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Utopia and Utopians

"Without the Utopians of other times, men would still live in caves, miserable and naked. It was Utopians who traced the lines of the first City...Out of generous dreams come beneficial realities. Utopia is the principle of all progress, and the essay into a better future." (Anatole France)

cool
quote

A utopia is a place of ideal social conditions and just laws along with a flawless government, but a utopia is also an imaginary place that can never be attained. It is similar to a dream. Though it is not possible for mankind to reach a utopia, the idea of a utopia is used to promote and achieve great change in humanity. Utopias are used as a method to improve the current society: socially, politically, and economically. They are formed in order to show, usually by contrast, the flaws of the current civilization. Sir Thomas More, the individual who created the term utopia, constructed an imaginary utopia in his book *Utopia*. He wrote this book as a criticism of the perverse social lifestyle that the European states were involved in and to ultimately endorse change in the government. Another aspect explored in utopias is the gender role in society. In Mary Gentle's book *Golden Witchbreed* the gender of a newborn is not chosen until the individual reaches adulthood and gender has no effect on one's participation in society. Utopias are created as ideal places that individuals strive to achieve, and by doing so accomplish some aspects of their utopia, therefore making the world a better place.

Utopias explore many different social characteristics including; gender roles, religion, and equality. Gender roles are commonly analyzed in utopias. Charlotte Perkins Gilman explores this idea in her book *Herland*, a place with no males. With only one gender there is no way to have gender roles, so her book surveys a place without gender roles. The women reside in "such universal peace and good will and mutual affection." (99) Because "they lacked the sex motive and, with it, jealousy." (99) The women are free to work whatever job they please and are all equal. Religion is also discussed in utopias. In Thomas More's *Utopia*, any member of the utopia can practice any religion. They are given complete freedom to choose any religion they please. In

utopias people are not judged by what religion they are or by what they look like. It is a place of equality of all. The environment is also examined in utopias. In Ernest Callenbach's book *Ecotopia*, "Washington, Oregon and much of California, sickened by environmental degradation, swollen military budgets and inflation in the U.S., have announced their secession from the Union." (David Brand, Times Magazine) The Ecotopians create a new political, social, economic, and cultural state, where everyone displays their emotions. Everybody sorts out his or her problems in the open. There are no hidden feelings. In *Ecotopia* pollution has been eliminated by the outlawing of the combustion engine, microwave, and many more polluting appliances. The Ecotopians goal is to find a balance between the environment and themselves. Stress is greatly reduced in these environments, sometimes allowing humans to double or triple their lifespan. In *The Lost Horizon* people can live to be hundreds of years old. They are protected by the mysterious properties of the paradise they live in. Crime, war, and hunger are non-existent. Everyone's needs are met.

The economic views in a utopia are usually socialistic. There are no economic classes. Everyone is equal, everyone has their needs met, and everyone does what they are good ^{at} in a utopia. There is no private ownership of land. "In Utopia, where every man has a right to everything, they all know that if care is taken to keep the public stores full, no private man can want anything; for among them there is no unequal distribution, so that no man is poor, none in necessity; and though no man has anything, yet they are all rich; for what can make a man so rich as to lead a serene and cheerful life, free from anxieties." (*Utopia*). Sir Thomas More's book influenced the views of many socialist movements. Karl Marx had very similar ideas to those in the book *Utopia*; in fact The Communist Manifesto and Utopia are sold together in one book. Utopian economies are all about sharing. One must be willing to give their time and effort in order to **benefit** the society as whole. In *Ecotopia* it was hard "to get from America to Ecotopia [**because it**] requires a lot of social reconditioning." For example, "all companies are small, **worker-**owned co-operatives, and the distinction between work and play seems to have **vanished.**" (David Brand, Times Magazine) Every Ecotopian works a 20-hour workweek. Every person does what he or she wants to do, which makes the person **more** productive. *Ecotopia* has laissez-faire economic policies unlike many other utopian

really?

economies. Callenbach wrote this book as a criticism of “consumerism and materialism, among other aspects of American life.”

Utopias challenge the political views of the present in order to try and change them for the future. A utopian government is run by few knowledgeable people making decisions based on the moral values of the society. Since all people in the society share the same ethics, the morals become supreme law. All problems are solved by choosing the most ethical option. The politics of utopias are based solely on moral values and equality. Thomas More used his book *Utopia* to try and change the chaotic politics of his own era by contrasting the rather abnormal politics of Utopia to the disordered politics of his own time. In the end of the book *Utopia* More writes, “Meanwhile, though he is a man of unquestioned learning, and highly experienced in the ways of the world, I cannot agree with everything he said. Yet I confess there are many things in the Commonwealth of Utopia that I wished our own country would imitate—though I don’t really expect it will.”

good quote

Geographically utopias are very mysterious. In *The Lost Horizon* no one knows exactly where Shangri-La is located. Generally, utopias are very isolated and hard to find. In More’s *Utopia* the island of Utopia is very hard to find, as it is on an isolated island. Utopias are commonly cut off from all other societies. In *The Lost Horizon* the characters are essentially kidnapped and brought to Shangri-La, but once they leave it is nearly impossible to find again. The locations of utopias are only known by the utopians. *Ecotopia* is different from utopian societies geographically. Utopia means “no place”, while ecotopia means “home place”. Ecotopia is a geographically known area. In that respect it is the only different aspect from a utopia.

Utopias are used to change the current status of a society. Utopias in literature use extreme examples of in order to criticize the existing civilization and enact change. *Ecotopia* does so by going to the furthest extent of an ecological society to show contrast between today’s world and the wacky nation of Ecotopia. This contrast demonstrates to us the necessity for adjustment to improve our world today. Utopias are very affective in achieving transformations. Some of Callenbach’s ideas in *Ecotopia* have been performed

in our society today. These ideas include recycling, print on demand, electric trains, and much more. "if you reflect on our change from thoughtless trash-tossing to virtually universal recycling, or from the past in which smokers didn't hesitate to blow smoke in anybody's face to our present restrictions on smoking in public places, it's clear that shared ideas about acceptable or desirable behavior can change markedly. Such changes occurred without anybody getting arrested in the dark of night. Further changes will come." (*Ecotopia*) It is obvious that utopias can affectively change society.

Utopias have been around for a very long time. "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (The Bible) Though they have been around for forever, not one has been successfully created and maintained. A utopia can never be reached because everyone has a different view of what a utopia should include. Everyone has his or her own utopia.

Great Quotes
Bible Quote
to finish was particularly poignant. The A- is a tad too high a grade w/ Ingoing with Flow of paper and polished structure. Reads like several good paragraphs jammed together. Frankenstein

A-