The dialectic of utopian images of the future within the idea of progress☆

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A B S T R A C T

F. Polak and K. Mannheim's reconceptualization of the role of the utopist as a radical/revolutionary who acts to shatter present reality and reconstruct it according to a vision of the future is evaluated in the light of K. Popper's critique of utopian engineering; also, Popper's proposal of piecemeal engineering is critiqued and found deficient. Polak's thesis of a vital image of the future is tested on the basis of J. B. Bury's idea of progress and found to be modern-born. The historic roots of the dominant utopian image of the future (within the idea of progress) are clarified as the technological/consumer society within industrial civilization. However, as this modern thesis become dystopic, an antithesis, in the form of utopian socialism, emerged to contend with the dominant utopian image of the future throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The dialectical struggle between contending utopic images of the future within the idea of progress brought about the progressivesocialist synthesis, which in turn, opposed by reactionary neoliberalism (a "counter-utopia), has realized a new, postmodern thesis – as global sustainable development – a reconstructed, 21st century utopian image of the future.

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One could say that the encounter between utopia and the idea of progress is a double movement: utopian discourse assimilates the themes peculiar to the idea of progress, by transforming them; on the other hand, historical discourse adapts and modifies utopian themes (B. Baczko, in Utopian Lights, p. 114).

In F. Polak's foundational contribution to futures studies (Polak, 1971a), he posits social critique and systematic reconstruction as the fundamental criterion of a "utopist," whose utopia serves as a "... buffer for the future, as a driving force toward the future, and as a trigger for social progress" (p. 178). The utopist is an "eternal questioner," writes Polak (1971a), the "prototype of the revolutionary and radical spirit," whose task is to hold up two mirrors—"one to reflect the contemporary generation, and one to reflect a counter-image of a possible future" (p. 179). Polak's characterization of a utopist is strikingly similar to that of Mannheim (1949), who writes that only those "orientations transcending reality will be referred to by us as utopian which, when they pass over into conduct, tend to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time" (p. 173). The reconceptualization of a utopist as a radical or revolutionary who acts to shatter

present reality and then reconstructs it according to his/her vision of the future is justified in order to distinguish between the passive (thus harmless to the status quo) otherworldly dreamer and the proactive thinker who does not merely engage in idle philosophical speculations about the future or "science fiction," but also *acts into this world* as a catalyst to realize a better future. As Mannheim (1949) relates, though an "ideological" state of mind be "incongruent with reality," it is not yet "utopist"—one can only be "utopist" when one actualizes the utopia and proactively works to "burst the bonds of the existing order" (p. 173)[1].

Within Polak's "two mirrors" of the revolutionary utopist, the one reflecting "the contemporary generation" represents the function of social critique since it involves self-reflection as a trigger for social evolution—through the unpacking of the fundamental assumptions and values underlying the belief system that forms and permeates the structure of a particular society or civilization. In other words, by exposing implicit assumptions in the idealist structures of a paradigm, one obtains objective social consciousness, which leads to foresight concerning social evolution, development, activism, and (at times) revolution. The assumption is that, when armed with such consciousness, the image of the future is clarified; consequently, the door is open for "reconstruction"—the function of the "other mirror" in the realization of alternative futures as venues for social change.

However, Polak and Mannheim's recasting of the utopist as a radical revolutionary is problematic, to say the least. As pointed out by Popper (1966), the radical utopist pursues ideologically fixed utopian "ends" and often justifies and advocates violent means to achieve such ends. It is the "uncompromising *radicalism*" prepared to make wholesale, sweeping changes to wipe the slate clean in order to construct or realize its ultimate political aim or Ideal society that Popper (1966) objects to and regards as "dangerous" (p. 157, 161–162, 164). Its historicism and asceticism jettisons reason and replaces it with "a desperate hope for political miracles" in order to realize the utopist's "dreams of a beautiful world"—springing from an intoxication that is essentially Romanticist at heart, appealing to "our emotions rather than reason" (p. 168). Also, the implementation of the utopian blueprint usually leads to a centralization of power (rule by the few or dictator), and since the ultimate aim is uncompromising and has abandoned reason, differences of opinion among utopists often leads, "... in the absence of rational methods, to the use of power instead of reason, i.e. to violence" (p. 161).

Popper (1966) notes a number of problems related to utopian engineering, which he says is nothing more than "the application of the experimental method to society" for the sake of social reconstruction as a whole, based on a blueprint of the ultimate aim. For the success of this social experiment, countless sacrifices are made, and powerful interests get involved (p. 163). However, since this large-scale social reconstruction effort necessarily takes place over long periods of time, ideas and ideals change, so the successors of the grand project may not view the blueprint the same way as those who originally conceived it; especially as the experiment meets certain social challenges during implementation, the ultimate aim begins to change during "... the process of its realization. It may at any moment turn out that the steps so far taken actually lead away from the realization of the new aim. And if we change our direction according to the new aim, then we expose ourselves to the same risk again. In spite of all the sacrifices made, we may never get anywhere at all." (p. 160). Because the experimental method involved in utopian engineering has no experience to base itself upon, the practical consequences of such sweeping changes are difficult to predict and often lead to social catastrophe; hence, states Popper (1966), "*it is not reasonable to assume that a complete reconstruction of our social world would lead at once to a workable system*" (p. 167).

What Popper (1966) advocates, instead, is what he calls "piecemeal engineering" in which a blueprint of society and ideal state does not necessarily play a significant role in the pursuit of happiness and perfection on earth; in fact, rather than focusing on achieving the greatest good, the piecemeal engineer will, instead, adopt the "method of searching for, and fighting against, the greatest and most urgent *evils* [my emphasis] of society..." (p. 158 As Popper (1966) relates, it is easier to reach "... a reasonable agreement about existing evils and the means of combating them than it is about an ideal good and the means of its realization" (p. 159). Also, rather than large-scale reconstruction efforts involving the whole of society, piecemeal social experiments are carried out incrementally, on a small-scale, under realistic conditions, which permits for repeated experiments and continual readjustments. Even if we consider the possibility of wholesale reconstruction efforts, they can only work where the piecemeal method "... has furnished us first with a great number of detailed experiences, and even then only within the realm of these experiences" (p. 164), for the experiment we learn most from is one that proceeds rationally with the alteration of one social institution at a time; only in this way can we learn how to

> ... fit institutions into the framework of other institutions, and how to adjust them so that they work according to our intentions. And only in this way can we make mistakes, and learn from our mistakes, without risking repercussions of a gravity that must endanger the will to future reforms (p. 163).

Popper's piecemeal engineering – a method distinguished by reason, pragmatism, incrementalism, and compromise – has been the prevailing approach to purposeful social change in modern society while revolutionary utopian efforts at wholesale social reconstruction do not have a very good track record—a checkered history at best. Accordingly, it must be granted that Popper's criticism of utopian engineering accurately points out the defects of the radical approach to social change that Polak and Mannheim seem to advocate. On the other hand, Popper's piecemeal approach, which he paints in glowing terms, has defects that Popper completely ignores; moreover, Popper's analysis does not appreciate the historical role of the utopist

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[1] Here we encounter echoes of Feuerbach and Marx, who both sought to reconceptualize the role of the philosopher (then personified in the figure of Hegel) as one who does not merely interpret history but actively works to change its course.

revolutionary and the utopian image of the future, which can inspire and guide a society and civilization with its holistic vision and systematic approach to social change.

If we investigate Popper's piecemeal approach closely, its defects become apparent. For one thing, the piecemeal approach does not provide an overall understanding of the structure or systemic nature of the society in question; thus, even though independent improvements are made, because of certain inherent contradictions and systemic defects in the structure as a whole, the society or civilization in question could be unravelling and disintegrating from within, especially if the civilization is based on a runaway capitalism on the path of overshoot and collapse. In this scenario, due to its ignorance of fundamental contradictions eating away at the core of society, the piecemeal approach is blind and useless. Because the piecemeal approach denies the interconnected nature of society and is short-sighted, it lacks a coherent, holistic vision of the future, and as Polak points out, civilizations that lack an image of the future are not able to adequately meet the challenges of the future and thus die out. A coherent, holistic image of the future, based on an understanding of the overall structure of society, is better able to remedy structural defects and employ foresight to help meet the challenges of the future. Popper's piecemeal approach can be likened to free market ideology – the belief in a mythical "invisible hand" – which is "invisible" because it does not exist, at least not in relation to the overall development or evolution of society. In other words, it may or may not exist in relation to the market itself, but if the market is impervious to its overall effects on society or the environment, then the invisible hand could, in fact, lead to social disintegration and civilizational collapse. Certain piecemeal societal improvements, willy-nilly, are incapable of preventing the collapse of civilization due to inherent contradictions and systemic defects. Though Popper rightly points out dangers of utopian engineering and radical restructuring of society, his piecemeal approach, by itself, is an unsatisfactory solution.

Thus, although one should certainly be aware of the dangers of utopian engineering, one should also not "throw the baby out with the bathwater" by disavowing the role of utopian images of the future in civilizational evolution. Popper's piecemeal approach is a progressive view, very much in line with the idea of progress; however, because this idea of progress is divorced from utopian images of the future, it is not sustainable. Piecemeal engineering is an evolutionary approach that betrays an ignorance of the overall design and direction of society; on the other hand, while the utopian view is revolutionary and can be radical, it does exhibit an understanding of structural and systemic defects of society, which it attempts to address through fundamental social change towards a vision of the future—yet if it becomes too ideological and impatiently divorces itself from the evolutionary approach to social change, it can be dangerous, as Popper points out. My thesis is that *both* are necessary components of the dialectic of utopian images of the future within the idea of progress, which is at the same time evolutionary *and* revolutionary, is historical, and can be used as a basis for a prognosis of the future of humanity[2].

1. The origins of the idea of progress and Utopic images of the future in modern times

Polak asserts the image of the future as a prime mover of social and historical development; for this reason, *The Image of the Future* can be considered as an example of historical idealism. As a matter of fact, Polak (1971a) unabashedly regards himself as a historical idealist, writing,

> As between two opposing schools of thought, historical materialism and historical idealism, we favor the latter. The primary forces in history are not propelled by a system of production, nor by industrial or military might, but rather by the underlying ideas, ideals, values, and norms that manage to achieve mass appeal (p. 14)[3].

However, historical idealism and philosophy of history tend to become ideological such that those sources in support of the idea propounded are emphasized while those that do not are ignored. For example, while Polak presents a convincing case for the historical relevance of an image of the future pulling modern, Western civilization in its direction, the same cannot be said for supposed ancient and medieval images of the future based on Greek mythology and Judeo-Christian eschatology; on the contrary, as Bury (1932) demonstrates, the social and historical conditions were not propitious to the idea of progress for those societies, and if not favorably inclined for the idea of progress to emerge, why would we think that images of the future would play a significant role? Polak's arguments for pre-modern images of the future seem forced and unconvincing as he strains to fit those epochs into the historical idealist box. While the Christian synthesis suggested the idea of progress, through which is it possible for a dynamic image of the future to emerge, the ideas of Providence, cyclical time, and original sin were still too strong for the idea of progress to matter much, and if the idea of progress did not matter much, neither did the image of the future.

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[2] The "dialectic" here, as enunciated by Ollman (1993), is understood as a way of ". . . uniting in thought the past and probable future of any ongoing process at the expense (temporary expense) of its relations in the broader system. And it is a way of sensitizing oneself to the inevitability of change, both quantitative and qualitative, even before research has helped us to discover what it is . . . it does encourage research into patterns and trends of a kind that enables one to project the likely future, and it does offer a framework for integrating such projections into one's understanding of the present and the past. . . . With dialectics we are made to question what kind of changes are already occurring and what kind of changes are possible." (p. 15, 19).

[3] Also, in *Prognostics*, Polak (1971b) quotes Dr. Erich Jantsch that a "central idea," acting at a given moment, "also – spread out over time – guides the historical development towards that set of goals . . . which gives the notion of 'long range normative forecasting'"; Polak (1971b) points out that this was exactly his purpose in *The Image of the Future* – to demonstrate by means of ". . . a broad historical analysis that . . . inspiring and idealistic *visions of the future* in the past have to a very significant extent *de*termined or at least greatly *influenced*, later development towards what was then the future" (p. 402).

Images of the future in ancient and medieval societies argued by Polak are, at best, eschatological and ideological images that were too iconoclastic to be able to bring about the kind of social change that Polak himself advocated as the mission of the utopist; in other words, because these images were not able to meet the fundamental criterion of social critique and systematic reconstruction of society, social change progressed very, very slow—if at all. The Greek and Roman images Polak mentions could just as well be interpreted as images of cultural identity while Jewish and Christian images of the Kingdom of God emphasized God's predestination and intervention rather than humanity's efforts to realize the future[4]. For all practical purposes, future consciousness did not factor in the worldviews of ancient and medieval civilizations: the image of the future, as a vibrant, dynamic force pulling society forward, is truly a modern-born phenomenon, whose utopian nature forms a dialectical relationship within the idea of progress[5].

Only through the advent of the Renaissance and Reformation did the feudalistic structure of medieval society begin to change as the idea of progress and the modern image of the future were conceived as dynamic, realizable pursuits for humankind. For the first time in history, the idea of progress and the image of the future took hold of the social consciousness and imagination, exerting a powerful influence that formed the motif of the modern era. Even in the early stages of development, the reconstructive, alternative worldview represented a dramatic shift from the cohesive, theocratic, "hereafter" orientation of the Middle Ages. Polak (1971a) describes Renaissance man as a "split-man" with one foot still in the Middle Ages and the other foot "forward" in space and time. (p. 86) Torn loose from the "cohesion of the here-after oriented Middle Ages," man is driven by "... an inner necessity to reshape this world and to shape new Other worlds in time and space ..." (p. 95).

While Bury focuses on the historical importance of the idea of progress, Polak emphasizes instead the importance of the image of the future; however, my contention is that *both* are entwined, that utopic images of the future are essential to the idea of progress since utopia provides direction to progress, and just as the idea of progress gave birth to the utopic, modern image of the future, the image of the future has no relevancy outside of the idea of progress since it would have no viable way to realize its utopic vision—no *systematic*, (i.e., "progressive") reconstruction of society. As such, *both* represent the inseparable "means" and "ends" of dialectical history in the modern era[6].

The dialectical nature of history is due to contending utopic images of the future within the idea of progress as well as efforts to tease progress and utopia apart, that is, to treat them asymmetrically. For example, implicit in Popper's idea of progress is his piecemeal idea of continuous, perpetual social change towards an indefinite, presumably "better" state. In this respect, the values of freedom and democracy are vital to the idea of progress in an "open" society; however, its indefinite treatment of utopia deemphasizes and disallows the ideas of perfection and stability, and so no real direction, no "ends," is assumed. The fundamental character of the de-utopianized idea of progress is its fluidity; fluctuating, shifting, and indefinite, it does not break with the past nor the present but is continuous and evolutionary, containing more of the same, while at the same time gradually assimilating the new or "other"—yet it does not admit nor incorporate the notion of discontinuous change, revolution, or fundamental reconstruction as do utopic images of the future.

Utopic images of the future depict an essentially stable order of society, often containing the ideas of perfection and/or sustainability; also, as Polak asserts, the utopic image of the future involves social critique and systematic reconstruction, which means that it incorporates discontinuous change and possibly revolution as the means for attaining the utopia. By emphasizing social critique, it maintains its base in the present, yet "systematic reconstruction" indicates the *means* for achieving the utopia; hence, the viable utopia has one foot planted in the present, and the other is in the future—one in the ideal and one in the real—with an indication of a synthesis based on the *evolutionary* idea of progress and a *revolutionary* utopic image of the future.

However, asymmetric treatments of progress and utopia inevitably fail, for they not only lead to denial of the other but self-denial as well. In other words, despite attempts at denial of utopic thinking, the idea of progress has always contained an implicit, deep-seated, subconscious utopia at work in the social imagination—inevitably appearing as industrial civilization and the technological/consumerist society. Even Polak, who illustrated the importance of the image of the future, was nevertheless unable to concretely identify and describe the nature of the modern image of the future. Perhaps this was because he was yet a child of modernity; at any rate, now that we live in late modern/postmodern times, we are afforded clearer insight into the role that yesteryear's images of the future played. Now, we are more conscious of the powerful role that utopian images played in *pulling* us towards yesteryear's future. The seeds of the future were planted in modernity and watered by the idea of progress and its utopic images, to realize over time the industrial civilization and technological/ consumer society we live in today; in other words, for the first time in history, the future did not come about haphazardly but was, instead, created out the idea of progress, upheld by the utopic images of the future that the people of modernity believed in, followed, and progressively worked towards.

During the Enlightenment, the idea of progress, through advances in science and technology (as well as the inception of the Protestant ethic), held an implicit utopic image of the future in the form of bourgeois, capitalist society and industrial civilization while, at the same time, a more revolutionary, explicit image of the future, that of utopian socialism, challenged the mainstream, implicit utopia. These conflicting images of the future reflect contending worldviews engaged in dialectical

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[4] See Morgan (2002) for more discussion of the image of the future in relation to the idea of progress.

[5] Kumar (1991) also notes how early and medieval Christianity "produced no utopia," that the "absence of utopia in the Middle Ages is generally accepted," and how utopia was "born with modernity," as a "secular variety of social thought ... a creation of Renaissance humanism." (p. 35, 51, 112).

[6] Ollman (1993) contends that the value of the dialectic mode of analysis is that it exposes inherent contradictions in a system; such contradictions offer the "... optimal means for bringing ... change and interaction as regards present and future into a single focus. The future finds its way into this focus as the likely and possible outcomes of the interaction of these opposing tendencies in the present, as their real potential." (p. 16).

struggle, from which a synthesis emerges; thus, the idea of progress began to incorporate utopian socialism, in the form of the welfare state—a "New Deal" in response to the Great Depression. The post WW II era during the latter part of the 20th century, then, is a time when the progressive-socialist synthesis was able to develop and crystalize into democratic socialism and social democracies worldwide, while revolutionary, radically socialist images of the future, in the form of communism, upheld by force or threat of force, became dystopian and disintegrated. After the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, as the U.S. and multinational corporations emerged as global powers, neoliberalism arose too, as a reactionary effort to purge the progressive-socialist synthesis of its utopia (its "socialist" elements), which marks the present era of globalized capitalism within industrial civilization and technological/consumerist society.

2. Images of the future within the idea of progress: Utopian or dystopian?

Though seldom recognized, implicit within the idea of progress is its utopian vision of the future; in fact, this utopic vision is so powerful that the idea of progress would be meaningless without it. Moreover, social science cannot function well without recognizing the importance of utopia; as Aldridge (2003) explains, explicitly or implicitly, social science "… offers us descriptions, visions and blueprints of the good society. Even when it claims to be realistic its utopian strand is unmissable. Although it may be unscientific, utopianism addresses fundamental aspects of human society…. Without a utopian vision of a better world we may find no antidote to despair." (p. 53) Kumar (1991) concurs, writing that all social theory, "is utopian or has a utopian dimension … deals in imaginary worlds where impossibly pure or ideal principles reign: states where sovereignty is actually operative, constitutions where powers are truly divided, democracies where the people really rule. The fiction of social theory does not in this respect differ much from the fiction of utopia." (p. 31). In fact, one can argue that the importance of utopic visions of the future is one reason why futures/foresight studies emerged as a distinct discipline that attempts (to some extent) to integrate the social sciences through the research of holistic, utopic visions or blueprints connecting the social sciences, without which they tend to fracture and even become dysfunctional. So, if holistic, utopic visions of the future can serve as a kind of "glue" of the social sciences and are at the core of the idea of progress, then what *are* these visions of the good society in the future? Can we imagine and analyze them clearly; if so, how does this understanding help to reconstruct and realize our common future beyond modern and postmodern times in the 21st century?

For one thing, we should be aware that every utopia contains its dystopian opposite. As Aldridge (2003) continues, whereas "utopia," as originally used by Sir Thomas More, meant "nowhere," the meaning has shifted in modern times to eutopia, which means "a good place"[7]; thus, "… the term word 'dystopia' was invented to connote a bad place. Utopia expresses desire, dystopia fear…. Apparent utopias typically conceal a grotesque secret." (p. 53). Certainly, the "grotesque secret" is out, for the dark side of the utopic visions of the future within the idea of progress have played out over the course of the 20th century, resulting in two world wars and a great depression, while the current mega-crisis of industrial civilization and technological/consumerist society threatens more lethal dystopias on the horizon.

So, due to this "grotesque secret," should we then purge all attempts at utopian thought? Even if it were possible to do so, it is not advisable since we would, at the same time, deny and prevent the positive role that utopian images of the future play. Perhaps, now that we are conscious of their positive role as well as their dystopian potential, instead of denying and preventing utopian images of the future, why not allow the dialectical process to flow freely, that is, with systematic and continuous construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of utopian images of the future? This dialectic is not so much focused on the idea of progress as it is on the utopic images of the future *within* the idea of progress. Because the idea of "progress," like that of "development," is mostly a subjective matter, the positive content of the idea can be retained while, at the same time, continually refined; that is, since the idea of progress is defined by its utopic vision of the future, by focusing on the content and quality of the utopic vision, the idea of progress will automatically be redefined in the dialectical process.

In fact, the purging of utopia is not only problematic but can also be part of a reactionary strategy, as demonstrated by historical analysis of the rise of neoliberalism. For example, the emergence of U.S. and multinational corporations as dominant global powers after the end of the Cold War was accompanied by the emergence of a neoliberalist doctrine seeking to purge the progressive-socialist synthesis of its utopian socialist elements. Neoliberalism is considered reactionary because it does not intend to replace the socialist utopian image of the future with an alternate vision of the future; instead, it advocates a repudiation of the progressive-socialist synthesis in favor of a *return* to the modernist idea of progress based on the classical liberalist *laissez faire* economics model for the global expansion of an American-led industrial civilization and technological/consumerist society[8]. The only thing "new" about it is that it represents the globalization of capitalism as a hegemonic, postmodernist project in the form of Empire[9]. Granted, there have been some developmental benefits of neoliberal-led globalization; nevertheless, the overall, long-term assessment revolves around the critical question of

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[7] See Kumar (1991): "Utopia is nowhere (*outopia*) and it is also somewhere good (*eutopia*)" (p. 1).

[8] Stiglitz (2006) writes that neoliberal globalization has often been used to advance "a version of market economics that is more extreme, and more reflective of corporate interests than can be found even in the U.S." (p. 10) Klein's thesis (Klein, 2007) is that, more often than not, countries have been pressured and forced to implement neoliberal policies through what she refers to as a form of American-style shock therapy.

[9] Hardt and Negri (2001) posit "Empire" as the postmodernist network or "biopower" that is truly global and extends well beyond imperialism in that Empire "… establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a *decentered* and *deterritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers… The distinct national colors of the imperialist map of the world have merged and blended in the imperial global rainbow." (in "Preface," xiii).

whether this hegemonic globalization project will play out as utopia or dystopia. Historically, since the dialectic of utopian images of the modern future has already evolved into a progressive-socialist synthesis, according to the needs and desires of the existing social reality of the times[10], and given that neoliberal globalization by hegemonic powers mostly represents a reactionary effort to hold on to a flawed utopic image of modernity, one can only conclude that, despite provisional economic benefits and its postmodernist phenomenal character as "biopower," it is largely a dystopian image of the future, fighting to maintain its lost status through a global manoeuvre. Essentially, anti-utopian neoliberal ideology springs from a conservative mentality, which according to Mannheim (1949), "has no utopia," or at least is a "counter-utopia" that "serves as a means of self-orientation and defense" as it "discovers its idea only ex post facto . . . . It was its liberal opponent who, so to speak, forced it into this arena of conflict." (p. 206–208). In this case, "its liberal opponent" is the progressive-socialist image of the future, which it attempts to purge.

3. The historic rise of the idea of progress and the modern image of the future

It might be instructive here to give further treatment to the historic rise of the idea of progress, which formed the modern image of the future. Throughout modernity, the dominant (implicit) utopic image of the future within the idea of progress has been that of the "guiding hand" of the mythical free market system, which promises to deliver a technological paradise of goods and services for all to consume. This model of happiness, now exported globally as an extension of the American Dream, to some extent has its earliest roots, at the beginning of the modern era, in the utopia depicted by Bacon (2000), *The New Atlantis*. Bacon, who sought the reform of science through experimentation, is known for anointing science with its purpose—to pry open the secrets of nature; for Bacon, science was not for speculative satisfaction but to establish man's dominion of nature. Bacon "sounded the modern note," writes Bury (1932), when he assigned "utility" as the end of knowledge; he sought to "increase men's happiness and mitigate their sufferings . . ." (p. 51–52). The pure novelty of Bacon's view of science lies in the utilitarian purpose he assigns to it—its "usefulness" to humankind; thus, to ". . . increase knowledge is to extend the dominion of man over nature, and so to increase his comfort and happiness, so far as these depend on external circumstances" (p. 58). Bacon implies that ". . . happiness on earth was an end to be pursued for its own sake," according to Bury (1932), "an axiom which any general doctrine of Progress must presuppose" (p. 59).

Bury (1932) contrasts Bacon's utopia in *The New Atlantis* with Plato's *Republic*; while Plato's utopia depicts a stable, solid, unchanging, ordered society, Bacon depicts an imaginary community that achieves "dominion over nature by progressive discoveries" (p. 60). The stark contrast between *The Republic* and *The New Atlantis* symbolizes the contrasting world-views of the Ancients and Moderns. For example, Plato's utopia has no relationship to the idea of progress, with no indication of systematic reconstruction as the means by which to realize the utopia, while Bacon casts his utopia *within* the idea of progress; his "scientific investigators" anticipate today's technocrats, engineers, and professional managers of the technological society, who contribute to social progress through scientific enterprise and expertise.

Bacon, along with Rene Descartes, were principal transitional figures at the dawning of the modern era because their radical social critique completely broke with the past; more significantly, they engaged in systematic reconstruction of the image of the future through philosophy of science, placing it on sure grounds, to give birth to the idea of progress in the image of the technological society. Of course, this idea would not have taken hold of the social imagination if actual scientific discoveries and inventions were not occurring simultaneously at an accelerating rate to bring about the industrial revolution and industrial civilization. As one historian, Weisenger (1968), describes it, in their estimation, what distinguished the

> modern period was the rise of science, which to them meant the discoveries and the new information they uncovered, the invention of instruments the ancients had not known, the effects of these inventions, and finally the application of science toward more discoveries and inventions in increasing numbers of disciplines so that the outlook for the future was not one of sameness but of continuous change and change to the better" (p. 76-7).

Equipped with Cartesian reasoning and Baconian empiricism, scientific progress rapidly expanded to capture the social imagination with its utilitarian image of modern man and the boundless future. Through the methodical application of reason and empirical observations, nature's laws were progressively uncovered in order to secure men's happiness by providing for their material needs, comforts, and desires.

The scientific paradise depicted by Bacon (2000) contains a number of implicit assumptions about the nature and purpose of progress. Social progress is tied to scientific progress, which, in turn, is unrestrained in its conquest and transformation of nature for a utilitarian, production/consumer-oriented happiness. Adams (1968) illustrates how the

> boldest emphasis is laid on the idea that the main purpose of applied science is to bring forth endless, ever-increasing torrents of usable inventions and luxuries, or "fruits" for the delight of a supposedly insatiable public, perpetually in raptures over the latest, most novel productions of the laboratories and factories (149).

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[10] Mannheim (1949) writes that it is a ". . . very essential feature of modern history that in the gradual organization for collective action social classes become effective in transforming historical reality only when their aspirations are embodied in utopias appropriate to the changing situation. . . . If we may speak of social and historical differentiations of utopian ideas, then we must ask ourselves the question whether the form and substance that they have at any given time is not to be understood through a concrete analysis of the historical-social position in which they arose. In other words, the key to the intelligibility of utopias is the structural situation of that social stratum which at any given time espouses them." (p. 187).

Thus, in contrast with Shakespeare's depiction of man as "most noble in reason and godlike apprehension,"[11] in Bacon's philosophy, s/he is transformed into *homo consumptor*, as a "sort of belly capable of almost infinite distention" (Adams, 1968, p. 150). Moreover, the assumption of this idea of progress is the fatal notion that *moral* progress necessarily follows from social and scientific progress. While Bacon advocated man's absolute right over nature in the unfettered scientific pursuit of knowledge and power, at the same time, he was confident that "'right reason and sound religion will teach him how to apply it'" (Adams, 1968, p. 154)[12]. However, the notion that moral progress mysteriously follows from material progress is a credulous, even dangerous assumption that invites either social catastrophe or disintegration, for wisdom does not necessarily follow from knowledge, as has been witnessed during the course of the 20th century and is at the root of the civilizational crisis we face today.

The assumption that moral progress goes hand in hand with material progress is also reflected in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (Smith, 2005) (first published in 1776), for Smith was as much of a moral philosopher as he was an economist. According to Harvey (2000), it was Smith's reflections on the theory of moral sentiments that led him to "propose a utopianism of process in which individual desires, avarice, greed, drives, creativity, and the like could be mobilized through the hidden hand of the perfected market to the social benefit of all" (p. 175). This "utopianism of process" became the implicit yet dominant utopia expressed in the idea of progress at the dawn of the industrial revolution; it is a process-oriented, piecemeal utopianism that relies upon "the rational activities of 'economic man' in a context of perfected markets"—by far "the most powerful utopianism of process throughout the history of capitalism..." (Harvey, 2000, p. 175).

Of course, the "hidden hand" and the "perfected market" are mythical, yet these myths became the theoretical basis for political programs aimed at eliminating state interference and regulation of the "perfected" market so that the market would be absolutely "free" to work its wonders for the benefit of all[13]. As Harvey (2000) relates, *laissez faire*, free trade, and properly

> constituted markets became the mantras of the nineteenth-century political economists. Give free markets room to flourish, then all will be well with the world. And this, of course, is the ideology that has become so dominant in certain of the advanced capitalist countries (most notably the United States and Britain) these last twenty years. This is the system to which, we are again and again told, 'there is no alternative'.... For more than twenty years now we have been battered and cajoled at almost every turn into accepting the utopianism of process of which Smith dreamed as the solution to all our ills. We have also witnessed an all-out assault on those institutions–trade unions and government in particular–that might stand in the way of such a project (p. 175-6).

Furthermore, this process-oriented utopianism (Popper's "piecemeal engineering") not only idolizes the marketplace of the "open" society but also creates another form of idolatry – the idolatry of "technique" – whereby "means" becomes an end in itself—a utopianism by default. Though rarely recognized, it is nevertheless ubiquitous, and along with the "hidden hand" of the "perfected market" (the ever-expanding/accelerating capitalist engine) constitutes the technological society as the dominant utopian image of the modern future. In extraordinary, painstaking detail Ellul (1964) describes how "our civilization is constructed by technique (makes a part of civilization only what belongs to technique)... in that everything in this civilization must serve a technical end ... is exclusively technique (in that it excludes whatever is not technique or reduces it to technical form)" (p. 128)—an "inversion" that distinctively marks the modern era. Ellul (1964) notes how technique once only *belonged* to a civilization, as merely "a single element among a host of nontechnical activities;" today, however, is quite different, for

> *technique has taken over the whole of civilization.* Certainly, technique is no longer the simple machine substitute for human labor. It has come to be the 'intervention into the very substance not only of the inorganic but also of the organic.' (p. 128)

Contrary to conventional opinion, Ellul (1964) argues that humankind does not master technique for its own "happiness," nor for "good" or "evil"; rather, technique is impervious to moral judgment, as it does not accept the ".. existence of rules outside itself, or of any norm. Still less will it accept any judgment upon it. As a consequence, no matter where it penetrates, what it does is permitted, lawful, justified." (p. 142). Elaborating on the autonomous nature of technique, Ellul (1964) contends that technique is totally "irrelevant" to the notion of human good; instead, it evolves in "a purely causal way: the combination of preceding elements furnishes the new technical elements. There is no purpose or plan that is progressively realized. There is not even a tendency toward human ends. We are dealing with a phenomenon blind to the future, in a domain of integral causality." (p. 97–98). Hence, due to the autonomous nature of the evolution of technical systems, humans increasingly do *not* play a part; instead, technical elements

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[11] From *Hamlet*.
[12] Quoting Bacon (2000).
[13] Ironically, state intervention is only invoked to protect freedom from itself since free market institutions need to be secured and monopolies curbed. Neoliberalism contains a fundamental contradiction, as Harvey (2000) points out: "If free markets, as is their wont, undermine state powers, then they destroy the conditions of their own functioning. Conversely, if state power is vital to the functioning of markets, then the preservation of that power requires the perversion of freely functioning markets." (p. 180).

combine among themselves, and they do so more and more spontaneously. In the future, man will apparently be confined to the role of a recording device; he will note the effects of techniques upon one another, and register the results (Ellul [18], p. 93).

Thus do we arrive at a depiction of the technological/consumerist society, powered by the engine of ever-expanding capitalism – as the modern image of the future – the dominant utopia within the idea of progress. Yet the question remains: is this a utopia or dystopia? Surely, Bacon's utopia did not foresee the other side of the coin—the dystopian dimensions of an autonomous technological society that dominates human activity and nature with ever-increasing intensity, producing man in its image just as man produces the machine in his image[14]; nor did Smith's implicit utopia understand the inherent contradictions and brutal nature of free-market utopianism. As Harvey (2000) relates, it took Marx to deconstruct Smith's "utopianism of process that relied upon the rational activities of 'economic man' in a context of perfected markets" (p. 175). With relentless and irrefutable logic, Marx showed the inevitable consequences of an unregulated, free-market capitalism, which can only survive by "'sapping the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the laborer,' making the despoliation and degradation of relation to nature just as important as the devaluation and debasement of the laborer" (Harvey, 2000, p. 175). However, before Marx mounted his devastating attack on the utopianism of process, the utopian socialists had already anticipated the dystopian nature of the technological/consumerist society.

4. The utopian socialist challenge to the dominant image of the future

During the course of the Industrial Revolution it became apparent that the promised utopian paradise was flawed. Admittedly, the Industrial Revolution did deliver an unmistakable measure of progress towards the betterment of society for much of the civilized world; nevertheless, at the same time, much of the world did not benefit and was, instead, exploited as the "price of progress" for the benefit of those in the so-called civilized world. Moreover, even in the "first world," the lives of many workers suffered brutally in the "dark Satanic mills"[15]—a stark contrast to the promised paradise. Hence, a number of intellectuals argued that the "price" was too great, that it benefitted too few while far too many were living in a dystopia rather than the utopian vision of the future that the idea of progress held. This criticism of the dominant utopian image of the future led to a reconstruction of the image of the future to that of utopian socialism, which as an alternate vision of the future, contended with the dominant utopian image throughout the 19th and 20th centuries[16].

The term "utopian socialist" was originally coined by Marx and Engels (1848), who used it derisively to dismiss the theories and efforts of early socialist (or quasi-socialist) thinkers/practitioners such as Robert Owen, Henri de Saint-Simon, and Charles Fourier as fanciful, piecemeal, reactionary, subjective, and unscientific because they were not grounded in historical materialism[17]. It is ironic that Marx and Engels poked fun at the utopian socialists and dismissed their utopias out of hand as being unrealistic when, as a matter of fact, Owens, Saint-Simon, and Fourier made extraordinary efforts to implement their respective utopias in the real world as alternative, viable societies *within* the idea of progress. As Guarneri (Guarneri, 1991) explains, each of these utopists, Fourier, Saint-Simon, and Robert Owen, criticized the emerging

> order from his particular vantage point and projected a 'new world' as its obverse image. Saint-Simon saw the gulf between the propertied and propertyless in postrevolutionary France and envisioned a scientific elite, sanctified by a 'new Christianity,' as the saviors of society and administrators of the coming society. Robert Owen, living in the most advanced industrial society of the age, experimented with social engineering at his own factory in New Lanark, Scotland; there he evolved his plan for rational communism, which would later spread throughout Great Britain. Fourier's special subject was bourgeois society: with relentless sarcasm he exposed the 'respectable' crimes of competition and the hypocrisy of conventional morality; and with the precision of a true visionary he foresaw a 'harmonic society' in which the social equity would be automatically taken care of so that persons could devote their energies to expressing their inmost selves creatively . . . . About the same time that Saint-Simon issued his call for a new technological order and Owen was turning New Lanark into a model factory town, Fourier decided that the cure for the evils of competitive society was the establishment of small cooperative communities to unite persons of all types and classes so successfully that such experiments would expand rapidly throughout the world (p. 1–2).

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[14] I realize that I'm using gendered language here, but the metaphor of "man" and "his machine," from science fiction origins, is more powerful. Also, it could be argued that the "machine" is not gender neutral but a reflection of masculinity's obsession with power; in fact, male-dominated society could be at the root of problems related to machine civilization.

[15] Blake's (2007) famous phrase condemning the horrors of factory life at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.

[16] Mannheim (1949) explains that emerging utopias should not be regarded merely as a "unilinear filiation of one from the other" but that they come into existence and maintain themselves as "mutually antagonistic counter-utopias," which appear in connection with "certain definite social strata struggling for ascendancy" (p. 187).

[17] As Guarneri (1991) relates, the founders of communism admired ". . . the way these theorists 'attack[ed] every principle of existing society' and advocated a collectivist lifestyle, but they condemned communal experiments promising the 'disappearance of class antagonisms' as 'purely utopian' and 'contrived.' History progressed not through models of social harmony, they said, but according to the violent logic of class struggle." (p. 121).

Of course, their efforts were experimental, so failure accompanied success; nevertheless, these tangible communities produced real world results and served as models for future efforts as well as future reforms within the capitalist system and so represented a qualitative transformation of the idea of progress[18].

Marx and Engels, on the other hand, engaged in theoretical speculation and polemical diatribes to justify revolution on a grand scale—a mighty exercise in social critique and an ambitious project, no doubt, but one that fell quite short in terms of viable social reconstruction. This was due to the fact that while Marx and Engels provided an incisive, unparalleled critique of the dominant utopic image of the future, they, at the same time, mostly rejected the idea of progress—in other words, they focused too much on the necessity of proletariat *revolution* while largely rejecting the *evolution* of society as a transformation *within* the idea of progress. For example, Marx and Engels did not accept the legitimacy of liberal democracies based on natural law theories[19], nor did they accept (or foresee) political reform or the role of trade unions to negotiate better conditions for workers. Yes, it is true that Marx and Engels provided a theoretical model, in the form of historical materialism, for the evolutionary transformation of society; however, despite their efforts to ground their model in social and historical conditions, this evolutionary model proved to be scientifically untenable—ideology rather than science, as Giddens (1981), and a number of other scholars have demonstrated[20]. For one thing, after more than 150 years, history itself has not vindicated Marx and Engel's prediction that revolution would necessarily follow from the way the system works[21]. No doubt, one can cite a number of communist revolutions in the 20th century; however, since none of these followed the course of historical materialism that Marx and Engels prescribed, it is to no avail to refer to these examples, most of which can be regarded as dystopias rather than utopias due to the systematic mass murders of millions of people in the name of the communist utopias forcibly implemented.

One could just as easily throw back the same criticism that Marx and Engels dished out to the utopian socialists. Is not the classless society that Marx and Engels pronounced would magically emerge after the revolution an example of the same "fanciful" utopian imaginings that they charged the utopian socialists with? Where are the historical precedents for a classless society? The notion of the origins of "class" is problematic, to say the least. Perhaps class consciousness emerged, as Marx assumes, from the division of labor, but then again, could Marx's supposition be ideologically motivated and thus over-simplified? If the origins of class are more complex than Marx stated, should we assume that "class" will mysteriously disappear after the supposed proletariat revolution? As a matter of fact, after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, Lenin argued for the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as a temporary measure until the classless society would emerge; however, this dictatorship became a permanent feature of the Soviet Union—as power changed hands, a new ruling class quickly asserted itself as a new form of oppression, negating Marx and Engels' utopian prophecy and realizing a communist dystopia instead[22].

5. Marxist reevaluation and the emergence of the progressive–socialist synthesis

Nevertheless, despite the apparent failures of Marxist-inspired revolutions, Marx still serves as the definitive example of the revolutionary utopist described by Polak and Mannheim, for as a social and political creed, writes Bottomore (1964), Marxism "sets out directly a vision of a future condition of human society and a programme of action to realize it ...."; especially in the plans and policies of developing countries, it invokes an "ideal conception of society – a classless society, a welfare state, a co-operative commonwealth – which includes much more than an industrial economy" (p. 108–109). Baczko (1989) views Marxism as a dualist opposition of utopia and science, drawing an analogy between Marx's theory and "the 'fantasies' of utopians, what chemistry is to alchemy"; moreover, in relation to utopias, Baczko (1989) asserts, 'scientific'

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[18] As Kumar (1991) points out, the value of the utopian experimental communities is that they represent the "germ cells" of the new socialist society of the future, "the inspiration of the literary utopia when it revived at the end of the nineteenth century" (p. 62). Their influence can also be seen in the counter-cultural communes and ecotopian communities that have sprung up since the 1960s. (p. 78–79) Also, referring to the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels, 1848), Harvey (2000) expresses how the utopian socialists provided "valuable materials" for the "enlightenment of the working class," and that the "'practical measures proposed' were helpful as landmarks in the struggle to abolish class distinctions." (p. 195).

[19] See Femia (1993).

[20] As Giddens (1981) points out, many have attempted to declare Marxism "to be redundant or exhausted," citing Kolakowski (1978) as among "the most prominent of recent works that belong to the second of these categories" (p. 1). Though Giddens (Femia, 1993) does not identify himself with "implacable opponents of Marx" or "disillusioned ex-believers," he nevertheless rejects historical materialism as an overall theory of history for three reasons: (1) the "chief motor of social change" cannot be demonstrated as "'modes of the production of material life'" neither in "tribal or class-divided societies," nor can class struggle be chiefly attributed to it, (2) historical materialism is based upon "an ambiguous and badly flawed mixture of an ethnocentrically biased evolutionary scheme and a philosophical conception of history in which 'mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve'," and (3) Marx's conception of human nature is reductionist in that it classifies human beings merely "as above all tool-making and using animals," as if this were "the single most important criterion distinguishing the 'species being' of humanity from that of the animals"; summing up his critique of Marx's historical materialism, Giddens states: "Human life neither begins nor ends in production" (p. 155–156).

[21] Noble (2000), p. 91.

[22] This is precisely what the former Yugoslav Party leader, Djilas (1957) argued on the basis of his observations of the Soviet Union and at home, that the "... ruling Communist party had itself become a new class of officials and bureaucrats controlling the means of production, distribution, and exchange as well as everything else, and exploiting the laboring masses in the communist world much as the capitalist class did in the West" (Noble, 2000, p. 93) Bottomore (1964) also notes this theoretical weakness of Marx in that Marx never "... for a moment considers the possibility that under certain circumstances new social distinctions and a new ruling class might emerge in the society which succeeds capitalism; for example, from the dictatorship of the of the proletariat itself, which is so easily transformed into the tyranny of a party" (p. 136).

socialism has the capacity for both continuity and rupture—continuity because it incorporates that which it recognizes as scientifically valuable but rupture as well since it arms the proletariat with a "scientific theory" by which to "transform dreams into reality"—rupture and continuity

> operate again in relation to the representations of society to come–rupture, because scientific socialism, contrary to utopias, refuses to elaborate in detail the image of the society whose advent is nevertheless considered the ineluctable result of the historical evolution and the ultimate objective of the class struggle–but continuity, too, for, despite this automatic refusal, the overall vision of the community of the future is permanently in play in the theoretical and political discourse of Marx and Engels. Thus, the opposition utopia/science at once masks and reveals this vision of the social otherness, showing at once its presence and its absence... This vision of communist society can be read, veiled, just below the surface in Marx. He occasionally speaks of it, but only in a secondary discourse. It seems ... that he almost distrusts giving his imagination free rein, being afraid to fall into illusion and reverie. And yet his entire work conveys this vision, making it a potent, stirring dream that renewed the collective imagination" (p. 9–10).

Yet for a number of reasons, as previously related, the efforts of Marxism have failed—or have they? Neo and Post-Marxists argue that, despite the theoretical mistakes of Marxism and the real-world failed attempts to establish a Marxist–Leninist–Maoist socialist/communist utopia, the historical verdict is still out on Marx. This is because Marx's incisive analysis of capital and capitalism is probably more penetrating than anything that had ever been achieved during his time, perhaps until present times. He understood and even admired the dynamic nature of capitalism, so much so that sometimes it seems that Marx is as much a fan of capitalism as he is its greatest critic[23]. While the flaws of orthodox Marxism has been pointed out by a number of scholars, beginning with Eduard Bernstein and notable others throughout the course of the 20th century[24], Marx's general economic and sociological analysis has nevertheless held firm to produce Marxist schools of thought that include Revisionist-Marxist, Neo-Marxist, and Post-Marxist scholars, who exert a powerful influence on perspectives on social change and the course of world history during the 20th century and beyond. It seems that though Marxism lost a number of battles in its efforts to establish a communist utopia during the 20th century, the struggle over the future of humanity is not over yet, and the Marxist utopic image of the future has, nevertheless, survived, historically transformed within the idea of progress to form a progressive-socialist synthesis that still has quite a pull on the future of humanity[25].

The emergence of the progressive-socialist synthesis is largely due to the efforts of revisionist Marxists like Eduard Bernstein, whose criticism of Marxist doctrine and advocacy of a more pragmatic approach helped to temper orthodox Marxists' ideological rejection of the idea of progress, at the same time, preserving its utopian image of a socialist future. For example,

Bernstein (2013) pointed out that since the entrepreneur class was steadily being recruited from the proletariat class, compromises were necessary; thus, Bernstein encouraged progressive proposals such as minimum weekly labor hours, provisions for old-age pensions, and other measures that strengthened the conditions of laborers; also, he urged workers to take an active interest in politics. As Findlay (1981) relates, progressive revisionism generally "... includes a view of the state as separate from civil society, reform as more desirable than revolution, and stresses the need for democracy and universal suffrage. The emphasis is also placed upon the possibilities of economic stability, rather than breakdown." (p. 8).

Paradoxically, the prospects of a Marxist inspired proletariat revolution has also surely contributed to such progressive reforms, since this spectre has motivated owners of capital to make certain compromises with labor to improve labor conditions. On the other hand, historically speaking, whether (as orthodox Marxists maintain) these concessions only postpone the inevitable, is still a valid objection while labor is exported globally to countries that have very little tolerance for decent labor conditions, and the possibilities for labor reform (as a matter of fundamental human rights) continue to be crushed by the owners of capital and their state collaborators in developing countries. For this reason, the Marxist utopian image of world revolution and a world socialist future has still a powerful pull, especially in developing countries, and if the attacks on labor and labor rights continue (as the global economy quite possibly heads towards a crash), even in the developed world, the spectre of Marxist-inspired revolution should not be too readily dismissed but is a utopic vision of the future that could yet rebound to take hold of the social imagination and still play out as a viable world socialist revolution scenario in the 21st century[26].

[23] See Jhally (2005) for an insightful illustration of the value of Marx's analysis of capitalism and how it helps to understand globalization.
[24] Giddens (1973) summarizes the most notable critiques by Weber (1968), Dahrendorf (1959), Ossowski (1963), and Aron (1969). Giddens (1973) adds that these are "only the tip of the iceberg" (p. 69).
[25] As Bottomore (1964) relates, Marxism appears "... as a progressive doctrine, a modern view of the world that is irreconcilably opposed to superstitions, an egalitarian creed which has had the power to enthuse men everywhere and most of all in those countries where immense wealth and the most degrading poverty co-exist, and at the same time a theory of rapid industrialization which incites men to activity and labour ... Marxism, in this aspect, is the Calvinism of the twentieth-century industrial revolutions" (p. 101).
[26] In fact, this is Harvey's (2000) position as he upholds the *Communist Manifesto's* "... grander goal expressed in the final exhortation for workers of all countries to unite in an anti-capitalist struggle." (p. 41).

6. The "end of utopia?" "nowhere?" "a good place?"

To say that Marx rejected the idea of progress is to say that he largely rejected the role of liberalism and democracy to realize social change; instead, he replaced the idea of progress with historical materialism and "utopian" socialism with "scientific" socialism, which as it turns out, is mostly ideology—not so "scientific" after all. The progressive-socialist synthesis, on the other hand, admitted revisionism and so did not dispense with the idea of progress, which includes the vital role of liberalism and democracy to realize the utopian vision of a better society for all. As Bernstein (Findlay, 1981) explains, the "final goal of socialism was nothing; progress toward that goal was everything." And such progress could only come about through the strengthening of democracy, not its denial.

Yet, is the final goal "nothing," as Bernstein (2013) asserts—a voyage to "nowhere" instead of a "good place?" Had Bernstein, a disillusioned Marxist, given up on the utopic vision of socialism, to opt for Popper's piecemeal engineering instead? The Leftist disillusionment with utopia presents a huge civilizational problem, which both Harvey (2000) and Kumar (1991) illustrate; moreover, it is indicative of Polak's (1971a) cracked image of the future. For one thing, disillusionment with utopia creates a vacuum through which ultra-Right, corporatist, and reactionary powers can, by default, co-opt democracy and bend the future to the interests of ruling powers. As Harvey (2000) relates, what the abandonment of "... all talk of Utopia on the left has done is leave the question of valid and legitimate authority in abeyance (or, more exactly, to leave it to the moralisms of the conservatives—both of the neoliberal and religious variety)" (p. 188). Consequently, the concept of Utopia becomes a mere literary convention (ala science fiction) stripped of Polak's "systematic reconstruction" of society—a "... pure signifier of hope destined never to acquire a material referent. But the problem is that without a vision of Utopia there is no way to define that port to which we might want to sail" (Harvey, 2000, p. 189)[27]. In an air of despair, Kumar (1991) asks:

> Is this the end of utopia? With the failure of the great utopian experiments of modern times, with all the bloody episodes the twentieth century–world war, fascism, the Holocaust, Hiroshima– what can possibly sustain utopian thought? What are the resources of hope in the late twentieth century? And even if utopia can maintain some sort of existence, what might its functions be? At the beginning, with More, utopia set out an agenda for the modern world. Today, five hundred years later, what are the uses of utopia? (p. 85)

Along with the recognition that the great utopian experiment of the Soviet Union collapsed in failure, now it is evident that the "other" great utopian project, the American Dream, has also come to an end—as another failed utopian experiment. Reactionary neoliberalism too (as a counter-utopia) is not viable since it is but a global manoeuvre, in conjunction with Empire domination schemes; and the world capitalist system appears to be reaching its limits to growth—on an overshoot-and-collapse trajectory. So it is no small wonder that anti-utopian sentiments dominate in the 20th century (Kumar, 1991, p. 99). Yet, to give up on utopias altogether is also problematic, as Harvey (2000) and Kumar (1991) point out.

Kumar (1991) largely blames Mannheim (1949), whom he says "perversely puts the emphasis on the *realizability* of utopian ideas," later incorporated in "the programmatic demands of socially subordinate groups.... Mannheim's determinist and historicist conception of utopia ... supplied weapons to the anti-utopians by his insistence that utopia must be linked to the progressive realization of social philosophies" (Kumar, 1991, p. 92). It was not that utopias are mere fantasies, writes Kumar (1991); rather, it was because utopias were *all-too-possible*, were indeed being realized, but far from liberating "... humanity and adding to its well-being and happiness, the realization of utopia was bringing in a world of unprecedented servility and sterility, a world where old forms of tyranny were returning in the new guise of mass democratic politics and benevolent state planning" (p. 93). In order to preserve the positive contribution of utopias, Kumar's (1991) solution is to soften their impact by divorcing utopias from Mannheim's definition as "blueprints for action"—which Kumar (1991) says have made the "apparent bankruptcy of socialist experiments tantamount to the bankruptcy of utopias themselves" (p. 95–96).

Harvey (2000), on the other hand, would not concur with Kumar's eradication of utopian activism in order to preserve the "use" of utopia, strictly as a literary genre (i.e., "nowhere"), for this divorce is tantamount to binding hope so that it is prevented from acquiring "a material referent"—which is to deny its revolutionary urge and power of implementation—the historical and evolutionary necessity of the systematic reconstruction of society towards a sustainable trajectory (i.e., a "good place"). Harvey (2000) too concedes the problematic, failed history of utopianism and so suggests possibilities for its rehabilitation and reconstruction; however, he makes no qualms that the radical/revolutionary impetus of utopianism be left intact to perform the pressing task of our times, which is to

> define an alternative, not in terms of some static spatial form or even of some perfected emancipatory process. The task is to pull together a spatiotemporal utopianism–a dialectical utopianism–that is rooted in our present possibilities at the same time as it points towards different trajectories for human uneven geographical developments" (p. 196).

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[27] Wilde (1973) writes that a map of the world that "... does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias" (as cited by Kumar, 1991, p. 95).

Furthermore, as a Neo/Post-Marxist[28], Harvey (2000) emphatically reaffirms Marx's clarion call for a world socialist revolution, proclaiming that the conditions of the "global working-class formation in the last half of the twentieth century suggests that such an exhortation is more important than ever" (p. 41). For Harvey (2000), the only way forward for the rehabilitation of utopia lies in the rubble of capitalism as it disintegrates and eventually collapses due to inherent contradictions; thus, he attempts to achieve a balance between evolution and revolution through a pluralist spatiotemporal-dialectical utopianism, whose starting point lies in the very contradictions of neoliberal world capitalism[29]. Harvey (2000) identifies five main internal contradictions, evidenced in the process-oriented utopianism of U.S.-based neoliberal globalization[30]: (1) the lopsided (at best)/fraudulent (at worst) benefits of unlimited consumerism as the path to happiness, (2) the "liberal illusion" (a "pseudo-democracy") where individual rights/freedoms are but the freedom to "dominate and exploit others who are kept free of political influence and power by a politics of unequal rewards if not downright marginalization", (3) "success" predicated upon the use of violence and repression "as a necessary path to a more general enlightenment ... more and more as an exercise in the power politics of US Manifest Destiny as seen by an elite few in the United States rather than as a mass movement for global enlightenment", (4) market forces undermining territoriality and ruthlessly transforming cultural norms globally to create defensive blowback in the form of trenchant nationalism and "reactionary exclusionism," forcing the "simple choice" between the "secular spatiotemporalities of free market or the mythological timespace of religion and nationhood", (5) market externalities generating a host of problems related to resource depletion and environmental/ecological destruction (p. 193–194).

These five interlocking contradictions spell disaster for the US-led spatiotemporal process-oriented utopianism of technological society within industrial civilization; it is a fractured image of the future incapable of providing vision for humanity in the 21st century. So, as Harvey (2000) asks, should we just "... let the whole idea of utopianism of any sort die an unmourned death? Or should we try to rekindle and reignite utopian passions once more as a means to galvanize socio-ecological change?" (p. 195) His resounding answer is an unqualified "yes," that alternative visions need to uncover "... how to deliver on the promises of considerable improvement in material well-being and democratic forms, without relying upon egotistical calculation, raw consumerism, and capital accumulation, how to develop the collective mechanisms and cultural forms requisite for self-realization outside of market forces and money power, and how to bring the social order into a better working relation with environmental and ecological conditions" (p. 194–195).

7. A reconstructed new thesis for a 21st century image of the future

Thus, Harvey's (2000) spatiotemporal-dialectical utopianism fuses social justice/equity with sustainability—a utopia that attempts to achieve balance between two types of relationship crises: human > human (societal) & human > environment (planetary). Regarding the crisis of societal relations, though much progress yet remains, most of the 20th century has confirmed the response of the progressive-socialist image of the future, as democracy and socialism have spread throughout the world, a phenomenal development *within* the idea of progress; however, even as the antithesis (as "counter-utopia"), in the form of reactionary neoliberalism, opposed the progressive-socialist synthesis, a new thesis was emerging, a redefined utopic image of the future—that of global sustainability—in response to a crisis in planetary relations.

This planetary crisis was perhaps originally recognized by Brown (1954), who established, for perhaps the first time, the parameters/variables for global analysis (i.e., population growth, resource depletion, alternative energies, and food production). *The Challenge of Man's Future* was probably the first scientific treatise on the predicament of human civilization and its prospects in the future. One landmark study that followed up on Brown's initial endeavor was the Club of Rome's *Limit to Growth* project, led by Dennis & Donella Meadows (along with J. Randers & W.W. Behrens III) (Randers, Meadows, Behrens, & Meadows, 1972). *Limits to Growth* (hereafter *LtG*) explores five variables of world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion through a computer simulation program, which finds that the prospects of a global overshoot-and-collapse scenario by mid-21st century to be probable if "business as usual" prevails. Despite the storm of criticism that followed, through a number of updates, the Club of Rome *LtG* study weathered the crisis with its fundamental thesis still intact (see Turner, 2008). Perhaps more potent than Marx's critique of capitalism (which focused on human-to-human relations *within* capitalism), the *LtG*'s human-to-environment critique further exposes the self-destructive nature of capitalism, strongly implying that a fundamental structural shift is necessary in order to avoid an otherwise inevitable overshoot and collapse scenario in which the quality of life for future generations is severely jeopardized. Furthermore, the *LtG* critique implies that superficial technological quick-fixes are not going to be enough to prevent the breakdown of industrial civilization; in other words, the conclusion indicates that the system itself is inherently broken and in need of fundamental reconstruction, which calls for a new, sustainable way of life for humankind.

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[28] I consider Harvey as a Neo-Marxist in the sense that he does not follow a doctrinaire interpretation of Marx and adds something new to Marxist theory, yet he is also a Post-Marxist because Harvey fuses postmodernism with Marxism.

[29] Harvey (2000) writes that if the seeds of "revolutionary transformation must be found in the present and if no society can launch upon a task of radical reorganization for which it is not at least partially prepared, then those internal contradictions provide raw materials for growing an alternative" (p. 193).

[30] As summarized.

Then, in the late 80s, the Brundtland Report (*Our Common Future* (Bruntland Commission, 1987)) recognized that the time had come to formulate a new, interdisciplinary, "integrated approach to global concerns and our common future" with sustainable development as its guiding principle, formulating it as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Essentially, the Brundtland Report (hereafter *BR*) poses sustainable development as a "process of change" through which the exploitation of ".. resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development; and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations" (Bruntland Commission, 1987).

Though the BR position on sustainable development seems idealist and abstract, it is significant, for it represents a historical beginning by establishing an overriding, "guiding principle" for economic "growth" or development in the global future. Moreover, sustainable development, as such, exemplifies the dialectic of progress and utopia in that "development" adheres to the idea of progress while "sustainability" is its guiding utopic vision of the future, redefining and redirecting the idea of progress as a matter of development towards global sustainability, which includes issues of social justice/equity, hence a more qualitative and comprehensive meaning and direction than had been understood by the utopic image of the future within the idea of progress.

Historically and dialectically speaking, the GSD (i.e., global sustainable development) thesis is still in a formative stage of development, so it is natural that the concept is contentious, as definitions are still evolving—for it is yet an experimental "work-in-progress," which must be allowed to evolve dialectically[31]. For example, if we compare the concept of "sustainability" with that of "democracy," we might gain some historical perspective on the matter. "Democracy" is no less a contentious term as sustainability is and is also an experimental, unfinished "work-in-progress," is it not? And yet this is after some 250 years of real world attempts at implementation! Because the definition of democracy is still debatable and elusive, because it has yet to be implemented authentically, has yet realized full social functionality, and has been co-opted by a corporatocracy—does this mean that we should just give up on it? Once we comprehend the alternatives, we realize at the same time that *there really are no alternatives to democracy*—we have to continue with this grand experiment until democracy fulfills its historical purpose as an evolutionary project of humanity—"of the people, by the people, and for the people." Is it not the same with global sustainable development? Is it not also an evolutionary project of humanity, still debatable, yet to be implemented authentically, and co-opted by corporate interests? So, should we then just give up on it too? As with democracy, there really are no alternatives to GSD.

Now in postmodern times, as humanity moves into a new stage of evolution, global in nature, the modern idea of progress is transformed by the utopic image of a sustainable future—that is, of GSD. As a matter of historical and evolutionary necessity, either the future will be sustainable, or else there might not be a future. For this reason, this 21st century transformation is one in which global society, conscious of itself as One and yet mindful of the Many – celebrating its plurality, diversity, and indigenous cultures – is at the same time a *future-oriented* society, not merely "futuristic" in the modern sense of the progress of technological developments within an industrial society that depletes renewable and nonrenewable resources, exterminates other species, destroys the life capacity of the Earth, and alienates and robs people of their subjective nature—but truly life-affirming and future-oriented in an *ethical* sense, of caring about the future and all life so that future generations will inherit an Earth that has *at least* the same quality of life that present generations enjoy and cherish.

Is this just a ridiculous utopian dream that has no material referent, no chance of realization, or is it an imperative of human evolution? It all comes down to a matter of choice. If we say we have no dream, then we have no choice—and without choice, who are we? Devoid of choice, humanity has no meaning and no future. We must *choose* the dream – a vision of the future of humanity – and then we must *choose* to make it real.

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[31] Since the publication of *Our Common Future* (Bruntland Commission, 1987) in 1986, the concept of "sustainable development" or "sustainability" has indeed evolved dialectically over whether or not economic growth (as capitalism) can accommodate environmental externalities or whether capitalism will even survive in the future, at least without radical socialist restructuring to meet the concerns of environmental/ecological destruction and the needs of the many. Does *Our Common Future* privilege a continuation of capitalist development as its goal? Is it a repudiation of the radical conclusions of LtG? Scholars continually debate these questions (a reflection of the tension between competing utopias?), yet sometimes endless debate too can be a way to stall action; thus, do Sneddon et al. (2006) argue for an embrace of pluralism as a "way out" of ideological/epistemological "straightjackets" that only "deter more cohesive and politically effective interpretations of SD," that is, in order to "advance the SD debate beyond its post-Brundtland quagmire." (p. 253) Perhaps this "quagmire" is also a reflection of the "internal contradictions" mentioned by Harvey (2000), and the embrace of pluralism is a way to allow the dialectic to evolve organically towards its synthesis, from which a new thesis of global sustainable development will emerge.

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