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INTELLECTUALS:

UTOPIAS

&

DYSTOPIAS

BY

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MOHAMMAD REZA ADELI

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THESIS ADVISOR

BAHRAM MEGHDADI, PH.D.

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MOHAMMAD REZA ADELI
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COMMITTEE ON FINAL EXAMINATION :

Bahram Meghdadi DR . BAHRAM MEGHDADI
Mojgan Jalali MS . MOJGAN JALALI

Mojgan Jalali.....

MS . MOJGAN JALALI THE HEAD OF THE ENGLISH
DEPARTMENT

ABSTRACT

Utopia has, for four centuries, accompanied that hope of progress and that striving for betterment. It now straggles against a widespread sense that this has been an illusion, or an impossible dream. The utopian idea can never entirely disappear, But utopia as a form of the social imagination has clearly weakened. If it cannot instill its vision in the public consciousness, the consequences of its failure will be serious.

The complete disappearance of the utopian element from human thought and action brings about a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing. We would then be faced with the greatest paradox, namely, that man who has achieved the highest degree of rational mastery of existence, left without any ideals. With the relinquishments of utopias, man would lose his will and ability to understand history.

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Do not search for any solutions in this book. You will not find them. In deed, the period possesses none. That which has been decided is finished; While the coming revolution is only in its infancy. We do not build, we destroy; we do not proclaim new discoveries but discard old false hoods. The man of today, that unhuppy pontifex maximus, only lays the bridge; some stranger, belonging to the future, will pass over it. You, perhaps, will see it. Don't stay behind on this shore. Better perish with the revolution than seek safety in the alims- house of reaction. The religion of the revolutionis the only religion which I be queath you. It has no other paradise or rewards but your sense of right, your own conscience.

Navozov, L, A Letter to his Son. From the other shore

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Utopia belongs primarily to fiction.

George Orwell wrote of "the dream of a just society which seems to haunt the human imagination ineradicably and in all ages , whether it is called the Kingdom of Heaven or the classless society, or whether it is thought of as a Golden Age which once existed in the past and from which we have degenerated"¹. Orwell points to the consistency and constancy of the utopian vision. Utopia is the imaginary society in which "human kind's deepest yearnings, noblest dreams, and highest aspirations come to fulfilment"²

Utopia pertains to the way we could live and the kind of possible realistic world in which we would live. Imaginary worlds have been created in almost every culture or religion. In utopias man is free from the difficulties that beset him in reality. Because perfect good life is not available to us in this world, images of the ideal society are embedded in origin and destination myths. This ideal world is confined to a "lost Golden Age"³ , or a world beyond death, which may be religious or secular, literary or political. However, there are nearly many common speculations about the existence of a fundamental utopian propensity in all human beings in general and in the learned people in particular.

It was first Plato who furnished, notably in his *Republic*, the general mode to which all later utopian fiction is heavily indebted. Plato's influence has significantly contributed to the history of utopian thought. Thus no surprise that the utopia's structure has barely changed from Plato's work over the past twenty-four and a half centuries. Utopias assume diverse forms, locations. The wish that things might be otherwise becomes a conviction that it does not have to be like this. Thus utopia is not just a dream to be enjoyed, it is a vision to be pursued. Yet the very term utopia is suggestive of the impossibility of this dream of this good life being "an escapist fantasy"⁴. Those utopians who seek to make their dreams come true are considered to be unrealistic, or worse, actively dangerous.

Yet although utopia attracts attention, there is much confusion about what Utopia is for and why it is important? Are all images of good life utopia? Does utopia refer to transformed versions of the social world in which we live? Does it help to change the world or to stabilise the existing societies?

Utopia is a significant part of human existence. It is not an 'escapist nonsense'. Utopia can be observed from different perspectives: literature, history, sociology, etc. The current variation in usage of the term utopia fundamentally stems from offering definitions of utopia, which is not an easy task. Although we may initially think we know what utopia is when we try to define it, its boundaries become blurred. Attempt will hereby be made to clarify the meaning of the term utopia by providing a few definitions.

Many problems which grip the literary critics arise from the absence of a clear-cut definition of utopia. It is, therefore, useful to begin with a consideration of how the term is generally used. Utopia has two meanings: a good, and yet non-existent, and therefore impossible, society. This meaning is taken from Thomas More's book entitled *Utopia*, first published in latin in 1516. The title, like many of the names in the book, is a joke. It contains deliberate ambiguity: Is this an "escapist nonsense?", the good place, or "outopia", no place and are they necessarily the same thing? The pun has created lasting confusion about utopia. More is frequently represented as "a benevolent father of the utopian genre and consequently of the field of utopian studies"⁵.

The ambiguity, moreover persists in contemporary dictionary definitions. *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* gives us both a non-evaluative and an evaluative meaning . Utopia is " an imaginary state described in Sir Thomas More's latin political romance or satire *Utopia* of imaginary state of ideal perfection"⁶. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* reflects the same issues. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, again with the same reference as the two aforementioned ones , the term utopia has come to signify "the class of fiction which represents an ideal political state and way of life."⁷

Utopia is a literary genre; It is "closer to the novel than to any other

literary genre, it is in fact a novel."⁸ Utopia is a very different kind of fiction. It shows the best society as actually achieved and as already in existence. It is a society in full operation. Utopia is, furthermore a literary genre which was "invented, more or less single handedly"⁹ by More.

Nearly all definitions in terms of form, function, or content are problematic; they also obscure variations in the utopian genre. But the invariable thing is the desire for a better way of being and living. "Utopia is virtually synonymous with socialism"¹⁰, Kaufmann says. He also provides us with a definition of utopia:

What is utopia? Strictly speaking means a nowhere land; some happy island far away, where perfect social relations prevail, and human beings, living under an immaculate constitution and a faultless government, enjoy a simple and happy existence, free from the turmoil, the harassing cares, and endless worries of factual life.¹¹

Plato's *Republic*, and More's *Utopia* "placed desire above reality"¹², and found their fulfilment only 'in the realm of fantasy', they are both good place and no-place, 'eutopia and outpoia' and thus proper utopia. More was able to imply the existence of a good place; it was an improvement on early sixteenth century England. His vision of utopia is static. However, the perfect society, once organized, needs no improvement. There were no frills in his well-provided island with the essentials of life.

The first chapter deals with the intellectuals' relation to the ideal state in Plato's *Republic* by exploring difficulties in Plato's discussion. *The Republic* mostly influenced the western utopia. More saw his own *Utopia* as partly a continuation of the *Republic*. Utopia is, however a creation of the modern world. It was a literary form or genre. More said of his work that it was "a fiction whereby the truth, as if smeared with honey, might a little more pleasantly slide into men's minds"¹³. Utopias have been defined as fictions, and nearly all writers had the same didactic intention as More had. Using fiction a

vehicle of effectively communicate moral and social truth. The second chapter will be devoted to More's *Utopia*. In the second part of this chapter, William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, written in 1890 will be taken up. It had a large circulation and was translated into several languages. However, it was an account of England in the twenty-second century in which Morris travelled in a dream. This novel dealt with the relationship between artistic production and its social base.

Despite the fact that Utopia is the backbone of all progress, and the essay into a better future, intellectuals issue warning of its dangers. Their pessimism is based on the idea that man is made of 'mud and manure' and is hence incorrigible, however this is one of the dominant themes in *The Holy Quran*. As the result of their warnings people increasingly write and read anti-utopias. The function of the intellectuals is to issue a warning of the doom that awaits the foolish people who put their trust in a utopia, "an ordered and regimented world"¹⁴. The role of the intellectuals is "in suggesting a trend of development for society, or the unconscious alignment of society in conformity with some defined ideal."¹⁵

The third and fourth chapters will discuss dystopian novels. From the onset, anti-utopia stemmed from utopia. Man, by nature, opts for criticizing and mocking the works of others. For example, Swift mercilessly ridiculed Bacon's scientific utopia, *The New Atlantis*, in *Gullivar's Travels*. The anti-utopian novels chosen for this study are Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

There are undeniable Kafkaesque elements of anti-utopia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Kafka, unlike Huxley and Orwell, suffered greatly under a totalitarian regime in his time. He evoked the dark side of human nature as the chief side. He viewed men as sinful, fallen, and consequently weak creatures. The reflection of his experience of suffering under a totalitarian regime shocked his audience, thus no surprise that his anti-utopia's have the highest appeal. As the greatest dystopian of all times, he postulated the anti-utopian theme in the

best literary way. Orwell believes that Kafka's works dramatically show the following:

We are living in a world which nobody is free, in which it is almost impossible to be honest and to remain alive. We live in a lunatic world in which opposites are constantly changing into one another, in which patriots become quislings.¹⁶

So he was, therefore, completely honest in saying that "sometimes I feel I understand the Fall of Man better than anyone."¹⁷

Kafka showed his characters in the worst possible kinds of distress very much resembling his own life. He was a true intellectual, because he had the keenest perception of human condition. "Our art," Kafka wrote, "is dazzled blindness before the truth: the light on the grotesquely distorted face is true, but nothing else is"¹⁸. Such ambiguity is characteristic of our century, but its expression belongs uniquely to Franz Kafka and the haunting, dystopian fictions such as *The Castle*, *The Trial*, and the many short stories and fragments in general and "Metamorphosis" in particular.

In reading Kafka, it is indeed difficult to percept that he died in 1924, for we so clearly still belongs to his age. Never before has 'absolute darkness been presented with so much clarity,' he exposed the "very madness of desparation with so much composure and sobriety. In doing so, he offered both a unique and representative manifestation of a remarkable writer's imagination and sensibility.

In each of the works, intellectuals and their functions will be explored. The present writer attempts to diagnose the place of utopian thinking and the learned-men in the above-mentioned works. The object is to describe the treatment of the intellectuals in literary utopias and dystopias, and in doing so expose the nature of their treatment and the impluse behind it. The persent writer deals with the specifically literary quality of utopias and anti-utopias which are by definition fictions. Their literary devices can make meanings uncertain and open to varying interpretations. However, it does indeed seem

the general rule that the anti-utopias at least in modern times should be more effective than the utopias in evoking qualities of a vivid and compelling kind.

Notes

- ¹ M.I.Finely, 'Utopianism Ancient and Modern', in K.H.Wolff and Barrington Moore, Jr. (eds), *The Critical Spirit: Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), P. 33.
- ² George Orwell, 'Arthur Koestler', in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* (4 Vols) ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1970), Vol.3, P. 274.
- ³ Ibid., P. 286.
- ⁴ Ibid., P. 308.
- ⁵ J.C.Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), P. 11.
- ⁶ E.M.Kirk Patrick (ed.), *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1983), P. 1436.
- ⁷ M.H.Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. P. 183.
- ⁸ J.C.Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society*, P. 48.
- ⁹ Ibid., P. 25.
- ¹⁰ Mortiz Kaufmann, *Utopias* (London: Kegan Paul, 1934), P.V.
- ¹¹ Ibid., P. 21.
- ¹² Ibid., P. 87.
- ¹³ Ibid., P. 139.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Marie Leuise Berneri, *Journey Through Utopia* (New York: Schocken Books, 1950), P. xi.
- ¹⁶ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*.
- ¹⁷ Joseph Jeller, *Franz Kafka*, (London: Routledge, 1963), P. 38.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., P. 51.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., P. 68.