

Slobodan G. Markovich,
Faculty of Political Science of
the University of Belgrade

THE DYSTOPIAN DECADE (1923–1932) AND ITS HERITAGE: RETHINKING ZAMYATIN, FREUD AND HUXLEY¹

Abstract: The nineteenth century is usually viewed as the century of progress and optimism for European powers and the United States. It was also the century when belief in God was severely shaken in the European intellectual mainstream. At the end of the century, the first signs of discontent appeared, and the first pessimistic views emerged. The horrors of the First World War led to what the author has termed “the dystopian decade (1923/24–1932)”, the period when three great dystopias were published: *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin (1923/24), *Civilization and its Discontents* by Sigmund Freud (1930), and *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley (1932). The first deprives man of freedom, the second of any prospects of being happy in civilization/culture, the third of creativeness, art and literature. In the first, man is just about to become a robot, in the second he is a sinner, in the third he is a programmed being. In the author’s view, all three anti-utopias have, in different ways, shown the antinomy of two notions that man so fervently wants to reconcile: happiness and freedom. The messages of the dystopian decade became topical again at the end of the 20th century when the contemporary man ran out of utopias.

Keywords: Zamyatin, Freud, Huxley, dystopia, anti-utopia

At the beginning of the 20th century in the Euro-Atlantic world there was a widely held opinion that mankind had embarked on a route of scientific, cultural and economic progress. Although many scientists and scholars still believed that man was an aggressive being with a “fighting instinct”,² there were only a few who held that the immediate future could bring about a European or a world war. The bourgeois Victorians of that age throughout Europe “preferred self-control to self-expression, even though they sought

1 In September 2016, a draft of this paper was presented at the Matica Srpska seminar “Contemporary Man and Contemporary World”, and then published in a shorter version in Serbian in 2016.

2 Georg Simmel believed that the fighting instinct was universal, while William James claimed in 1902: “Ancestral evolution has made us all potential warriors.” For more details see Peter Gay’s chapter “Alibis for Aggression” in Idem, *Schnitzler’s Century. The Making of Middle Class Culture* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 2002), 97–101.

and often found, legitimate channels for letting themselves go.”³ With the exception of the Balkans, Europe witnessed no war on its soil after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871. This encouraged those who viewed the 19th century as the century of progress in their belief. It was firmly believed that the new century that followed after the American and French revolutions also produced a new, more humane, way of behaviour. In this sense, one could retrospectively describe the period between 1815 and 1914 as the period of utopianism in terms of belief in the progress of mankind. The closer one was to 1914, the more utopian the belief in human progress was.

Several decades later the American historian Sidney B. Fay remarked on the concept of progress: “The concept is logically meaningless. It ought perhaps therefore to be shunned by the historian. But it has an accepted popular usage and has profoundly influenced writers on social science.”⁴ Something had happened in the period between *fin de siècle* when the belief in general progress had prevailed and Fay’s conclusion from 1947, when it was already shaken. Contemporary historical events and processes had made the Euro-Atlantic man more cautious about the concept. What had happened was “the Age of Catastrophe,” as the British historian Eric Hobsbawm called it.⁵ A prolonged world war took place between 1914 and 1945. As a result, humanness was put into question to an extreme degree, and the legacies of humanism and Enlightenment were profoundly challenged.

The man of early modernity still lived in the age of faith that was accompanied by eschatological fears inherited from the late Middle Ages. The European mentality that had developed in the late Middle Ages simply continued in early modernity. Waves of fears and anxieties dominated the European mentality between the 13th and 18th centuries. They reached their peak between 1348 and 1660, in other words between the disastrous epidemics of the Black Death, which killed up to a third of the European population, and the waning of the wars between Catholics and Protestants. This was “the period of the greatest anxiety”, as Jean Delumeau termed it.⁶ While the eighteenth century liberated the European man from the yokes of mediaeval Christian pessimism and eschatological anxiety, the nineteenth century brought something rather new: doubts crept into the very foundations of the Christian faith, thereby causing a crisis in the orientation of many European intellectual streams.

In a very inspiring monologue of doubt, the Anglican priest Frederick Robertson as early as 1843 sensed “an awful hour”, a moment when the soul suspects previous props, “when it begins to feel the nothingness of many of

3 *Ibid.*, 101.

4 Sidney B. Fay, “The Idea of Progress”, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Jan., 1947), 231.

5 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (London: Abacus, 1995, 1st ed. 1994).

6 “Une séquence de plus grand angoisse”. Jean Delumeau, *La peur en Occident. XIV^e –XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1978), 259.

the traditionary opinions”, once held with “implicit confidence.” In a passage anticipating Nietzsche’s concept of the death of God, Robertson echoes similar dilemmas of the Victorian mind facing the temptation: “when this life has lost its meaning, and seems shrivelled into a span; when the grave appears to be the end of all, human goodness nothing but a name, and the sky above this universe a dead expanse, black with the void from which God himself has disappeared.”⁷ Contrary to Nietzsche he finds a way to revive God in himself, but some Victorians could not achieve the same, and they rather became agnostics or even atheists.⁸

The philosopher who finally announced the death of God was Friedrich Nietzsche. In aphorism 125 of his *Gay Science*, entitled “Madman” (1882), he described the insane still in search of God, but confident that institutional faith was in deep crisis:

The insane man jumped into their midst and transfixed them with his glances. “Where is God gone?” he called out. “I mean to tell you! We have killed him,—you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? ...does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning? Do we not hear the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? ...God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! ...It is further stated that the madman made his way into different churches on the same day, and there intoned his *Requiem aeternam deo*. When led out and called to account, he always gave the reply: “What are these churches now, if they are not the tombs and monuments of God?”⁹

Already shaken, the religious ethics of the European man was further undermined by the horrors of the Great War and endless deaths on all European fronts. From February to June 1916, close to six hundred thousand German and French troops were killed in the battle of Verdun. As A. J. P. Taylor aptly summarised it: “Verdun was the most senseless episode in a war not distinguished for sense anywhere.”¹⁰ There were moments in the Great War when in a single day 60,000 casualties were sustained.¹¹ The Western

7 *Life and Letters of Frederick W. Robertson*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (London: Sith, Eldrer and Co., 1866), 112. Cf. Saul Friedländer, “Themes of Decline and End in Nineteenth-Century Western Imagination”, in: S. Friedländer, G. Hoffer, L. Marx and E. Skolnikoff (eds.), *Visions of Apocalypse. End or Rebirth?* (New York and London: Holms and Meier, 1985), 63.

8 Alec R. Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution. 1789 to the present day* (London: Penguin Books, The Pelican History of the Church, 1974), 112.

9 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom (“La Gaya Scienza”)*, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*. The First Complete and Authorised English Translation, tr. Thomas Common, ed. Dr Oscar Levy, volume ten (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), 167–169.

10 A. J. P. Taylor, *The First World War. An Illustrated History* (Harmodsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), 123.

11 On July 1, 1916, during the Battle of the Somme the British Army sustained 60,000 casualties including 20,000 fatalities. It was “the heaviest loss ever suffered in a single day by a British army or by any army in the First World War.” A. J. P. Taylor, *op. cit.*, 136.

European man after the Great War was not only shaken in his belief in God, he had trouble believing in humanity as well.

Zamyatin's Dystopia

In the decade that followed after the Great War two dystopias were written based on completely opposite assumptions. One claimed that man could develop his rationality to the point of auto-negation (Zamyatin), while the other postulated that man was not dominantly rational and that irrationality could bring him to self-destruction (Freud). The third anti-utopia that followed was founded on the premises that rational scientific development had to be abandoned at some point for the sake of happiness (Huxley).

In 1920–21, in the wake of the great flux prompted by the Great War and revolutions connected with it, the Russian writer Yevgeny Ivanovich Zamyatin (Евгений Иванович Замятин, 1884–1937) wrote his novel *We* (*Мы*). He was a naval engineer, and his father was an Orthodox priest who thought catechism at a local school. Zamyatin had joined the Bolshevik fraction of social democrats even before the Russian Revolution of 1905.¹² Originally a supporter of the October Revolution, he soon opposed authoritarian tendencies of the new state, particularly in the field of its interference in artistic freedom.

If there was a single state in the world that readily embraced the idea of progress, it was the United States of America. The period between the 1890s and 1920s is remembered as “the Progressive Era”. One of the great names of the period is certainly that of Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856–1915). In his 1911 work entitled *The Principles of Modern Management* he laid the foundations of so-called “scientific management”. In the introduction to the book Taylor insists that there are “wastes of human effort” taking place daily. He regrets that there was still no “agitation for ‘greater national efficiency’”. He is very optimistic that there is a remedy for this inefficiency and that he has found it in the concept of scientific management, which as “true science” rests “upon clearly defined laws, rules, and principles, as a foundation.”¹³ At the end of the book Taylor promises that the adoption of scientific management “would readily in the future double the productivity of the average man engaged in industrial work.” More than that – it would eliminate “almost all causes for dispute and disagreement” between the employers and the workmen. Even the definition of what “a fair day’s work”¹⁴ is, will be a matter for scientific investigation. For Taylor scientific management is a panacea that would bring about completely new relations between workers and employers and would harmonise their relations to a previously inconceivable degree.

12 Mirra Ginsburg, “Introduction”, In Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (New York: Harper Voyager, 2012), vi–vii.

13 Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Modern Management* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1919 [1911]), 5–7.

14 *Ibid*, 142–143.

In his managerial Utopia the possibility of conflicts is reduced to a minimum, poverty is alleviated, and each worker is trained to his “highest state of efficiency.”¹⁵

Drawing on the Soviet experience, Zamyatin envisaged Taylorian ideas in their assumed climax in the distant future. He describes a state that has rejected organised religion and in its stead embraced principles of reason; a state that, by application of mathematics, has developed Taylorian assumptions to the point of perfection. His starting point is the mechanical civilisation of the United States combined with the experience of the Soviet one-party state. Therefore his book is an anti-utopia of modernisation, especially of its totalitarian wing.

Although inspired by the disquietude he witnessed daily in Soviet Russia, Zamyatin’s novel was conceptualized from the very beginning as a universal condemnation of politics that suppress creativity. He had the misfortune of not being able to publish his novel in Russia during his lifetime; the revolution he had initially embraced had turned against its critics in the ranks of writers and artists. He did manage to give a public reading of his book at a meeting of the All Russian Writers’ Union in 1923, but this only attracted inimical attention and provoked a series of condemnations.¹⁶ The first version of his book to appear in full was an English translation published in the United States in 1924. It was translated by the future American psychoanalyst and psychiatrist of Russian descent, Gregory Zilboorg (Григорий Зильбург, 1890–1959).¹⁷ In his foreword he was also critical of certain aspects of American culture. “The tragedy of the independent spirit under present conditions is pointed out in a unique way in *We*. The problem of the creative individual versus the mob is not merely a Russian problem. It is as apparent in a Ford factory as under a Bolshevik dictatorship.” Dealing with problems like this, in Zilboorg’s opinion, “seems offensive to anyone who prefers to be a member of a mob or to keep this or that part of humanity in the state of a mob.” For this reason *We* was not published in Soviet Russia, but Zilboorg warns that Zamyatin’s novel “will probably be disliked by those whose spiritual activities are reduced to the mechanical standards of a mechanical civilization which is devoid of original creative effort.”¹⁸

In two of his autobiographical notes published in Soviet Russia Yevgeny Zamyatin mentioned that he was the author of the novel *We*.¹⁹ The publication of his novel in 1924 in the United States in English produced no conse-

15 *Ibid*, 143.

16 *Ibid*, xiii.

17 Eugene Zamiatin, *We* (New York: Dutton, 1924).

18 Gregory Zilboorg, “Foreword”, in Eugene Zamiatin, *We* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959), xv.

19 He wrote autobiographical notes in 1922, 1924 and 1929. In 1922 he called *We* “my most serious work”. In 1929 he states: “I wrote the novel *We*, which appeared in English in 1925, and later in translations into other languages; the novel has not yet been published in Russian.” E. Zamyatin, *Soviet Heretic*, ed. Mirra Ginsburg (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992, 1st ed. 1970), 4, 14.

quences. However, when in 1927 *We* appeared in an émigré journal, *Volya Rossii* (Воля России), issued in Prague and later in Paris, censors got upset and Zamyatin faced persecution in the Soviet Union. It was clear to him as early as 1924 that censorship would not allow the publication of his novel in the first communist country. The Soviet Writers' Unions (Федерация объединений советских писателей) and the All Russian Writers' Union (Всероссийский союз писателей) discussed the publication of this work in emigration and condemned Zamyatin. The Leningrad branch of the All Russian Writers' Union was divided in September 1929, but also condemned Zamyatin despite some dissent. After that he resigned his membership in the All Russian Writers' Union.²⁰

In his autobiographical note from 1924 Zamyatin wrote down: "Thus far, I have been in solitary confinement only twice, in 1905–6 and in 1922; both times on Shpalernaya and both times, by a strange coincidence, in the same gallery. I have been exiled three times, in 1906, in 1911, and in 1922."²¹ He had obviously been and remained a heretic, both for Tsarist and for Bolshevik Russia. In his text *On Literature, Revolution, Entropy, and other Matters* from 1923 Zamyatin described the fate of heretic writers in Soviet Russia: "Babeuf was justly beheaded in 1797; he leaped into 1797 across 150 years. It is just to chop off the head of a heretical literature which challenges dogma; this literature is harmful." He also warns that heretical literature "is more useful than useful literature, for it is antientropic, it is a means of combating calcification, sclerosis, crust, moss, quiescence. It is utopian, absurd – like Babeuf in 1797. It is right 150 years later."²²

Yevgeny Zamyatin managed to escape the anti-utopia that he had himself anticipated in his novel. This was facilitated by the unexpected generosity of the Soviet dictator, to whom he sent a letter in June 1931, and who permitted him to emigrate to the West after Maxim Gorky had made an intervention in his favour. In his letter to Stalin he described his position in the Soviet Union and the way the Soviet literary establishment had treated him. "Just as the Christians created the devil as a convenient personification of all evil, so the critics have transformed me into the devil of Soviet literature. Spitting at the devil is regarded as a good deed, and everyone spat to the best of his ability."²³ He ends the letter to the Soviet dictator emphasising his hopeless position in the Soviet Union and states that his reason for leaving has been "the death sentence that has been pronounced upon me as a writer here at home."²⁴

20 Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Letter of Resignation from the Writer's Union (1929)", in *Idem, Soviet Heretic*, ed. Mirra Ginsburg (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992, 1st ed. 1970), 301–304.

21 Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Autobiography (1924)", in *Idem, Soviet Heretic*, 6.

22 Yevgeny Zamyatin, "On Literature, Revolution, Entropy, and Other Matters (1923)", in *Idem, Soviet Heretic*, 109.

23 Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Letter to Stalin (1931)", in *Idem, Soviet Heretic*, 306. Cf. Marc Slonim, "Preface", in Eugene Zamiatin, *We* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959), xxii.

24 Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Letter to Stalin (1931)", in *Idem, Soviet Heretic*, 309.

The novel *We* rethinks logical consequences when rational principles and mathematical formulae are applied to state organisation. In his dystopia humans live outside of nature, in a city made of glass separated by the Green Wall from the world of nature. The inhabitants of this dystopian polis have no traditional personal names. Instead they are designated by a combination of letters and numbers. The One State plans their days and manages their happiness, and the name of the hero of the novel is D – 503. He writes a confession about the time when he was ill, and he was ill because a soul appeared in him. The novel is divided into 40 entries, each representing a confession by D – 503. He records what he sees and thinks, or “to be more exact, what we think (precisely so-we, and let this *We* be the title of my record).”²⁵

The plot takes place one thousand years after the One State (Единое Государство)²⁶ had succeeded in conquering the entire world, following the Two Hundred Years’ War in which the city defeated “the primitive peasants” who harboured religious prejudice. The State is headed by the Benefactor. The One State was to a large degree created as an antipode to the Ancients, those who believed in a senseless God or gods; those who had been incapable of applying mathematics to everyday life and unable to organise every second in the life of its inhabitants following rational principles and using exact plans. All the books of the Ancients are banned, only the *Railway Guide* is still read as the “greatest literary monument to have come down to us from ancient days.”²⁷ The One State succeeded in eliminating hunger, but it also subjugated “the other ruler of the world” – love, and reduced it to “mathematical order”.²⁸ But the One State was not able to find “an absolute, precise solution to the problem of happiness.”²⁹

D – 503 is seemingly a perfect inhabitant of this state. He is a mathematician building the Integral – a spaceship that will spread mathematical principles of this polis around the Universe. If there are still any beings “living in the primitive conditions of freedom”, the Integral will subjugate them “to the beneficent yoke of reason.”³⁰ Still, the perfect rationality of D – 503 has its seamy side. He falls in love and his whole world falls apart in just several days. In the One State *Lex Sexualis* has regulated sexual affairs for 300 years. It is based on the following principle: “Each number has a right to any other

25 Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, tr. Mirra Ginsburg (New York: Harper Voyager, 2012), 1st entry, 2.

26 Zilboorg translated “Единое Государство” as “the United State”. Eugene Zamiatin, *We*, tr. Gregory Zilboorg (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959). Mirra Ginburg opted rather for “the One State”, and that seems more appropriate.

27 Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, 3rd entry, 12. Zamyatin’s novel also appeared in another English translation by Mirra Ginsburg (1972). The full edition of *We* was printed in Russian only in 1952 and published in New York. Евгений Замятин, *Мы*, (Нью-Йорк: Издательство имени Чехова, 1952). In the Soviet Union it appeared no sooner than 1988. Quotes are taken from Ginsburg’s translation.

28 Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, 5th entry, 21.

29 Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, 3rd entry, 12.

30 Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, 1st entry, 1.

number, as to a sexual commodity.” The state calculates the sexual hormones of each inhabitant, and they are then provided with “an appropriate Table of sexual days.”³¹ In such a state and with such plans there is no space for romantic love, yet that is exactly what happens to D – 503. Every inhabitant has two hours every day called “the Personal Hours” stipulated by the “Table of Hours.” The Table makes inhabitants precise and exact: “at the same second, we come out for our walk, go to the auditorium, go the hall for Taylor exercises, fall asleep...”³²

Originally an organised and well-mannered inhabitant, D – 503 becomes a sceptic and a man who has dreams. In his usual incarnation D – 503 held the opinions expected from loyal inhabitants of the One State. “The only means of ridding man of crime is ridding him of freedom”, was one of his normal lines of thinking. The first sign that something is out of order is that the engineer of the Integral begins having dreams and in the One State that is considered a sign of mental illness. While he was an orderly citizen, he had the usual perceptions cherished in the One State: “The ancients knew that God – their greatest, bored sceptic – was there. We know that there is only a crystal-blue, naked, indecent nothing.”³³ In his dreaming phase he observes something else: “Now I no longer live in our clear, rational world; I live in the ancient nightmare world, the world of square roots minus one.”³⁴ Finally a doctor tells him that he has contracted an illness that has reached epidemical proportions, his soul appeared!³⁵

He finds out soon that there is a mutiny against the One State, and he becomes ambivalent. He would still like to be loyal to reason and the One State, but he is at the same time attracted to a woman whom he falls in love with, a woman named I – 330. He realises that she is one of the leaders of the mutiny, which proves capable of shaking the very foundations of the (anti) utopian state of reason. The rebels break the Wall, and the organised world of the One State begins to fall apart. But, the State strikes back. Through the only gazette that it issues, the State reports that the State Science has located the centre of imagination in men and also discovered a way to cure men from imagination by triple-X-ray cautery. The proclamation ends with the following words: “You are perfect. You are machinelike. The road to one hundred per cent happiness is free. Hurry, then, everyone – old and young – hurry to submit to the Great Operation.”³⁶ In the end, D – 503 submits to the requests of the One State and goes to the Guardians, who dispatch him to the X-ray operation that makes him devoid of any emotion.

31 Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, 5th entry, 21–22.

32 *Ibid*, 3rd entry, 12.

33 *Ibid*, 11th entry, 59.

34 *Ibid*, *We*, 14th entry, 77.

35 *Ibid*, 16th entry, 89.

36 *Ibid*, 31st entry, 180.

The novel ends in uncertainty. The One State may or may not survive. If it survived, it would be able to have any one of its inhabitants, anyone of its numbers, undergo the surgical operation in order to prevent any new epidemics of emotions and the appearance of souls that could lead to a mutiny against it. Another possibility also remains open: that the revolution from the outside might win. The now lobotomised D – 503 gives his last statement in the dystopian city from the symbolic barricades of reason. He states: “And I hope that we shall conquer. More than that – I am certain we shall conquer. Because Reason must prevail.” („И я надеюсь – мы победим. Больше: я уверен – мы победим. Потому что разум должен победить”)³⁷ In this way dystopia reaches its climax at the very end. The highest point of reason leads to a man without a soul, a man on whom the One State has performed a surgical operation in order to destroy even the slightest possibility of him developing emotions, dreams, imagination and a soul. The man who has undergone a kind of lobotomy is the man who fully believes in reason!

Some of the questions addressed by Zamyatin had already been posed by Dostoevsky. The story of the Grand Inquisitor certainly influenced the author of the novel *We*. As D. Richards puts it, he faces “the same problems as Dostoyevsky: the merits of freedom and its compatibility with happiness, and the clash of reason and unreason.”³⁸ In the 36th entry D – 503 is brought to the Benefactor, who is revealed to be a machine. He is actually Zamyatin’s version of the Grand Inquisitor. The Benefactor states that the One State promises its citizens paradise on earth and that it has already given them the promise. “Remember: those in paradise no longer know desires, no longer know pity or love. There are only the blessed, with their imaginations excised (this is the only reason why they are blessed) – angels, obedient slaves of God...”³⁹

While the nineteenth century faced the dilemma on whether there was God, Zamyatin expressed this dilemma in a secularized idiom. The heroine of freedom in this novel I – 330 declares infinity. While D – 503 is of the opinion that the revolution conducted by the One State was the last, I – 330 turns his attention to the fact that there is no finite number, and in the same way as there is no finite number, equally there is no final revolution. “Then how can there be a final revolution? There is no final one. Revolutions are infinite. The final one is for children: children are frightened by infinity, and it’s important that children sleep peacefully at night...”⁴⁰ On the other hand, a scientist from his neighbourhood tells D – 503 of his great discovery: “there is no infinity. If the universe were infinite, then the mean density of matter in it should equal zero. And since it is not zero – we know that! – it means

37 *Ibid*, 40th entry, 232. Евгений Замятин, *Мы*, запись 40-я. Internet edition available at: http://az.lib.ru/z/zamyatin_e_i/text_0050.shtml (retrieved in March 2017).

38 D. Richards, “Four Utopias”, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 40, No. 94 (Dec., 1961), 221. Cf. D. J. Richards, *Zamyatin* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1962), 54–55.

39 Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, 36th entry, 214.

40 *Ibid*, 30th entry, 174.

that the universe is finite... You understand: everything is finite, everything is simple, everything is calculable. And then we shall conquer philosophically – do you understand?”⁴¹ But, it is exactly when infinity emerges that one faces the limits of rational considerations, and therefore D- 503 desperately asks: “out there, where your finite universe ends! What is out there, beyond it?”⁴²

When he wrote his dystopia Zamyatin certainly did not have in mind only Soviet Russia. However, the leaders and censors of the USSR unmistakably recognised themselves and their own practices in this novel, and therefore it remained unpublished in this state almost until its very disappearance. His dystopia was materialised in the practices of the Soviet state.

Freud's civilization/culture as an anti-utopia

While Zamyatin focused his attention on what could happen if the path of the rational and rationalised man devoid of emotions and imagination continued, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) defined man as an instinctual being who, by entering culture, had to repress his basis, his instincts. Already in his most famous book *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), the work that brings the contemporary man into the disquietude of the 20th century, he defined humans as beings of unfulfilled desires. After the Great War, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) he assesses that “the aim of all life is death”,⁴³ that in humans concomitantly with the life instinct (Eros) there is another drive that operates with equal force – the death instinct. In this way, he repeats something that had seemed quite obvious to the early Christians and many other subscribers to the concept of *contemptus mundi*. Max Schur argued that Freud had formulated the concept of the death instinct “not only because of his basic adherence to dualistic formulations, but because conceptualizing the wish to die in biological terms enabled him to deal better with his own fear of death.”⁴⁴

In 1927 Freud wrote his second pessimistic manifesto *The Future of an Illusion*. In it he revealed his concept of religion that owed much to Feuerbach's critique. For Freud religious teachings are “neurotic relicts”, and religion is “the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity.”⁴⁵ Therefore it is illusion and illness at the same time. From this one can only conclude that as long as there are many religious believers among humans, humanity will remain in the state of “obsessional neurosis”. Translated into terms of the second half

41 *Ibid*, 39th entry, 230.

42 *Ibid*.

43 S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [1920], *The Standard Edition of Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, further SE, tr. James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud (London: Vintage, 2001), vol. 18, 38.

44 Max Schur, *Freud: Living and Dying* (New York: International Universities Press, 1972), 344, 373.

45 S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, SE, vol. 21, 43, 44.

of the 20th century, one would have to add the so-called “secular religions” to the list, and would find “obsessional neurosis” as an illness accompanying totalitarian politics as well.

Freud himself wrote a dystopia in which he offered his vision of the direction and aim of human culture/civilisation. He began writing this book in the summer of 1929. The book was published at the end of the same year, although 1930 appears on its cover page. The first suggested title was *Das Unglück in der Kultur* (Misfortune in Culture), but the noun *Unglück* was later replaced by *Unbehagen* (malaise or discomfort), and it was finally published as *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*.⁴⁶ Freud made no conceptual distinction between culture and civilisation and therefore in the English translation, in which this work was mostly read in the following decades, it appeared as *Civilization and its Discontents*.⁴⁷ The work is focused on the conflict between instinctual demands and cultural restrictions.

In the second chapter Freud points out that the question of the purpose of human life has been raised on countless occasions, yet it has never “received a satisfactory answer and perhaps does not admit of one.” Unable to establish the purpose of life, he focuses on a more modest question dealing with what men “demand of life and wish to achieve in it?” His answer is that they “strive after happiness; they want to become happy and to remain so.”⁴⁸ This suggests that the purpose of life stems from the pleasure principle. Yet, this principle “is at loggerheads with the whole world... There is no possibility at all of its being carried through; all the regulations of the universe run counter to it.”⁴⁹ He finds that man “cannot tolerate the amount of frustration which society imposes on him in the service of its cultural ideals.” In his opinion present-day man “does not feel happy in his Godlike character.”⁵⁰ In the fifth chapter Freud focuses on a truth that “people are so ready to disavow”. It is:

that men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him...

Like Hobbes before him Freud is ready to repeat *Homo homini lupus*, and to ask “who, in the face of all his experience of life and of history, will have the courage to dispute this assertion?...” He reminds everyone of the atrocities committed in history by the Huns, the Mongols, or by “pious Crusaders”. He

46 Sigm. Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1930).

47 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, tr. Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1930), *Ibid* (New York: Cape and Smith, 1930).

48 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, SE, vol. 21, 75.

49 *Ibid*, 76.

50 *Ibid*, 92.

also does not fail to mention the horrors of the Great War, and concludes that “anyone who calls these things to mind will have to bow humbly before the truth of this view.”⁵¹

In Freud’s opinion, in civilized society “instinctual passions are stronger than reasonable interests”, and society is “perpetually threatened by disintegration.” As a consequence culture/civilization must do everything in its power “to set limits to man’s aggressive instincts.” The commandment “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”, which Jesus Christ called the greatest of all commandments,⁵² is for Freud “really justified by the fact that nothing else runs so strongly counter to the original nature of man.”⁵³

He ridicules the idea advocated by communist ideology that man is essentially good and it was only the institution of private property that corrupted his nature. He describes the psychological premises of communism as illusion. A possible abolishment of private property would yield more negative than positive results. First of all, aggressiveness is older than private property. And even without property sexual relations would remain a key question that is “bound to become the source of the strongest dislike and the most violent hostility among men who in other respects are on an equal footing.”⁵⁴ In Zamyatin’s *One State* sexual relations are regulated mathematically. The quantity of sexual relations of numbers follows the quantity of hormones in their blood. When children are born they belong to the state. Freud also mentioned the possibility of introducing complete freedom of sexual life. Even if that happened, in his opinion, one could expect “this indestructible feature of human nature [he means aggression and violent hostility among men] will follow it there.”⁵⁵ He was aware of the reality of the Soviet Union, where aggression survived and was periodically directed against different undesired groups. Biding together a group of people in love is possible as long as there are other people against whom they can manifest their aggressiveness. Very close communities are engaged in constant feuds. He called this phenomenon “narcissism of minor differences.”⁵⁶ At the end, in a famous sentence, he anticipated Soviet purges: “One only wonders, with concern, what the Soviets will do after they have wiped out their bourgeois.”⁵⁷

In the sixth chapter he discusses one of his most controversial concepts: the death instinct. He acknowledges that it “met with resistance even in analytic circles.”⁵⁸ Where is the source of this rejection? He explains it in the fol-

51 *Ibid*, 111–112.

52 Mark, 12:31.

53 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, SE, vol. 21, 112.

54 *Ibid*, 113–114.

55 *Ibid*, 114.

56 *Ibid*.

57 *Ibid*, 115.

58 *Ibid*, 119. Freud acknowledges that he originally used the views dealing with the death instinct only tentatively, “but in the course of time they have gained such a hold upon me

lowing way: “For ‘little children do not like’ when there is talk of their inborn human inclination to ‘badness’, to aggressiveness and destructiveness, and so to cruelty as well.”⁵⁹ He comments ironically that God created them “in the image of their own perfection,”⁶⁰ and is compelled to summarise his position “that the inclination to aggression is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man, and I return to my view that it constitutes the greatest impediment to civilization.”⁶¹

Since aggression is an impediment to civilization, how does the latter defend itself? An individual’s aggressiveness is introjected, it is internalised and it splits a part of the ego “which sets itself over against the rest of the ego as super-ego.” This new element takes the form of “consciousness” and implements “against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have liked to satisfy upon other, extraneous individuals.”⁶² The ego is now subjected to the harsh super-ego and in the common language that is called “sense of guilt”. Through this feeling the ego is tormented by the super-ego and the ego feels sinful.⁶³ One of many Freudian paradoxes emerges at this point. The more moral a man is the more powerful is the tyranny of the super-ego over him. It reaches its climax in saints “who reproach themselves with the worst sinfulness.”⁶⁴

Civilisation brings humans to unite “in a closely-knit group”, and it can do that “through an ever-increasing reinforcement of the sense of guilt.”⁶⁵ Hence, guilt is the fundamental problem of civilisation/culture and “the price we pay for our advance in civilization is a loss of happiness through heightening of the sense of guilt.”⁶⁶ In this way man faces a paradox: both defence from aggression and displaying aggression makes man unhappy or in Freud’s words: “What a potent obstacle to civilization aggressiveness must be, if the defence against it can cause as much unhappiness as aggressiveness itself!”⁶⁷ Freud’s man of civilisation is unhappy. Zamyatin also sees the pre-utopian man of his age as unhappy. An acquaintance of D – 503, poet R-13 mentions a legend that the ancients had in Paradise. There was a choice before Adam and Eve: happiness without freedom, or freedom without happiness.

that I can no longer think in any other way.” *Ibid.*

59 *Ibid.*, 120. ‘Denn die Kindlein, Sie hören es nicht gerne’ [“little children do not like”] is a quotation from a poem by Goethe. *Ibid.*, 120, f. 2.

60 *Ibid.*

61 *Ibid.*, 122. „Für alles Weitere stelle ich mich also auf den Standpunkt, daß die Aggressionseigung eine ursprüngliche, selbständige Triebanlage des Menschen ist und komme darauf zurück, daß die Kultur ihr stärkstes Hindernis in ihr findet.“ Sigm. Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1930), 96–97.

62 *Ibid.*, 123.

63 *Ibid.*, 125.

64 *Ibid.*, 126.

65 *Ibid.*, 133.

66 *Ibid.*, 134.

67 *Ibid.*, 143.

“Those idiots chose freedom”, and then “for ages afterward they longed for the chains.”⁶⁸ It’s only in the One State that happiness was retrieved.

Freud’s dystopia does not reflect his ideas on the future state of mankind. It is a description not a forecast. It reflects the human past, as he saw it, in civilisation/culture, and it diagnoses contemporary humankind. In his formula civilisation equals unhappiness. For this reason the core of his dystopia is the civilized man. In this work, Freud’s man is not the man of Enlightenment anymore with huge prospects awaiting him. His man is framed and limited by his instincts, confined by his character, the formation of which he could not have influenced, inhibited by the dynamic structure of personality in which the rational part – the *ego* – represents a small fraction and plays roles written by others.

As with Christian pessimists one faces the same gloomy human description in Freud’s work. What is anti-utopian in both cases is *conditio humana*. As Norman O. Brown put it: “In the new Freudian perspective, the essence of society is repression of the individual, and the essence of the individual is repression of himself.”⁶⁹ Therefore, culture, like religion, is a neurosis. Since all human civilisation/culture stems from the primal parricide and the Oedipus complex, this is not a surprising conclusion from Freud. In other words, he replaced St. Augustine’s pessimism, which viewed the destiny of an overwhelming part of humanity within the concept of *massa damanata*, with his own modernised form that could be called *massa neurotica*.

From this follows that the most civilized man is the least happy man. It is not only that civilization/culture impedes human happiness, it is even worse than that. Further development of it makes humans increasingly unhappy. Based on his field research conducted in Australia and New Guinea, and under the impression of *Civilization and its Discontents*, a leading psychoanalytic anthropologist, Géza Roheim, was prompted to write:

Every day we (humanity) are worse and worse. Culture does not involve happiness; people are happier in the Trobriand Islands or Central Australia than in the Middle Ages. Therefore psychoanalysis can cry its *delenda est tua Carthago* against the excessive tension in civilization. But we need have no fear. The pleasure in the discomfort of civilization, and in the holding of forepleasure tension at a constant level, is so great that we can never win this battle. Hence our courage. For otherwise we should be really more, or less, than human.⁷⁰

Not to be more and not to be less than human is to accept *conditio humana* for both Freud and Roheim. To accept – that means to accept unhappiness as the fundamental human condition. Freud himself had no doubts that his findings from *Civilization and its Discontents* left little space for any hope. In

68 Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, Eleventh entry, 61.

69 Norman O. Brown, *The Life against Death. The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* (London: Sphere Books Ltd., 1970), 16.

70 Géza Roheim, *The Riddle of the Sphinx, or Human Origins* (London: The International Psychoanalytic Library, Hogarth Press, 1934), 236.

February 1939, writing to him disturbed by the rise of Nazi Germany, Arnold Zweig remarks that only Freud's book "explains what we are experiencing: civilisation's discontents are now coming to the surface. The peoples of the West are avenging themselves for centuries of repression."⁷¹ Twenty days later he added: "For I have discovered, and derived a certain consolation from the discovery, that the explanation of the pile of ruins on which we and the dictators now live like rats, is to be found in your work – in your *Civilisation and its Discontents*."⁷² Freud replied in March: "I cannot imagine what 'consoling explanations' you have discovered in my *Civilisation and its Discontents*."⁷³ Freud concluded quite honestly in the last year of his life that the findings of his work on civilisation/culture leave no consolation for humanity. Nine years earlier he had replied in similar manner to Pfister:

The question is not what belief is more pleasing or more comfortable or more advantageous to life, but of what may approximate more closely to the puzzling reality that lies outside us. The death instinct is not a requirement of my life; it seems to me to be only an inevitable assumption on both biological and psychological grounds. The rest follows from that. Thus to me my pessimism seems a conclusion, while the optimism of my opponents seems an *a priori* assumption. I might also say that I have concluded a marriage of reason with my gloomy theories, while others live with theirs in a love-match...

At the end of this letter to Pfister he defined his position regarding reason. Contrary to Zamyatin who had fears that having faith in reason would ultimately limit human freedom, Freud found that there was too little reason in man, and that his lack of reason could lead man to total destruction. An old empiricist, a follower of Enlightenment, a humanist and a political liberal, he fully retreated before facts that he himself had collected, and with some resignation wrote to Pfister:

I personally have a vast respect for mind, but has nature? Mind is only a little bit of nature, the rest of which seems to be able to get along very well without it. Will it really allow itself to be influenced to any great extent by regard for mind?

Enviably he who can feel more confident about that than I.⁷⁴

With this work Freud's overall pessimism reached its peak. Freud closed the first edition of this book with the following sentence: "And now it is to be expected that the other of the two 'Heavenly Powers', eternal Eros, will

71 Arnold Zweig to Sigmund Freud, Mt. Carmel, House Moses, February 6, 1939, in *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, 175.

72 Arnold Zweig to Sigmund Freud, Mt. Carmel, February 27, 1939, *Ibid*, 176.

73 Sigmund Freud to Arnold Zweig, London, March 3, 1939, *Ibid*, 178.

74 Freud to Dr Pfister, Vienna, 07.02.1930, in Heinrich Meng and Ernst L. Freud (eds.), *Psycho-Analysis and Faith. The Letters of Sigmund Freud & Oskar Pfister*, The International Psychoanalytic Library, book No. 59 (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1963), 132–134.

make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary.” In the 1931 edition he added another sentence: “But who can foresee with what success and with what result?”⁷⁵ Touching upon the additional sentence, his doctor and biographer, Max Schur, posed a dilemma. “One wonders what Freud would have added after Hiroshima?”⁷⁶

Huxley’s anti-rational and anti-progressive Planning

It was already Zilboorg, Zamyatin’s translator, who noticed that *We* refers equally to Soviet Russia and to a Ford factory. Another writer also had factories owned by Henry Ford (1863–1947) in mind when he was composing his dystopia. In 1932 Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) wrote his anti-utopian novel *Brave New World*. In it he depicts humanity living in a society that has abandoned rational foundations, but has kept planning. Rational foundations would request an endless progress of science. Huxley describes a society that has found a balance between human nature filled with passions and technological development. The latter had to be halted so as not to obstruct the achieved balance and stability.

The members of this society enjoy their youth throughout their lifetime which is programmed to last 60 years. Inhabitants of the New World do not have biological parents. They are created through Bokanovsky’s Process which is “one of the major instruments of social stability.”⁷⁷ A single “bokanovskified egg” on average brings 72 persons of one of the five unformed series or castes named after the letters of the Greek alphabet: alpha, beta, gamma, delta or epsilon. The alpha caste is the cleverest, while epsilon deals with the simplest jobs. Every caste is brought up in such a way to make its members more than satisfied for belonging precisely to that caste and they are also programmed to have animosity to others. Children are brought up by State Conditioning Centres, and stability is provided through sleep-teaching called hypnopaedia, “the greatest moralizing and socializing force of all time.”⁷⁸ A child’s mind is conditioned by the endless repeating of the same sentences while the child is asleep. Each caste learns different sets of sentences and accepts them as postulates. There is also a special procedure called death conditioning. It frees the members of this society of the fear of death. It begins at the age of eighteen months when kids spend some time at Hospitals for the Dying where the best toys are kept. As a result: “They learn to take dying as matter of course.”⁷⁹ Education is essentially based on the neo-Pavlovian conditioning of reflexes.

75 S. Freud, *The Civilization and its Discontents*, SE, vol. 21, 145.

76 Max Schur, *Freud: Living and Dying*, 421.

77 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (London: Vintage, 2004 [1932]), 5.

78 *Ibid*, 23.

79 *Ibid*, 137.

The plot of the novel takes place in A. F. (*Anno Fordi*) 632, since the years are counted by the Ford era. The World State has emerged, and Ford's Day celebrations take place. There are Community Sings, and Solidarity Services.⁸⁰ The past is banned, museums are closed, and all books published before A.F. 150 are prohibited. This state has an important new invention, a new drug called *soma*. It has "all the advantages of Christianity and alcohol; none of their defects."⁸¹ *Soma* provides absence from reality whenever one needs it, and its use enables stability. It is precisely stability that is considered the highest social aim of the World State. To maintain stability, controllers prevent further progress. Science is under control because its findings could endanger the high level of stability that has been achieved through many efforts.

One of the main characters in the book, Bernard Marx, decides to visit one of the rare reservations that have survived – the pueblo of Malpais. It hosts savages as the remnants of the pre-Fordian era. For the society of the 26th century AD, or 7th century AF, people with feelings and biological parents have become a kind of safari. In one such reservation Bernard meets a young man named John who speaks exotic English and introduces himself as "a most unhappy gentleman". His mother Linda is from civilization. She got pregnant, was lost and stayed in the reservation, and the father of her child is "for the Other Place".⁸² Having a baby is so shameful in the World State that she had not dared go back to civilization. She rather stayed with the local Indians, but was deeply unhappy without *soma*. Her son had only a single link with civilization, a dusty old book of the Complete Works of William Shakespeare. He learned long passages from it. Bernard realizes that his director is John's father. In an act of vengeance against him, he takes John and Linda back to civilization. Bernard and John soon become attractions in the World State. Everyone wants to meet "the savage".

"The savage" finally meets one of the ten controllers of the World State, "His fordship", a "Resident World Controller for Western Europe", Mustapha Mond. John is rather surprised that the world that he just entered is not the same as in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Mond replies: "you can't make tragedies without social instability", and he offers a description of the World State:

The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get. They're well off; they're safe; they're never ill; they are not afraid of death; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there's *soma*.⁸³

80 *Ibid*, 45.

81 *Ibid*, 46.

82 *Ibid*, 99.

83 *Ibid*, 193–194.

Mond clarifies that in his opinion God quite probably exists, but that in his time God “manifests himself as an absence; as though he weren’t there at all.” John holds Mond responsible for this, but the Controller retorts that it is “the fault of civilization”. The reason for this is that “God isn’t compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness. You must make your choice. Our civilization has chosen machinery and medicine and happiness.”⁸⁴ After he has heard the principles of the World State, “the savage” John replies that he wants God, poetry, real danger, freedom, goodness and sin. “You’re claiming the right to be unhappy”, was Mond’s reply.⁸⁵ When he returned from the meeting with Mond, John had to explain why he looked ill and whether he had eaten something that did not agree with him. “I ate civilization. It poisoned me, I was defiled...,” exclaimed the young man.⁸⁶

Essentially Huxley depicted three phases in the development of man: barbarity as its past, the age of Shakespeare and Ford as its present and the era of the World State as its future. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913) Freud proclaimed civilization to be a result of the primal murder of the primal father of the horde, and he later reduced religion to an “obsessional neurosis of humanity”. Finally he added that in civilization man cannot be happy (1929/30). Huxley strongly agrees with him and therefore offers a new happy man devoid of religion, art and literature in his state of future. George Orwell summed up the question of the human nature in *Brave New World*: “In Huxley’s book the problem of ‘human nature’ is in a sense solved, because it assumed that by pre-natal treatment, drugs and hypnotic suggestion the human organism can be specialised in any way that is desired.”⁸⁷

New man has a drug available to everyone. Happiness of the man of the New World has been achieved by depriving him of critical insight into reality and into anything that could lead him to be ambivalent. For this reason art and religion have been abandoned. Linda in the meantime is overwhelmed by the possibility of using *soma* after so many years of deprivation. She increases her dozes daily and ends up in the Hospital for the Dying. John only manages to witness her last moments. The savage John who ate civilization ends up in hermitage in an old and abandoned lighthouse. He came there “to escape further contamination by the filth of civilized life.” He becomes a flagellant and is tormented by a sense of guilt. Someone spots him and he becomes a media attraction in the World State. In the end he commits suicide. In Freud’s terminology, he did not escape from civilization. On the contrary: by his last act he reaches the final phase of civilization/culture seen as a constant repression of drives. The repressed instinctual man, overpowered by his sense of guilt, reaches the supreme predicament of civilization/culture – the predicament of

84 *Ibid.*, 206–207.

85 *Ibid.*, 211–212

86 *Ibid.*, 213.

87 George Orwell, *Tribune*, January 4, 1946. Republished in: Donald Watt (ed.), *Aldous Huxley. A critical heritage* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 333.

suicide. The World State continues to exist, and the only sincere admirer of Shakespeare in it appropriately ends his life as most of Shakespeare's characters – tragically.

Although *Brave New World* was subsequently regarded as a condemnation of totalitarian movements of the 20th century, it originally emerged not only as reaction to them but also as a response to Anglo-American problems. Huxley got the idea to write this satire after he visited the United States in 1926. He personally shared the concerns of some of his contemporaries about an imminent American global domination. For this reason this novel may be read as a reply to “the widespread fear of Americanisation which had been present in Europe since the mid-nineteenth century”, but it “offers much more than straightforward travesty.”⁸⁸ One should not neglect the context of political crisis in Britain in 1931.⁸⁹ This work may be regarded and read “as the projection of the totalitarian dangers inherent in the corporate state, as it can be taken as a satire on the American bogey.” It may even be seen as the author's support for “scientific planning.”⁹⁰ One of the main characters in the novel, Mustapha Mond, was based on Sir Alfred Mond (1868–1930), the first director of Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd. Scientific planning, described by Huxley in the novel, may therefore be taken to be a way to escape the world of uncertainty of the early 1930s and to arrive instead to the world of certainty of the World State. It is at the same time a satire and a proposal, an anti-utopia and a plan.

The work had a mixed reception. Herbert George Wells angrily remarked in a letter that Huxley had “no right to betray the future as he did in that book”, and Wyndham Lewis assessed it as “an unforgivable offence to Progress.”⁹¹ In her review of the book for *The Daily Telegraph* Rebecca West points out similarities of Bolshevist and Behaviourist movements with the picture of the world provided in Huxley's book, and notices “that this is true even of the least pleasing details.”⁹² She summarizes her view of the novel as follows: “Equally a denunciation of Capitalism and Communism so far as they discourage man from thinking freely, it is a declaration that art is a progressive revelation of the universe to man, and that those who interfere with it leave men to die miserably in the night of ignorance.”⁹³

Bertrand Russell's work *The Scientific Outlook* was published a year earlier and may have served as an inspiration to Huxley. Russell published a review of Huxley's novel in the *New Leader*. At the beginning of it he noticed:

88 David Bradshaw, “Aldous Huxley (1894 – 1936)”, in Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (London: Vintage 2004), xxi.

89 *Ibid.*

90 David Bradshaw, “Introduction”, in Aldous Huxley, *op. cit.*, xii.

91 Donald Watt, “Introduction”, in *Idem* (ed.), *Aldous Huxley. A critical heritage*, 16.

92 Rebecca West, *The Daily Telegraph*, February 3, 1932, 7. Reprinted in Donald Watt (ed.), *op. cit.*, 198.

93 *Ibid.*, 202.

“In the happy days of Queen Victoria men used to write Utopias to suggest the likelihood of even greater happiness in the future. In the unhappy days in which it is our lot to live, Utopias are written in order to make us still more unhappy.”⁹⁴

Although Zamyatin’s novel was written in 1920/21, it was publicly read in Russia in 1923 only, and was published in English in 1924. In this way in the period 1923/24–1932, three powerful dystopias appeared: Zamyatin’s, Freud’s and Huxley’s. The first deprives man of freedom, the second of any prospects of being happy in civilization/culture, the third of creativeness, art and literature. In the first man is just about to become a robot, in the second he is a sinner, in the third he is a programmed being.

The end of history and a new anti-utopia

Freudian theory is a product of the age of Enlightenment and Freud himself was strongly influenced by rationalism. In his worldview there was no possibility for God or for the transcendental. Therefore, his understanding of life’s aim is even more tenebrous than the Christian version. For St. Augustine mankind was *massa damnata* – a multitude of the damned who will not have eternal life. Mankind seen by Freud is *massa neurotica* – the mass of neurotics who are broken under the influence of the repression of culture/civilisation and who are therefore unhappy. The choice detected by Freud is rather unfavourable for humans: the ill man who is a masochist and who marches towards his self-destruction, or the sane instinctual and aggressive man who, under the given conditions of technology, marches towards his all-encompassing destruction: in other words, the choice is between a self-destroyer or an all-destroyer. The world can be destroyed by both sadism and masochism. It can also be saved by balancing between the two opposites, but even Freud was not certain if future would bring the victory of Eros or Thanatos. Zamyatin’s One State is a product of the Two Hundred Years’ War. Huxley world is a result of the devastating Nine Years’ War. Freud’s world is a spectacle of civilisation that in front of his own eyes oscillates between suicide and all-destruction. It is the result of the First World War, and an announcement of the imminent Second World War.

Experience of the Great War undermined hopes in human progress; records of the Second World War brought both despair and readiness to define universal values. The first half of the twentieth century is one of the most brutal periods in the history of Europe. As László F. Földényi put it: “The twentieth century was only the most developed century of European history, registering itself as the peak of unsurpassable progress; it was simultaneously

94 Bertrand Russell, *New Leader*, March 11, 1932, 9. Reprinted in Donald Watt (ed.), *op. cit.*, 210.

undoubtedly European history's most horrific and brutal century."⁹⁵ At the same time the century witnessed great technological advancement. For the first time science reached a level that allowed humans to destroy the totality of human life on earth. This century was above all an era of human power to destroy the visible world. This prompted a new fear, not from a vengeful God, or from nature, but from humanity itself. A disappointed Freud concluded *Homo homini lupus*, and in that way he repeated what Hobbes mentioned and what Schopenhauer accepted. The death instinct as Freud defined it could destroy either external visible civilisation, or it could be internally directed and could destroy man himself. 20th-century pessimism has the same dualism. The world could be destroyed externally by apocalypse in the form of diseases, pollution of nature or a thermonuclear catastrophe. But mankind could be destroyed by the human inner world: by the nothingness in us, the sense that the world has no meaning, by general despair, a sense of futility and aimlessness.

During the course of the nineteenth century, in vast areas of Western mainstream culture, humanity ceased to believe in God and the devil and belief in science emerged instead.⁹⁶ By this act many humans stopped believing in the demonic within humans. God descended to Earth and incarnated himself in the idea of progress. Political history of the twentieth century challenged this belief in progress and demonstrated radical evil in its full content. Jeffrey B. Russell agrees that there is evil in every human, but doubts that "adding together even large number of individual evils" could explain Auschwitz. In his opinion: "Evil on this scale seems to be qualitatively as well as quantitatively different. It is no longer a personal evil, but a transpersonal evil, arising perhaps from a collective consciousness."⁹⁷ What could one do with this kind of Satan in a culture of despair increasingly present in the Western world, the type of culture in which the "ruler of this world" is at home?

The spectacle of Zamyatin's dystopia and the spectacle of human instinctual determinism in Freud's theory both leave an impression of anti-utopian pictures. Happiness induced by narcotics or based on abandoning rational scientific progress is the type of happiness that leaves no room for Shakespeare, God or arts, and that is exactly the kind of happiness that Huxley prophesises. In the foreword to another dystopia, Orwell's *1984*, Erich Fromm concludes: "The negative utopias express the mood of powerlessness and hopelessness of

95 László F. Földényi, *Dostoyevski reads Hegel in Siberia and Bursts into Tears* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020), 73.

96 Perhaps this happened in Europe even slightly earlier, by the end of the 18th century. "God and the devil died more or less at the same time – at some point toward the end of the eighteenth century". To put it more precisely, they both "took their leave of their traditional metaphysical theatre." *Ibid*, 71.

97 Jeffrey B. Russell, *The Prince of Darkness. Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 275. J. B. Russel, who wrote history of the Devil in the form of a tetralogy, offered an even more alarming possibility: "Or, possibly, it is truly transcendent, an entity beyond as well as within the human mind." *Ibid*.

modern man just as the early utopias expressed the mood of self-confidence and hope of post-medieval man.”⁹⁸ All three authors, Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell, believe in mankind, but Fromm speaks for all of them when he remarks that it is possible to destroy man’s humanity: “with means and techniques which are common knowledge today.”⁹⁹

At the end of the 20th century we have witnessed the emergence of the idea about the inevitable triumph of liberalism, the end of history, but this optimism turned out to have been short-lived. Therefore, the three previous centuries could be described as a series of falls of utopias. Krishan Kumar, in his well-known text on utopia today, warns that utopian ideas had lost much of their persuasiveness by the end of the 20th century. A “debased millenarianism” has emerged, a view that “sees an end without a new beginning.” There is a lack of faith in the possibility of significant improvement of the conditions of mankind. As Kumar sees it, utopia was on the defensive between the beginning of the First and the end of Second World War, but also afterwards. In Kumar’s selection the authors who contributed to this line are: Yevgeny Zamyatin, Nicholas Berdyaev, Aldous Huxley, Arthur Koestler, George Orwell, Karl Popper and Leszek Kolakowski. As the greatest utopia of Enlightenment, socialism “has apparently been a spectacular failure.”¹⁰⁰ Contemporary man has run out of utopias by the end of the 20th century. Kumar sees a serious problem in this because “utopia is not mainly about providing detailed blueprints for social reconstruction. Its concerns with ends is about making us think about possible worlds. It is about inventing and imagining world for our contemplation and delight. It opens up our minds to the possibilities of the human condition.”¹⁰¹

The Age of Enlightenment proved capable of severely challenging Western institutional religious beliefs; the 20th century disputed the idea of progress and universal categories. The period following the Second World War began with a great universal plan. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations. The idea behind it was that the declaration would be valid and applicable to every *homo sapiens* throughout the globe. By the end of the same century, social sciences in the West had challenged any essentialism, and consequently it could mean the universality of human rights as well.

Certain scientific findings had the same effect: there are no eternal categories any more. Decade by decade humans learned that stars were not eternal, that Earth would eventually come to its natural end. Finally, even the Universe lost its essential quality. It would also disappear as well. The great

98 Erich Fromm, “Afterword” to George Orwell, *1984* (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1961), 259.

99 *Ibid*, 261.

100 Krishan Kumar, “Apocalypse, Millennium and Utopia Today”, in Malcolm Bull (ed.), *Apocalypse Theory and the Ends of the World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 215–216.

101 *Ibid*, 219.

dilemma that Zamyatin's D – 503 wanted to solve has lost meaning. For Stephen Hawking, as well as for many other contemporary theoretical physicists, the destiny of the universe depends on the amount of matter in it. If the amount is above critical level the gravitational attraction will stop the galaxies flying apart. At some point the end of the Universe will come as “the big crunch in which all matter will be sucked back into a vast cataclysmic gravity well.” There is also the opposite possibility of the amount of matter falling below critical level. In this case there would be nothing to stop galaxies from flying apart. The Universe would get increasingly emptier and colder. In that case, the last act of apocalypse is the following: “The long cold whimper in which everything runs down and the last stars flicker out.”¹⁰² In both cases everything visible would disappear. From the two apocalyptic spectacles one could only draw the conclusion that the Universe, whether finite or infinite, has no inherent meaning since in both of its two possible final scenarios it comes unstoppably to its own annihilation.

Jeffrey B. Russell criticised what he termed “academic conventional wisdom”. That wisdom “holds that only things that can be quantified really exist; that the universe had no inherent meaning or purpose”, and that, after all, there cannot be such a thing as evil “precisely because there is no such thing as deliberate, free choice.” As he noted, “if there is no inherent meaning in the cosmos, then absolutely nothing can be absolute good and evil, and everything is relative according to personal view.”¹⁰³ On the other hand, it was precisely relativism that opened up possibilities for new personal freedoms in the Western part of humanity. To further improve the human condition, a balance between relativism and universalism may be equally important as the balance between Eros and Thanatos.

Man believing in some type of general principle appears to be the only force that could oppose a growing pessimism in Western world of our *fin de siècle* and the possible emergence of a post-truth age. This man was severely shaken by Nietzsche, and was made senseless by the late Freud who defined him as a neurotic. His diagnosis was not incorrect, but it has remained an open question what his neurotic man is supposed to do. Freud gave no clear instruction for how mankind could overcome its own neurotic poverty and was satisfied with merely describing it. In his dystopia Zamyatin left a utopian hope in the end – revolution that is endless. For Huxley everything that the man of the old civilisation, the savage John, could do was to self-flagellate and ultimately commit a suicide. Huxley may have not been fully aware of how much he agreed with Freud the pessimist, whose man of civilisation/culture who repressed himself was the supreme masochist. All three analysed

102 Stephen Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell* (London and New York: Bantam Press, 2001), 95–96.

103 Jeffrey B. Russell, “The Reality of Radical Evil”, in Predrag Cicovacki (ed.), *Destined for Evil? The Twentieth-Century Responses* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 81–82, 85.

anti-utopians clearly stated that mankind could face total disappearance, if by mankind one understands men of humanism and Enlightenment, and not robotised and technologically modified creatures. None of them could dream about artificial intelligence and other technological challenges facing humanity in the first half of the 21st century.

In Zamyatin's view the rational may totally overcome man's humanness and may reduce him to a robot; for Freud, on the contrary, it is the instinctual that could ultimately destroy the entire visible world. In Huxley's novel only members of the alfa caste are still able to reach certain aspects of humanity, but even its members can do it in extraordinary cases only. Herman Hesse observed that in Huxley's Utopian novel only two men were not wholly machines. Only two of them "still have remnants of humanity, of soul, of personality, of dream and passion."¹⁰⁴

Zamyatin announced the emergence of the totalitarian state and its lack of concern for any individual need. Freud described the misfortune that civilisation/culture had already created as well as those that it could eventually create; and Huxley challenged the very notion of progress. If at the beginning of the 20th century many Americans and Europeans seemed to believe that progress had no limits, it was Huxley who set the limits. In order not to be the Freud's neurotic man, Huxley's anti-utopian man had to repudiate freedom in two ways: freedom to constantly progress and freedom to choose between happiness and unhappiness.

Both Zamyatin's and Huxley's dystopias resulted from anticipated prolonged wars. In Zamyatin's version after the Two-Hundred Year War only 0.2% of the world population survives.¹⁰⁵ Freud was a rare admirer of humanism who thought that wars were almost eradicable for humans. In September of 1939, in the last month of his life, he was to endure a year-long agony produced by metastasis of his jaw cancer. Dr. Schur informed him that the Second World War had just begun and asked the confident pacifist: "Do you believe that this is the last war?", to which Freud replied "My last war."¹⁰⁶ This was one of the last great sentences of Freud's, his final anti-utopian message to mankind. War is too congruent with human nature that even the new destructive world war could not be seen as the last that humankind would wage.

The anti-utopian decade (1923–1932) ended with the beginning of modern barbarity in the 1930s: the Nazis came to power and Stalin undertook the gravest purges. In the One State Zamyatin described Gas Bell as a "scientific" method of dealing with enemies. It soon materialised as the gas chamber. Freud announced a series of wars in which mankind might become involved and diagnosed the problem of human aggression that would be very difficult

104 Herman Hesse, *Die Neue Rundschau*, May 1933, supplement, p. 2. Reprinted in Donald Watt (ed.), *op. cit.*, 221.

105 Евгений Замятин, *Мы*, запись 5-я.

106 M. Schur, *Freud: Living and Dying*, 527.

to overcome. Both defence from aggression and aggression itself bring misfortune to man. Huxley reconceptualised the problem of progress. Its permanent advancement brings a series of misfortunes. Its halt could make man happy, but the price that accompanies it is all too high. All three have, in different ways, shown the antinomy of two notions that man so fervently wants to reconcile: happiness and freedom. For Zamyatin and Huxley the two notions do not go hand in hand at all. For Freud man of culture/civilisation can under no circumstances be happy. Man would anyway want to have them both and simultaneously at his disposal, but to paraphrase Freud, modern man who is Godlike cannot achieve this, “all the regulations of the universe run counter to it... One feels inclined to say that the intention that man should be ‘happy’ is not included in the plan of ‘Creation.’”¹⁰⁷

Bibliography

- Bradshaw, David, “Aldous Huxley (1894 – 1936)”, in Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (London: Vintage 2004), pp. v-xv.
- Brown, Norman O., *The Life against Death. The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* (London: Sphere Books Ltd., 1970).
- Delumeau, Jean, *La peur en Occident. XIV^e – XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1978).
- Fay, Sidney B., “The Idea of Progress”, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Jan., 1947), 231–246.
- Földényi, László F., *Dostoyevski reads Hegel in Siberia and Bursts into Tears* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020).
- Freud, Ernst L., *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, translated by Prof. and Mrs. W. D. Robson-Scott, The International Psychoanalytic Library, book No. 84 (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1970). Original edition in German: Ernst L. Freud (ed.), *Sigmund Freud und Arnold Zweig. Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1968).
- Freud, Sigmund, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [1920], The Standard Edition of Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, further SE, tr. James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud (London: Vintage, 2001).
- Idem*, *The Future of an Illusion* [1927], SE, vol. 21
- Idem*, *Civilization and its Discontents* [1930 (1929)], SE, vol. 21. German edition: Freud, Sigm., *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1930).
- Friedländer, Saul, “Themes of Decline and End in Nineteenth-Century Western Imagination”, in: S. Friedländer, G. Hoffer, L. Marx and E. Skolnikoff (eds.), *Visions of Apocalypse. End or Rebirth?* (New York and London: Holms and Meier, 1985), 61–83.

107 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, SE, vol. 21, 76. “...alle Einrichtungen des Alls widersterben ihm; man möchte sagen, die Absicht, daß der Mensch ‘glücklich’ sei, ist im Plan der ‘Schöpfung’ nicht enthalten.“ Sigm. Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1930), 24.

- Fromm, Erich, "Afterword" to George Orwell, *1984* (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1961), 257–267.
- Gay, Peter, *Schnitzler's Century. The Making of Middle Class Culture* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 2002).
- Ginsburg, Mirra, "Introduction", In Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (New York: Harper Voyager, 2012), pp. x-xx.
- Hawking, Stephen, *The Universe in a Nutshell* (London and New York: Bantam Press, 2001).
- Hobsbawm, Eric, *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (London: Abacus, 1995, 1st ed. 1994).
- Huxley, Aldous, *Brave New World* (London: Vintage, 2004 [1932]).
- Kumar, Krishan, "Apocalypse, Millennium and Utopia Today", in Malcolm Bull (ed.), *Apocalypse Theory and the Ends of the World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 200–224.
- Meng, Heinrich, and Ernst L. Freud (eds.), *Psycho-Analysis and Faith. The Letters of Sigmund Freud & Oskar Pfister*, The International Psychoanalytic Library, book No. 59 (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1963).
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Joyful Wisdom ("La Gaya Scienza")*, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche. The First Complete and Authorised English Translation*, tr. Thomas Common, ed. Dr Oscar Levy, volume ten (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924).
- Richards, D., "Four Utopias", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 40, No. 94 (Dec., 1961), 220–228.
- Richards, D. J., *Zamyatin* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1962).
- [Robertson, Frederick W.] *Life and Letters of Frederck W. Robertson*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (London: Sith, Eldrer and Co., 1866).
- Roheim, Géza, *The Riddle of the Sphinx, or Human Origins* (London: The International Psychoanalytic Library, Hogarth Press, 1934).
- Russell, Jeffrey B., *The Prince of Darkness. Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).
- Idem*, "The Reality of Radical Evil", in Predrag Cicovacki (ed.), *Destined for Evil? The Twentieth-Century Responses* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 81–90.
- Schur, Max, *Freud: Living and Dying* (New York: International Universities Press, 1972).
- Slonim, Marc, "Preface", in Eugene Zamiatin, *We* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959), xxi-xxv.
- Taylor, A. J. P., *The First World War. An Illustrated History* (Harmodsworth: Penguin Books, 1966).
- Taylor, Frederick Winslow *The Principles of Modern Management* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1919 [1911]).

Vidler, Alec R., *The Church in an Age of Revolution. 1789 to the present day* (London: Penguin Books, The Pelican History of the Church, 1974).

Watt, Donald (ed.), *Aldous Huxley. A critical heritage* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

Zamyatin, Yevgeny,

Editions in Russian:

Евгений Замятин, *Мы* (Нью-Йорк: Издательство имени Чехова, 1952)/
Zamyatin, Yevgeny, *My* (New York: Chehov Publishing House, 1952).

Евгений Замятин, *Мы*, запись 40-я. Internet edition available at: http://az.lib.ru/z/zamjatin_e_i/text_0050.shtml (retrieved in March 2017).

English translations:

Zamiatin, Eugene, *We*, tr. by Gergory Zilboorg (New York: Dutton, 1924, 2nd ed.: New York: Dutton, 1959);

Zamyatin, Yevgeny, *We*, tr. Mirra Ginsburg (New York: Harper Voyager, 2012).

Zamyatin, E., *Soviet Heretic*, ed. Mirra Ginsburg (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992, 1st ed. 1970).

Zilboorg, Gregory, “Foreword”, in Eugene Zamiatin, *We* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959), pp. xiii-xviii.

Idem, “Thirty-five years later”, in Eugene Zamiatin, *We* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959), xix-xx.