

Communal Societies as Cyclical Phenomena

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"UTOPIAN COMMUNITIES"¹ have existed in America almost continuously since the late colonial period. Despite demonstrable continuity, however, communal groups have not been uniformly distributed through time. Large numbers were compressed into relatively brief spans, separated by intervals of thirty to fifty years. Their concentration in a few utopian-intensive periods might have been the product of special conditions that obtained at one time or another, such that each Utopian wave must be considered the result of unique nonrepeatable circumstances. On the other hand, the alternative explanation—that similar behavior arises from similar causes—seems at least equally entitled to a hearing.

Indeed, the distribution of communal experiments strongly suggests the existence of a Utopian cycle with a moderately predictable rhythm. The relationship of that rhythm to other episodic phenomena—in particular, the rise and fall of millennialism and the expansion and contraction of the economy—suggest the possibility of a theory of Utopian growth and decline. While such a theory could never fully account for the foundation or dissolution of any single community, it could explain why many such communities might arise almost simultaneously.

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1. In the absence of standardized usage, I employ "utopian communities" and "communal experiments" interchangeably to signify intentionally organized, relatively self-sufficient group living arrangements that seek to realize ideal social relationships.

1. *Four Utopian Waves and Four Waves of Millennialism*

The United States has experienced four periods of unusually intense communal activity in, respectively, the early nineteenth century, the very end of the century, the years of the Great Depression, and, of course, the 1960's.² For reasons which will become clear, I defer consideration of the most recent case to the concluding section.

The degree of concentration is most easily demonstrated for the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where systematic efforts have been made to identify the population of verifiable communal settlements.³ Two hundred and seventy communities were founded in the 132-year period between 1787 and 1919. Of those 270, fully one-third were begun in two seven-year periods. Fifty-five were established from 1842 through 1848, and another thirty-six originated between 1894 and 1900. The balance (179) were scattered over the remaining 118 years. The first wave (1842-1848) included the very numerous Fourierist groups, late Owenite communities, Perfectionist groups, and a scattering of ethnic (largely German) experiments. The second wave (1894-1900) was less numerous but more diverse, about evenly divided between religious and secular groups, less characterized by ethnolinguistic separatism, and not dominated by any single belief system (as American Fourierism had dominated the 1840's).

The timing and relative magnitude of twentieth-century Utopian waves are harder to determine, for, curiously, documentation is fuller for older movements than for modern groups. It is easier to survey the Utopian universe of, say, the 1840's than of the 1930's. Even the communes of the 1960's possess a vagueness of outline unmatched by their nineteenth-century precursors. In part, no doubt, greater knowledge of the distant than of the recent past reflects what scholars have thought it worthwhile to study, but it also reflects the greater stature of communitarianism's first intellectual patrons. It is difficult to find recent figures to match an Owen or Fourier, or even Henry George or Edward Bellamy later in the century (although of course there is B.F. Skinner). The tendency for many colonies to cluster

2. James H. Sweetland, "Federal Sources for the Study of Collective Communities," *Government Publications Review* 7 A (1980): 129-138; Benjamin Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma: A Study of Contemporary American Communes* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), pp. 31-40.

3. Otohiko Okuguwa, "Defining a Population of the Communal Societies in Nineteenth-Century America," prepared for National Historical Communal Societies Conference, Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield, Mass. 1980. Otohiko Okugawa, "Annotated List of Communal and Utopian Societies, 1787-1919," in Robert S. Fogarty, ed., *Dictionary of Communal and Utopian History* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood, 1980), pp. 172-233.

around a single system of beliefs has diminished. And thus individual causes, motives, and circumstances behind community foundations have become both more numerous and more difficult to fully discern.

Nonetheless, there is good reason to identify a third Utopian wave with the 1930's, even in the absence of an inventory on the order of Okugawa's or Bestor's. This may be said with confidence if only because of the unprecedented role of the federal government in communal organization. Between 1933 and about 1937, a variety of New Deal agencies established ninety-nine communities, with almost 11,000 units of housing, at a cost exceeding \$100 million.⁴ Not all the communities were equally designed as radical social and economic alternatives. But the crucial administrative role of Rexford G. Tugwell from 1935 through 1937 ensured that the bulk of the communities were conceived as fundamental departures from existing American social and economic patterns.⁵ Even before Tugwell's involvement, M. L. Wilson, an early advocate of "subsistence homesteads," had been strongly influenced by the example of Mormon villages,⁶ and "most of the early advocates of subsistence homesteads . . . had become convinced that full industrial employment was never to be expected again."⁷ Hence they were planning for a future that would bear no fundamental resemblance to the past. In addition to the nearly one hundred federal ventures in community-building, there were a number of as yet uninventoried private initiatives, which, like the government projects, often involved the return of urbanites to the land.⁸

Thus about half a century separates the second wave from the first, and three decades intervene between the second and third; an equal length of time elapsed between the third wave and that of the 1960's.

Arthur Bestor, *Backwood Utopias: The Sectarian Origins and the Owenite Phase of Communitarian Socialism in America, 1663-1829* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), pp. 273-285.

4. Paul K. Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), pp. 332-337; Russell Lord and Paul H. Johnstone, eds., *A Place on Earth: A Critical Appraisal of Subsistence Homesteads* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, 1942).

5. Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 147-153.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

7. Lord and Johnstone, *A Place on Earth*, p. 3.

8. A few such groups are listed in Ralph Albertson, "A Survey of Mutualistic Communities in America," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 3 (1936): 374-444.

The Utopian waves strikingly coincided with periods of more broadly based millennial expectation; that is, with eras when large numbers of people anticipated the consummation of human history. The 1842-48 wave coincided almost precisely with the climactic years of Millerism, the 1894-1900 wave with the economic panaceas of Populism and the "single-tax," and the wave of the 1930's with such secular saviors as Huey Long and Dr. Townsend.

"Millerism" was perhaps the most widely noted millenarian movement in American history. Its eponymous leader, William Miller, was a self-taught Baptist preacher whose reading of Scripture convinced him of the Second Coming's imminence. Pressed by expectant followers, in the early 1830's he gave the time as "sometime in 1843." In early 1843 he modified that view and spoke of "the Jewish year, 1843," by which he meant the period from March 21, 1843, to March 21, 1844. The uneventful passage to March 22 caused the Millerite leadership to issue a new—and final—extension to October 22, 1844.⁹

From 1839 on the movement became increasingly well organized and aggressive in its proselytizing, particularly in the Northeast. Although no membership records exist that might permit a precise determination of size, the best available estimates suggest a peak membership of about 50,000, together with a million or so described as "skeptically expectant"—this in a national population of nineteen million.¹⁰ Not surprisingly the period from March 1843 until the Fall of 1844 constituted the time of most rapid growth, just as the period immediately following the "Great Disappointment" saw the most precipitous drop in followers.¹¹

Fin-de-siecle millennialism spoke in more diverse idioms. Traditional Protestant millenarian traditions continued on the assumption that the Second Coming would eventually occur and usher in the millennium. While this venerable body of ideas became more respectable within

9. William Miller, "Apology and Defense," in *Advent Tracts* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, n.d.), Vol. II, pp. 24-25. Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (New York: Harper, 1965), p. 304.

10. William Miller, "Apology and Defense," p. 22; Cross, *The Burned over District*, p. 287; Jonathan Butler, "Adventism and the American Experience," in Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 175.

11. A substantial number of disillusioned Millerites migrated to existing communal organizations, the Shakers having been the major beneficiaries. Cross, *The Burned-over District*, p. 311. Millerite and post-Millerite Second Adventism was itself responsible for the founding of at least three communities whose members were able to rationalize the "Great Disappointment": The Germania Company, Marquette County, Wisconsin (1856-79); Adonai Shomo, Worcester County, Massachusetts (1861-97); and Celesta, Sullivan County, Pennsylvania (1863-64).

Protestant denominations, there is no evidence that it was unusually strong in the last decade of the 1800's.¹² Although the language of portents and prophecies continued to be applied, the 1890's belonged to the new secular millennialists, who increasingly regarded human salvation as an economic problem. Hence the period was filled with economic nostrums, which were expected not simply to eliminate poverty, unemployment, and labor strife, but to produce a wholly refashioned society.

Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* (1879) became the largest selling economic tract of all time.¹³ George's "single tax" proposal, in which all public revenue would come from the taxation of land, was intended to solve virtually all social ills at one stroke. George narrowly lost the New York mayoral election of 1886 and lived on until 1897, speaking, writing, and organizing on behalf of the single tax.¹⁴ The public enthusiasm for George's ideas was nearly matched by the almost contemporaneous vogue for those of Edward Bellamy, the result of his 1886 Utopian novel, *Looking Backward*. Bellamy's program for the nationalization of industry was carried forward by "nationalist clubs" and eventually by the People's (Populist) party in the presidential elections of 1892 and 1896."

What Richard Hofstadter has called the "folklore of Populism" was less a creed than a set of emotive symbols out of which a millennial, although secular, vision of the world might be constructed.¹⁶ In

12. Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism (1875-1925)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 85-87; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. xvii.

13. Steven B. Cord, *Henry George: Dreamer or Realist?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), pp. 244-245. Long before his development of the single-tax concept, George wrote of his yearning "for the promised Millennium, when each one will be free to follow his best and noblest impulses." Quoted in Charles Albrow Barker, *Henry George* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 55.

14. Although George had not intended to link the single-tax with communal organization, five communities were founded on his principles: Fairhope Industrial Association, Baldwin County, Alabama (1895-present); Arden, New Castle County, Delaware (1900-present); Tahanto, Worcester County, Massachusetts (1909-34); Free Acres Association, Union County, New Jersey (1910-50); and Halidon, Cumberland County, Maine (1911-38).

15. John L. Thomas, *Alternative America: Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Henry Demarest Lloyd, and the Adversary Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 274-276. Two communities were founded on Bellamy's model: Kaweah Co-operative Commonwealth, Tulare County, California (1885-92); and Altruria, Sonoma County, California (1894-95).

16. The interpretation of American Populism remains an extraordinarily contentious area. For a sampling of opposed views, see the following exchange: Norman Pollack,

its Manichean vision, it "looked backward with longing to the lost agrarian Eden." At the same time, it saw its road blocked by "a sustained conspiracy of the international money power."¹⁷ William Jennings Bryan, nominated by both the People's party and the Democratic party in 1896, polled six and a half million votes, five and a half million more than the People's Party had alone in 1892, but not enough to catch the Republican, McKinley. Although Bryan was not a millenarian, he stood close enough to the Populist constituencies of the South and West to propel their concerns into the national political arena.

The millennialism of the turn of the century was thus most clearly captured not by religionists but by spokesman of economic protest, and the same was largely true for the 1930's. Indeed, the same debate returns, over whether the advocates* of economic transformation were irrational fanatics attempting to "turn the world upside down" or whether they simply represented the economic interests of the unpropertied and disaffected.¹⁸

The dispute over motives is less important than the promise of renewal held out by Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and Dr. Townsend, whose economic cures for the Depression had a way of drifting from reform into total transformation, as though the magnitude of economic collapse had of necessity to engender cures as sweeping as the disease. Long's "share the wealth" plan, Coughlin's monetary proposals, and Townsend's "revolving old-age pension plan" elevated economic tinkering to the position of master-lever in the construction of a virtuous society.

2. Utopian Communities in a Millennialist Context

Most of the groups commonly identified as communal have sought living arrangements that would permit the full development of human capacities, hold at bay the forces that produce evil in the external world, and join individuals together in perfect harmony—in short, produce the millennium in miniature. These "micromillennialists"

"Fear of Man: Populism, Authoritarianism, and the Historian," *Agricultural History* 39 (1965): 59-67; and Irvin Unger, "Critique of Norman Pollack's 'Fear of Man,'" *ibid.*, pp. 75-80.

17. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Knopf, 1955), pp. 62, 70.

18. An instrumentalist view is presented in Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression* (New York: Knopf, 1982). The same figures are viewed as millenarians in David H. Bennett, *Demagogues in the Depression: American Radicals and the Union Party, 1932-1936* (New Brunswick Rutgers University Press, 1969).

were often concerned to explicitly link their communities with a macromillennial historical design, which their modest experiments foreshadowed. Hence the profusion of millenarian views could scarcely be a matter of disinterest to communitarians, although they might interpret the phenomenon in widely different ways.

The Utopian waves described earlier coincided remarkably with periods in which large numbers of noncommunist Americans felt society to be at a juncture of historic, indeed metahistoric, significance. Those who chose a communal life were thus joined to more conformist Americans who felt an anxious anticipation about the shape of the future. Those unable or unwilling to abandon conventional ways of life were often just as certain that immense transformations lay ahead.

The first Utopian wave (1842-48) coincided, as we have seen, almost exactly with the climactic years of Millerite Second Adventism, the most widely noted premillennialist movement in American history. In their rhetoric, Utopians and Millerites had little use for one another. John Humphrey Noyes called Second Adventism a "popular mania."¹⁹ The Millerites returned the compliment, consigning one of Noyes's attacks to a section of *Signs of the Times* headed "Refuge of Scoffers."²⁰ This was less a dialogue of the deaf than a debate between equally earnest competitors, each sure that he possessed the exclusive millennial calling and equally confident of the other's error.

The 1894-1900 Utopian wave grew out of the diverse millennial visions of the "Gilded Age," so many of which envisioned "sudden destruction or slow strangulation [that] lay in wait for a rotten civilization."²¹ Tumultuous cities, heavily populated by immigrants, evoked the last days of Rome. As Henry George put it: "Go through the squalid quarters of great cities, and you may see, even now, their gathering hordes."²² Action of the most immediate and decisive kind was required, but the power to effect the millennial consummation was no longer supernatural. It lay in economic forces as potent as they were unfeeling, and whose potency, if properly directed, might indeed bring back a lost Eden of egalitarian abundance.

The dialectic between the third Utopian wave (the 1930's) and the coincident millennialism was even more evident. The economic crisis placed secular millennialists such as Long and Townsend in competition with the New Deal for the allegiance of voters, a political threat

19. "Clouds Driven with Winds," *The Witness* (Putney, Vermont), 10 December 1842, p. 184.

20. *Signs of the Times* (Boston), 15 June 1840.

21. Frederic Cople Jaher, *Doubters and Dissenters: Cataclysmic Thought in America, 1885-1918* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p. 7.

22. Thomas, *Alternative America*, p. 127.

that could be most effectively dealt with if their ideas were co-opted. Thus, Roosevelt was only too happy to speed passage of the Social Security Act as a way of holding the Townsendites at bay.²³ The permeable ideological boundaries of the New Deal allowed at least some millennialists (Tugwell, for example) to rise to positions of influence. Hence the New Deal community projects subsumed the views of a diverse "back-to-the-land" movement and genuinely reflected some in the Roosevelt Administration who believed that only through self-sufficient rural communities could the new society of cooperation be built.

The construction of intentional communities represents one strategy for expressing millenarian aspirations (others include mass proselytizing and revolution). To be sure, neither all communities nor all communalists have been overtly millenarian. Nonetheless, many who harbored intense expectations of a perfected society found the communal ambiance congenial. Three factors particularly commended it. First, the preservation of unconventional beliefs depends upon the provision of rewards for conformity and deprivations for deviation from the beliefs, as well as shielding against competing ideas that might tempt the believer. Neither condition is easily met in an urban, heterogeneous society. Belief is far easier to maintain in an environment of likeminded persons, relatively insulated from nonbelievers. Second, all millennialist groups, whether religious or secular, face potential crises of disconfirmation, when predictions of total change are seen to be unattainable. A variety of devices are available to buffer the disillusioning effects of this confrontation with an obdurate reality: making predictions vaguer and more general; extending the predictions ever farther into the future; and attributing the delay to the malevolence or inadequacies of others. Such devices are easier to deploy in a communal environment, which can be viewed as a quasi-millennial way station on the road to societal transformation. Whether communalists view themselves as a saving remnant or as experimenters pointing the way for others, the indeterminate period that separates a flawed present from a perfect future can be made more tolerable. Finally, in principle communities are "total institutions,"²⁴ complete environments providing whatever their members require for both daily life and the life-cycle. While this aspiration to completeness may be difficult to attain, if only for economic reasons, its effect is to transfer attention from a desired end-state—the world as we would

23. Bennett, *Demagogues*, p. 177.

24. Erving Goffman, *Asylums* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1961); Lewis A. Coser, *Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment* (New York: The Free Press, 1974).

like it to be—to a process—the manner in which one lives in order to reach that end-state. The most successful communities have in fact been process-Utopias, in which the manner of living and the adaptations to changing conditions come to be seen as valued ends in themselves. A community whose beliefs fail to find sympathetic responses outside may yet be experienced by its members as a kind of millennial consummation.

3. *The Larger Context*

Neither the Utopian waves nor the correlative millenarian waves arose in spontaneous or accidental fashion. While the communities often reflected the prominence of millenarian ideas, neither lived a closed existence, cut off from forces in the larger environment. For that reason, it may be useful to speculate about factors which influenced their timing.

The first three utopian/millenarian waves came at or near the troughs of an economic cycle variously called "the long wave" (after its forty- to sixty- year periodicity) or "the Kondratieff wave" (after the Soviet economist who suggested its existence in the 1920's).²⁵ Long waves, unlike the more frequent business cycles, represent alternating times of expansion and crisis in industrial economies. Long-wave theorists generally begin the plotting of these oscillations with the end of the eighteenth century, the earliest point for which relatively complete and reliable price and production figures can be obtained.

During the two hundred years for which data are available, Kondratieff waves exhibit four troughs: a first downswing from 1815 until the mid-to late-1840's; a second downswing beginning in the decade after the Civil War, reaching its lowest point about 1896; a third downswing from 1920 until the late 1930's; and the fourth and most recent downswing, dated by some economists as beginning in the early 1970's and still unfolding but by others as having begun in the early 1950's and concluded in 1972.²⁶ The first three troughs include

25. The long-wave Kondratieff literature is large and, in recent years, has grown rapidly. For an introduction intended for noneconomists, see the August 1981 issue of *Futures*, entirely devoted to the subject. In addition, an unusually full bibliography appears in William R. Thompson and L. Gary Zuk, "War, Inflation, and the Kondratieff Long Wave," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 26 (1982): 621-644.

26. W. W. Rostow, *Why the Poor Get Richer and Rich Slow Down: Essays in the Marshallian Long Period* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980) argues that the downswing has already ended. See especially pp. 49-56. The opposed view is argued in J. J. van Duijn, "Comment on van der Zwan's Paper," in S. K. Kuipers and G. J. Lanjouw eds., *Prospects of Economic Growth* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing, 1980), pp. 223-233.

major economic crises: the Panic of 1837, the Panic of 1893, and the Great Depression. During such periods, communal organization made good economic sense, for it encouraged the pooling of resources in times of scarcity. These resources might then be distributed in a far more equitable manner than the vicissitudes of the market permitted. Communal belief systems often encouraged a relatively austere lifestyle, providing intellectual and/or religious rationales for straitened economic circumstances. On the other hand, the disproportionate number of communities founded during bad times increased the likelihood of community failure, since many were severely undercapitalized. Lacking sufficient resources to maintain themselves, they quickly dissolved.

4. *The Problem of the 1960's*

I have thus far skirted the most striking modern manifestation of community building: the "communes" of the 1960's. On the one hand, they appear to be yet another expression of some enduring "utopian impulse," tying them to forebears in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, they clearly do not quite match those ancestors' associations with economic malaise.

The "communes" became major elements in the social landscape about 1965 and declined rapidly in the early and mid-1970's. Thus the length of time of this fourth Utopian wave was approximately the same as its predecessors'. The imperfect but frequent estimates of 2,000 to 3,000 communes suggest an order of magnitude, even though many were little more than convenient ways of living cheaply or were exceedingly small and fleeting.²⁷

However, the communes had a complex relationship with millennialism, for although a new, fourth wave of millennialism was also at hand, it appeared in three discrete forms. First came the so-called "new religions" or "cults," some of which were clearly millennial. Their rise almost exactly corresponded to that of communes and a number of communes were founded for religious purposes. Second, liberal Protestant denominations, hostile to millennialism, began to lose members about 1964-66, reversing a two-hundred-year-long record of increase. At the same time, conservative denominations, more receptive to

27. Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma*, pp. 48-57. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 166. Maren Lockwood Carden, "Communes and Protest Movements in the U.S., 1960-1974: An Analysis of Intellectual Roots," *International Review of Modern Sociology* 6 (1976): 13-22.

millennial beliefs, gained members at an increasing rate.²⁸ The fundamentalist surge began to become publically visible by the time of the 1970 publication of Hal Lindsey's millennialist work, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, which became the largest selling American nonfiction work of the 1970's.²⁹ The third form of millennialism was a secular apocalyptic literature stressing the imminent destruction of "civilization as we know it" by such man-made forces as nuclear war, environmental disaster, and global famine. The Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth* (1972) sketched the outlines of a genre which continued throughout the decade. Usually the work of intellectuals and academics, these scenarios envisioned a future society where drastically lowered material well-being was compensated by the flowering of spiritual and aesthetic capacities.

While Christian communes were not likely to be explicitly millenarian, communes oriented toward Eastern religions or the counter-culture believed "that a new Utopian age [was] about to dawn."³⁰ As in the second and third waves, Utopian communities were more likely to draw millennial inspiration from secular or occult sources than from the Christian tradition. The bifurcation of nineteenth-century millennialism into Christian and non-Christian (usually secular) forms implied that the latter rather than the former would nurture Utopian experiments.

The relationship of the communes to macroeconomic disturbances is a good deal more problematic. On the one hand, the popular characterization of commune members as almost exclusively the children of affluent middle-class parents seems wide of the mark: "There were about as many children of truck drivers, farmers, and laborers. . . as there were children of lawyers, physicians, and professors."³¹ In this regard, communes resembled the highly representative memberships of the communities of the 1840's. On the other hand, no economic collapse remotely resembling the Great Depression coincided with or directly preceded the fourth Utopian wave (1965-1975). Almost alone among students of long-wave cycles, Walt W. Rostow does argue that the fourth Kondratieff downswing occurred at about this time (1951-1972), pointing in particular to the downward movement of commodity prices; but even he concedes that simultaneous

28. J. Stillson Judah, *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture* (New York: John Wiley, 1974), pp. 138-146.

29. Michael Barkun, "Divided Apocalypse: Thinking About the End in Contemporary America," *Soundings*, forthcoming. On the distorted perceptions of American fundamentalism, see R. Laurence Moore, "Insiders and Outsiders in American Historical Narrative and American History," *American Historical Review* 87 (1982): 390-412.

30. Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma*, pp. 214, 243.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

low unemployment and high inflation made for a strange combination.³² Others have argued with equal force and greater plausibility that Rostow's downswing was instead an upswing, with the real downswing beginning in the early 1970's.³³ Given the length of long-wave cycles (forty to sixty years) and our own proximity to the time in question, we can only conclude that the jury is still out and likely to remain so for perhaps another decade.

What, then, are we to make of the fourth Utopian wave and its relationship to its predecessors? In the first place, the link with widespread, noncommunal forms of millennialism appears well established. No period of communalism, including the sixties, has occurred in the absence of substantial millennial movements in the society at large. Their counterpoint suggests that ideologists of utopianism may borrow from the millennium-saturated culture around them;³⁴ that expectations of transformation make alternative communities appear more plausible and respectable; and that community organization provides a particularly secure way of expressing millennial expectations at times when more confrontational strategies are dangerous. In this connection, discussions of communal "success" or "failure" often compare communities with one another instead of with ideologically similar noncommunal groups. Thus the communities of the 1840's must be viewed alongside Millerism, those of the 1890's in comparison to the more radical forms of Populism, and the Depression-era communities with the demagogues who offered competing versions of "this-worldly" salvation. Where large national movements often crumbled with relative suddenness, the segmented character of utopianism, with its literally dozens of coexisting communities, is better designed for survival, for no single community's demise determines the failure of others. In this connection, it is worth noting that although there are clearly discernible waves in the founding of communities, there are no comparable waves of dissolutions, at least for the period 1787-1919, where ample data is available.³⁵

32. Rostow, *Why the Poor*, p. 94.

33. Van Duijn, "Comments. . ."; Jay Forrester, "New Perspectives on Economic Growth," in Dennis L. Meadows, ed., *Alternatives to Growth. 1: A Search for Sustainable Futures* (Cambridge: Ballinger, 1977), pp. 107-121.

34. A relationship evident even in a militant secularist, such as Robert Owen, J. F. C. Harrison, *Quest for the New Moral World: Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1969), pp. 132-135.

35. An apparent exception is the very large number of dissolutions—eighteen in 1918. Most of these, however, were Hutterite communities, whose members had resisted service in World War I and believed that the political climate would be more tolerant in Canada.

If the link with millennialism has proven relatively enduring, the tie to Kondratieff downturns is less clear, if only because the relative prosperity of the 1960's makes it difficult to take Rostow's argument seriously. While the first three waves indisputably took place in times of severe deprivation, the most recent did not. Although for obvious reasons any hypothesis concerning the timing of the fourth wave must remain tentative, one does indeed lie at hand. The first and third Utopian waves mark the outer boundaries of a Kondratieff hypothesis. Before the early nineteenth century neither data on communal organization nor information on economic fluctuations is sufficiently full to permit a linkage of the two. After the 1930's, the two appear unrelated. If the first and third Utopian waves define the area in which a Kondratieff hypothesis appears to offer some explanation for Utopian foundations, the same Utopian waves also approximate the outer boundaries of the high period in American industrial development. Although some industrialization had occurred earlier, the "take-off" began in the middle 1840's, particularly in the Northeast, where Utopian organization was then most intense.³⁶ By the 1930's the period when heavy industry dominated American economic life was nearing an end, although its dominance was prolonged another two decades by the needs of the Second World War and the pent-up consumer demand released in its aftermath. Soon thereafter the economy entered its service- and knowledge-oriented "post-industrial" phase.³⁷

This suggests the following line of argument: Millenarianism in general and utopianism in particular are responses to perceived disturbances in the moral order, periods when individual and collective fates appear to violate the wish for people to "get what they deserve and deserve what they get."³⁸ From the early nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, during the heyday of industrialization, disturbances in the moral order were regarded as linked to the capricious if not malevolent play of economic forces, hence crises of confidence could be admirably tracked by a device such as the Kondratieff wave. Its application is not one of simple economic determinism, for its use does not necessarily imply that the poor and unemployed would be more likely to gravitate to communities. Rather, it serves as a marker, pointing to those economic dislocations sufficiently prolonged, widespread, and intense to engender profound doubts concerning the fate of

36. Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-class and Social History* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

37. Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 130. The great surge in employment in the service sector began after 1947.

38. Melvin J. Lerner, "Introduction," *Journal of Social Issues* 31 (1975): 1-20.

moral order, doubts ultimately translatable into (among other things) communal experiments. So long as a cycle of boom and bust obtained, and affected the national well-being, its low points were apt to induce a questioning of received ideas and an equivalent willingness to examine other routes to the good society.

Yet the deprivations associated with economic panics and depressions are not the only ones capable of shattering complacent acceptance of the status quo. After World War II utopianism may well have passed out of its century-long Kondratieff phase, in which downturns in the long wave were sufficient markers for its occurrence. Thereafter, the capacity to shake conceptions of the moral order may have passed to other forces, thus permitting the apparent paradox of millennial concerns in relatively privileged populations. Rosabeth Kanter's observation that so many of the communes embraced a psychological rhetoric of "personal growth"³⁹ suggests the limits of explanations derived primarily from economic factors. Calamities that shake a belief in moral design need not be exclusively economic. Indeed, a Maslowian analysis would suggest that as material needs are met, it is precisely in the nonmaterial realm that individuals become most vulnerable. The Kondratieff wave provided a suitable indicator for the critical disruptions of an earlier time but encompassed neither the racial unrest of the sixties nor the debilitating effects of the Vietnam War. The apparent detachment of the millenarian-utopian cycle from economic roots suggests that its appearance may become increasingly erratic and/or difficult to predict. In a general sense, such movements are byproducts of high levels of collective stress,⁴⁰ yet increasingly, familiar causes of stress, once capable of unsettling our visions of the moral order, are coming under control, being adequately foreseen, or having their most serious effects neutralized. This occurred first with regard to natural calamities and may now be occurring with regard to economic downturns. The locus of disruptive events will in consequence shift to less well-understood and less tangible phenomena, such as perceptions of the quality and purpose of life. Given the rudimentary character of social as opposed to purely economic measurements, the ebb and flow of post-industrial Utopias is likely remain enigmatic.

39. Kanter, *Commitment and Community*, p.167.

40. This point is elaborated upon within the framework of a theory of the emergence of millenarian movements. Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).