

# “Nonclassical Turn” in Utopianism (the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century): History, Historiography, Methodology

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## Abstract

The importance of the article is determined by “deficiency of projection” observed in the field of political ideology. Moreover, the available data (including in social and humanitarian technologies) don't have a goal of being implemented in practice. The article examines «nonclassical turn» in utopianism at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the nature of the utopian ideal was altered and the transcendental ideal of classical utopia was replaced by an immanent ideal of nonclassical utopia that essentially advanced the social development of mankind. Our research is based on the historical method and the article shows that utopian texts are varieties of historical sources which can reveal the features of public consciousness of certain historical periods. The data presented can be useful for political scientists, sociologists and historians who deal with the problems of the evolution of public consciousness and the perception of social time.

**Keywords:** Utopia, social ideal, nationalism, cosmopolitanism, social and historical time, markers of historical reality

## 1. Introduction

Ricoeur (1986) believes that the main difficulty in learning utopia is related to its excessive thematic variety, though he is quite traditional in his definition: "utopia" first of all is a literary genre, any utopia is inherently the author's creation, implying the participation of the reader who has to accept the represented model of a society and an individual at least as a plausible hypothesis (Ricoeur, 1986).

The concepts of Russian experts are mainly based on the distinctions between "utopia" and "utopianism". According to Chertkova (2004), they have a common stem that denotes 1) incompleteness of history; 2) negation of the existing reality; 3) aspiration for social harmony. The difference is rooted in the peculiar to utopia "mythical" transfiguration of the world, and in its generic feature, that is, a strong orientation towards perfect society (Chertkova, 2004). In social utopianism there is an aspiration for real transformation of the world according to the suggested model. The characteristics of social utopianism include 1) projection; 2) lawfulness; 3) a priorism; 4) anti-historicism; 5) extremity; 6) perfectibilism. Social utopianism aims at the random creation of the world following the vision; thus, causal relations are substituted by ideal oughtness, causality is replaced by rationality. Utopian consciousness treats the historical process negatively as the future is thought a valuable alternative and an antithesis to the present.

Arab-Oghlu (2004) has offered a more traditional definition of utopia considering it as "the image of an ideal social order in the country which allegedly existed or is existing somewhere, or as the project of social transformations resulting in its implementation ". Thus, in general meaning utopia stands for an ideal social order therefore, it carries out ideological, educational and cognitive functions. It is noted that "with the development of scientific titles of society, utopia considerably weakens its role to inform and predict". However, utopia remained as a specific genre of literature revived by H. Wells at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The aforementioned differing points of view reveal the attitude of the Russian intellectual community to utopia. The splitting of the semantic field is also obvious. Moreover, no efforts are made to synthesize the definitions. At best, certain inversion is offered in order to raise the status of the whole cluster of concepts related to "utopian" with negative connotations prevailing in meaning. Western researchers suffer the same difficulties, but perfectly realize them. So in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* published in 2005, Sargent, the author of the article

"Utopia", avoided giving any definition to "utopia" at all (Sargent, 2005). Instead, he described the etymology of the concept introduced by Thomas More and points out that "though he had introduced the concept and invented the genre, he wasn't the first who came up with an idea of a society better than the existing one".

The dictionary of Morris and Cross (2009) claims that "utopia" and "utopian" are synonymous as they express "any ideas or schemes which are impossible to realize, but are theoretically attractive". The authors propose six main principles, which we followed selecting the corpus-based data. The same principles empirically describe the boundaries of the concept "utopian". In our research they are represented in the following way:

1. A perfect society exists as a philosophical idea, a manual or even as a description of existing objects. Its major characteristic is the absence of basic conflict; however, it is imagined in physical time and space that differentiate it from various religious ideals and communities.
2. Utopia, developing in the consciousness of the author, suggests its realization that distinguishes it from the dreams of separate individuals and any marginal thinkers (*dysfunctional thinkers*).
3. A utopian thinker suggests the flexibility of human nature.
4. Utopia includes a *particular plan or model* (based on religion, reason or science). From the political point of view, a utopian model can be oligarchical, aristocratic, theocratic or democratic. From the social point of view, a utopian model implies the improved family model based on the existing system of relationships but free from class and gender distinctions and provides equality in every respect. From the point of view of economics, a utopian model promises equality, joint efforts, provided while pursuing a common goal, and fair distribution of public goods.
5. Utopia can be negative (*dystopia*). In this case it criticizes utopian ideas and schemes, showing their weaknesses and unfitness for practical implementation, and troubles the mankind may face in case the utopian ideals are realized.
6. Utopia is at all not a flight from reality as it suggests improvement of some spheres of the social and political life of particular groups and subcultures. The basis of any utopia *surely includes* universality (*totality*) and perfectionism; they are peculiar to each utopian's view of the world.

The given table shows the differences between classical and nonclassical models of utopia (Martynov, 2013)

Table 1. Differences between classical and nonclassical models of utopia

<i>Classical Utopia</i>	<i>Nonclassical Utopia</i>
1. <i>Spatial isolation</i> . The locus is an isolated island or a set of enclaves similar to island.	1. <i>Spatial openness</i> . The locus extends to the ends of the earth, sometimes overstepping these limits.
2. <i>The absence of historical time</i> , that is so-called "bullet-time".	2. <i>Eschatology</i> - utopia is believed to be the peak of the mankind evolution.
3. <i>Autarchy</i> .	3. <i>Globality</i> .
4. <i>Urbanism</i> –the topos of the Ideal City is typical.	4. <i>Anti-urbanism</i> – the inhabitants of Utopia settle in small communities.
5. <i>Regulations</i> .	5. <i>Freedom to express yourself</i> .
6. <i>Totalitarianism</i> .	6. <i>Totality</i> .

The table represents how the content elements of utopian projects reflect the evolution of public consciousness which consequently identifies the consciousness of the author.

## 2. Methodological Framework

The polysemantic essence of the term "utopia" in many respects leads to the lack of any general methodological approaches to studying the concept. We devoted a number of articles to this problem which were published in the journal "Questions of Philosophy" (Martynov, 2009, 2010). Nevertheless, the current situation has certain advantages, as the researcher, according to his own goals, is free to deal with any of those meanings which are available for him for the time being.

It is very convenient to do historical research of utopias based on the method offered by Ricoeur (1986). He

thinks that the interpretation and understanding of historical phenomena are similar to the understanding and interpretation of literary works. As Ricoeur puts forward, analysing texts with the help of methods, developed by semiologists, we can understand the logic of reasoning and actions of people of a certain period under certain conditions that allows us to account for the subjective factor in social interaction. "Perhaps, we should find the connection between various utopias in the structure of imagination. However, even the superficial understanding is extremely complicated as we come across numerous individual utopias which can't almost be united under one generic name. This problem is reflected in a method. Critical analysis of ideology is actually sociological, whereas *utopias have to be studied historically* (our italics – D.M.). Major works about utopia are mainly stories about certain utopias. This goes to prove some likeness between literary genre and historical method" (Ricoeur, 1986). In our turn, we implemented the method in practice based on a popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century utopian novel "Looking Backward" by E. Bellamy (Martynov, 2008).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 The Functional Peculiarities of Utopia as Genre

In Literature "utopia" is represented by the German term *die Staatroman*. At the same time the genre has those features that actually bring it out of the literary research perspective. We will try to distinguish these features.

1. The main characteristics and structural features of utopia as a genre are entirely determined by the goals it achieves. By content a utopia is a story about the perfect structure of human society with a written set of management principles which are able to meet the challenges of the real modern society the author of a utopia lives in. Such artistic endeavor results in the descriptiveness and inclusiveness ("totality") of utopia. A utopian writer describes the perfect society from outside which indicates the closeness of the literary "state novel" to a treatise on sociology. A utopian writer is actually a sociologist revealing the main tendencies and signs of social and government systems which are perfect for him. Even from the point of view of literary critics, the "state novel" would not employ the main features of a novel as a literary form as utopia implies totality that is characteristic of a scientific work, but not a literary one.

2. The art form of utopia is not only secondary to socio-philosophical content, but also it explicitly covers instrumental functions. Since utopia as a genre is directly connected with the problem of the ideal, it occurs also in aesthetic dimension because the ideal is given an aesthetic shape. The secondariness and instrumental character of the literary form of utopia represents its genre dependence.

3. The introduction of a special character, who accompanies the lyrical hero in Utopia, is a characteristic element of any literary utopia.

4. Utopia as a literary genre tries to connect things which cannot be connected: novel has to follow the logical structure of the theoretical treatise, so it represents a vision and a scheme at the same time. Thus, to be a novel utopia is excessively conceptual; to be a socio-philosophical concept it is largely fictional.

5. Utopia can separate from reality both in spatial and time relations. In addition, it is necessary to remember that the possibilities to create a fantastic world are extremely limited, besides, not only following the writer's individual imagination. All the elements of imagination are definitely based on the knowledge of the real world the author has. It naturally brings us to a problem of historical time in a utopian work which appears to be more complex than its stated absence.

#### 3.2 Historical Time and Utopia

Historical time is an integral element of an art work as it represents the main background of actions, possessing a complete structure and marked by signs of the narrated historical period. The creation of "own" historical time, at least the static one, actually isn't the creation of a fantastic reality as we deal with the time of real human history (so-called current reality). A human being cannot think beyond historical scope because the human imagination is framed by the individual experience and historical experience of mankind, available in any form, or the identity which differentiates this individual. At any fictional time there are the marking signs of the current reality that is real history, altered by the consciousness of the author. Only due to markers, time can be considered as a category of thinking and as an artificially created reality. In this process we distinguish dominant markers which narrow the gap between the time of the actions of the art work with the typified time frame of any period of human history; in the case of a utopian author with his own (historical time) time frame. The other markers function as anachronisms.

Volkovskaya (1988) in her unpublished manuscript introduced the concept of chronotype, in other words, the characteristics of the conditional time frame associated with the specific period of human history. The term was coined by analogy with Bakhtin's (1986) chronotope, but it remained the author's neologism. It can be interpreted in the following way. Chronotype can be marked only by material and social factors existing in indirect historical

time, linked together with a set of ethical, aesthetic and religious beliefs.

Here, the main problem is that people do not always adequately perceive the environment, as their consciousness is filled with fictional phenomena which seem real for each perceiving individual. This imaginative reality becomes real, having a practical and effective impact on the life of an individual and communities of various sizes.

Considering the phenomenon of typified historical time, we can and must ignore the problems of continuum (it is implied by Bakhtin's term "chronotope"). Nevertheless, it does not exclude the possibility of the interaction of chronotope and chronotype as components of single semiotic structures providing an inextricable connection between the general and the specific. Thus, the problem of studying typified historical time appears to be as important as the problem of studying historical time in general.

### 3.2.1 Typifying Historical Time in Utopia

1. The illusion of historical accuracy in a utopian work is created by purely formal means, that is, by introducing certain names, dates, etc. Typified time possesses a characteristic feature: the recognition is achieved without any formal statement that is not necessarily the result of conscious efforts made by the author.

2. Historical time becomes typified by conscious deformation. It suggests narrative prose should reach a new generalizing level of quality. That is the way how typical models of utopias, dystopias and pamphlets are created.

3. A human being is a creature incapable of thinking outside history. It means that it is utterly impossible to create a world picture which isn't associated with any chronotype. On the other hand, the current reality of human history provides a small amount of material to model the vision of a utopian society. Hence, a utopian has to deform considerably the models of historical time he has, altering the chronotype beyond any recognition.

4. Negation of reality in utopia is only the tool, besides neither the only nor the important one, but, by no means, it is the goal or the result of modelling a utopia. The modelling process of a utopia is the process of neutralizing the reality followed by adding the challenges of the environment in which its author created; it is called the "understatement" of utopia. According to Volkovskaya (1988), "understatement" is the most important structure-forming element of utopia. Meeting the challenges inherent in a certain society is one of the most essential tasks the author of a utopia faces with. "Among the great variety of chronotypical signs the author consciously excludes the ones with negative connotations, those that come into conflict with the harmony of the created reality. With the rest the author models hypothetical conflict-free continuum. The marking signs lacking antagonists are incomplete but recognizable as the projections of valid time structures" (Volkovskaya, 1988).

5. To create the impression of suppressing the utopian "organism" it is necessary to conceal the initial sign sets.

After More, due to the shortage of historical material for modelling a new chronotype, the genre of utopia was deprived of considerable resources necessary for further development. It meant that the basic principle of creating utopian models also didn't undergo any changes though some certain forms of their interpretation (private details) couldn't but experience essential evolution.

On exploring the globe by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, utopians of contemporary history started shaping their utopias in time (uchronias). Placing utopia in a formally declared future demanded its development, at least in literature. It signaled the similarity of utopian genre with futurological fantasy. A utopian addresses to the nonexistent future a complex of ideas of the future which existed in the social reality he lived in, or his own vision of the future. In case there are no initial signs of historical time (namely, of social and material realities) the markers of chronotype are successfully substituted by ideological complexes such as entitling or fashions, which are also typical of historical periods. Therefore, the vision of the future is inseparably linked with the present, changing in the course of time, as well as any other cultural phenomenon.

### 3.3 Metahistorical Categories

While analyzing a utopia we cannot ignore the problems of semantics of historical time. These problems have been thoroughly studied by a German historian and historical philosopher Reinhart Koselleck (1923 – 2006). Koselleck came to the conclusion that it is necessary to introduce special methodological concepts, which he called "metahistorical categories". They are called metahistorical due to the fact that they serve as an anthropological background of a "probable history", affecting the arrangement and development of events. Metahistorical categories, the first one of which is called by Koselleck "space of experience", the second – "horizon of expectations", create a special semantic field, which shapes the future. Koselleck considers "experience" as modern past, the events of which are connected with the present through memories and descriptions. Therefore, other people's experience is kept and preserved in the memory of generations, and in this sense history appears to be the information about the borrowed experience of "expectation", which connects personal and not personal.

Though happening today, "expectation" is at the same time the imagined future. Koselleck points out that "expectation" aims at "what has not happened and become an "experience" yet" (Koselleck, 1979).

"Experience" and "expectation" are permanently influenced by time shifts and changes. The tension between them "produces" a range of new decisions and actions, creating and forming the frames of historical time. According to Koselleck (1979), it is most obvious through the example of prognosis. The probability expressed by prognosis implies not that someone expects something; as highly improbable things can be expected. The probability of predicted future is counted from the past conditions, improved by experience. Prognosis contains this experience, the "space" of which shapes a definite "horizon of expectations". On the one hand, prognosis is controlled by "expectation"; on the other hand, the probability of a particular action has to project "expectation", in which there always exist fear and hope. Prognosis just suggests the possibility of "expectation" that arises not only from experience. "If a prognosis is given, it means that the situation, from which it originated, has already changed... The previous "space of experience" is never enough to define exactly the "horizon of expectations".

Time puts "experience" into "horizon of expectations", but not vice versa. Compared to presence of the future, presence of the past is represented differently. Since, the experience taken from the past appeared directly ("in space"); it has to be connected with some rational, reasonable totality, where other "layers" of time are present without being identified. Totality plays a vital role in case that the research objective is to receive synthesis based knowledge about the object, when the object is complex or regarded as a certain process. In terms of time, "experience" is not consistent, as it is involved in the preparatory process of the past.

"Horizon of expectations" looks a little different. Expectation is revealed through hope and fear, desire and will, care, as well as rational analysis. "Horizon of expectations" suggests the creation of a new "space of experience" in the future, which is not accessible yet. Here, despite the prognosis, the quality of the future meets the demarcation line, as it the future has not been defined yet. The future "expectation" is framed differently than the past which is shaped from the ready "experience". "Experience" can already be expected today, although it can appear in various ways, repeat and prove to be true in the future.

Following this approach, we can be convinced that utopias will become a clear illustration to the problem of historical time by Koselleck. It should be specified, that here "utopia" cannot be regarded as a complete structure with certain characteristics. Thus, it is essential to carry out functional analysis of the certain content of certain utopias.

### *3.4 The Functionalist Approach to the Study of Utopia and Paul Ricoeur*

Ricoeur points out the following methodical difficulties in studying utopia:

1. Utopia initially appeared as a literary genre connected with the name of a specific author. "Utopia is a developed genre not only proclaimed but presented by many creators whereas ideology has no author. Ideology is always the creation of someone who claims that we are victims of our ideology. Therefore, initially it is easier to deny ideology while it is easier to proclaim utopia" (Ricoeur, 1986).
2. Ideologies are examined based on a critical method, consequently, the task of the researcher of ideology is to expose it. "However utopia in its literary form promotes some kind of partnership with the favorable reader. The reader is inclined to accept utopia at least as a probable hypothesis. By the way, the last can be a part of the literary strategy of a utopian aimed at convincing the reader with the help of rhetorical devices peculiar to fiction. A fiction writer distorts the images, and these devices are accepted by the reader for a while. In utopian compositions we don't face polemics which have to be "disarmed" by the mind of the reader, in this case appearing as the editor" (Ricoeur, 1986).
3. Excessive variety of certain utopian works doesn't allow formulating the general definition of utopia. "It is caused by the author's nature of utopias: each separate utopia is written by a certain author. We could hardly identify the nature of ideology as a separate phenomenon; it is even more difficult to distinguish the nature of Utopia. We can classify ideologies according to their subject matter, but the content analysis of utopias is senseless; it won't be able to differentiate the general from the essential, and it will appear that we sink in the sea of unrelated dreams. <...> There is a certain thematic constancy when motives of family, property, consumption, social and political systems, the bases of religion, etc. are repeated" (Ricoeur, 1986).

So, Ricoeur (1986) approached the problem of utopia as a philosopher of history not as a historian. Paradoxically, he had no intention to check his own arguments on practical bases despite a rich collection of utopian literature.

The ambiguity of the concept "utopia" and other related concepts impede formulating a single definition and theoretical synthesis. Nevertheless, debating Ricoeur's opinion, it is quite possible to give the definition based on certain utopian works included in the context of historical time in particular and intellectual history in general.

1. Any utopia (both as a text or a social structure) carries out the following functions: a) the critical function suggesting the consideration of the current reality "from outside"; b) fantastic function supposing the inversion of the current reality for own purposes of the author of a utopia; c) the axiological function expressed as well in inversion of ethics and introduction of values differing from those widespread in the current reality; d) the mobilization function suggesting spreading the aspiration to make changes among the public.

2. Thus, any project can be called utopian provided that it meets the following criteria: a) it represents the image of the society which is considerably different from that existing in the current reality; b) it is the product of imagination, that refers to the rational analysis of the existing situation and the conjuncture; c) this project is based on an absolutely different set of values that define new goals and cause changes of social institutions and structures, their organization and functioning; d) it is a complex project; e) this project implies its realization.

Nevertheless, all these features can be reduced to one: utopia is an alternative to the present. A utopian writer representing the world considerably different from the existing one, already proclaims that the reality has to be changed. The author also offers a model of a new alternative reality which the current one has to be altered to.

#### 4. Discussions

The "dividing line" between classical and nonclassical utopia is drawn by H. Wells' work "A modern utopia" (Wells, 1905). Debating P. Ricoeur's statements, the above given table demonstrates that it is quite possible not only to study the social functions of utopian ideals, but also to analyze the social and political models described in utopian texts (Dauenhauer, 1999).

Dealing with conceptual models of utopia of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as a whole, it is possible to declare that E. Bellamy's utopia "Looking Backward: 2000 – 1887" did not only set a new trend of the American liberalism that the state is a super monopoly, but also influenced the sphere of public consciousness, as it had introduced a consumer society ideal. In the political and sociological treatise of H. Wells "A Modern Utopia" (1905) the dynamic society of the future extends all over the surface of the earth. However, all classical utopias were located on extremely limited spaces. Wells closely connected the economic prosperity of Utopia with sociology, not with theories of work and the capital. According to his opinion, a correct social theory had to direct the creative energy of mankind to satisfy the basic needs and solve the main problems of all human race. At the same time he offers the existence of a small elite group which could get rid of the weaknesses of human nature and manage the development of society in the "correct" way, though they are not joined in a political party and do not replace the state (Wells calls the members of this group "samurai").

#### 5. Conclusion

Utopian texts are one kind of historical sources, which can be used to describe the peculiarities of public consciousness of different historical periods. Moreover, the difference between classical and non-classical utopia suggests revealing the deeper causes of the change in the perception of historical time and its inversion in utopian texts. The sign complex of certain historical time, though transformed, is contained in utopian texts, conveying the social and spiritual environment of its author.

In this sense, utopias can serve as a fine illustrative material to the theory of Koselleck's metahistorical categories. The two main metahistorical categories are "horizon of expectations" and "space of experience". Time transfers "experience" into "horizon of expectations", not vice versa. Expectation is reflected through hope and fear, which are involved in a rational analysis. Although horizon of expectation suggests the creation of a new "space of experience" in the future, which is not accessible yet. On the one hand, utopias serve as compensating mechanisms; on the other hand, they are quite effective mechanisms for going beyond the limits of the future, which is not distinguished and not accessible yet. It also means that it is impossible to provide a complex study of utopias and functional analysis of the certain content of certain utopias should be carried out.

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