unconscious operates differently from the conscious” (J. Mitchell, 2002: 223). The little girl may well be freer than Freud allowed in the way she identifies with caring or parental figures of either sex, but there will always be an intractable, often death-driven, and unknowable part of the mind. Some feminists argue that the unconscious is a politically obstructive concept since it suggests a limit to how far we can control our own minds and destinies; for others the idea of the unconscious acts as a crucial challenge to the coercive norms of social and sexual life.

In more popular political and cultural analysis, the unconscious can suggest invisible but unstoppable forces: “The populace of England were unconsciously on the rapid rise to protestantism” (Froude, 1858); the hidden but central philosophy of an epoch: “art will reflect the fundamental assumptions, the unconscious philosophy of its time” (K. Clark, 1949); and most recently, political motivations – “unconscious identifications” – of which the chief actors, the leaders of the Western world, may be dangerously unaware: “in their analyses and propaganda, they instinctively generate the necessary image of the enemy...it would be unwise to see this as a conscious process” (Lieven, 2002: 19).

Jacqueline Rose

See: DESIRE, EMOTION, FEMINISM, FETISH, SEXUALITY.

Utopia

Utopia usually refers to the imagination of a perfect society, based on the inventor’s social critique of their own society, and often set in the future or in a world markedly different than the writer’s. Coined by Thomas More in 1516 in his Utopia (1995 [1516]) and derived from a play on two Gk words, “good place” and “no place,” “utopia” and its variants, utopian and utopianism, are almost always associated, even when the specific vision is considered appealing, with the impractical, the unrealistic, and the impossible.

Utopias and utopian thought take many forms, including the hundreds of intentional or separatist communities created in many countries. The best-known form is the genre of European and American literature, conventionally starting with Thomas More and including feminist writers such as Joanna Russ and Ursula K. Le Guin, that creates and peoples a distinct world in which the problems and limitations of the writer’s existing world are exposed and overcome (Moylan, 1986). Contemporary scholars tend to distinguish between the commonplace and somewhat restricted definition of utopia as fictional place and the broader meaning of utopia as the wish for, description of, and attempt to create a better and good society. When treated as a general feature of human thought and practice, utopia and the utopian tend to be situated in a much longer history, pre-dating the publication of More’s Utopia and extending beyond the parameters of Euro-American civilization.
Despite the fact that there is a great deal of "confusion about exactly what makes something utopian, and disagreement about... why it is important," "utopia" persists as a term which powerfully conveys the desire for "a better way of being and living" (Levitas, 1990: 2, 7). Utopias and utopian thinking contain a diagnostic and an imaginative component. On the basis of a critical diagnosis of existing political and social arrangements and the values which underlie them, utopians always offer alternative ideals and claim these are realizable, often describing new institutional arrangements for doing so. Typically, Western utopians find their contemporary society exploitative, authoritarian, unequal, and alienating, and seek to replace the ruling economic, political, military, social, and knowledge arrangements with ones which promote a harmonious, egalitarian, self-managed well-being. Utopians practice a politics of everyday life, placing a premium on inventing and describing social arrangements designed to create an environment in which latent capacities for individual happiness can be fulfilled. Notwithstanding the genealogy of the word, most utopians are distinguished by their willful insistence that the good society is not "no place," but one that we have the human and material resources to build in the present.

In the socialist tradition, the tension between the good place and the no place has been particularly acute. The C19 socialist thinkers Charles Fourier, Henri Saint-Simon, and Robert Owen, nominated as utopian socialists despite their rejection of the name "utopian," were notoriously dismissed by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels for being unscientific and naïve (Engels, 1962 [1892]). For Marx and Engels, these utopians failed to understand the primacy of capitalist society and its binary class antagonism and failed to accord the proletariat its appropriate historic role as revolutionary agent. Accused of misunderstanding historical materialism's basic assumptions about human nature, about historical development, and about large-scale social change, the utopian socialists were branded idealists both for their vision of a co-operative, pleasurable, and non-patriarchal society and for their presumption that people possessed the autonomy to imagine and construct small-scale versions of societies free from domination.

Historically, Marx and Engels were the most influential critics of utopianism and established the principal terms by which utopias and utopian thought are criticized (Geoghegan, 1987). The main line of criticism is suspicious of an individual's or group's ability to think and act independently of, and ultimately to transcend, the law-like dictates of the capitalist system.

At the same time, socialists, socialist feminists, and Marxists have been some of the utopians' greatest defenders and theorists. Herbert Marcuse spoke for many when he rejected the oft-heard epithet - that's "merely utopian" - as a management device designed to suppress critical thought and liberatory practice (Marcuse, 1969). Following Ernst Bloch (1995), the utopian is conceived as an active "principle of hope," found in various situations in which individuals and groups "anticipate" in thought or practice their...
rejection of the totality of the existing society and their dreams for a better one. While oriented toward the future, socialist and Marxist utopians are concerned with how to use everyday “resources of hope” (R. Williams, 1989) to defeat the omnipresent cult of “T.I.N.A. – There Is No Alternative” (Singer, 1999), and to establish an alternative reality principle in which “The dream is real... The failure to make it work is the unreality” (Bambara, 1980: 126).

A multicultural radical tradition has long been absent from the domain of the utopian. The C17 “many-headed hydra” – commoners, prostitutes, prisoners, indentured servants, slaves, maids, pirates, sailors, runaways, and religious heretics – challenged the making of the modern capitalist world system, but has never been treated as a model of utopian thought and practice (Linebaugh and Rediker, 2000). The legacy of this exclusion has left us with a map of utopia that includes, for example, the English craftsman William Morris, but not the black worker Harry Haywood: numerous white separatist communities, but not one example of maroonage or run-away slave communities in the entire Americas. In 2002, the Second World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, met under the utopian banner, “Another world is possible.” The participants, gathered to fight against neoliberalism and globalization and for democratic globalism, were the contemporary inheritors of the C17 “many-headed hydra.”

The other world Porto Alegre conjured, in words and deeds, replaces the fantasy of a common culture realized as a little nation, magically pre-established and founded on good rules given from above, with complex individuals centered in communities negotiating inevitable contradictions and a hostile environment. In this other world, there’s a rich living history, filled with legends of people who can fly, end slavery, and also organize meetings and grassroots movements. In this other world, the instinct for freedom is the antithetical core of culture, where the seeds of opposition grow into something much more powerful than skepticism.

**Avery F. Gordon**

See: MOVEMENTS, RADICAL, SOCIALISM.