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ERNEST CALLENBACH'S INTERTOPIA AND THE QUEST FOR DEEP TIME: ECOTOPIAN PATHS TO NATURAL PHILOSOPHY, NATIVE AMERICAN WISDOM AND THE HIGH ROMANTIC REPUBLIC

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Abstract. *Ernest Callenbach's Ecotopia (1975) is relevant for both the ecological paradigm and the emergence of a neo-Utopian cast of mind in our age. The novel is almost an anticipatory treatise of sorts on the question of the ongoing emergence and evolution of an ecological conscience of man, echoing old types of native American wisdom and associated with the rise of "deep ecology" or ecosophy and an interest in the concept of "deep time" (the temporality of deep germinal processes which are invisible if looked at from the surface of things) as opposed to "surface" temporality. The Ecotopian civilizational model imagined by Callenbach is not a perfect world, but one based on the opposition against the national philosophy of America grounded in the notion of perpetual technological progress. Through Ecotopia's eco-philosophy, which we hereby propose to analyze, Callenbach proposes a model of the "deep time" quester (descending in the last analysis from the Amerindian model of the "vision quester") and so attacks the technopolitan tendencies deriving from the so-called Second Scientific Revolution of the 20th century, with roots in the 19th century (ca. 1800), and associated with the Industrial Revolution.*

Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975) is relevant in general for the question regarding the evolution of man's naturalistic consciousness. The Ecotopian model of civilization imagined by Callenbach is a complex intersection between a Utopian and a Dystopian republic having deep roots in Western natural philosophy, native American wisdom and high romantic ideals. Ecotopia is thus a High Romantic Republic of sorts, grounded in the rediscovery of the ancient link between man and Nature, man being Nature's lost prodigal child who, while establishing Ecotopia, gradually returns to the ancient view of Nature as the Mother of all and as an interface between the world of matter and the world of spirits – a receptacle on the ethereal line between time and eternity.

William Weston is Callenbach's main hero, a journalist working for *Times-Post* in New York: he becomes in the Ecotopian story the first American to be received in Ecotopia for a visit when twenty years have elapsed from the constitution of the new country called Ecotopia, which emerged by a new war of secession and, more exactly, nineteen years after its new Declaration of Independence.

Ecotopia is located in the former territories of Washington and Oregon, as well as in the northern part of California, thus comprising the Sierra Nevada mountains which become in the story a "guardian" of Ecotopia's borders which are closed for the USA.

The separation from the USA – which partially drew inspiration from the model of secession between Quebec and Canada – came about as a consequence of the opposition against the national philosophy of America based on the following technocratic/technopolitan principles: 1) "ever-continuing progress"; 2) "the fruits of industrialization for all"; 3) "a rising Gross National Product".

The fragmentation of territories – interpreted as a regress, a degenerative process (a "devolution") – becomes a global tendency: Biafra separates from Nigeria, Bangladesh – from Pakistan, Belgium is

divided into three parts, the Soviet Union is troubled by separatist minorities, etc. Callenbach thus attacks the technopolitan tendencies deriving from the Scientific and the Industrial Revolution.

Ecotopia is full of contradictions, it in fact does not mark off the end of technology and of science, but rather their being directed on the paths of Nature, with a view to their being integrated into the natural. In this sense the author seems to point to a generalization of Rousseau's famous arch-romantic cry "Back to Nature": this cry is addressed to man's entire civilization, including his creations.

The Ecotopian program is thus deeply romantic in nature and it constitutes a generalization of Rousseau's manifesto: man must fuse back into Nature not alone, but by bringing along, and so naturally transforming, all of his cultural accumulations. In other words, Callenbach's Ecotopia advocates a fusion between nature and culture, natural/cosmic temporality and cultural/human temporality, man and nature, in this process Ecotopia being the meeting place, the interface of this fusion – hence the name we propose for Callenbach's model: "Intertopia" as the place between places, the threshold between the Old World (which is nature-unfriendly, man's products being artificial, non-natural) and the New emerging Ecotopian World (which is nature-friendly, in which the artificial gradually metamorphoses into the natural): by being an emerging republic grounded in its wish to fuse back with Nature in its pristine structure, Ecotopia is a threshold space, an ongoing process of interfacing, crisscrossing nascent phenomena, on the verge between a distant past (the Old World) and a projected future (a virtual "New" New World, first concocted in the Utopian/Dystopian mind whence it also is to come true). Being a threshold space of processes, Ecotopia can be considered to be a High Romantic republic, deriving its force from the threshold space or interface space between the world of matter and the world of spirit, on the tangent between time and eternity, natural temporality and spiritual temporality.

The Ecotopians themselves are the offspring of a combination between four ancestors: 1) the American Indian for whom the world of nature and the world of spirits form a unity; 2) Rousseau's and Byron's "noble savage", anticipated by Voltaire's Huron Indian; 3) the modern-dystopian Savage in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*; and 4) the Medieval-Renaissance encyclopedist of the kind best typified by Leonardo da Vinci – who combines science and art with the careful observation of Nature.

In contrast with the Ecotopians, the Americans, represented by Weston, appear in the eyes of Ecotopians like strange aliens. In this sense, Weston even desires to appear in the eyes of Marissa, his beloved from Ecotopia, like a "Mysterious Stranger", a type obviously derived from Mark Twain's romantic novella bearing that title (*No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*) and reminding one of Goethe's *Faust*, Lord Byron's *Manfred* and of gothic novels in general.

Callenbach's reference to Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger* is not accidental. The action here is set in Austria in the time of the Middle Ages; the opening setting is the top of a precipice from which "frowned the vast castle of Rosenfeld"; the narrator-hero, August Feldner, is a printer's apprentice, printing being back then "a new art", "only thirty or forty years old, and almost unknown in Austria" (so the time setting is ca. 1480-1490 A.D.). Number 44, a colleague of August Feldner's at the printer's workshop, is a strange shaman-like character who has knowledge of the past, present and future, thus disclosing to August Feldner for instance information about scientific discoveries and technological improvements and innovations to be made four hundred years in the future or so. From an ecosophical/romantic perspective, in other words, Number 44 has access to "deep time"; by disclosing its contents to August Feldner he is practically inviting him to join the quest for its knowledge.

Here is a relevant dialogue between the two in Chapter 22 of *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*:

"Hot corn-pone from Arkansas – split it, butter it, close your eyes and enjoy! Fried spring chicken – milk-and-flour gravy – from Alabama. Try it, and grieve for the angels, for they have it not! Cream-smothered strawberries, with the prairie-dew still on them – let them melt in your mouth, and don't try to say what you feel! Coffee from Vienna – fluffed cream – two pellets of saccharin – drink, and have

compassion for the Olympian gods that know only nectar!”
I ate, I drank, I reveled in these alien wonders; truly I was in Paradise!
“It is intoxication,” I said, “it is delirium!”
“It’s a jag!” he responded.

I inquired about some of the refreshments that had outlandish names. Again that weird detail: they were non-existent as yet, they were products of the unborn *future!* Understand it? How could I? Nobody could. The mere *trying* muddled the head. And yet it was a pleasure to turn those curious names over on the tongue and taste them: Corn-pone! Arkansas! Alabama! Prairie! Coffee! Saccharin! Forty-Four answered my thought with a stingy word of explanation –

“Corn-pone is made from maize. Maize is known only in America. America is not discovered yet. Arkansas and Alabama will be States, and will get their names two or three centuries hence. Prairie – a future French-American term for a meadow like an ocean. Coffee: they have it in the Orient, they will have it here in Austria two centuries from now. Saccharin – concentrated sugar, 500 to 1; as it were, the sweetness of five hundred pretty maids concentrated in a young fellow’s sweetheart. Saccharin is not due yet for nearly four hundred years; I am furnishing you several advance-privileges, you see.” (Twain 548-549)

By creating an intertopia Callenbach might suggest that he is giving the reader, just as No. 44 gave August Feldner, precious information about the future, those in possession of that knowledge being privileged and ontologically advanced when compared with the rest of the world who in general is ignorant of the future. By this kind of knowledge people are invited to become “deep time” questers.

There is however a further ramification when we discuss Callenbach’s allusion to *The Mysterious Stranger*: Mark Twain’s number 44 might contain a reference to the Siouan concept of *tobtoḅ kiḅ*, which translates as “the four multiplied by four” (*kiḅ* = “the”; *topa* = four), i.e. “sixteen”, the group of sixteen benevolent powers, gods or spirits making up what the Lakota call *Wakaḅ Taḅka* or the Great Spirit/the Sacred-Mysterious Great (or *Tobtoḅ kiḅ*, “the Four times four”; see Powers for details on the Amerindian concept).¹

This subterranean reference to the Siouan *tobtoḅ kiḅ* or *Wakaḅ Taḅka* – who in fact is a much better candidate for being identified as the real symbolic protagonist of Mark Twain’s romantic novella than is Satan (as another version of the novella might lead us to think, in which No. 44 is replaced with a character named Satan), this reference, therefore, only strengthens the general underlying network of complex references pointing in Ecotopia to the Amerindian lore which Callenbach wanted to fundamentally characterize this eco-utopian/dystopian world from the very beginning.

Ecotopians are endowed with a super-emotional nature, they relish – like the romantics before them – “intense feeling”, all having artistic inclinations and all tending to approach science as a whole – thus abandoning narrow specializations of the kind greatly deplored in the 20th century by such high-ranking scientists like Louis de Broglie or Henri Coandă (cf. Stroe, “Modernitatea”). Ecotopians are described by Weston as being almost “Dickensian”: they are often strange enough, but they do not look sordid or like madmen, as was the case with the hippies in the 1960s. The “Dickensian” dimension of Ecotopians qualifies them as high romantics also in the following sense: they are beings dominated by a

¹ This notion reminds us of William Blake’s own division of the cosmos into an abyssal quaternary structure, based on the building block of the four Zoas or powers of the mind-body assemblage (Los = imagination-instinct; Luvah = emotion-love; Urizen = reason-thought; Tharmas = sensation), ordered according to the four cardinal points, and each Zoa in the building block being in turn structured according to a systemic inner quaternary of Subzoas, ordered according to the four cardinal points as well: the four Zoas governed 16 Subzoas or gates of creation, each of them with inner quaternaries, again ordered in accordance with the four cardinal points, *ad infinitum*. See Stroe, “Modelul cosmologic al lui William Blake” for details.

powerful affective instinct (hence their strangeness owing to the capriciousness and unpredictability of the affects) which generates their interest in totalities and individualities, in art and in integral science.

Ecotopia is defined by the following major aspects and vectors.

1) *A tendency towards naturalistic purism, the cult of Nature and the naturalizing of extant technology*: the gradual abandonment of all fruits of modern technology. This is the “poetic,” but expensive, return to what the Ecotopian extremists call “nature”. We are dealing here with a society having roots in the romantic age. The “Ecotopian revolution,” however, did not succeed in changing anything regarding the fundamental afflictions of the human condition. This state of affairs is obvious in the themes approached in music, that is, the most important art here. The general attitude towards money is utilitarian (therefore with roots in the Victorian age of utilitarianism and in the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill), “informal”. The Ecotopian paper money are created “romantic in style”: i.e. with scenes reminding one of Rousseau – in which the dominants present are tropical abundance, images of strange wild animals and wondrous plants, and the sheer lack of any image of Ecotopian leaders – this latter aspect reminding us of the sheer hate of a P. B. Shelley or a Lord Byron directed against tyrants who tended throughout history to cast their effigies in gold or silver or bronze coins with a view to appeasing their thirst for aggrandizement and eternal domination.

On the other hand, the time allotted to labor every week in Ecotopia is ca. 20 hours, and the working program is a mixture of labor and play. This seems again to be a High Romantic ideal with roots in the realization that man has indeed also a ludic dimension (namely the eternal child inside all humans: what William Blake called “innocence”) as opposed to the serious dimension (Blake’s “experience”). In this sense, it was the contention of romantics such as William Blake that without a return to the ludic dimension (that is to “innocence”), after experiencing the “serious” dimension (experience), man will never reach paradise, that is, genuine eternal happiness.

Genetic engineering, cloning, etc., are practices related to which the Ecotopians wish to make no speculations, being content to live just the way they are, naturally.

The new towns like San Francisco have a bucolic air, being full of trees, while the streets have brooks flowing through them. Orchards, plains, fences are well taken care of and look healthy, almost like those in Western Europe. The number of houses has increased, many of these being small farms; inside these there are large “barbarous” beds, built out of massive wood – similar to those built by the old Vikings. Again, the interest of Ecotopians in Norse culture is reminiscent of the ideals of the romantics, who were heavily influenced by Germanic mythology and culture.

The prevailing building material in Ecotopia is understandably wood, produced by a new program of general reforestation. Even the international border of Ecotopia is marked off by a wooden fence with a large gate, rarely used: Ecotopia’s borders are shut for the USA, although the Ecotopians cultivate international relations with the rest of the world; Ecotopia is grounded in a network of “stable-state ecological systems”. Debris of metal, plastic, glass, and paper are deposited by everybody in special containers for recycling. The plastic is biodegradable (is “dying”) – thus crucially contributing to the creation of the “stable-state system”, and is derived, by non-polluting technologies, from living biological sources – the plants, and not from fossilized sources like crude oil or coal, as is the case for the rest of the world.

Even long-lasting plastic is biodegradable: in the molecules of these materials are inserted “keyholes” that can be opened only by micro-organisms in the soil. Once these keyholes are opened, the whole structure of the plastic is quickly decomposing.

The Ecotopian trains are extremely silent, operated by propulsion and magnetic suspension, full of hanging ferns and all sorts of plants: Callenbach anticipates here the emergence of the train currently called *Maglev*, with “Magnetic Levitation”, at present used only in Japan. In fact, Weston mentions that

the pioneers in the field of trains with magnetic suspension had been the Germans and the Japanese, Boeing being the first to start mass production, a year after the new Ecotopian Independence. After the new Declaration of Independence, efforts have been made in order to develop silent versions of many machineries, such as refrigerators. The national bird is the egret (the one staying in marshes all day long).

2) *Biocentric thought* (centered in biology): the teachers in Ecotopia consider that they have entered the “age of biology”. On the one hand, branches such as political sciences, sociology, and psychology have disappeared from the Ecotopian universities, while, on the other hand, branches such as history (also industrial history), economy, and anthropology have come to flourish – hence a rise in interest regarding time and man. Ecotopian students have an alternating program: one year of study, one year of work. Life in general is organic-chaotic, naturally-disorganized, and work tends towards pleasure, amusement and often intimacy. It is relevant to observe here that the idea about life’s organic-chaotic, naturally-disorganized structure has great affinities with the natural philosophy embraced especially by a poet like John Clare – who spoke about the “disorderly divine” and the “disordered graces” of natural life (see Stroe, “John Clare și canonul romantic” for details) –, but also by the German and English romantics in general. Ecotopian time thus unfolds more freely, by being connected more to the natural flows of temporal energies.

3) *Web of Life philosophy*: having become almost a religion, this Ecotopian philosophy asserts that man’s function is not production, as was emphasized during the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, but rather occupying a modest place in a continued web of living organisms, governed by a stable state, in whose deep structure he must disturb the web as little as possible, which means a) sacrificing the present consumption (this is obviously an anti-consumerist concept), by this measure future survival being ensured; b) abandoning the domination of living creatures around and establishing a balance between man and all these (this is a concept of deep ecology in Arne Naess’s acceptance, namely “biocentric equality”, cf. Devall & Sessions). Only if this balance is reached can humankind hope to have access to “deep” temporality, otherwise Nature will always create obstacles and so the path to this interior germinal space of discrete processes will ever be barred. Ecosophy thus suggests that this balance, once established, opens a gate towards the success of what the Amerindians call the “vision quest”, i.e., among other things, the acquirement of “guardian spirits” who are to help man for the rest of his life.

The “ecological religion” of Ecotopians is fatalistic: like the Amerindians before, Ecotopians prepare for death, they choose the day in which to die, and by the power of their will they enter death’s sleep, in order for them too to be “recycled”. Ecotopians have thus a powerful sense of themselves as “tribal animals” who need numerous contacts with their fellow creatures, they even not being upset if for instance caught in intimate situations such as sexual union – feeling comfortable in their biological being, lacking any inhibitions.

Ecotopian women are equal to men: this state of affairs started to become a palpable reality precisely in the romantic age, when artists and poets became more and more fascinated with the so-called “religion of the woman” (the Promethean quest for spiritual initiation, see Stroe, *Romantismul german și englez* for details), whose deep roots are traceable back in history for instance to the lesser mysteries of the Egyptian goddess Isis, constituting an essential step towards the greater Osirian mysteries.

In Ecotopia the symbolical charge of sex-roles is eliminated, but even so the physical nuances of femininity and masculinity are preserved. Moreover, Ecotopian women never have children with men whom they did not freely choose and monogamy is not official, but it is general, excepting four holidays, at solstices and equinoxes, when sexual promiscuity is widely spread – an aspect particularly reminding us of the social model in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, in which sexual promiscuousness was a method to eliminate social tensions.

The Ecotopian civilization seems in certain ways to have returned to the “stone age”, to primitivism-animism (of the Amerindian type): a) hunting practices are revived, for instance deer are hunted down with bows and arrows; b) animals are allowed to live in the wilderness as far as possible; c) hunting constitutes an important source of food, being treasured for its “spiritual” qualities.

Marissa, for instance, even speaks with trees, uttering prayers in order to be forgiven when she decides she must cut off those trees, this practice being derived by her from the customs of Amerindians who used to speak – in order to pacify them and to thank them for their sacrifice – with the spirits of the animals killed in hunting. This is one of the reasons why the Lakota, for example, address the buffaloes as the “buffalo nation” – *pte oyate* or *tataŋka oyate*.

With all this, the religious descent of Ecotopia is Judeo-Christian. It is not accidental that modern ecosophy claims its ancestry precisely in a complex combination of Amerindian philosophy, Christianity, natural philosophy, ecology, etc. (cf. Devall & Sessions). Realism is the dominating factor in Ecotopia, to the detriment of romanticism, although the cult of emotion – characteristic for the latter – is powerful.

The Ecotopians are never alone (as is sometimes the case with the romantics burdened by solipsistic crises). Any mistake is always capable of being remedied. We are dealing here with an anti-solipsistic and anti-fatalistic principle: man is not alone, but embedded in a universal reticular system (the “Web of Life”), and the tragic flaw may be mended by reconfigurations of the system-network which is flexible and – as a whole/totality – unvanquishable. Associated with this anti-fatalistic aspect is the “cooperative criticism”, by which, as it seems, men search for the paths leading to the mending of errors by gaining knowledge-wisdom. This is an important part in the Ecotopian quest for “deep time” seen as a nuclear web of dense and extremely elastic-germinal energies ever unfolding in discrete temporal events.

4) *Generalized “technological austerity”* as a first step towards *total detechnologization*: cars/automobiles have been abolished, being replaced by “electric traction units.” Busses are used for free, being maintained by funds gathered from general taxes. However, in Ecotopia the existence of a few private cars is still mysteriously tolerated, although individual possession of vehicles is prohibited in the “car-free zones”. There are no more gas stations, phone booths, or advertising panels. Microwave ovens are declared illegal. Processing food is simplified to the highest degree and reduced. Packing food is declared illegal and lists are created concerning “Bad practices”: including a food item on such a list led naturally to the diminution of population’s interest in buying that product any more. The “natural” cuisine thus becomes a national pride, food being no longer contaminated with herbicides and insecticides.

Iron, on the other hand, is considered the only “natural” metal because it rusts, aluminum and other non-ferrous metals being abandoned.

There is a lot of embroidery and decorations, made up of small shells or feathers, as well as many articles made up of patchwork, textiles being rare and so re-used. Belt buckles are made up of bone or hard wood. Clothes – manufactured and so extremely expensive – are loose and lively colored, out of natural fibres, those out of synthetic fibres being no longer sold in the past twenty years, because they cannot be recycled. Nothing is painted/dyed artificially any more, because dyes are based on lead or rubber or plastic substances, which do not decompose.

It is possible that the clothes, the baskets, and the personal ornaments might be directly of Amerindian derivation, one of the crucial Ecotopian features being precisely of Amerindian origin: namely the aspiration to live in harmony/balance with nature, according to the slogan “Walk lightly on the land”, which means – treat the Earth like a mother. Flowers are no longer plucked, these being a source of joy precisely where they grow. Air and sound pollution is prohibited – international flights are prohibited across Ecotopia’s territory. By this and other similar measures death due to chemical or air pollution is eradicated.

However, certain people are still attached to the symbols of the past: there is for instance a clandestine import of high-quality whisky and other luxury goods difficult to find here. The streets – which are practically sidewalks – are densely populated, however not like in Manhattan: the traffic of passers-by on the sidewalks/streets has been diminished by the creation of a reticular system of “lacy bridges” connecting one skyscraper to another. The streets/roads are named, not numbered, being narrow and sinuous, as in medieval cities, with trees coming dangerously close to sidewalks, and lacking car traffic – here only pedestrians and cyclists being allowed to freely move.

Ecotopians are vague concerning time, few of them carrying watches, attention being focused rather on natural events like the sunrise or the sunset, the high tide or the low tide, etc., the justification being directed against industrial civilization: “You’d never catch an Indian wearing a watch”. In fact, it is quite relevant that American Indians such as the Sioux lack in their vocabulary an abstract name for “time”, references to it being made by using concrete terms such as the following: “day” = (in Lakota) *anpetu*; “the time/hour of the day” = *wihiyayela* (the passing of the “sun”/*wi*, cf. Buechel & Manhart); “at that time” = *hehanl*; “at a certain time” = *tohan*, *tohanwel*, *tohanuka wan*; “winter”/“year” = *waniyetu* (one thus says: “I am twenty winters old”); “season”/“year” = *omaka*; “clock”/“watch” = (in Lakota, cf. Ingham; Riggs) *mazashkanshkan* (i.e. the “iron” or “metal”/*maza* that “moves”/*shkan*) or (in Dakota, cf. Williamson) *wihiyayedan*. Very many such justifications make reference to what the American Indians would do or not do in a given situation, which evidences the sentimental attitude of Ecotopia towards Amerindians and their envy regarding their natural place lost in the American wilderness. Otherwise, many among the Ecotopians adopt even names derived or inspired from those used by native Indians (such as “Shining Cloud”, “Sitting Bull”, “Red Bird”, etc.).

The initial population of Ecotopia had been 15 million, but it dropped to 14 million in the present, many specialists being of the opinion that the optimal number of inhabitants in Ecotopia would be equal to that of the Amerindians before the European invasion of Spaniards and American settlers, namely ca. one million.

Streets during night time sink in total darkness, which does not create a panic concerning a possible outbreak of mass murder (such as the case would be in America).

Although there are no more anti-ecological devices in Ecotopia – such as electric frying pans, electric hair curlers, etc., still there is a large scale use here of networks of video devices connected by cable, for instance for transactions involving commercial contracts, or for television. Certain TV channels are an integral part even of the structure of the government, its works being open to the press and the public – spectators can actively participate by giving telephone calls live, so much so that television not only provides news, it constitutes the news. In addition, TV advertisements are brought together and transmitted only between shows, not dispersed during these, thus becoming “islands of sanity” in the chaos of points of view and quality images that constitute normal Ecotopian television.

There is also a tendency towards miniaturization of electronic devices, in order to meet the requirements regarding low energy consumption, small weight, etc. Such as it is, the Ecotopian technology is considered by Ecotopians as not being “separated” from them, just as Amerindians thought about their tents (*tipi*) and their horses (in Dakota *shunka tanka*; in Lakota *shunka wakan* or *shunq* or *tashunka*), as well as about their bow with arrows (in Dakota/Lakota *itazipe/itazipa* = bow; *wanhiŋpe/wahiŋpe* or *wan* = arrow; cf. Riggs; Buechel & Manhart; Ingham) as being projections of their very being, because they emerged organically, like man, from the womb of Nature.

From this point of view, Callenbach’s intertopia attempts precisely to “naturalize” back into the womb of Nature the artificial products of man’s technology and science, so much so that they be able to re-emerge from the womb of Nature as “children” of Nature, and so lose their deformed, unnatural, artificial dimension as “Frankensteinian children,” that is man-made products created without recourse to

natural wisdom and philosophy. Callenbach's intertopia thus functions precisely as a metamorphosing medium meant to philter away the "Frankensteinian dimension" (pure artificiality) and turn it into a natural dimension located at the borderline between material time and spiritual time.

In Ecotopia the practice of sports is widely spread, street runners being something common, just like ping-pong tables.

5) *Minimalist industry*: guided by the slogan "small is beautiful." An enterprise cannot expand over a number of 300 employees. Still, Ecotopia is guided also by the individualistic slogan, which became obsessive: "do it yourself." Callenbach suggests here an association with H. D. Thoreau's ideas, who struggled to gain the same total independence from society and civilization, so much so that the return to Nature had to be authentic and artificiality had to be as fully as possible eliminated from everyday life. Even so, it is well known that Thoreau continued to use the products of human society, being to a large degree unable to put into practice the ideas of his natural philosophy.

Industrial minimalism, however, manifests itself also as the principle of maximizing the standardization of daily necessary things: for instance, there are only white towels available in shops, these being colored by each according to their wishes. In addition, tools are manufactured, all wishing that they be of highest quality.

6) *Generalized decentralization*: cities are fragmented into neighbourhoods or communities, some constituting the new "minicities" of about 10,000 people, others being erased from the face of the earth in order to be transformed into parks or in order for the Ecotopians to rebuild on the soil thus freed the hayfields, forests, orchards, gardens, etc., of yore.

The universities are separated into their constitutive faculties, which become autonomous. The large corporations (including the press, the television, etc.) have been dissolved or fragmented into small independent enterprising groups. Trading centers are overpopulated with children and their parents, the skyscrapers here, which had in the past been the headquarters of large corporations, are now transformed into huge apartments, each comprising 10-15 rooms, in order to shelter groups living in a communal system. No doubt, this kind of project reminds one of S. T. Coleridge's and Robert Southey's Pantisocratic Utopian (failed) project of an egalitarian commune of six families "on the banks of the Susquehanna" in the New World in 1794-1795, which was based on joint-stock farm (cf. Drabble: 745).

Owing to the destruction of a large part of its own civilization by fragmentation-decentralization, Ecotopia is compared with ancient Carthage, which was erased and then ploughed by the Roman conquerors: here William Weston feels thrown back into a past which he might have known from photographs or forwards into a future even of America: the Ecotopians could be what the Americans themselves will become. In this particular point Callenbach uncannily recalls Thoreau's complex philosophy of time, with deep roots in Piranesi's system: Ecotopia reminds one of the ruins of the past (Carthage), but this past is an uncanny image also of the future – namely what the present civilization, resting on the "giant shoulders" of past civilizations, will in turn become. In other words, the future is the ruin of the present, just as the past is the ruin of yet another, deeper, past. Ecotopia is thus a deep temporal intertopia as it reflects a potential germinal space in the deep future (not yet physically real), floating between time and eternity, at the border between finitude and infinity.

7) *Segregationist-separatist governing*: rule based on the principles of separatism and segregation, quietism, and the return to medieval structures (i.e. a civilization structured in small principalities) or even to tribal structures (i.e. social systems typical for the jungle), because centralization hides tyrannous principles – of the kind so detested by Shelley and Byron; the small regional societies have the advantage that they can exploit their own "niche" in the world biosystem much more efficiently, more subtly and less destructively than superpowers ever can, which in Weston's eyes at first sight seems to be a "dubiously fetishistic decentralism".

Even so, there is a very weak differentiation among social classes. Ecotopia's president is a woman, Vera Allwen, compared with the old queen Elizabeth, who is also the leader of the "Survivalist Party", an opponent of the Progressive Party. The Ecotopian constitution is based on the city, unlike the American constitution, which is based on the rural side (this trait being inherited from an agrarian age).

8) *Impossibility to inherit properties* (excepting personal items): by this feature Callenbach resumes the idea of the radical American transcendentalist Orestes Brownson regarding the abolition of the hereditary right to inherit properties, by which the accumulation of huge goods is possible, and so attributes to Ecotopians the thought system of Amerindians who, at the moment of the European invasion, had no idea of land as private property.

9) *General relaxation (also of legislation) and the cult of the person*: Ecotopians are very loose and playful with each other, there being no threat whatsoever such as implicit in acts of criminal violence. The restrictions on interpersonal relations are extremely relaxed, extreme hostility being itself accepted as normal behavior.

Everywhere Ecotopians willingly express powerful emotion, being by nature curious in an insolent way and lacking any sense of anonymity, an anonymity which so allows Americans to live together in numerous groups. An Ecotopian train ticket seller will not tolerate being treated like a ticket selling machine: he/she will not sell you the ticket unless you treat him/her like a "real person."

There is also a general silence in Ecotopia (with the exception of natural sounds and human shouting). The national slogan is: "Relax, it's a free country".

The general "looseness" here refers also to the legislation: drugs are declared legal. In this very aspect (the extreme relaxation which tends towards legislative-social debauchery) one can observe the fine borderline between good and evil, between the positive and the negative aspects of Ecotopia, thus reminding us of Aldous Huxley's dystopia.

10) *Defects/negative aspects*: Ecotopians did not manage to eliminate smoking, which is a vice from a Western point of view, but from the viewpoint of Amerindians² is an integral part of religious practices of the highest importance.

We refer here to the cult of the Sacred Pipe, widespread among Amerindians. The pipe is a fundamental cosmological symbol of the center and of the union between man and the spirits. The pipe signifies the union between man (the tube of the pipe) and the woman (the bowl- or cup-like part of the pipe, usually red – considered as being the center of the world –, in which the tobacco is introduced): the grains of sacred tobacco inside the pipe signifies the cosmic particles (the whole of cosmic reality), whose bright burning signifies cosmic life itself (and so, logically, also "time" as "living" processes unfolding). The smoke going out the cup-uterus of the pipe carries to the Great Spirit or (in Siouan) *Wakan Tanja* the prayers of the shaman.

Many of the Ecotopians tend to stutter, and there are rumours concerning the existence of bloody rituals, called "Ritual War Games", in which hundreds of young Ecotopians allegedly lose their life every year. By this Callenbach seems to suggest Aztec reminiscences in Ecotopia, constituting its wild dark side. However, at a demonstration in which Weston participates nobody dies, although one of the young warriors – dyed in vivid colors like the ancient Amerindians – is wounded. The justification for this dangerous practice is anthropological: physical competitiveness seems to be inherent in man's biological programming, hence its neglect may lead to the appearance of perverted forms like the war (actually this being a phenomenon well documented, for instance, by Konrad Lorenz in *Das Sogenannte Böse / The So-*

² Cf. Arthur Amiotte, "The Lakota Sun Dance"; Arval Looking Horse, "The Sacred Pipe in Modern Life"; Elaine A. Jahner, "Lakota Genesis: The Oral Tradition"; Raymond J. DeMallie, "Lakota Belief and Ritual in the Nineteenth Century" – in Raymond J. DeMallie, Douglas R. Parks, editors, *Sioux Indian Religion*, 1988.

Called Evil, 1963). That is why, Ecotopians prefer to risk and indeed in these rituals ca. fifty young people accidentally die every year.

What is more, inside Ecotopia there is an isolated area, a sort of enclave, populated by black people, called “Soul City,” in which culture is in general different, and in which a political regime of racial segregation is instituted – similar to the one established in South Africa in the 20th century (the Apartheid) – however not by white people (as in South Africa), but by black people. Thus Ecotopia acknowledges the fact that the races cannot live in harmony, this being one of the most discouraging evolutions in Ecotopia, reminding one of the fiercer version of the deep evolution of mankind into the Eloi (the weak, servile mezo-human race on the surface of the earth) and the Morlocks (the slave-driving subterranean sub-human race) in H. G. Wells’s *The Time Machine*.

Soul City is a great exporter of music, musicians, novels, movies, poetry, both to the other areas in Ecotopia and to Europe and Asia. In the schools here the tendency is for people to speak Swahili (the most widely spoken of the Bantu languages in Africa). The enterprises of black people here are collectivistic in a more natural way than those in the areas with white population, but Soul City has problems because most of the murderers in Ecotopia from the very beginning originate with the black population.

In addition, for the general Ecotopian “looseness” Weston finds a possible justification in the large scale use of a drug like marijuana. The fact that drugs like marijuana became legal led to the liberation of drug dealers, their activity no longer being considered illegal. Heroin thus enters governmental monopoly, another trait that reminds us of the Huxleyan dystopia in which drugs were used by the government as a tool to manipulate the population into believing itself to be free and happy.

Callenbach’s Ecotopia is a complex combination midway between a positive and a negative utopia (dystopia), between an ecological technotopia – in which human technology is guided increasingly more in accordance with naturalistic, ecological principles – and a general anti-technotopia, in which artificial, human technology is denied and so progressively more fully eliminated.

Ecotopia is an intertopia, the vision of a virtual future floating in potentiality between two worlds at least, in a liminal space of sorts: 1) between Nature and Culture, which Ecotopia tries to fuse together in its own intertopian configuration; 2) between matter and spirit, which meet together in the Ecotopian man as reunited with Nature and the Cosmos; 3) between the old paradigms and the new paradigms emerging out of the old by deep transformations and differentiations and fusions – the old paradigms here are renewed by transcending/surpassing and enclosing/embedding the old paradigms into new syntheses, this process pointing to the flexibility of living reality – if, in the sense of Thomas Kuhn’s theory about techno-scientific revolutions, we take plastic to be a paradigm in itself, then this is re-newed by being made into a bio-degradable plastic (it looks like the old material, but it is different in its discrete structure and superior); 4) between the real past and a virtual-potential future which tends to rekindle that real past (as such expressed by primitivism and animism in Ecotopia as a Neo-Romantic Republic), all the while not forgetting the present, the rekindled past being enriched with many elements that the present accumulated in knowledge and experience.

In short, Ecotopia is a place of paradoxes, an intertopia in the sense of a complex symbiotic reticular cultural space in a potential future, channeling energies between nature and culture, ecosphere and humanosphere. In temporal terms, Ecotopia is a quaternary intertopia: a cultural deep space floating somewhere in potentiality at the crisscrossing of natural time, human time, cosmic time and spiritual time.

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