

IS UTOPIA POSSIBLE?

NOTES

“Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance . . . and she will open wide before thee the portals of her secret chambers, lay bare before thy gaze the treasures hidden in the very depths of her pure virgin bosom. Unsullied by the hand of Matter, she shows her treasures only to the eye of Spirit – the eye which never closes, the eye for which there is no veil in all her kingdoms.”

- *The Voice of the Silence* p.15-16

Plato's Republic

Philosopher kings are the rulers of Plato's utopian city of *Kallipolis*. If his ideal city state is ever to be realised, “philosophers [must] become kings...or those now called kings [must] genuinely and adequately philosophise.” Plato defines a philosopher as a “wisdom lover,” one who loves true knowledge. Only these have access to ideas – the archetypal entities – that exist behind all manifested forms. He coined the term the ' Ship of State ', saying that a “ true pilot must of necessity pay attention to the seasons, the heavens, the stars, the winds, and everything proper to the craft if he is really to rule [guide] a ship.

– *The Republic* 5.473D & 6.488d

--- “*The world does not need governing; in fact it should not be governed.....good order results spontaneously, when things are left alone.*”

--- “*The greater the number of laws and enactments, the more thieves and robbers there will be. Therefore the Sage says: ' So long as I do nothing, the people will work out their own reformation. So long as I love calm, the people will right themselves. If only I keep from meddling, the people will grow rich. If only I am free from desire, the people will come naturally back to simplicity.*”

“*Govern a great nation as you would cook a small fish.*”

– *The Tao Te King* by Lao Tse

Thomas More's Utopia

Thomas More was a 16th century English lawyer, philosopher, statesman and renaissance humanist. His novel *Utopia* was published in Latin in 1516. This was a work of fiction and political philosophy. It depicts a fictional island society (located somewhere to the West), and its religious, social, and political customs. Many aspects of More's description of Utopia are reminiscent of the life in monasteries. He repeats Plato's call for kings to study philosophy in order to acquire correct ideas, and also for philosophers to work practically to improve existing flawed political systems.

Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*

Also a philosopher and statesman Bacon, Lord St Alban, published his book in 1627. This was a utopian novel in which he portrays a vision of human discovery and knowledge, expressing his aspirations and ideals for humankind. The novel depicts the creation of a utopian land – also an island, but located in the Pacific Ocean – where generosity and enlightenment, dignity and splendour, piety and public spirit “are commonly held qualities of the inhabitants of the mythical *Bensalem*.” The plan and organisation of his ideal college, *Salomon's House*, envisioned the modern research university in both pure and applied sciences. The inhabitants of *Bensalem* are described as having a high moral character and honesty, as chaste and pious.

Mahatma Gandhi's 3 Principles for the Perfect Society

Sarvodaya – Swaraj - Swadeshi

Sarvodaya: the well being of everything in Nature, both animate and inanimate.

Swaraj: the principle of self- governance

Swadeshi: the economics of place, based on the principle of participation by every citizen in the economic activities of their community.

Mahatma Gandhi designed a system by which human beings would minimise their material needs and maximise their quality of life through spiritual, cultural, artistic and human values. He saw the fallacy, narrowness, and purely utilitarian foundation upon which the [flawed] socialist, communist and capitalist systems are all based. These systems wanted to exploit and subjugate nature for human benefit. Such systems cannot be holistic.

Gandhi took his model of self governance from nature. As the earth's systems are self-organising, self-sustaining, self-maintaining and self-governing, so should the human systems be. Whatever kind of government we have, the role of it should be of simple, subtle and invisible co-ordination. Like the thread in the necklace, we hardly notice the thread, but it is always there. (Compare this with Lao-Tse's teaching re above). Similarly government is there but citizens are so empowered that they are able to manage their own affairs largely at local level. Thus the maximum power remains in the hands of human scale communities, including maintenance of essential law and order, provision of health care and education, and organisations of trade and transport.

Gandhi elaborates the principles of localisation versus globalisation, decentralisation versus centralisation. *Swaraj* is only possible when we embrace the ideal of small communities, small cities, and small nations. In order to establish *Swaraj* (self-governance) we need moral education on a massive scale; and we also need to trust in people's innate goodness, and ethical sense. According to Indian tradition every creature both human and non-human, is basically good. Like water and air human souls are pure. Contamination and pollution are aberrations, and not the norm. Selfishness, greed, exploitation of the other and the pursuit of power over others, have emerged out of social and economic conditions. If we can restore economic justice, and value people for their good qualities of kindness, compassion, and generosity, rather than for their

wealth, power and status, people will aspire to develop their own spiritual qualities instead of competing for material advantage.

– *Soil -Soul -Society* by Satish Kumar

It is interesting to note that Albert Einstein and Mahatma Gandhi both shared similar ideals. He wrote:

"A human being is a part of the whole, called by us "Universe", a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of Nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such an achievement is in itself a part of the liberation, and a foundation for inner security."

– *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat Zinn

John Lennon's Song *Imagine* (1971)

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the will world will live as one

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will live as one

Biblical Utopia Quotes

Isaiah – Ch.2, verse 2-4

2: And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord' House shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

4: And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.

Isaiah – Ch. 11, verse 6-9

6: The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7: And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8: And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den.

9: They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah Ch.65 verse 17-25

17: For behold I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.

18:....Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy.

19: And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

20: There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old.

21: And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and rest, and eat the fruit of them.

22: They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23: They shall not labour in vain nor bring forth in trouble.

24: And it shall come to pass ,that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear them.

25: The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

Revelations – Ch.21, verse 1-6

1: And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away: and there was no more sea.

2: And I John saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from god out of descending from heaven prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband

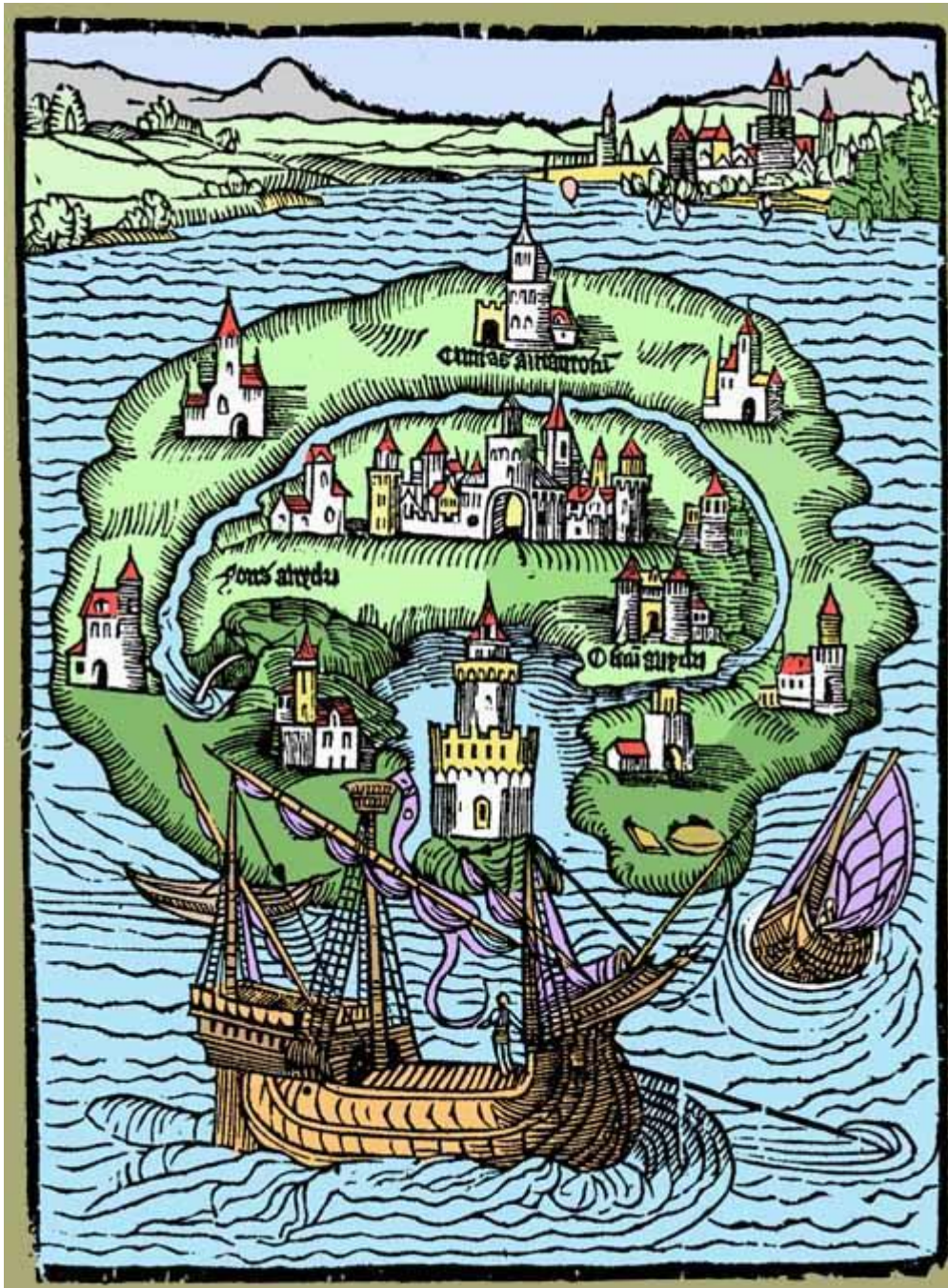
3: And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, behold the tabernacle of god is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4: And god shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5: And he that sat on the throne said behold I make all things new.

6: And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

23: And the city had no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.



Thomas More's Utopia - The Island of Utopia

The island of Utopia is in the middle just 200 miles broad, and holds almost at the same breadth over a great part of it; but it grows narrower towards both ends. Its figure is not unlike a crescent: between its horns, the sea comes in eleven miles broad, and spreads itself into a great bay, which is environed with land to the compass of about five hundred miles, and is well secured from winds. In this bay there is no great current, the whole coast is, as it were, one continued harbour, which gives all that live in the island great convenience for mutual commerce; but the entry into the bay, occasioned by rocks on the one hand, and shallows on the other, is very dangerous. In the middle of it there is one single rock which appears above water, and may therefore be easily avoided; and on the top of it there is a tower in which a garrison is kept; the other rocks lie under water,

and are very dangerous. The channel is known only to the natives, so that if any stranger should enter into the bay, without one of their pilots, he would run great danger of shipwreck; for even they themselves could not pass it safe, if some marks that are on the coast did not direct their way; and if these should be but a little shifted, any fleet that might come against them, how great soever it were, would be certainly lost.

There are 54 cities in the island, all large and well-built: the manners, customs, and laws of which are the same, and they are all contrived as near in the same manner as the ground on which they stand will allow. The nearest lie at least 24 miles distance from one another, and the most remote are not so far distant, but that a man can go on foot in one day from it, to that which lies next it. Every city sends three of their wisest senators once a year to Amaurot [the capital] to consult about their common concerns; for that is chief town of the island, being situated near the centre of it, so that it is the most convenient place for their assemblies. The jurisdiction of every city extends at least twenty miles: and where the towns lie wider, they have much more ground: no town desires to enlarge its bounds, for the people consider themselves rather as tenants than landlords. They have built over all the country, farmhouses for husbandmen, which are well contrived, and are furnished with all things necessary for country labour. Inhabitants are sent by turns from the cities to dwell in them; no country family has fewer than forty men and women in it, besides two slaves. There is a master and a mistress set over every family; and over thirty families there is a magistrate.