Utopian Writing as a Tool for Social Criticism: More, Orwell and Huxley

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SUMMARY

This paper aims to explore how utopian writing serves as a genre suited for social criticism with a primary emphasis on the contributions of three influential figures: Sir Thomas More, George Orwell, and Aldous Huxley. To comprehensively understand utopian writing as a genre utilized by these authors, it becomes crucial to delve into their social and historical backgrounds. These contextual factors profoundly influence the content and overarching themes of their literary works. What's particularly intriguing is how Thomas More's approach invites readers to engage critically with his writings, thus allowing for diverse interpretations. This, in turn, has given rise to subsequent works that have, in turn, provided fresh insights into our readings of '*Utopia'*.

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INTRODUCTION

"The creation of the literary generic concept of "utopia" is a complex process which has until today eluded complete explanation." (Holscher, 1990: 7)

Lucian Holscher has perfectly captured the tone of most academic works that have attempted to explain the concept of utopia. Many authors have tracked the emergence of the utopian genre and canon in different ways, while also acknowledging that utopian thought has been prevalent for a long time. Additionally, this subject has inspired critics to dissect its nuances, while philosophers have used it as a medium to convey their views on politics, ethics, and societal structures in general.

Utopianism, often referred to as social dreaming, has been a captivating topic for many authors, inviting them to articulate their visions of a "non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space". Whether the author intended "a reader to view it as a considerably better society in which the reader lived or a considerably worse society is" often hard to distinguish. (Fitting, 2009: 126)

More is frequently acknowledged as the genre's founding figure, whereas Aldous Huxley and George Orwell extended the tradition of employing utopian writing, as outlined by More, as a prominent tool for social critique. By examining the influence of utopian narratives on the societal dialogue during More's era and comparing it with the 20th century, this essay seeks to clarify how More has shaped the tradition of utopian writing, allowing us to interpret subsequent works, and how these subsequent works have, in turn, provided fresh insights into our readings of Utopia.

THOMAS MORE AND THE BEGINNINGS OF UTOPIA

In the midst of political turmoil during the late 15th and early 16th centuries, Sir Thomas More embarked on a imagining of utopian writing. More, a prominent figure in English politics as a member of parliament, privy councilor to Henry VIII, and eventually the lord chancellor of England, employed the medium of dialogue to describe an ideal society and to critique autocratic rulers, including the kings of France and England. His career as a statesman, philosopher, humanist, and writer allowed him to participate in political and legal life actively. He used his experience as a man of action to observe and reflect on the greedy and power-hungry Christian Europe.

It is important to note that the idea of an ideal society existed before Thomas More's writings but has been dormant. More's significance extends beyond the mere revival of this tradition; he played a pivotal role in redefining it. The process of redefining unfolded within a unique political and religious setting.

While King Henry VIII was initially seen as a ruler who encouraged intellectual debates and open conversations in his court, these perceptions later clashed with his political actions. He entrusted his ministers Cardinal Wolsey, Thomas More, and Thomas Cromwell with implementing his wishes and carrying out his policies. (Warner, 1996)

During More's appointment to the delegation tasked with revising an Anglo-Flemish commercial treaty in May 1515, it may have driven More into writing *"Utopia"*. As the conference unfolded in Bruges – a Flemish city with Margrave as its hereditary ruler - More had extended breaks that allowed him to explore various cities in Belgium. This exposure to different environments, coupled with the commercial nature of the delegation's work, which focused on trade and economic agreements, likely shaped More's perspective on issues of wealth distribution, property rights, and societal equality. These recurring themes became central in *"Utopia,"* where More directed his criticism toward his time's social and economic disparities (Fokkema, 2011).

More's close relationship with the throne was evident when he, in 1523, collaborated with the King on writing a response to Martin Luther. They aimed to defend the Catholic Church and its teachings and establish the authority of the Pope. (Wegemer and Smith, 2004)

However, their close relationship had a very ill ending. Henry VIII inherited a stable treasury that he spent on lavish expenditures and wars, and the English court found itself in a crisis. Additionally, lacking a male heir meant having a clear line of succession was no longer possible. It also meant that the throne would be open to power struggles without security, defense, and dynastic prestige.

Henry became interested in Anne Boleyn, a lady at court who could provide him with the security his rule needed. Subsequently, he wanted to paint his marriage to Catherine as being against God's rules because she had been married to his older brother, who had died. He thought their lack of sons was a sign of God's disapproval. Henry asked the Pope to end his marriage, but the Pope was influenced by the powerful Holy Roman Emperor and disapproved of his request. The king was still adamant about divorcing Catherine of Aragon.

More disagreed with Henry's divorce plans and wanted to stay loyal to the Pope and the Catholic Church. His refusal to back Henry VIII's religious and political aims and his strong loyalty to the Catholic Church posed a significant challenge to the king's control. Due to his absence from the king's coronation and his refusal to swear to his Oath of Supremacy, More was put on trial. He was found guilty and sentenced to death.

THE DIALOGIC APPROACH OF THE GREEK MASTERS

It is well known that ancient Greek philosophers used dialogue, the form of questions and answers, to unveil the truth about the nature of human behaviour and intentions. This stems from Socrates himself, who aimed to educate others, living his philosophy through spoken interactions, not written words. The reason for the enigmatic nature of the Socratic method is its reliance on asking questions rather than providing direct answers. Socrates emphasised that there is no definite answer to any question, considering that human knowledge is limited.

Unfortunately, this means that it is impossible to ensure that the true meaning behind Socrates' teachings is properly conveyed when it is put into writing. Therefore, the Socratic method allows for a lot of different interpretations. Thomas More drew considerable inspiration from Plato's *"Republic",* it is not surprising that *"Utopia"* is subject to centuries-long analysis and debate.

It is important to note that More's dialogical form of Utopia is often attributed to Lucian, whose works he translated into Latin. Not diminishing Lucian's role in shaping the way More interacted with his own text, the philosophical approaches of Plato and Aristotle are of interest to us due to their correlation and similarity between the main interlocutors in Book one of "*Utopia".*

In Plato's *"Republic,"* the main objective was to explore the concept of true justice. Through the character of Socrates engaging in dialogue, Plato envisioned an ideal polis with a carefully designed social structure that would establish justice and harmony. In the context of Greek philosophy, political and moral justice were intricately linked, and as a result, "The Republic" delves into a wide range of ethical, political, and social themes. In the text, Plato refers to a state where each social class fulfills its designated role without attempting to perform the functions of any other class. It suggests/implies that the best life is only lived in a civic community. How to achieve this life and what is the best order of human society is explored while the existing political and social conventions are at the same time subjected to criticism.

Aristotle is another important figure that has allowed us to gain insights into the meaning of Utopia. In *Politics,* he established himself as an authority in the field of political theory. Aristotle differs from his master not in the principal values but in separate ways of approaching

them. While Plato utilises imaginative, allegoric, and illustrative methods, Aristotle writes with his analytical and systematic approach. Being the father of logic, it is rational to assume that Aristotle's vision of a perfect world is explored from both speculative and practical standpoints. Therefore, political and social matters should be discussed from he perspective of? empirical evidence since individuals cannot form Plato's speculative reasoning without developing practical reasoning in the confinement of an ideal city.

Book One of "Utopia" is structured as a dialogue between More, Pieter Gillis, and Raphael Hytholoday, who through opposing views, discuss the mishaps of Tudor England. Furthermore, this dialogue can be interpreted as a clash between different lines of reasoning. Similar to Plato, Raphael strives to achieve the ideal of truth by believing in the good consequences of its true form. In other words, Raphael frequently overlooks the practicality of putting his ideas into practice in the tangible world. This mirrors one of the enduring criticisms leveled against Plato - the impractical and unrealistic nature of his ideals when applied to the real world.

Of course, this does not mean that he solemnly relies on the theoretical approach. His regard for practical change becomes evident while opposing the English laws that has been prevailing during his time, specifically his critique of capital punishment for theft. Raphael recognizes the need to address the problem at its root, taking a proactive approach to solving societal issues. He understands that simply punishing theft is not a sustainable solution. Instead, he advocates for tackling the underlying cause of poverty by creating meaningful job opportunities for the less fortunate, thus addressing the root of the problem.

Nendza suggests that More draws on a Machiavellian argument that a poor population poses a greater threat to rulers than a prosperous one. In other words, a just society should be structured to minimize the incentives or needs for individuals to engage in illegal activities. Fueled by unbridled greed, these laws resulted in the gruesome punishment of the unemployed for minor theft (Nendza, 1984).

> „If you do not find a remedy to these evils, it is a vain thing to boast of your severity in punishing theft, which, though it may have the appearance of justice, yet in itself is neither just nor convenient; for if you suffer your people to be ill-educated, and their manners to be corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to

> which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this but that you first make thieves and then punish them?" (More, 1949: 28)

Furthermore, he argues that rich men acquire land for their flocks which drives away farmers with whom the cultivation of grain decreases. Not only is this benefiting only a selected few, but the farmers are also losing their jobs becoming a greater burden on society and resulting in theft. Finally, England is creating thieves just to hang them. Essentially, he considers the monarchy to be an inherently flawed system that encourages unwanted social behaviour and subsequently punishes people for engaging in it.

Raphael also argues against private property. He believes that there will never be a fair distribution of goods until private property is abolished. If there is no self-interest, people will willingly serve the common good which will lead to a fair and equal society.

> "Though to speak plainly my real sentiments, I must freely own that as long as there is any property, and while money is the standard of all other things, I cannot think that a nation can be governed either justly or happily: not justly, because the best things will fall to the share of the worst men; nor happily, because all things will be divided among a few (and even these are not in all respects happy), the rest being left to be absolutely miserable." (More, 1949: 55)

More holds a different view, arguing that a nation with communal property won't thrive. People wouldn't be motivated to work as they'd rely on others for sustenance; hence the absence of private property would diminish any respect for authority, potentially resulting in violence and disputes.

This conflict about communal versus private property is central in political discussions regarding socialist systems. Critics argue that innate human behavior is not compatible with such systems. Chesterton explains that the fundamental flaw in all Utopias is their assumption that humanity's greatest challenge has been conquered, while they meticulously detail the resolution of smaller issues. They start by presuming that no one will desire more than their fair share, and then they intricately discuss whether this share will be distributed via a motor car or a balloon. (Chesterton, 1905)

The natural progression to an argument that criticizes the current system is naming an alternative. That is precisely how More’s Utopia unfolds. More's character takes on a pragmatic perspective, similar to Aristotle, who believes that the pure concept lacks value unless it's adjusted for the layman, even if that means changing the original idea.

IN SEARCH FOR THE MEANING OF UTOPIA

The central question of this chapter is straightforward but crucial: What is the true message conveyed by *"Utopia"*? This question holds significance because it helps us understand how later utopian writers engaged with More's work. As we explore the writings of these later authors, it becomes clear that they grapple with the various meanings found in "Utopia" and select interpretations that align with their own narratives. In essence, they act as thoughtful readers of More's text, choosing and highlighting specific ideas that resonate with their own stories. Examining these choices provides valuable insights into how utopian thought evolved and how human ideals and aspirations shifted over time and in different ideological contexts.

The second book begins with Hythloday, who is appalled by the deplorable state of English society and its inability to achieve justice, lays out for his prospective audience a vision of an "ideal society" that showcases a more modern and abstract approach to establishing a just society. In a narrative form he begins by recounting a story of an island just off the Brazilian coast that functions under a communal way of life, ensuring equality and prosperity to its inhabitants. The change in literary style in book two can be attributed to the narrative quality of the story that ensues, prompting readers to question whether they should interpret it as a story or a manifesto.

The emphasis on community is first presented through the concept of building identical cities. The Utopians eliminate all differences and advantages associated with geographic location by constructing cities that are unified in design and layout. This ensures that all citizens are provided with the same resources and living conditions, thereby reducing inequalities that could otherwise arise due to differences in urban development. Preventing the concentration of wealth or power in specific places fosters a stronger sense of solidarity among the population, as everyone experiences the same living conditions and benefits from the same societal background. The uniformity of cities, while aimed at reducing inequalities, could leave no room for diversity and creativity. Different geographic locations often give rise to unique cultures, traditions, and architectural styles. By eliminating these differences, Utopia might inadvertently suppress cultural diversity and homogenize its population. This could lead to excessive government control, which may not align with everyone's interests or values. It might limit local autonomy and personal freedoms. This unwelcome outcome will interest many modern utopian writers due to the prominent power struggle in the 20th century.

Secondly, the countryfolk play a vital role in the Utopian society. They live in large families and contribute to the community through agriculture. Moreover, they've established a balanced system where urban citizens assist in farming to prevent overwork and food shortages. These individuals exhibit generosity and a strong willingness to support their neighbours since they have personally undergone strenuous labor, they fully grasp the significance and challenges of countrymen.

As opposed to the English society, individuals who commit grave crimes are forced to become slaves, performing the most strenuous tasks. This approach is taken because they've chosen criminal behaviour despite their virtuous upbringing. In this context, it's evident that education does not always lead to individuals who are content with the existing system. What often ensures is rebellion against the imposed uniformity – another famous theme in contemporary utopian fiction.

Utopians handle disobedience by forcing criminals to turn their transgressions into proactive tasks, they contribute productively to society, thus making amends for their actions and benefiting their fellow citizens.

Most importantly, Utopians abolished private property. Since most of their needs have been met, they have no desire for additional indulgences. They are free to work whichever job they please, but they must work to ensure that the needs of the community are met since the needs of the community supersede human preferences. The Utopians are not facing problems of European idleness because they have a strict work ethic and are internally motivated to work and contribute to the common good.

Here, More presents an alternative model for societal organization and governance that represents the New World as opposed to the first book, which serves as a reminder of the Old World. More's New World is a world of justice. In this quest for justice, More diligently follows in the footsteps of Plato and paints a vivid picture of a utopian society guided by reason.

Due to the enigmatic nature of the first book, crafted primarily through a philosophical dialogue without explicit narration, *"Utopia"* has puzzled scholars and readers alike over many

generations. This style of presenting ideas and concepts has led to extensive efforts in unravelling the underlying meanings and commentaries within the text. As a result, *"Utopia"* has been subject to numerous interpretations, but these varied perspectives can be grouped into different categories.

Early scholars and critics argue that *"Utopia"* is a clever result of More's brilliance and creation of the Renaissance era. It is a work of satire and occasional social commentary, but it was not intended as a fully fleshed-out plan for societal transformation.

William E Campbell, the editor of More's works, claims it is being taken more seriously by readers and critics than the author initially intended, claiming that More regards Utopia as the least serious of his literary works.

There are also critics who emphasize More's Catholic faith and view the book as a "moral allegory." This perspective focuses on the religious themes and moral teachings embedded in the text. It suggests that *"Utopia"* serves as a means for More to convey ethical and spiritual ideas through the depiction of an ideal society. R.W. Chambers, in his work from 1935, identifies “Thomas More as the champion of Medieval Christianity and the communal values found within monastic life” (Fortunati, 2016: 251).

The argument that "Utopia" serves as a moral allegory has some grounds in the historical context of More's life. More's execution by hanging in 1535 can be seen as a consequence of his deviance from the king's mandates and strong Christian belifs. It is interesting that in his second book, More mentions that Utopians urge people who are severely ill to consider euthanasia. However, Catholic Church does prohibit voluntary death and considers it an ultimate sin against God's will. Does that mean that More personally disagrees with Utopians on this matter?

> “(…) since they are now unable to go on with the business of life, are become a burden to themselves and to all about them, and they have really out-lived themselves, they should no longer nourish such a rooted distemper, but choose rather to die since they cannot live but in much misery;“ (More, 1949: 126)

On the other hand, the third interpretation highlights the political and social aspects of *"Utopia."* It gives prominence to More's proposal of a society based on common property, which implies collective ownership and distribution of resources. K. Kautsky believes that More is an exceptional precursor of modern socialism. This perspective views *"Utopia"* as a "political manifesto" or a political statement advocating for specific social and economic arrangements (Fortunati, 2016).

The fourth interpretation, which Nendza defends, is that Utopia's purpose is not to propose actual political reform, but rather to demonstrate the limitations of pursuing drastic changes and the potential risks associated with excessive political idealism. It aims to showcase a hypothetical proposal that may seem appealing initially but needs to be revised upon closer examination.

More strategically distanced himself from Raphael's opinions on contemporary politics. Within the book, More's character finds it hard to believe or accept the unconventional practices and structures described by Raphael. The character in the story questions whether these ideas are practical or sensible. This contrast between doubt and the presented concepts encourages readers to adopt a critical mindset that they can notice and potentially use when engaging with the narrative.

This raises the question of the role that More sets up for his readers and invites a comparison with the roles assigned to readers in contemporary utopian and dystopian literature between the existing norms and the utopian vision presented in the book, such as communism, religion, and practices in war.

However, it would be simplistic to assume that More merely plays the role of a devil's advocate to further his own political agenda. In fact, naming certain elements within the new world and even Raphael's surname hold deeper significance and reveal hidden layers of meaning. Raphael's last name is “Hythlodaeus” which means "Dispenser of nonsense". Furthermore, he uses names that ridicule various aspects of this island. The titles and names such as Utopia itself ("No place"), Ademus ("No people"), Anydrus ("No water"), and *In senata Almauratico* ("in the obscurantist Parliament"), serve to emphasize the satirical and mocking nature of More's argument. (Fokkema, 2011)

Since he is using a satirical approach that is very enigmatic, many argue that he is purposely being sarcastic. By using the term "Utopia," meaning "No place," he immediately highlights the idealized nature of the society being described. By giving it a name that suggests its non-existence, More could be subtly suggesting that such a perfect society is unattainable or merely a product of the imagination.

It may seem that the juxtaposition of different interpretations leaves us with no definitive answer to the question posed in this chapter. However, one might assume that More intentionally utilized dialogue as a literary device to allow for different interpretations. Nendza claims that it would be incorrect to identify More's views with the views of every character in his work since the nature of the dialogue is characterized by argumentation that needs to be revised and revised.

However, since More was a student of Plato, he must have been acquainted with the enigmatic nature of philosophic dialogues. Possibly, he intended for others to struggle to grasp the meaning that underlines this book to reveal two sides of the same coin.

The layman’s struggle to accept the system that works in favour of the prevailing influence of the rich and his inevitable transformation into a radical and idealistic philosopher who escapes the world creating an ideal society without any regard to the practical challenges and its divergence from modern preferences.

The final interpretation of Utopia, which became evident to many only after the rise of 20th-century novels exploring alternative societies like "1984" and "Brave New World," represents a significant shift in our understanding of utopian ideals. The 20th century, influenced by new social realities like Soviet communism and the technological revolution, yielded unique insights into 'Utopia' that previous centuries did not. As these novels depicted notably darker and more critical perspectives of utopia, often labeled as anti-utopia or dystopia, they prompted a retrospective examination of Thomas More's readings of Utopia, that were previously invisible, casting doubt upon the original interpretations of the text.

UTOPIA VS DYSTOPIA

Utopian writing has been proven hard to define. Mannheim describes “utopia” as “ideas that are incongruous with and transcendent of reality, which do not match the world as it is, and which, when they pass over into conduct, tend to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at that time.” (Mannheim, 1936: 192)

Authors such as Suvin define “utopia” as a conceptual framework of “quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community.” He emphasizes that utopia is a literary form encompassing a harmonious way of thinking that strives for order, coherence, and an ultimate solution. (Huntington, 1982)

On the other hand, dystopia is the opposition, the antithesis of utopia. In a narrower sense, dystopia represents an undesirable place, essentially mirroring utopia but replacing the perfect principle with a negative one devoid of hope.

While “dystopian reality” is often used to describe *1984 and Brave New World*, the initial search for a perfect society lies at the heart of both genres. Authors create societies that follow their internal logic, driven by optimistic aspirations or cautionary fears. Whether it's the allure of an ideal existence or the dread of a sinister reality, both utopia and dystopia stem from a deep understanding of what brings happiness or unhappiness to humanity.

In essence, Suvin's theory illuminates how utopia and dystopia are inseparable – “literary expressions of a yearning for coherence driven by the powerful imperative of imagination.” These narratives prompt us to “ponder the intricate machinery that propels societies toward perfection or despair, reminding us that storytelling isn't merely an art form; it's a mirror that reflects the intricate facets of human experience.“ (Suvin, 2010: 46)

Suvin’s examination of dystopian and utopian literature allows for further analysis of contemporary utopian writing. It is important to recognize the shift in literary expression that will now begin to reflect a more negative outlook on societal control, uniformity, and lack of privacy and freedom in the works of Huxley and Orwell.

DYSTOPIAN READINGS AND INDIVIDUALISM

There are a variety of reasons that have inspired authors to delve into utopian writing: a lack of trust in science, the historical foundations of philosophy, scepticism towards emotions, and the objective economic-political circumstances and outlook. As technology advances and ecological equilibrium is disturbed, directly impacting all life and human survival, the dynamics between society and individuals undergo significant transformations. Social power intensifies, gradually threatening individual freedom and leading to a restricted and controlling social structure.

In the nineteenth century, the rise of industrialization played a significant role in shaping the desire for a utopian society where humans could peacefully coexist alongside machines. Authors like Bellamy and other social reformers of that era recognized the potential consequences of 'man's inhumanity toward man'.

They believed that a more harmonious society was attainable and drew inspiration from the principles of scientific socialism. This concept revolves around the idea that a well-structured and efficient society that is run like a machine can ensure equality and peace. It emerged as a response to the challenges brought about by extreme individualism, which was causing issues at the time. This way of thinking was a product of the perspective held by reformers during the 1800s. (Bellamy, 1888/1997)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, gloomier and darker themes overtook the traditional approach due the radical changes in political and social life during the 20th century and the fear of industrialization.

Reflecting the prevailing mood of the era, dystopian fiction emerged as a prominent force within the utopian genre. Writers began to question classical utopianism and the even more optimistic utopian visions of the late nineteenth century.

> "Of course, the utopist proclaims the freedom and happiness of the individual in his ideal society but the reader must ponder the questionable status of the individual in the completely centralized and institutionalized economic or political or religious society.

> It was fear of the institutionalization of men that alarmed such satirists as Huxley and Orwell" (Matter, 1975: 147)

The 20th century is infamous for various tragedies that resulted in mass genocides and significant changes to political systems, including the collapse of empires and the rise of new nation-states. The ups and downs of fascism and communism led to significant changes in societies. The process of converting from a different political system can often be accompanied by periods of uncertainty, fear, and violence, as people may be unsure of what the changes will bring and how they will be affected by them. Both Huxley and Orwell were driven by the fear of totalitarian rule and the potential dominance of such a system, leading them to craft their works as cautionary tales with a satirical twist.

The very notion of envisioning a superior world implies that the current world requires change. A large number of utopian writings heavily rely on criticizing the existing order and taking their readers to a utopia that is void of such problems. Authors such as Huxley and Orwell no longer glorified a perfect world and began emphasizing their lack of humanity. Since then, dystopian thought has prevailed over traditional utopianism. (Matter, 1975)

However, this twentieth-century dystopian view is not novel by any means. Satire had always played a part in utopian writing. Notably, More's "Utopia" held a special place due to its strong connection to satire, a genre that he deeply valued. And it is evident that modern aliterations of utopian writing became a method for reevaluating and interpreting More's Utopia.

HUXLEY AND INDIVIDUAL HAPPINESS

Aldous Huxley was strongly against the belief that progress through science is an answer to an age-long question of a perfect world. The industry will never be able to fulfill people's desires and this naive idea that technology was a cure for war, famine, and disease became a dystopian reality. Relying on technological developments of the first half of the 20th century, "Brave New World" introduces readers to a world where such progress has been used to create a highly efficient and controlled society. This society is divided into several classes, or castes, with each caste having a specific role to play. There is a strong emphasis on conformity and stability, where individual freedom is suppressed in favour of the collective good. This notion is portrayed with great emphasis and intensity in the book, pushing the boundaries to illustrate the extreme nature of its implications.

The government heavily controls the lives of its citizens, including their reproductive rights, encouraging sexual promiscuousness, and the use of the drug 'soma' is prevalent in order to suppress emotions and keep the population happy and content. Despite the appearance of a perfect society, there is a lack of genuine human connection and emotions, leading some characters to yearn for a different way of life.

This line of reasoning can be seen in the character John the Savage, who is raised outside of the dystopian society and is therefore unfamiliar with its regime. Since John the Savage's identity is not determined by social influence or predetermined roles in the system, he is able to recognize that the perceived comfort and security provided by these restrictions are actually limiting his freedom.

> "But I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin."
> "In fact," said Mustapha Mond, "you're claiming the right to be unhappy."
> "All right then," said the Savage defiantly, "I'm claiming the right to be unhappy." (Huxley, 1932: 288)

It is evident that the society depicted in Huxley's novel perceives freedom as a negative value that further contributes to the unhappiness of individuals by limiting their ability to express themselves. The removal of these values is leading to the creation of conformist individuals

with no sense of self. This is clearly seen in the character of Lenina Crowne. She represents a product of society's strict social hierarchy and conditioning system. She has been genetically engineered and conditioned from birth to fulfill a predetermined role in society. As a result, she is highly conformist and lacks the ability to think critically or independently. She is also deeply committed to the values and ideals of society and often tries to convince others to conform as well.

> "I don't know what you mean. I am free. Free to have the most wonderful time. Everybody's happy nowadays." (Huxley, 1932: 107)

Similarly, in More's utopian model, humans are depicted as rational beings prioritizing stability, happiness, and prosperity over greed and envy. Utopians are content with what they have and look down upon those who strive for prestigious goods like gold or silver. Luxury materials are used for menial purposes, such as making chains for slaves. Criminal behaviour is virtually nonexistent in Utopia since all essential needs are provided for. In this way, Huxley has adopted More's ideal vision and showcased the negative aspects, which has been made possible by allowing his readers to have a critical mindset. Here, Huxley clearly demonstrates that there are restrictions to individual freedom that we recognize today.

In Utopia there is no time or opportunity for error or privacy. Therefore, Utopians never become tempted to indulge in activities that may result in inequality or discrepancies. Individual freedom is suppressed in favor of the greater good - the good of the community. The concept of social control in Utopia, though already present to some extent, is amplified and intensively examined by Orwell in his renowned novel "1984." Orwell builds upon the motif of an omnipresent, ever-watchful eye to delve deeper into the theme of social control. In his portrayal, social control reaches extreme levels, eradicating individualism and the dominance of conformity.

ORWELL AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Similar to most utopian authors, Orwell significantly relied on elements of political philosophy to build the world of Oceania. The central premise is that "1984" is not implicitly defending liberal democratic ideals such as privacy and personal freedom but actually demonstrating a form of authentic socialism. This form of socialism revolves around compassionate comrades and community values rather than socialism and primarily seeks to redistribute resources among all eligible participants. (Roelofs, 1987)

Orwell's vision of an ideal society revolves around an emotional and shared experience, emphasizing genuine human connections and a sense of belonging rather than being based on solely on theoretical implications of organized systems. Orwell's stance emphasizes a socialism of genuine human interaction and empathy. This unique perspective adds depth to the discourse on political philosophy that doesn't necessarily align with previous authors' views. (Roelofs, 1987).

The true value of Orwell's portrayal of this dystopian reality is prompting readers to question the ideals put forth by More in his original concept of utopia. The contrast between the oppressive surveillance and suppression of individuality in Orwell's world and the supposedly harmonious and contented existence in More's Utopia challenges us to re-evaluate and reconsider utopian visions' true nature and consequences.

An example of this can be found in supposedly trivial symbols. In Utopia, More highlights the absence of wine taverns, ale houses, brothels, and secret meeting places to emphasize the prevention of seduction and isolation from society. These very elements become pivotal in Orwell's novel. In "1984," seduction and alienating oneself from the collective become critical turning points in the narrative.

Orwell's society is ruled by Big Brother, who has complete control over his citizens. Social control is explored on several levels. Firstly, the Inner Party uses surveillance and punishment to control its citizens. It monitors their every action through telescreens and other means, creating an undeniable sense of doom. This method is used to closely inspect individuals and their mundane lives to discover those slightly different in their usual demeanor. In such a way, the government can predict those who are more likely to experience *thoughtcrime* or more

severe crimes, subsequently punishing them severely. The concept of *thoughtcrime* is an act of merely thinking in a manner that contradicts the ideology of the Party and is punishable by death. Orwell exercises these extreme levels of government control to create a reality that is unmistakably devoid of individuality.

Secondly, the Inner Party is developing New Speak: a deliberately constructed language that limits the ability to express oneself. Such restrictions prevent individuals from understanding concepts that could lead to negative emotions and rebellious acts against the Party. Ultimately, the Party prevents individuals from forming their own opinions and values, the most crucial part of one's identity. By constantly manufacturing enemy threats and engaging in seemingly endless wars, the government can keep the population in a state of fear and anxiety, which makes them more likely to support the government and comply with its rules and regulations. Additionally, it distracts the population from the government's shortcomings and directs their anger and frustration toward a common fictional enemy.

Another question Orwell raises is: What is the benefit of imagining a perfect world if it is unattainable?

"It was possible, no doubt, to imagine a society in which wealth, in the sense of personal possessions and luxuries, should be evenly distributed, while power remained in the hands of a small privileged caste. But in practice such a society could not long remain stable. For if leisure and security were enjoyed by all alike, the great mass of human beings who are normally stupefied by poverty would become literate and would learn to think for themselves; and when once they had done this, they would sooner or later realise that the privileged minority had no function, and they would sweep it away. In the long run, a hierarchical society was only possible on a basis of poverty and ignorance." (Orwell, 2021)

Another interesting point is that More invisions that education does not necessarily spark a desire for revolution. On the other hand, Orwell finds it unrealistic to imagine an educated working class individual content with merely following instead of aspiring to participate in the political world of their country.

Throughout his novel, Orwell paints a gloomy picture of a society under totalitarian rule. However, he also notes that a hierarchical society will always require a power struggle.

Different classes will always have different motives for attaining power and security. It is a vicious cycle that will always prevail. Subsequently, one may conclude that there is no escaping that reality; we already live in a dystopian world. Hence, the foundations of almost all systems are inevitably flawed.

More follows a similar line of reasoning at the end of Utopia where he states that many notions on which the Utopian society is built on are rather to be wished for than hoped for.

If so, why have authors and philosophers been imagining utopias for centuries? Perhaps it's because the genre of utopian writing has uniquely enabled them to create allegorical narratives that serve as a instrument that allowed them to freely articulate their political views and societal critiques.

Another way to answer it is perhaps more in the spirit of Humanism, as captured by Oscar Wilde.

> "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias." (Wilde, 1997: 12)

Following Wilde's line of reasoning, one could say that the human race is condemned without progress, and progress is the ability to imagine and then realize the world we want to live in. This is only possible if we continue our attempt to create a world that adheres to the values of our own time. It allows for a thought experiment that may guide us in the right direction.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that by navigating utopian literature we are navigating human imagination with boundless potential. The *"utopias"* are heavily influenced by the culture and circumstances that the authors have found themselves in.

Others may interpret what one individual or culture deems an ideal society as a prison. This is why it is unimaginably hard to confidently claim that Sir Thomas More meant for Utopia to be read as one. In this process, one societal system must always prevail, whether that is a system that is defined by a communal way of living and compassion, a system that is enhanced due to scientific progress and artificial emotions, or a system that allows individuals the freedom not to think.

On the one hand, each of these works has a sinister undertone that may leave readers questioning the author's intentions, with the prevailing theme being the lack of individuality. In recent decades, dystopian dominance over the genre has solidified the realization? that many reimagined systems lack modern values.

On the other hand, these values are most certainly modern. Therefore, it was crucial to approach these works with an awareness of the temporal context in which they were written. While More was the starting point, Huxley and Orwell were not the culmination. Utopian writing is prevalent to this day. Its correlation with political and social critique has remained central, and it will be interesting to speculate what the twenty-first century's philosophical, political, and social thought will contribute to the genre.

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