American cultures. Utopia, in the context of the globalization we are now experiencing, is composed of interculturalism, the very many opportunities for exchange and cross-fertilization. Traditional utopian discourse must henceforth reconcile the universal values of reason with passions, differences, fragmentation and the diversity of cultures.

**Nicole Schwartz-Morgan**
**Utopia 9/11: A Plea for a New World**

Thomas More's *Utopia* is made up of two books. Book One, quickly skimmed over by those who dream of the future and are bored by history, tells us about Europe in 1515 at the dawn of a revolution in every field of knowledge dominated by a political power that uses religion, fear and ignorance to satisfy an insatiable appetite for



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hegemony, infinitely corrupt but in public promoting moral, family values. Book Two gives us a glimpse of a future on a human scale using new techniques, reason and good management of its resources to reconcile the common good with the pleasure of the individual. That book is the founding text for our modernity. It is the pagan bible adopted by the Enlightenment, which we have inscribed in the charter of our epoch's institutions. Five hundred years later the books are being rewritten in reverse: the great human dream set in train by Book Two in 1516 is bogged down in the reality of 2005. The new promises of free-choice economism in 2005 are just a nightmare journey back in time to the postulates of Book One.

**Gloria López Morales**
**Utopian Thought and the Survival of Cultural Practices in Mexico**

1492. The American continent was drawing Europeans on. Some saw in it the chance of a utopia, others saw it as utopia already coming about, in its natural state. All at once two processes of domination were triggered: one supported by the force of arms, and the other by the power of ideas and beliefs. If the defenders of utopian thinking were able to create a lasting achievement, it is because they managed to make their ideas fit with the principles governing the social life of the indigenous peoples: thus a substantial part of what remains from the period of Don Vasco de Quiroga had preceded it. Cultures will not be able to transcend nationalisms and rise to the level of concerns shared by the whole of humanity until they can stand up for their own particular character against 'globalizing' trends.

**Jaime Hernández Díaz**
**Legal Pluralism in the Thought and Works of Vasco de Quiroga**

Several aspects of the personality, thought and work of Don Vasco de Quiroga are known today, but a deeper awareness of his legal thinking would enable us to understand better the motives for his actions in New Spain and the Michoacán region. In order to do this we need to place him in the conceptual, institutional and legal context in which he was educated and where he developed throughout his life. Well versed in the different legal systems in use at the time, he absorbed Roman laws, which he respected as the work of esteemed scholars, while at the same time basing his evangelical mission in Mexico on the canons of the Church. And the legal system that was to govern the villages he created according to a new model would be based on custom coming from the grassroots.

**Germán Solinís**
**Utopia, the Origins and Invention of Western Urban Design**

The particular field of urban design is profoundly influenced by ideas about the ideal city, which have very deep roots in utopian discourse and thought. In tracing the relationship between urban planning and utopia from its origins to the present



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day, the author attempts to put his finger on what town planners, in trying to organize and control space, have made of utopia. The relationship between utopia and urban design is approached here from the starting-point of two questions. (a) How does the city impart its morphology to utopian discourse? (b) Can urban design be the science of the ideal city?

**Barbara Freitag**
**The Familistery of Guise: A Utopia Realized**

The Guise Cooperative, a project out carried in northern Paris by Jean-Baptiste André Godin (1817–88), who was inspired by the utopian ideas of Charles Fourier (1772–1837), put into practice a model that: (a) was politico-democratic in its self-management by the workers in a foundry; (b) was socio-economic in combining for the first time international competition and social benefits; (c) anticipated ecological arguments in developing industrialization processes; (d) embodied religious tolerance; (e) outlived the genuine socialism inspired by Marx. Godin's 'Palais Social' in Guise, still lived in today by around 300 descendants of the workers, was proclaimed a Human Heritage monument and handed over to the European Union in 1991.

**Jean-Joseph Goux**
**Beyond Hopes and Disasters: The Rejuvenation of Utopia**

Nowadays there is a paradox ruling utopia. The place for the 'spirit of youth' in our society, apart from the traditional age groups, ought to mean a strong upswell of utopian projects, since youth is the age for questioning the world as it is, and idealistically rebuilding the future. And yet there is a paralysis of optimistic imagination as to the future. It is the unpredictability of the future, in a world that makes creating the new in every field its very driver, that makes any imaginings about a future society so perilous and uncertain. However, the demand for diversity and the aesthetic dimension are two factors that could characterize the contemporary vision, in contrast to the old austere utopias that are now bankrupt.

**Souleymane Bachir Diagne**
**The Life Force and the Utopia of the Post-Human**

Immortality is humanity's great quest, the supreme utopia. In his science fiction novel *Le Grand Secret*, René Barjavel reflects on the convergence between love that defies time, science that conquers sickness and wisdom that triumphs over death. Spinoza reminds us that death cannot ontologically have a place in thinking about the living and Bergson assumes a 'current of life' running through bodies and generations, dividing up and flowing together without losing its force. That life force has no connection with the new philosophies of the trans-human or post-human which imagine a post-humanity living longer, healthier and less miserably, thanks to



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biotechnology. If human beings were an exceptional diversion in the course of evolution, it is one of intensification, creation and emancipation, and not of extension and addition as the life-sciences would have it.

**Silvana Rabinovich**
**Utopia: Reading and Redemption**

This paper suggests an approach to the various possibilities of reading as a practice responsible for generating thought. It might be said that it is an approach to the dismissal of reading as the origin of other paths of thought. Utopia, understood as anticipation, yields its place to the figure of *redemption* (in Benjamin's sense of the word) as imminence of the absolutely other, expectation and extreme attention. The text invites the reader to try other routes in the practice of reading (other than solitary silent reading), in which the body and the senses play a part, and – especially – the other, to allow the advent of a thinking that welcomes justice. In an act of memory, reading – as heteronomy – opens onto the future.

**Rafael Argullol**
**Seven Arguments in Defence of Poetry:**
**Resisting the Madding Noise**

Poetry is essentially connected with silence and may be thought of in that sense as a sort of resistance against the din of the present or rebellion against the commonplace. Alert for the primal sound that travels across cultures, it attempts to express the inexpressible. For poetry is the interplay of possibilities. In treating possibilities lightly, it encourages human beings to inhabit their world differently.

**Kam-ming Wong**
**The Butterfly in the Garden:**
**Utopia and the Feminine in *The Story of the Stone***

With *Peach Blossom Spring* and other poetical works written by Tao Qian in the 5th century, there was born a vision of utopia that remains forever etched into the Chinese collective imaginary. Thirteen centuries later, Cao Xueqin drew inspiration from it when he gave form to the 'Grandview Garden', a universe with fundamentally female characteristics and one of the centres for the plot of *The Story of the Stone,* a masterpiece of Chinese romantic fiction also known as 'Dream of the Red Chamber/Mansions'. Reading the two works in parallel, in both the figurative and the literal sense, points up the message of the *Daodejing* that utopia cannot be planned or imposed. In fact it emerges from a spirit of openness, an attitude of patient waiting, listening with the ear of the other. This intuition leads to reflection on difference, based on Zhuangzi's *Butterfly Dream*.



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**Edgar Morin**
**Realism and Utopia**

The real, thought of as human reality, that is, a mixture of the imaginary, mythology, emotions, flesh, passions, suffering, love, is always surprising, full of possibilities and hard to grasp. A thinking adapted to the complex reality of our earthly homeland cannot be a trivial realism content with the established order and accepting the victory of the victorious. On the contrary, understanding of reality, lucidity are often the result of an ethical revolt against the *fait accompli*, against certainty. The thinking suggested by Morin attempts to move beyond the alternatives between, on the one hand, the worst option: the utopia that thinks it is realistic, and on the other the utopia that knows it is utopia, and is therefore harmless, outside the real. The hope is to introduce the poetry of intensity into reality, to resist the oppressive forces of pseudo-realism by cultivating the garden of our earthly homeland.

**Eduardo Portella**
**Utopia's Legacy (A Postscript)**

To the extent that our future depends on our ability to change and 'live together', we cannot do without utopian thought. We know utopia goes astray when it puts off indefinitely confronting the present, trying to prolong the temptation to go back to complete, stable models. It goes astray when its totality merges into totalitarianism. But if utopia was shattered, broken into pieces, divided into lots, would it still be utopia? Turned into a listed heritage, a legacy that is both fertile and too weighty, utopia demands an approach at the same time critical and self-critical.



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