

## I. ECLECTICS OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE PAST

Today, in general, historiography is identified with three paradigms: the structuralist, positivist, and postmodern. These terms cover a rather mixed reality. The structuralist approach could represent both Hegelian and Marxist traditions and could signify the continuation of the structuralism of the 1960s. The principle is that the historian using this approach handles the manifestations he examines as a complex unit that can be arranged into some form of structure. So far as the nature of the structure is concerned there is room for considerable variation, showing differences in philosophy and in values. There is no question, however, that history in this instance is the history of structures. This type of description is suitable for interpretation and for the formation of critical projections. Its disadvantage is that it is difficult to use it to examine unique events. I can say that it is much more difficult, if not impossible, to use this structural approach for the preparation of a biography. It is not an accident, therefore, that this approach is much more popular among the economic and social historians than among the biographers. It is useful for those who favor longer time spans because in this situation the structural characteristics are more likely to appear strongly than in the case of an event that had a relatively short duration. This means that the interpretational paradigm works for the political historians assuming that they analyze a political system or write about national or social history taking place over an extended time period.

The positivist approach views everything in its own evident manifestations. Its critics usually refer to it, with some contempt as the

“recitation of events.” It is strong in their discovery and their description, but weak in analysis. It focuses on factual evidence, but it is insecure in trying to establish causal relations. It sees the function of the historian to do research, discovery, and demonstration of facts. Any trained historian should be able to use this method. It requires considerable effort, yet the intellectual returns are relatively meager. Because it was developed in the nineteenth century it had time to become firmly embedded in the discipline of history and to become the most influential paradigm for generations of historians. Consequently, it acquired a “classical” flavor and the positivist approach is the most secure way to reach an elevated scholarly rank anywhere in the world.

Compared to the positivist one, the postmodern approach is relatively recent. It stresses narrative rather than facts or structure. The important issue is not the “what” and the “why,” but the “how come.” That is, the investigation of the kind of presumptions that shape our discourse. From this perspective there is no difference for the postmodern historian between narratives which confirm the holocaust and those which deny it ever happened. Instead of the validity of the narrative, it is the narrative itself which is the most important factor. A strength of this approach is that it questions the shaping of the discourse about an issue. Its great weakness is that it is not particularly curious about the issue itself. It does not analyze the validity of a question and pays little attention to what we ordinarily refer to as truth. It is not an accident that the subject matter for the postmoderns is generally the contextualization of history rather than what happened.

The three interpretations do not appear today in their pristine form. Explanations for these could be found through the history and sociology of knowledge and through the examination of intellectual dispositions.

The history of knowledge posits this to the fact that the interpretational frameworks did not appear at the same time. From the perspective of time, historiography became “scientific” through positivism and it was only later that the philosophical ideas of structuralism became the “applied” parts of historical scholarship. Ultimately, the postmodern approach became the trend. Since they had to coexist it became inevitable that they influenced each other even though there are still historians today who claim to be uniquely positivist, structuralist, or postmodern. Because we are dealing with very different and irrecon-

cilable approaches, the authors today, seeing the advantages and disadvantages of the various approaches, generally embrace some form of eclecticism. The positivist can deal with structures and with the narratives of the historiography of his own carefully selected subject.

The other explanation related to the history of knowledge can be found in the fact that the concept of what history is has broadened and became more elastic. In the process, beginning with the nineteenth century, auxiliary disciplines developed, from ethnography to anthropology and from historical sociology to cultural history. These, instead of narrowing the scope of the discipline of history, enlarged it. It became apparent that the essence of history, the understanding of the past, became increasingly important for the auxiliary disciplines as well. Consequently history became enriched by the marked appearance of the auxiliary disciplines. Its meaning, impact and its need for contextualization changed. As a consequence the interdisciplinary challenge became stronger and this again moved everything in the direction of an eclectic approach.

The situation did change, however, in another important sense as well, and this is also in the area of the history of knowledge. The discipline of history expanded its time frame. Contrary to earlier perspectives, history practically extends to our days. Today every worthwhile historical work concerning the country concludes with the immediate past. This forces the historian to recognize that the study of the distant past and the immediate past together requires divergent methodological approaches. This situation also pushes us toward eclecticism.

The sociology of knowledge component of eclecticism is also important. Today, if somebody wishes to become an expert, it is essential to be thoroughly familiar with the principal theories of interpretation and to be able to demonstrate that the budding scholar is able, to some extent, to apply each one of them. This occasionally leads to a very peculiar mixture where forewords and chapters on methodology have little, if anything, to do with the actual research. Works are produced which declare that they wish to be at the cutting edge when, in fact, they are totally traditional.

This particular eclecticism has an intellectual component which comes from two directions and moves in two directions. They are quite different. In one case the motivational characteristic is curiosity, the

search for something new, to try this and that and to create new dimensions and new approaches. The lure of experimentation appears and the awareness of an intellectual adventure predominates. The other case reads quite differently. We can call it stupidity, amateurishness or something similar. To put it simply, the given author lacks insight and reflection, assembles a mish-mash and believes that eclecticism can be traded for quality. He believes that by using words in a “modern” fashion and fusing incompatible and only apparent similarities he can flaunt his expertise. The two trends can be distinguished easily. Originality can readily be distinguished from imitation. (In the latter case one can only ask whether the author imitates well or poorly.)

Eclecticism, by itself, does not qualify an author and it also has cogent reasons which, in some respect, do not grant alternatives to its existence. The only alternative lies within the use eclecticism itself. Does it lead to a high quality production or will it result in an average or inferior achievement?

Regardless of how broadly interpreted are the approaches, regardless how eclectic they have become, I cannot get rid of the nagging thought that the process was not just beneficial but was also detrimental and seriously so. The language of the science, independently of approaches or their synthesis, must be aloof by its very nature. This aloofness is a distinct desideratum.

This resulted in important intellectual traditions having fallen into oblivion. We have abstained from using them and we have eliminated them from the language of history, even though they fill an important role there even today.

In my view the most important issue is the tradition of ancient historiography and the traditions of antiquity.

The historians of antiquity, particularly the Romans, used a much humanized worldview. They incorporated everything into their narratives that, in their view, motivated the actions of men. When we look at their use of words we can detect the elements of desire, ambition, vanity, integrity and lack of character. They were seeking the life-like motivation of mankind and showed the protagonists of their history with all their virtues and vices. This tradition was still alive in the eighteenth century because the motives which could be assigned to the concept of virtue or vice were shown to be valid explanations.

The historians of antiquity told stories. They did not describe structures and they did not provide the factual material related by them with references to sources. They believed that what they were writing was the source itself and that the story became history in their telling it. They did not relate reflectively to their methods of presentation. They did not use the concepts which today are commonplace and, for instance, were unfamiliar with the significance of the term "society" as it is used today. They knew much, however, of mankind, very much indeed. They wrote sentences that would be used today only by belletrists. On numerous occasions they enunciated experiential concentrations that had universal validity. They said such things as, "To err is human; to persist is of the Devil"; "Diligence is a very great help even to a mediocre intelligence" (Lucius Annaeus Seneca, the Younger), "Men adjust to the morals of their kings"; "It is of the nature of the masses either servilely to obey or arrogantly to domineer"; and "by fleeing, men often meet the very fate they seek to avoid" (Livy). After the two Romans, let us listen to a Greek historiographer. Plutarch wrote, "the belly has no ears," meaning that with words alone one cannot influence men indefinitely. He also wrote, "slander without fear, it always turns into gossip."

The historians of antiquity knew all about man and made this an organic component of their narrative. This is the reason why reading them gives us great pleasure. This is why we feel that we know them intimately, this is why they are timeless. Their writings, are seen as fiction rather than science, but this categorization is due to the increasingly narrow concept of the meaning of science.

Their approach to the past has practically disappeared from contemporary historiography. In any self-respecting biography of Hitler or Stalin the word ambition does not appear and there is no mention of the connection between fate and destiny. Vanity is no longer sufficient to explain motivation. Uprightness is a category to be avoided and infamy even more so. The scientific requirement, for any one of the various methods, of distancing oneself from the subject of inquiry has led to the sterility of history. We see our past increasingly depersonalized and this is the way we show it, unlike our predecessors did in the olden times.

The loss of the traditional worldview of antiquity, is painful not only because it is a cultural loss. It is a loss also because in other areas the cultural heritage of antiquity is still with us and, in fact, it is an

organic component of the Europe concept. The loss is bad not only because it depersonalizes the image of the past. The major problem of the loss is that it makes it much more difficult to understand modernity and history itself, which should be the principal task of scholarship.

We cannot deny that history is made by man. We can also not deny that men are different and are characterized by both fallibility and greatness. We cannot deny that they can make good decisions and bad ones. We cannot deny that their decisions are largely governed by their human characteristics namely stupidity and wisdom, honesty and dishonesty, greed and generosity, uprightness and ignominy, cupidity and ambition. Why then, do we not make these a part of our narrative techniques?

We know that human characteristics shape history. This is so whether the decisions made are good or bad. From an intellectual perspective the latter are more interesting because they usually lead to conflicts, decline and tragedy. Because history can be perceived as a series of such manifestations, I can say that understanding history is simply understanding the mistakes that have been made. In other words, it appears that the mistakes are the most important shapers of history. The mistakes are made by men and in making them their character and their desires are just as important factors as the frequently coercive force of circumstances.

On this basis, I believe that it is wrong to forget the traditions of contemplation characteristic of the historiography of antiquity. Our eclecticism can be enriched. We should hold on to everything that helps us to understand our past. This is what our selfishness also demands because understanding the past is inevitable for understanding ourselves, our present, and our life.

Can anything be more important?

## II. THE UNCERTAINTY OF CONCEPTS

Utopia is contemporary with human thought expressed in writing. In our use of the word, utopia is nothing else but an impossible dream, plan or yearning. We could think of it as a mirage or a cloud castle.

Two very human characteristics are the inexhaustible sources of utopia. If utopia is an impossible dream, one of the reasons for this is that men cannot realistically assess the possibilities. Consequently their ideas cannot be realized. We could also say that they are erring. Error is the strongest force shaping history. Looking at it from a certain angle or approach, we can say that the history of mankind is nothing but the history of errors. The German General Staff erred twice in the twentieth century because it obviously was willing to start two world wars in the mistaken conviction that it could win them. This is not what happened because the planners made an error in assessing their chances and consequently they lost. Looking at these errors from another angle we could call them utopias. They were dreaming of a great German empire but the thousand-year Nazi state lasted altogether twelve years, three months and eight days.

We could naturally cite other examples. The great utopia of the twentieth century is communism, based on significant ideological-historical antecedents. It tried to justify and prove, through the devoted labor of many intellectuals, that conceptually communism was the only "solution" of history. The attempts to implement it were carried out with fire and sword but it remained unachieved and unachievable. The experiment led to many deaths. The faithful solidified the utopistic experiment into an architectural metaphor according to which the new world would grow and the growth would occur in a planned and grad-

ual fashion. It was never completed and the more they built the more illusory it all became.

The list of errors is endless and if this is the way we look at the history of man, we find an inexhaustible supply of examples and parables.

It seems appropriate to find an explanation or, at least, to make an attempt to find some species of reason why men become the partisans of utopias and why they consistently commit error after error.

This is where, in my opinion, the second absolute human characteristic comes into play. Men are rarely satisfied with their economic and emotional situation and generally wish for something better and more perfect. Indeed, wish is the key word. Wish creates the wish-filled thought and the need for wish-fulfillment is most capable to modify the perception of crude reality. Wish is most likely to clash with reality, while wishful determination is most capable of modifying the traditional ways of the world. Collapse of a wish-based utopia is therefore not an argument against utopias, because the wish was legitimate, being human, and also because even a failed utopia can accomplish more than resignation or behavior built on a slow corrective process.

This is well illustrated by the case of one of the most effective utopias, Christianity. Nobody can argue that the non-dogmatic, but human, essence of Christianity is about the value of love and about the implementation of an appropriate moral system. Nobody can claim that this has come about, even in Christian cultural history, and if it did not happen after two thousand years there is little likelihood of it becoming reality any time soon. Thus, we are talking about a utopia. At the same time nobody can deny that the effects of this utopia are enormous. It is so significant that without it one cannot imagine human existence spread over all the continents. It can also not be argued that behind the appearance of Christianity and behind its long history we find the wish of mankind for the better world imagined by all.

Utopia is accordingly inevitable and cannot be ignored because it belongs to human nature in a multiplicity of ways and is derived from it. Utopias might lead to human tragedies but they can also lead to changes which do not entirely meet the utopian expectations but nevertheless change the world and its progress. The existence of utopia and its various contents, forms and reproductive capacities are not variable but its strength and potential record show considerable choices.



Our treasury of words contains a term, derived from the Latin that is similar to utopia in some of its content. This word is “illusion” and the variations derived from it. Among the many meanings of the word, the one that is important to us in this context is that illusion is nothing but unjustified hope and delusive fantasy which lead to self-deception. Consequently we use the term illusion for situations which are imaginary and illusive, unobtainable and chimerical. It is not by accident that the most popularly held meaning of the word “illusionist” is applied to the circus magician.

Illusion, just like utopia, refers to unreality. This is their fundamentally shared function. We know that both illusion and utopia are able to modify the so-called reality particularly if they are held by many who try to convert them into action. Yet, they are something compared to which the possible and the real are completely different categories.

In my view, there are significant differences between them, well beyond their shared function. Utopia, perhaps because its popular acceptance is based on the work of the same title, written by Sir Thomas More on statecraft in 1516, and thus one assumes that it has a more or less consistent theoretical background and more or less solid basis. In my view this criterion does not apply to illusion. A person might have illusions about a liaison or about getting a particular job, but not a utopia. Illusions might be derived and will necessarily be derived from utopias but illusions can be turned into utopias only by creating a new set of theories. This is a major and significant difference.

Looking at it differently, there is an important similarity between illusion and utopia in a socio-psychological sense. We must believe in both of them because otherwise we could not exist. Neither of them is backed by empirical evidence and thus faith is inevitable. Faith can be nurtured by the same wish that we have discussed above and which creates a variety of “wishful thinking” representing a variety of directions and contents. It creates a form of thinking that reflects desires and wishes.

Wish and the faith it generates and the utopia or illusion derived from them have another very significant functional result. They create an identity, sameness, and self-identity. If these become large enough and their societal penetration wide enough, then identity might become full blown identity politics. Identity and identity politics, in their reac-

tions, can strengthen illusion and utopia by creating a ritual and a symbology that gives a core to the persona.

This similarity of utopia and illusion suggests, in an apparently paradoxical fashion, that the two concepts have to be handled individually and not as synonymous entities. Identity politics speech means a language of discourse which can become a complete, everyday political manner of speech. Instead of the theoretical core of utopia, illusion can become the proof of parlance. There is no need to argue about its shape as any questioning becomes heresy. I could say, symbolically, that illusion can be viewed as a morsel of utopia. Utopia necessarily creates illusion and the illusions can then create identity and identity politics. Yet utopia is not required for identity and identity politics—it is sufficient to have illusions. Identity and identity politics need not be built on illusions but their derivation from the world of illusion is an inevitable consequence.

Conceptual definition is important but not nearly as much as the sharply critical, pedantic intellectuals seem to proclaim. If one thinks historically and not just in theoretical constructions, then the connections and intermingling between the concepts can be sensed clearly. Historicity can interpret the conceptual language and it is not necessary to explain concepts with concepts alone. From the perspective of methodology every possibility is legitimate and there is no intellectual hierarchy between them. To select one or the other is a matter of individual preference.

The big question is who considers what is to be a utopia and/or an illusion?

The simplest answer is that everything that was desired and wanted and that came to nothing, is an illusion.

Let us examine what this handy answer really means.

It says that we can determine only in retrospect what could be considered to be an illusion or a utopia. It is not so easy to determine when the “in retrospect” really occurs. In recent ages three attempts were made to create a unified Europe. First by Napoleon under French leadership. The experiment came to nothing, proved to be an illusion and is still an example of power-hungry ambition. The only lasting result of the experiment was the Europe-wide acceptance of the *Code Napoleon*. The next attempt is linked to Hitler, about 130 years after Napoleon.

He wished to unite Europe under a German Nazi hegemony. His intent remained an illusion. It has only one lasting effect, the marked reduction in European Jewry. A mere five years after the end of World War II a process began which lacked the elements of national hegemony and which attempted to create a unified Europe on a democratic basis. The process is not yet complete and does not encompass all of Europe but it has become institutionalized (EU) and continues to make progress.

These small examples give rise to several problems. One is that it is an illusion to think that utopia is a strongly historical category. Something that did not succeed once may somehow and at some other time be successful. Also when Napoleon or Hitler started their action many believed that it could be accomplished. Even the fact that it could not be completed did not sway everybody that the project was impossible. Consequently it is not part of the utopia-illusion concept that “nothing came of it.” Something did come of it and of this “something” much, good or bad, has been preserved.

The obvious answer, at least in a historical sense, is that the validity of the concept has innumerable shortcomings.

There can be a view which approaches the concept of illusion from the side of human thought. One of the great, late representatives, Georg Lukács, sees the essential reason for the appearance of illusion in the fact that, “*people have a mentality which precludes from the outset the possibility of judging the situation correctly* [italics by Lukács]. In the first place, neither in their thinking nor in their their analysis of the situation do they take as their starting-point the real position....”<sup>1</sup>

This is a popular analysis of illusion that states that the root of the problem must be looked for in the erroneous nature of the perspective. Let us see what this means.

First of all, a person can form a judgment about another person’s views and thoughts and find that they are faulty. We make such judgments daily and thus we are not talking about anything unusual. In addition, we are usually able to attach rational, or seemingly rational, arguments to our judgments. Here again, however, historicity raises its head. If, for instance, we look at the life of the saints who suffered martyrdom, there is no question that they, the martyrs, did not start out from a correct position because then they would not have become mar-

tyrs. Yet, after they were killed, their sacrifice can be acknowledged, and they become saints. Was their view illusionary or not? In actuality it was illusionary, but from a distance it was not.

The same is true for the non-religious martyrs. Can we say that Imre Nagy assessed the situation at the end of October and the beginning of November, 1956 realistically, when he announced the neutrality of the country and its withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact? Was this not an act filled with illusions? I believe, and I have good arguments for this, that this was an illusion and an incorrect assessment of the political situation. This is one side of the issue. On the other side, this was the reason why Imre Nagy could become one of the symbolic figures of 1956 and rapidly became a member of the imaginary Hungarian pantheon. The illusionary perspective was converted into reality when seen in another, distant time frame.

There is another problem with the so called “worldview” explanation. The overlapping of worldview and thought does not mean, however, that the deed will be the same. In principle it could happen, in actuality it does not.

In the Muslim culture people are convinced that if somebody sacrifices his life for the Muslim cause, he will go directly to Paradise. The Paradise is the very best possible place and therefore the believers are motivated to sacrifice themselves. Whatever constitutes a Muslim cause is determined by people empowered to do so and they might announce a “Holy War” or Jihad. Whoever dies in this war will go directly to Paradise. Many explain the actions of the suicide bombers on this basis. It would logically follow that every man holding Muslim religious principles and perspectives, is a potential suicide bomber. This is not the case. Only an exceedingly small percentage of the Muslims become suicide bombers. The worldview and the thought might be the same but the behavior is quite different. How then shall we understand that it is the worldview that excludes the correct assessment of the situation?

The truth is that the more we attempt to go round and round the concept of illusion and utopia and the more we look at them in a historical-cultural context and not as abstractions, the more doubts we will encounter even though we believe that we know what we are talking about.

Perhaps it should be approached from a different direction. It is possible that it would be worthwhile to enlarge the conceptual circle of illusion and utopia and perhaps study the contrast of the conceptual system of synonyms. Perhaps we could reach greater intellectual certainty if we made our approach from the opposite side.

If we make our approach from a somewhat associative conceptual side, the category of idealism beckons. For us now it is not the philosophic meaning that is significant, namely that we are dealing with the opposite to materialism. (I must note that the idealist and the materialist can both be a utopian and a partisan of illusions.) The other meaning, namely that the idealist believes in ideals and is perhaps a “dreamer” removed from the practical world is much more important.

To believe in ideals is the same as making a strong commitment on the side of values.

The best example for this type of idealism is the case of the Founding Fathers of the United States. They recorded their commitments in the eighteenth century. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington and the others expressed a spiritual content that was embodied in the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution of the United States. In the spirit of the search for freedom they wished to create a country unlike any other in history, and they succeeded in accomplishing it. There is no doubt, they were idealists. Yet, interestingly from our perspective, their idealism resulted in a solution that functions well, seems lasting and so far has overcome all challenges. The idealistic values of freedom, the Constitution, have stood firmly and today are the basis of the personal and political existence of the people living there. Their extension to all residents was achieved through one war of independence and one civil war, with all other conflicts being resolved more or less peacefully through internal adjustments. All this shows that great idealism and great pragmatism can and do coexist well. (As a matter of interest: the idealism of the Founding Fathers is shown by the historical topography of the events. The documents so important in American history were drafted in Philadelphia, within a few hundred feet from the headquarters of the Philosophical Society. The documents were enacted in an adjacent building. The American Constitution was inspired by the works of thinkers, living thousands of miles away or long dead, whose writings were available

to the Founding Fathers. It was composed for people the large majority of whom could neither read nor write.)

The success story of American idealism stands in particularly sharp contrast to areas of Europe that are the older versions of the ancient Judeo-Christian culture cycle. If we look at the French part of Europe, the Liberty, Equality, Fraternity slogan testifies to idealism and its spiritual progenitors were the same authors whose works are on the library shelves of the Philadelphia Philosophical Society. This idealism resulted in numerous stormy conflicts and in at least four revolutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (1789, 1830, 1848, and 1871). This idealism was unable to establish a system where self-correction became the basis for practical existence. It is possible that it was the failure of idealism that is the reason for the characteristic reserve of European culture in the areas of ideals and idealism and this might be the reason why it has occurred to me to link idealism to the theoretical cluster of utopia and illusion. It is likely that if I were an American I would not feel that way. All this shows how much even conceptual thinking, which is theoretically universal, is linked to the material of cultural-historical experiences. Identical concepts, even though they can be translated word for word and are present in a variety of languages, can have divergent cultural significance. This then raises the problem of the discourse because what appears to be a dialog can easily become a pretense.

Idealism can be a success story but can also be an endless and bloody history of conflict. The content of idealism can be related associatively with the concept of utopia and illusion. Yet its activities are associated with such divergent, mutually contradictory consequences that it does not allow the deduction of any generally valid conclusion.

It seems that idealism colors the concept of illusion but cannot contribute to the more precise explanation.

There remains one conceptual association. Unreality.

Unreal is something that lacks a true basis. Unreality is something that does not exist in reality, is unachievable, is an unobtainable thing, plan or desire. It is an imaginary world.

We might, of course say, that unreality is an organic component of utopia and of illusion. This, however, has not added anything to our definition, it only used different words to say the same thing. This is

only one of the problems. The other problem is much more important and might become clear in the light of the above examples.

In a historical sense it is impossible to state something that is unreal. We can only state who considers something to be unreal and why.

It seems to be a cheap shot to come up with an example from the history of technology. Until the twentieth century it was considered foolish and unreal to imagine that man could fly or, rather, that a heavier-than-air machine could be constructed that not only could stay above the ground but could be controlled and steered. Today we ought to explain why this was considered unreal throughout the millennia.

There is an example from sport history as well that deals with the biological limitations of man. The measurable accomplishments are theoretically limited and it is inconceivable that somebody could run 100 meters in 0 seconds. Yet, it seems that every record is being broken on a regular basis and that man's biological accomplishments can be improved to a point considered completely impossible forty or fifty years ago, i.e they seemed unreal.

We can also raise examples from political history. Emperor Francis Joseph would have considered it unimaginable that an amateur painter could become a chancellor of Germany. For President Harry Truman it would have seemed an unreal concept that within a few decades the American secretary of state would be an African-American woman. For Tsar Nicholas I it would have been an unreal vision that a Georgian bank robber would become the autocrat of Russia. The sequence could be extended almost indefinitely.

It seems that just because something has not occurred in history so far, it still could happen. The reverse is true also. Because something has occurred in the past it does not ensue that it will happen again.

This is the reason why it is so difficult to assess the possibilities of reality and unreality. We do know, however, that certain things are more likely than others.

Yet, even this is not entirely true. If somebody believes in the manifestations that I consider unreal this may turn into reality by the simple force of faith. It is sufficient to go to a number of European locales, e.g. Lourdes, where according to tradition a miracle happened and we can see that masses of people consider an event as real which others consider to be unreal.

This is the next problem about unreality. In a diametrically opposed fashion the same situation can be considered to be real and unreal. Hence, this type of cultural consensus, according to which we state a fact, falls apart

This leads us back to where we started from and we are unable to state precisely what constitutes the historically valid essence of unreality, illusion or utopia. Stated more accurately, I cannot refer to it with anything approaching universal validity. All I can state is what I believe to be so,

Let us now turn to a different approach, particularly because in our success oriented society we have reason to be dissatisfied with what we have accomplished so far.

Let us now look at what might be opposed to utopia and illusion. Perhaps the matter might be approached more readily from this side. It seems to me that the most obvious opposing concept is realism.

Ignoring the meaning of this term as used in the history of philosophy and in the history of literature, it encompasses a feeling of reality. This is what the term "real" refers to. We apply the term "real" to things or situations that are in fact occurring, are sober, sensible, realizable and can be implemented.

This, generally, is a practical matter and not a theoretical one. One has to try it and if it works it is realistic.

This is true in isolated human activities. If I wish to go the grocery store and actually get there, I was a realist.

There are two additional, historically awkward problems that are linked to the concept of realism and represent a strict transition toward utopia, illusion and idealism.

One is the dynamics of realism. The other, related to the first one, is the complexity of realism. I will start with the latter.

The term realism and real are applied not only to isolated human activities. In fact, they are usually applied to other situations because what we call realistic and reality consists most often of the composite activity of numerous men and human endeavor. These endeavors can appear in a multitude of shapes and the final outcome is what we ordinarily call reality and real.

The derivation is not a given. It takes shape by compromise, conflict and/or agreement.



Among these volitions, desires and intentions we find what others define as utopia, illusion, and idealism. The ones, who see themselves in this way, believe that they are realists. Yet, those who think or act differently could also be part of reality. It is part of the distancing appreciation and assessment of reality that the elements I consider non-real also be taken into consideration because they participate in the construction leading reality to become an outcome.

This argument might be somewhat abstract. It might be better if I were to explain what I am thinking.

The conservative trend in historiography opined that the political views of Count István Széchenyi were realistic while those of his opponent in the debate, Lajos Kossuth's, were illusionist. The Kossuthian, largely nationalistic, but also left-wing ideas claimed that Kossuth's path was the realistic one and that it was only the external forces that prevented its full implementation. Széchenyi's comportment, way of doing things and ideals were burdened by illusionism. These ideas created a fault line that permeated the history, spiritual life and political culture of Hungary for a very protracted period. The resulting interpretation elevated these two men into metaphors and symbols of realism and illusion.

In my view, both of them were a part of realism in every sense. I could also say that both of them became part of illusion because the outcome of their historic struggle, symbolically speaking, was the father of the 1867 Compromise, Ferenc Deák.

This is how I see the complexity of reality. This is how I see the complexity of illusion. Each is part of the other. Reality always contains illusions, illusions always contain reality.

This last statement leads us to the question of the dynamics of realism. In essence, we are dealing with the same thing as in the case of illusion and utopia, but from a different direction.

What today is rock-hard realism could turn into illusion tomorrow because, in a historical sense, the permanence of realism exists only in theory and not in practice.

This is what the historical processes, without exception, deal with. Just as a few years before its collapse, the Soviet Union seemed to be indestructible. Everybody considered it a matter of realism that the Soviet Union ruled Eastern Europe which seemed to demonstrate a

homogenous Eastern Europe precisely because of the Soviet domination. Who would have thought that the Soviet Union would fall apart and that without firing a single shot the Russians would leave on their own accord the area they had occupied and held by the use of armed force? Anyone who predicted this would have been considered a representative of unreality.

In the nineteenth century the British Empire was the principal reality in the fate of the entire humanity. If anybody had predicted that by the end of twentieth century hardly a trace of it would remain he would have been considered a lunatic.

The historical dynamism of the reality-concept is changeable. It changes slowly or rapidly but it still exists. Consequently, one can certainly perceive the so called realism in historical retrospection. For the present, partly because of its complexity, we can see it with some uncertainty and as far as the future is concerned, it cannot be viewed with any degree of valid assurance.

Thus, in my view, the complexity and dynamics of the reality-complex provide a structural transition to its own opposition, utopia, illusion and idealism. All this time people classify themselves in one way or another, and frequently assume roles and attitudes to conform with the classification they assign to themselves or to classifications that are assigned to them by others.

This level of discussion further complicates the situation because it associates such concepts and such patterns of behavior with the role of the realist or the idealist and allows that these persons be divided into stereotypes. The ones considering themselves to be realists prefer not to use their fantasy or do not know how to use it and therefore, by necessity, consider themselves to be realists. The role of the realist also denotes a decreased inclination toward innovation. The realist is temperate, careful and wishes to minimize all risks. He endeavors to have all his statements and actions proven correct as soon as possible.

These mental traits could denote praise and/or self-praise of sobriety but, from a different perspective could also represent a severe criticism.

The same duality of assessment pertains to the idealist. The idealist is a person, at least at the level of stereotypy, who believes that his ideas are noble. He considers that the moral values which can be attached to the event are more important than immediate practical con-

formation or eventual success. Many consider the idealist to be a moralist. His image, whether created by himself or by somebody else, does not allow many compromises. The idealist appears not to care much about circumstances and conditions.

Such culturally fixed images, sketched here, strongly influence the utilization of the concepts. Whoever describes them and speaks about them must know that these words carry a heavy cultural burden. The cultural flavor must not necessarily be considered but its existence must be acknowledged.

In reality, historically, such stereotypes are difficult to justify. If we add one more term to these expressions, it might become more apparent whereof we speak. This added term is pragmatism.

As usual, I must state that I am not using the term pragmatism in its meaning as a philosophical trend. Pragmatism and pragmatist, in this context, mean that in a given set of circumstances the approach is practical and expedient, in fact, as expedient as possible. We call a person a pragmatist if he is practical and purposeful and if he considers achievability of success more important than the principles involved.

Pragmatism might be a feature of the realist as well as of an idealist. The idealist Mahatma Gandhi, obtaining India's independence by proclaiming the absence of force, is just as much a pragmatist as President Richard M. Nixon, who seemed to be a realist and who did not even eschew the sins of power.

What I wish to say is that pragmatism attached to reality can also belong to the worldview of illusions and utopias. Neither type nor way of thinking is homogenous.

\* \* \*

I believe I was successful in indicating that I am unable to define utopia and illusion conceptually. Perhaps if I were a philosopher I could do better. But I am an historian and my abilities are evidently limited. Thus it seems to me that while we use these concepts we do not know precisely what we are talking about.

We believe that a utopia is some kind of a coherent concept that cannot ever be fully realized. Yet was there ever a situation in history, with theoretical relevance, that could be fully realized?

We consider illusion to be an erroneous concept originating from an erroneous perception. Why do we then think that this is not a part of reality? Why do we believe that the unreal does not create reality? Generally, why do we believe that the concept of reality can exist without utopia and illusion and even contrary to them?

I want to write about what I call Hungarian illusionism, being fully aware of my lack of conceptual certainty.

The argued lack of certainty can still have intellectual rights.