

The Future, An Alternative to History

Conversation Between Ashis Nandy and Shuddhabrata Sengupta

Shuddhabrata Sengupta — Introduction

We've had a great, very visionary morning, and continuing in that spirit, it is my pleasure to introduce you to a dear friend and a teacher, Dr. Ashis Nandy. Perhaps Ashis Nandy can best be described as an intellectual who combines the grace of a tango dancer in his mind with the lethal ability of a street fighter, when necessary. In a world where intellectual work so often disintegrates into the steady respectability of academics, it's wonderful to have someone whose intellectual work is, I think, an exemplar for all of us who are artists. He is an artist of the mind.

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Ashis Nandy was born in Bhagalpur, India in 1937. Bhagalpur is a town famous for an incident in which the police blinded people by pouring acid into their eyes, so I think it is quite appropriate that a man of such great vision came to earth in Bhagalpur, to reverse that series of blindings. He is a political psychologist, a social theorist and a contemporary political and cultural critic. He has worked as a clinical psychologist with an interest in a wide variety of topics, including the legacies of violence in the South Asian subcontinent, the partition of India and Pakistan. He has also thought a lot about public conscience and the dialogue of civilizations. He was senior fellow and director of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, where Jeebesh, Monica and I, along with other colleagues, co-founded an initiative called Sarai, in the year 2000, and I think that it is a testimony to that ongoing dialogue that another generation at CSDS, we at Sarai-CSDS, in a sense, continue. And it is that dialogue that I am bringing here to you today.

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He is currently a senior fellow at that institute (CSDS), and apart from being the chairman of the Committee for Cultural Choices and Global Futures, he continues to be active, vigilant and militant as a public intellectual in India, weighing in with his side jabs to the solar plexus of complacency power.

His writings include *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture*; *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*; *Tradition, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness*; *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves*; *The Illegitimacy of Nationalisms: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self*, and *Time Treks: The Uncertain Futures of Old and New Despotisms*.

I believe that he is also published in Mexico, in Spanish, through the Colegio de México. So he is available here in your libraries and bookshops, in both English and Spanish; do take advantage of that fact. Without further ado, I invite Ashis Nandy to talk to us.

Ashis Nandy—

Shuddha has given me 20 minutes, and I have six points to make: roughly three minutes each. And I will try to stick to the time, unless I fall in love with my own voice.

But first of all, let me thank you for these very kind words of introduction, and I want to thank you and SITAC for this opportunity to share my thoughts. I have been listening carefully for the last two days and have learned a lot. I chose these six issues, because in some ways they seem to run through several of the presentations. I want to sharpen, hone and put them blandly and sharply for you. You don't have to accept them, but I would like a dialogue, even if the response you have is critical.

1

Artists and the Future

Firstly, this is primarily a group of artists, so I want to give you some confidence. When the Paris Exposition was held in the year 1900, they decided to talk to the world's best known scientists to find out what the nature of science would be, how far it would change the world and what form our lives would take in response to new scientific discoveries.

Some of the world's best known names, no, not some, all of the world's best known names in science were interviewed. And it is a remarkable record of the scope and limits of modern science. For instance, in response to the question "What speed will human beings and human-built contraptions maximally attain in the next century, up to the year 2000?" the scientists only went as high as 250 miles per hour. In response to the question of whether something like television could be discovered, most scientists, most famous ones, said that would be something we would need to wait until the 21st century for. They even underestimated their own discoveries. Radio had already been thought of, but even those who had been involved in its discovery did not think that it would become a household device. Even Edison did not believe that electric bulbs would be popular beyond a certain sector of the population.

If you compare their predictions with those of science fiction writers, say those of Jules Verne, who was their contemporary, the latter were much closer to reality. Indeed, virtually all the things that they (the scientists) said would not occur until the 21st century had arrived on the scene by the 1940s. So, sometimes writers, artists, thinkers and visionaries can go much further than scientists, even in the matter of science. Jules Verne had something that scientists lacked - vision.

The future cannot be thought of without visions, because between the present and the future there is a disjunction, a point I shall come back to. And we can take confidence from this to say "We have a right to envision the future." The future might be closer to the way you envision it.

Future cannot come from the linear programming of economists. It cannot come from the path analysis of social scientists. It cannot be projected from the present, because there are disjunctions in human creativity and human initiatives. That's the first point.

Not everybody thinks of things like that. There is also a fear of the future. The famous American wit and comedian W.C. Fields was once asked "What do you think of the future?" He replied, "Why should I think about the future? What has the future done for me?"

We can take that position, too.

But, others have been at least more open to the idea of the future.

2

The Future as a Negation and Criticism of the Present

The future is a negation of the present. It can be a negation of the present. Something in human nature makes us think that the future will give us solutions to the problems that haunt us. So you can think of the future as a negation or a criticism of the present. This is important, because animals have no past and no future. Human beings are the only species that talks of the past and the future. Animals have only experiences and reflexes. The experiences sharpen some reflexes and blunt others. That is the situation with humans; they can attribute "pastness" and "futureness" to things. They can talk of the past and the future as if they were realities. It is our construction, and given that human beings are also a very diverse lot, let us be prepared for more plural futures, and I would necessarily add, for more plural pasts.

3

The Past as a Negation and Criticism of the Present

Because once you get out of chronological time, about which Prof. Keith Moxey spoke yesterday—or was it the day before yesterday—, there is no difference between the past and the future that is unbridgeable, because the function of the past can also be a criticism of the present, and the past, too, can be constructed in myriad ways. It is possible to have a more open past. But the western idea of history, particularly post-enlightenment history in the west, which is the dominant form of consciousness, promoted by the state and by the powerful and the rich, prevents the past from being kept that open. The idea of history (and this might seem very strange to you) closes some options about the past. It tries to freeze the past; it tries to reduce the past through some empirical concerns.

That is not the way in which the past is looked upon in many civilizations. In many civilizations, the past is also open, because the past can be constructed through

various ways, not only through contemporary history. Myths, epics and legends all keep the past open. Public memory transmitted over generations is another way of constructing the past. And often our anguish, our sorrow, our record of suffering can only be kept alive through memories transmitted through generations.

I remember being in a women's court, as part of a jury hearing (they were unofficial public proceedings), and an African American woman had told us of a diary in which her grandmother said: "I know that my mother and grandmother were raped. I have been raped, and my daughters and granddaughters will be raped by the slave owners." Testimony like that is not available in the history you study in schools and colleges. For that history you have to be sensitive to human sensitivities. That history can only be transmitted over generations through recorded diaries, sometimes at most, otherwise, by word of mouth. Those memories are held in trust by certain sections of the world. Societies and cultures that have no voice in history have a voice in those private-public memories transmitted over generations.

4

Open Pasts, Plural Futures

I said earlier that I think that the past can also be open. This is the fourth point. The past was specifically and clearly open in the Chinese (Sinic) and Indic civilizations. Our utopias were often located in the past. Utopias have acquired a certain pejorative sense now. Utopianism is seen to be romantic, an avoidance of reality. Utopia in much of radical literature is a term of abuse. Whatever does not agree with the dominant radical vision is seen to be "utopian", like "utopian socialism" and so on. But utopia also serves a function. Utopia, too, is a negation and a defiance of the present and the contemporary.

5

On the Theft of the Future

That brings me to the fifth point. Many of these points are interconnected. There has been a theft of the future in our times. The plurality of the ideas of the future has been challenged, and the back of that plurality has been broken in our public life. The future is open only in the privacy of our homes or even in the privacy of our thoughts.

Borrowing from Oscar Wilde, we could say that like most of the world, if you are a good Mexican, or a good Indian, you do not go to heaven but to New York after death. Previously, even in this matter we had a little bit of choice. We (Indians) were colonized by the British, and so many would have wanted to go to London. To oppose this, some others, who were radical dissenters, wanted to go to Moscow or even Beijing. Those pluralities are dying out. Even in China, I have found out, every good Chinese, would like to go, after death, to New York.

One billion Chinese and one billion Indians now constitute 40% of the world. So there you have a guaranteed future. This future is known; it has only to be spelled out, worked out, through institutional means. That is our situation.

This has been done through a process that I would like to call “space-time translation”. If you encounter a different culture in contemporary times it is no longer possible to see it as a different culture and celebrate it as such, because that difference has to be chronologically ordered. So, what is India today? It is what Europe was earlier. And what is the future of India? It is of course to be what Europe is, or what North America is, tomorrow. We are all crawling up the “inclined plane of history”. We are struggling to climb a hill—the inclined plane of history—, struggling to become Europe. And there at the top are those who reached the summit earlier, and they have the right to advise you how to climb that hill, that inclined plane, well. There is no other option.

We didn't have any past in any case, because we are ahistorical. India and Africa were supposed to be ahistorical parts of the world.

I have a story. If Shuddha gives me a little bit of time, then I can tell it.

The Story of Ahistorical Societies

An Aside

Karl Marx had declared that Asia and Africa were ahistorical continents, and therefore, colonialism had done good (because as Joan Robinson said, “The only thing worse than being colonized is not-to-be-colonized.”). But that was what he wrote. In his private letters (Johann Galtung first told me about this), he had other comments to make. For instance, he wrote that Latin Europe is also ahistorical, because Catholicism is no good. I guess Mexico falls in that category, too, if this is any consolation to you. In another letter, he wrote (he used to make these remarks mainly in asides to Engels), the Slavs are also ahistorical; they drink too much. After some years, he also said Scandinavians are ahistorical; they do not bathe and are very dirty. So, ultimately, Marx was left with very few historical societies: Germany, where he was born, England, where he spent much of his life, and the low countries, Belgium and Netherlands and so on, through which he travelled from Germany to England.

So, I belong to these ahistorical societies, hence my criticism of history as a social process and of the idea of history, for that matter, and its limitations.

In these parts of the world, we live with a different kind of consciousness, where the past is plural and open.

6**Alternatives to History**

The great Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, was originally only 10,000 couplets, but by the time it was finished it had a hundred thousand couplets. Nobody wrote them. Who wrote them? Who did the “interpolations”, as modern scholars would say. And there are Indians who try their whole lives to cure the *Mahabharata* of these (interpolations and) extrapolations. There was a project that struggled with this problem for more than a decade. That is how even the epics are closed. And they could not stand that, because there are gods and demons in the epics, and the gods are often not very godly, and the demons are not demonic enough in many places. This is a very different kind of concept of the past, a different kind of play of visions. This is the way in which history has entered our societies.

The alternatives to history and the visions that I am talking about, are the lot of the ill educated, the savages and the primitives. That is the way in which most societies are thought of. They themselves (many people in these societies) have come to think of themselves in these terms. Even in the post-colonial world, colonial principles have been internalized so well that our regimes, our establishment, think of the rest of their own society in exactly these terms - that “they” (the majority of the population) are the riffraff, the etceteras, and so-forths. That “they” (the majority of the population) are what “we” (the establishment) were yesterday. And that if “they” behave well and read the textbooks that “we” have produced, tomorrow “they” too will be like “us”. “We” therefore have hegemonized “their” present. “We” know their present better than “they” do, because “we” were once like “them”, but “we” have since grown out of it. We are now “enlightened”. And “we” have hegemonized “their” future, because “we” are already living out “their” future.

That is the game in which we are caught.

Another Story**The Cobbler and His Century**

I am nearing the end of my time, so I will just tell you a story. Probably, that will at least convey, however insufficiently, that there are still a few options left and that there are still people who do not abide by this frame given to us.

A friend of mine, a famous director of a famous business school, was also a social worker. He had organized a group that was trying to improve the lot of the former untouchables in a village dominated by cobblers. Cobblers were an untouchable caste, so it was an untouchable village.

They gave the cobblers new machinery, access to the market and new ways of organizing themselves, and indeed their lot improved dramatically. But this friend of mine was very disturbed to hear that an old cobbler was refusing to fall in line, and he thought that he would convince this old cobbler to accept the innovations.

He went to the village, took the cobbler aside and said to him, "I hear that you don't accept these changes and do not participate, that you do not use the new machinery. Why?"

The cobbler said, "I am happy as I am; I don't need all this."

So my friend said, "But your own brother is using them and has become so prosperous, and his children are doing so well."

The cobbler replied, "Yes, I know that, but I also notice that his expenses have risen and that now he cannot do without all this, and I think his happiness has diminished. He is always tense and worried about the future."

"But what is wrong," my friend continued, "in using better technology, or in accessing the market?"

The cobbler said, "There may be nothing wrong in that. I am not saying that it is wrong, but I do not want to do it. I am happy with what I have."

In desperation, my friend said, "Everybody is calling you backward and old fashioned. They are saying that you are living in the 18th century."

The cobbler responded, "I decide in which century I want to live."

I must say, to my friend's credit, that despite being the head of a business school and given to the pseudo-science of management, he was humble enough to acknowledge that he had met a formidable opponent. He himself told me that he came back a richer person for having met this cobbler and that he had learned something from the encounter.

I hope that we, too, pick up clues from those parts of the world that play with time in another way, not only through artistic visions but also with the rhythm of the life that they lead.

They perhaps have something to share with us, and we perhaps have something to share with them. Let us make our choice. Thanks.

(Cheers from the audience)

Responses, Questions, Answers (Selected)

Sengupta reading: "...The shaman waits. This shaman I am speaking of (not the anthropologists' favorite subject) waits, 'til the right moment when the right candidates come to reproduce himself or herself. Because the moment the shaman uses the available institutional instrumentalities, he or she becomes a part of the everyday

world - a priest, someone who has power, and perhaps even charisma, but is not subversive. A priest is never subversive. A priest helps consolidate a culture, whether as a priest to a revolutionary movement or as a high priest in art. He might have a subversive past, but it is only a past, and nothing is as dead as the past in a historical society. The shaman can survive in a historical society, but with difficulty.

He survives usually as a relic, existing in the present under sufferance and waiting to be superseded by interpreters who will rationally and systematically explain shamanism, or if it does not stand up to critical scrutiny, consign it to history, identified as belonging to an earlier stage in the evolution of historical consciousness. The shaman may even manage to survive in historical society as a lunatic, as a schizophrenic who should be psychiatrically committed, or, if that move becomes politically embarrassing, as one who should be met with deafening silence. However, it is possible to argue that once you explain a shaman properly, you turn him or her into a guru, or worse, into a priest, an odd, eccentric priest, but a priest nevertheless.

The difference between the shaman and the priest is in some ways akin to the one that George Steiner has, I believe, drawn somewhere between books and texts. The shaman here is the text, and the priest the book. A text can be read in many more ways than a book can ever be. In our times, Marx, Freud and Gandhi are examples of men who have produced or have become texts. Most of their disciples, though, have consistently tried to turn them into books, and closed ones at that.

Alternatively, the shaman can assume a prophetic voice, partly outside society and entirely outside the metropolis. Unlike the priest, the shaman can afford to be irresponsible, immature and irrational. The shaman's responsibility is ultimately to an inner vision, or as many would put it, to an inner vision of truth. Yet it can be argued that the shaman is actually the repressed self of society, articulating some possibilities latent in a culture - possibilities which the sane, the mature and the rational cannot self-consciously express or seriously argue."

Sengupta I could read that entire text by Ashis Nandy, from *Time Treks*, replacing the word "shaman" with the word "artist".

My task was to do a little bit of "human trafficking". Human traffickers are an honorable profession in Mexico; they are the "coyotes" who transport people across borders. I transported a man from one world into another, into the world of contemporary art. I am the human trafficker who brought you (Nandy) here. I want to know from you about what you saw in the last three days, what you witnessed and what you heard. What do you think of your companions, the artists?

Nandy— on artists and dissent

Well, let me say very honestly that the major lesson I learned, after so many years, (because I do keep in touch with artistic production to the extent that I can) is that borders are crumbling in the world of art. Younger people are experimenting with art in a way that perhaps had not been done for a long time. One of the crucial components in the world in which we live is this: that it is not through conformity that you define dominance, or hegemony. Actually hegemony is the more appropriate word. Rather it is by laying out the rules of dissent.

We live in a world where dissent is divided into justified, legitimate dissent and unjustified, illegitimate dissent. It is by monitoring dissent through setting fashionable trends within the knowledge industry and institutional cultures that you really monitor a society. This is how you give conformity a touch of vivacity, a liveliness, which it should not acquire. And I did notice that the kind of experiments that we have heard and seen in the last few days do fall amongst those concepts of dissent which are unmanageable, unruly and perhaps sometimes insane. I say and mean that as a compliment.

Sengupta— On Iván Illich

Thank you very much. My last question, before I open this up to the general house, is a request for you to share a few of your memories, some of your associations with Iván Illich, with whom we began and who has run as a kind of subterranean theme of this conference. I say this because the whole question of “another future” and of “deschooling” ourselves is something that you have been preoccupied with, and I know that you have a personal association with Iván Illich and that you have come to Mexico several times.

Nandy— Illich the shaman

Yes, I first met him in Mexico City, many —not less than 30— years ago, and I gradually grew close to him... He was a remarkable person...

Sengupta Do you think he was a priest or a shaman?

Nandy He was a shaman all right. There's no doubt about that. I had people like him in mind when I wrote that particular essay (from which you read). He had almost a panicky fear of institutions. He used to say to many of his friends in private that he had actually closed CIDOC because it was becoming fashionable to go to or visit it and that graduate students were making trips to Mexico especially to visit CIDOC. So, it no longer remained the institution that he wanted it to be. He wanted it to be a voice in the

wilderness that also reaches out to the dispossessed and the marginalized in the metropolis. That is the alliance he wanted to build, and he never wavered from that goal. Many of his ideas resonated as truthful and yet aroused anxieties at the same time. “Deschooling society” is one of them. “Medical nemesis” is a very good example. I have myself seen special issues of journals, including professional journals, devoted to the ideas or the criticisms of the medical system that Iván was venturing. *Daedalus* brought out such an issue, as did *Science*. No less than 15 such issues came out during the seven or eight years or maybe the decade after he expressed them. The interesting part of the story is that none of them mentioned the name Iván Illich. None of them even mentioned it. They did not want to “glorify” his book. The book was, of course, a bestseller. They did not want to acknowledge that the criticism emerged from outside the medical profession. They referred to all kinds of other tangential work, which raised some of these issues, like iatrogenesis (therapy induced disease), for instance, and, as Iván argued, the fact that none of the major epidemics were cured by the medical system, that this had more to do with the improvement of sanitation. Except smallpox, of course; he always made the exception of smallpox. Other than smallpox, no major epidemic was cured by medicine. He gave the data that showed that tuberculosis had already come down to ten percent of what it had been before the drugs against tuberculosis were discovered or developed and so on and so forth. Cholera, as well, was the same story.

Actually he was more right than he knew. One of our friends who was very fond of Iván Illich wrote an excellent anthropological account of the pre- or non-modern forms of vaccination available in India and China, which also kept smallpox in check. It was called variolation and is well known. Many other cultures also had it. Illich was actually wrong about smallpox; it was not the exception. His theory held, even though he was unaware of it. Illich enjoyed this.

So there is always this part of the story. I remember reading a long review of his life’s work published just a few years before his death, in the *New York Review of Books*, where the whole tone of the writing suggests that he was a “lapsed prophet” who “overdid things” and “sensationalized” many of his findings, that “time had left him behind”. By the time he was dead, his work was inaccessible in many parts of the world. He died a forgotten man, though he was at the height of his creativity then.

Sengupta I now open the time and space we have for discussions and comments. Questions. Please be brief and introduce yourself.

Salvador— On Education for the Future

My name is Salvador. You’re talking about education or pedagogy that will maybe open the past and let us imagine a different future. Which kind of mechanisms

should that education encompass so that it can open the past and create a possibility for a new future?

Nandy There is no time for me to give an elaborate answer, but I will give a clue. Just yesterday Oscar Hagerman talked of schools that were built with the active participation of communities. I believe that the educational process itself can involve the active participation of communities. I believe that much knowledge exists outside the formal academic structure. I will give you an example from India, and I am sure that you can find similar examples from Mexico, because the answer has to be community specific.

India has about 350 government, state-supported universities and about another 300 private universities. The private universities do not go in for any education in the humanities and the arts; they only go in for technological education, mainly engineering, information technology, medicine and maybe dentistry. The only disciplines that they support and teach in the humanities or social sciences are economics and management.

Among the government-supported universities in India, there are roughly 15 that offer courses in music, and you can even do your PhD in music. They have produced scores of PhDs in music, but I can also tell you that in the last 50 to 60 years I have not seen a single publicly recognized musician produced by the university system, not one. Some things the universities simply cannot teach. For that you have to go outside the university system. I am mainly speaking of Indian classical music here. Indeed, when it comes to serious classical music, even those who have PhD degrees in music from these universities have their personal gurus, and they are taught in the old-fashioned way it has always been done: the student has to go and live with the teacher in a 24-hour interaction and has to imbibe the ethos of that music and that particular master in a one-to-one relationship. So that is the way it goes. Perhaps that gives you some idea of how it can be, and in that kind of thing, the community is what becomes important.

For instance, in India, there are so many institutes of agronomy, but no one has ever asked a practicing farmer to teach anything to any student in any of these agricultural universities. And yet I remember a UN functionary, who was himself an agronomist, saying, "I have come to you because of your interests and because I have read some of your writing, and I wanted to tell you that in the last few years that I have spent in India, I have found that more than 90% of the real work in testing out a new seed, pesticide or water management system has been done by the farmers themselves. Because they are born skeptics, they always distrust what is given by the government. They never accept it immediately and use it all over the land they own. They divide their plot into a grid of 16 or 64 squares. In one section they will put a new seed; in one they will use less water; in another more water; in one area

they will combine it with a new pesticide, and they play out all the possibilities. That is the way. This is also a clue.

Irit Rogoff— On Nationalism

I wanted to ask you about where one relegates nationalism. I think that maybe the fight against nationalism has been the major fight of my life. It's the one that has organized a lot of my thinking. One of the things that confound me in this trajectory is that one is always relegating it to the past and yet it always becomes the future, and there is absolutely no way to produce it as a pre-history. So, I wanted to ask you where, in this kind of movement between the present and future, you put nationalism and the need to constantly re-fight nationalism.

Nandy: I do distinguish between nationalism and territoriality. I think some degree of territoriality is given to human kind biologically, the way it is given to cats and dogs, and even to birds. That (the territorial instinct of birds) is the whole basis of the principle of messaging through carrier pigeons. But nationalism is not a sentiment, territoriality is. Nationalism is an ideology. It came into being in the 17th century, when the monarchies began to collapse in Europe, along with the old appeal of the king and the country, of the king as the mediator between heaven and earth, and the country was seen as inadequate to protect its solidarity. Newborn nation-states looked for an ideology to cement their inner bonds, and that is how nationalism was born.

And in nationalism there are always allies and enemies. Though at least as one Turkish psychoanalyst has argued, that search for allies and enemies is also necessarily part of being human, because "we all look for allies, and we all look out for enemies." Perhaps nationalism takes advantage of that part of our biological self, or of our deeper self, while territoriality depends on another part of our self.

I do not think that nationalism has any place in the kind of world I am talking about. But, we live in an imperfect world. The solution does not lie in proscribing nationalism. The solution lies in working through nationalism, to see it as a homogenizing principle, as something which flattens differences, which is afraid of differences, which claims priority for the nation over all other allegiances, whereas in the older empires, these priorities were provisional. In some situations, the fact that you were a Christian or a Protestant, and in others, the country and allegiance to the king came first. In some situations it was community, caste, denomination, or other things came first.

I think the last word on it was said by Wali Khan, the Pakistani dissenter and son of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (the "frontier Gandhi"), who said, while he was being tried for sedition in court, "I have been a Pakistani for 45 years, a Muslim for a thousand years, and a Pathan for 5,000 years. Do not teach me patriotism."

We are multiple selves. This idea of a unified, well-integrated self that we have begun to demand of citizens is itself a dangerous contribution of nationalism.

Harry— How Do You See The Future?

(in Spanish - a question about integrated chips, blade runner, how do you imagine and visualize the future of the planet. Please translate)

Sengupta You are being asked to be Jules Verne

Nandy— On Dystopia and Utopia

(Laughing): Let me make two things clear. First of all, just because I am raising some questions does not mean I have the answers (laughter in the audience). Secondly, I have found from my experience (because I have worked on this idea for very many years) that human beings always found dystopias more convincing than utopias. The most influential futuristic works in my lifetime have been first, George Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. All three have been immensely popular. I'll give this specific example. Orwell did not write another futuristic novel, but Aldous Huxley did, and H.G. Wells did. People have forgotten those novels. Aldous Huxley's novel was *Island*, which is a positive utopia; nobody remembers it. And H.G. Wells' was *Men Like Gods*; nobody remembers that either. That is because it is easier to convince about what should not be there in the future than it is to convince about what should be there in the future. The moment you put it positively, plurality immediately takes over, and you can never have a consensus or an aggregation of interests. All our positive utopias have failed. The last one failed in 1989. All our positive utopias have failed; that should teach us something. But all our negative utopias have done their job. 1984 was not what George Orwell thought it would be, and the "brave new world" of Aldous Huxley is yet to arrive.

The end

Notes

¹ Motto of the University of Mexico, created by Vasconcelos in the 1920s

² Marpa fut très remué lorsque son fils fut tué, et l'un de ses disciples dit: <<Vous nous disiez toujours que tout est illusion. Qu'en est-il de la mort de votre fils, n'est-ce pas une illusion?>> Et Marpa répondit: "Certes, mais la mort de mon fils est une super-illusion." Roland Barthes, manuscript for Camera Lucida, IMEC (L'Institut Mémoires de L'Édition Contemporaine, Caen), BRT2.A21.02, p. 64 from Trungpa, *Pratique de la vie thibétaine*. The first French edition of *La chambre claire* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, Gallimard, Seuil, 1980) put Marpa on the back cover. The English translation by Richard Howard, *Camera lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981) did not include it. Geoffrey

Batchen seems not to have been able to examine the manuscript for *La chambre claire* at the time of writing his introduction to the edited volume of essays on the book, *Photography Degree Zero* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009). The translation here is mine.

³ Chris Marker, *La Jetée/Sans Soleil*, Criterion Edition DVD (2007), booklet, p. 31.

⁴ Jacques Rancière, *La Nuit des Prolétaires: Archives du Rêve Ouvrier* (Paris: Fayard, 1981) in English as *Nights of Labor*, introduction by Donald Reid, translated by John Drury (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), p. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶ *Ibid.*