Utopias and Final Solutions

I. Englightenment project in its origin is utopian

A. the pursuit of an ideal, a perfect society based on

reason, tech/scientific progress, and individualism

B. much as the laws of nature have been revealed to

the natural scientists the laws of human behavior

and social interaction will be revealed to social scientists

C. a perfect, harmonious, static society?

II. in all utopias a dominant ideal becomes the organizing principle

A. the inevitability of technological progress is that dominant

ideal and organizing principle

B. ultimately four of our five questions can be answered by

our society's ideal

1. the individual or person in the modern world

2. social organization

3. relationship to the environment

4. how ought I live my life

C. until we enter a philosophy or sociology class we pretty much accept the program, we live what Socrates called

the unexamine life

III. Utopias

A. demand conformity and obedience to the ideal, totalizing

B. exclusion of other possible ends towards which human

beings might want to live, imperial

C. no freedom of choice, decisions are made by experts,

1. religious or scientific, those who understand the ideal and its demand

D. no sacrifice is too great to achieve the ideal

1. the god of progress is a demanding god

E. all utopias are afraid of something, what do they fear

1. they define something as "different" or "other"

2. this other has to be eliminated

3. really fear, great variety and possibility of human

values and ends

F. all utopias are escapes from freedom, from personal decision,

from moral accountability

IV. Utopias and final solutions

A. Three genocides of the twentieth century were utopian

1. A thousand year Reich for the ubermensch

2. Pol Pot Khmer Rouge beginning with Year Zero

3. Hutu Power

B. All identified their sacrifices, the problem that needed

to be eliminated

1. the Jews

2. western influence

3. the Tutsi's - aliens

C. the ideal and its sacrifice was something that the entire

population could bow down before

1. obedience and conformity to the ideal

2. mass cooperation in its execution

3. escape from moral accountability, in fact it is

moral to kill your neighbor

V. Two traditions

A. Democracy - a participatory democracy is the opposite of

a utopia and it is the opposite of technocracy

1. accepts the fact that there are variety of ends

towards which humans might live their lives

2. there will be continually conflict regarding both ends

and means

3. society is fluid

4. demos is that sphere (public sphere)

policies and programs are shaped through argument and debate

by the citizenry, not experts, experts can advice

values come into play other than efficiency, speed,

predictability and control

5. opinions are for something, intelligence means something

B. democratic institutions and there limitations

1. representative government

2. rule of law

3. freedom of press

4. constraints on the power of instutions and accoutability

C. bureaucracy

1. the bureaucratic individual - somone else is taking

care of it - its their job

2. banality of evil - enmeshed in institutions -- I'm

just doing my job

D. religious tradition

1. it is not sufficient to not do evil, it is necessary to

act against evil, oppression, exploitation

2. Good Samaritan laws, Genocide Convention 1948

E. democracy and ethics come together in direct action

1. non-violent civil disobedience, not passive, active

confrontation will injustice

- US was born in non-violent civil disobedience

- refusal to pay Stamp Tax, boycott British goods

- segregation

- workers

2. non-violent towards opponent

3. moral commitment demands breaking law,

4. non-cooperation, strikes, boycotts, and tax refusals

4. injustice is so profound I am willing to go to jail

5. not siezing power but restoring social harmony

6. embrace your enemy for they are a victim too