

The ideal society in utopia by thomas more



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Utopia is a masterwork written by Thomas More, and published in 1516. The island of Utopia is a kind of positive counter-image of what might be England, if it was better governed. Thomas More describes his ideal society which is an island because isolation on the outside is essential to the proper functioning of the ideal society. Utopia is a crescent-shaped island that contains fifty-four large cities and the distance between every city and another is 24 miles away. Language, laws, customs and institutions are uniform. The capital which is located in the center of the island is Amaurot because it is the seat of the government and the senate; hence, public affairs and concerns of the state are always discussed in council with the Prince. Any utopian who has independent discussion about public affairs is sentenced to death. Utopians have abolished private property and apply the principle of common possession. All individuals are equal and have the liberty of religion. Religions are multiple and coexist, but most Utopians are monotheistic and recognize an immense and inexplicable God. They simply postulate two dogmas: the immortality of the soul and the government of the world through divine providence. Those who do not believe in these dogmas are excluded from the community, but are neither beaten nor killed. On the other hand, any religion that accepts these two principles is legal. Thus, atheists are refused by the utopian society. Money nor wealth have a value in the island: "gold is a badge of infamy". Thomas More observed how the British society was driven by money, and how some individual receive admiration and esteem by people just for being wealthy. Although, in the island, people share their overabundant resources with pleasure. In Thomas More's Utopia, every individual should have a job and work for 6 hours. Not alike England at this epoch, where there was a lot of housewives, nobles, and

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beggars. In addition, because agriculture is the prime professional occupation in the Utopia. It is mandatory for every Utopian to work in agriculture for two years. Any Utopian that committed adultery and tried to escape the Island is harshly punished, mistreated, and is exposed to servitude. Also, Utopians believe that virginity and premarital examination are required.

The perfection of the island passes only by the standardization of all its elements (geographical, architectural and human). But there is no diversity, the inhabitants all lead the same existence, work the same number of hours and live in the same houses. The populations of the fifty-four cities speak the same language, wear the same customs, and are governed by the same institutions and laws. We then see that the ideal appearance of Utopia has a price which is the destruction of individual expression. This utopian concept has many contradictions. For example, to prevent conspiracies against freedom, those who discuss public affairs outside the Senate are sentenced to death. In addition, utopians who have premarital sex are severely punished although it is a personal freedom and a private concern that the government should not involve in it. Hence, in England of 1500s premarital sex also was not socially accepted. Moreover, as mentioned previously, virginity and premarital examination are both a requirement for marriage. Although, what kind of premarital examination can be done in 1500s when medicine and technology (used in medical field) were not developed yet? In the imaginary island, the groom and the bride being naked in front of each other is considered the “ premarital examination”; it is done to avoid discovering hidden imperfections after marriage (when it is too late); this

method is logical for Utopian because it is also applied when buying a horse. We wonder if Thomas More was serious or humorous about this method which tremendously contradicts Utopian's set of morality and decency, or about comparing the human body to a horse which is extremely a pejorative image for men and women. Thus, in the island, the beauty of the body is more appreciated than the beauty of the soul. In my perception, I feel that Thomas More's island is close to be a dystopia and not utopia because a lot of social, ethical, and political issues still exist; in addition, Thomas More's concept of freedom contradicts with mine. However, reading the description of someone else's utopia that will definitely be dissimilar to the description of my utopia is very captivating and absorbing because I get to see the ideal world in someone else's perception.

Two decades later, the Philosopher of the Age of enlightenment, Voltaire wrote *Candid or The Optimist*. In one of the passages, Voltaire, in order to criticize European societies, spoke about his Utopia to which he called Eldorado. In the passage, Eldorado appears as an extraordinary place, an ideal world in all domains. The populations of Eldorado have good manners, and positive behaviors. Politically, Eldorado is close to a liberal monarchy to an extent that there is a liberty of thinking (political, religious, or philosophical). Moreover, repressive institutions do not exist. Also, resources are not scarce they are overabundant and shared by everyone. Similarly to Thomas More's Utopia, money and wealth have no value or utility in Eldorado. Despite the great similarities between the two utopias, the downsides of Thomas More's Utopia seem to be greater than Voltaire's Utopia probably due to the elaboration of sundry right-minded concept

during the Age of enlightenment. Although, Voltaire, in his novel, claimed that this imaginary world will never exist, it is only a dream.