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Utopianism after the End of Utopia?

Utopian models of thought have largely vanished after the respective failures of both Capitalism and Communism in redeeming their promises of providing overcompensation for everyone. However, recently social scientists such as David Harvey, cultural critics such as Fredrik Jameson, and even politicians such as Barack Obama have called for new utopian visions as motors for social progress. This paper investigates the relationship between these new forms of utopianism after the so-called “end of utopia” to the ones we find in the classical utopian tradition from Thomas More to Karl Marx. The guiding hypothesis is that while classical utopias emphasize a state of perfection (total happiness, the just society), the recent return to utopia emphasizes questions of form over those of substance (subversion, change). Only a utopia that would be able to combine an emphasis on both form and substance would be able to make justified promises.