

Imagining Utopia

February 8, 2007

7:30 PM

The Philoctetes Center

Levy: Francis Levy
Bell Baxter: Adrienne Baxter Bell
Cattaneo: Anne Cattaneo
Gay: Peter Gay
Pippin: Robert Pippin
Rockwell: John Rockwell
Schlossberg: Edwin Schlossberg

Levy: I am now pleased to introduce Anne Cattaneo. I first met Anne when we were both students in the doctoral program in dramatic criticism at the Yale School of Drama. While I turned most of my critical inclinations on my family, Anne went on to become dramaturge of the Lincoln Center Theater and creator and head of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors' Lab. A three term past President of Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, she is the recipient of LMDA's first Lessing Award for lifetime achievement in dramaturgy. Anne will moderate tonight's panel and introduce the other panelists.

Cattaneo: The part that I'm least good at is introducing other people, so you are all carrying a program and I'll introduce everyone by just saying who they are and you can read exactly, they all have enormous biographies that I can only begin to touch on. This is a discussion that encompasses many facets. Adrienne Baxter Bell comes to us to talk in particular about the world of art. She teaches at Marymount Manhattan College. Peter Gay is Emeritus Professor from Yale, author of many, many books. So I'm counting on you to hold up the 19th century part of this, as well as many other things. Robert Pippin from Chicago represents the world of philosophy on our panel. John Rockwell, who is an old friend from Lincoln Center, what are you here for? Art? Literature? Art, literature, marriage and music. A former editor of the Arts and Leisure section, he just published a book. Edwin Schlossberg, who I am delighted to welcome, I see you as 21st century architecture, cyberspace and media. All of their various books and accomplishments are on your program.

This panel actually began thanks to Starbucks, because Francis and I were getting together after not seeing each other for a number of years, when we first went into rehearsal with *Coast of Utopia*. I edit with John Guare, the playwright, the magazine that we just passed out to all of you, the *Lincoln Center Theater Review*, which is a magazine that is sort of an armchair companion to many of the plays. We do it three times a year. We view it as an ideal theater-going companion. If you've just seen *Utopia* and you wonder what Margaret Atwood might have to say about *Utopia* you can open your magazine and there she is discussing *Utopia*. John and I had just interviewed her and I was so excited by what she had to say, and then I went to have a cup of coffee with Frank and we talked a lot about this interview and he said, you should come up and do a panel about that. So we went into rehearsal with this absolutely insane project, a three-part trilogy on 19th century Russian Utopian thinkers. We thought we were going to be in a deficit situation, nobody would be interested in this. The first day we put our member tickets

on sale I came to work at 10:00 in the morning and I thought that the Library for the Performing Arts had been evacuated, there was a line of 3,000 people going up Amsterdam Avenue waiting to buy tickets. So clearly the subject of utopia is one that seems resonant and interesting to many, many people, and it has gone on to be very, very widely embraced by audiences, by the press, etc. We're just about to open the final part. I've been in rehearsal all day. I saw Stoppard when I was leaving, who has got a lot of work to do tonight and he said, oh I'd much rather come to your panel than have to go to work tonight, so he asked me to say hello to everybody. Some of you have seen these plays, some of you have not. They are plays which have many ideas about living together in the world, but they follow the story of friends who met at the University of Moscow in the 1840s, the generation of the 1840s and as young students they formed political circles and philosophical circles and began to agitate, write and reform for change in Russia: the emancipation of the serfs, freedom to travel, freedom of the press and bringing in new ideas from the West, ideas of philosophy and political thinking. They all were jailed, sent into exile and they reunited in the second play in Paris in 1848. The characters, obviously many of you know, are Alexander Herzen, Michael Bakunin, Nicholas Ogarev (who was a friend of Herzen's and a poet), Vissarion Belinsky (who was a literary critic and really responsible for nurturing many of the early Russian writers of the century—not Pushkin but pretty much everybody after that), Stankevich (who is the head of the philosophy circle). Stankevich and Belinsky die quite young. And of course Ivan Turgenev, who was also a student at that time. They were all in the same class at the University of Moscow, just like you and I were. So we follow them in the three plays to Paris. In the second play, where they are there, everything is true, based on historical fact. They were all there during the Revolution of 1848, except for Belinsky and Stankevich who died of tuberculosis by then. And then we continue to follow them in the third play into their exile in England. Towards the very end we are in Geneva right before Herzen's death. So this panorama of a century opens up in Stoppard's view questions of all kinds: how to live together, how to live in the world, how you imagine a future, should one imagine a future and how.

With that in mind I emailed around a few questions. As I said, this is a conversation that we will start among ourselves and then open to questions. It is a conversation we could probably be having for the next three weeks, but we'll open up a few things to talk about today. So I sent around some questions and I'm just going to mention some of those and from our different areas of observation and expertise I just want to ask you all if you will respond, as you see fit, as we get started.

The first question I circulated to our panel was: is utopian thinking a product of historical times? Why was the 19th century such a fertile time for this kind of thinking? Margaret Atwood in her interview said that the Utopian thinkers seemed to be focused in the 19th century, whether they are the Shakers, whether they are the thinkers in our play *The Coast of Utopia*, and in contrast the utopian thinkers of the 20th century are Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot, and I added the Reverend Jim Jones. So is there something about the kind of thinking that's different in those centuries? Then I became curious about the utopian thinkers of the 21st century, SimCity, Second Life. Is there utopian thinking going on on the web among young people? There is some urge for it. Why does it pop up and how does it pop up in different centuries? So maybe I'll open that up as my first question and see if anybody has anything to say, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st? Would you like to start, since you're the 19th?

Gay: Why was there so much interest in utopia through the 19th century? Well, that is very difficult to deal with because there are many utopias earlier, as you know. Some 19th century utopianists were borrowing from earlier utopians. So that might be one of the reasons. Another was the existence of a relatively open country, like the United States, where games could be played. They were not available in Europe—the Vice President calls it the Old Country or the Old Culture. So I don't think it's too surprising. There is perhaps one other thing: a certain loosening up of the rigid notions of where people belong in the social hierarchy. Again, I don't want to overdo this but I do think that after 1815, after the end of Napoleon, there is a good deal of stirring about where people, in fact, belong. As an historian I haven't liked the phrase "rising bourgeoisie" for a long time, but there is something to this: the entrepreneurship, where people like American millionaires, for example, very often come from Europe and under very limited circumstances make it over here in a way they could not in Europe. These are a couple of things.

Cattaneo: Would you give us a little background on the philosophers of the 19th century who are mentioned in our play?

Pippin: I know we're not assuming anyone has seen the plays, but as a way into this question, one of the really interesting things about the characters in this play is that none of them are really—well Bakunin is really probably the most traditional utopian thinker, that is, people who just don't think that society could get better, but think it could be perfected. This is the classic notion of utopianism: Plato, Moore, experiments in communal living in the 19th century and so forth. Anarchism is the struggle constantly against rule or order of any kind as a kind of perfected life or a life constantly perfecting itself. But the other forms of utopian thinking that are alive in the play are much less traditional. Herzen is pretty much a moderate reformist. But the reception of German philosophy in the 19th century played such a huge role in the dialogue in the play, which I never had seen before in a public production of anything.

Cattaneo: I had to spend a great deal of time in July trying to make our wonderful actor David Harbour, who had just won a Tony for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. He and the rest of the company had never heard the name Hegel when we went into rehearsal, and I brought them along to Fichte and Schilling.

Pippin: The Russian reception of German philosophy sort of highlighted an aspect of that particular strain of idealism in which the advent of modernization or modernity—Western European Enlightenment, modernity from its French through its German versions—represented for many of these people the advent of utopia itself already. The ideals of the French Revolution, the social mobility introduced by new forms of wealth production, and German Romantic notions of a kind of vast cosmic scene on which all this was playing out altered the way traditional utopianism is often presented. Rather than some unattainable ideal we have to hope we can approximate, many of them began to think it was actually happening, and with tremendous envy at Russian backwardness and inability to join in the realization of this ideal. The ideal was human liberty. This seemed to be given. In a very compressed way, the message of German idealism was that this was the point of everything. The point of all cosmic creation was the final realization: that human liberty had started to occur, which was exciting. But there are two other forms of utopian thinking in the plays that are extremely interesting. One is the enormous burden placed on art, that there's a kind of utopian domain accessible in aesthetic

transcendence. It's extremely interesting that this idea would become so powerful, a way of transcending the ordinary, finite contingent, unacceptable humdrumness of everyday life in aesthetic transformation. It is more a burden than art could bear, but interesting that it came to bear it. And then while all the men are reading Hegelian philosophy all the women are reading Georges Sand, and that means that they also placed this enormous burden, a utopian burden, on Romantic life, on the idealization of human love as something more than the messy coupling of animals, but this spiritual transcendence in a kind of ideal unity that would transform life by virtue of just having occurred. These other forms of utopian thinking, romantic life and aesthetic transformation, and this lust for modernity, represented something rather non-traditional in utopian thinking, not the sort of perfected plan imitated just faintly. That struck me as quite interesting.

Cattaneo: Isn't that also Schilling's philosophy, that you find transcendence in art?

Pippin: Yes, very much. And there's a nice line in the play where one of the characters says, "Well, I'd prefer Fichte, he's at least more democratic." We can all have a share in it.

Cattaneo: We don't have to be great artists. What about in music, John?

Rockwell: I would say that Stoppard gets a lot of comic play about Bakunin rushing in about every ten pages and saying, "Forget Kant, the truth is in Fichte. Forget Fichte—." And every time he picks up a new German philosopher he jettisons all the previous ones, which is amusing if you find them all kind of interesting. Music has always operated on its own mystical plane—the music of the spheres and all of that—that's why Plato had attitude about it. But you could argue that the community of notes is a utopian community all by itself and musicians belong to a kind of elect society that can share in this that mere mortals cannot.

Cattaneo: I'm thinking about Wagner.

Rockwell: There's no question that many of the Romantics, not just Wagner but also Liszt and Chopin and others, had a more or less articulated philosophy to go along with their composition, and that Romantic music shared in many of the presuppositions having to do with not only a kind of transcendent betterment of man through aesthetics but also the sexual, romantic notion of it. To what extent all of these harmonized together in the way Stoppard conjoins them in this play, and to what extent they were all sort of parallel movements, I don't know. Certainly Wagner, friend of both Bakunin and also Herwegh—who plays a role in this, which you didn't mention—but Herwegh, the German semi-revolutionary poet: they all believed in both political revolution and in aesthetic Romantic revolution. So it wasn't just Georges Sand who swept along the susceptible, but it was also the music of the time, best rendered in the Tabu perfume ad of the woman swooning backward against the diabolically handsome violinist who embraces her.

Cattaneo: It's funny, only people over 45 remember that ad.

Rockwell: That's everybody in this room. Most everybody.

Cattaneo: It's also interesting, we had a conversation with Tom about the fact that when you look at Herzen's writing, it isn't only the women who were totally tuned in to Georges Sand. She was enormously influential to the men, to Herzen and Bakunin. They loved her, and of course she's having the affair with Chopin. It is an absolutely astonishing period because everybody seems to know everybody. Bakunin runs off to Saxony with Richard Wagner and everybody is in this world in Paris in 1848 when they come out to the West.

Rockwell: In fairness, Bakunin ran off to Saxony where he met Richard Wagner. He was less interested in Wagner maybe than Wagner was in him, in terms of a thinker. Bakunin hardly knew or cared much about Wagner's music, but regarded him as an amusing companion on the barricades.

Cattaneo: Tell us your theory about Siegfried.

Rockwell: I have many theories. It's not a theory: it's fairly known that the original character of Siegfried, now regarded in post-Nazi times as a kind of Aryan bully boy, was based on Bakunin. Wagner writes at considerable length in *My Life*, his autobiography, about Bakunin and what a force of nature he was and so forth.

Cattaneo: I had to make, thanks to John, some little recordings of Siegfried arias for Ethan Hawke to listen to on his iPod when he was getting ready for his role. Could you talk a little bit about art in that century, which is a reference in the play?

Bell: Aesthetic Romantic revolution—that's a great phrase, something that resonated with me when I was thinking about this. I'm afraid I'm going to ricochet this over to America because it is such an important topic for Americans in the 19th century. One of the things I was thinking about when we were batting around this idea was the connection between utopia and nature and how important a role nature plays in defining what utopia is to Americans in the 19th century. Because it all begins with the kind of city on the hill: the errand into the wilderness, the notion of conquering the wilderness, the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal. These are all profoundly utopian concepts. And during the 19th century, for the artists especially, there is a tremendous struggle to identify utopia. I was thinking about Thomas Cole, for example, who in his letters on landscape painting in 1836 defines the wilderness as a fitting place to speak of God. In a way, you can't get a utopian phrase than that. But he's also somebody who anticipates the destruction of utopia. All we have to do is go to the New York Historical Society and see his *Course of Empire* series from 1836 and see the agrarian pastoral ideal, the rise of civilization, and the eventual destruction of civilization. So that is a whole utopian arc from beginning to end: we see the progress of the creation of a utopia and the eventual destruction, which raises the point, of course, of whether there is the seed of destruction inherent in every potential utopia. That's another thing we can talk about. And of course the 19th century itself is this incredible fruit basket of utopian ideas, both from the philosophical point of view and then manifested in various concrete ways with these utopian societies—Brooke Farm and Eagle's Wood—these various communities that had their rise and fall themselves. But they were essentially also so deeply connected to nature that they existed in nature, on nature. They were self-sustaining through nature. Nature is always a part of this idea and before Darwin, before the Civil War in fact, very much a sense of a physical place. And then this transformation that takes place mid-century with

Darwin, with the idea that nature is a killing field. For the first time we're seeing through photography, with the photographs of Brady and Timothy O'Sullivan, and all of a sudden people see nature associated with death and destruction and the dissemination of those images.

I was thinking also about this Center and the interest in psychology, and it struck me how much utopia becomes a psychological state towards the end of the 19th century, and how there's this tremendous turn inwards towards defining what psychology is and the new understanding of consciousness in the writings of William James, for example, who uses the notion of nature and psychology together when he defines something like a stream of consciousness. So nature becomes something that is internalized and helps us to define very much who we are and we see this very profoundly again in the works of artists of the late 19th century. We see people like George Inness, Blakelock and Ryder turning to their own internal states in order to create works of the landscape that are nowhere defined as landscapes, and in a way those are all utopian visions. They may have the name Montclair, New Jersey on them, but they are in fact a kind of utopic vision. I was also reminded of a wonderful story about Ryder, who notoriously lived in a complete mess on West 4th Street in a brownstone. His house was filled with junk and there were boxes and old clothes and even food, and people would go in to see him and write about him and describe this mess, an enormous mess outside his window in a garden with piles of junk and all this. And they wondered how in the world he could live in this environment, and when he was asked about it he described a utopic vision of flowers and birds singing and trees and all sorts of wonderful things, so for him he was seeing a utopia and it was very much his psychological state that utopia had become a personal internalized vision. So I guess I was interested in that trajectory, to get a handle on this enormous, monstrous topic. I was thinking about how in the 19th century there was an inward moving process. Of course we also see it in the Manet painting because it itself is such a problematic painting in terms of nature is and how we are looking at nature. This shift in our vision is something that painting really embodies completely and it is all done in a natural setting.

Cattaneo: The painting is actually on the back of magazines that we passed out to everybody. You are all familiar with it and it is a painting that at a key moment in the second play you realize is suddenly on stage. Just to stake out our boundaries, moving into the present, I wonder if we can move to architecture, which seems important. SimCity, where are we now, cyberspace? Could you give us some thoughts to move us into the present?

Schlossberg: One of the things that was so striking to me about the presentation was that the expectation of anything about utopia suggests the Other—other than the real. It has an idea of imagined composition outside of the real where you can create perfection. I think that one of the brilliant aspects of the staging of this play was the creation of an environment with a sensibility that perfection was sort of constantly being talked about but never realized. In an interesting way the utopian experience of those men's and women's lives was actually much more vital than the ideas that they were presenting. One of the things that was interesting about the pieces you collected (I went on like everyone else and bought Isaiah Berlin and other people and read all about it) was that if you think about what Russia was like, the number of people that could have actually contemplated a utopia or had that conversation was so small. There was actually no rich cultural life, or a very small cultural life. So the idea of imagining something had to be abstracted. It had to be something that was not connected. And in the staging of the play, for

those that haven't seen it yet, there are mannequins of the serfs all the way along the back edge of the stage, just standing there. It is stunning that in this play, the disembodied-ness of everyone who is not a part of this conversation and in a sense the portrayed insensitivity to that is essential for the idea of the composing of the stories. To counterbalance that: the optimism of contemporary life, with the idea of composing reality collaboratively rather than individualistically. The pluralistic composition of reality is what we're involved in. I think that Stoppard is tipping his hat to the fact that utopia is what's happening in the present, not this aspirational environment in the future. That's what we have to reject, this idea of it always being in the city on the hill. It actually has to be the city we're living in.

Cattaneo: Have you seen the third play yet?

Schlossberg: I haven't.

Cattaneo: Well you're right with Mr. Stoppard. All you've got to do is come to the very end and you'll be very happy because what you just said—

Schlossberg: It is also the most brilliantly staged visual experience of a play I've seen, maybe ever, as a context to set the ideas.

Cattaneo: When we first met over a year ago, the director Jack O'Brien and Bob Crowley and Scott Pask, our set designers, and I, we were just beginning to sort through this. It is an extremely complex read, this trilogy. You really have to focus hard. So I was doing some research and came up with this actual statistic, that of the population of Russia at this time, 1840 when the play begins, 10% of the population was literate and 50 million, 90% of the population, were serfs. If you look at the comparable statistics in the United States, Lincoln freed—I can't remember the numbers—something like six million slaves. So the emancipation of Alexander II freed 12 times as many serfs, but the percentage of Russia, of people who were slaves, was completely different than in the United States, and thus came those mannequins in the back, always present, because they were such a huge percentage of the population of Russia.

Talk a little bit about SimCity, what do you think about that?

Schlossberg: SimCity is an environment that users create online. It started out as a single compositional environment that you could do on a computer to create a simulation of a city or a cell or a plant or an animal. Eventually it got to be a much more complex environment, and now it's a massive multiplayer environment where you have hundreds of thousands of people simultaneously living and working and composing a city together.

Cattaneo: Does anybody here have kids who play SimCity?

Schlossberg: And Second Life. There are many. SimCity has a collaborative sense. Second Life is a narrative—it has a direction.

Cattaneo: SimCity is one of the biggest selling computer games in America now and everybody is on it creating these little towns—how many people in the towns and what's the industry.

Pippin: Some of my students play a more radical one where you create a character for yourself, a completely different character, and go through.

Schlossberg: Second Life.

Pippin: And some become so involved with it they lose the original life.

Schlossberg: There is a conversation about carbon life versus silicon life that people really feel they don't know where they prefer to live. I think it is a very compelling experience for many people and I think it's compelling because it is a very thorough practice environment for real life and there are very few of those.

Pippin: The key thing is, can you really die in one of these?

Schlossberg: You certainly can become a millionaire. There's been the first millionaire who earned money selling all the avatars and costuming and real estate that he had created in Second Life to other people.

Rockwell: But surely that's a secondary form of being a millionaire: the primary form being virtual millionaires.

Schlossberg: Absolutely. There's currency in each one of these environments, which is the currency of the game, which people then trade. But some have traded into the carbon world.

Rockwell: Degenerate renegades that they are.

Schlossberg: On which side?

Rockwell: On the virtual side, which is the true reality.

Cattaneo: It sounds like we're talking about 19th century idealism here. We've laid a few things out on the table. I'll move to my second question. This has come up in some of our rehearsals: why is utopian thinking in literature—and I wrote some examples: *1984*, *Handmaid's Tale*, *Brave New World*, *Animal Farm*—so much more pessimistic than in political writing?

Schlossberg: What would you categorize as political writing?

Cattaneo: I'm thinking of these philosophers or the writing of Marx or Lenin, the writing that looks to make change in a positive way.

Schlossberg: You haven't made a good differentiation with those things.

Pippin: It does depend on which period you're talking about. The play cycle stops before the emergence of the complete disaffection with modernist conceptions of utopia. 1848 is the big political break, but even in the play there's the fine line by Herzen—that we wanted modernity, but now it's just materialism, triviality and skepticism, and that's not what we thought it was going to be. The same sort of thing is true about the Romantic complications of this idealization. The freedom of free love: people are hurt and destroyed, devastated, disloyalties occur, betrayals. There isn't any such thing as that kind of freedom. It's the impotence of art to effect cultural or social change. We're right at the period where if you're not talking about dystopian political thought, you have to think about Nietzsche, Heidegger. The current changes fairly dramatically in late modernist culture in European philosophy and cultural writing in general.

Cattaneo: And what are those dates?

Pippin: I'd say roughly from 1870 to the Second World War, the same thing was very obvious in art as well: the dystopian element entering in and a kind of fatigue with the utopian expectations of modernism and modernity not being fulfilled. This revolutionary hope to be completely self-determining—19th century utopian thought is the most radical humanism in the history of modern thought. It is all about us: we're about to take over completely, from nature even; we're going to make nature do our will; we're going to be completely self-determining collectively. And all of it turned out to be, in some sense, a false expectation or an illusion. There are still thinkers around who think the problem is just completing modernity's promise rather than this fundamental realization of its deceptive or false consciousness. But in much political or cultural or philosophical writing in the period after 1848 one might say the same kind of dystopian tone that you pointed to in literature becomes much more pronounced as well.

Cattaneo: Yes, I ran across this saying with the actor playing the doctor on the seashore in the third play, who is going to become the central character of *Fathers and Sons* by Turgenev: all nihilists are children of idealists. I thought that was kind of nice. Tom Stoppard is very aware of this generational shift, this generational change.

Rockwell: But do we therefore refute your premise? In other words, the argument would seem to be that pessimism and optimism is a fact of place and time rather than form of expression.

Cattaneo: Well, I was wondering, I was trying to think of a contradiction to this list. What is an optimistic utopian novel? Can anyone think of one?

Pippin: Well, there are science fiction novels, but it's not clear what their actual topos—their place—is.

Cattaneo: I don't know that much about science fiction, but science fiction obviously plays a huge role. I didn't even know which books to cite, but it plays a huge role in utopian thinking because that's a whole genre.

Rockwell: There's a lot of pessimistic science fiction.

Schlossberg: But is a novel that ends well—the family really gets along—is that a utopian novel? Is that an optimistic novel?

Cattaneo: I'm trying to think of a novel where the family gets along.

Pippin: There's a parallel novel to this series of plays and that is Roth's *American Pastoral*, which is a kind of novel about the 1960s, very much about the same sort of things that the reaction to 1848 was about. The novel is really about the failure, but also the self-deceit, the naïveté—the sort of cruelty that that kind of self-deceit and naïveté can visit on an entire civilization.

Rockwell: But we live in a kind of anti-utopian climate, which, in turn, is a result of all your dictators that you reeled off earlier. I'm not sure that they represent 20th century utopian thinking so much as, in the eyes of those who think that utopianism is inherently flawed, that they represent the kind of grim consequences of the working out of the ideas of the 19th century optimistic utopians. When you say literature is pessimistic and the political writing is optimistic, there's certainly a lot of pessimistic political writing, especially in the second half of the 20th century. So, as I say, place and time versus form of expression.

Cattaneo: I'll move on. I'm just trying to throw a number of questions. Looking at the heydays of utopian thinking, do they coincide with times of social change, new trends in art or music, changes in marriage and personal relations, thus Stoppard's 1848, 1920s, 1960s? I'm looking at certain shifts.

Pippin: Well, the utopians between 1815 and 1848 were living in a time of Metternichian repression, sort of post-Napoleonic conservative reaction, so in that sense they would not correspond to times of social change. If anything they engendered them.

Gay: Not much happened: the famous 1848 turning point, which didn't turn. And if you look ahead, by 1849 things are roughly as they'd been.

Rockwell: I don't think these characters are very unhappy about it—the characters in Stoppard's play.

Pippin: It's very similar to 1989, that same kind of euphoria and then disappointment to a certain extent. I mean the horrors of the 20th century are well known, but post-'89 is the first time since the French Revolution that there's not on the world stage a kind of revolutionary consciousness, a revolutionary movement of any kind.

Rockwell: Except Islam.

Pippin: *Progressive* revolutionary movement. Political, radical Islam is a regression—it's anti-modernist. It's a very odd thing for modernity, because modernity itself is a revolutionary ideology. But the idea that the domestic virtues are so erotically unsatisfying—peace, commodious living, the bourgeois family, domestic life as a mode of life, doesn't seem to

be able to generate the kind of fervor or allegiance. It did when it was an anti-repressive movement, but so much of the literature and art of the post mid-19th century is full of a kind of bourgeois self-hatred.

Rockwell: You have the generalized optimistic hysteria of August 1914, when everybody was saying, finally we can get rid of all this boring peace and domesticity and go off and be heroic. They got their chance.

Cattaneo: To go back to where you started with that sentence, in the interview it mentions that out of this utopian thinking in the 19th century come a number of these movements—end of slavery, feminism. These are some of the logical progressions.

Pippin: There's still a lot of liberation—ethnic politics, identity politics—there's still a lot of liberationist rhetoric about finding new forms of oppression to liberate oneself from, but one senses that that has a short half-life as well.

Bell: And there's a reaction against all of that, of course, which is the slide into aestheticism in the late 19th century. That's a pure escapist fantasy.

Rockwell: Well, it's not an escapist fantasy if you regard romantic, aesthetic and political as more or less on the same plain. If you regard aesthetic as a third rate reflection of the realities of political life, then it's an escapist fantasy.

Bell: It's escapist to the extent that I think it wasn't grappling with the problems at hand as much as papering them over, literally, with beautiful things to look at. Certainly in America the whole Tonalist movement was about beautiful women in beautiful costumes in beautiful settings.

Rockwell: I place a higher value on beauty than as an escape from the reality of politics.

Bell: Which is not to say that it was any less—it's just different. I'm not saying that it's any worse than that, I'm simply arguing that it was an option that had not been presented quite as forcefully before that time.

Cattaneo: My next question was one that Francis liked a lot. Starting with the Bible—I always think of the Garden of Eden—why is there so much nudity called for in utopias? What was your response to that?

Levy: My response was that it was precisely the issue that none of us had really dealt with in our preconceptions about the roundtable. It was that the ideologies of the roundtable dealt with aesthetic matters and matters of society and matters of philosophy. We hadn't dealt with utopia's intrapsychic issue—it sort of goes with the German idealist element that is in Fichte and Schilling, and certainly going back to Kant where you have the notion of the *Phenomena* and *Noumena*, where you can separate that. The mind is conjuring up something about which you could have synthetic, a priori knowledge. In other words, you could have knowledge of the world that is not based upon any vision of the world, which suggests to me that there's a utopian impulse that exists inside human beings that is apart from any of the familiar milieu in which the

human being finds himself. In other words it might be an Edenic or prelapsarian kind of desire for a return to a state that is devoid of temptation, of all the things that make us human—of eros, of thanatos, of repression. That was kind of what I was getting at, because we are after all at the center for the study of imagination and we are also oriented towards neuroscience and psychoanalysis. So the response to nudity was very suggestive—I didn't mean it to be in a puerile sense, but of course that is the sense in which I enjoyed it. And I have nothing against the eros either as a form of utopian conception. But the nude seems to be an instinct in people to create something that is almost an intra-psychoic and organic human propensity, and that is what that question meant to me.

Cattaneo: That is what was motivating all those ticket buyers to come at 10:00 in the morning and buy the tickets to *Utopia*. I include a quote, and it goes right with what you're saying. This is a quote from Tom from *Coast of Utopia*: "A child's purpose is to be a child. Nature doesn't disdain what lives only for a day, pours the whole of itself into each moment and life's bounty is in its flow. Later is too late. It is only we humans who want to own the future too."

Gay: This brings up something—if I may use a psychoanalytic term here: how regressive most of these utopianists are. Return to childhood is a given, it is where it all began, all this stuff about the innocence of children, which Freud has a few things to say about after all. I would say it is a very important reason why nowadays we are very worried about utopians, and with justice.

Cattaneo: What utopians are we worried about?

Gay: Anyone with a program that requires closed membership and 100% agreement. It is a very nice—not so very nice—statement by German revolutionaries in 1918 that I can give you in German, but in English it is: If you don't want to be my brother I'm going to break your neck.

Cattaneo: The question that is next on my list is this exact thing. Margaret Atwood—again I keep quoting her—says in the magazine that, as Nathaniel Hawthorne pointed out, the first two things the Puritans built were a prison and a scaffold. So what about the people who don't want to join or don't fit in?

Schlossberg: One of the key ideas of any kind of community is the idea of the rules and the boundary of whatever it is you are suggesting. I think, going back to the thread of nudity, the reason why it is interesting is because there are all the rules of social behavior and how you dress or not and how you behave or not. And I think the thing I felt was so interesting, what has always been so interesting to me about utopian thought—I include as a modern utopian Buckminster Fuller and Daniel Bell and people who wrote about a possible way to integrate production and communication and society such that the idea of growth, the idea of having access to the benefits of human experience was dispersed as much as possible, allowing for as much growth, both individual and community growth. I think the interesting thing about a utopianism, one model of utopianism, is that it is boundless with the spread of resources and access and potential. And then the other is the bound-in model of utopia, which was about, "It'll be us. We'll do fine. And everyone else ... that's their problem." And I think that one of the modern problems, which certainly something like Second Life suggests, is that the idea of a

boundary is now impossible. The idea of a utopia as a bounded environment is not possible. All the models have to be interdependent, and that's very troublesome, and I think that's one of the ideas that Stoppard is actually exploring in this play.

Cattaneo: I don't know about the philosophers, but when you think of Georges Sand it does embrace sexuality. It isn't pushing that away and returning to childhood, it is finding yourself through—

Rockwell: It came in various forms. Natalie Herzen in Stoppard's play: we assume—at least I assumed, perhaps salaciously—that she had physical relations with the one you call Natasha.

Cattaneo: Everyone in this play was named Natalie.

Rockwell: There were too many Natalie's so they changed the second Natalie to Natasha. But the two Natalies—the first Natalie and Natasha—have some kind of relationship. I assume it to be carnal, but she doesn't want to think of it in that way. She only thinks of it in terms of the higher universal romantic spirit, which this intense relationship, the most intense relationship of her life thus far, has allowed her to join in. But it has nothing to do with eroticism or jealousy or possessiveness, it is just love. So even though for some—say Wagner—it certainly had an erotic component, for others it did not, or at least not consciously. They repressed the notion of eroticism.

Pippin: Some notion of this fantasy, this intrapsychic fantasy, can be represented in a regressive return to childhood, but the deepest fantasy is harmony—a reunification of what had been separated. It's a very old theme in both literature and philosophy. And in these characters in the 19th century, most dramatically expressed by the poet Hölderlin, every aspect of speech and consciousness is a separation or a disuniting, but poetry especially can give us intimations of a kind of harmony. By harmony we mean also a harmony with the natural elements of human life. Especially in the modern scientific world, the conception of nature makes the idea of embodied mindedness, embodied eros as a human form, extremely difficult even to comprehend much less to experience. So people like Schiller thought in sensual objects like art and in sensual experiences like aesthetic experience there wasn't the great dualism between conscious control and natural necessity, that there was some harmonious transcended experience in which we had an intimation of the harmony—prelapsarian or whatever—but not necessarily one that is just childhood, but a reintegration of harmonious life, because for many of these thinkers the deepest characterization of modern life is *Zerrissenheit*—torn-apartness.

Rockwell: Obviously Wagner in his theories of the 1840s, from which he later lapsed, but also Nietzsche before he split with Wagner, articulated a theory that characterized this notion of anti-*Zerrissenheit* to a full unification of the arts—a looking back to an idealized Greek situation in which the politics, the sociology and the art were all supposedly unified and from which everything had fallen apart and needed to be pulled together, preferably by Richard Wagner.

Pippin: People were very afraid about this. People after the Second World War kept looking for where it all came from, the dark side of the German tradition, and this hunger for a natural harmonious unity and experience of oneness—

Rockwell: *Gemeinschaft.*

Pippin: It was characterized as the great failing that the English and French enlightenment were much more secular and less ambitious and perfectly willing to tolerate various aspects of division as long as everybody got fed and wealth was distributed and things were working relatively sanely. But the Germans apparently had this aspiration for a much deeper kind of harmony. It resonates with a lot of these Russian philosophers. And without that, without the experience of it, the material success of the enlightenment would be useless.

Rockwell: That is surely the position that Stoppard takes at the end of this trilogy, which is that ultimately, despite the notion in *Herzen* that we must go on and so forth, this utopian quest is destructive and that he, Stoppard, is advocating what I in my article argue is a kind of liberal British gentleman's view of what a rational, limited, reasonable, perhaps not so exciting or thrilling or deep but humane society should be. Which, in turn, leads to the question of whether or not we are witnessing a return of utopian thought today.

Cattaneo: Anybody want to address that?

Bell: One little thing about art, if I may, and it goes back to this painting, because it is not for naught that this painting is so closely associated with the play. Talk about destruction and revolutionizing—what people thought about in terms of the nude, to bring it back to your question about nudity, was that this was a naked woman, not a nude woman. Manet's *Olympia* was a profoundly naked woman who was referring to Titian's *Venus Urbino*, who was a profoundly nude woman. So inherent in this one painting is a whole play on this question of what is naked and what is nude and shocking people into rethinking the position of the human body, the role of the human body in this question of utopia, because it was really now that the naked body was being shown for the first time. Up to now we had the Greek ideal, the representation of the nude in countless paintings and sculptures, so it is very interesting from the aesthetic point of view and the question of the nude body that all of this is coming together in this one painting. I think he is very deliberately and smartly using that as a way of reinforcing this sense of shock and dislocation of tradition, visually speaking as well as in terms of the philosophical content.

Gay: Most painters didn't paint like Manet and probably *Olympia* would have been just as good as an illustration. One way you could do it was to give them names, right? Give the nudes names, like a season. But always you have some explanation that makes them like statues. They could be as naked as possible. There was a way in which it went and kept on going. I don't think there was a school of Manet. Painters liked him but did not paint like him. And I would argue that the 19th century nude is interesting in part because of all the explanations that are given that make it permissible. The famous Greek slave, as long as you have a sad expression and a good name, like the Greek slave who is about to be turned over to the Turks, you can do it. If Powers had called that statue "My Girlfriend," it wouldn't have been exhibited. So he didn't, he called it something refined. Which was pretty true for hundreds of years.

Bell: *The Birth of Venus.*

Rockwell: So the whole nude/naked business is just a history of euphemisms?

Bell: It's also the context in which the body is placed.

Schlossberg: The nudity in the play plays exactly that same role. He actually recreates the painting on the stage.

Bell: It's the shock of seeing her in that context that makes the point.

Cattaneo: And they are visiting Mont Morenci, which is where Rousseau lived. There's so much stuff that just passes through.

Audience: People like Marx hated utopia and criticized all these different utopias in the 1840s because he knew it wasn't going anywhere. And the three great utopians—Owen, Fourier and San Simon—even they were not going to be able to go too far, because the working class was rising and suddenly there was a new class that had been opened. So he created *Kapital*. Now *Kapital* is not a utopian piece, it is an analysis of how capitalism works, whether you agree with it or not, it's the law of motion of capitalist society. Lenin did not create some kind of utopia; he said how are we going to do this? Everybody thought he was crazy. He got a newspaper and said around that newspaper we're going to develop people who can think and we're going to develop this skeleton around which people are going to get to know each other and bring this thing around. And he did succeed up to a certain point. So they weren't utopians. They also knew that at some point that they didn't have all the answers and others would stand on their shoulders. Hegel said anything that's real is rational—that was not true. This is where Marx disagreed with him, though Marx thought he was great.

Pippin: But all Marx said was, "not yet". That's utopian thinking.

Audience: But the definition of utopia is that which does not exist.

Pippin: I disagree. I think Marx was a utopian. You have to be utopian to believe in the rationality of history. In a way, he had his own kind of explanation: he believed human beings were just anthropologically so constituted that they would always seek to produce the maximum amount of goods with a minimum amount of labor. I agree with you that he was against moral utopia, the sort of dreamy moral-demand kind of thinking, but there is something incredibly utopian in believing in history, which Herzen finally says is really like the weather—it's a perfect sort of counter-Marxian statement.

Cattaneo: You never know what it's going to do.

Audience: And let's not forget materialism.

Pippin: Also very utopian.

Schlossberg: One of the reasons that Marx was a utopian was because he was eminently projectable. Almost anybody could think that their ideas were Marxian because they said certain words or certain things. And I think that everyone who heard it could think about how they could optimize the world from their own perspective and it could be socialistic or Marxist. So the thing that was great about him was that he created an incredible model, which anybody could adapt and claim to be true to form, which was a very smart way of writing a utopia. With a lot of the other utopians it was much too narrow in their definitions, too precise. I think one of the things about utopian writing is the ability for everybody to think that they're already doing it. That makes it really utopian.

Audience: As I understand it Karl Mannheim said that what you get in the modern era is a conjunction of what he thought of as utopianism, which is a kind of fervor, a feeling of imminence that reality is now, is going to take over. It's timeless in a way. He sees that as coming from the masses and conjoined with ideology, which is a plan that the intellectuals have that moves into the future for accomplishing something. And when these two things come together you have the transcendent, almost mystical, energy of discovery, combined with a kind of plan management, which is the ideology, which eventually freezes over the energies and becomes bureaucratic. He was thinking obviously of Stalinist elements and the Nazi phenomenon. But I think he felt that what we generally think of as utopianism in politics really was a combination of the Jim Jones phenomenon and the Lenin phenomenon. Without one, the other would take over. And that it was self-limiting because the ideology, since it had to be practical with a plan for the future, would eventually regiment the inspirational sources of the utopianism that you found, for example, with early religions and bohemianism.

Audience: I haven't seen the play, but I was a little surprised that Stoppard didn't engage with the reaction against utopia, which was of course very strong in the voice of Dostoevsky in the 1860s. I was interested that what was common to utopian movements was this gesture and longing for a reunification. In the reaction against utopia, which certainly was central in the character of Raskolnikov, who wrote against the Chernyshevsky novel *What is To Be Done*, you have a character who also longs for a certain kind of reunification, a joining of the movement of bonding with the earth. I can't remember what it was called in Russian, but the movement of the Russian soul being reunited with the earth was part of it. It was very connected with Russian Orthodoxy, but it was reunification for the anti-utopians. So I just wonder how unique that character was?

Cattaneo: Chernyshevsky is actually a character in the play, but you're bringing up an interesting question, which we haven't talked about at all, which is the religion.

Rockwell: The 1860s reaction is dealt with in Part Three.

Cattaneo: Chernyshevsky is only brought in in a somewhat tangential way in the play, but this question of yearning for a different world is expressed in religion, and these are characters who don't follow that route. They are using philosophy and political thinking. Dostoevsky, of course, is a much more Christian writer or a religious based writer, and we haven't even talked about religion except to mention Jim Jones.

Rockwell: And American religious utopian communities. We haven't talked about the kibbutz either.

Audience: In *Crime and Punishment* it is not so much Christian gesture—that comes later in *The Brothers Karamazov*—but the effects of being enthralled to a utopian ideology that Raskolnikov pushes to the logical conclusions of being hostage to this utopian ideology of the earlier 1850s and 1860s.

Pippin: Something that seems to be more cultural than anything else is the great skepticism about the attempt by human beings to control our historical fate. If we actually attempt to do it we end up mucking things up a lot worse than they would have been if we'd left it alone. So it is a very Tolstoyan sensibility. There wasn't just a counter utopia but a vast counter Enlightenment reaction from very early on—and certainly in somebody like Burke this notion that there are forms of associated sensibility that are not rational, that are pre-rational, and that we abandon or distrust at our peril, continues all the way on through the 19th century and assumes some very dangerous forms. We talked a little bit before about Fascism as a form of utopian thinking, but this odd fact is true: that at just the moment when bourgeois civilization was beginning to pay off its promissory notes with greater health, security, sanitation, production of wealth, liberal democratic institutions, the best minds in the Western European culture turned against it, either wanting to accelerate out of it very rapidly, as in the Marxist ideology, or to go back to what had been lost—blood and soil and a form of communal association that wasn't based on rational self-interest. So there is a curious dynamic, also psychologically, in this form of self-dissatisfaction. The moment when the actual promises were beginning to be paid off, we have this trajectory out of it, either dystopian or utopian, or however you want to characterize it.

Rockwell: Stoppard is disapproving of these people, but he is also very affectionate about them. That's the subject of his play.

Pippin: That's a good point.

Rockwell: And especially when you bring in the aesthetic and the romantic, as you pointed out, he humanizes them in a way that is a nice gloss on Carr and Berlin.

Schlossberg: I think the tension is the tension of using art to tell that story, and he has ambivalence about telling the story well in a play, rather than telling that story well in life. I think he is constantly fighting the fact that it is only the theater in which this is being said, which is really interesting to me, like it's sort of okay to be saying it in a play, but plays are sort of fake.

Rockwell: And it's also fascinating—obviously researchable, but fascinating—to figure out which lines are Stoppard's and which he has more or less lifted, from Herzen especially.

Cattaneo: I think there is unfortunately going to be a piece in the book review on that very subject soon.

Rockwell: Why unfortunate?

Cattaneo: We had an unhappy article in the *Times* and a happy article in the *Times* about this. An unhappy article by the gentleman who said you had to read 19 books to be able to see the play, which was just idiotic. Mr. Grimes. “It was so difficult to understand that you had to read...” Tom had to write a letter to the editor saying that only an insane person would require its audience to read 19 books before you see a play. We tried to invite him to come see the play and he wouldn’t come. So he’s never seen the play. But he is now reviewing the reissue of Herzen’s *My Life and Thoughts* to answer this very question: what is Stoppard and what is Herzen.

Rockwell: So it’s an article with an axe to grind.

Cattaneo: Well, we hope not. But we also had a second really wonderful article in which our production has made Isaiah Berlin’s book *Russian Thinkers* be put back in press.

Pippin: You can’t buy it in New York.

Cattaneo: It’s great. I think just in production, just buying books for the actors, we made *The Romantic Exiles* number 500 and something on the Amazon list. But apparently Isaiah Berlin’s widow is still alive, because the man quoted in the article from Oxford, Henry Hardy, called and she is in hospital and she would be so cheered to know that her husband’s book is going back on press.

Rockwell: Is the Herzen autobiography unexpurgated?

Schlossberg: It’s great.

Rockwell: I know, but the point is that the original that’s been out was edited.

Cattaneo: It is edited by Dwight McDonald. It’s in four volumes and he only includes about half of it or less.

Rockwell: So the reprint is also of his edited version.

Audience: You guys brought up art and I was just thinking that it was Moore rather than Plato who came up with the word utopia.

Cattaneo: Yes, Thomas Moore coined the word, right.

Audience: Neither of them really knew what to do with artists. I know with Moore there was this conflict about what to do. There was an island that was utopia and everybody who didn’t want to play the game was off it. And there were a lot of problems with everybody who was artistic or had different ideas. You had to believe in a God, you could have different religions, but there’s all that fascism that comes in the beginning of utopia. And then the relationship with art which I think you’ve been trying to get at.

Schlossberg: Well, it makes me think of Woody Allen’s line—I wouldn’t join any club that would have me as a member.

Rockwell: That was Groucho Marx who said that. They both wouldn't be in the same club.

Schlossberg: But that idea is the idea of the artist, that you can't be a member of a utopian community if you are really an artist, because you are struggling against the environment in which you live in.

Rockwell: There are visions of utopia that are artistically based as well, with all due respect to Plato.

Pippin: But it reflects a deeper problem in political philosophy that isn't easy to deal with. Most political philosophers, if you press them, can see that people generally—not philosophers but people—don't have allegiance to political doctrines as a result of being persuaded by rational arguments. That's not how the world works and most intelligent philosophers realize that. That means that the real subject matter of political thought is something like political psychology—the way in which the economy of the soul works in a certain way to create allegiances. That makes poets very controversial, very problematic, because they have a way of creating erotic attachment, approbation, disgust, an enormous amount of very powerful human passions, better than anybody else. So that suggests that utopias are almost necessarily anti-democratic—the classical forms of utopias—because if you are going to have a utopia you have to have some system of political reform and we've just been admitting political reform is ultimately only effective if it is psychological reform. And that means manipulating people's psyches. And we don't like that. And we shouldn't like it. There's an inherent problem with who gets to determine how the psyches get changed. But the problem with artists is they just get permission to do that. That's what they do is change human psyches in various ways. And so if you are a real political reformer and you're being quite serious about it and you realize that you don't have this naïveté about the force of argument, then your major competitor is going to be, in general, poets. Because they know how to do that better than anybody and they are very dangerous for that reason.

Levy: There's a certain self-abnegation, in an ideal utopia, that makes artists and poets contrary, it would seem. I wanted to ask you more about these online communities. There's a famous sociological term for society, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gessellschaft*, in which you discriminate between the desire for community and the desire for society. This goes back to what I said earlier about the individual and intrapsychic issue. Is there an aspiration as reflected today in these online worlds for a sense of community? It is both self-invention and self-abnegation. You join, you don't really have a name, you are an avatar.

Schlossberg: Well, the interesting thing is that it is actually iterative. It is both. I think you join to see what you can design or create and then you want to see what the reaction is to what you do and what kind of community you can build around the things you do. Or what kind of community you can create by joining and how your joining of other communities will work. The interesting thing is that there are small pockets where people are coming together and there are pockets where people are growing apart and it is constantly that process of people cycling around someone who is interesting or some area that is interesting and then going apart and going to other areas, just as any dynamic system works. The thing that's so cool about it is that it's

dynamic. So we have all been living in this world where we have to assume static models of anything in order to appreciate it because there is nothing where we could see things moving except real life, and it is very hard to model in real life. So that's why these things have a potential for people to be really able to study and see what the consequence of actions are in a way that has never been possible before.

Rockwell: Was it you who brought up the notion of bounded versus unbounded?

Schlossberg: Yes.

Rockwell: Did unbounded utopias exist before the worldwide web?

Schlossberg: Probably not. What would you think?

Rockwell: I would think not. Are they unbounded because they literally have taken the notion of utopia and introduced an element of freedom, or are they only unbounded because there is an essential disconnect between the virtual world and the carbon world, as you put it.

Schlossberg: I think part of it is about the idea of scale and that it is like Upanishads—don't think of anything too big lest your head fall off. If you think, you start to go too far out on an idea and it falls apart in your hands. So I think any model starts to be bounded; that's the history of science, which is bounded systems so you can understand them. There are always these small systems and then you see slightly larger ones. But the fascinating thing if you ever explore these worlds is that they are conceptually boundless. If you want to start to build your community at the perceived edge, there's plenty of room.

Rockwell: Sort of like visions of America in the early 19th century.

Schlossberg: Exactly—really boundless.

Audience: We've been talking about the primary barriers in utopia: anti-democratic on the right where you get fascism, then the Marxist experiment, as well as religious communities. The presumption being that there is a sort of top down model, which is opposed to a more piecemeal model—social engineering, along the lines of what we find in liberal democracy. The contrast that's been set up is between liberal democracy and everything else around it, but after 1989 you have the collapse of Soviet communism, and you get a feeling that the major ideological competition to liberal democracy has failed. Francis Fukuyama famously wrote that we have reached the end of history and that end of history is this liberal democracy, which is inherently pluralistic and self-governing and chooses its leaders, protects the rights of minorities, and so forth. However, there was also talk about ideology, and I would guess that everyone in this room probably agrees essentially that a liberal democratic model is the best form of governance and all we have to compete with are reactionary movements, so we can't really get better. All we have left to lose is the liberal democracy we have. So isn't the ideology that we have in fact achieved a utopia here? And isn't that borne out by utopian thinking, as evidenced by the fact that I would presume that no one here disagrees with that.

Pippin: You can be resigned to something without thinking it is the best. I think what's happened is, for one thing, the whole realm of politics, the boundaries of politics, have begun to erode. That is, the classical 18th and 19th century model of the nation-state has become less and less relevant to the world of global capitalism for one thing. There are a lot of things one could say about the proper subject matter of politics that have changed. So part of the liberal democratic revolutionary ideology has just become irrelevant, not so much affirmed or resigned to. It's just ceasing to be the discourse in which the most important issues of the control of power are discussed. That has a parallel in the rise of academic culture in cultural politics. If you had to identify what was the greatest Western utopian ideal today, it has something to do with what philosophers very abstractly talk about as the Other—that is, a way of thinking about the boundaries between groups, races, genders, etc., such that the perennial psychologically unavoidable origins of hate, exclusion, groupthink and so forth can be addressed. Nobody seems to know exactly how to do that. It goes back to the issue of political psychology again. But there is a utopian aspiration in the West that doesn't have to do very much anymore with the control of state power, because there isn't that much state power as classically understood in the formation of liberal democratic political philosophy in the 18th century.

Rockwell: You mentioned science fiction, and in the *Times* today or yesterday Alessandra Stanley had a review of *Lost* or a discussion of *Lost* in which she essentially mentioned that all of these television programs that deal with extraterrestrials and mystical other worlds and parallel universes and whatever are sort of neatly summed up as a pure example of the decline of the West. The fact is there is a lot of interest in that and people are fascinated by it, quite apart from the many people who have been abducted by spaceships. There is a kind of bubbling under, as we say in *Billboard Magazine*, a fascination with things that directly refute the liberal democratic idea. Now, whether they will coalesce eventually into the totalitarian forms of bounded utopianism, I don't know. But the urge persists.

Cattaneo: I was actually going to mention those when we were leaving cyberspace, to go from high to low into all these *Lost* programs. I don't really watch them much, but it becomes very gloomy. Everybody is always trying to do the other one in and it's not particularly idealistic or utopian, and yet they all seem to want to go there.

Schlossberg: The interesting thing is that when all these social communities—these net communities like MySpace and Facebook—start to emerge, they are not unlike the CB world 25 years ago. In every one of these worlds that exists, everyone invents a language, they start to identify themselves, they go through the exact same thing that any culture develops in terms of primitive behaviors and then somewhat sophisticated ones and a variety of other things. And we tend to think that if it is carried by a sophisticated medium it will have a sophisticated quality to it, and it doesn't. It has a very primitive—"what's your name, where do you come from, where's the police, what's the problem". All those issues become the same conversation. So the interesting thing is that you can actually watch this generation of culture by watching how people start to behave in these new communities.

Rockwell: You would know more about this than I, but isn't there an anti-utopian buildup of thought amongst people who think hard about the web? I'm thinking of Jaron Lanier's attack on

Wikipedia and all that. I don't know where you stand on that, but it is interesting that even within the world of unbounded utopias there are cautionary voices now being raised.

Schlossberg: Well, I think it's really interesting if you look at the Oxford English Dictionary when it was first put together, before people had a chance to edit it, there were millions of mistakes in it. Wikipedia emerges, there are lots of mistakes in it—it's terrible suddenly.

Rockwell: Is that his argument?

Schlossberg: His argument is that you have basically a dysfunctional model: to think that people would actually ever want to increase the level of sophistication and accuracy of information on the web, that there would always be an incentive for people to, as my son did last week, put complete nonsense on an entry just because he thought it would be fun, which people do constantly on this thing. So that's an interesting aspect. Instead of thinking that everything that we put anywhere in the world has to be "the truth" and perfect, you could think about it as an experiment in social relationships. At a certain point in time people develop the techniques which allow you to behave better. That's what happens. And so Wikipedia has a model—it sort of works sometimes. It is a very interesting way of composing the sort of agreements between people about what words mean.

Cattaneo: This is like a philosophical argument from the 19th century, isn't it?

Schlossberg: Definitely.

Rockwell: Tom Stoppard's next play.

Levy: Buckminster Fuller wrote a utopia.

Schlossberg: He did. But every one of those single-author utopias are always bounded models of how it could work best for me in my head. I mean, typically they have been. His was very interesting, but it was all about making sure that everyone had the right amount of food, clothing and shelter, worldwide. That was baseline condition.

Audience: I wanted to know the context in which you said the boundlessness of these utopias is dangerous, as opposed to the bounded.

Schlossberg: I don't think it's dangerous. These are experimental situations. There is supposedly something like 25,000 to 35,000 people who become part of these communities, these massive multiplayer games, per day. There are 250,000 more URLs every day. People are constantly becoming part of this world. They are all over the place. And it is fantastically interesting.

Audience: Has anybody looked at the relationship between participation in that world and participation in the carbon world? Is it becoming a real substitute?

Schlossberg: Yes. Well, for a lot of people. For a large number of mostly men between the ages of 18 and 30 it can be 40 hours a week—American men, and supposedly in Korea it's higher. I don't think there are any really good statistics because no one is really collecting them well yet. But it is intense.

Pippin: You can propose marriage, get rejected, your business can fail, your colleagues can sue you.

Schlossberg: Absolutely. There are starting to be cyberlawyers, who exist only in these environments. So that's really scary.

Bell: I have to ask whether or not people acknowledge that there's a big problem with this, especially for people who are assigning research papers to their students, because they all go on Wikipedia and they cite it as though it is absolutely carved in stone.

Schlossberg: I think the idea of people making mistakes and getting the wrong information is always a cultural problem, and there is a different kind of way of correcting it.

Bell: What about accountability, because these things aren't signed. We need our students to find a good source. How do you trust your sources?

Schlossberg: This is like year four of the invention of this world. How would it get it right at year four? The expectation of that is insane.

Rockwell: It's also not been accepted by the other world. I'm part of an organization that recently applied for a grant to a foundation that was out to build communities. And so the application was to build a virtual community. It was rejected as irrelevant to the criteria of the foundation because the foundation was thinking about people in towns and neighborhoods.

Cattaneo: I'm thinking about the cover of *New York* magazine this week, about cyberspace.

Audience: It's about people disclosing everything about their private lives online, not only because of the anonymity, but also for the opposite reason: the very ability to disclose everything.

Cattaneo: And it asks if this is horrifying and a breach of privacy or is it, according to the girl, freedom.

Schlossberg: Well, all those things—that's the challenge.

Pippin: I think something you said before is extremely important. There's no reason to expect that all of the traditional human problems won't simply get replicated. It's not going to get worse, but it's not going to get better. It's just going to be the same thing we've always had. People will manipulate other people, they will be cautious about what they do, they'll start lying, they'll be sorry they did this, there will be a reaction. It is the same old same old, just magnified a billion times.

Schlossberg: And faster.

Audience: And bigger.

Schlossberg: Right. Well, again, Russia, the world that Stoppard was modeling, was a world of 60 or 70 million people, of which a million or a million and a half were actually capable of carrying on an independent life. And now there are almost six and a half billion people. It's a different world, so utopia is very different.

Cattaneo: Well, the last question is where is the utopian thinking in the world today? In religion, different parts of the world, social organizations, politics, on the web—where is it? Does anyone see it?

Schlossberg: Everywhere.

Gay: We'll always have readers and writers, but I would think it's got such a bad reputation that I don't see too much future for it. I mean, considering Pol Pot or anyone else you'd like to name—you know, if you don't want to be my brother you will not survive. In a way it's become a kind of mantra for a great number of people. It may not be 100% right, but with some good justice. Since we have an architect here, it seems to me architecture is particularly well placed in knowing what utopian thinking can do because some ideas get built. I was thinking of my favorite horror of the 20th century being Le Corbusier. All you have to do is go to Vallée France and say, is this what we really want? And I think the answer would be no.

Schlossberg: If you go to Brasilia, which was a utopian government, or Albany, Chandigarh, all these places that were designed as solutions to an entire new village, and they always fail terribly.

Pippin: Not always. When Chicago burned down in 1870 some people did some good work.

Schlossberg: Right, but idiosyncratically.

Pippin: There was a kind of master plan. They had this genius idea, very expensive, to keep 18 miles of the Lake Shore undeveloped, and that was part of the whole new thinking.

Schlossberg: That's *not* building. Not building is always a good idea. That's utopian thinking.

Cattaneo: That was actually based on Swedenborg's utopian view of the world.

Rockwell: What is that German town that is still so perfectly replicating the 18th century? One of those minor duchies in Germany has a perfect grid plan, like Washington, DC, except better.

Audience: Manhattan.

Rockwell: One of these West German duchies was laid out by its ruler in the late 18th century with perfect symmetry and it still exists. If you look at the *stadtplan* of the *innenstadt* it's right there. But there's plenty of examples of those kinds of things that precede 20th century architects.

Pippin: I think the way Frank Gehry is changing urban architecture is utopian and good. I mean, you can't imagine the difference it makes to Chicago. I don't know if you've seen the new band shell in the Millennium park of Chicago—it changes the entire city.

Gay: I think Gehry's stuff does work.

Rockwell: Bilbao is even more dramatic.

Pippin: It's quite utopian. The L.A. Center too is a departure from conventional architecture in a radical way with a utopian view of how it might change whole communities.

Rockwell: But it's not a city plan; it's an inspirational building.

Pippin: Well, he's getting so much work lately—

Audience: I've been struck by how this has been a dialogue or dialectic that has gone on for maybe 3,000 years or so. It comes and goes. When one thinks of 3,000 years, it isn't really that much time in the history of the earth, and I'm struck as to why no one has mentioned the supposed threat of global warming and how that might influence thinking today about the future and what is the future. This is an unspoken theme here that is underwater, so to speak.

Schlossberg: Interesting, because one of the problems with utopian ideas is that there is an opportunity to revert to an earlier state of the ecosystem, which is clearly not possible. So what is the state that you want to make an effort to sustain? People have been resisting that conversation in almost every quarter of the scientific and educational and ecological community. But that is the big conversation, which is, do we know enough to make a decision as to what is the base case that we'd like to live under. That's a utopian problem.

Levy: You mentioned religion. Max Weber had a famous dichotomy between the church and the sect going against the architectural model, which is one of permanence. One wonders, is there a temporal component to utopianism? That is to say, is utopianism a flash in the pan? For example, The Philoctetes Center started off as this unmitigated psychoanalytic intellectual discussion—no moderator, no themes. We'd just get interesting people to come together and it was quite fascinating, not necessarily for an audience. And then it became more institutionalized over a period of three years—it's changed from the initial format. Is there something about utopianism that it always exists in a certain way—in process?

Schlossberg: When I went to Japan someone said that I should go see the oldest temple in Japan. And I went to see it and what it was, was a temple that had been rebuilt every 22 years for the last 1000 years. And the parish of the church, their whole religious practice was to

rebuild this temple every 22 years. And they grew the trees and they did every other thing, and that was their religion, to build this building again and again. It's near Kyoto. It's very small, but that's the story. It's the oldest temple in Japan. So in a sense it's the ideal of the temple that has been sustained over 1400 years.

Audience: It's sort of like a metaphor for memory these days. It's the same premise. It's just continually rebuilt—that's what its permanence is.

Audience: It's all development or regression, either one or the other.

Audience: You made a very provocative distinction between naked and nude, and if I understood you the idea of nude was a kind of idealized or glorified image and the naked figure was a more realistic or tangible figure, and therefore somehow more dangerous or provocative. I wonder if you could speak about the function of the female form in the context of one functioning in a more utopian way and one in a more realistic way.

Rockwell: And does it apply to the male form as well: David, for example.

Bell: In that painting the figure was a known model and everybody knew who she was, so they could identify who she was and that was an unusual thing for the time. And the way she is represented is clearly out of the tradition of representing the nude female body. She is represented in a much harsher light, as if she'd been photographed. So the mode of representation is new for the time and the fact that the nude is identified and brought out of that ideal realm. These are two shocks to the system and I think that is why the painting is still so powerful and seems to be so appropriate for this context in discussing the fragmentation of utopia. That tradition had been so powerful for so many years that to do what he did was not only an artistic statement but also a kind of political statement.

Audience: What were some of the ramifications of that startling shift in terms of the representation of the female form or the depiction of nudity or nakedness in art?

Bell: Well, it had to do also with the way in which people thought of space as a form in which they could represent nature, because this was also about a shock to vision, a question of engaging the viewer in a new way. After all she's looking out directly at us and participating both in her pictorial space and in our pictorial space, so there's another layer there of shocking. The nude continued to be represented but the repercussions of that painting were more about how we saw the world around us and how we engaged with art in general. So all of the many revolutions from then on—you could talk even about *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* as a kind of harshness in terms of not only pictorial space but in how the nude was treated. So there were series of ricochets from then on in terms of how artists dealt with the nude. This was one of the most shocking ones of the time and the first to challenge that whole hegemony of the nude figure.

Audience: I think in statues the nudity has to do with the origins of Christianity and all that. The nude is Adam and Eve before God chases them out, then they become naked.

Audience: I wonder if you might comment more on the societal dimensions of utopia. It seems to me someone was commenting on Stoppard's ambivalence towards these characters. That's really an anti-utopian framework par excellence because aren't utopian ideas a way of eliminating ambivalence, eliminating the biological demands of the body, of the psyche? And in a certain way the appeal of something like silicon life involves the elimination of the biological destiny.

Rockwell: Doris Lessing wrote a semi-autobiographical novel recently called *The Sweetest Dream*, which was, if you want to reduce it to the basics, communism. But it was the kind of utopian idealism of her youth and of the '60s and how it had not panned out quite as they had hoped. And I think that Stoppard's treatment of all of this is that it was a sweet dream. As I said, obviously he's critical of the utopians, especially as they evolved into the harder edged versions in the 1860s—Marx and others—we meet in part three. Also in general they anticipate the 20th century and all that. Yet he has this affection, not only for the characters but also for the ideals that they had in their personal lives, in their artistic lives, and in their political lives.

Cattaneo: I would agree. If I would speak for him—and no one can do that—I think what he took from Isaiah Berlin when he met him was an admiration for people of very different talents and personalities. Turgenev, Bakunin, Herzen—these are very different people with different ways of approaching and making change, who in the course of this unbelievable century, of all the things that happened to them in their public lives and personal lives, remained friends, remained able to talk to each other, disagree with each other, as opposed to the new men who come along and when those disagreements arise they banish anyone who doesn't agree with them. It is that ability to stay flexible and to continue to create and change as they get older that he admires, and I think he took that from Berlin. And whether that is ambivalence or whether that is admiration, I don't know.

Audience: I'm also referring to the intrapsychic world, where living with incommensurable wishes and the inevitable conflicts that are part of our biological heritage is something that in utopian fantasy is not just a fantasy of reunion, but also a wish to escape the incommensurable dimensions of human life.

Pippin: There is something about the aesthetic capacity to maintain the tension that is intolerable for philosophers, for example, or rationalists. You know, Almodovar made a movie about a man who rapes a comatose woman, and you're full of sympathy! For the man! It is a remarkable manipulation of point of view—and a technical matter—but it's also another indication that the judgmental, qualifying, philosophical categorization impulse can be defeated if the work of art is a great enough work of art. It would be the wrong question to say, "What does that tell us about how we should live," because that would destroy exactly the achievements.

Cattaneo: And that comes around to another thing, which I hadn't thought to mention, but it is something we discussed and is in the magazine. We haven't talked much about Vissarion Belinsky, who I knew nothing about until I started working on this project. He was a literary critic who said if Russia is ever going to be created as a culture it will be created by its writers, by its literature. And he encouraged Dostoevsky, he encouraged Turgenev, he encouraged

Gogol. And we have a piece in the magazine about the creation of a national identity. Is the identity of being American created by American writers? Is the identity of being English created by Shakespeare? Is the larger notion created by artists? That's also an issue in this trilogy, among thousands of other things.

Audience: I think in art things are possible that are not possible in life, and that is what makes art so compelling.

Pippin: Fantasy—it's not like an escapist possibility that you can't have, it's actually an intimation of desideratum or something that we can't give up, that we have to keep alive somehow. And art keeps it alive even if it doesn't give us a blueprint of how to realize it.

Rockwell: And extending art into virtual reality, you synch up those two as alternatives. This is why I slightly bridled at your notion of late 19th century art as an escape from reality, because there are other realities, and they are in dialogue or conversation with one another all the time. That's why, for me, the Stoppard play balancing politics, romance, and art is so fascinating. He isn't choosing sides and seeing the romantic and artistic as somehow, like in the newspapers, hard news, which is real, and soft news, which is secondary. That's not the way it is in *The Coast of Utopia*, which is to me a more accurate reflection of life than the hard news/soft news dichotomy.

Cattaneo: And he is very sympathetic to Turgenev, who is always being accosted by people in the play who say, "What is your point of view about the Russian peasant?" And he says, "It's all the points of view about the Russian peasant." He's not good at answering questions about what *The Coast Of Utopia* is about. He said, "I'm writing a play and I have to think about my characters and I don't know." Or it's about this *and* that. It's not a question you can ask an artist, really.

Rockwell: Ask some artists and they'll talk your head off.

Audience: This has been an amazingly interesting discussion. There was a question, which raised issues about psychoanalysis and Freud, that's been given short shrift in a meeting that takes place on 82nd Street, where the beginning of psychoanalysis took place in America. But Freud's not been mentioned.

Rockwell: What about Herbert Marcuse's efforts to marry early Marx with Schiller, and notions of play and so forth as the utopian goal of a revolutionary process?

Audience: I think people just want to escape from the reality of the psyche. People just don't want to deal with it and I don't think our culture wants to deal with it and in some ways I think our conference hasn't really dealt with it.

Cattaneo: Well, I have to apologize because I'm here because of Frank, and I know nothing about psychoanalysis and I've never been in psychoanalysis so maybe I didn't ask the right questions.

Pippin: It does sound a bit like the voice of the Freudian superego.

Audience: This gentleman mentioned that art is not synonymous with reality. Correct me if I'm wrong.

Audience: I was picking up on the idea that art was a medium through which people's fantasy lives can be expressed and appreciated by both the artist and the person who is the audience of the artist. I'm not saying art isn't real, but I think that it has to be juxtaposed against what I guess you would call the reality principle, to use a psychoanalytic term.

Audience: May I probe a little further? Do I have your permission or would you rather I didn't?

Audience: It depends on what you're asking.

Audience: The question about psychoanalysis came up, and I would think most of us in the room would be thinking about what the parallels would be in psychoanalysis, because the contrast between the utopianism of psychoanalysis and the Freudian tradition and other currents is such a dramatic one for any analyst. Historically, as well as contemporaneously, it has sort of fallen out. But originally there was a very strong—not with Freud but with many of the people who gathered around him—there was a very strong utopianism. Many people joined the Freudian movement because of a kind of sexual utopianism that they had in mind—many of the original converts. And in the early days the idea of, for example, prophylactic psychoanalysis—I remember hearing an account by Marianne Horney Éckardt, Karen Horney's daughter, who had been sent with her sister to Melanie Klein as a child for what was not uncommon there: a prophylactic psychoanalysis that would prevent them from having guilt. These are balanced against Freud's skeptical sense of the limitations of humanity and got played out a little bit in the sense of European versus American psychoanalysis. America had a kind of tendency to use the analytic mission or tradition in a somewhat utopian fashion, with the feeling that material conditions and biological conditions, quite contrary to what Freud thought, would not pose any kind of barrier if you could improve the social surroundings and if the person was completely analyzed, etc. Still, I'm sure one of the variables in the warfare that goes on in analysis between things like self-psychology, which is felt by its opponents to be a kind of perfectibility theory of how people can commune, is selling it short. But the feelings are still there—that there's one side that would be more literally utopian in what can be accomplished in analytic treatment, and the other one being more ... what would be the opposite?

Cattaneo: Dystopic. That's the word they say.

Audience: It would be hard to be a therapist and be dystopic.

Rockwell: But it would be more pragmatic.

Audience: It seems pessimistic.

Cattaneo: We have time for one more question.

Audience: Utopia is meant to teach everyone to use their inner goodness. If you have badness still operating at the same time, you don't get utopia. For me utopia is absolute freedom to do what I like, but I have to do the right things. We don't own that yet, do we?

Cattaneo: That's a line from our play. Is freedom the fact that I can sing in my shower as loudly as I want without disturbing my neighbor singing in his shower.

Rockwell: Good soundproofing is not utopia.

Cattaneo: Thank you.