

# The inevitable failure of utopia



Utopia, defined as an imagined society or state in which everything is perfect, was first introduced by Thomas More in his signature work “ Utopia”. Ever since the release of Thomas More’s work, utopia has been one of the most controversial topics, and among all, whether a utopian future can be reached have always been the most popular argument. This essay discusses how the interdependence between people, society, and nature makes creating a utopian society an unrealistic goal.

First and foremost, on the “ social” aspect, there is not one society that can fit everybody perfectly. Not only does the needs, expectations, and definition of perfect alter, the contradictions between cultures makes it extremely hard for utopia to succeed. As cultures vary, so do their beliefs, leading to the question about whether all cultures are willing to accept variations. In the story, “ Flowers In The Mirror” by a famous Chinese writer Li Ruzhen, the main characters Tang Ao, Merchant Lin, and Old Tuo decide to make a trip to the Country of Women, to safely escort the little girl who they saved in the pier back to her family. The three come from a country that follows the traditional gender roles, meaning a female should dress and act like a female while a male should act like a gentleman. On their way to the young lady’s mother, they arrive at the Country of Women and are surprised at what they see. The special thing about this country is that the gender roles are reversed, indicating females are expected to dress and act like a male while males are also expected to dress like a female. The two countries have opposite views on gender roles, which make the three travelers extremely uncomfortable. They refuse to accept or adjust to the local culture, and eventually, a verbal fight is held by Tang and a local. As the three travelers

are absolutely shocked and uncomfortable by the culture, the citizens of the Country of Women are just as confused at the appearance and nature of the three. To the three travelers, the Country of Women is undoubtedly a dystopia, but the citizens that live there are proud of their country and will fight for their culture when being challenged. From this short scene, it can be seen that people from different places are not likely to accept variances toward their culture from outsiders, which makes creating a utopian society unreasonable. With regards to the willingness to accept differences that contradicts with one's culture, the disagreement of two or more cultures will result to cultural conflicts that drives negative emotions. No matter how perfect a society is, dystopianism will arise when cultural conflicts do. with cultural conflicts. For example, the United States has always been a leading country of economic power, which satisfies the majority of its citizens' expectations. Nevertheless, with the ruling of abortion being illegal in 2019 in parts of the United States, there have been a tremendous amount of protests in the US due to the action of aborting a child is conflicting with a lot of the more conservative cultures such as Christianity and Islam. The United States lost a huge amount of support from its citizens and it surely made the country an uncomfortable place for believers from the disagreeing cultures. Apart from that, the story also highlights the idea of cultural conflicts when merchant Lin has his foot tied as a concubine-to-be in the " king's" palace. In order to achieve an ideal shape, " women" are expected to tie their feet to create the shape of an arch. Lin is forced to get his foot tied and when he cannot bear the pain no more, he will " let out his voice and (begin) to cry" (Li Ruzhen, *Flowers In The Mirror*, page 111, line 6), there is no doubt that Lin is strongly against having his foot tied up, so in order to solve the cultural

difference, he will untie his foot and solve the potential conflict in a peaceful way.

Coupled with the idea of how one a perfect society cannot exist in the social aspect, the aspect of freedom is equally as important.

Freedom often leads to chaos. As a society which offers a highly desirable amount of freedom to its citizens, it may be taken advantage of. Humans are inherently lazy, therefore it is natural for us to do what seems the most convenient and effortless to us. However, in order to maintain the perfect society, some unfavourable responsibilities are critical. If the responsibilities are not being taken care of, the society may be destroyed in the physical aspect, like being disgustingly dirty or being a crime society. India, has been suffering from water pollution for decades caused by an extraordinary amount of freedom, which in return, indirectly promotes laziness as there are no responsibilities imposed on the citizens. Having the most contaminated rivers in the world, India is known for floating garbage and yellow coloured water. The pollution is a consequence of industrial waste, improper particles in agriculture sectors, oil leaks and most importantly, daily garbage disposal from the citizens. In the past, the government of India was eager to see results from urbanization and was not strict about waste disposal. This gave people the choice to dispose the harmful garbage to the rivers, which caused the pollution we see today. Citizens of India nowadays are still given the freedom to dispose their garbage to the rivers. This freedom not only worsen pollution, but also harms the health of the people in the country who depend on the river as their source of water. This example examines that an appropriate amount of freedom should be given, but with a tremendous

amount of freedom given as the definition says is truly unreasonable, and will lead to a chaotic situation like the rivers in India. In connection with pollution, the story examines a similar idea highlighted through merchant Lin's thinking. Merchant Lin, a not so honest gentleman that believes he can "charge (citizens of the Country of Women) whatever (he) can, (and he) shall have no difficulties selling the whole consignment to rich families in two or three days" (Li Ruzhen, *Flowers In The Mirror*, page 107, lines 20-21). The two countries in the story contradict with each other in a sense that one believes that a merchant should only charge what the product is worth and the other country supports the idea of markups to create a competitive market. Lin chooses to take advantage of the inconsistency, and benefit himself and the rest of the crew. Though his idea sounds smart, he ends up going to the palace and experiences his life as a concubine-to-be, the experience is unpleasant without a doubt, and it will surely haunt him for the rest of his life. It is only normal for people to do whatever is the most beneficial and easiest for them, which will eventually lead them and the world to a horrible outcome.

Finally, nature's law of order and chaos makes the existence or sustainability of utopia impossible. Supported by Murphy's Law and The Second Law of Dynamics, it is scientifically proven that any society will become chaos in a matter of time. Captain Edward Aloysius Murphy, an American aerospace engineer created Murphy's Law, an aphorism that states 'Anything that can go wrong will go wrong' (Arthur Bloch, *Murphy's Law*, p. 2), applying the law to a utopian society, it means no matter how perfect the society is, it will sooner or later go wrong and become a dystopia. The statement is "

often(compared) with the Second Law of Thermodynamics as both the statements point toward a more disorganized state with time” (Atanu Chatterjee, Is The Statement Of Murphy’s Law Valid). Physicist Lord Kelvin’s Second Law of Thermodynamics states “ there is no natural process the only result of which is to cool a heat reservoir and do external work” (Paul S. Taylor, Second Law Of Thermodynamics – Does This Basic Law Of Nature Prevent Evolution). The law can be understood as the fact that “ the (amount of) useable energy in the universe is becoming less and less” (Paul S. Taylor, Second Law Of Thermodynamics – Does This Basic Law Of Nature Prevent Evolution) and ultimately, the energy will all get used up and the world will end up in a chaotic situation. Taking the law to extent, even though a utopia is created in the future, as the energy gets used up, the so-call perfect society will turn into a chaos, or a dystopia instantly. Thus, the idea of perfecting society is good in a sense that improvement can be made, but on the other hand, the idea is impossible to achieve under nature’s law.

Above all, the connection between the society, nature, and people makes utopia a preposterous goal to achieve. It is highly unlikely to create a society that fits every citizen perfectly, as there are a variety of cultures, each having different standards and beliefs. Some cultures will not be as accepting leading to cultural conflicts and ruin the thought of living in perfection. Apart from that, the relationship between freedom and the nature’s law to a chaotic future are also critical reasons why utopia cannot be created nor sustain. My goal may not be an easy one, nevertheless, it is important to realize the idea of utopia should not be taken too far, “ Utopia is the process of making a better world” (Kim Stanley Robinson, Pacific Edge, p.

95), it is a reminder to always making improvements to better yourself and the place we all live in.

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