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Utopia – hopes and dangers: the case for longing utopias

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1. Introduction

The political idea of utopia has bad reputation. In everyday discourse, utopia is synonym for some unrealistic endeavor, which can never be achieved. Utopia is a concept that ends discussions rather than begins them. As a person that believes in the possibility and necessity of significant changes in the political and social order, I find this status of utopia regretful. I wish to claim that utopia is still a prominent concept in contemporary politics. Moreover, I wish to claim that liberal visions of utopia are not enough to quench the utopian thirst, and that a more radical utopian vision has to live, and does live, side by side with the mature, reformist utopias of liberal thinking. I wish to ask whether such radical utopias are still plausible as a political scheme, through the examination of a contemporary utopian vision.

In my essay, I tried to understand what is exactly utopia – how it is defined in current literature – and what critical usage in utopia is still available to us, in a disenchanted era such as ours. Thus, the second part of the essay briefly discusses definitional aspects of the concept of utopia. I adopt the broad definition, according to which utopia is the desire to better life or a way of being. In the third part, I present the liberal ideas (that function as utopias following my broad definition) that govern the language of social change in the beginning of the 21st century – the ideas of human rights and distributive justice. I shall elaborate on the origins of the liberal ideas. In the fourth part, I shall present a critique on the liberal ideas based upon utopian thought. I shall offer a new concept, a sub-category in utopian thinking: that of longing utopias, which include in my analysis an important utopian moment, not shared by the liberal ideas – emotions such as yearning and even feelings of loss.

In the fifth and main part of my essay, I shall present some of the dangers facing the longing utopias, dangers the utopian liberal ideas manage to avoid. Afterwards, based on the discussion in these dangers, I will analyze a contemporary utopian work called bolo'bolo. I will try to see if this work succeeds in avoiding the difficulties longing

utopias face. In the sixth and final part, I shall offer some concluding remarks, and a call for the necessity of both liberal and longing utopias.

2. Definition: what is utopia?

Before we address the relevance of the concept of utopia to contemporary society, we must first clarify what do we mean by the word utopia. Ruth Levitas' book, The Concept of Utopia, is a good source for historical and analytical discussion in defining utopia. The problem of defining utopia is embedded in it – Thomas Moore, who invented the word in his masterpiece 'Utopia', used in a playful and dual manner – u-topia, or nowhere in Greek, but also eu-topia, the good place. So what is utopia? The unreachable place? The good place? Or both?

In her book, Levitas discusses the historical development of the term, from the ambivalent use of the Marxists, to the current-day interdisciplinary abundance. Levitas looks at three common prisms for defining utopia: definitions of content, of form, and of function[1]. Definitions of content rely on specific content for future benevolent society - for instance, a libertarian utopia, which maximizes human liberty. The obvious and immanent problem with content definitions is their exclusion of other kinds of utopia. For instance, if I'm a Buddhist utopian, defining utopia in terms of libertarian utopianism will exclude my vision from the utopian field.

Another prism of definition is form – according to which, a certain way of presenting the good society, or the ideal commonwealth, is utopia. For instance, a utopia can be defined as a literary creation, based on Moore's model in his book 'Utopia'. But in Levitas' view, this type of definitions can also cause unnecessary exclusion, for there needs to be a possibility to present utopia in several forms, especially for societies and communities that don't link themselves to the Moorian tradition of utopia[2].

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[1] Levitas, Ruth. *The concept of utopia*. Vol. 3. Peter Lang, 2010, p. 4

[2] Ibid, p. 5

A third type of definitions revolves around the function of utopia, meaning, what kind of social need it serves – for instance, the need to present a vision, or the need for constructive critique of the prevailing order. These definitions, taken as is, suffer from similar difficulties mentioned earlier relating the previous types of definitions – namely, if you choose one social function, such as social vision, as the defining function of utopia, you have to abandon all other relevant functions[3].

Because of these considerations, Levitas adopts a 'thin' definition to utopia that wishes to include almost all the historical and contemporary discussion of the term, but also provide the analytical clarity which is necessary for an informed discussion in any field. Levitas defines utopia as a desire for a better way of life and being[4]. This broad definition allows for inclusion of different contents, forms, and social or mental functions that utopia fills.

Another interesting point that Levitas stresses is the focus in current utopian studies on small communities, in contrast with society at large[5]. According to Levitas' definition, the broad social discussion on 'the good society' is considered utopian. But in fact, researchers focused on utopia stress more the small-scale, and perhaps the more profound changes, that take place in different communal and spiritual communities[6]. In his book 'Kibbutz and Utopia', Yiftah Goldman asks whether and to what extent has the Kibbutzim movement in Israel has been a utopian one. He also deals with the question of scale. In the international socialist movement, the utopians aimed for creating 'pilots' that will later be adopted on a broad international scale. In the kibbutzim movement, on the other hand, every kibbutz was an end in itself, not a case study designed to prove the

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[3] Levitas, Ruth, p. 6

[4] Ibid, p. 8

[5] A common example to that linkage is in communal studies of scholars such as Yaacov Oved. See, for example, Gorni, Yosef, Yaacov Oved, and Idit Paz. "Communal Life." *An International Perspective. Tel Aviv* (1987).

[6] Ibid, p. 181

feasibility of socialist utopianism. We will return to this gap, between the intrinsic and the instrumental, and to the questions concerning the utopian scope.

Apart from Levitas' definition, I will offer another, quite similar definition to the concept of utopia. In his presentation of the work of the Marxist philosopher Ernest Bloch, Douglas Kellner offers Bloch's definition to utopia, out of his central work, 'The Principle of Hope'. Utopia is 'something better' people are searching for, without which they feel incomplete[7]. Levitas herself writes about Bloch, and describes his attempt to find the original intentions of Marx's work, and connect them to utopian thinking[8]. Levitas reads Bloch as defining utopia as 'the dream of better life'[9], a definition not far from her own.

Levitas' and Bloch's definitions are rather broad, as we can see. But Levitas claims that the vagueness and width of this definition is preferable to the unnecessary restrictiveness of a narrower, more limiting definition[10]. This broadness has both political and interdisciplinary merits: politically, it enables different visions to be united around the utopian cause, and academically, it allows cooperation and mutual fertilization between different approaches rather than futile conceptual arguments[11]. We shall now see what implications this broad definition has in regards to familiar discourses.

3. Human rights and distributive justice – liberal utopias

In 1971, John Rawls published his magnum opus, A Theory of Justice, introducing a normative theory that offers principles to fair distribution of political rights and wealth and income in liberal society. Rawls' book, other then creating (or reviving) the

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[7] Kellner, Douglas. "Ernst Bloch, utopia and ideology critique." *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch* (1997): 140-148, p. 140

[8] Levitas, Ruth, p. 97

[9] Ibid, p. 100

[10] Ibid, p. 207

[11] Ibid, pp. 207-8

normative discourse on distributive justice, became for some elementary reference-point for the liberal project as a whole. Rawls opens his book with the claim that justice is the primary virtue of social institutions, and that unjust institutions cannot be justified by turning to other virtues (such as efficiency) instead. As the virtue and the purpose of scientific theory is truth, justice is the overruling purpose of social organization[12].

I would like to suggest that according to Levitas' broad definition of utopia that I adopted for this essay, Rawls' project is a utopian one, in the simple sense that it is part of the attempt to form better life in the social sense. Rawls sparked a meaningful discussion in the realistic and ideal society to be aspired. The former US president, Bill Clinton, said that Rawls' work '…has helped a whole generation of learned Americans revive their faith in democracy itself'[13]. In the Rawlsian utopia, all accept the principles of justice, and know that the others accept them as well. Even more so, they all know that the social institutions act by those principles[14]. Adding to that, there's an element of stability in social conduct, so that the principles of justice will be based and reaffirmed by the regular course of society[15].

The debate Rawls started on the content of distributive justice is still open, naturally, and many have criticized Rawls from the political right and left. But from the utopian perspective we adopt here, the main point is that while many of Rawls' critics disagree about the content of his utopia, they do agree that the discussion about distributive justice is the main arena for realizing utopia in human society, the way to reach a better society[16].

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[12] Rawls, John. *A theory of justice*. Harvard university press, 1999, pp. 3-4

[13] See the full speech in http://clinton4.nara.gov/WH/New/html/19990929.html

[14] Rawls, John, p. 4

[15] Ibid, p. 6

[16] Robert Nozick's book, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, can serve as a good example.

Another liberal source of inspiration is the human rights discourse, which has been established prominently in the 1948 UN declaration of human rights. The declaration begins: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world…"[17] The declaration continues and elaborates on every person's right to life, liberty, and security, or the protection of human beings from torture and slavery. The human rights discourse served in the past and serves today a platform for various socio-political demands. One example is women's rights. Nitza Berkovitch shows how women's right became a more and more integral part of international treaties on human rights[18]. The human rights discourse in feminism has also been criticized, for its sterilized and judicial language[19], but many believe that human rights framework is an appropriate one for promoting a wide range of feminist goals.

An illuminating example that combines both human rights and distributive justice discourse can be found in the work of the philosopher Thomas Pogge. Pogge develops an argument that wishes to expand Rawls' theory of justice to global scale. Meaning, the principles of distributive justice are claimed to be valid not only on the national level, as claimed by Rawls, but on the global one[20]. Such approach involves radical redistributive consequences for wealth and income transfers from developed to developing countries. In addition, Pogge argues that extreme poverty and hunger in developing countries should be seen as a human rights violation by the richer societies[21]. As we can see, Pogge is a prominent thinker that bases his claims on these two pillars of 20th century liberal

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[17] See the full declaration in http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/

[18] ברקוביץ', ניצה, "גלובליזציה של זכויות אדם ושל זכויות נשים: המדינה והמערכת הפוליטית העולמית", *תיאוריה וביקורת*, 23, 2003, עמ' 14

[19] See the following article as an example - Merry, Sally Engle (2006). Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 72-102

[20] Pogge, Thomas W. "Moral universalism and global economic justice." *politics, philosophy & economics* 1.1 (2002): 29-58.

[21] Pogge, Thomas Winfried Menko. *World poverty and human rights*. Polity, 2008.

thinking – the distributive justice discourse and the human rights discourse – in order to promote such goals as eliminating hunger and severe inequality, and securing a better global future. This approach, with the conspicuous gap between vision and reality, must be utopian in our current framework. It seems that current liberal thinking is thus utopian. But some think the liberal thinking isn't utopian enough, and I now turn to them.

4. The liberal insufficiency – are liberal utopias really utopian?

In his article[22], Adam Etinson addresses the growing link between human rights and utopia. Etinson points to the way all our social demands are presented nowadays in terms of rights – as far as the absurd 'right for world peace'. Etinson criticizes the analytical overburden carried by the idea of rights in today's philosophical and political discussion. But his main claim addresses the limits to utopian thinking resulting from its Gordian knot to human rights. He wishes to show that our turn towards human rights limits and narrows utopian thinking.

Since mid-20th century, human rights have been a safe haven for 'non-political' change, meaning, change not led by any grand political ideology (such as communism or capitalism). Human rights lack the status of 'aggressive utopianism', in contrast to radical forms of socialism threatening a profound shift in social organization, as so they function, Etinson claims, as anti-utopian utopias. This claim might seem problematic if we accept Levitas' definition for utopia. How can we deny that human rights proponents, such as Pogge and others, wish to see betterment of the human condition using human rights? I'll try to show that Etinson claim can still be shown plausible even if we accept the current definition.

As we can recall, Levitas defines utopia as a *desire* to better life and way of being. The word desire can mean 'will' or 'want', but also means passion of lust. Levitas could have chosen a milder word, but see chose one embedded in emotion. With Bloch, it's even more striking – this lack, the insufficiency inherent to human beings, with which they

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[22] Etinson, Adam. "A Rights-based utopia?", *The Utopian,* June 2012, accessed March 29th 2014: http://www.the-utopian.org/post/16860310117/a-rights-based-utopia

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deal through utopia. I think these definitions point to some emotional strata that is essential to utopian thinking – a yearning connected to some loss or lacking, a desire full of emotion and enthusiasm. As Etinson shows elegantly, the very source of successes for human rights lies in their cool, unenthusiastic nature. The ones to embrace them are the disenchanted, the mature, perhaps the rational. By contrast, utopia has to contain some dimension of yearning or passion. In Etinson's words:

"But this only begins to scratch the surface. For, a genuine utopia would be a world in which we not only find our rights and the rights of others respected, but also find ourselves living well *both individually and collectively. That is to say, it would be a world in which the quality and satisfaction of our social interactions was high, in which we as individuals and society as a whole were productive in a variety of important ways, in which we would benefit from that productivity, and in which we would be able to properly look after not only others but, critically, ourselves."*

Etinson wishes to claim that human rights are a necessary but insufficient condition for a utopian society. For instance, the right to education can be a pre-requisite to good life in terms of career, equality of opportunity, or liberty. But education is only potential – we, as individuals and as a society, can choose what to do with the education given to us, and what kind of individuals or society we want to become following this education.

In fact, Etinson thinks that the rights discourse has become so dominant that we have forgot that rights were for something – they are an instrument, not an end by themselves. This point is clearly made by the philosopher Charles Taylor, in his renowned article 'Atomism'. Taylor shows that in the basis of any cherished right – freedom of thought, for instance – lies a value that we as a collective respect. There's no merit or moral force in a right that doesn't protect and nurtures a value we view as important – such a right would be meaningless to us[23].

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[23] Taylor, Charles. "Atomism." *Philosophy and the human sciences: Philosophical papers* 2 (1985), p. 195

As I mentioned earlier, I see the lack of passion in liberal utopia as central to our concern. As Levitas writes on Marxist utopia: "Its goal lies not in a defined set of institutional arrangements, but in the pursuit of another way of being; what is sought is disalienation"[24]. I do not wish to claim that the idea of rights lack moral and emotional force. But it's worth noticing that any yearning is silenced in the political discourse surrounding human rights, a phenomena also diagnosed by several feminist thinkers, such as Sally Engle Marry.

Now, I wish to present a parallel argument to that Etinson makes regarding human rights, only with the tradition of distributive justice stemming from Rawls onwards. In his later books, Rawls tried to narrow down the ethical dimension of his theory, and build it mostly of political principles that enjoy overlapping consensus. This attempt takes shape in two important concepts Rawls was part of developing – the priority of right over the good, and justice as a political, not metaphysical issue. Rawls assumes that people's conceptions of the good, of basic philosophical and religious beliefs, can't be agreed upon on the broad social level – the disagreement here is a fact of modern life. Because of that, Rawls' idea of justice is political, in the sense that it's supposed to be a platform of agreement for people with different conceptions of the good. Not all conceptions of the good are permissible under Rawls' political liberalism (for principles of liberty and equality stand in the basis of his principles of justice), but his concept of justice attempts to achieve an overlapping consensus, meaning, gaining the support of reasonable citizens holding different conceptions of the good[25].

Similarly to Etinson's claim regarding human rights, it's plausible to claim that Rawls' utopia is intentionally anti-utopian. In fact, much of its merit stems from its very ambition for wide agreement, under no acceptance of any particular conception of the good. It, too, involves a desire of some kind – the desire to live together and to communicate, even in a reality of profound differences between groups in society.

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[24] Levitas, Ruth, p. 7

[25] See mainly in his article: Rawls, John. "The priority of right and ideas of the good." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 17.4 (1988): 251-276.

But it's not the yearning thinkers like Levitas and Bloch aim at. If I will go back to Levitas' words on utopian Marxism – which did not lack institutional aspects, as we know – about disalienation. It is not only about a more just society, in terms of equality – meaning, a society where the poor share the privileges of the rich, or the developing countries become as developed as the richer countries. Again, this are important aspects – growth, or equality, might be conditions to qualitative change in people's way of being – but they aren't this qualitative change itself. They do not create by themselves a new way of being.

So, I must offer an important distinction regarding utopias from now on. As I see it, we should understand some utopian projects as containing a longing for something *other,* for the individual, the community, or the society at large. Not just more of the same, but real and foundational change. Such a change can't be only true for third world countries – such as the abolition of hunger – for this is an already achieved goal for entire societies.

As mentioned, Levitas prefers a broad definition for utopia. She claims that a broad (and thus somewhat vague) definition is preferable to an unnecessarily restrictive one[26]. So while sticking to Levitas' definition, I wish simply to offer an important distinction between different kinds of utopias – the non-longing utopias, represented here as the liberal utopias, and the more high-aiming utopias, referred to from now on as longing utopias. The next chapter will include a discussion of such a utopia, which contains the otherness and yearning mentioned by Levitas and Bloch. But first, a few words on the dangers characteristic to these utopias.

5. The longing utopia – dangers and a case study

Before we dive to a critical analysis of a utopian book named bolo'bolo, we'll want to map the negative potential embedded in the 'longing utopias' on which I wish to elaborate. We'll do so by presenting the positions of two thinkers – Carl Marx and John

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[26] Levitas, Ruth, p. 207

Rawls: the first in his rejection on utopian socialism, and the second in his rejection of a unified conception of the good for the entire society.

The contemporaries of Marx and Engels in the socialist movement were mockingly referred to by them as utopian socialists – in contrast to their 'scientific' socialism, that was focused on exposing economical and historical structures and predicting broad political processes. The utopian socialism, lead by thinkers such as San-Simon, Fourier, and Owen, was decried by them for two reasons: firstly, the impracticality of the communal efforts of the utopians, and secondly, their over-speculation regarding the nature of future society[27]. More specifically, Marx criticized the utopians about their commitment to a certain type of human nature to be exposed in future society – for instance, the emphasis of San-Simon and Fourier concerning the sexual liberation in future society[28]. In addition, Marx rejected the detailed institutional description of future society – he claimed that the liberating institutions themselves are more a matter of discovery and exposure than of strict theoretical planning[29]. The well-known socialist issue here is that you can't asses the needs and structures of a liberated society when we are all still chained by capitalist structures. A lot of the differences between Marx and the utopian socialists focus on how detailed their plans are – Owen and others specify how large future settlements would be, what would everyone work would look like, and so forth. Again, Marx rejected this approach – firstly because this predictions are very speculative, and secondly because communism (or socialism) is a process in which people realizing themselves in a varied manner, so blueprinting that process of realization is highly paradoxical – it limits the freedom of liberated people to shape themselves and their society autonomously[30]. So utopian plans are suspected by Marx to be 'over prescriptive', and in fact limiting to the free and creative nature of a truly liberated society.

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[27] Levitas, Ruth, p. 41

[28] Ibid, pp. 43-4

[29] Levitas, Ruth, p. 50

[30] Ibid, p. 52

As for Rawls, as I wrote earlier, the idea of the priority of justice over the good plays a prominent role in his thinking. Meaning, a structure of political liberalism, although it does limit some conceptions of the good, enables people fundamentally different from one another to live tolerantly side by side[31]. This connects to what Rawls calls the fact of oppression – which is a descriptive characteristic of human societies. According to the fact of oppression, a society cannot uphold one unified conception of the good without oppressive forces enabling this unity. Because political, philosophical, and religious questions are extremely important for us, a society that dictates one 'correct' answer to them will force many to suppress the most meaningful part of their existence. So Rawls' structure wishes to offer a liberal society a dialogical framework where people with different comprehensive doctrines can discuss the political and economical foundations of society.

We can infer that Rawls is concerned with some classical forms of political oppression – religious persecution, or dominating oppressive regimes (such as Stalinism, for instance). I see this as another danger to what I called 'longing utopias' – their danger of oppression. For as Levitas made clear when discussing definitions for utopia, there are many visions of the good society – one imagines an ecological paradise, and the other a developed consumer society. Longing utopias can become dystopias, if they end up oppressing reasonable conceptions of the good.

Now, I'll proceed to examine the PM's book, bolo'bolo, under the scrutiny of the critiques mentioned. These lurking dangers for the longing utopias are: 1. the over-prescription of future society, which creates unrealistic level of specification, 2. the intransigence of utopias that disables true freedom and autonomy for the future individuals and society, and 3. the danger of oppressing reasonable conceptions of the good, under a utopian ideal embracing a narrow range of what the good life consists.

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[31] Rawls, John. *Political liberalism*. No. 4. Columbia University Press, 1993, pp. 174-5

I'll begin with a few words about the book bolo'bolo. It was written by PM, a pseudonym of a Swiss thinker called Hans Widmer, in 1982. It is considered a constitutive work in many anarchist circles, for its ideas and also for the direct and daily (and sometimes blunt) language it uses[32]. It's not a philosophical work in the strict, academic sense of the word, but the book does offer a theoretical framework that allows for a philosophical discussion. The book offers an analysis of the current global situation, a way to fight it, and an alternative to rise instead.

The book opens from a personal point of view, describing daily life in a western society as bleak, forlorn, and depressing[33]. PM points to the division of labor and severe alienation in our world – where we don't know what we produce and what for[34]. In fact, bolo'bolo opens with a critique of contemporary life, filled with oppressive labor, polluting industrialization, and endless war. In the background PM points to the agricultural and industrial revolutions, comparing the situation today to hunter-gatherers societies, where people worked much less than today.

PM divides the global society into three groups – western-capitalist, eastern-socialist, and developing third-world. What's fresh about the analysis is that PM doesn't see the western society as victorious, or as a goal the others should reach. He mentions the clinical depression, the suicide rates, the mental illnesses, and the deep dissatisfaction of westerners as evidence that there's no glory in the 'deal' won by the inhabitants of the 'developed' countries. He, of course, acknowledges that in many respects, they are better off than third world inhabitants. But still, the way to go for us as a planet can't be the western way, according to PM, for it is objectively speaking quite bad[35].

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[32] For a fascinating discussion in contemporary anarchist political culture, and in the role of bolo'bolo in this culture, see Uri Gordon's book: Gordon, Uri. *Anarchy alive!: anti-authoritarian politics from practice to theory*. Pluto Pr, 2008.

[33] P.M, *בולו'בולו*, הוצ' אוב-ז.ע.פ, תל אביב, 2011, עמ' 4-23.

[34] שם, עמ' 29-30.
[35] PM, עמ' 34, וגם עמ' 8-37.

PM also critiques the socialist solution, claiming that it's in fact very similar to the capitalist one, where the anonymous mechanisms of exploitation and control are operated by the state, instead of by capital. PM outlines two critiques (that are typical of anarchist thinking) concerning socialism: firstly, if the goal is to come back to human relations based on trust and affinity, why take the 'bypass' through capitalism, and not just come back (or go near to) pre-capitalist lifestyle? Secondly, oppressive means (such as political violence, parties taking over the state, and so forth) cannot manifest the opposite goals, to which socialism supposedly aims, such as fraternity non-alienated relationships[36]. 'The Machine', or Planetary Work Machine (PM's way of describing the socio-economical institutions in which we act today), slowly destroys are cultural achievements - "the development of the machine is the history of wealth destruction"[37] – meaning the loss of free time, the narrowing freedom of movement, and the declining cultural diversity.

Regarding the way in which we free ourselves from this Planetary Work Machine, PM claims that since the socio-economical is by now completely global, no partial liberation from it is possible. Every 'deal', meaning, every type of socio-economical status (western, eastern, of southern) is interdependent on the two other types. No liberation of the westerners from their subordinating and dull routine is possible, without the liberation of the exploited factory workers at the global south[38]. So PM writes that "the solution is global, or there's no solution at all"[39] . Specifically, PM addresses the claim that we should deal with third world suffering before we address the suffering of the affluent westerners. PM stresses that there's no real independent 'exit' of third world inhabitants from their oppressive status, for this exit depends on affluent people breaking the vicious circle they're in[40].

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[36]שם, עמ' 27.

[37]שם, עמ' 50. כל הציטוטים מבולו'בולו מתורגמים על ידי.

[38] PM, עמ' 48-9.

[39]שם, שם.

[40] שם, עמ' 52-3.

For this, the attack of the world order should happen simultaneously, and on two levels: firstly, the assault on current institutions has to be parallel to the building of alternative institutions, because institutional vacuum nurtures new oppressive order[41]. Secondly, there has to be cooperation between the three classes, in order to create true solidarity, and to take advantage of every class's unique gifts[42]. This cooperation has to be direct and daily, in order to create the qualitative change in human relationship: not a distant institutional relationship, but a new experience of inter-class relationship[43].

The main part of the book is dedicated to PM's vision for the future society: a society of small communities (bolos), that can trade with each other, but keep a high degree of autonomy. Every person born in a bolo has a right to live her life in it, and he is also free to leave and move to another bolo[44]. It's also important to note that any bolo has a right to hold its own identity – a bolo can be Buddhist, vegan, bourgeois, or aikido-lover[45]. The point is that the bolos function as a source of self-determination and of meaningful creation for their members, while taking advantage of communal life to decrease consumption and work time needed.

Now, after this short description of the book's content, I turn to see how it deals with the dangers facing the longing utopia. There's no doubt that bolo'bolo's vision is a longing utopia: it aims at everyone, and contains a radical and holistic change in the way of life, towards a direction both more communal and more autonomous. This vision is firmly linked to two important contemporary political movements – the green movement (in regard to local and quasi-autarkic consumption) and identity politics (that emphasizes and celebrates cultural differences).

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[41] שם, עמ' 55.

[42] שם, עמ' 1-60.

[43] שם, עמ' 64.

[44] PM, עמ' 76.

[45] שם, עמ' 77.

As for the fallacies Marx found in utopian socialism, which I call the over-planning fallacy and the autonomy-binding fallacy, PM addresses them directly and simultaneously:

"The course of this counter history therefore depends on the question, which 'utopia' we wish to fulfill in it. The wishes we have regarding the machine will change over time. Our project, then, isn't a plan we should execute exclusively – it's only a temporal offer, a starting point. Although the end is 'open', it's essential that we shall agree now where are we aiming at, and what limits do we see as acceptable. For this agreement we only need a common language, some sort of wishes vocabulary"[46].

Meaning, PM prefers to think of his specific ideas about the future's communities, the bolos, as a language that enables us to talk about the future. He adds that the discussion's content, his concrete suggestions, is less important than the discussion itself, which we have to make on a new socio-economical order on a global scale[47].

This would-be reaction of PM to the over-planning fallacy seems to me problematic. For the book is still filled with rich content that goes well beyond 'wishes vocabulary': food arrangements[48], production[49], water supply[50], and more. Meaning, as a utopia, bolo'bolo doesn't really avoid the over-specification that characterized 19th century utopian Marxism.

Still, it's interesting to note that much of the enthusiasm invoked by bolo'bolo stems, I believe, from this specification itself – the concreteness and even the pedantry in which PM presents his claims. Sometimes, specific ideas (of local food supply, for instance) can appear attractive, even regardless of PM's comprehensive scheme. So even if bolo'bolo

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[46] שם, עמ' 67.

[47] שם, עמ' 68.

[48] שם, עמ' 97.

[49] שם, עמ' 101.

[50] שם, עמ' 108.

falls into the over-specification pit, perhaps it owes at least some of its charm to that fallacy.

On the other hand, as for autonomy-binding fallacy, PM is doing much better. In fact, the society in bolo'bolo offers an attractive blend of autonomy and meaningfulness – the bolo itself has its own developed and rich culture or tradition. But people can leave the bolo and join another, if they dislike their bolo's culture, or prefer another's. Thus, an offer of a meaningful community that allows the possibility of exit enables the bolo inhabitants the freedom to create an independent society – economically, culturally, and socially - without pre-conditioning of a utopian planner, dictating the way society should look like.

As for the central danger to the longing utopia, the danger of oppression, the analysis is more complex. On the one hand, PM's idea of pluralistic and diverse society combined with communities upholding profound comprehensive doctrines seems to solve the problem. For even the idea of a meaningful community is maintained, where deep aspirations can be achieved, doesn't appear to be coercive: the individual can leave it, join another, or found a new community with like-minded people. In my opinion, that's where the main force of bolo'bolo lies: the ability to combine a longing utopia with pluralism that allows different meaningful communities to exist next to each other.

On the other hand, there is a population PM doesn't seem to be taking into account – those who object change in the current hierarchical and class-based order, whether if it's because they prefer their current 'deal' (to use PM's term), or because they simply fear the future. Perhaps the danger in such a radical transformation of the social order can be very threatening to many? Offering them to establish a conservative bolo is not enough. It's not a conservative bolo that they want, but society as it is today.

PM doesn't respond to that challenge directly, but I can assume that he would answer that those prevailing-order lovers don't have a right to prevent all the others the transfer to non-oppressive society, and would probably mention that conservatives are welcome to

live in a bolo imitating the old existence. Perhaps it's an inadequate answer, and it can also be claimed that there's empirical dimension to that question – how feasible (ecologically, economically) PM's vision is. We can claim that as the probability of this vision declines, so does the conservative objection becomes more relevant against bolo'bolo's communitarian-pluralist vision.

6. Conclusion: the longing utopia, limits and possibilities

In works concerning utopia, it's common to quote Oscar Wild, stating that the yearning for utopia is the yearning for progress. Using this remark, perhaps the division I made between two kinds of utopias – longing and non-longing – seems more logical. Maybe an important difference between the liberal utopias and the longing utopias revolves around time range. Perhaps 200 years ago, human rights utopias were completely wild, in an age of mass slavery, and today it's still an unfinished project, but much more feasible. Today, a more communal and autonomous society, where people can fulfill themselves more fully, seems far-fetched and imaginary, for it's very far from today's society. Perhaps, 200 years from now, this will become the 'realist' utopia, the one that seems reachable and feasible.

In any case, the dangers facing longing utopias still stand. I have tried to show that these dangers aren't inherent to these utopias. Perhaps more refined versions of the vision unfolded in bolo'bolo can deal with those challenges even better. Although longing utopias are exposed to particular dangers (and probably to other dangers I didn't address) not risked by more realistic and disenchanted utopias, it doesn't mean they're unnecessary. They still can and should be used in helping us to outline new ways of development for humanity.

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