

The Realistic Utopia¹

La utopía realista

A utopía realista

*I wish more than anyone else to see America form the greatest nation in the world,
less because of its extension and wealth than because of its freedom and glory.*

Simón Bolívar,
Letter from Jamaica, 1815.

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Recibido 19 /03/2021 - Aceptado:05/02/2022

Abstract

Thinking is always an action that commits to transformation, this is the thread by which Latin American thought has been raising awareness, the need to establish a utopian thought that achieves this goal. That is why it is necessary to outline some ideas around what this category implies from the contributions made by the academic Horacio Cerutti Guldberg, thus allowing it to be assumed as part of the baggage of Latin American thought. Proposing alternatives to the fragmented and dehumanized realities with which we live on a daily basis.

Keywords: realistic utopia, Latin American thought, identity, social cohesion, emancipation, transformation.



¹ The basis of this article corresponds to Chapter IV of my dissertation of Bachelor of Philosophy, “*The Concept of utopia in the thought of Horacio Cerutti Guldberg*” defended in 2013, presented at the School of Philosophy of the Universidad Nacional; it has been reviewed and some modifications have been made in relation to the unpublished document.

Resumo

Pensar é sempre uma ação comprometida com a transformação, e este é o fio pelo qual o pensamento latino-americano vem considerando, desde o momento da consciência, a necessidade de estabelecer um pensamento utópico que atinja esta tarefa. É por isso que é necessário esboçar algumas idéias sobre o que esta categoria implica, com base nas contribuições do acadêmico Horacio Cerutti Guldberg, tornando possível assumi-la como parte da bagagem do pensamento latino-americano. A proposta de alternativas para as realidades fragmentadas e desumanizadas com as quais convivemos diariamente.

Palavras chave: utopia realista, pensamento latino-americano, identidade, coesão social, emancipação, transformação.

1. Horacio Cerutti Guldberg: Semblance of a compromised memory

The work of an author must be a reflection of his experience capitulated throughout his human and intellectual formation. Such is the case of this academic who has dedicated his life to the education of the young minds of the continent, throughout his career in various universities, in his works, he identifies with the teachings bequeathed by Bolívar and Martí, arrives to call Latin America with great familiarity as *Our America*, he thinks and reflects on it, but not as a meaningless or abstract concept, as Leticia Flores and Gabriela Huerta affirm in their essay *Institutional route of Horacio Cerutti*,

“For Horacio Latin America was not, nor is a simple object of study,

but a harrowing and hopeful reality that had to be present and there was no time to lose” (García Clark, 2001, p. 210).

It is necessary to take a look at the personal life of Horacio Cerutti Guldberg. He was born in Mendoza, Argentina, in 1950, in 1973 he graduated as a Bachelor and Professor in Philosophy from the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Cuyo, Mendoza. During this time, he was “one of the members of the generation in which the so-called Philosophy of Liberation crystallized” (Cerutti, 2006, p. 33), as termed and deemed by Leopoldo Zea. In March 1976, when he was a postgraduate scholarship holder in the master’s degree in Social Sciences at the Bariloche Foundation, a coup d’état took place by which the Governing



Board came to power with General Videla; around this time Cerutti's father was kidnapped and disappeared. Professor Cerutti left his country in May, heading for an unknown Ecuador as suggested by Guillermo Henríquez, in 1978 he obtained the title of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Cuenca.

He has been a professor at universities in Argentina, Ecuador and Mexico. He is a researcher at the *Centro Coordinador y Difusor de Estudios Latinoamericanos* (CIALC), now the *Centro de Investigaciones sobre América Latina* (CIALC) and Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at UNAM.

With this life experience, the guarantor of his thought built not only from the theoretical, but also from the experiential is remarkable. In addition, he has discovered through philosophy a useful instrument to serve Latin American societies. He has managed to practice the philosophy studied from the moment he was exiled from his country. His friends and students are witnesses to his commitment to the elaboration of Latin American thought.

Within his works we have different articles written for various occasions: conferences for the various Schools of Philosophy in Latin America, he has visited the Universidad Nacional of Costa Rica and the Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR) on different occasions; he has offered discussions, presentations, symposiums, international conferences on Latin American philosophy, interviews, among others. His literary production is extensive, it contains a vast proposal of Latin American reality and thought.

2. Why Latin America?

Our history is marked by colonialist imposition, invisibility, recrimination, exploitation, repression of the native peoples. With European expansionism, which began in the fifteenth century, the possibility of an authentic meeting and exchange of cultures diminished and caused one of the largest genocide events in world history, becoming a trauma and a point of reference for the various reflections given in different disciplines since that time. It also marks the beginning of globalization and the foundations of the subsequent formation of modernity.



Leopoldo Zea points out:

“We speak more of a concealment than a discovery, since both Spain and Europe found in this our Continent what they wanted to find; they discovered what they wanted to discover” (1988, p. 8).

The construction of Latin American thought begins with the awareness of the massacre and the violence with which the clash of cultures occurred, which came to impose the Eurocentric paradigm, without allowing the capacity of alterity, in addition, the region was taken as an abundant source of rich minerals and precious metals, without assuming the richness of the culture.

It is necessary to understand that the dynamics of the discovery did not have the purpose of sharing knowledge and carrying out a dialectic of history, but on the contrary, razing, due to the incomprehension and intolerance of alterity, with beings that seemed to be human, *homunculi*. From the European anthropological paradigm and the European social imaginary, in contrast to the archetype of the *Other*, they were not fully human. The construction of the ideological archetype of the white-heterosexual-Christian man is promoted and colonially established, permeating to

this day the collective imaginaries and *Western-centered* aesthetic standards.

From there, the humanity of these beings defined as “*strange and alien*” was definitively assessed. From the moment that “accidentally and circumstantially” Christopher Columbus “discovered” in 1492 a mass of land they called “*The West Indies*”,² they dedicated themselves to looting, abusing, imposing, enslaving and exploiting, as Bartolomé de las Casas narrates to us in his work, as Brief account of the destruction of the Indies.

From this moment of “discovery” a concealment took place, covering up the atrocities they carried out with the cities and civilizations they found, and dedicated themselves to writing in history the destruction of cultures. These found entities, encountered as a consequence of the search for new trade routes to India, gave way to one of the most silent, underhanded and legitimized holocausts in history.

Colonization was not carried out peacefully, the construction of new

2 It must be taken into account that already since the fourteenth century there were Chinese maps cartographically indicating knowledge of the existence of what in 1507 came to be called America. These maps were known in Italy from the fifteenth century.



European establishments was through the expropriation and expulsion of the natives from their own lands and their confinement to the most difficult to access areas, examples of this were the reduction in indigenous populations and the *encomienda*.

In the face of this barbarism, in recent decades, voices of visibility of these facts begin to rise, abuses are made evident, the consciences of men and women come afloat who point out the material, cultural and ancestral wealth of the histories of the Mayans, Incas and Aztecs. In order to understand more about this juncture, it is necessary to read *Las Venas abiertas de América Latina* by Eduardo Galeano (1971), and *Visión de los vencidos* by Miguel León-Portilla published in 1959.

With this new interpretation of history, Latin American thought turns Latin America into its own object and subject of study, its point of reflection; starting by asking about its own identity, way of thinking, way of governing, freedom, among others.

“History can and must be reiterated and patiently reconstructed from new situations, I would almost dare to say conjunctures, which allow new facets to be illuminated and better position current work and future tasks. The time is coming to

launch decisively into the task of reconstruction that must be equal to the work that has preceded us” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 44).

Encountered with this search for self-determination, it is necessary to start from our thought, it is time to reflect, put aside Eurocentrism and dare to think about and from ourselves, promoting the originality of reflection, about reality, in short, our own way of doing philosophy,

“It is not about affirming, once again, programmatically the existence of a Latin American philosophy to simply point a finger at it, but about recovering it and re-signifying it to perfect its conceptualization... when returning to the roots, new forces are found to try the new. It is to think with rooting from the own towards the universalizable; with openness to universality” (Cerutti, 2000: 32).

A verb that must not continue to be lent (Zea, 1974, p. 28) and it is talked about the social, political, cultural, religious environment of Latin America, we snatch the right to express what the very entrails of the original peoples, mestizo and bent by the centuries, think. It is this seizure of the *Verb* where Latin American thought appropriates a particular way of thinking, of doing philosophy. It is no longer imitating



throughout history the currents of thought at the foot of European dictation, but by assimilation from its own categories, experiences and receptions to its own needs and adequacy of its realities.

“It has been a philosophy elaborated with a high critical sense regarding reality and itself. For their part, the philosophical currents from abroad were not passively imitated but rather adapted and adopted in an active process of transformation, which also followed its own lines of conceptualization. It was taken up and in what was taken up and in the way it was taken up, a series of consequences of the greatest theoretical and ideological importance were played out. Finally, and for all of the above, it is unjustified to demand a revolution prior to a process of philosophical authentication” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 60).

It is in the commitment of the thinker where the discovery and systematization of that traumatic concealment begins to be forged, in addition to the ability to express in their own works the needs that are occurring, the unjust power relations, that is why it is insisted to

“Warn from the beginning that identity (as an ongoing process)

is not only past (been), but also and eminently present and future (being). This procedural consideration of identity admits a recognition of its political and cultural dimensions, to the same extent that traditions and their characteristics make possible cultural creation that is never, nor can it be, *ex nihilo*” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 21).

Cerutti’s thought implies reinterpreting history itself, to visualize it and assume it as a past event that definitely marks, but does not determine the future of Our America, placing it in a historical perspective,

“far from renouncing to what is one’s own, to one’s history, one’s own past, one must assume it and, based on what forms one’s own identity, assimilate other values. Not undoing what has been, but being what one is, being able to be even more” (Zea, 1988, p. 16).

The self-determination shown by the peoples has collaborated in the dialectical development of our own history, it is the Latin American being who takes charge of his own destiny and directs it to build his identity, his humanity that was denied, his own way of doing philosophy, it is here where the why of Latin America is understood.



“Latin America discovers itself as a philosophical object. It discovers itself in the concrete reality of its history and its culture, and even in its physical nature as support, contour and condition of its spirituality. Its thought has spontaneously tended to reflect that of Europe; but this, by its own course, leads to historicism, the conscience of America, upon reflecting this historicism, paradoxically finds itself, invoked in what is genuine” (Zea, 1987, pp. 26-27).

In this way, Latin America becomes a place *from* which one can have aspirations, achieve ideals, create and think great utopias, it is meritorious that it is considered no longer as groups of isolated nations, but as “sister countries in search of a common destiny that in many ways will have to be due to their common historical and cultural origin”. (Zea, 1987, p. 19)

With these contributions, Zea points out the process of self-discovery, they converge to the creation of the discipline of the history of ideas in Latin America as a way of tracking one’s own thought, “in a certain way the effort of historicism can be considered as an effort towards our reality, towards our history” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 46).

Why Latin America? Due to the fact of forming a rich, multicultural, multiracial, multi-religious region, with great antagonisms and paradigms, in need of delving into the interiority of its great secrets, to humanize the person who develops in these lands that range from the Bravo River to the Cape Horn region in southern Patagonia. Because it offers a paradigm, for discovering through its intrinsic development, its relationships: economic, political, social, commercial, ethical, religious, anthropological, artistic, literary, among other points to rediscover and evidence.

It is that starting from our own experience, where great trenches will be found to defend what is ours, to position itself as a solid region that is characterized, as Bolívar thinks, not for being the “greatest nation in the world, less for its extension and wealth than for his freedom and glory” (Soto, 2008).

It is the necessity in which the “subject thinks from the very core of his own where” (Cerutti, 2000, p. 57). In this way, our own thinking about ourselves, our social, political, economic, and ethical relations become. With this, a primordial category is visualized to understand Latin American philosophy, since it



thinks *in a from*, it is a commitment of the thinker to assume this specific reality and bind their work to rediscover the richness and clarify the Latin American reality. It no longer comes to be the philosophy copied in the best European style, but rather it is an introspection of it however applied in Latin American terms, it is to apply due originality to all own philosophical thought processes. It is a thinking about reality from reality itself, which is not thought from nowhere or from a void or neutrality.

It is *from* this very approach that Latin America should be understood as a category of analysis, it is in itself where the possibilities of change are born, of significant transformations, from which social synergies cease to be alienating and become the beginning of a transforming dynamic of the dignity of each person. Understanding that the development of the region depends solely on the reinterpretation and reflection that can be had around itself and from itself, reconfiguring itself as its own object of study and pertinent but also, as a subject of great advances and technical and industrial developments, always embracing harmony with the environment and society in general.

The necessity to build new bridges of dialogue presents a project in the region that must lead to respect and the free exchange of opinions, framed in dialogue, solidarity, social justice and the search for forms of progress that go hand in hand with social and human development.

Latin America is poetry, it is art, it is culture, it is such a broad paradigm that it is necessary to propose interdisciplinary studies to try to cover the largest number of factors that make the region a place of vast possibilities for development and equity, it is a region suitable to be able to build Utopias, alternatives and changes.

“I believe that among these philosophical journeys, utopias play a role in relaunching reflection along paths not yet trodden. My journey this time will be limited to following some traces of the utopia to which I believe we have a right” (Cerutti, 2007, p. 69).

Definitely, Latin America has and can be built as equitable and just societies, starting from the same origin, mestizo, forged in the crucible of colonialism, of extermination. These characteristics therefore allow a common language, by sharing the same history, but at the same



time they become one of the most complex points to achieve union, since the peoples do not perceive a common root among themselves and, in some sectors, only the differences that guarantee the autonomy of each region are highlighted, the divergence and walls of “racialization” as a practical form of colonial domination must be overcome. It is to achieve authentic liberation, emancipation to achieve self-discovery of identities and utopias, the construction and appropriation of Our America.

“Latin Americans turned in on themselves will try not only to know themselves in a certain horizon of history but also as men, as the concrete actors of that history, as those who suffer the situation or circumstance that determines, personalizes, individualizes them” (Zea, 1974, p. 96).

As a summary, I ask again, why Latin America? Because it is the dream of Our America, it is Our demanded *right* to have our utopias as hopes for change and inclusion.

3. Utopias and identities as a form of social cohesion

The concept of *utopia* was coined by Thomas More (1478-1535), the famous Renaissance humanist to designate the island that appears

in his work of the same name written in Latin, between 1514 and 1516, the year of its publication. Etymologically, *utopia* is a word of Greek origin and literally means: “*no place*” (ou = negation adverb, topos, ou, o = masculine noun, place, site, position; country, territory, locality, district, region; condition category; occasion, possibility, opportunity); an attempt of a more precise translation is “place that does not exist anywhere”.

The subtitle of More’s work provides us with another antecedent on the meaning that will be given to that word: “Of the best of possible states and of the island of Utopia”; the word is also used in a prologue of the work as a synonym for *utopia*, the voice “*udetopia*” (contraction of vowels according to Greek grammar conjugating topos as place or site), “place of never ever”.

Hence, the word *utopia* came to be used, for a long time, to name a perfect and necessarily impossible society for human nature. Also, by extension, any invented project will be called *utopia*; and “*utopian*” will be said of something reduced in theory, but unattainable in practice.

Certainly the concept of *utopia* can be approached from different areas of knowledge. For the purposes of



the present work, a distinction will be made between the purely literary-linguistic concept and the concept considered in Latin American political philosophy.

In a literal sense (etymological), it is expressed as that unattainable moment in which the human being irrationally pursues an alienating ideologization, it is a demonstration of the naivety of the person, persuaded by an effervescent discourse, it is rather confused with an abstract and unreal dreamer, where utopia, in strictly speaking, is unrealizable since it surpasses reality and does not start from it as the fundamental basis of social transformations.

In a literary utopian sense, a society is presented that has reached a perfect higher degree of development, a society in which social relations are clearly stipulated by the State, and within which they are isolated from other societies to achieve a higher degree of purification of society, it is here where the possibility of being a feasible utopia is obstructed, without utopian tension, nor necessity for social transformations. As a literary genre, we find texts that can be classified as utopian such as Plato's *The Republic*, *The City of God* by Augustine of Hippo, *The City of*

the Sun by Tommaso Campanella, Thomas Aquinas' *On Princely Government*, among other works.

In its other sense; in Latin American political terms, the concept takes on a different nuance, as it proposes a new interpretation of the nature of politics in the region,

“Utopia is not just gender, like the classical utopias of European Renaissance. It is also a utopian function operating in the historical and utopian dimension of human rationality. If the utopias of gender can be discussed as anthropological constants of universal validity, neither the historical function nor the rational dimension can be. The human mind strives to seek what is not always yet” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 123).

This operating function of which Cerutti speaks denotes it as the ability of the human being to think of better living conditions in all aspects, departing from the deepest social conscience, acting in history, operating in it, intending to achieve permanent social transformations, in which the desire for better living conditions are understood by the peoples that make up Our America as the achievement of a new integral progress based on the person, even as a proposal of *Sumak Kawsay* in its



reflection on redefining what is good living and living well.

Along these lines of thought, utopias are presented not as a simple numbing, but in their internal relationship they seek emancipation from the great social bases who take responsibility for their destinies, as a form of self-determination and the authentic freedom to choose their destinies without interventionist policies of those who seek to exercise their hegemonic economic and political dominance over Latin America, which has become a region of exploitation of “natural resources” (extractivism) in search of raw materials, or in large plantations (monoculture enclaves) to satisfy the whims of the most powerful and “developed” in terms of economic, production and consumption terms countries in the world, which often implies an irreversible environmental deterioration due to soil erosion, the indiscriminate exploitation of water resources and minerals, wherein the people continue to be deceived and internal political relations of power continue to be manipulated to favor the interests of an economically powerful elite in detriment of the authentic common good of the peoples, in which “gold for mirrors” continues to be exchanged.

It is with this concept of Latin American utopia that it is intended to displace an idealistic and naive mentality and to lay, through thought, its own philosophy, the bases of effective transformations to build more just and equitable societies at the social, political, economic and ethical level.

In this way, Utopias do not continue to be an unattainable philosophical paradigm, but instead become a struggle with direct social impact that can be achieved; the philosopher, by engaging his intellectual efforts contributes to the mental emancipation of societies.

According to the prevailing economic model of “free market” exchange, one does not imply the other, or in its own alienating discourse it generates the naivete of expecting the rich to fill their pockets so much that they begin to overflow their wealth into the hands of the workers, who by definition are worthy of participating in this great capital, since they are the ones who generate wealth through their productive work.

Economic development is privileged, driven by developmentalist myths, which is carried out under the exploitation and humiliation of the



worker, who is not offered any form of social protection, the more a person can be exploited at work, the better for a company. Incidentally, the desire for better social guarantees for the most unprotected sectors are often subject to political pressure for their veto or the adjustment that favors the owners of the factories or proprietors of the means of production.

Starting from this social outline, the need to concretize abstract thought into something concrete is considered, philosophy itself merits the urgency of retaking its own concepts and putting them into practice in function of the society that demands new ways of responding to its social realities, it is urgent to think from Our America. It is from Our America that Latin American philosophy draws its breath to understand power relations, interpret them and not remain in reflection alone: but establish its praxis while reflecting and elaborating thought on the region and from it. This implies the achievement of a progressive emancipation, mental, but also social, political of those who want change. It is in this case that

“the verification that philosophy has some type of incidence or social operability, which must be explained in each case, taking into account how philosophy

is articulated with science and technology and, above all, what is its relation with the state” (Ceruti, 1996, p. 76).

Utopia deeply touches Latin American social realities. This is how the thinker finds different modes and ways to discover paths to make himself be felt and of political activism, but particularly it is in the *essay*, as a literary genre, that is found a liberating refuge to expose their highest ideals of justice, unity and peace.

This commitment between thinkers and utopia energizes to an understanding of the environment in which it all develops, it leads to a sensitizing with social reality, it is not merely an empty discourse, but a direct responsibility with the generations. In addition, it allows not to confuse unity with homogenizing uniformity, insofar as it must initiate from the plurality of our nations.

The way in which these thinkers have managed, historically, to shape the expression of their ideas about utopia and identity is the essay, as this genre aims to

“influence the behavior, the decisions of the reader by mobilizing his thought, his sentiment, his will. The essay seeks to stimulate their



sensitivity”, “the objective is to make the reader find out, judge and react or assimilate a new point of view about something that is known to him” (Azofeifa, 1982, pp. 19 -20).

With the essay, Latin American philosophizing is manifested through this genre in an ideal way. It seeks to influence the reader, move him towards a point of view, always seeking the discussion of ideas for reflection, *bona fide*, as Montaigne indicates in the preface to his work.

It is through the essay that the study of the history of ideas becomes necessary to track the originality and novel contributions of Latin American thought, in it underlies the way of thinking of the region. It is through the action with other genres and literary figures, that the essay as a literature of ideas, manages to be a suggestion to the reader to become politically and socially aware of the issue at hand.

It is starting from this reality where the utopian discourse organizes the ideas to propose a conception concentrating philosophical tradition with praxis.

“Utopia as a term, discourse, program, attempts at social historical construction, axiological

horizon of ideology, concept, etc. Utopia as a theme whose treatment requires putting into action the entire worldly philosophical tradition” (Cerutti, 2007, p. 18).

It is this freedom of expression of the essay with which utopias find an ineffable ally, which allows them to express themselves, only limited by the author’s capacity for suggestion when dealing with a certain content. It will be in it that Latin American thought emerges as a form of expression of its own ideas, concepts, way of interpreting the world and intrinsic relationship with Latin American thought. To exemplify it is only necessary to refer to the great essay work of José Martí in his 1891 text *Our America*.

Hence, the concept of utopia throughout its political – social treatment, acquires a new axiology in Latin American lands, which since their “discovery” have been cataloged as the *New World*, as an earthly paradise in which European utopias could be realized. This without taking into account the needs of the new beings, who were defined as *homunculus* (from Latin “little person”), who from the beginning were questioned about their own humanity, and the right to have their own need for political and social fulfillment,



“Utopia acts mystically on these lands, these men and these cultures. Utopians, by wishing the transformation of Europe, disrupted the reality of America. From history it is reduced to geography” (Cerutti, 2007, p. 154).

Utopia comes to necessarily remove the knowledge of our identity, hence the history told by the conquered is discovered, not only by the conquerors and their successive colonization, the mysticism of our lands enamors with its imposing landscapes and its legendary paradises, it also generates that real intention to utopically think in the possibilities of transformations.

To attempt to comprehend such complex, dynamic and changing realities, it is necessary to be aware of the political and social changes that occur daily in the region, but in order to analyze them it is necessary to introspect the various works of art, literature, poetry, among others, where it is possible to trace back forms that reflect the diverse ways of thinking of Our America. It is worth mentioning the extensive Latin American literary work, which provides account of the wonderful realism where the imagination recreates thought. It is necessary to begin to reinterpret, to discover the identity that is our own

“The concern for identity constitutes one of the **leitmotif** of Latin American thought, even before we can speak of Latin America. What are we? Who are we? They constitute anxiously reiterated questions throughout history and by different social subjects, even when Criollos in previous moments, during and after emancipation, were privileged wielded as a demonstration of their affirmation as social historical subjects” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 27).

Reality has been written through utopia, it presents us with the place where as nations we want to arrive, but to reach it, it is first necessary to discover identities, taking into account the trauma of colonization that deeply affects the mentality collectively, as a means to achieve the highest ideals that may be posed throughout the region. Latin America or Our America is the place of the possible, but that possibility, ontologically inferior to reality, presents great challenges that invite the region’s intellectuals to set clear goals in which the sense of the person, the environment and the healthiest possible human-technological development are privileged, intelligently exploiting the resources that are possessed.



Identity and utopia are outlined as the ways of shaping Latin American societies, within which, societies can begin to break down the barriers that have been built over the centuries, especially xenophobia, racism, discrimination, classism, extreme poverty among others. Bridges of union and dialogue between peoples must be sought, but before this, it is necessary to heal the social discrimination suffered within each country, such as: gender violence, child exploitation, domestic violence, homophobia, intolerance of all kinds, among others.

When discovering the utopias of Our America, concomitantly it is encountering the identities of the region, it is not possible to understand one without the other, as the work of the thinker Cerutti points out, it must start from the same history, from what we are, to interpret it critically and creatively in order to transform it, as he mentions extensively in the work *Memoria Comprometida* (1996) and later in his work *Filosofar desde Nuestra América* (2000).

The operating aspect of utopia does not work under irrational assumptions, but on the contrary, it functions from the interpretation of the operating reality in history,

it is not created from nothing, *ex nihilo*, but rather it is presented as a program of self-discovery, self-assimilation of the environment that the generations that are present have had to live in, and thus be able to offer a desirable future to the rest of the generations that are integrating into the daily lives of Latin America. In this way, the social differences that are so marked in some parts of the region can be narrowed. It is time to begin to see in the OTHER an equal to me/us, a human being with the same possibilities for individual and collective development. Social classes will have to disappear to make way for the construction of just and equitable societies, solidary, aware of the needs of others, who have had to share this temporary moment of space – time and understand once and for all that social cohesion is one of the ways out of multiple exclusions.

At the moment when the masses become peoples, these peoples become nations, and these nations become authentic democracies in which the people assume their legitimate responsibility to administer power, and demand it from those who assume the leadership of these nations, the construction of the utopias of Our America, being aware that sharing, solidarity, respect, dialogue, peace



are human values that manifest their most intimate being.

Is it possible to build this type of utopia? Will nations be able to see each other as equals and work for the common good? Is it possible to understand ethics within politics? These and other questions spring to mind when thinking of utopias. It is necessary to assume a critical and challenging posture to transform societies and achieve unity, not uniformity.

From these utopian ideas, Latin American thought begins its path of self-recognition, where political, social and economic aspirations are outlined in an awareness of the identity of the peoples, the collective imagination that projects the ideals, the utopias of a region.

“Forced to the maximum to define ourselves, to state what role we occupy and will occupy in world history, rather than emphasizing the latinity of our denomination, at least of some of them, we have tried to clarify the projects of our America that, paradoxically, is still not quite “ours” and that is why it can be called with this possessive of desire, of dream, of utopia” (Cerutti, 2007, p. 151).

This is not only in a material sense, of possession of the land, of a

continent that day after day is denied to us starting from the appropriation that occurred during the Conquista (Spanish colonization of the Americas), where we came to be the Others. Also from this enunciation, a type of identities is exposed, that of Us as Latin Americans, as those who must take the paths of destinies and think about common goods, remembering the inspiration of Martí.

The need to define what Latin America is calls for the thinker to undertake an academically demanding process in which rigor and commitment take on new dimensions. It is no longer a simple personal practice of acquiring knowledge, but rather it becomes an element and a social responsibility, in which the duty of projecting thought to other people is acquired, developing academic fields of exchange of perspectives, opening fields of dialogue in the midst of alienated societies to achieve awareness and emancipation in order to begin to transform the society into that which is desired to be made into. It is through thought that new possibilities for the region will be forged. But before initiating this process, it is worthwhile to understand and delve into our identity and our own way of doing philosophy,



“Latin American philosophy today, in order to be up to the circumstances as it has been in other times, does not have as an alternative to articulate itself to the praxis of the people but is obliged to reflect, from categories that allow explaining what occurs before our eyes, where this process comes from and to where innumerable transitable paths open up, not as lost paths but as wonderful routes that must and can be consolidated” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 50).

While advancing in the process of recognition of one’s own identity, where the characteristic features of Latin American philosophy can be found, these philosophies that find their various forms of expression, their ideal in the change of societies, the human being and nature as the center of change, we find that this is encompassed by the Utopia of Our America, it is the right to dream of an America different from the one that is developing today, united under the values of peace, respect, the sense of BEING a person amidst the consumerist and hostile environment.

It must be understood that to achieve the utopias of Our America it is necessary to start from one’s own roots, and take into account our personal identity and immersion as

part of a society, as well as our way of thinking, since

“the discovery of the identity of our vast region was the engine of their struggles and inspired the idea of Latin American identity as the quintessential utopia of our peoples, if we understand by “utopia” not something chimerical and unrealizable but an ideal that must inspire our action in the present, give meaning to our struggles in order to make it a reality in the future. Utopia is a horizon that marks the meaning of the struggles and directs the goals to be followed as a North” (Mora, 2001, p. 49).

4. Realistic utopias: alternatives for Our America.

Faced with overwhelming and devastating realities of human, social, political, ethical imbalances and other social problems, widespread in Latin America, utopian thoughts are presented to us as political forms of social transformation for Our America. It is the dream of great committed thinkers: Alberdi, Simón Bolívar, José Martí, José Carlos Mariátegui, Benigno Malo, Arturo Roig, Leopoldo Zea, Rodó, Andrés Bello and of course Horacio Cerutti, among some representatives.



They have fallen in love with their own land, torn apart by poverty, hunger and violence, and they have wanted to present the new generations, who are rediscovering and reinterpreting their own history, with a new way of thinking, of doing philosophy from Our America, of praxis, of transforming society, to have the right to Our Utopia.

In these convulsive and changing times, to speak of utopia is often criticized and intentionally misinterpreted since this concept, as a category of Latin American analysis, generates a logic opposed to the prevailing political and economic model, namely neoliberalism, expansionism and neocolonialism, which generate economic, political and social imbalance in each State. It is an uncomfortable issue for those who legitimize the power of the State since they seek to preserve their particular economic interests, legislating and manipulating their laws for the benefit of a social and political elite. Even starting from a critique of the systems that also claim to be to the “left” since, like their “right” counterparts, they originate from the same concepts of modernity, reducing development to economic manifestations and indicators, ignoring the human being. That is why there is a need to

overcome these political dichotomies to think of other alternatives, of viable solutions in which diverse relational spaces are generated that promote the human being in its entirety, initiating from respect for the multiple and the different as an additional manifestation of being a person and understanding the world.

Utopia must be deliberate, situated in a specific historical context, considering the particular and different characteristics of each region, one cannot pretend to fall into the distortion of universalisms, one must think of the solution to social and political problems from each particularity, and from there, establish dialogues that allow the exchange of the actions that were carried out to achieve successes, it is from there that a collective learning of exchange of ideas takes place. It merits a joint effort by all social actors to achieve the aspirations to where thought projects us towards, thus generating a utopian tension, starting “from the very core of reality” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 48).

Within this historical dynamic, Cerutti’s proposal invites us to think about reality, in order to discover our identities, the roots of the peoples and begin to rebuild starting from a common history, Our America, but



what for? Why think about reality? Only from reality will the community and individual alternatives that must be taken to walk under the utopian tensions will begin to be glimpsed,

“It is attempted to thinking about reality in the present, as a historical process from the past, from future horizons from which the entire process is retrospectively illuminated” (Cerutti, 2000, p. 49).

The invitation as such, raises the need to make a committed approach to Latin American realities in a critical and creative way, in order to transform them,

“it is insufficient to know and to think only for oneself. One thinks to transmit one’s own reflections to an interlocutor. They are reflections emitted about a reality and a receiver reworks them to criticize, modify, attenuate, revise them” (Cerutti, 2000, p. 58).

It is in this manner that Latin American philosophy leaves statism and emerges as political praxis with social repercussions and incidences, where the philosophy of Our America is categorically differentiated as it is proposed with a commitment to situated thinking that promotes mental emancipation, teach to think, to learn to be.

The Latin American political experience has been marked by colonialism and neocolonialism, as presented by the dependency theory since the 1970s with regards to foreign domination, manipulation and exploitation. It is starting from these oppressed realities where philosophy makes its contribution with the interpretation or approach to the reality lived throughout the centuries, visualizing, evidencing the alienation committed, seeking to liberate minds, contributing in its de-ideologizing function as Ignacio Ellacuría proposed.

The work of reflection already takes as its object of study the Latin American realities themselves. It turns to itself to discover its own way of thinking, of making philosophy, politics, it cultures its own way of being “others” in the world. The need to generate thought to share, reflect and act is ingrained. Seeing ourselves clearly, to understand ourselves as free men and women, capable of living in society, it is the self-discovery of possibilities, to start being proactive and provide for ourselves a place among the nations of the world.

To achieve this, it is necessary to maintain a revolutionary, utopian logic of continuous review and



self-criticism. To fight for utopia as Martí proposed, to build an America that is ours, designed by ourselves, free from all foreign interference.

One way to begin to *see ourselves clearly*, would be to think about our own reality, starting from our historical heritage and experience, taking into account that it is a

“very unstable place that philosophy occupies in the fabric of reality. I don’t know anyone who has set out to think from a void Not even the defenders of thinking “from zero”, because upon examining that “zero” it is evident that it is not but another name attributed to certain portions of Western tradition, surreptitiously and naively called “zero” as if it were a void of thought” (Cerutti, 2000, pp. 40-41).

Thus, thinking about reality is configured as its own category, “understood as a way of advancing in the emancipation of Latin American conscience from all other forms of conscience” (Cerutti, 2000, p. 44).

To be specific, it is not just any type of reality that will be thought of, but a very particular one, “it is specifically and predominantly about the social, historical, cultural and political reality, which is, altogether, a single reality with different facets, so to

speak, a reality of being and space – time, historical reality” (Cerutti, 2000, p. 50).

Upon having clarity that the operative activity of utopia acts in society and from history, it is then that “everyday life appears, then, as the range of experiences to be elaborated by philosophy” (Cerutti, 2000, p. 51). In this sense, in a more concrete way, Cerutti clarifies:

“thinking from Our America means doing it from utopia. Because this America, as I have explained in other places, is not ours yet and the expression carries within itself the tension of the utopian; the powerful tension between reality and ideal. The will to think from our America is the will to think from the ideal/ reality tension, it is the will to think utopian, the pretense of utopia, the desire to transgress – not to evade – the given and the rush to go further, to build the new alternative” (2000, pp. 69-70).

Utopia will then be the source of inspiration to create thoughts, ideas, and feasible dreams, initiating from a deep study of reality, of the intrinsic social relations of each nation and the relations among them, as well as the relations between Our America and the world.



But, it is not just thinking for thinking as a contemplative act. In such a case it would be an abstract doctrine that is separated from reality. It is proposed to think “*from history itself*”, what does this mean?

“Philosophizing depends to a great extent on its relationship with one’s own historical-philosophical memory. One does not philosophize from a void, but from traditions that are prolonged, criticized or rejected, but all of this explicitly so that thinking gains strength, tradition, heritage” (Cerutti, 2000: 79).

It is by recognizing oneself in one’s own history, assuming the past, that one can really understand the present. It is in this eagerness that the search for identities is found,

“this key to organizing the reconstruction of ideas in a given country has been associated with the theme that almost completely covers the development of Latin American reflection: that of identity” (Cerutti, 2000, p. 77).

This concept is simply living our own reality and historical juncture. It is starting from the past where we discover ourselves in the present and we can project ourselves into the future, without falling into the same mistakes.

It is from situated thought that one begins to analyze one’s own historicity, and from which one has to reflect in order to propose new forms of rationality, of political and social movements of resistance, and alternative ways of understanding human beings and their intrinsic relationship of their being in society, assuming something that is evident, as human beings we are diverse and we must learn to coexist with each other.

It is therefore, not initiating from a void. It is to take into account the background and previous reflection that has occurred throughout the development and history of thought. It is letting go of unfounded complexes and being able to vindicate many of the anthropological and sociological situations that affect a large part of the region. It is to stop thinking about what has not been and to promote thoughtful and desirable change, hand in hand with all the factors that coexist in societies. It is to establish new bridges of dialogue and understanding among nations.

The search for unity, which does not mean uniformity but coexistence in diversities, should refer to a search for the common good, for justice, for law, to return to the rationality proper to human beings and, based



on an anthropological reflection to project new utopian horizons, detached from often misunderstood models, in order to move on to the study, deepening and elaboration of real plans for change, where the human being is privileged in its entirety, as a complex and diverse being in itself.

Starting from history itself is where the various problems are going to be found, as soon as the adaptation and reflection of political models have been forgotten, when there is a halt to the implantation of these models in some countries, trampling over social and individual freedoms, where the State has unprotected and disrespected human rights and even the freedom of other neighboring nations, promoting political and social intolerance among brother nations.

It is recognizing, in reality itself, the Latin American man and woman who are still fighting for their freedom. It will not be with a *colonized* mentality that the power to change the destiny that has been imposed on us can be obtained. It is in a critical, reflective, and conscious way that new pages of glory and freedom will be written in the history of Our America. We are mostly mestizos, but with the presence of millions of people who are part of the original peoples with

whom we also have to consult and assume their philosophies.

It is here that utopia “appears as a complement and culmination of the work of thought. Without criticism, without critical reception, the work remains halfway. Without great possibilities of fertility” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 94).

All this emergence of thought has the purpose of achieving the effective transformation of reality and its meaning (Cerutti, 2007, p. 98), that is, to charge the destiny of society with complete originality, granting it a meaning that will ultimately be that utopian horizon, towards which the region is heading, insofar as challenges of unity are posed while respecting the diversity of thought.

It is allowed to think of utopia as a route for change, “facing reality, from a memory that is known to be awake and with a critical attitude that allows discriminating between what should remain and what should be modified” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 95).

Latin American philosophy becomes intrinsically political due to its character situated in the circumstance of the historical moment in which it develops, if it does not have a social character, it is violating its most intimate intentionality,



“is to be understood by “praxis” a transformation of nature through work, in the manner of the classics. It is in this case, by extension, a transformation through political work in history, of an artificially naturalized situation (...) it is about elaborating a “Latin American” discourse with the conviction that whoever does not want to understand will not understand, no matter how precise and detailed, elaborated and meticulous its development is and without this implying concessions to the rigor that is intrinsic to it” (Cerutti, 2007, pp. 65 - 66).

So, is a utopia possible? In Latin American terms, it is what should be desirable. Utopia is realistic and possible, as long as a serious exercise is made to build our Latin American society:

“the idea that America is the hope of humanity. The idea of a utopian America, where those values of justice, fraternity, peace, solidarity, humanization that cannot be realized in the rest of the world, will very probably be able to be realized here” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 56).

The need to think critically and creatively about reality in order to transform it has been widely exposed, but to what end? In order to

build our utopia. But what is utopia? Is it feasible?

It is time to take the proper direction of Latin American society, it is time to dream of overcoming oppressive schemes. After two centuries of independence from Spain and Portugal mainly, new forms of dependency or alienation have been generated, mainly through the market; slavery and exploitation product of neoliberal capitalist expansionism governed by utilitarian and superficial principles, whose values are prioritized by consumption and individualism, in which are noted the principles of modernity-coloniality in our Latin American case.

That is not the dream of a better world, it is not the project of the heroes of Our America. The dream for Latin America is outlined by Bolívar when he affirms “I wish more than anyone else to see America form the greatest nation in the world, less because of its extension and wealth than because of its freedom and glory” (Soto, 2008).

These words should incite any Latin American who is conscious of his own history, to desire to be truly free, to emancipate himself. The *Great Utopia* is nothing more than wanting



to build Our America, as José Martí would come to call it. But, what is Our America? It is none other than Latin America and the utopia of its unity, “this utopia demands a reworked concept of unity that fosters the integration of those who are different, without requiring as a condition their submission to the imposed homogeneity” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 23).

The steps of an integration must not be imposed, but proposed to achieve better cohesion in political and social decisions. Unity does not imply uniformity. Unity is built on alterity, on the capacity of willingness to understand the Other and thereby establish common ground for which one can fight to achieve them, with help and cooperation between nations, forgetting the differences and assuming the similarities. To achieve true unity in Latin America, we must start from the plurality that we are, and from there envision paths of common human, social, economic and political growth.

In other words, there is a glimpse of the need as a region to build our own plan, to lay out what we desire to project to the world and take a place in the dance of developed nations.

Given the above, it is to inquire, what should be understood by

Latin American utopia? Cerutti responds to this

“Utopia is not necessarily identifiable with the unrealizable. On the contrary, in most cases, utopia designates the supremely desirable and a maximum of realism in terms of rejecting situations of oppression and injustice, situations that make human life impossible and unfeasible the subsistence of human beings who deserve the identification as such. In this sense, the term utopia is loaded by the multiform contents of the virtual. To work on the utopian category is to work on what is possible and how to achieve it. More than this, [it is to work] on the need for the imperative affirmation of the alternative, as something desirable and feasible” (2007, p. 172).

In this way, it is clear that utopia is operative. It is the necessity to awaken consciences in view of the indiscriminate displays of violence and depravity that are being reached, due to the misuse of mass media for alienating, individualistic and hedonistic consumerist political and commercial purposes; causing a relativization of social values.

Writing Our Utopia is doing a committed hermeneutical work,



in historical key and with identity affirmation, recognizing ourselves as members of a region whose utopian horizon is under construction and should make us advance.

Talking about utopia may result impossible for some social and even academic sectors. The greatest commotion occurs when it is expressed as feasible, where it is desired to affirm the need to work on what is possible, starting from the very reality that circumscribes Latin American society. The reality is the daily life of the peoples who live in this region, Our America, that

“is by itself a utopian expression. It tells us about an America that is not yet ours, that we desire to fully possess and that, paradoxically, identifies us. Because it is not yet, it announces what it should be. It constitutes an entire program, an entire project in the making to be developed. It is a fence against reformist patchwork policy” (Cerutti, 1991 p. 18).

It is starting from this concept of achievable utopia, that the need arises to create what is proper for our realities. Not with merely sensitive or volitional foundations, but rather

“Utopia is not equivalent to irrationality, but rather the search for a new social totalization, one

that overcomes and integrates the entrenched totalizations in force. Its social action is typically dialectical; of a dialectic that emphasizes more the moment of rupture than that of the new totalization. Utopia acts in social historical reality as a revulsive against irrationality. There has been an attempt to assimilate utopia to myth. However, utopia preserves a conceptual and analytical dimension of the social that cannot be lost sight of. At the same time, it is a modality of fecundation of reason through the imagination of desirable and viable alternatives. The utopian proposal is paradigmatically illustrated: it believes in the power of reason for social transformation” (Cerutti, 1991, p. 44).

The Latin American being in Cerutti's thought, is the immediate agent of social and political transformation insofar as it launches itself in search of unity. Generated in a certain way by the utopian horizon, that

“operates within all ideology as the level of what is axiologically desirable. It is the programmatic level of ideology, understood as the program for political action. The utopian horizon is that which is sought to be established in the political – social reality. It is a set of articulated values, whose non-validity is the current situation, it



generates mobilization in favor of its adoption” (Cerutti, 2007, p. 172).

This horizon has as an immediate consequence the search for the transformation of the prevailing, oppressive and alienating reality of the human being. An *utopian exercise* must be generated, which consists of “an exercise of rejection of what is in force and an attempt to build an alternative world now” (Cerutti, 2007, p. 173).

In this way, utopia is concretized in the creation of our own reality, converging in the desire to generate a more just, equitable society and in function of the ethical and moral human values typical of Latin American society.

Definitely, Our America presents a broad paradigm of opportunities for social, economic and political development, it is fertile land, it is the land of dreams, it is the *magical world*, of Utopias. These must be presented to the great masses oppressed by the exploitation of the market, unemployment, the upper social classes that monopolize great percentages of wealth and deprive them of dignity and sustenance, to the great working masses, proletarians, who with their work increase the coffers of a few, called

fortunate, proprietors of the means of production.

The social classes that raise their voices must be coalesced to achieve the authentic application of social guarantees, equality, fair wages, health, citizen security, decent and dignified employment of each human being who wants to fight for a better world. How to achieve this in Our America? What is our utopia?

The road of development and change is not easy. Much less the path of social, political and economic transformations, we must set out from our own reality in order to achieve the great ideals of the oppressed peoples caused by labor alienation and, worst of all, by mental alienation. The market has become the new *opium of the people*, the creation of new needs provoke in the young generations forms of alienation, of pseudo happiness and fulfillment, based on scales of materialistic values, legitimizing the savage capitalist power that generates a dehumanization.

In view of this reality, which is taking root in the peoples, it is urgent to act directly in the construction of new concepts, propose new ideals, to set new goals that achieve in the region an understanding of our origins and



starting from a solid base, propose new alternatives to the historical conjuncture of the beginning of the 21st century. It is not by forgetting or obviating the past, our history, where we will be able to understand where the future could be headed, but on the contrary, committing ourselves to understanding the past in order to project ourselves in the region with a promising future,

“in a certain way, the effort of historicism can be considered as an effort towards our reality, towards our history. This effort must be taken up again as a motto, emphasized, deepened, acutely discerned, problematized” (Cerutti, 1996, p. 48).

It is based on assuming their own history, where the Latin American generations will understand their roots, their reality, their utopia. It should be understood that there is nothing to envy other cultures and regions of the world. The peoples who become aware of their own unjustified miseries, begin to mobilize in social struggles for justice and equity, seek the development and well-being of their peers.

Our America is under construction and utopian thoughts are the efficient force that is generating change for us and future generations, as evidenced in the multiple social movements.

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