

## A History of Salvation and Social Utopias

*Tomorrow lives today,  
and it is always sought after.  
The faces that turn to utopia  
were different at different times,  
and so were the details that they thought they saw.  
But the direction always remained the same,  
and the hidden goal was shared;  
it seems to be the only constant in history:  
happiness, freedom, non-alienation – a golden age.*

Ernst Bloch

During the time of the student revolts at the end of the Sixties, we had a great dream: a free world without exploitation and oppression, without class rule and false authorities, without force and heteronomy. The dream did not come true. That is clearly one of the reasons for the deep process of de-politicization that began during the Seventies and has reached its apex today. The societal goals were reduced to personal goals, the revolution transformed itself into therapy, and class consciousness turned into a general desire for consumption. The comrades from back then today carry the same ties as their opponents used to carry. It is dangerous when a great dream is not fulfilled, for one tends not to want to have dreams any more. Life is then sealed off as it is. Someone who no longer has a dream or a vision has stopped believing in change and in making a commitment to something new. But this is exactly what the groups that are in power on earth want, so that they can play their game to its conclusion.

Humanity has dreamed many great dreams and has often believed in an approaching salvation that then did not occur. The entire issue of the “second coming of the Lord” (parousia) and the corresponding chiliastic movement that envisaged a thousand year reign of Christ was characterized by a great enthusiasm, followed by an even greater sense of hopelessness. Today, we can only relate to such emotions by comparing them to situations in which we fall acutely in love, followed by total abandonment. Here, we had a life force that cannot be outdone. The despair that followed was correspondingly great when, instead of the expected salvation, pure hell broke loose, as it did in the early Christian community in Tyros. The community lived in anticipation of the Kingdom of God on Earth, as promised by Jesus. There are accounts of the beauty and joy of the lives they led in anticipation of salvation, for they were the perfect example of an early Christian community. But instead of the promised Kingdom of God, the Romans, who had been notified by St. Paul, came and annihilated them. The Cathars experienced a similar fate. After a great time of growth, they were attacked and annihilated by the Catholic Church during the Albigensian crusades. Their idea of purity could not stand up to the power of evil, since they knew so little about the source and existence of evil within themselves. The Anabaptists in Münster [Germany] also had similar experiences. In 1536, after initially creating a community of God in the city, they were exterminated by the imperial and episcopal army. Here, too, God’s kingdom on earth was to be established. Their young leader, Johann van Leiden, had already let himself be declared the “King of Zion”, for their goal seemed to be so close at hand. Throughout the middle ages the conviction kept surfacing that the Kingdom of God was near. The people had committed themselves so strongly to hope that their belief in God was maintained until the bitter end. When, during the battle at Frankenhausen in 1525, Thomas Münzer realized that he and his badly armed peasant warriors were surrounded by the enemy, he pointed to an approaching storm and saw it as a

sign of the salvation that now would come through God. He was then captured and slowly put to death under unspeakable torture.

The history of the patriarchal era is not only a story of suffering, but also - and this was almost worse - a story of often hoping for salvation, yet never experiencing it. What happens within the human soul when, again and again, great hopes are disappointed, great promises are not fulfilled, and great dreams are lost? It gives up. When it comes to the great hopes and goals of humanity, we are today living in a time of global resignation.

But the soul only gives up for a while. It cannot give up forever, for forever is defined in the context of eternal life and not eternal death. Eternal life is consciously or unconsciously written into the human heart. After every pain a new hope grows, for something inside of us knows that life cannot be like that. Somewhere in us there is a connection to the sacred core of the world that whispers to us to keep on going, to try new ways, and to keep on seeking until the goal has been found. What this goal looks like and how it is described and handed down depends on the circumstances of the times and the culture. Since Greek antiquity a considerable number of social utopias have been described in writing, providing images of a healed world and a desired society as it was seen at the time. From Plato's philosopher's state (Politeia) to Marx's classless society, the male mind has tried to describe in writing a realistic dream of a more beautiful, free, and just world. These dreams usually had their roots in an illusory world of lofty ideas rather than in the inner reality of the people, which is why they did not have an impact on reality. Sometimes, as with Jesus, Robert Owen or the anarchist Kropotkin, their time had not yet come. Maybe it has now.

Ernst Bloch is the most eloquent philosopher of social utopias and their mental-spiritual background. If we still had time to read great literature, I would thoroughly recommend his Opus Magnum: "Das Prinzip Hoffnung" ["The Hope Principle"]. He created a special word to denote the true, yet veiled goal of history: "nondum" (Latin for "not yet"), the "not-yet-fulfilled", an image of the desired content and goal that underlie all utopias. This is a trans-historical matrix that constitutes the foundation of our historical existence. In our research group in Tamera we call it the "original historical utopia".

This historical human utopia can seldom be seen as clearly as in the founder of Christianity, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus had a grand vision. He spoke of the coming "Kingdom of God on Earth". Through the power of his personal closeness to God, he was filled with a love that he thought would soon touch all of mankind. He felt that the time was right for a fundamental transformation of the human community in terms of an encompassing, forgiving love. Even on the cross he is supposed to have said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus was - in spite of some scholars' skepticism - a historical figure. He, alone, could not liberate humanity, but through his life he has shown us a new possibility of existence that still has an effect on many people. It is amazing how many people, from revolutionaries to atheists, truly love Jesus today. Wolf Biermann has written a song about Che Guevara in which he describes the Cuban revolutionary as "Jesus with a gun". Jesus' message was not heeded. Instead, the Church turned it into its most extreme opposite. But the Christ impulse that he embodied continues to be active in the souls of many people. A new image of the human being has arisen through him. The expression "God's Kingdom on Earth" is still valid today, although we would translate it in a different way. This concept brought about a change in the direction that religion has taken: happiness, love and salvation are to be celebrated here on earth, not in the hereafter. Heaven should come down to earth and life on earth should again fully connect with the divine. The cosmic and the social orders should come together again. That is still today our highest goal. (I will keep coming back to these ideas in the next chapters.)

In connection with these ideas that Jesus spoke of, the dream of the "heavenly Jerusalem" was developed during early Christian times. In his text "Civitas Dei" from the year 425, the

church father Augustine turned this idea into the utopia of the “Thousand Year Reign” in a “city of God”, which was to be created by the church. Here, the typical Christian idea of a connection between power and asceticism had been changed so radically that there was not much left of the original thought. A similar thought, but a much gentler and more loving one, was developed eight hundred years later by Joachim di Fiore, an abbot from Florence. Based on the Bible, he developed a vision of history consisting of three successive states or eras of the world. The third state was the “societas amicorum” (society of friends), a state of monks living in brotherly love, also toward Jews and heathens. Here, Christ is fervently viewed as the Messiah of a new earth. It was a deep vision, but unfortunately the women were missing. Joachim’s document triggered a wildfire of anticipation, for he had calculated that God’s Kingdom would begin in the year 1260. First, the Antichrist was to be defeated. The Antichrist was the emperor Frederick II. It is difficult to determine what excited the Italian masses more: the expected last battle against the Antichrist or the imminence of the coming Kingdom of God. But the Stauffen emperor thwarted the plans of the believers: with no further ado he died in the year 1250 and could therefore no longer be fought. The hope for the coming paradise was lost in a tremendous turmoil of disappointment, hope, and anger, and the Joachites began to fight each other. It was a typical process resulting from betrayed hopes.

During the renaissance we find further great social utopias. This was the confused era in Western civilization, when the darkest Middle Ages fought the humanistic enlightenment and when a “rebirth” of Greek antiquity was celebrated, while at the same time the excesses of the Inquisition had a stranglehold on life. In the middle of this chaos three great utopian documents were published. The first was “Utopia” by Thomas More (1516), describing a communist democracy without private ownership. It contained deep, authentic, humane thoughts. Humans become evil only through distress, so why should they be so severely punished? Pleasure and the joy of life were seen as justified goals of human actions, and humaneness had fully taken on an earthly form. But adulterers should be severely punished! The time was not yet ripe for the freedom of sexual happiness to be incorporated into the utopian scenario. This thought could not be expressed publicly until 270 years later, by the early socialists.

One century after Thomas More, two other visions of the future were published: “Nova Atlantis” by Francis Bacon (1623) and the “City of the Sun ” by Campanella (also 1623). Francis Bacon invented an island that was patterned on the legend of Atlantis and included the technical knowledge of the old Atlanteans. The citizens had telephones and steam engines, submarines and airplanes, they had psi powers, and they could create rain artificially. All this in a vision from 1623! In Campanella’s City of the Sun there was a strict astrological order, so that everything occurred in cosmic precision at the right place at the right time. People lived in a communist way and with a relatively tolerant sexuality, but they were constricted by a dictatorship of the stars that did not allow them much freedom. One is reminded of the strange state that the Jesuits, in a spate of extreme missionary zeal, founded in Paraguay during the 17th century. Campanella lived for 27 years in Spanish prisons, but he never gave up his convictions. He welcomed the birth of the French king Louis XIV, who was not by chance called the “Sun King”.

A great name among the humane visionaries is Robert Owen, an English industrialist during the time of the early socialists (around 1800). He worked with an unusual commitment for a humanization of the life conditions of the English working class. He suspected that there was a connection between a communist life form and sexual liberation, and he founded the “New Harmony” community in Indiana, USA. Robert Owen was a noble man in the deepest sense. He was correspondingly honored by a man who was similar to him in many ways: Friedrich Engels, the friend and patron of Karl Marx. Before Friedrich Engels wrote the Communist Manifesto together with Karl Marx, he wrote some statements at the age of 22 that I would like to quote in order to illustrate the effusive spirit of the times:

*The self-consciousness of humanity, the new Grail, around whose throne the peoples are gathering and rejoicing (...) That is our profession, that we (...) tie our sword around our waist and joyfully lay down our lives for the last sacred war, after which shall follow the Thousand Years Reign of Freedom.*

That is how deep the anticipation and the belief in the coming reign were in the minds of the young revolutionaries. That is how deep the chiliastic movement was, and all through the darkness its hopes had remained in the hearts of the people. In the “Paris Manuscripts” and even later in the Communist Manifesto, the young Karl Marx also wrote with the same passion about the final liberation of the human being from a thousand years of slavery. One can sense the meaning that hope once used to have. They truly wanted to improve the world. And today? Today, if you want to improve the world, you are regarded as a starry-eyed nutcase.

It is a tragic aspect of the historical utopias that the different lines of thought developed by the pioneers could not come together. The social issue and the sexual issue, for example, never truly came together. Marx and Engels could not subscribe to the ideas of the one man who had worked more than anyone else for the liberation of sexuality: Charles Fourier. He developed the “Phalanstères” project, a vision of free love, embedded in agriculture, crafts and Christian love of one’s neighbor. Every day, from noon until 1 pm, he waited for the patron who would help him to finance the project. But the patron never came. We may smile, today, when we read about how schematically Fourier imagined sexual liberation. But Fourier had arrived at the center of the issue. He did not have empirical success, but his name will forever be connected to the idea of sexual liberation.

If Marx had understood Fourier’s ideas, and if he had included them in his concept, then a different kind of communism would have arisen. One of the fundamental thoughts of communism was the abolition of private property. This resulted in a new economic model, but there was not yet a new model for the inner relationship between people, especially no model for the areas of love and sexuality. Men were still allowed to see and treat their wives as private property, and the same was true for family heads toward their families and for parents toward their children. A tight fence was still built around every love relationship, the love partner was privatized, and sexuality was banned from public life. After the October Revolution in 1917, there were some tendencies toward an anti-authoritarian way of raising children and – for example under the auspices of Alexandra Kollontai – for the liberation from the old ideas around love and sexuality. But these tendencies were soon reversed in the name of party discipline. Sexually, a proper Soviet citizen was to behave like a proper bureaucrat during the Czar era. The emotional structures of a communist functionary hardly differed from those in other authoritarian, capitalist, and fascist systems. It was the type of structure that [the German philosopher Theodor] Adorno described as an “authoritarian personality” with its sexual repression, its belief in authority and its fight against dissenters. The economic system was revolutionized, but the sexual system remained feudalistic, Christian, middle-class, and capitalist, as it did everywhere. Here lay the central inner inconsistency of Marxism and of the communist movement that it gave rise to. Marxism saw one area as being separate from the other, thus ignoring the inner unity that connects the different areas of life in human society. Whoever wants to create a new economic system must establish a new sexual order. For, as Marx rightly said, the societal existence of the human being determines his consciousness and his sexual existence is fundamentally a part of his societal existence. One main reason for the worldwide failure of communism was that the liberation from the class society did not go hand in hand with liberation from its historically developed sexual ideas. The communist dream was not taken to its conclusion. It could therefore not be realized. It will reappear in an entirely different form, when people have learned to lead a communitarian life where they no longer need to lie about love. The communist dream is the original dream of the human community.

A dream does not have reality-creating power until it is dreamt realistically, i.e. when what is dreamt corresponds to a real possibility in life. The New Left movement, which was created in Germany during the Sixties, soon took notice of the texts by Wilhelm Reich, describing his sexual theories, and pirated editions of these texts were spread in large numbers. It was sensed instinctively that there can be no free society without free sexuality. In groups and communes one tried to understand the essence of free sexuality, but no progress was made. We did not yet have a concrete vision of a new life. One did not know what free sexuality meant in terms of content, and one could not yet see it with one's heart. The sexual issue could not be solved overnight, for it was connected to too many misunderstandings, human collisions, claims of ownership and power struggles, competition, fear of abandonment, and pains of jealousy. As usual, the first failure resulted in a reversal to its opposite, and in large numbers the comrades began to marry and create their own private lives. That was the end of the movement. But what is five years of a movement compared to five thousand years of oppression? Historically speaking, the students' movement's first attempts at taking its first steps were a small, almost childish beginning of an overall movement that had just begun. This movement cannot be held back forever by today's counter-propaganda. **A future worth living requires a different model of sensual love or it will not come about at all.** Countless people would agree with this statement if they knew what this new model could look like and if they had the courage to speak of it openly. It is difficult to speak the truth about sexual matters without endangering one's own love relationship, marriage, or social position.

I could not give up the dream. After the failure of the New Left, I sought out other possibilities to continue to work with these new thoughts. Again, I spent a few years learning and traveling, I visited over a hundred communes, and was amazed at my political friends who by now had settled down in the country to seek the meaning of life by milking sheep every morning. One no longer read Karl Marx's Political Economy, but the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the Bhagavad-Gita and old books about herbs. The political vision had broken down. Could a new, different vision arise so soon thereafter? Could political thinking so quickly be exchanged for a new spiritual and ecological thinking? Had it really been true political thinking? Or were the ideologies really so interchangeable? The goals of the fight against imperialism, which shortly before had been proclaimed by millions of young people all over the world, suddenly no longer existed, and there was hardly a trace left of the sexual liberation movement. The more the old dream broke down, the longer became the psychological conversations at breakfast, at lunch, at dinner and at the evening meetings. It was in this situation that I – the first time in October 1975 – visited [the community of] "Friedrichshof" in the Austrian province of Burgenland. It was created and led by the Austrian painter and action artist Otto Mühl.

Friedrichshof was a revolutionary experiment. The plan was to create a community with free sexuality and authentic, honest human relationships. Here, there was a concept and a vision: bioenergetics, translated into group life and into social design. No project up until then had so radically attempted to translate the idea of sexual liberation into reality as this one did. The project had a bad reputation, I disliked many of its views and methods, and yet it was the only project that had a relatively truthful way of dealing with the "number one" topic. That alone was enough for me to get over my personal aversions and to enthusiastically study the conditions there. Sixty people lived there under the leadership of an impressive artist, in a totally unfamiliar system of free sexuality, a total lack of private property, and a grotesque lack of comfort. There were no radios, TV's or newspapers. There were no sofas or recliners. There was no alcohol or other drugs and practically no cigarettes. It was the harshest living environment that I had ever been in. It was only tolerable because of the emotional vitality, the creativity, and the sexual contacts. In front of the guests' quarters, which consisted of a slightly modified grain silo with a pigsty, there were a few puny acacias, otherwise there were only open fields. There were no diversions, not even through nature. Everything had to be created by humans. If there was anywhere anything fundamental to learn about the creation of

community, then it was here. For almost all other communities had already failed and no new perspectives were visible anywhere.

What was being established here was one of the most radical social utopias that had ever been dreamed of in the history of the community movement, from its beginning with the American Hutterites up until today. And yet this experiment, too, failed because of the usual conflicts around sex, power and money. They did not know all that had to be done in a community in order to be able to solve such problems. They knew something about the importance of sexuality, but they knew nothing about the universal and spiritual conditions of our existence. These conditions must be considered and integrated if we want to create a community with truly free sexuality, without hypocrisy and the misuse of power. The emotionality that was developed there was not free or else they would not a few years later have experienced the eruptions of hatred and public denunciations that divided the community and finally destroyed it. This project failed, as did the communist one before it, due to dogmatic narrow-mindedness. But we are not here to judge, but to learn from the mistakes of others.

We cannot end this brief history of social utopias without at least taking a brief look at the Sannyas movement that was founded by Osho (Shree Rajneesh Bhagwan). For a short while it succeeded in creating one of the 20th century's most amazing experiments: Rajneeshpuram, a New Age city of a few thousand inhabitants in the US state of Oregon. The project created an astonishing synthesis of sexuality, spirituality, and emotional liberation, which for a while was connected with a definite global vision for the future of mankind. Altogether, there were almost half a million Sannyasins on earth. Their red clothes testified to their willingness to act on their beliefs. And yet they did not have mature enough concepts to guide this collective willingness. Bhagwan's encompassing mind knew much about the background of religions and of the history of ideas, but he did not know much about the work that must be done in order to dismantle the inner structures of power, dominion, competition, and fear. Here, he relied on Western therapists who offered many groups and seminars in Poona, where they were originally stationed, and yet they did not quite deal with the heart of the matter. And so, in spite of all outer successes, the old conflicts around power, sex and love could continue to grow under the surface until they created the disaster in Oregon that resulted in a media frenzy. To me, this movement was as interesting and important as the one created by Otto Mühl. Here, too, a new direction was being explored that we today can integrate and develop further on a more solid foundation. When we today look for authentic texts around spiritual and sexual issues, then some of the writings of Osho, the Indian revolutionary and philosopher, are still among the best.

When trying to judge the historical and philosophical importance of peace work today, it is not important if one is for or against the representatives or the statements of a given social utopia or movement. What is important is to look beyond the shortcomings and mistakes of a movement and to recognize and see its inner gestalt or entelechy. It is important to see to what extent this image is aligned with the larger process of human evolution that keeps reconnecting us with the powers of Creation and with the trans-historical matrix of a non-violent, universal life. We hold this process inside of us as an inner signpost, we can recognize it, and we are definitely faced with the decision whether to follow it or to perish.