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Evantropia and Dysantropia: A Possible New Stage in the History of Utopias

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Introduction

The term utopia was coined five centuries ago but to some extent the utopian imagination is something that every civilisation has embraced. A utopia is *grosso modo* a normative image of a society based on particular needs—and the possible solutions to those needs—from the point of view of a collective or individual subject. This subject is limited by his or her time-space coordinates: language, history and culture in general. Utopias usually replace each other and an idealistic dream in period T_1 becomes a nightmare in T_2 because needs and resources change in time and space. Such changes are unavoidable, so utopian subjects become aware of the limitations of static images. Therefore, utopian scholars have marked another meaning for the term which is a broader one (Cioranescu 1972: 21-22). Utopia, in such broader sense, is an approach to social problems based on a method using imagination to provide a model *in actu*—it would be more accurate to say *in fictio*—to convince contemporary fellow countrymen to apply some policies to fulfil their general needs.

Thus, on the one hand, a utopia is a particular image corresponding to a Zeitgeist and, on the other hand, it is the method the utopian subject has employed to build that image. This method can be replicated and even aimed at improving or discarding previous utopias. Utopian images often compete with each other, but at the same time they share some traits, allowing us to distinguish epochal trends which

represent the list of needs that particular people consider most urgent and valuable. For this reason, sometimes utopias have competed with religious and mythical images. But the utopian method is a secular one and different utopian trends can be understood as progressive steps in a process of secularisation. Herbert George Wells is considered to be the first one who recognised this feature which still is being looked back over by sociologists, as the utopian method is considered "an active device in reflexive and collective deliberations about possible and desirable futures" (Levitas 2010: 530).

The above clarifications are crucial to this chapter as it will address the question: What is the contemporary utopian trend in liberal Western societies? The answer should fulfil the following requirements: (1) being representative of contemporary utopian subjects; (2) being a normative social image or set of images; and (3) being compatible with the process of secularisation initiated in the sixteenth century with the utopian self-awareness often referred as the utopian genre[1].

The hypothesis presented and supported in this chapter states that there is a new trend in the history of utopias which I suggest naming evantropia[2]—the name has been developed as a result of the contemporary focus on the scientific goal of the physical improvement of humankind. This neologism has been used for what contemporary transhumanist philosophers have called "human enhancement" (Savulescu, Sandberg & Kahane 2011: 3). The novelty of this trend lies in the fact that the utopian imagination is not necessary focused on a new and better place, time or state of mind, but on a new body. This new and improved body can be organic (clones), cybernetic and organic (cyborgs), or just a consciousness attached to a device—the brain emulation so-called mind "uploading or "downloading" (Sandberg & Bostrom 2008: 7). As it is put forward in the chapter, this new trend can be conceived as a new stage in the process of secularisation initiated with Renaissance eutopias.

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[1]   For a profound description on the beginnings of utopia as a literary genre see Trousson (1995) and Blaim (2013).

[2]   These come from ancient Greek terms: on the one hand, the adverb *eu* which means "well *in all senses*, justly, fairly; favourable, happily" (Pabón 2000:260), and on the other hand, *anthropos* "man, human being; *in plural* the men, the humankind" (Pabón 2000:51).

Utopia as Image and Method

Utopia is a complex concept. Not only has multiple meanings but it is also the subject of different academic disciplines. Broadly defined, utopia refers to a waking dream or, as Lyman Tower Sargent puts it forward defining utopianism, utopias are samples of "social dreaming" (Sargent 1994: 3). Utopian imagination includes both positive (dreams) and negative (nightmares) feelings about the dreamers' society. As Fernando Aínsa has remarked (1999: 37) it is possible to analyse the concept from a dialectical perspective in which utopias oppose factuality, presenting either good or bad images in opposition. On the other hand—as Cioranescu (1972) and Levitas (2010) have stated—utopias represent a method based on societal models imagined by individual or collective subjects with the goal of criticizing their own societies in order to improve them. That criticism can become a project of social change, usually named "practical utopias" (Servier 1996: 13), or can be just a cathartic expression—so-called "utopias of escape" (Mumford 1922: 15). But a utopia itself needs something to be compared to, an image to overcome with a new improved one. As Aínsa insists, this is because utopias themselves are "counter-images" of our daily world (1999: 37). In Thomas More's book these two requirements of utopian thought are conveyed in what is now the archetypical feature of the genre: a comparison between the factual society and the utopian society (More 1992: 99)[3].

Nonetheless, since More coined the word "utopia", there have been many interpretations of what he meant by that neologism. More wrote his *Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus, de optimo reipublicæ statu deque nova insula Utopia* in the playful spirit of Renaissance humanism, and his intellectual friends contributed to the book with letters, alphabets, poems and other ideas. The word "utopia" was born of collective work, so to speak. Among the names which More considered as possible options for the island were: *Abraxas*—a magical name in the Gnostic tradition (Allen 1967: 161), and *Nusquama*—a Latin equivalent to "nowhere". However, as Fátima Vieira believes (2010: 4), More chose "utopia" probably because of its productive ambiguity: it can be interpreted both (*o*)*utopia* "no-place" and (*e*)*utopia*[4] "a good place".

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[3]   In the first part of his book More offers a description of the main problems of the factual society he lived in, e.g. the relationship between the system of enclosures and the increasing poverty in England. In the second part of the book he provided the product of his imagination in a counter-factual society aimed at solving these problems.

[4]   These derive from the Greek adverbs *eu* (see footnote 2 in this chapter) and *ou* "no" (Pabón 2000:438) plus a modification of the noun *topos* which means "place, site, position; country, territory, location, district, region" (Pabón 2000: 587).

This ambiguity pervades the whole history of the concept. Utopia can be understood originally as a place that does not exist and as a good place at the same time; in other words, he latter meaning allows to consider it as the fictional idea of a good society. These utopian images are important because they play the role of normative models to judge factual societies and provide blueprints for their replacements, although these models should be flexible and modifiable in order to avoid totalitarianism (Sargent 1994: 24).

In consequence of the ambiguity between a dreamed society and its non-existence, More left a problematic legacy to utopian thought from the very coinage of the term. Are utopias by definition possible or impossible? Here comes the distinction I want to stress: utopias can be considered either as a fictional image of a society or a method of thinking through social challenges. Both ways of considering utopias—as image or as method—share common traits. The most crucial seems to be that an imagined or evaluated aspect is a conception of a good or at least a just society. For this reason utopias are not the same as myths or other fictions such as robinsonades, fantastic or fairy tales. The utopia of More is an image of a better society; it is set in a still unknown continent—the Americas[5]. For some scholars, it is not possible to interpret More as aiming towards future utopian projects because he was considering the utopia in relation to his contemporaneity (Heller 1980: 7). Also, there is an interpretation called "the Roman Catholic interpretation" of Raymond W. Chambers—a scholar and biographer of More. This interpretation explains that the possible objective of More was to use the mirroring feature of his utopian image to show his contemporaries how shameful it could be to find happy austere pagans living in better conditions than Christians (Elliot 1963: 317).

In contrast to many interpretations of the foundational work of More, the word became something else after his death. Firstly, it was considered as denoting a literary genre. So, for some scholars utopias are merely samples of a genre founded by More. They share some plot features such as an island, a traveller-narrator, a long dialogue, a comparison between the island and the city or country of the author. Some scholars also include verisimilitude as a requirement to consider a book as a part of the utopian literary genre (Cioranescu 1972: 30). This is, among many more

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[5]   In English usually the Americas are considered two different continents: North America and South America. However, I follow the Spanish tradition of considering the Americas as only one continent. But I have written 'the Americas' to avoid the misunderstanding between America as the continent and America as the country: the U.S.A.

reasons, why utopian authors accept that we have endless wishes but limited re-sources (Davis 1985: 46), and forbid themselves to appeal to a *deus ex machina* or fan-tastic social solutions.

The social counter-image that More depicted in his little book is not perennial, even when some of the social criticisms are still valid. This is because there are some ideas that are hard to be supported nowadays, for instance: the slavery of the prison-ers and the practice of marking their ears and forehead, and even some of less shock-ing suggestions could face strong opposition, such as the case of garment uniformity. In twentieth-century dystopias such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, the homo-geneity and stability—which are positive values for Thomas More—are described as the opposite ones: disvalues or dangerous values. As a useful convention the follow-ers of the literary approach to utopia distinguish between "eutopia" (the depiction of the good possible society) and "dystopia" (a negative counterpart of utopia). But they still consider both as utopias in general (Trousson 1995; Comparato 2006), since the critical function remains the same, i.e. mirroring the real societies in a critical way.

After that distinction some sociologists and philosophers started to think of the concept not only as the counter-image but also as a way of thinking: the idea of uto-pian thought. Utopian thought changes its images according to the real needs the utopian thinkers find in their contemporaneity. In answer to my question asked at the beginning of this section—yes, utopian images are possible and in many cases become real communities; however, as soon as one realises that they are utopias, they will stop being ones.

Nevertheless, this is not the end of utopian thought as some might believe (Mar-cuse 1986: 7). In new social conditions, new needs appear and the imagination starts to work in order to fulfil these needs and criticise the failures of the fulfilled utopia by imagining a new improved one. This is the nature of utopian thought that Ernst Bloch defined as the "not-yet-conscious" (Bloch 1988: 28). As Huxley puts in its epi-graph to a *Brave New World*, quoting Nikolai Berdyaev:

> Utopias seem to be more realisable than we have believed before. And now we found ourselves in face
> of a frightful question: How to avoid their definitive realisation? Utopias are realisable. Life goes to
> utopias. And maybe a new century starts, a century in which intellectuals and the learned class will

dream the means of avoiding utopias and returning to a non-utopian society, less 'perfect' and more free (Huxley 1980: 7)[6].

In some way a Hungarian philosopher, Ágnes Heller, partly agrees with Berdyaev because she believes some of the eutopiass of the past can become the dystopias of the present (Heller 1980: 204-205). Therefore, to recapitulate there are many ways of considering utopia but two of them are especially fruitful: as a counter-image of reality and as a method of social criticism. The first one is based on a synchronic perspective because it stands against other representations of the social good in its contemporaneity. The second one is based on a diachronic perspective because it extends the criticism to the past and to the future. Tom Moylan called this self-critical feature of utopian thought "critical utopianism" (Moylan 2000). The clearest example of diachronic awareness is provided by H. G. Wells in *Modern Utopia*, in the first pages of which he claims the need for modern kinetic utopias against the traditional static ones (Wells 2000: 33). Even Wells went further when he argued that utopianism should be the very tool of sociology (Kumar 1990: 197).

In the twentieth century—and thanks to the critical influence of Wells but overall because of the World Wars—utopian imagination exaggerated its pessimistic side. Dystopias proliferated, warning us how badly humans were doing and which social institutions needed to be changed. Utopian thought was linked to Marxism and criticised as a heresy (Molnar 1970: 7) and a mean to tyranny and violence (Popper 1967: 429). Nonetheless, the criticism was misguided insofar as critics commonly mistook utopian image for utopian method (Levitas 2010: 530). Utopian images expire with the progress of time, but the utopian method remains a useful tool to criticise our societies. Criticism needs a normative ideal dimension to compare the actual needs and errors with our possible solutions and actions. The danger does not lie in creating utopias, but in ceasing to create them.

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[6]   "Les utopies apparaissent comme bien plus réalisables qu'on le croyait autrefois. Et nous trouvons actuellement devant une question bien autrement angoissante: Comment éviter leur réalisation définitive...? Les utopies sont réalisables. La vie marche vers les utopies. Et peut-être un siècle nouveau commence-t-il, un siècle où les intellectuels et la classe cultivée rêveront aux moyens d'éviter les utopies et de retourner à une société non utopique, moins «parfaite» et plus libre".

Diachronic Classification of Trends in Utopianism

From the diachronic perspective of utopian thought it is possible to classify the development of utopias in a few stages. It is preferable to use the idea of development rather than progress because of two characteristics. Firstly, the different stages often overlap with one another. The predominance of one over the other is changing, but the less predominant does not necessarily disappear. Secondly, the new stage is not exactly better in an absolute sense but it only better embodies the contemporary needs of the society. In this way, the different stages can be seen as the development of one idea—that of an ideal social model to criticise factual societies—through the different needs of every particular age and place.

As it was mentioned above, utopian thought is adapted to particular human needs and it discards and criticises previous unfitted utopian images at the same time. Again, this does not mean the previous images disappear; instead, they become unpopular and are considered to be regressive or conservative. Even More's utopia may be interpreted as a conservative counter-image because of his defence of a medieval way of life matched with the Hellenistic philosophy of living naturally and austerely. These ideas, in the context of the birth of capitalism and modern science, can be—and were—considered to be regressive.

It is also important to specify that there is no general agreement among utopian scholars about the stages of utopian thought. Most of the time they assume two general conventions: the periodical and the foundational. The periodical convention repeats the classification of time in terms of historical ages: ancient utopias, medieval utopias, Renaissance utopias, modern utopias, and contemporary utopias (Trousson 1995; Comparato 2006). This approach does not focus on the difference in the conceptual framework of the various utopias. It is probably the easiest classification, but the least accurate at the same. The other approach is based on a typology of utopias and it is linked to the utopian founding fathers: Plato, More, Mercier, Wells, etc. Plato is considered to be the founder of the idea of a perfect republic, but not yet a utopian author in the literary sense of the term. The literary genre appeared in the Renaissance together with More, who used fiction in a didactic way to express some ideas which were similar to Plato's, whom he quoted a few times and considered an inspiration. Louis-Sébastien Mercier, the author of *L'An 2440: un rêve tel qu'il ne fut* (1771), is agreed to be the founder of the first uchronia, i. e. the switching from a good-place-

but-not-this-one (or *u-topia*) to a good-time-but-not-this-one (or *u-chronia*)[7]. Wells named himself the founder of the modern utopia, considering all the previous utopian images both classical and static ones, because his idea was the first kinetic utopia and it allows change.

The aforementioned classifications are one of the most popular. It is true that there is some similitude among different utopias during the same historical age, however, the periodical classification neglects much of the complex nuances of utopian production. The same happens with the foundational approach, since it is Western-biased and person-focused. Considering utopia as a rational method of social criticism, we should expect it to be present in every culture since humans started to think rationally. Even Frank E. Manuel and his wife—the great believers in the Western-centrality of the utopian thought—have provided an interesting classification which contributes to a more sophisticated enumeration of utopian stages.

Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel (1997: 4) have mentioned three main categories, which here I call "utopian trends" to keep in mind that new images do not necessarily cancel previous images but become dominant in some period. They classify these trends into the categories of early eutopias, modern uchronias and contemporary eupsychias. These can be summarised as follows. Eutopia is the trend in utopian thought deeply focused on finding—or building—a better place to establish a good society. This tends to be linked to morality, architecture and urbanism. Uchronia has a utopian drive centred on future and better times as well as the idea of linear progress in the current society. This trend tends to be linked with technique and technology. Finally, eupsychia is the one in which the utopian spirit has arrived to a more fragmented and individualistic point of view and the society is considered as a collection of individuals searching for their own inner and outer peace. This kind of utopia aims to be not only rational but also reasonable. It tries to accept social mobility, tolerance of differences and axiological pluralism; in other words, the kinetic ideal is pursued but not reached by Wells in his *Modern Utopia*.

The question is: are eupsychias still the dominant trend in utopian thought nowadays? The answer supported here is negative. While there are still samples of eupsychias around us, they are not the normative ideal of the good society anymore. A new

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[7]   Uchronia is the variation of the noun utopia by replacing *topos* by *chronos,* which means "time", "determined epoch, period" (Pabón 200:647).

one has risen, continuing a process of secularisation started during the Renaissance. The trend of eutopias can be considered the secularisation of the idea of paradise (Servier 1996: 139; Aínsa 1990: 114); the same happens to with uchronias and the idea of providence (Molnar 1970: 13, 27-28), and eupsychias and the soul (Manuel 1965: 295). But this age is secularising the body, in Judeo-Christian terms the "divine creation". Human creatures are claiming the right to re-create themselves and to reform the crooked timber of human nature. Although there are still some eutopian examples of hope for a fresh start on Mars or the Moon (not necessarily in new times or calm minds but in enhanced or artificial bodies), the contemporary predominance of the utopian images of immortality and other forms of human enhancements are focused not in new places. The contemporary utopian stage of secularisation is mainly that of the re-creation of the human by the human itself.

Stage	Eutopias	Euchronias	Eupsychias	Evantropias
Idealisation	Land	Time	Mind	Body
Secularisation	Paradise	Providence	Soul	Creation
Example	T. More	L. S. Mercier	W. Hudson	N. Bostrom
Age	Renaissance	Modern Age	20th century	21st century

Table 1. Diachronic transformation of utopian goals

Evantropias and Contemporary Utopian Imagination

The name "evantropia" is taken from the works of two Cuban physicians from the early twentieth century: Eusebio Hernández and Domingo Ramos. They employed the word "evantropia" to refer to the ideas shared in three Panamerican conferences on health policies—Havana 1927, Buenos Aires 1934, and Bogotá 1938 (Medina Domènech 2004: 295-296). For Hernández and Ramos evantropia is an ideal of human health development including two linked branches: eugenics and "homiculture". The first refers to human selection, through hygienic and health policies that aim to preserve the "best genes" in different human groups. This discipline is associated with some of the most horrible landmarks in human history—racism, genocides, etc. The second one, called by the authors "homiculture", focuses on the development of *Homo sapiens* and it is inspired by the concept of "puericulture" as developed by the French obstetrician Adolphe Pinard (Hernández 2009: 1-5).

The use of the concept of evantropia in this chapter refers to contemporary ideas of human enhancement, not only in traditional ways as education or cooperative work but also in new ways including, for example, genetic manipulation and digital prosthetics. This kind of approach has led us to dispute the very conception of our own species, raising questions such as: "Is it possible to modify our own essence?"; "Is there a human essence at all?"; or "Is it mandatory to preserve any of our biological traits?". In some hyperbolic sense evantropia is the contemporary desire to go beyond our physical limitations by pursuing the dream of self-creating the "good humankind" or "the human beings who are doing well in all senses"—reflecting the origin of the term, from the Greek *eu-anthropos.* This dream wants to avoid—but can also become—a nightmare: dysantropia or human extinction.

Over the last twenty years, after almost half a century of anti-utopian literature linking utopia to Marxism and the Soviet Union, the utopian imagination reappeared with renovated images. As I mentioned before, the utopian method was applied to new needs and discoveries. Two of the most remarkable forms of contemporary utopias are deeply linked: the digital utopia and the transhumanist utopia. The first arose with the revolution of information and communications technologies, especially the Internet and the process of digitization of data and even social interactions—e.g. social networks, home-banking, etc. The second utopia is more radical because its rhetoric appealed to a long-lasting wish of humanity: immortality, or in a more humble approach, the increase of longevity to its maximum. Whereas the defenders of the digital utopia appeal to the future with direct democracy and a learned and intelligent population, the self-defined transhumanists appeal to longer and better lives. Sometime the two are combined in the idea of digital consciousness attached to a non-biological body.

The revolution of the new technologies has forced us to rethink our idea of what it is to be a human. The body is seen sometimes as a starting point and sometimes as an obstacle. While reading John Perry Barlow's *Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace* written in 1996, one may find in his preaching of the future "civilization of mind" the denial of the limitations of bodies, when in cyberspace the individuals recover their full freedom (Barlow 2001: 30). Some digital activists, so-called cypherpunks, have echoed this kind of rhetoric. For example, Julian Assange, defending the freedom of the Internet, calls on us to protect "our platonic realm"—our minds—with the rules of nature, and our bodies with the laws of man (Assange et al. 2012:42), i.e. mathematical and legal codes.

Even though both contemporary images are linked, I want to focus on the most radical one: the transhumanist, because the digital utopia can be considered a kind of dualistic approach, an unnecessary duplication of the "realms" of human activity. In contrast, the transhumanist utopia supposes a deflation of the concept of human nature by putting trust in the capacity of self-transformation of our bodies and skills. In an open letter which has been rewritten many times, a Swedish philosopher, Nick Bostrom, depicts how the transhumanist utopia could look like:

> What is Suffering in Utopia? Suffering is the salt trace left on the cheeks of those who were around before.
>
> What is Tragedy in Utopia? There is tragedy in Snowman's melting. Mass murders are not required.
>
> What is Imperfection in Utopia? Imperfection is the measure of our respect for things as they are and for their history.
>
> What is Body in Utopia? Body is a pair of legs, a pair of arms, a trunk and a head, all made of flesh. Or not, as the case may be.
>
> What is Society in Utopia? Society is a never-finished tapestry, its weavers equal to its threads—the parts and patterns an inexhaustible bourne of beauty.
>
> What is Death in Utopia? Death is the darkness that ultimately surrounds all life.
>
> What is Guilt in Utopia? Guilt is our knowledge that we could have created Utopia sooner (Bostrom 2010: 7-8).

This letter can be also included in euchronian trend because it is allegedly written from the future; however, this is not the most prominent feature of it. Bostrom imagines a "post-human" being with a life expectancy of half a millennium, a non-organic body and superintelligence beyond our current geniuses and best computers. It is possible to interpret the whole letter as a hyperbole to stress Bostrom's point, but in *Superintelligence* he warns us that this could also "veer toward dystopia" (Bostrom 2014: 210)—which I suggest to call "dysantropia". In simpler words, our own technology, aimed at enhancing human beings and freeing ourselves from organic-cognitive limitations, could be not only used to feed the gap of political unfairness (Fukuyama 2004: 42-43) but could also risk our own survival as a species.

The problem of the risk of creating our own extinction was discussed by a German philosopher, Hans Jonas, who made an interesting distinction between the ancient ethics and future-oriented ethics. In *The Imperative of Responsibility* he claims that our contemporary ethical needs require the second kind of ethics, because our actions have larger and riskier consequences than ever before (Jonas 1995: 32). Even

now we need to behave in a way that can guarantee the genuine human life of future generations. Jonas' answer was pessimistic and in some way conservative. He considers that we need to protect our human nature. That implies for him two things: our image-making capacity and our bodily limitations. While the first aspect is deeply linked to utopia, he took care to clarify that utopias are a dangerous form of future-oriented ethics. They are dangerous because they are too optimistic regarding technological capacities and risk future generations in the quest to go beyond the limits of our own generation.

Even when both Bostrom's and Jonas' approaches share the similarity of being future-oriented ethical claims, they differ on their stand on utopian thought. Once again, as Berdyaev stated in the above-mentioned *Brave New World*'s epigraph (Huxley 1980: 7), if the danger with utopias is that they are possible, the answer of Jonas is to replace utopian motivation for survival motivation—through his heuristics of fear and the imperative of responsibility. Jonas recognised the value of utopia as human motivation (1995: 17), however, he was not able to trace the distinction between particular—and limited—utopias and the ever self-updating utopian thought. In contrast, Bostrom recognised the dangers of some particular utopias and the possibilities of utopian thought by using it as a method to share his view on the future of humankind. That is why instead of denying the value of utopias he tries to offer particular eutopian scenarios to be judged (Bostrom 2010: 1-10) and particular dystopian ones to be avoided (Bostrom 2014: 209-210).

In this context the contemporary stage of utopian thought is revisiting the religious notions of creation and destruction, genesis and apocalypse through evantropian and dysantropian fictions. Contemporary utopias deal with the question of whether it is possible to create new human beings that will overcome all the challenges they are to be left with, i.e. global warming, economic inequality, political unfairness, artificial diseases, overpopulation, exploitation of non-renewable resources? Or will the very medicine—the anthropogenic changes we are trying to perform on ourselves—lead us to extinction? These questions are addressed not only by transhumanist philosophers as Bostrom or Savulescu but also by fiction writers in new subgenres in which evantropic and dysantropic images are displayed. The example of

these questions can be found in different pieces of literature as the clones of *La possibilité d'une île* (Houellebecq 2005) and hopes put in cryonics[8] in *Zero K* (DeLillo 2016). But also in films and TV series similar examples appear more often, such as in the film—and later also the TV series—*Limitless* (Burger 2011), in which the enhancement is only cognitive. The protagonist reaches a state of superintelligence via "nootropics", drugs stimulating brain activity. Some pharmaceutical companies increased their sales of nootropics after this film came out. Something that was considered a dream or a fantasy at first, then starts to be marketed—whether it is feasible or not—and gradually transforms our social life and hopes.

Conclusion

To sum up, I repeat the question stated at the beginning of this chapter: what are the characteristics of the contemporary utopian image? Foremostly, it is necessary to admit that utopian images are trends and even after being discarded or satirised some of the previous images still remain. Once I have made this clarification, the answer is that the current trend in utopian thought is what has been defined here as evantropic. These new utopian discourses fulfil the three conditions established in the introduction. Firstly, they are representative of contemporary needs such as the pursuit of longer life expectancy and the prevention of illnesses and the physiological traits of agedness. Secondly, they provide a normative social image because what is pursued is aimed at becoming widespread among all members of contemporary— at least Western and liberal—societies. Thirdly, the anthropogenic transformation of the human body can be considered a new step in the utopian process of the secularisation of the religious idea of the creation of human beings.

Evantropias are particular to our times because they question entirely our view of the world and of what we can do in it. The distinctive aspect of evantropias is that they go beyond the synergy of social cooperation and the use of scientific techniques in mere prosthesis and they are grounded on the anthropogenic transformation of the humankind, i.e. the hubris of the transformation of the human species by the human beings. In these scenarios technologies replace and/or become part of the

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8   On the relationship between evantropia and cryonics, it is interesting to note that Max More—the founder of the Extropy Institute and one of the leading figures of the transhumanist movement—is now President and CEO of Alcor, a company dedicated to life extension via cryonics.

evantropic body. The ultimate goal in evantropias is immortality followed by eternal youth and the maximum use of our capacities. The societies as have appeared in evantropic discourses and fictions are communities of superhumans.

These radical discourses echo ideas such as the singularity or transhumanism and in any case fulfil the requirement of secularizing some religious ideas. In the particular case of this current stage in utopian thought, the divine creation becomes human creation. Evantropic images offer scenarios in which humans decide for themselves their own evolution, their own bodies, and their own capacities boosted by technologies and supermaterials.

As any other utopian dream, evantropias have their nightmarish counterpart: dysantropias. This is the idea of a worse society than the factual one in which the evantropic ideas end up undermining the life and societies they are intended to improve. Common dysantropic scenarios are human possible futures in which the outcome of the anthropogenic modification is negative and irreversible at the same time; another one presents the increase in the division between different people—new interspecific divisions between superhumans and regular humans—and finally the extinction of the species by the above-mentioned hubris.

The challenge we face is to guide debates in utopian thought towards creating scenarios that help to face these problems emerging from the application of new technologies to our daily lives, and to do so in a way that preserves diversity and equality. Some possible basic requirements could be to maintain respect for the otherness, ensure that transformations are reversible, and to ensure collective participation in enhancement policies.

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