

## **The Movement's Utopian Thoughts on Family, Work, Education, and Government in the Sixties**

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### **Abstract**

*The word UTOPIA stands in common usage for the ultimate in human folly or human hope – vain dreams of perfection in a Never-Never Land or rational efforts to remake man's environment and his institutions and even his own erring nature, so as to enrich the possibilities of the common life. Sir Thomas More, the coiner of this word, was aware of both implications. Lest anyone else should miss them, he elaborated his paradox in a quatrain which, unfortunately, has sometimes been omitted from English translations of his Utopia (1516), the book that at last gave a name to a much earlier series of efforts to picture ideal commonwealths. More was a punster, in an age when the keenest minds delighted to play tricks with language, and when it was not always wise to speak too plainly. In his little verse he explained that utopia might refer either to the Greek "eutopia", which means the good place, or to "outopia", which means no place.<sup>1</sup>*

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The Sixties in America were "years of hope, days of rage" to paraphrase the title of Todd Gitlin's book.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, lots of protest organizations emerged on the political scene to challenge the American government and its institutions. Among those, could be found all the groups linked to the Civil Rights Movement, such as CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), SNCC ("Snick") (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which became the Student National Coordinating Committee in 1966), and the BPP (Black Panthers Party), the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) with NOW (National Organization of Women), WITCH (Women's International Conspiracy from Hell), and SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men), the Gay Movement with the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) or the Gay Activist Alliance (GAA), the student movements with the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society, which split to become the Revolutionary Youth Movement I, the « *Weatherman* », and the Revolutionary Youth Movement II, the « *Mad Dogs* », in 1969) or the FSM (Free Speech Movement), the main ethnic organizations such as the Indians with the NIYC (National Indian Youth Council), the AIM (American Indian Movement), the Chicanos with UFWOC (United Farm Workers Organizing Committee), UFWU (United Farm Workers Union), UMAS (United Mexican American Students) or MAC (Mexican American Confederation), and the Puerto Ricans with YLP (Young Lords Party).

These groups represented the political New Left. The hippies, who were part of the cultural or counter-cultural New Left, joined them in 1967. All these groups were part of a wider entity called the Movement with a capital M, whose objective was to offer a political and cultural alternative to the American status quo, mainly in the late Sixties. This article is to provide a means for recognizing whether the Movement did indeed envision some future society, a continuation of the American utopian tradition, and, if so, what the main features of its thoughts were. A part of the data source used in this study is the underground press, a new kind of newspapers trying to turn mainstream journalism upside down.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lewis MUMFORD, *The Story of Utopias*, New York: Boni and Liveright, Inc., 1922, Preface.

<sup>2</sup> *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, New York: Bantam Books, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> "The underground press is papers developed over the last five years [1966-1971] which are concerned with nonconformist trends culturally and politically, and which operate on a low financial plane, if indeed any at all. Culturally this means new art forms... Politically, this means all forms of anti-government activity and dissent... These topics all are merged and constantly are tangentially related. The "alternative media" included all this and more. It includes a number of publications

However, a wide variety of sources are also mentioned, for they give details that are more specific on the themes that are dealt with. Only four main themes have been selected because they give a reliable and comprehensive image of the Movement's utopian thoughts: family (which refers to the institutional relations between men and women for procreation, and to the economic unit and responsibility for the care of children), work (which refers to the economic nature of the society and to the individual's relationship to the means of production), education (which refers to the means of socializing children), and government (which refers to the means by which group decisions are made and the way in which individuals react to each other in a legal sense).

The selection of underground newspapers as one of the data sources, besides books and studies, has several implications.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, newspapers are clearly one means of communication, as Charles H. Cooley puts it.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, newspapers tend to enforce the standard and the popular and to encourage a low level of distinction. Still, they are powerful and influential in most aspects of life. In other words, the effect of communication on public opinion is a matter of no small scope and of no small import. Contrary to that, there is often a clear effect of public opinion on communication. In such a case, the content of communication is designed to harmonize with the opinions and ideas of the possible or actual audience, whether these opinions are presumed or known. In fact, once a distinguishable audience is attracted to a specific communications channel – the underground press, for instance – there are two main ways in which the public can affect the communication. The first one is when there is “conscious and deliberate and calculated manipulation of the content” by those who communicate.

For example, this is the selective assignment of column space in newspapers to specific subjects by the editors. The second way, called “implicit”, is “through the sincere and more or less non-conscious correspondence ideology between producers and consumers.”<sup>6</sup> This is based on the economic desire of keeping an audience loyal by satisfying its needs, which reminds us of McLuhan's famous phrase “the medium is the message.”<sup>7</sup> According to it, people buy these newspapers because they expect to read articles on what they believe in or because they expect to find the information, they want about a specific topic. In analyzing the contents of some underground newspapers representing diverse geographical regions of the United States, such as *The Berkeley Barb* (Berkeley), *The East Village Other* (New York), *The Fifth Estate* (Detroit), *The Great Speckled Bird* (Atlanta), *The Los Angeles Free Press* (Los Angeles), and *The Washington Free Press* (Washington), the basic assumption is that there is a similarity between the views expressed in the articles and the views of the readers, assumed to be Movement members.

Aside from the news articles dealing with political happenings, a number of other issues of interest to the Movement include the gossip of the underground press. These issues cover all aspects of the lifestyle of the readers, among which family, work, education, and government are the only ones that have been selected, because they cover the main spectrum of the Movement's concerns. How the issues are viewed by the Movement shows to a large extent what they would implicitly desire or prefer were they able to organize or reshape society themselves. As a result, their relationship to the utopian tradition, as well as their image of a better social order toward which they would strive, can be inferred from the contents of the underground newspapers.

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which, although they are not as vociferous and forthright in their views, do serve, propagate and analyze the developing life styles in the country,” in Mark FRAZER, *The Making and Un-Making of the Underground Press*, New York: Viking Press, 2001, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Underground Newspapers: a Listing of Microfilm Holdings*, compiled by Diane PUTZ, Forrest R. Polk Library, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, 1974. Obtained when the author was in the US.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard BERELSON, Morris JANOWITZ, eds., *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1953, p. 145. He goes even further to define the function of newspapers: “The essential function of the newspaper is, of course, to serve as a bulletin of important news and a medium for the interchange of ideas, through the printing of interviews, letters, speeches, and editorial comment (...) The bulk of its matter, however, is best described by the phrase “organized gossip” (...) That the bulk of the newspaper is of the nature of gossip may be seen by noting three traits which together seem to make a fair definition of that word. It is copious, designed to occupy, without exerting, the mind. It consists mostly of personalities and appeals to superficial emotion. It is untrustworthy – except upon a few matters of moment which the public are likely to follow up and verify,” p. 149.

[http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Cooley/Cooley\\_1909/Cooley\\_1909\\_06.html](http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Cooley/Cooley_1909/Cooley_1909_06.html). Site consulté le 2 février 2012.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 449-50.

<sup>7</sup> See *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*, Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1994 (1964).

Although this article is about the Movement's utopian thoughts and not about utopian systems according to More's ideas, a number of institutional structures are recognized as inherent in thought about any future. These include the four themes that have been selected, based on common-sense criteria rather than on analytic evaluation. These themes are common in any society and, it may be assumed, will be part of any future society which is the logical extension of the present one. To a certain extent, the nature of the future is largely determined by the nature of the present situation which has to be improved, including the institutions, as well as all the different aspects of life that are associated with it. The choice of these themes was influenced by George A. Hillery's elements of the folk-village model.<sup>8</sup> His elements were the following: family, economics, religion, mutual aid, government, stratification, socialization, and recreation. "Family" and "government" were chosen in our sample, "socialization" became "education," and "stratification" became "work."

### ***The Movement's utopian thoughts on family***

Despite the long-standing acceptance of monogamy as the main form of the institution of marriage, there have been, from time to time, experiments with other forms such as "complex marriage", as practiced by John Humphrey Noyes' Oneida community in 1848, or group marriages among the hippie community in the Sixties and Seventies. The structure of the marriage institution is important to any group, because it implies the form of family life and indicates the way the children relate to the community and how they will be raised. Since the family unit is usually the basic social unit, the implications of the structure are even larger, for it also usually is the basic economic unity of society and the basic governmental form, as well as the socializing unit. On a more personal level, the accepted form of male-female relationships has further implications.

All of these parts indicate that the man-woman-child group has so far proven to be a crucial structure of maintenance of society, as well as for the lives of the individuals. Yet, the definition of this structure is often tacit in practice. The Movement as such was bound more by an intangible feeling of community than by visible bonds. This feeling most directly related to the communal movement within the Movement (communes like Lou Gottlieb's Morning Star Ranch in Sebastopol, an hour's drive north of San Francisco),<sup>9</sup> but could be also seen in those who did not join communes in their relaxed opinions about the institution of marriage. The desire for community, implying directly an absence of suspicion and a presence of trust in one's fellows, was possibly that element felt to be most completely missing from established society. The commune has to be understood as "a gathering of individuals who's certain shared goals and values create, for each, a real feeling of personal involvement for the common good."<sup>10</sup> The feeling of community ran through all the structural elements of any society envisioned and through all the social elements of lifestyle and interpersonal relations. It could be said to be the identifying characteristic of the members of the Movement despite retaining its intangibility. It was the theme of which all the other elements were subsets, for it was based upon a feeling that each bore the responsibility for the welfare of every other, while accepting that other's right to retain his individuality and any accompanying idiosyncrasies.

The nature of the marital unit is determined not only by the interpersonal relations forms which are deemed acceptable between men and women, but also by the issue of sexual morality. It goes without saying that if a society has very strict prohibitions on what is acceptable sexual practice, it will tend to also have a rigid marriage unit. The opposite also pertains. Possibly, most widely heralded of the information publicized about the Movement was the notorious lack of morals by which its members lived. This directly referred to the lack of adherence to pre-marital chastity and to the absence of post-virginal marriage. The feeling of community appeared to transcend the necessity for rigid controls on the relationships between men and women. Individual related to individual in a basically trusting way providing the background for cohabitation for a longer or shorter period until such time as one or the other decided to move on. Marriage is acceptable, if one desires it, but it is relatively unimportant. Being married may put false restraints on a situation and thus not be adhered to in the traditional sense of preserving faithfulness or prohibiting extra-marital relationships, but rarely does it, as an institution, provide extra strength which will cause an individual to remain true. Marriage appears to be practiced mostly by individuals who wish to live in and be accepted by society.

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<sup>8</sup> *Communal Organizations: a Study of Local Societies*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> See Frédéric ROBERT, *La Révolution Hippie*, Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011, pp. 182-84.

<sup>10</sup> William HEDGEPEETH, Dennis STOCK, *The Alternative: Communal Life in New America*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970, p. 18.

Isolation or group living tends to provide the support needed to sustain informal relationships without official guarantees. While the marital relationship is seen as relatively unimportant in form, having children and raising them are given serious consideration. The members of any society wish to pass on the best moments of life to their subsequent generations. Movement members also felt that children were important to the furtherance of their vision. Some members were really serious about it: "The most important step in our society will be raising our kids. We'll find out where our heads are at by how our kids turn out. If we're gonna survive, our kids are gonna not only agree with what we think but add to it. They'll let us know just how valid we are."<sup>11</sup> Children were seen as containing the future and the success or failure of the way of life with them, and as people with rights and values of their own, contrary to what was seen as the constricting, restricting, patronizing attitude of the established order. Sometimes, the desire of the members was to allow their children to escape from identification by and with the larger society, as well as to make the child the child of the whole community instead of just the parents.

It was widely accepted that traditional monogamy as the normal form of marriage was being replaced by serial monogamy or progressive monogamy, or sometimes by group marriage in some hippie communes. In other words, divorce had become as much of an institution as marriage itself. Moreover, remarriage, in the Sixties and now, tended, and still tends, to be very popular among some social classes. During the counter-cultural decade, the American family went through an era of change and transition, which gave it a new image and a new meaning: "The counterculture questioned sexual morality and proposed many different models: extended sexual families, sex orgies, sex-therapy groups, acceptance of homosexuality, and most of all, a positive, joyful celebration of sexuality, as opposed to the uptight morality of the previous generation."<sup>12</sup>

The sexual revolution turned all traditional values about marriage and procreation upside down.<sup>13</sup> In 1969-1970, 58% of the people were in favor of pre-marriage sex, 51% were not shocked when seeing pictures of nude people, and 62% of them thought it was fun for women to show their breasts.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, between 1965 and 1974, the rate of the people who wanted public authorities to inform the younger generation about contraception went from 81% to 91%.<sup>15</sup> These figures were quite telling. Some scientific studies, carried out by some prominent people like Wilhelm Reich<sup>16</sup> or Alfred Kinsey,<sup>17</sup> truly gave a new meaning to sex, group sex, sexuality, bisexuality, and homosexuality.<sup>18</sup> As Timothy Leary, the LSD guru put it: "The key energy of our revolution is erotic. A free person is one whose erotic energy has been liberated and can be expressed in increasingly more beautiful, complex ways. The sexual revolution is not just part of the atmosphere of freedom that is generating within the kids. I think it is the center of it."<sup>19</sup>

Still, most of those changes appeared to be intuitive or understood: they were not all mentioned by Movement members in the underground press. In all the issues of the underground newspapers which were analyzed, no article dealt solely with marriage. Such an absence of discussion, together with the presence of relatively many articles about the acceptability of free interpersonal relations as desired by the involved individuals, can be taken as a sign of the lack of importance attached to the specific institution of marriage. Even more important, much more frequently discussed was the nature of the community, what the Movement members called "tribalism:"

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> Barry MILES, *Hippie*, New York/London: Sterling, 2005, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Mike BRAKE, *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 142.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Y. SHAPIRO, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 74.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *The Function of the Orgasm*, New York: Pocket Books, 1975 (1940).

<sup>17</sup> *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co., 1948, and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co., 1953.

<sup>18</sup> See ROBERT, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-58. See also John D'EMILIO, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: the Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, William H. MASTERS, Virginia E. JOHNSON, *Human Sexual Response*, Toronto, New York: Bantam Books, 1966; *Human Sexual Inadequacy*, Toronto, New York: Bantam Books, 1970; *The Pleasure Bond*, Toronto, New York: Bantam Books, 1974; *Homosexuality in Perspective*, Toronto, New York: Bantam Books, 1979.

<sup>19</sup> MILES, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

“In that sense, going beyond monogamy means accepting in ourselves and in our spouses, in our mates, the need for a wider range of love and tenderness and community. Transferring what has been called infidelity – or any wide-ranging sexual behavior, as we all experience in modern family life – from a negative into a positive. Finding a way to see that as matters of growth and matters of sharing rather than matters of ‘unfaithfulness’ or betrayal.”<sup>20</sup> *The Berkeley Barb* shared the same opinion: “(...) Their notion of a commune is not a roof and meals, but a community of people all located under the flailing club, people who will fight in their various ways to throw off the stark and subtle form of tyranny, USA, late 1960 s.”<sup>21</sup>

### ***The Movement’s utopian thoughts on work***

The almost total lack of articles dealing with work in the underground newspapers analyzed in the traditional meaning of a job or occupation is most significant. Many people having jobs were mentioned, but the concept of a career or a vocation could not be found. Some skeptics tended to feel that this was because youth were spoiled, lazy, and unwilling to take their place as productive members of society, preferring instead to live off what others produced at the sweat of their brow. Those who felt that this alienation might be justified saw, included in the anti-traditional work attitude, a continuation of the traditional rejection of technology, and the rejection of the types of jobs which were available as generally not meaningful. Many people saw no reason why young people were not drawn to the challenges of dealing with the complex technology of the Sixties, especially because of all the potential it represented for the future: “In our time, the new requirements of disciplined teamwork and programmed rationality in organizations living in inescapable symbiosis with technological systems seem to offer a satisfying and self-corrective world-image to many, if not most.”<sup>22</sup> Despite such optimistic comments, one of the strongest traits of Movement members was their rejection of the values, if not the products, of the technological and technocratic society.<sup>23</sup> It represented a ruthless drive which placed products and consumption in higher priority than the individuals who were involved in the system:

They see their schools, churches, and all other old institutions as masses of cold, social machinery geared to preparing and placing a person in an occupational role. The goal of such a role is to earn the means for purchasing those things society says are vital for “the good life.” Yet, if society’s conception of “good life” suddenly appears horrifically barren and irrelevant to reality, then there’s no longer the blaring internal pressure to play the game to amass the money to purchase that life. Therefore, the hippies devalued money in their own minds and tried instead to relate to people in terms of human needs.<sup>24</sup>

Kenneth Kenniston clarified some of the issues which had led to the rejection of those societal values about work and the traditional ideal of finding a productive place in society. According to him, the Sixties inspired little enthusiasm.<sup>25</sup> He tried to describe the three social trends that he considered useful to explain the increasing distastefulness of the culture. For him, the first trend was “what we might call the gap between the cultural images of the child and the adult – the first (appereived as) integral, concrete, immediate and spontaneous; the other as dissociated, abstract, specialized, and conformist.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, he suggested that work was specialized in relation to the final product. Innovation, fantasy, and imagination came to be used only for escape, not for leading people on to further efforts in a specific area in which they were involved. The second trend dealt with the increasing difficulty for a youth of deciding what adult roles he or she could choose, for these roles were both ambiguous and subject to change: “The variety of adult roles is so great, and the boundaries of each role so imprecise, that for any but the most resolute or unimaginative, a period of inaction is almost mandatory when faced with choosing between them.”<sup>27</sup> The third trend is what he called “the gap between aspirations and actualities.”

<sup>20</sup> Gary SNYDER, *Great Speckled Bird*, January 3-9, 1969, pp. 12-13.

<sup>21</sup> James A. SCHREIBER, “Berkeley Commune: Street People Emerge as Underground Force,” July 1968, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Erik ERIKSON, *Youth: Crisis and Identity*, New York: W. W. Norton Company, Inc., 1968, p. 156.

<sup>23</sup> See Theodore ROSZAK, *The Making of a Counter-Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, London: Faber and Faber, 1969.

<sup>24</sup> HEDGEPEETH, STOCK, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> “Alienation and the Decline of Utopia,” *The American Scholar*, 29, Spring 1960, p. 166.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Indeed, as the level of young people had increased, the number of negative conditions they were willing to accept had decreased: (...) the natural logic of our immense technological and material progress is, by generalization, to convince us that we should be able to determine our fates as human beings in our social and cultural settings just as we begin to control the physical world; yet, consciously we lack any such conviction.

The cultural correlate of material progress is therefore not, as we would expect, reform or revolution, but what we might call “unprogrammable alienation” – rejection of society without any explicit program of objectives or techniques for improving it, and without even an articulate set of principles from which to criticize it.<sup>28</sup>

As a result, young people felt purposelessness, a lack of direction in which to move, a lack of acceptable end toward which to move. Consequently, there was little apparent reason for those people to become active or productive members of adult society. For them, there was little future hope in their lives, only a kind of servitude to the system in order to buy things which had little value and less meaning, and which brought no pleasure or happiness: “Why join a society which asks more of an adult, offers less in return, and yet encourages higher aspirations than any before it.”<sup>29</sup> This was the reason why a great deal of hippies decided to become the creative members of society: the intellectuals, the students, the professional people, because they could give free rein to their feelings and emotions.<sup>30</sup> To them, money was not an end in itself: they would rather have an erratic source of income than “hassle” (a typical hippie expression) with the American consumer society.<sup>31</sup> One hippie, who lived in Haight-Ashbury, decided to drop out of the traditional society because of a lack of freedom he had: “I was doing the same thing I am now, only then I had to do it even when I didn’t want to.”<sup>32</sup> Another situation of the same type was also quite striking:

Ted has the days and hours that his shop is open placed on the door, although on a number of occasions when I have dropped by to see him during these times the shop has been closed. Sometimes when the shop is closed, there will be a note on the door indicating when he will be back. I have encountered him at the coffee house during the hours he has posted as being “open for business,” and mentioned that I came by the other day and he was closed; and that I came back when the note on the door said he would be back and he was still closed. He answers (...) “That’s why I have a shop on Haight Street instead of someplace else. I could probably make more money someplace else, but there would be no satisfaction in it.”<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, it seemed that work was not the most important thing in the life of the Movement members. Being unemployed was not considered as a terrible thing, but rather as an opportunity to do something else, or enjoy life to its fullest. Two examples are particularly clear about that: Leon says he is looking for a job. Sandy says that Leon had just gotten a job two days ago. Leon replies, “I quit. I didn’t like it.” Tony is telling me that he is going to quit his job which he has been working at for more than seven months. I ask him why, saying that I thought he enjoyed what he was doing. He replies, “I don’t think I do any more. Too much hassle” (...).<sup>34</sup>

Walt inquires about when John returned and then asks him what he has been doing since he returned. John responds, “Oh, just being.” (...) Tony has quit his job about four weeks ago. At the time he quit I asked him what he was planning to do and he answered that he didn’t know. I have seen him occasionally in the park since then but have not spoken to him. He is at Nora’s apartment this evening and I ask him what he has been doing since he quit his job. Tony answers, “Just being, but I’ve decided to do some leatherwork now.”<sup>35</sup>

However, there were several exceptions to the rejection of work, aside from doing that which was necessary for subsistence. The first one was that of working for and with people less fortunate, such as minorities, the poor, or the people who were dependent and seen as exploited by society. The second acceptable kind of work was that which was done in the name of and for the purpose of furthering some particular causes about which there was a strong feeling.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>30</sup> Burton H. WOLFE, *The Hippies*, New York: Signet, 1968, p. 119.

<sup>31</sup> Sherri CAVAN, *Hippies of the Haight*, St. Louis, Missouri: New Critics Press, Inc., 1972, p. 87.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

As a consequence, when the underground press reported the activities of groups working for a free university or putting out a campus newspaper, it was reporting about Movement members doing tasks to which they were committed and which were meaningful to them. The third exception was that sort of work done in communes. In this case, work was for the welfare of the community, because it was vital for the group's continuance. Moreover, it was very often of a nature that was pleasant, mainly in a rural environment, as in rural communes.

Those activities mainly consisted in farming, building shelters, preparing organic food, or working with the land. Morning Star Ranch, the Diggers' commune, was a case in point. *Time* even wrote an article about this new way of living the American Dream, on July 7, 1967: Cabbages and turnips, lettuce and onions march in glossy green rows, neatly mulched with redwood sawdust. Hippie girl's lounge in the buffalo grass, sewing colorful dresses or studying Navajo sand painting, clad in nothing but beads, bells, and feather headdresses. (Not everyone is a nudist – only when they feel like it.) A shaggy sheepdog named Grass plays with the hippie children, among them a straw-thatched 17-month-old boy named Adam Siddhartha. The new-found trip of work and responsibility reflected in the Morning Star experiment is perhaps the most hopeful development in the hippie philosophy to date (...).<sup>36</sup>

Implicit in these exceptions of meaningful work was that they had a very specific goal: the restructuring of society by example or by action. The communitarians felt that they were preparing for survival in the future, where the current way of life would simply have broken down, and where people would have turned to the land to survive as in the good old days. Needless to say, there were some people who would consider themselves Movement members, but who had normal and traditional jobs in technological society, and who had a lifestyle which tended to be separate from their world spheres. Consequently, those people were not work-shirkers, as the straight society might have thought. Instead, they were willing to tackle any job which appeared to be meaningful, and were eager to be productive members of society, but of a society which, in turn, could be meaningful to them. The American educational system was considered in the same way: it had to offer them a meaning to their lives.

### ***The Movement's utopian thoughts on education***

The nature of the beliefs about education was part of the ideas about how children fit into the community and the way that community felt about work. Moreover, a great deal of young people thought that knowledge had become quickly obsolete when coupled with the specialized nature of what the individual would be trained to do when entering the job market. Indeed, at a time when the general perception of established institutions was that they attempted to increasingly limit and restrict the individual in actions and thoughts, the desired form of education, as expressed by the Movement, was that it was a continually enlarging experience at all levels, allowing for relatively unstructured action and thought. For those people, learning was preferred to education. Indeed, for them, the latter was simply a means used by all the social institutions to train and shape students, considered as raw materials, about to be used to serve Corporate America and the technocratic society. The Berkeley student revolt, which broke out in October 1964, was part of those worries: knowledge was no longer considered as such, but as a commodity to be bought or sold by President Clark Kerr, regardless of its value or meaning:

Knowledge has certainly never in history been so central to the conduct of an entire society. What the railroads did in the second half of the last century and the automobile for the first half of this century may be done for the second half of this century by the knowledge industry: that is to serve as the focal point for national growth. In addition, the university is at the center of the knowledge process.<sup>37</sup>

All the students who had joined the FSM wanted to make public opinion realize that their university was nothing but a "knowledge factory," or a "multiversity" to use Kerr's terminology<sup>38</sup>:

The University is being called upon to educate previously unimagined numbers of students; to respond to the expanding claims of national service; to merge its activities with industry as never before. Characteristic of this transformation is the growth of the knowledge industry, which is coming to permeate government and business, and to draw into it more and more people raised to higher and higher levels of skill.

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<sup>36</sup> Charles PERRY, *The Haight-Ashbury: a History*, New York: Random House, 1984, p. 216.

<sup>37</sup> Mark KITCHELL, *Berkeley in the Sixties*, 1990 (documentary).

<sup>38</sup> David Lance GOINES, *The Free Speech Movement: Coming of Age in the 1960s*, Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 1993, p. 51. William J. RORABAUGH, *Berkeley at War: the 1960s*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 9.

The production, distribution and consumption of knowledge is said to account for 29 percent of gross national product, and knowledge production is growing at about twice the rate of the rest of the economy. What the railroads did for the second half of this century, and the automobile for the first half of this century may be done for the second half of this century by the knowledge industry; and that is to serve as the focal point for national growth.<sup>39</sup>

For Malvina Reynolds, left-wing folk singer, Berkeley was a “robot factory.”<sup>40</sup> Mario Savio, leader of the FSM, in a speech entitled “An End to History,” delivered on December 2, 1964, emphasized the alienation that his fellow-students felt deep inside: There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you sick at heart, that you can’t take part; you can’t even tacitly take part, and you have got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus and you’ve got to make it stop. In addition, you’ve got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you’re free, the machines will be prevented from working at all.<sup>41</sup>

This abstract rhetoric can explain why so many young people were willing to reform their university campuses, since they could influence their future lives, as at Columbia University in April 1968.<sup>42</sup> The new education ideas were not separate from some of those proposed for practice within the established society. Still, in keeping with the lifestyle of the Movement and its values, there was far greater urgency to the idea according to which a child should learn what he was interested in, what was useful to him, and what was practical for his manipulation of his society. One of the solutions to the problem of alienating education and impersonal universities was the creation of “free universities,” supposed to offer a healthier learning environment to the student community.

Paul Goodman, who wrote *Growing Up Absurb: Problems of Youth in the Organized System* in 1960, thought that the American university had become an alienating microcosm: “The community of scholars is replaced by a community of administrators and scholars with administrative mentalities, company men and time-servers among the teachers, grade-seekers and time-servers among the students. And this new community mans a machine that, incidentally, turns out educational products.”<sup>43</sup> These counter-universities, these unstructured institutions, existed on many levels, providing the opportunity for the student to pursue interests not often addressed by formal education. Their purpose was to liberate imaginations. A *Great Speckled Bird* reader insisted on the use of such universities:

First, I assume that human beings have an inner need to learn about their environment. Second, that sheer knowledge of facts and the ability to cope conventional style are not sensible goals for education at this time. Rather, I hope for my children to (1) be in touch with their own needs and their own rhythm of learning, (2) follow their curiosity and intelligence in creative, imaginative exploration of the problem, (3) take the initiative in testing possible solutions in practical, commonsense ways, (4) throw away old but once pleasing solutions as new ones become evidently superior, (5) experience themselves in relation to the world in as integrated and wholistic ways as possible, (6) discover in their relationship to others that certain ways of relating and behaving are life-promoting and others are destructive, and that they love life more than inhumanity and destruction.<sup>44</sup> These “free universities “or student-free universities”<sup>45</sup> became more and more popular among students, because they proposed a wide variety of courses that could be called counter-courses.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>39</sup> KITCHELL, *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> RORABAUGH, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> Seymour LIPSET, Sheldon S. WOLIN, *The Berkeley Student Revolt: Facts and Interpretations*, New York: Doubleday, 1965, p. 163.

<sup>42</sup> Frédéric ROBERT (with Armand HAGE), *Révoltes et utopies: la contre-culture américaine dans les années soixante*, Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011, pp. 121-26.

<sup>43</sup> Paul GOODMAN, *Compulsory Mis-education and the Community of Scholars*, New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1964, p. 238.

<sup>44</sup> “Parents, Teachers Rap Education,” June 15, 1970, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Nathan GLAZER, *Remembering the Answers: Essays on the American Student Revolt*, New York, London: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1970, p. 203.

<sup>46</sup>“(…) no restrictions were put on subject matter (though at few places, not by any means the majority, right-wing or pro-Establishment courses were discouraged) and the catalogues included numerous courses in Marxism and socialism, community organizing and movement building, Vietnam and the draft, Chinese politics and Latin American exploitation,



According to Sale, “The free universities were *alternatives* to the established order, and opposed to it, independent of (at least some of) the pressures of the surrounding society; those who founded them were not interested in working *through* the instruments of the society but *apart* from them, hoping as far as possible to remain untainted by them, trying by forging new shapes to avoid the built-in dangers inherent in even the best of the old.”<sup>47</sup> There, the students, who wanted to teach a particular course, only had to sign up to do so, the registration fees were low (about \$10 a term), no credits and no grades were given, but there was an opportunity for people to learn about what they were interested in or what they wanted to know. The Free University of Berkeley in 1969 had about 700 people signed up for 65 courses.<sup>48</sup> The free university movement appeared to be important as presenting the possibility that technical and intellectual subjects might be taught in a less restrictive atmosphere, and therefore be appealing to those who might have otherwise rejected them. This utopian learning and teaching environment did prove very successful, because it offered an alternative to what the university administration and the government tried to impose.

### ***The Movement’s utopian thoughts on government***

At the core of the Movement’s utopian thoughts could be found the common denominator of their frustration: the power structure. At issue in the larger sense was the form of government which was deemed most acceptable to individuals, assuming that some form of decision-making structure was necessary or that there was some implicit understanding about decision-making. In the narrower sense, at issue were the articles of conduct of daily governmental affairs and the implications of local and national governmental rulings to the individuals including the larger society. The main topics of interest for the Movement were anti-war activities, because of the escalation of the war in Vietnam, and local and national politics, which were extensively dealt with in newspapers like the *Great Speckled Bird*, *The Fifth Estate*, and *The Washington Free Press*. Indeed, *The Barb* tended to emphasize anti-university issues instead of directing its energies towards criticism of American politics. As *The East Village Other* and *The LA Free Press*, they provided less controversial and less extensive coverage of such topics. Needless to say, the issue was not simply one of governing, but it related to the matter of acceptance of authority. Most people had a negative image of their government whose role, apparently, was to make sure that society was correctly managed and under control; one testimony was quite telling in that respect:

I have three main criteria for judging whether I shall accept as valid and rightful, and therefore binding on me, a process for making decisions on matters that affect me. First, a process may insure that decisions correspond with my own personal choice. Second, a process may insure decisions informed by a special competence that would be less likely under alternative procedures. Third, a process may be less perfect than other alternatives according to the first two criteria but, on balance, more satisfactory simply because it economizes on the amount of time, attention, and energy I must give to it.<sup>49</sup>

The first criterion, called “the criterion of personal choice” by Dahl, was the most obvious. Still, Dahl pointed out the difficulties of democratic authority under this criterion, which had to be based upon some form of political equality. At the same time, however, other difficulties could be found: “Indeed, whatever you regard as a part of the most presence essence of the self – your self – is a matter you are likely to deny any government the right to invade, no matter how ‘democratic’ it may be.”<sup>50</sup> The second criterion, “the criterion of competence,” was especially relevant in a technological society to be more competitive and effective. The third criterion, that of economy, was also relatively straightforward. In other words, these criteria shed light on the dilemma of authority which every individual faced, although the issues were most clearly observed when the particular form of generally accepted authority was not considered legitimate. Indeed, most people fear totalitarian governments, because they encroach on their individual liberties.

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film making and “guerilla graphics,” contemporary literature and “street poetry,” body movement and karate, hippie culture and the student revolt, and even (put-ons, but not by much) “Zen Basketball” (at San Francisco State Experimental College) and “Paper Airplanes and People” (at the Free University in Seattle). The whole idea, as those who started the Seattle school put it in 1966, was “to establish protest counter-institutions to the unfree universities,” in Kirkpatrick SALE, *SDS*, New York: Random House, 1974, p. 266.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>48</sup>“Free University Booms,” *Berkeley Barb*, February 28, 1969, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> Robert A. DAHL, *After the Revolution? Authority in a Good Society*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

Although most Western countries, in the Sixties, saw democracy as the mandatory form of government, in utopia, some alternative governmental forms – anarchism and the “does your own thing” ethic – were preferred to any sort of coercion:

Surely, however, the pure utopian aspiration is anarchism when it can be had (...) The underlying view is that not merely coercion but authority as well – even the most benign, rational, and democratic authority fails to comport with human dignity.

The modern utopian dream is of a community of equals in which each man enforces on himself the moral law, and no other law is needed, superior intelligence and ability are not translated into leadership or control, and not only absence of conflicts of interest, but beyond that, an incredibly sophisticated technology, leaves no need even for managerial regulation, discretion, but permits, instead a spontaneous harmony.<sup>51</sup>

Kateb further suggested that the reason that democracy itself might not be as desirable a form of politics as the anarchic, from a utopian point of view: “The plain fact is that the existence of any political system is a sure indication of the existence, in turn, of division of opinion. In addition, where there is division of opinion, there must inevitably be discontent, even if the finest civility and spirit of tolerance are present. It is hard to find room for discontent in utopia in the abstract.”<sup>52</sup> More specifically related to Movement members, anarchism implied a freedom from the established institutions of society as much as a future desire to not be controlled by machines and institutions, unseen monoliths, complexes or structures which were impervious to and impenetrable by human beings: “The current anarchism among the young, though, is expressed not as a wild quest for chaos, but as an urgent attempt to build counter institutions that reflect their own highly-principled, highly-humanized ideas about how things should be.”<sup>53</sup>

The articles published in the underground press, reiterating that underground newspapers made no claims to objectivity, tended to have about them a certain tone which could almost be called derision or even disgust when describing decisions made or moves taken by governmental organizations, or even all bureaucracies. As the governments tended to deal impersonally with individuals, so the Movement members viewed it as a predatory, monolithic entity, giving little credit for what might be good intent, seeing only the implications of control for people’s lives. There was little consistency in the criticism, such as when the welfare boards were condemned for not giving more aid to the poor, as well as for even existing, since they were tools of some branch of the government. An article published in the *Barb* showed some of the issues and the reactions of the Movement to traditional government. There was considerable effort to modify the institutions which existed or to, at least, influence the decisions made, but little hope that this effort would provide any respite:

In the midst of East Oakland’s “political wasteland” lies an oasis. It’s the Oakland Opposition center. Nestling in an area where American opinion bookstores dot the barren political scene, the Opposition Center offers the community an alternative. It opposes the draft, racism, war, and poverty, among other things. It also works for some things despite the negative name. Among these are food, clothing, self-determination, and voter registration.<sup>54</sup>

In line with this way of thinking, some were concerned as to whether the future would bring the adaptation or the dissolution of the established institutions, mainly the political ones: “Today’s political challenges may lead to such extreme polarizations as to rend the social fabric into tatters. Or they may usher in a new era of expanded pluralism, with significantly more people unprecedentedly influencing public policy through a growing number of increasingly sensitive representational devices.”<sup>55</sup> The question posed for society was how to deal with a fairly sizable portion of its membership reluctant to accept certain ground rules, if indeed they could not change these rules by peaceful means. Charles Reich suggested that the State in the Sixties was bringing about the seeds of its own destruction, because the two human elements upon which it depended – willing workers and willing consumers – were eroding away.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> George KATEB, *Utopia and Its Enemies*, London: Collier-Macmillan, Ltd., 1963, p. 72.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>53</sup> HEDGEPEETH, STOCK, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> Rick HEIDE, “Opposition Not Only Vs. But Also For,” *Berkeley Barb*, February 28, March 6, 1969, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Robert T. GOLEMBIEWSKI, Charles S. BULLOCK III, *The New Politics: Polarization or Utopia?*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> *The Greening of America*, New York: Random House, 1970, pp. 205-14.

Contrary to that, the alternative to the government and society of the future as a continuation of what existed in the Sixties was sought by those who joined the communes which sprang up throughout America, and who saw it as the only means for survival in the future, as well as the best form of society.<sup>57</sup>

According to the Movement members, government was hardly separable from the categories of interpersonal relations, from ethics and morality, and from values and goals. The determining factor was a sort of derision for impersonal bureaucratism, which was seen as leading to exploitation and victimization, and to an abrogation of the right of each individual to freedom and personal choice. As government implies the relationships of groups to groups or groups to individuals, only a tribal sense of community and sharing was acceptable.

Family, work, education, and government are the integral parts of the traditional structure of every social structure. In the Sixties, these pillars of the established order became the main targets of the Movement's direct actions and utopian thoughts. Indeed, those young people, who felt alienated by the social order, wanted to set up a counter-society which, they hoped, could be closer to their concerns and desires. This counter-society, which was part of the utopian tradition, was supposed to be the new Promised Land for the Sixties' lost generation. Therefore, the most sensitive American values, landmarks, and traditions had to be turned upside down, because they represented the older generation those young people wanted to differentiate themselves from.

Paradoxically enough, the Sixties' social structure had contributed to make these people who they were: they came from middle-class backgrounds, they were educated, and apparently well-mannered, and were able to study in prestigious institutions, and a bright future was waiting for them after graduation. In other words, their protest was aimed at a society they should have cherished and preserved, instead of trying to change it or dismantle it. If we consider the profile of most protesters at that time, we find the same pattern and evolution in their lives. Firstly, as we have just said, they should have been satisfied with their lot, because of all the comfort and well-being they could have enjoyed at home and at school, secondly, reaching a critical moment in their lives for various reasons, be they social, political or cultural, they suddenly decided "to turn on, tune in, drop out" for existential and utopian ideals, before coming back again into the mainstream, after a few years spent on the political and cultural protest scenes. Therefore, it seems that their protest years had been nothing but an emotional reaction of spoiled children for whom the best was not enough even in a utopian world.

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<sup>57</sup> HEDGEPEETH, STOCK, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

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