

The Regime of Utopia and Dystopia

Art and Politics In the Land of OZ

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Utopia and Dystopia in Art and Politics

Reality is a product of the most august imagination.

— Wallace Stevens

Art is the right hand of Nature. The latter has only given us Being, the former has made us men.

— Friedrich von Schiller

Every human being is a utopian agent by its very nature. That does not mean that all humans are daydreamers; but rather, it means that we dream, we create, we hope, and we fantasize another unknown possible possibility or future—even when, we are willing to cipher and decipher the *noema* of something; at least esoterically in our mental capacity. Utopia is *a priori* and not *a posteriori* structure of our mind. It is a panegyric phenomenon and it drastically alters the world—our world. Be it as it may though, Utopia has its own codes or its own exhilarating connotations and its idiosyncratic glossary; which in itself, it has a structure, and that structure is imprinted and build into our brain and into our memory. We are impervious to *statism*. Utopia is a powerful hope to attain a state of mind and of being that we think we lack—that is to say, a better world either socio-politically, scientifically, culturally or artistically. It is ingrained into our human nature to dream placeless places, to envision the unimaginable, and that has been the driving force for continuous [change]—it has been and, it will always be as Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, points out; ‘the catalytic axis for arts as a viable [counterforce] against the norms or the established rules of society.’

Utopians, or as some say the daydreamers are a powerful and vital energy in our life. They enable us to rethink our present conditions and that, how could we alter the *status quo* of any hegemony; be it political or artistic-cultural. Utopia is the very core and the most essential structure of every regime of politics—of all political philosophy as such, whether or not it is, democratic, fascistic, despotic, authoritarian or totalitarian, theocratic or atheistic, oligarchic, cosmopolitan or universal. As long as we have a social contract with one another, and for as long as we bind ourselves to laws and rules of any given society or political systems; then, willingly or unwillingly, we are living in a utopian regime. For instance, in *Leviathan* of Thomas Hobbes, can we claim that Hobbes' political philosophy is a utopian condition: 'state of nature'—as 'a war of all against all'? Or is it, a dystopian regime of existence? Perhaps, in his mind it might be that, this is a fatal human condition? Utopia is not just a pataphysical instance in our daily routine of life, but on the contrary, as dangerous and as naïve as it might seem, it is precisely the idea of dream-utopia that which is needed, in order for hope to exist. Utopia encapsulates and preserves the notion of hope and also, be it as it may, human beings cannot do without hope; because, it is the last thing that vanishes or evaporates from our minds or our perception of future and life itself.

In this analytical discourse, I will focus on a few topics of utopia and dystopia in arts and politics as separate and also, as intertwined fields in action—seeing them through the eye of objective history. The main starting point will be the political utopia, starting with the Marxist hope to revolutionize the socio-economic and socio-political regime of the world throughout a violent revolution, abolition, liquidation, persecution, confiscation, centralization and collectivization. To be sure, this is a superfast *bottom-to-top* change, and let me say it again; without mercy and dialogue and without constructivist manners either. It is a brutal and a painful action. The second aspect will be the artistic utopia, and the epicenter of it will be some elements from Dadaism, Futurism, Constructivism, and Social Realism to show that, art and politics intermingle or complement each-other, as they are also simultaneously intertwined in the cultural-political spectacle/scene of human history and its cultural-dramatic progression and regression.

POLITICS, IDEOLOGY, DOGMATISM: ONEIRIC UTOPIA

Isn't Karl Marx's lethal proletarianism or his egalitarian-dogmatism or even his opium-oneiric idea for social change utopian? Is his *Communist Manifesto* a daydreamers' ideology? Did Marxism fail? If so, did utopian thinking fail as well? There are some imperative texts and a variety of historical records and a plethora of examples, as it pertains to utopian ideologies and dogmas such as: The *Atlantis* of Plato, St. Augustine's *The City of God*, Thomas More's *Utopia*, Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, Charles Fourier's *Phalanxes* and *Saint-Simonianism* (Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon); to tag just a few here—leading to modern utopias in massive practice with Soviet's/Bolshevik's Revolution (Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin) or the Chinese/Maoist's Cultural Revolution and the paranoiac-lunatic experiment, of the Albanian neo-Stalinist and xenophobic system of Enver Hoxha, among many. That is not to say that, the French Revolution was not a utopian one either, quite on the contrary; it was a pure utopian event, and it failed to be righteous, because the politics of domination and power struggle (Jacobins and Girondins) eliminated any dreamers or pacifists and the notion of "liberty", "equality", "brotherhood" (*liberte, egalite, fraternite*), were *void* from the very moment that one oppresses the previous regime, with the same or more ruthlessness and violence and brutality (like the terror of M. Robespierre). It happened in the French, Russian, and Nazi size of Power, or in the Chinese Revolution—leading to the very famous statement of Vladimir Lenin saying that; *you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs*.

Now, the reality is that human beings are not just eggs, so to speak; they have feelings—we are human beings with emotions, consciousness, logic, rationale, and with a mind that thinks—breaking human beings means that you are exterminating life itself and the very core of existence and civilization. Speaking figuratively and semantically in a way, those broken eggs are the terror of repression in its best; it is

the kinetic bunkerization and the vortex of mass extermination of the opponent, because in order to attain Utopianism the cost of life does not really matter here—does it?! Therefore, we come to the conclusion that: any peaceful or innocent utopian egalitarianism that starts with the notion or the prospect of change, in response to the *hypothetical* present of a miserable regime, for a better one, it tends to be as much repressive as the previous one, by becoming a ruthless force itself. The right for liberty, equality and brotherhood does not mean to destroy and annihilate the others that might rightly oppose you. That is a pure Platonic-communist and fascist or authoritarian strand of thought.

Karl R. Popper in his book, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* was and still is absolutely right denouncing Plato's philosophy, as dangerous and totalitarian advocating an uncompromising radicalism. Popper states: "there is one element within Utopianism which is particularly of Plato's approach and which Marx does not oppose...it is the sweep of Utopianism, its attempt to deal with society as a whole, leaving no stone unturned...it is in short uncompromising radicalism"(164). That means that the righteous utopian daydreamers of egalitarianism turned utopia to dystopia, because the nature of the utopian revolution turned out to be the *zero sum game* rationale. Plato's engineering of a totalitarian state-of-the-best or of the strongest is a complete disaster regarding human experience—necrology on the making.

Nonetheless, returning back to Marx and even to Hegel, we will see that their ideologies were, and even today still are malicious and dangerous; because, their philosophical tendency is to uproot all the layers of society through violent means—no compromise—no dialogue: it is a vicious and a forceful “bottom-to-top” rapid chain of change; like a lava that erupts at the beginning point of a volcano. Here allow me to say that, the eruption of a volcano and its lava are a necessary and a natural and geological process, which is not concerned with human rights, human dignity, ethics, morals, socio-political harmony—this harmony of our society makes us different from any natural turmoil and catastrophes. Departing from natural violence (because this is not our geological concern here), the human violence; however, is to be understood as a chain of reaction that brings continuous violence for justice in return, and justice has been the [pretext] for any utopian ends. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his book *The Primacy of Perception*, rightly recognizes this

euphoric cacophony of revolutionary Marxism saying: “Communism cannot be justified simply by showing that violence is a component of Western humanism because the type of violence used by Communism is ‘progressive’, as Marx thought it was” (227). We see that the concept of using the means of terror, uprooting, violence, forceful confiscation and the abolition of property in exchange for utopian mechanical engineering and for a utopian end is disastrous; where, human pain and annihilation is of no value as long as Marxist-Communist utopia is attained. What better example is there of Utopian violence, terror and massacre than Fascism and Nazism, Maoism and Stalinism or even Christianity with its zombie Crusades and the persecution of heretics. The year of 1096 is known as the massacre of the Jews of Mainz, and 1492 is recorded as the Jewish inquisition in Spain, or not even to mention the *Thirty Years War* between Catholics and Protestants leading to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Why am I mentioning all of these dates? It is important to remember that all of the above events were driven by utopian beliefs, thus using daydreaming elements as a justification for the terroristic and the macabre finale—ruthlessly exterminating the others because their own utopia needed to be superior—that was just enough, to justify the bloodshed and Templar’s viral mental insanity. Utopia is a great rational.

Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty states: “Can revolution avoid terror?...Hegel said that terror was Kant put into practice...It is the one Marx adopted... Hegel in his later years reserved his name for the functionaries of an authoritarian state who decide the meaning of history for all and who create humanity by force and by war...In sum he transformed terror into an institution”.(211) There is a folkloristic tale saying that, even the Devil himself is outsmarted by the voluptuousness of sexual beauty—here I pair this great temptation with Hegelianism and with the opium of Marxism; and it seems to me that Merleau-Ponty’s statement is very accurate and powerful; because, it denounces the authoritative errors and the totalizing elements of Hegelianism and Marxism as having a repressive, exclusive, violent, and terroristic antidote, blended with euphoric apocalypses for a brand new utopian world—applying Pierre-J. Proudhon’s principle: ‘property is robbery’. Marx was highly influenced by the ideas of Proudhon’s anarchy, and his anarchistic work; *What is Property*, stating that: ‘property is theft’—this anarchist critique of capitalism seems to be the decisive and catalytic drive for Marx’s *Das Kapital* and his further ideas. Why then, human

beings cannot build upon previous structures using the qualities of the past and reinventing them to something anew? The reason as it seems, is that the euphoria of Marxist utopia does not compromise, to say the least; and does not accept a dialogue and a good will, but rather, terror and violence in Platonic terms as Popper coined it, regarding the phenomenon of utopian social engineering, i.e., taking the features of a totalitarian centralized system.

Nevertheless, the interesting part here, it is not just the oneiric element of an egalitarian decentralized structure of various political-schemata, (decentralization in terms of masses benefiting more as a result of egalitarianism and especially, as John Rawls in his book, *A Theory of Justice*, indicates in regards to the fair and just distribution of accumulated wealth) of action and peaceful communal life, as it is propelled by Plato, More, Fourier, Stalin, Lenin, Mao and others of the same DNA or utopian ideals; but rather, the forceful centralization of order as Popper puts it : “Both Plato and Marx are dreaming of the apocalyptic revolution which will radically transfigure the whole social world... Plato’s statement is indeed a true description of the uncompromising attitude of all forms of radicalism—of the aestheticism’s refusal to compromise...but all this radicalism and violence is both unrealistic and futile” (164, 166). Plato and Marx were operating on a very determinative, ominous or appalling platform where, the stage of their performance happened to be social bloodshed, volcanic revolution, hypnotic social-architectural-utopianism and destructive mental engineering. The transfiguration of the social order is more efficient and organic, when compromise and mutual acceptance is the basis of social change—where revolution occurs without necessary bloodshed-type of Nazi and Stalinist annihilation. And here, we could refresh our memory with the most current terror of fabricated utopianism, such as in the case of former Yugoslavia—a country that no longer exists, it has evaporated—it is no longer alive, it left this world in the same manner it entered the orbit of this world—without the desire to be real and authentic, because it was a bubble dystopia and that is so because; it was unethically and immorally patched together by others, for reasons that do not really matter; however, it was inspired and conceived from utopian idealism while its final end, turned out to be a freakish dystopian fact—this is called a *nationalist-mythological* utopia; where Serbians or Croatians or Bosnians, have literally fabricated a fake and a mythological

and “pseudo-heroic-folkloristic-mask or identity”; meaning that, they can easily justify their genocide or their hatred towards one another—and so it happened. The real victims here were: Kosovar-Albanians, in the sense that, they were not an integral part of Yugoslavia, ever; from the stand point of ethnic brethren or linguistic and historical continuation. Besides Kosovar-Albanians or Ethnic-Albanians, the Yugoslavian war has to be considered as a Civil War among the same people or, among three brothers that could not stand each other: Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians, have always been, and are, and they will always be of the same DNA or of the same anthropological, and historical continuation—the only difference is that they have been coated and sprinkled with different religious believes. They share the same customs, they speak the same language (with some dialectical differences of course, which is normal—they speak *Stokavian* or *Stokavski* dialect), and they are all South-Slavs. The reason I went so far with this insanity of Utopia-Dystopia called; Yugoslavia, it is because it has turned out to be a case in point, and one of the most classical conditions of contemporary dystopia, and so was Soviet Union. And here, let me say something else and elaborate about another dystopian event, and that is really another type of dystopia: it is called a *colonial dystopia* of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide between, *Tutsi* and *Hutu* fractions in Rwanda. I have coined it a *Colonial Utopia-Dystopia*, because it has been fomented by the colonial politics of first, German and Belgian colonial statuses and then, between the British and French intriguing interest. Philip Gourevitch, in his breath taking book: *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*, has tackled this dystopian condition of Rwanda extremely well, on the ground of that reality; and, he has also captured a great deal of human misery and pain, about Rwanda’s Dystopia and its macabre-genocide.

Here I would say that, wherever we direct our eyes in past times, we will come to realize the bitter fact that: human dystopian-brutality and human utopian-hope for a perfect state of existence and co-existence walk on a very thin line of Utopian and Dystopian paths. What matters here the most though; it is the choice and the praxis on a given state of affairs. I would like to mention Schiller here, where in his book; *On The Aesthetic Education of Man*, has given us a great deal of insight: in regards to the aspect of the state, aesthetics, reason, logic, politics, education, culture, and how humanity always strives to attain a perfect state of affairs. The question is, how? In Letter IV, Schiller is wrestling

hard with the concept of the ‘ideal’ man (human), suggesting that the condition of a human being and that of humanity as a whole ‘remains contingent’. For Schiller, it is very important, how the state and humanity relate to each other—how they coexist. In the end of his IV Letter, Schiller proposes that; there must be a unity of reason and morality and Nature itself, creating a perfect *totality*. He states: “Consequently, when reason brings her moral unity into physical society, she must not injure the manifold in nature. When nature strives to maintain her manifold character in the moral structure of society, this must not create any breach in moral unity.” (27) As I have said a bit earlier, Schiller gives us a great opening to the understanding of moral and logical behavior, between humanity and nature, and how should they complement one another—freedom and necessity; however, it has been the maliciousness of humanity with its divisive and hegemonic formulas of volcanic transformations, that which has created all of these catastrophic utopians and dystopias. And here, I will switch my gaze to Marxism, which has been the greatest form of utopia-turn-dystopia.

Now, at this point, I would like to go back to our main subject matter, which is Marx’s book, *After Revolution*, where he claims: “From each *according* to his ability, to each according to his needs” (Cohen, Fermon, 465). That sounds fair and very appealing and attractive and it mesmerizes and it hypnotizes even the most intellectual being. However, what this formula produces in reality, it is an army of massive parasites and irresponsible culture where, each one praises each other’s laziness and unproductive potential. To teach people to be lazy and lose their individualism or idiosyncratic character in the name of proletariat and universal total unity, brotherhood and egalitarianism and confiscating other’s rights—it is totalitarianism on the making. To encourage masses of people to destroy everything from the past is retardate, it is a nihilistic utopia—where the dream world never has any moral, ethical and harmonic social bases. It’s a fraud. Marxism is a mental treachery and extortion; it is not only in theory but in practice too. The inhumane schema of Soviet Union and its Easter European satellites proved to be a homeless system—not in this universe; but rather, it was an alien production, a poisonous system of endless catastrophic apotheosis and a social bunker of a hybrid human prototype. This is a part of the apocalyptic-Platonic radicalism that Popper was criticizing in regards to Plato’s and Marx’s intellectual violence and utopianism.

Richard Stites in his book, *Revolutionary Dreams*, captures some essential points about the utopianism of Russian revolution stating: “Lenin’s most elaborate excursion into the future speculation, *State and Revolution*...its utopian basis was to be found in Marx’s vision of the communist future: universal social ownership and the end of private property”(43). What is obvious here is the fact that Popper is right criticizing Plato, Hegel and Marx because their political philosophies have produced violent and repressive rulers and results. It is not as if Lenin did not know or predict the outcome of the revolution. He was very well aware of the terror, massacre, persecution, annihilation, extermination of the past. He believed that the communist future ought to start anew; including injustice and bloodshed. This was a nihilistic utopia; it is Proudhon’s and Bakunin’s dream anarchy and chaos on the making—the realization of a utopian state of death.

In later analysis Stites says: “Stalinism was not simply a negation to utopianism. It was a rejection of revolutionary utopianism in favor of a single utopian vision and plan...Stalin’s utopian design...was a crueler mode of thinking...it suggested, therefore, the arts of coercion, authoritarianism, brutality”(226). This is clear enough as to see that, how the daydreaming of Hegel and Marx, Proudhon, Bakunin, Fourier and Campanella among others, led to the most violent and traumatic revolution in the history of human kind—the Bolshevik or Russian panorama of hell itself. The melodrama and the parody of sadness in regards to Russian revolution is that, how could possibly be that Lenin was galvanized or inspired by Campanella’s *The City of the Sun*? Stites navigates in the esoteric structure of Marxism-Leninism stating: “But his 1602 utopia, *The City of the Sun*, was an ideal city state which turned religion into science and the urban landscape into a museum and outdoor school—both of these ideas appealing mightily to the schoolmaster in Lenin...Gorky had brought this book to the attention of Lenin and Lunacharsky before the revolution...Lenin was determined to build on Campanella”. (88) Be it as it may, here we have the Moon caressing the Sun, or paradise dancing with the hell; while creating the purgatory that Dante once dreamed. The October Revolution was able to do that—paranoia and sanity coexisting, where the extreme atheist becomes frantic theist making the theist sound a total atheist. As paradoxical as it might seem to us, it happened during Lenin’s domination of utopia. Campanella was a frenzy religious fanatic who was wandering in the

labyrinths of asceticism and of transcendental mysticism of Papal land—of God's benevolent power celebrating the magnificent utopia of Holy Roman Church—advocating its political domination, where Pope were a super-politician par excellence. This gives us a hint to understand the parody, the paranoia, and the hollow thinking of the early Bolshevik Revolution; where, the outcome was greatly predicted in *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell, in his satirical allegory of Soviet totalitarianism and ruthless Stalinism.

Orwell ingeniously encapsulates the real aspect of a Utopian state of mind as destructive, inhumane, calculated atrocity, and predicted the macabre and the carnage of Bolshevik futurological utopia. The world saw this truism when Marxism-Leninism with its monster—Soviet Union's callousness collapsed (where millions of people like me, in Albania as well, have experienced that communistic dystopian-destruction). The first question that comes up to my mind is this: Is Utopia attainable? Should mankind dream for some better conditions or for a society where a fare distribution of goods and happiness is applied? Certainly yes, but as long as the extermination of others, and militants' utopian dilettantism is not practiced—as long as violence and terror is refrained and compromise is attained—where utopian dreams are not achieved on the expense of the opponents. Utopia ought to be achieved through an-all-inclusive principle, of which Robert Nozick, in his book *Anarchy, State and Utopia* talks about. I will analyze his argument in the next paragraphs. As I have clearly stated in the beginning of this discourse; is that, we have to be aware and to remember very well, that are we already living in a utopian regime—this is our *Capitalist-Utopia* of insane consumerist led-culture, the hypnotic *Media-Utopia*, or the obscure panic of *Celebrity-Television-Utopia*, of the *Technological-Space-Utopia*, *Computer-Avatar Utopia*, or let me call it in the general and all-inclusive modern sense of it; the *Banking-Credit-Utopia*. From the moment we have given up our basic rights to the sovereign, to the government or to any type of constitution, that means that we are bound by a utopian system, be it capitalist or communist: in principle that makes no difference here—only the free state of nature is not a utopia and, as it is put forward in Hobbes's terms, '*all against all*' in the '*zero-sum-game*'.

It is obvious that, there will always be, some tempting attempts to alter our social conditions within the panorama of present regimes, excepting the fact that we already have created our own utopia including all political regimes: from theocracy to democracy; where, with these general utopias we try to create [specific utopias] which we call Marxism, Nazism, and Stalinism, etc. [These] total or single ‘specific utopias’ tend to be extremely irrational and violent with terror as the common denominator. Then, what about a more open and all inclusive regime of utopia like the one Nozick advocates as the best solution of mankind? Nozick believes that there is a need for a political structure in order to achieve a utopian state.

Nozick proposes a “Framework for Utopia” propelling his thoughts in favor of the ‘minimal state’ (utopian-libertarianism) even in utopianism. The notion of his framework regarding utopia, is diverse and divergent where, no single nomenclature dominates; but rather, there is a possibility of utopias, and where one does not expel the other. The main point of Nozick is that, there is a plurality and richness of probabilities in finding the paths leading to the realization of utopia—we must except the fact that we are different in terms of natural capabilities, intellect, temperament, values, race, culture, religiosity, language, aspirations and so on—we should celebrate our human diversities and differences—this divergence of elements ought to be taken into consideration, throughout the process of building a decentralized utopian environment and cultural-identity. He says: “Utopia will consist of utopias; of many different and divergent communities...Utopia is a framework for utopias, a place where people are at liberty to join together voluntarily to pursue and attempt to realize their own vision...where no one can *impose* his own utopia upon others. The utopian society is the society of utopianism.” (312) Nozick goes further, stating: “No pattern is *imposed* on everyone, and the result will be one pattern if and only if everyone voluntarily chooses to live in accordance with that pattern of community...Utopia is a free society...It grows spontaneously from the individual choices...there is a framework for utopia and there are particular communities within the framework” (316, 332). If we are to compare the experiences of our up-to-date utopianisms, we will immediately recognize that all of the attempted utopian systems were more or less single-minded or one-man oriented: where, everything else and any other possible possibility was washed away—therefore, having excluded many individualities and unique

variants or features, either ethnically/racially, regionally, culturally, linguistically, spiritually and so on (*European Union*, as it is from 2000 to this moment with a unified currency and program, it is a close but still, a very, very poor example or sample of what Nozick proposes, because there still some cultures try to dominate others—nationalistic agendas and political-economic interests are still a hot spot). The result of the single-minded-utopias or specific-utopias, is that they have spelled out to catastrophic results, to horror and devastation, to hatred and holocaust, to extermination and annihilation, to real human pain; a pain that could never be forgotten because history does not erase itself. Annihilation is a precedent for future malicious aspirations. This ferocious precedent is a “Pandora’s box” where the future could misuse it. Popper was right claiming that, the principles of Plato, Hegel, and Marx were cultivated throughout the examples of history until they spilled over—attempting utopian dreams but resulting to dystopian nightmares.

ART IN THE MIDST OF UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA

In terms of visual perception and experience, we can say that, seeing is an effort, and just to look at things, is no merit.

Art and aesthetics have been vital features of the utopian Golgotha. Art and aesthetics have been used and abused equally by utopian movements either for political or religious dogmas, and/or artistic ideologies alike. It is no surprise to see the way *Vatican* in specific, and other Christian fractions in general, have been patrons or sponsors and beneficiaries of arts throughout history. It is no wonder either, to realize the fact that, the *Christian Bible* has been translated into a pictorial or a visual panoramic presence—every page of the “Old” or of the “New Testament” has been visually-translated or mimicked pictorially; in murals, icons, stain-glass art and others formats, such on canvas and

wood, et cetera—so, as to better and more convincingly convey to the people and to the uneducated masses of that time, the world or the word of the hypothetically existing God?!

In this regard, what stronger image is there then the gaze of a Saint or Apostle, or God and Jesus himself; overlooking at you with omnipotence and transcendence or benevolence while, projecting through their posture the message of obedience: we commend you—follow us because we are the pathway to light, to redemption and to salvation—we invite you to the heaven's future for a better and real life as St. Augustine claims, in his *theological utopian* doctrine, in the *City of God*. Why art? What is the power of art? Does it really matter? Can art transform our values and our social experiences? Michelangelo Buonarroti's work at the Sistine Chapel (*Sacellum Sixtinum*) is the most intricate and significant part of it—*The Creation of Adam*, by Michelangelo: with this so well known to us iconic image of the *Hand of God giving life to Adam*. This is the power of the visual world—the same could be said about the power of today's images from; television or commercialism and from any technological devises, hypnotizing and mesmerizing us with the opium of kinetic images—in the case of Sistine Chapel's dramatic-theatrical scenario, it is precisely this particular image so to speak, which conveys to us the power of God's creation and of course, his omnipotence and benevolence and power over us, which in return, makes us feel and see ourselves as unimportant human beings?!

There is another paradox though, and that is: while in the Holy City of Vatican, the Papal State was sponsoring one of its greatest undertakings, the “Sistine Chapel” as a part of its *theological-utopia*, or as a *Christian Land of OZ* on the other site of Italy, in Venice, the worldly known artist, Titian, was creating the well-known artwork: *Venus and the Lute Player*—I have coined it, a *Sexual Utopia* or *The Land of Sexual OZ*; for the very reason of its time and place, 1565–70 in Venice, Italy. In this painting we see the sensuousness of human presence, its form, its desire, its hidden passion, its tranquil mind-spirit, its possible reality and the will of freedom and inner liberation. If one sees this painting well in the background, one will see a circle of nude people dancing freely in the field, among trees and in the fields of a beautiful paradise-nature—free of judgment, as if this background belongs to another planet and to another utopian place—its equivalent pair today, it

might be; the psychedelic America of 1970s or the movie series; *Stargate*; although, this has to be called a *Scientific-Utopia*, and this is not far enough from our need to explore the space and the infinite universe—this is a *Space-Utopia*, whether it is a Russian or an American one, it is a dream to the unknown—it is a utopian vision.

That being said, about the power of the image and that of the visual world and art in general, I tend to agree with Alain Badiou and Slavoj Zizek, arguing the fact that art [does matter], art [changes societies] and it has the power of conviction, because it controls our mental being, our emotions, our perceptions, our sensations, our visions, our imaginations, and it awakens our inner exuberance and innate power, which in return gravitates to the path of cultural transformation. This notion of art's power applies to: architecture, music, cinema/movies, theaters/shows, literature, poetry, and fine arts alike; to conceptual art, to performance art, to video art, et cetera. It applies to all forms of art so to speak. Arts have had a long path and a plethora of achievements and downfalls. It is like a spiral that keeps moving—its condition depends from the political and cultural situation and aspirations of a given time. An artistic utopia is as equal as a political utopia because, both transmigrate and determine our state of mind and the condition of our being. Jacques Ranciere too, emphasizes that art and politics have always been ‘intrinsically intertwined’. The bare-bone of his argument is that, art has never been pure and just passive and it will never be. Art is a vital part of human affairs and political environment, i.e., it cannot be separated from society as a whole—the truth of phenomenon or the appearance of things is related to the web of our human experiences and the independence of our mind. Talking about the independence of our inner-self and the intrinsic and colorful paths of the abstract-intangible world of our chromatic and ecstatic mind; here, I would like to mention a fraction of David Batchelor's book, *Chromophobia*. He articulates: “...color is a sign of civilization...And there's something else. If color has ‘the power to dream, to think or speak’, then, it is a very dangerous cosmetic...For Baudelaire color had perhaps the greatest power of all: the power to be autonomous...To be freed from Law and Nature: what better description of autonomy could there be”? (55) I think, actually it is more than that: every artistic form has the power of inspiration, of freedom and of dream, and what this also means; it is that, it has the power to think freely and independently from the *status quo* of any political and

cultural condition. Therefore, it is the existence of *status quo*, that which does not really like this sort of autonomous thinking—that means change. A great reference here, it could be: *Optics*, of Isaac Newton, *On the Theory of Colors*, of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; continuing with David Katz, *The World of Color* or with David Sutter, *Phenomena of Vision*, Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, and Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*, and with Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, to say the least.

Returning to the point of our latest departure and according to Ranciere's book *The Politics of Aesthetics*: "...there is no criterion for establishing an appropriate correlation between the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics...They intermix in any case; politics has its aesthetics and aesthetics has its politics...It is the state of politics that decides that Dix's paintings in the 1920's,...or films by Cimino or Scorsese in the 1980's appear to harbor a political critique or appear, on the contrary, to be suited to an apolitical outlook on the irreducible chaos of human affairs or the picturesque poetry of social difference." (62) Therefore, art and aesthetics are intermingled in the same spiral path of life, experience, human affairs, and cultural-political or socio-political phenomenon. The truth of our perception and existence is somatically and psychologically intertwined in the realm of art through its aesthetics and politics, and through its rhetorical game of perception and spectacle, creating for us a stimuli of utopian pragmatism—in a sense that reality and *hyper reality* or *simulacra*, are intertwined as one and the same. About this moment of truth and unity, Badiou in his book *Being and Event*, comments: "...love, art, science and politics generate—infinitely—truths concerning situations;...all sorts of other practices do not generate truths...Philosophy is thus at the service of art, of science and of politics...art, science and politics do change the world, not by what they discern, but by what they indiscern therein..." (340,341, 343) What comes out of Badiou's comment, it is that which Ranciere too, talked about; however, Badiou took it to another level of thinking. He is claiming that, besides the fact that art and politics are intertwined, art does change the world and consequently our life's experience and perception or its meaning and value—so does politics. Art and politics cannot be separated because they both provide us with an array of utopias and dystopias.

Thus, about the aspect of the primacy of art, one cannot miss the analysis of Zizek in his book, *The Parallax View*. He points out: “Within the horizon of traditional metaphysics, art is about (beautiful) appearances with elusive and confused meaning, while science is about the reality beneath appearances. In a strange reversal, today’s sciences focus more and more on the weird domain of autonomized appearances...in a symmetrical countermovement, modern art is focused more and more on the Real Thing...In this precise sense, modern art is sublime: it causes pleasure-in-pain, produces its effect through its own failure, in so far as it refers to the impossible Things” (147). It is fair to say that, here we see that art is not just the naïve domain of beauty and the ecstasy or the exuberance of aesthetics; but rather, art has been and it is a driving force and a frantic energy or as Nietzsche called it, “art as a counterforce” in the [reality] of reality, that is to say, the social façade of the hyper-real or its pataphysical energy leading to utopias and dystopias of various socio-political regimes. There is no other such artistic movement condemning the socio-political dynamic of dystopia than that of Dadaism.

On the other spectrum we could also say that, there is no other artistic force that created an initial utopia with an end-result as dystopia, then the artistic-fascistic movement of Futurism in Italy. Then, we could say that, it was the Russian Constructivism that which was highly connected with the platforms of Soviet utopianism, as being ‘one-body’ with the dogmatic daydreaming and ideology of the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics of Bolshevism, i.e., determining each other’s dead-end of utopianism. Dadaist’s art forms condemned the socio-political mentality of national war fare and the militaristic fashion of its time. Dada was a political art form that was meant to counter-fight the political utopias-dystopias of World War I. It did so. But even before Dadaism, there was the greatness of Impressionism which was able to break from mythological and theological art and from academic art restrictions; it opened another possibility for art itself. Art became an independent form of expression exploring themes of everyday life, as Zizek articulated, art took the role of science dealing with the ‘Real Think’ of Being, or as Badiou commented; art changes the experience of our world and life. Therefore, as paradoxical as it might seem, Art is a necessary utopia—human beings need this stimulation-of-becoming. The key to whether attain a utopian regime or create a dystopian nightmare

is the path and the mode or the fashion we choose it to be. It is all political—utopias and dystopias walk on the same path or line and the outcome depends on the balance of human actions.

Futurism and Constructivism created a very different bend of art and politics while involved in direct political actions and social changes, creating a utopian vision which was extremely violent and terroristic towards society in some respect. We see that there was a polarization of the arts, going from one point to the other extreme point, from condemning warfare to proclaiming and aiming war and destruction. Lenin grasped this fact relatively early during the upheavals of Russian Revolution. Lenin wanted to produce a proletarian culture and art corresponding to the Communist ideology. Lenin points out: “All educational work in the Soviet Republic of workers and of peasants, in the field of political education in general and in the field of art in particular, should be imbued with spirit of the class struggle being waged by the proletariat for the successful achievement of the aims of its dictatorship...” (Harrison, Wood, 402). For Lenin, the Russian communist futurism goes on the same pathway by stating that: “A Communist regime demands a Communist consciousness. All forms of life, morality, philosophy, and art must be re-created according to Communist principles”. (Harrison, Wood, 403) Obviously, we could perceive that art was a great tool for the Communist propaganda not only in Soviet Russia but in all totalitarian, communist, and fascist regimes. We have focused on Russian utopian daydreamers because, they took Constructivist art and literature to the extreme end, as they were aiming at the creation of a utopian society of equals—later on, Stalinism and Social-Realism became the nightmare utopia, as an artistic, political and mental terror, and this is a by-product, as Popper termed of Plato’s and Marx’ utopianism turned into dystopia. The political heresy of Lenin and others, as Stites points out, reached the maximum when Campanella’s *The City of the Sun* was applied in Soviet society and in the core of its principles—transforming human beings in to kinetic bunkers and *ex-nihilo*. A case in point, is the great literary work of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*; taking place in the horrific corrective-labor-camps of Soviet Union—here we see the lethal existence of Communist-Dystopia—human pain and forced existence—forced to be alive—mental and physical terror caused by your very own brethren, by your own government. In addition to this, it is important to mention the

great literary work of Yevgeny Zamyatin, and his great book: *We*. The satirical-dystopia of *We*, is known to us today as a dystopian-socialist or communist-spectacle: it talks about the futurologist-utopian state—the transparent and all penetrating “eye” of the state that overlooks everything as in the *panopticon* version of Jeremy Bentham’s theory of the observer, and the limitless power of the centralized State—*We*, is another way of understanding the vicious and the lethal control and oppression of the centralized government—it is the all-powerful imperious watching and invisible eye that controls everything. In *We*, we are dealing with a “sarcastic-dystopia” or a parody of the miserable communist situation, specifically inspired by the conditions of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution.

There is a long and a bumpy pathway from Constructivist-Utopia to Stalinist Social-Realism. The difference it seems to be in the naïve euphoria of early dreamers in Soviet Russia, aiming at the building of a new world, society, and above all, of the *new-man*. There was a plethora of ideas; however, this utopian labyrinth was tapped by Stalin’s Utopia: catastrophe, terror, violence, extermination of human life, and the bunkerization of human mind-life, i.e., paranoia, dogma, propaganda, fear, and the restriction of creativity became the mode and fashion of that regime. Constructivism was not apolitical. It was a political brand as a new proletarian artistic movement where art or aesthetics and political aesthetics found the same common ground with idealistic utopianism—there was no need to compromise with the past, the past ought to be eradicated, i.e., it bothered both, Constructivist’s politics and the aesthetical politics of Bolsheviks. The examples are a lot and just to condense the richness of Soviet utopia, I will mention just a few architectural futurologists such as, Vladimir Tatlin’s *Tower*; 1919, Gyorgy Krutikov; *Flying City*, 1928, Nikolai Ladovksy’s; *Collective Housing*, 1920, El Lissitzky’s; *Wolkenbugel*, 1925, and in my opinion, one of the most accomplished of all of these daydreamers, is Yakov Chernikhov. Chernikhov’s phantasmagorical architectural designs were very powerful and projected a sort of fantasy of unusual utopian cities of the future. Arts were the most active part of early Russian Utopianism. Utopian monuments and urban planning were praised as Soviet’s architectural futuristic and phantasmagoric constructivist achievements.

It is not without reason that I have chosen Soviet's Utopia and no other utopias. This reason is articulated extremely well by Stites: "The Soviet government in the 1920's was the first in modern history to possess such mammoth power to design living quarters for its population...in others words, utopia building on the ground and on the grandest possible scale." (190) These glittering dreams were enacted from the starting point of the Soviet Revolution and as Stites furthermore points out: "From the very onset of the Revolution, utopia was fed by millenarianism—dreams suddenly transformed into concerted beliefs and beliefs into actions" (39). Here we see that, the difference of Russian Utopia from all other utopias of human history is this: there was never in the history of mankind where, an organized state of the size of the Russian territory, power, and cultural and ideological projection that enabled or put into action and practice a tremendous utopian vision. They all believed in a radiant, glittering, and perfect utopian society and future, and the problem seems that the Bolshevik elite did not apprehend well the reality of the present—the present reality that was not able to handle such vision. It is not possible to create a future without rendering carefully the present socio-political, socio-economical, and cultural environment. However, the Russian Utopia was a wide spread vision supported by the masses and the peasants; although, still the issue and the main feature rests in the literature of the Russian Communist elite, creating a genre of populist utopia until it became a permanent state of mind—radical and anarchist thinking became the natural line and ideology of the revolution, leading to violence, terror, annihilation, extermination, and human pain. Even today as we speak, not much is reviled and no light has been shed, about the atrocities and the millions killed and imprisoned in Stalin's Russia. Artists were supportive of this utopia, believing in its potential for a better world and they were directly and indirectly part of it. Later on, they (the artists) were persecuted as well. Some became dissidents and another counter voice, but the damage was done. However, the divergence and the rich artistic ideas of early Revolution were excommunicated by the Stalinist nomenclature and dogmatic utopia; which for the arts and the artists that initially supported the Bolshevik regime, turnout to be a pure dystopia and a painful nightmare. Dystopia, in the sense that the freedom of literature and arts was modified in line with the Communist ideology and propaganda, cultivating a new breed of human species—bunker beings—numb minds—strangled spirits—mental finitude.

We have seen that a utopian vision could turn out to be a dangerous dystopian reality. It is possible because, whatever mankind does, it is attainable and our dreams are unstoppable, and the reason for that is that we as human beings need to envision a better future. But the reality is that, situations in life determine that which is been already transferred or given to us as a cultural-political inheritance. For Fourier, the society he lived was a chaotic moment or a reality, and the French Revolution swept way his own reality by making it a total dystopia. Thus he created his own Utopia as a counterforce regarding the socio-political conditions that the French revolt produced. Campanella created a religious utopia that was a Papal power and God dominating regime—a sort of, *Christian Land of OZ*. Marx envisioned a socialist-communist utopia that dismissed all the others or any previous social platforms; and he, aimed at the new socio-economic-political structure, purely on the basis of an extreme economic-egalitarian platform—to abolish—to destroy—to confiscate, prone to violence and terror: I have coined it, the *Parasitic Land of OZ*. So far in our human history, we do not have a good experience with utopia as a model. Although, the question is this: do we have the need and the right to dream, to imagine, to fantasize, to hope, and to create a phantasmagoric future for our self; for our mind and for future generations? Is life without dreams worth living it? Or should we all be “negative-pragmatists” and “ruthless-realists”? The notion of dystopian-realism and dystopian human misery, is nowhere better tackled then in the well-known work of Fyodor Dostoevsky such as, *Notes from Underground* or *Brothers Karamazov*; however, I would also add that, the elements of social or communitarian-dystopia are nowhere better captured then in the world of Franz Kafka, such as, *The Trial* or *The Castle*. Both of these authors have shed some interesting light on the topic of the human condition and in their respective societies, where a human being operates in the lowest level of existence—these are some perplexing questions of human agony, anxiety or mental aporia, and one option here; it might be the ‘Framework Principle’ of Nozick, the one we discussed a bit earlier. At least, in his formula for attaining a better and functional utopian regime, we see that there are elements of existence, tolerance, and where no one will *impose* or force the others to except what they do not like. Another thing is that, utopianism has to be understood as an *abstract form* of thought and not as a mere political and artistic object or structure, and it cannot only be just a concrete thing—for as long as it has not been structurally or politically formulated or

coded—utopianism is an [*ideal*] of human progressive achievements or innovative existence.

Decoding the regime of a utopian state is to decode the fact that, utopia is a mental, an innate, and a political being. We activate it when we think of it, because to be for it-self, it is to be in a permanent state of existence. Utopia is that condition that permanently *is* for and *is* in-self. The notion of Utopia is embed in our consciousness and unconscious state of mind, since the time and the origin of our existence as human species. We think, we imagine, we fantasize, we program, we build and rebuild, we destroy, we exterminate and annihilate one another, we create, and so, we go on and on in our human history of ideological-perceptive utopia—looking for the land of perfection; for the land of perfection is nothing more than the placeless place. Then utopia is a logical-paradox, but also, it is an imaginative and a real thing and at the same time, it is a being in it-self. In *it-self*, for our needs to survive and to hope because; where there are no hopes and no human dreams, there is no progress and no innovative processes for betterment. Therefore, utopia is the natural synthesis of the abstract and of the concrete thought, of the tangible and of the intangible world, of the visible and of the invisible reality; engaged together and thus producing a state of being which, we call it: dreaming of a state of perfection and *individual justice* as opposed to a *collective justice*—because, it is the *individual freedom* as that which, we have been searching and promotion so far in this discourse, and not the *parasitic communist* and *egalitarian-collectivism*.

In the end, we aim justice and it is the notion of fairness and of a just system that we place as the common denominator of utopianism. Some will reject the fact that utopia is a state of being-in-it-self, saying that utopia is null and void or ex-nihilo or a non-being; therefore, it does not exist and that dreaming does not matter. We do not know whether this argument if true or false. What we do know; however, it is the fact that humans of different epochs and backgrounds and beliefs have attempted to fabricate or build on utopian principles, and there are many that attempted to do so. Most of them, if not all failed, because the utopias they created turned out to be oppressive, exclusive, rigid dystopias—there were no platforms that could be sustained—they operated in isolation as a counterforce to the previous state of affairs or of the regime in that given situation on the ground. As a result these

utopias became total dystopias, regimes of totalitarianism or oppression and operated as states of theological or fascistic dogmas, etc. Thus, these outcomes bunkerized the human capacity, freedom of thought, and expression—they produced a paranoiac behavior and an irrational political action. The same applies to the domain of arts because as Badiou emphasized, arts do change our life, experience and behavior, because arts transcend the power of imagination, dream and action. Hope and dreams catapult the condition of our reality.

Finally, we say that utopia is needed or it is an exigency to exist because, we build our lives on dreams and hopes, for as long as utopia does not become a *militant* utopia. As naive as it is, utopian predilection is the only viable platform or the stage of human action and dreaming, as that which we could attain the realization of hopes, and materialize our imaginations into a tangible reality. Utopian thinking is an exuberant pure virtuous or sinless dream. This pristine hope of utopianism as a being for it-self—utopia is a catalyst, or an impetus or a stimulant to oppose the harshness or the brutalities and the rawness of our political reality. There has not been a single epoch or generation that did not create a utopian society; politically, socially, theologically, culturally, scientifically and artistically. Each one of us is a utopian atom. Utopia is an infinite pathway of human existence.

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