



# **The Rage for Utopia: Obsession and Civilization** **(A Susan Haynes book)**

*Ronald Conway*

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# The Rage for Utopia: Obsession and Civilization (A Susan Haynes book)

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## **The Rage for Utopia: Obsession and Civilization (A Susan Haynes book) Ronald Conway**

Can there be a parallel between psychic illness in individuals and the psychopathology of a whole society? "The Rage for Utopia" is a cross-disciplinary work that weaves psychology, history and sociology into a continuous fabric, and assails many a sacred cow in western life. Ronald Conway examines the obsessive social behaviour of western society in the light of its long-term psychological and ecological consequences. He traces much of the physical unrest and mental disturbance in affluent western communities to a vain quest for an earthly paradise, showing how a longing for the kingdom of God on earth was gradually transformed into the secular scientific and commercial strivings of our own time. These have produced dazzling technologies at the cost of life on a human, natural scale, while threatening the whole planet with desolation due to nationalistic pride, greed and waste. Selecting a wide range of examples of obsession and compulsion in western intellectual, political and institutional behaviour, Conway tries to show how the rage for earthly perfection can produce forms of social neurosis which masquerade under noble abstractions we call "freedom", "progress", "democracy" and "equal rights", all of which have ceased to be reasonable ideals and have turned into new forms of idolatry. To distract ourselves and to drown our dread of the future, we plunge into ever louder, more glittering forms of industry and entertainment. "The Rage for Utopia" explodes the vision of reality accepted by most western people and argues that our problems lie not in the world but in our false perceptions of it. Conway ends on a note of spiritual hope and optimism by suggesting ways out of the obsessively created maze of structures in which western societies have lost themselves. Ronald Conway has spent half a lifetime dealing with psychological suffering as a way of spotlighting aspects of western history and society in terms of people's most grotesque mistakes and deepest longings. He asserts that each individual contains the answers to the world's anxieties in microcosm if only they had the wit to see it.

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