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Its power lies in claiming falsities to be truths. So one is expected to believe a lie as the truth. Or, in all the competing truth claims, a common response is to simply throw up one's hands, and say I give up: I don't care about the truth.

Utopian thinking, at its best, takes a different path. It makes no such truth claims; it only claims upon the imagination. It is worth remembering that Thomas More's Utopia is a made-up word, composed from the Greek for No and Place. Utopia is a dream which we all know is a dream but inspires us and motivates us nonetheless. This sort of imagination leaves truth intact.

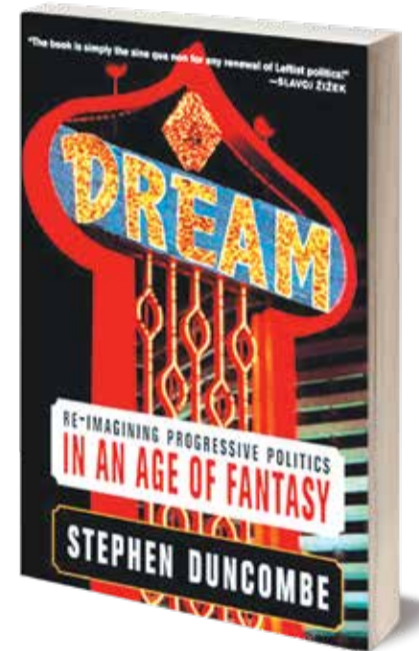
In today's politics, who might be a suitable candidate to deliver the function of vanguards of change?

Short answer: Someone who is not afraid to dream, yet is also able to distinguish fantasies from reality.

What kind(s) of utopia should we aim to achieve? Is there any principal theme around which we should mobilize?

The problem with most Utopias that have been put into practice is they are the result of finite vision of a small group of people that the rest of us are forced to live in. And if we don't agree that their Utopia isn't, say, "the workers' paradise" or the "one, true caliphate" then it's off to the gulag or off with your head. My ideal is a much more fluid Utopia, one which we all contribute to dreaming up, and one that is constantly being revised. A democratic forum for imagination. We use democracies for all sorts of decision making: what laws to have, or how a budget should be allocated. Why not a democracy for the imagination?

So if there is a singular principal to guide Utopia, I think it is this: It should be an Open Utopia.



A scene from the exhibition 'Utopia Dystopia', curated by Kathryn Weir, which was held in Madre - Donnaregina Museum of Contemporary Art in Naples, Italy, in 2022.

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Dystopias are always the fault of a clear and present enemy: Them. Utopias, on the other hand, make demands on us. And that puts a heavy responsibility directly upon our own shoulders.