

*The Pelagian Roots of Utopia—The Problem
of Good and Evil in the Novels “Pronalazak Athanatika”
by Vladan Desnica and “Koraljna vrata” by Pavao Pavličić*

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Introduction

Fátima Vieira who engaged in a reflection about the notion of utopia—which, according to her, is anamnestic in nature¹—emphasises that utopia itself is (in a paradoxical manner) an attribute of the modern way of thinking and one of its discernible consequences (Vieira 2010: 6). To corroborate the statement, she indicates the utopia's facility to assume new meanings or forms, to “disperse” in various directions and to absorb the more and more fields of human activity which results in blurring its identity, thus being defined in many ways (she herself indicates four different concepts of the understanding of the notion). However, it seems that the “modernity”² of utopia would be above all a consequence of the fact that, according to Thomas More, a literary fiction (and this point is mentioned by Vieira herself) became a field

¹ The anamnesticity of the utopia results from the fact that, according to the author, its name is referred to a *sui generis* prehistory of the concept, i.e. the tradition of utopian thinking before 1516, therefore the one that was present even before the occurrence of the word *utopia* itself (*inter alia* the ancient myth of the Golden Age or the anonymous 13th-century poem *The Land of Cockayne* are expressions of this tradition) (Vieira 2010: 5).

² It is difficult to state unequivocally how Vieira defines the concept of modernity. Some of the fragments of her text suggest that modernity is understood in that text as the modern age.

of debate over the world and various options of life which were different from the ones that reigned at that time; therefore, in the context of the debate the concept of the influence of the individual upon his or her fate was propounded, instead of its “polyphony” and “multifunctionality”. In reference to these statements, it seems worthwhile to consider the idea of the extension of the circle of the precursors of utopian thinking and to place also Pelagius next to Plato, who as Vieira emphasises, limited himself to a description of the best organisation of the country in *The Republic*, and next to Saint Augustine, who in the *Civitas Dei* expounded the ideal of life, but life after death, thus making not so much a utopia but an allotopia³. Therefore, it seems that it is his way of life, especially the conviction (which was revolutionary in the eyes of his contemporaries and which was rejected by, *inter alios*, Saint Augustine) that the freedom of human will and the ability to influence one’s own fate is peculiar to the mental basis on which modernity i.e. the Renaissance, and with the course of time also the Enlightenment, and most surely the modern utopia, is based on. The reflection on the selected examples of the latter kind of utopia will enable us to investigate the validity of this thesis.

Improving the existing world exclusively on the basis of human abilities is the object of *inter alia* two modern Croatian novels—*Koraljna vrata* (*Coral gate*) by Pavao Pavličić, published in 1993, and *Pronalazak Athanatika* (*The Discovery of Athanatik*) by Vladan Desnica, published in 1957. It is difficult to consider these novels as classical examples of the utopian genre, but without doubt both of them can be perceived as utopias, using Fátima Vieira’s definition of utopia: “the desire for a better life, caused by a feeling of discontentment towards society one lives in (utopia is then seen as a matter of attitude)” (Vieira 2010: 6)⁴. However, a broader understanding of utopia,

³ The notion of allotopia, which means “another place”, was introduced to literary research by Umberto Eco in the mid-1980s. According to the interpretation of the great Italian philosopher, allotopia is one of the ways of transfiguring reality, whose result is the creation of an alternative world and making this alternative world more real than the real world itself. It seems that these aspects (the otherness of the ideal world after death as compared to the terrestrial world and its “greater reality”) could have made Fátima Vieira consider Saint Augustine’s *Civitas Dei* an allotopia instead of a utopia. An interesting context is introduced by Krzysztof M. Maj’s book entitled *Allotopie. Topografia światów fikcyjnych [Allotopias. Towards the Topography of Fictional Storyworlds]*, in which the author re-assesses Eco’s definition. In his interpretation of the definition of allotopia of the Italian philosopher, *inter alia* from the perspective of xenotopography as propounded by Bernhard Waldenfels, Maj claims that allotopia would not only be “ontologically” closer to reality but it would also be epistemologically more remote from fantasy conceived of as a contradiction of reality. The upsetting of the opposition of what is known and what is unknown, of something which is one’s own and something which belongs to a stranger, the natural and the supernatural, the likely and the unlikely, and eventually the empirical and the counter-empirical—which follows from Maj’s redefinition of the notion—in my opinion appears to be legitimate, especially in reference to Augustine’s text and his concept of the earthly state and *Civitas Dei* (Maj 2015a: 33-76, 255-261).

⁴ Apart from the definition that is indicated, Fátima Vieira also mentions the interpretations of utopia as: (1) a particular project of the organisation of the society, (2) a literary genre, (3) the role/function of utopia (the point is about such influence of utopia upon the reader which would prompt action on his or her part; as this case is associated only with a

which is not limited to a literary term, does not preclude the study of opinions of the researchers of utopia in the context of its genre-related determinants and the establishment of those determinants which occur in the novels that are here analysed. Furthermore, I share Fatima Vieira's conviction that utopia, seen as a literary genre, is one of the possible manifestations of utopian thinking. In a sense, a demonstration of its distinctive features in the aforementioned novels will contribute to the introduction and development of the reflection on this subject also on a meta-level.

The Determinants of Utopianism

Vieira perceives the fundamental features of a utopia in a poem appended at the end of *Utopia* which was written by Anemolius, the nephew of Hythloday: (1) the isolation of the place which is referred to as the Utopia, (2) its competitive potential in reference to *The Republic* of Plato, which was merely a project, whereas in *De optimo reipublicæ* its complete realisation was expounded, and (3) the perfection of the inhabitants of the Utopia and the laws that were binding in their world which became the basis for calling this place an *eutopia* (Vieira 2010: 5). The theme of the isolation of the place in which the plot unfolds is present in both works. In Pavličić's work, the plot is set in the Lastovo island, one of the most remote island from the mainland—this ensures the isolation of space. Maria Maślanka-Soro, in her analysis of the Greek literary output, notes that utopian thinking directs itself in a somewhat natural manner towards a piece of land surrounded by water, when a human individual notices the rift between the world that surrounds him or herself and the world that could be, the world that is "thinkable" (Maślanka-Soro 2007: 11-12). Meanwhile, the editor of the volume *Archipelagi wyobraźni. Z dziejów toposu wyspy w kręgu literatur romańskich* [*Archipelagos of Imagination. From the History of the Topos of the Island in Romanesque Literatures*] refers to the island as "a natural reserve of unspoilt states" and it is used to justify the proclivity of Men of Letters to present the idea of utopia in a paradisiacal version (Łukaszuk 2007: 7). It seems that these premises, i.e. the association of the isolation of the

political utopia, the researcher suggests to reject this definition altogether). As noted by Andrzej Juszczuk, in Polish scholarly literature there are also various trends of reflection on utopia, although there is a dominance of the perception of utopia as a specific mode of thinking, and therefore the point is about referring to utopia with a term belonging to the field of ideology and the history of political and social thought (Juszczuk 2014: 17-18).

place with its perfection (as far as the particular aspects are concerned) may be considered as appropriate ones also in the context of the novel *Koraljna vrata*, in which the theme of isolation from the “normal” world has not only a real, physical dimension but also a mental one, especially, for the protagonist of the novel, Krsto Brodnjak, who undertakes a journey from Zagreb to an island which is completely unknown to him and seeks refuge from the hardships of a day-to-day existence and responsibility for his wife, who is still young but very sick. However, the reality of the novel by Desnica has to deal with an unnamed totalitarian state which is not particularly developed and which is ruled by Maman-Mamona. This state also has its own separate peculiar language and organisation which already indicate the level of isolation of the land. An additional element which somehow intensifies this state of isolation is a complete fictionality of the place—the relation about him is a story of an unreliable narrator, a toothless chatterbox. In Pavličić’s work the plot develops somewhat “directly before the eyes of the reader”, however, as far as Desnica’s work is concerned, the plot is quite limited, incessantly interrupted by anecdotes and essayistic interpolations about universals and, similarly as in the case of the first realisation of the genre that is commented upon, it is also presented in the novel. This in some respects approximates Desnica’s text to both More’s and Plato’s work. The dialogue between the toothless harum-scarum, who is presented in a caricatural way, and the narrator of the novel, is devoted to a great extent to the history of an imaginary country. Nevertheless, reflections of the former about, for instance, the modern novel and the challenges which are set to it, aesthetics as such, freedom, truth, humanity, the question of making people happy, religion and its relation with the organisation of the state, revolution. As stated in Witwicki’s description of the *Republic* (Witwicki 2003: 8), *Pronalazak Athanatika*, analogically as Plato’s text:

[...] is a book of an immensely rich content. It dazzles the reader with both its content and form, for once it has the form of a theatrical sketch with a distinctively drawn description of the people who appear on the stage, on a different occasion it has the appearance of a rambling discussion and at a yet different stage, of prophetic vision. Sometimes the dialogue flows like a song, and in a different place it is chopped up like a conversation held on the stage of a comedic play⁵.

However, it is difficult to claim that the novel attempts to compete in any way with the previous representations of utopia. Moreover, Desnica’s ambition is not to

⁵ Unless stated otherwise, all translations from Croatian and Polish are mine.

provide a complete description of the state that he presents; he concentrates, basically, on the selected aspects of its function and the optimisation of human happiness by inventing a cure for cancer—Athanatik cure's eponymous—which is not an “elixir of immortality”, as he emphasises, but a cure which is discovered as a result of thorough research. In his description of the properties of the cure, he does not use the word “immortality” which has metaphysical connotations, but such terms as “eternal regeneration” or “unlimited existence”. In this way, an ironic commentary is provided about the Enlightenment rationalism, the idea of the primacy of experimental sciences in all spheres of life and the assumption by physics of concepts such as immortality and permanence from the field of religion and mythology. Therefore, the postulated perfection does not concern all spheres of life of the inhabitants of the state and themselves; the optimisation of human happiness concerns one sphere, the question of health and life, and these spheres provide a basis for the establishment of a utopia. A parallel model may be found in Pavličić's novel. Although in contradistinction to *Pronalazak Athanatika*, the novel in question is distant in terms of structure from Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia* (Pavličić is a master of intricately woven fiction with an admixture of crime themes), it does introduce the theme of the transformation of a “normal” society into a society which is obsessed with a vision of permanent health (an analogous theme is found in Desnica's work)⁶; however, the transformation is not a result of research which is conducted but is a result of a swindling means—healing linden dust, discovered by Krsto Brodnjak in a chest of old books, and to be more precise, in a manuscript of *Osman* by Ivan Gundulić—a perfect copy

⁶ The questions of longevity and immortality are engaged *inter alios* by Frederic Jameson in the book entitled *Archaeologies of the Future*. In his comment about *Back to Methuselah* (1921) by George Bernard Shaw, the author points out that the previously mentioned themes are almost always “a figure and a disguise for something quite different” and that basically all stories about longevity or immortality refer to class struggle (Jameson 2005: 328-344). If we were to consider the themes of fear and group envy, the struggle for a salutary or life-sustaining formula, a certain type of collective mobilisation and attempts at introducing radical changes in local communities which appear in both Croatian novels which are discussed, then Jameson's remark would also refer to the novels of Desnica and Pavličić. However, the former novel—*Pronalazak Athanatika*—would also be a lampoon against the realia of the life in (Tito's) communist country, against the functioning of privileged groups in this country and against the faith in progress—as we have already emphasised—especially the faith in the progress of science. It seems that the personal theme i.e. the author's obsession concerning the subject of death (which is expressed *inter alia* by Desnica's final novel *Proljeća Ivana Galeba* published in 1967, devoted mainly to this theme) would be significant as well. Reflection about longevity would contain a more important problem i.e. internal rejection of death. In Pavličić work, apart from criticism of the communist state, one could also perceive criticism of utopia as such. The discrediting of the idea of immortality equal to the perfection of the world could be also considered the rejection of illusions about “paradisiacal oases”, delusive islands. Therefore the novel would have the nature of a metatext.

which contains the complete set of the songs of the work⁷. Thus, the validity of Fátima Vieira's claim is confirmed: "although the idea of utopia should not be confused with the idea of perfection, one of its most recognizable traits is its speculative discourse on a non-existent social organization which is better than the real society" (Vieira 2010: 7)⁸.

According to Artur Blaim, the fundamental feature of utopia would be its dialogic nature (Blaim 1984: 63). There is no doubt that if one considers the form itself, Pavličić's work is not a dialogue; one may perceive it rather as a convention of a testimony. Moreover, if we considered Jean-François Vallée's insight about the three pairs of oppositions peculiar to the utopia—theory and fiction, theticity and antitheticity, monologue and dialogue—it is indeed only the third opposition which will not refer to Pavličić's novel⁹. The case of Desnica's work would be different—it would realise the whole "instruction". As far as the type of dialogue applied in Desnica's work is concerned, it is certainly not a combination of two ways of perceiving one subject (*syncrisis*), and it is only partially the second subtype indicated by Blaim—*anacrisis*, i.e. provoking the interlocutor in order to express a different opinion. In Desnica's work dialogue appears to be a debate between two figures—the unnamed narrator, who is "reluctant" in the formulation of his opinions and most certainly the *alter ego* of the author, whereas his co-interlocutor is the rake, who is described in a

⁷ *Osman* by Ivan Gundulić, a Baroque writer from Dubrovnik, written most probably in the years 1622-1638 is a Tasso-type epic poem, which describes the Polish victory at the battle of Chocim in 1621 and the heroism of the future king of Poland, Prince Władysław IV Vasa. Although he did not participate in the battle (he was bedridden in a camp and appeared in the field after the battle only to maintain high morale of the soldiers which were commanded by Jan Karol Chodkiewicz at that time), he became the main positive protagonist in the work, a counter-protagonist for Osman. The work consists of twenty songs, but two middle-songs, i.e. song 14 and song 15 are missing. The latter songs became an object of the pursuit of researchers and numerous considerations associated with their existence and content. Pavličić's novel problematizes the question of the perfection of the complete text found on the Lastova island and the question of its influence on both the novel-related reality in general and the Croatian literary tradition (as noted by Joanna Rapacka, *Osman* is the first work which was considered by the national revival movement as the basis of the national canon, and (see Rapacka 1997:122-124).

⁸ In the article *The Origins of Dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell* Gregory Claeys claims that contrary to the fact that utopianism is directed at perfection, the majority of texts do not postulate perfection, stipulating at the most a norm which is higher than the existing one (for further information consult Claeys 2010: 108). Whereas in *Three Variants on the Concept of Dystopia* he notes that perfection is basically a theological concept associated with a millenarian impulse and it is not an appropriate instrument to describe human beings and societies (Claeys 2013: 16-17). Although both novels in question provoke a reflection on perfection, neither of them mention complete embodiment of perfection. This problem is evoked rather by bringing a certain sphere to an optimum variant which is unknown in the real world.

⁹ The observation that Pavličić's novel is a peculiar combination of literary fiction and a theoretical dissertation not only on morality, the problem of good and evil but also on the poetics of postmodernism, appears in Dubravka Oraić Tolić's work (Oraić Tolić 1998: 197-207). The problem of theticity, i.e. in this case the establishment of a model of a new type of society or reality is, similarly as in the case of Desnica, interwoven with a tendency to negate the plausibility of realising such an idea. Here, theticity and antitheticity are engaged in an interplay between utopia and dystopia. The latter theme—the possibility of perceiving Desnica's novel as both a positive and a negative utopia—is engaged by Krešimir Nemec (Nemec 2006: 81-94).

satirical and derisive way and is the one whom one hardly believes due to the status that was imparted to him¹⁰. The role of the former figure is admittedly to prompt the Gap-Toothed Harum-Scarum to speak (and making attempts at establishing a thematic rigour), nevertheless, one does not perceive here a need to present a different opinion. Although in a way it will be expressed, it will be so as a general conclusion that may be inferred from the entire conversation, as the main sense which is reached by the storyteller himself. Therefore, as we can agree with Andrzej Juszczuk that the dialogue in the utopia may perform the function of a literary technique, convention makes it possible to surprise the reader ; however, the fact that the author distances himself in the reference to the story that is presented (Juszczuk 2014: 21), in the context of Desnica's work, resulted in providing the following insight which is not valid:

[...] in contradistinction to the Socratic dialogues the point is not about the presentation of the process of reaching the truth or the representation of a philosophical discussion but the point is about the most expressive presentation of the image of the world (Juszczuk 2014:23).

In Desnica's work the situation is even opposite. This point is supported at least by the fourth part of his novel (the total number of chapters is ten)—an essayistic, non-fictional part which is not related directly to the story about Athanatik, but it is devoted exclusively to the problem of the truth which the storyteller presents in a manner that we are familiar with, owing to Heidegger's *Country Path Conversations*, i.e. by informing the co-interlocutor about the constant deviation from the subject, indulging in numerous digressions but which, in spite of that, emphasises the fact that the discussion pursues the right direction—the direction of the truth:

¹⁰ Andrzej Juszczuk points out that in *De optimo reipublicae* the figure of the boy appears not only as the face of Hytlodeus (who "believes in castles in the air") but also as the narrator and the author himself, whose name in Greek and Latin signifies exactly a fool. Therefore, the dialogue is conducted between equally compromised entities (Juszczuk 2014: 22). In Desnica's work an analogous role is played by the Gap-Toothed Harum-Scarum, in the case of whom the very nickname compromises him. It is difficult to establish unambiguously the position from which the narrator voices his opinions, but in the majority of cases he is the one who naïvely and repeatedly asks questions, enabling the co-interlocutor to "reveal the truth". The introduction of the figure of the moron/lunatic doubtlessly increases the satirical potential of the text, which is revealed also, for instance, by the names of other protagonists of the novel. And thus, for example, the ruler of the state in question is Maman-Mamona, which alludes to the figure of the lesser god of money, mentioned in the Gospel, according to Saint Luke. In John Milton's *Paradise Lost* Mammon figures as the one who taught humanity to "riffl[e] the bowels of [...] earth / For treasures better hid". In an analogous way, one could perceive the role of the ruler of the state in Desnica, who introduced the "salvific" Athanatik into circulation. The work also features a brilliant inventor—Robel (which sounds almost like Nobel)—who with the course of time establishes a foundation for young scholars, subsidising their development with money. The examples that were provided do not exhaust the whole satirical potential of the text; the novel features many more similar examples. Thus, in Desnica's work the validity of Ana Cláudia Ribeiro Romano is confirmed: "Both utopia and dystopia are the heirs of satire. We may therefore rephrase our initial statement and operate a generalisation by stating that all utopias contain dystopia and satire" (Ribeiro Romano 2013: 64).

YOU ARE AFRAID THAT we will lose the thread, are you not? [...] But we will not lose the “main thread”, fear you not. The point is that it will not lose us. Rest assured, it does not let its victim away from its clutches, until the very death! [...] We know that the truth is born permanently, in an uninterrupted process, that it arises by means of a constant, enduring re-elaboration and supraconstruction (Desnica 2006: 30; 32)¹¹.

Therefore, in the end, the light and jocose multiaspectual ramblings of the narrator of the novel and of Harum-Scarum carry a degree of sense; they bring the interlocutors closer to each other on the road of intellectual speculation to Heidegger’s “aletheic” reading of the truth, i.e. the one which is construed as the divinely provenanced unconcealment of existence which reveals itself to man in a fragmentary manner¹². The moment of deliberation, debate, and theoretical elaboration of new possibilities appears in reference to both texts as one of the means to get closer to the truth. And they do not miss the mark. They realise it by establishing a new order in the “non-places” and its final deconstruction, which is brought about by rational verification and analysis of various aspects of the model that is suggested.

The Eternal Interplay Between Utopia and Dystopia

The identification of the relation which remains between the “no-place” and the “place”, postulated by Krzysztof M. Maj as the final stage of the three-stage process of the description of a literary utopia—when referring to the etymology of the word *utopia* [no-place], Maj indicates that it requires the following course of action: the identification of the location of the “no-place”, the identification of its point of reference i.e. place and, finally, the decipherment of the mystery whether the former negates the latter (Maj 2015b: 153-154)—is justifiable also in this case, for it will bring us to the “truth” that the authors propose. Therefore, one should note that both novels present

¹¹ „STRAHUJETE DA ne izgubimo nit, jelte? [...] Ali »glavnu nit« nećemo izgubiti, ne bojte se. Stvar je u tome što ona ne gubi nas. Budite spokojni, ne ispušta ona tako lako iz pandža svoju žrtvu, sve do groba! [...] Mi znamo da se istina rada neprestano, u besprekidnom procesu, da ona nastaje stalnim, neumornim nadograđivanjem i nadograđivanjem”.

¹² Heidegger, as explained by Hanna Buczyńska-Garewicz, refers to the ancient idea of the truth as unconcealment, which is associated with bringing something to light, the revelation of a nature which heretofore remained unknown. Therefore, the truth is sometimes compared to a robbery. Moreover, the philosopher does not link it to the question of judgement but to the existence itself, and this represents his position of an opponent of subjectivism and the nihilism of the truth (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2008: 155-204). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes: “Truth (discoveredness) must always first be wrested from beings. Beings are torn from concealment. The actual factual discoveredness is, so to speak, always a kind of *robbery*. Is it a matter of chance that the Greeks express themselves about the essence of truth with a *privative* expression (*a-lētheia*)?” (Heidegger 1996: 204).

a vision of ideal societies (as far as a certain aspect is concerned), i.e. ones in which there are no diseases or death (a novelistic “no-place”), and which are compared to the reality which is familiar to us, i.e. one that is marked by the presence of all kinds of diseases (the novelistic “place”). Thus, in a broader perspective, one may ask a question about the justifiability of the functioning of the world in which there would be only good and all elements of evil would be eradicated. In Pavličić’s novel, this theme is alluded explicitly to the protagonist, Krsto Brodnjak, in the situation when the local community is about to learn about the effect of the cure that he has found and is about to indulge in its greedy application:

They want to [these will be the philologist’s words about the inhabitants of the island] drive away disease from this island. They want to abolish all evil. And if there is no evil [...]

—Good things are also not there [as remarked by his interlocutor—A.B.].

— Such health is not derived from God, I have been saying this all along (Pavličić 1998: 182)¹³.

This idea confirms the paradox of perfection which was expressed by Władysław Tatarkiewicz, i.e. the fact that “the world is perfect through its imperfection (*perfectus propter imperfectionem*)” (Tatarkiewicz 1992: 18). Analogous conclusions were reached by a German philosopher, Odo Marquard, the author of a book which was significantly titled *Glück im Unglück* [*Fortune in Misfortune*]. However, one should note that he considers such a state of affairs to be quite unsatisfactory. He claims that the question about happiness remains abstract until it is asked in abstraction from the question about unhappiness: “People do not know undisturbed happiness” (Marquard 2001: 5). Manifestations of such a situation, i.e. a temporal absolutisation of the world which (absolutisation) is brought about by the blurring of the border between the elements of good and evil, when happiness becomes a stated fact, not derived from salvation but a manifestation of people’s belief in their own strength, may be found in both novels¹⁴. A further perspective of the existence of such a world brings

¹³ — Oni hoće [these will be the philologist’s words about the inhabitants of the island] da odavde protjeraju bolest, s ovoga otoka. Da ukinu svako zlo. A ako nema zla.../—Nema ni dobra [such will be the remark of his interlocutor, who adds:] Ovakvo zdravlje nije od Boga, ja to od početka govorim” (Pavličić 1998: 182).

¹⁴ In Pavličić’s work the protagonist, Krsto Brodnjak, repeatedly comes close to the sin of *hybris*, perceiving himself as the future saviour of humanity. The recognition of the effect of the linden dust which pours from the pages of *Osman*, engenders a feeling of an awareness that he has become the master of human fate: *Tim prahom*—claims Brodnjak—*možemo izliječiti koga god hoćemo, a možemo ga i ne izliječiti... Mi smo gospodari života i smrti* (Pavličić 1998: 86: “With this powder we may cure whoever we want to cure, and we may not want to cure him [at all—A.B.]... We are the lords of life and death”). In Desnica’s work, even though the idea itself is equally brilliant, the strategy of the description, i.e. the satirical character of the text and its polyphony, shatters the pathos of the idea and at least questions it, if not even challenges it.

about a danger which would consist in the constant abolition of the opposition and what follows—a gradual loss of the idea of the value of any good things. The maintenance of both elements, suggested in *Theodicee* by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz¹⁵, according to Marquard, seems to be even more controversial as it is associated with approval to the existence of evil in the name of positive values:

For if there is no »*malum*« there is also no »*optimum*«; it must »admit« evil (*Übel*) as a condition of a world which is the best of all possible worlds: optimum happiness as an end justifies unhappiness as a means (Marquard 2001: 11).

This statement, which is in a sense repeated after Leibniz by the modern philosophy of history, is a manifestation, as noted by the contemporary German philosopher, of the relativisation of unhappiness through its teleologisation and is based on a popular thesis—the end justifies the means. The principle which was supposed to confirm God’s goodness prompts us not to believe in it. Otto Marquard indicates the attempts to neutralise the problem of unhappiness (which at every instance must be accompanied also by neutralisation of happiness) and balance the former with the latter, as a means to overcome this impasse. The theme of positioning the question of unhappiness and its opposite—the philosopher continues his argument—is engaged by Kant in his critique of eudaimonism (Marquard 2001: 22) by supporting a neutral attitude to both phenomena and, as a matter of fact, supporting a displacement of these things from philosophical reflection. However, wherever this theme is maintained, the ideas of compensation are introduced; so, it is possible to come to conclusion that all mishaps are associated with compensation in the form of happiness. Therefore, the paradox of the situation would consist in the fact that it always remains insoluble, which both Croatian authors seem to eventually repeat—the protagonist of Pavličić’s novel, Krsto Brodnjak, decides to burn the perfect work of Gundulić and to cut humanity off from the possibility of using the “beneficial” medication once and for all; for Desnica, who similarly as Pavličić describes the dire effects of the new world order that appeared after the invention of the cure, i.e. the struggle for the access to this cure, the corruption and manipulations associated with it and

¹⁵ “Now this supreme wisdom [according to the philosopher], united to a goodness that is no less infinite, cannot but have chosen the best. For as a lesser evil is a kind of good, even so a lesser good is a kind of evil if it stands in the way of a greater good; [...] As in mathematics, when there is no maximum nor minimum, in short nothing distinguished, everything is done equally, or when that is not possible nothing at all is done: so it may be said likewise in respect of perfect wisdom, which is no less orderly than mathematics, that if there were not the best (“optimum”) among all possible worlds, God would not have produced any” (Leibniz 2005).

the dangers resulting also from the inability to feed many generations of people living at the same time, the conclusion is analogous. The citizens of the country eventually demand to return to the original state; significant words are uttered “GIVE US BACK OUR CANCER! GIVE US BACK OUR DEATH!” [“VRATITE NAM NAŠ RAK! VRATITE NAM NAŠU SMRT!”] (Desnica 2006: 78) and the opposite conclusion appears:

—If we want to be at least a little bit optimistic, there is nothing else left for us to do than to force the supra-state body to destroy Athanatik!... [...]

—Please do so! No sacrifice dares to be too hard for mankind. Even the sacrifice of immortality! (Vladan Desnica, 80)¹⁶.

The model of the argument in both novels is, therefore, the same—originally the more attractive “no-place”—the Lastovo island and the country in which Athanatik was invented—seem(s) to constitute a tempting alternative to the “place”, however, with the course of time its potential is reduced until the possibility of realisation is completely negated. An eutopia is transformed into a dystopia, and both works confirm the validity of the insight of numerous researchers (e.g. Sargent 2013: 11, Juszczuk 2014: 28) about the apparent difference between them, or they even prove Gregory Claeys’s statement about the dystopia as the essence of a (e)utopia:

[...] there are problems even with the idea of dystopia as the negative of “ideal” societies. Clearly just as one person’s freedom fighter is another’s terrorist, one person’s utopia is another’s dystopia. Dystopia, in other words, rather than being the negation of utopia, paradoxically may be its essence (Claeys 2013: 15).

Augustine and Pelagius

One could risk asking, firstly, whether or not all these things question the sense of weaving a utopia and, secondly, what the above-mentioned insights referring to the Croatian texts give us in the broader, not necessarily genre-related, perspective. Lyman Tower Sargent, discussing the first question, surely would say that it is not so—the negation of the sense of maintaining a utopia does not come about, for the researcher explicitly emphasises a greater interest in good places instead of bad ones, perceiving the former ones as a presage of a desired change instead of as an escape

¹⁶ “— Ako hoćemo da budemo bar mrvicu optimisti, ne preostaje nam drugo nego da natjeramo naddržavno tijelo da uništi Athanatik! [...]—Učinite tako! Za čovječanstvo nikakva nam žrtva ne smije biti teška. Čak ni žrtva besmrtnosti!”.

from reality which is most frequently a dystopian reality (Sargent 2013:10). Stanisław Brzozowski would supposedly be less optimistic, about whom Urszula Kowalczyk, the author of a commentary to his *Pamiętnik* [*Diary*] writes that he belittled the value of the constructs of the intellect and imagination, setting above them the act of participation or a profound experience, whereas he perceived utopian thinking as a derivative of the substantial tendencies of modern culture in which: “theorising endangers experience, knowledge endangers will, conceptualisation endangers activity” (Kowalczyk 2007: 98). One must note, in a way contrary to this point and *en passant* responding to the second of the questions that were put forward that the value which is carried by both novels has the dimension of a theoretical elaboration of substantial content. They reiterate the philosophical debates which were conducted among the aforementioned thinkers of the last several hundred years who constitute their fictionalised concretisation.

However, the return to the now-familiar themes explicitly reveals (and this is without doubt one of its strongest points) the ideological basis from which utopian thinking grows and which Leszek Kołakowski links with Pelagian mentality in the following way:

It was pointed out many times that the entire history of European millenarian and utopian thinking, starting from the 16th century and perhaps from the Middle Ages, was associated—consciously or otherwise—with Pelagian mentality, with the refusal to admit that human efforts cannot eradicate evil and that we are incurably tainted with radical evil of which only God may purify us, if He pleases. According to this idea, our modernity is Pelagian at its roots, which also contains a Promethean hope of building a perfect human State which would be free from evil. This is equivalent to a belief in man’s self-redemption [emphasis—A.B.]” (Kołakowski 2001: 242).

Therefore, he directly formulates a conviction about the liberating role of Pelagius’s thought in the mental history of Europe, the cultivation of curiosity as a desirable thing that the thinker cultivated and the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. He also reveals that through the agency of this trend the belief in human freedom which consists in the capacity of making a choice between good and evil as well as the sense of the feasibility of belief in one’s own strength and in one’s chances of improving one’s existence, which is peculiar also to utopian projects, was promoted. All of these themes recur in both novels; they constitute the ideological background of these novels in the sense that their obviousness lies at the foundation of the considerations that are made. Therefore, if we consider the themes that were indicated, the Pelagian model lies at the opposite pole of the model which is suggested by Saint Augustine,

whom the vast majority of researchers perceive as one of the precursors of utopia, and who, let one remind the reader, dismissed the question of temporality to the background by setting eternal life above it. Augustine also made salvation dependent from Divine grace, and thus he negated the individual's possibility of influencing his or her fate. Nevertheless, an unambiguous conclusion of both authors, not so much about the impossibility of removing evil but about the groundlessness of making such a step, approximates them (from the point of view of the effect and not of the course of thinking that they made) to Augustine. In this sense, their attitude is ideologically hybrid although it requires that also Pelagius is to be put next to Saint Augustine as one of the precursors of utopian thinking.

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