

## Utopian Writing: Its Nature and Historical Context

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Utopian thought and expressions are mind - bogglingly enormous in range and scope.

### Introduction

If we, as we will today, constrain ourselves to utopian writing the subject is somewhat more manageable in that we find two categories rather different in character. The first comprises the utopian novels, per se, e.g., *Brave New World* and *1984*. The second to appear upon the world stage, and the easier for many to grasp, while being the less engaging, comprises commentaries, analyses, critical essays and more or less philosophical presentations, pro and con, of utopian themes. These range from passionate new arguments for utopias (witness the Marquis de Condorcet at the end of the 18th century), through equally passionate countering arguments, which, however, partake of utopia (witness Karl Marx and the anarchists of the 19th century), to passionate denial of the whole utopian notion (witness Sigmund Freud in this century). More of these in due course today: and, with the possible exception of the November 20th event, "Utopian Visions" by OSU students, subsequent lectures in this series will be, I suspect, solidly in this second category.

The Utopian literature itself, which I wish to concentrate upon, is also huge in range and scope, rich and fanciful in expression to the point of ambiguity and, at it's boundaries, at least, nebulous. Still, this literature does have general characteristics and a nearly 500 year history of persistence and change, so it can be spoken of as a genre.

I won't attempt a definition. The genre is too varied and besides, as Nietzsche said, only things without a history can be defined. The History of Utopia which I'll attempt spans More's *Utopia*, early 16th century, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Condorcet's *The Tenth Stage*, treated as if it were a Utopia, Morris's *News from Nowhere*, Wells's *The Time Machine*, and Piercy's *Women on the Edge of Time*, late 20th century, all set in context. I'll mention a few others in passing. The ones I won't mention are legion.

### Utopian Characteristics

At heart utopian literature is social commentary: social criticism of what is and social suggestion of what could be. Its means are social rearrangement. This is a crucial characteristic which distinguishes utopian literature from science fiction and fantasy, even when the line between is not obviously discernible. In a utopian novel the author

imagines a society with a given set of social conditions, few in number, which are decidedly different from those of his own society: they are decidedly different, there is a discontinuity between the author's actual and his imagined society, but the difference is not so great as to render his imagined utopian society unrecognizable to his fellow citizens. The author then elaborates the consequences of his chosen set of social conditions in fleshing out the social arrangement of his utopian society.

So, if a green gas transforms human nature such that . . . provide your own scenario . . . we don't have a piece of utopian literature. Closer to home, if the supposed social conditions and arrangements are so foreign as to not engage the imaginations of potential readers, we don't have a utopia. And we don't if the new conditions aren't foreign enough, i.e., if the author writes in terms of just a continuous extension of the society in which he lives. That might be a piece of futuristic writing, but not a utopia.

If on the other hand we have as with More, a religious, highly structured society complete with slaves, often at war, in which, however, all things are held in common and everyone works at needed tasks, then we do have a utopia.

Utopian literature like More's is more revolutionary than evolutionary and more revolutionary than reformist.

There are a few less crucial characteristics that utopian literature exhibits:

1. The Utopia is usually far away in space, or time, or both, and the way of getting there is not clear or easy.
2. The utopian literature does not provide a blue-print. It is not a formula of how exactly, things are to be done. Rather it is suggestive of how things could be if certain few, crucial social features were imagined to be different.
3. Similarly, in its lack of heavy-handedness, utopian literature tends to light-heartedness, optimism and, even, playfulness.

These minor characteristics of utopian novels, per se, do not obtain for the critical, analytical, philosophical utopian writings of my second category.

For utopian literature to work it must, of course, be permitted its own characteristics: its critical social nature stemming from an unusual, at least, perhaps almost outrageous perspective; its lack of rigor; its ambiguity and fancifulness. To usefully read a utopian novel it must be accorded its mythopoeic - its myth making- nature. Utopias proclaim - very quietly, without insistence - their own truths.

Utopian writing of the analytical, philosophic stripe is much brassier, insisting upon itself, often by shouting down its alternatives. But that's philosophy.

## The Promise of Utopias

Why should anyone trouble with utopian literature? In reading a utopia of another time and place one gains the critical perspective of the author toward his own actual society and learns of his (usually his but sometimes her) views as to how a different social arrangement at that time could have played out into a much different society.

By extension, the very nature of utopias invites us, suggests for us, to question the very assumptions - and that is what they are - the assumptions of our own society. It even urges us to not accept that the social features of this world are as they are meant somehow to be or as they must be. The current social features - GATT, NAFTA, the Global Economy, Multi-national corporations wasting natural resources and ignoring fundamental human needs to further their own greed and power - are indeed as they happen now to be: but here is another way - a better way - that they could be. Imagine!

Sir Philip Smith, as early as 1595, in his *In Defense of Poesie* held that the utopian genre (which he called talking pictures) was more likely to persuade people to reflect upon themselves and their societies, with an eye toward betterment, than political treatises and essays.

So that's what utopias are like; what they require of us; what they offer us.

## More's Utopia

Utopian literature began in 1516 with the first edition of the book of Thomas More (later Sir Thomas More, much later Saint Thomas More) entitled *Utopia* and the genre continues through the present day.

It is a utopia. In book 1 of the volume, written after book 2, More presents a discussion involving, most notably, himself and the traveler Raphael Hythloday, which discussion is an excoriation of early 16th century England. An enclosure movement, some of it legal, occasioned by the high price for wool, redounded in displacing the many marginal agrarian, rural poor with a very few shepherds also in the employ of the Lord of the Manor. The Commons, which had been crucial for eking out a peasant life, were enclosed and their use assumed by the Lord of the Manor. Most peasants were denied the livelihood - such as it was - they were used to on the land, in favor of sheep. As More put it: "It used to be that men ate the sheep. Now the sheep are eating the men." The peasants flocked to the towns and cities to be further fleeced. The cities bulged rather than accommodated them. There were no jobs and they had no appropriate skills had there been urban jobs. And so, they turned to

petty thievery. The legal and police systems clamped down. Petty theft was made a capital offense ( as was machine breaking for Kirkpatrick Sale's Luddites. As, I suspect we'll learn a great deal of on November 3rd.) As is pointed out in book 1., this is an inordinate response. It is a violation of the Greek Golden Mean: an excessive, abusive use of force. In a society which perpetuates it, the petty thief has nothing to lose and everything to gain - in this life - in murdering the person he is robbing. Furthermore, what the social "order", so called, has done is to establish social conditions in favor of the very few, the Lord of the Manor, the Nobility, the King's court, the indolent and redolent of power, greed, pride and sloth: These social conditions force the many into thievery. Then the social "order" kills the victims for being thieves. Fancy that, the victims being punished. We learn more of this every day in the newspapers.

In book 2, Raphael describes utopia, which saved his life after he, a former explorer with Amerigo Vespucci, had been hopelessly blown off course and lost.

The purpose and achievement of utopia is the satisfaction, for all its citizens, of genuine human pleasures. The pleasures are to be genuine, for example a pleasure followed by pain is not a genuine pleasure. There is a hierarchy of the pleasures ranging from simple bodily pleasures, e.g., flatulation and orgasm through the higher satisfactions of mind and spirit, thinking and understanding, and culminating in contemplation. Very Greek.

The new social arrangements, so different from those of book1, resulting in all citizens pursuing genuine human pleasures are as follow:

1. All property is held in common. There is thus no money or need for it. The artificiality of the value of gold is lampooned.
2. The basic material human needs are recognized as being few; good and plentiful food, drink, clothing, shelter, and social and spiritual care.
3. The fewness of human needs plus the working for six hours a day of all citizens in the few crafts required for providing them; carpentry, masonry, weaving, agriculture, results in an abundance.

So the citizen works with a will at his craft for six hours a day and thereby satisfies his material needs. He/she lives in a well-designed, well-constructed, well-maintained house with a garden. When his/her garments wear out they are exchanged at a central storehouse. Nor is the process difficult. The new garment will be just like the old and just like everyone else's. There is not a great deal of variety in utopia: after all it is genuine needs, not frills that are being fully satisfied. Thus the sins of greed and pride have no place in utopia - they don't occur and therefore don't need to be suppressed!

And what does the citizen of Utopia do in his/her seven hours of leisure time per day? Some will spend up to an hour in their gardens, some will think about improvements in their crafts, but for the most part they engage in good, substantial conversation and in reading and contemplating the classics, especially the Greek classics. They are fascinated by the newly recovered Greek texts which Raphael brought with him and use his knowledge of the printing press to reproduce them. They are fascinated, too, by his introduction of Christianity into Utopia.

So, More's *Utopia* is a utopia and the first one. But it didn't spring full-blown like Aphrodite (Venus) from the forehead of Zeus (Jupiter). The times are crucial for More. *Utopia* was written toward the end of the Renaissance when Greek was beginning to supplant Latin as the language for study of the Bible, when the works of Plato, most notably *The Republic* appeared in the west, when in short Hellenized Christianity became influential. It was the time, too, of Luther's Reformation, which was intended to reform, not splinter, the Church: and also, the time of the discovery of the new World. Less important, but of interest to us, it was also the time of the beginning of the Scientific Revolution: Thomas More and Copernicus were contemporaries. So, the early 16th century was a time of flux and great hope for change, harking both backward and forward.

There was the Biblical Garden of Eden, very problematic for More, which depicted an earthly paradise. If it is to be taken literally, where was it? It's been conjectured to have been perhaps in Ethiopia or Turkey, but the site has never been discovered. Perhaps, it was, is, in the new World? There were also various legends, e.g., Hesiod's in the Greek corpus of an ideal, early golden age (or race) of humankind. Might this not be recovered, perhaps after a long ordeal, an apocalyptic struggle, to be followed with the long bliss, the long Sabbath? Christian millenarianism is an important source for utopias. Perhaps, we'll learn more along this line next week from Marcus Borg and Jill McAllister.

More specifically, I'd like to recommend William Morris's *News from Nowhere* to you. Morris uses Marx in detailing just how his beyond - socialism, anarchistic Nowhere came to be. It is true, of course, that the departure point is a developed industrial, not a post-industrial society. Still, much of what needed to be overcome, e.g., cross commercialism, overcome an oppressive government and corporate power, still much to be overcome. And the means Morris suggests offer a good starting point for our own time, not that they themselves will suffice. Also, Morris's anarchistic Nowhere is a splendid example of a beyond-egalitarian society with virtually limitless immediately available possibilities for everyone.

*The Republic* of Plato, seminal for More, provided a profound analysis of the ideal city - Athens with large doses of Sparta - and strong argument for the Philosopher -

King. More's Raphael uses the former and argues for the rejection of the latter. There are other examples of ideal cities for More, not least Saint Augustine's *City of God*. Plato's having left only fragments of *Critias*, his own spin-off from *The Republic*, may be taken as an invitation for More's decidedly utopian city. Perhaps, we'll get more in this vein five weeks hence in the panel discussion. Finally, as sources for More, I should mention for their contributions of fancifulness, satire, and socially critical comedy, the Greeks, Lucian and Aristophanes, particularly.

We have seen, I hope the nature of utopias; what characteristics, major and minor, they have; what demands they make upon us and what promise they hold for us if only we meet those demands. We have seen too, something of the origins of utopias, that they partake of and transcend their own times and finally we've seen, I hope. More's *Utopia* as a stunning exemplar.

Also, read "The Return of Karl Marx" in the *New Yorker* of October 20 & 27, 1997, pp. 248-259.

## **From More to Bacon**

Before we turn, briefly, to Francis Bacon and his utopia, *New Atlantis* we should consider four features of the turbulent century between Thomas More and Francis Bacon.

1. The reception of Plato, from about 1450 (i.e., before and by More) had not been easy. Aristotle had been received from the 10th century on, also not easily (he was a pagan and as such had strange ideas relative to the beginning and end of all creation, but what splendid ideas he had about the intervening time), but then ensconced in the 12th century Renaissance, into the universities, newly founded to incorporate him and into Christian thought, thanks largely to Saint Thomas Aquinas. So there was no room for Plato. Hence the genre of 15th and 16th century academies, the new groves of academe; and Plato flourished for a time. Then, following Luther, the Catholic counter-Reformation with the Council of Trent (1545-1563) retrenchment, reasserted Aristotle. Disagreeing with "The Prince of those who know" became dangerous: witness the trial of Galileo.
2. Thomas Muentzer, a Reformation theologian, preacher, a leader of peasant uprisings and a utopian thinker, was taken as stemming from Joachim of Fiore, who, in the 12th century had held that the reign of the Father was about to yield to the reign of the Holy Ghost - a kind of millennialism - and that he, Joachim, was a kind of John the Baptist, proclaiming the new Kingdom of God. Muentzer broke with Luther, holding that Luther in selling out to the German

princes was serving the Anti-Christ, and developed his own austere, dark revolutionary and subversive views. Like Marx, who would find Hegel standing on his head, Muentzer encountered Calvin. For Muentzer the elect were not the prosperous, but the down trodden, reviled poor who alone were enduring the suffering required for the entrance of God into the human heart; such that they, Muentzer's elect, would be soon redeemed, not in the after life, but in the transformed - millennial - life here on earth.

3. Pansophism, in a gentler way, spoke similarly to utopians. There was coalescing, here and now, a new profound unity. The book of nature, God's creation on the one hand, and the book of Scripture, God's word on the other hand, would immanently no longer, be twain. The coming new science, (Galileo's, Kepler's, Bacon's) and the coming new religion were about to be one.
4. The scientific revolution, stemming from the reformation proposed initially by a canon of the church, Copernicus, is in this middle stage in the hands of Galileo; who is passionately in opposition to Aristotle in every way possible: in the hands of Kepler; who, using the spectacular new observations of Tycho Brahe, is advocating first Copernicus's reform, then the revolution that stems therefrom (and, finally, transcending Copernicus on the way, as it turned out, to Newton): and in the hands of Francis Bacon.

## **Bacon's *New Atlantis***

Bacon's utopia, the unfinished *New Atlantis*, published posthumously in 1626, may be seen as something of a pseudo-pansophia. The new Baconian science (with almost no Galileo, Kepler, or Harvey) and the very traditional Christianity (no shades of Joachim or Muentzer) are unified in an opulent city, Bensalem, which has not changed character in 2000 years.

The static nature of Bensalem is all the more difficult for us because central within and exalted and yet apart, almost monastic, is the House of Solomon, which amounts to a 19th century German research institute. The House of Solomon is dedicated to research into the very nature of all things knowable in order to further understanding of God's creation, and to the application of this understanding to provide for the continuing improvement of the conditions of life in Bensalem. It is this application of science to technology which is Bacon's great innovation.

Why doesn't science applied for change repeatedly transform Bensalem? Easy. Bensalem is totally suffused by, permeated with, enthralled by, Christian *caritas*: the love of God for man, the love of man for man, benevolence, good will. (For us this would take a green gas, but not for 17th century Christian Europe.) And the continued

operation of *caritas* is not left to chance. If, perchance, some research led to a discovery the application of which was deemed inimical to *caritas*, the censor, at the apex of the House of Solomon would suppress the discovery. Science is not left to itself. Human social and spiritual values prevail in new science Bensalem: A ready-made pansophia.

## From Bacon to Condorcet

We've transversed about one century from More, early in the 16th through Bacon, early in the 17th. Now, before we jump ahead nearly two more to the Marquis de Condorcet at the very end of the 18th century we need to consider three features of the intervening time.

1. Pansophia died with Leibitz. With its demise the 17th century central core of utopianism vanished and the immediately subsequent utopias are unfocussed. Had Pansophia not died, Voltaire would have murdered it. The 16th and 17th century utopias were Christian: subsequent ones are secular.

The scientific revolution culminated in the works of Issac Newton (1642-1727) and by the time of Condorcet had been accepted, assimilated and extended into western thought.

This subsequent 18th century work as regards Newton's *Principia* of 1687 (the three laws of motion, the absolute demolition of Descartes cosmology, the universal law of gravitation) was accomplished largely by continental mathematicians and cosmologists, using Leibnitz's formulation of the calculus. The mounting successes of the Newtonian system: the prediction to within a month (on theoretical grounds), of the return of Halley's comet in mid-century; the solution of the vexing lunar secular acceleration problem which, carried with it the demonstration of the stability of the moon's orbit about the earth, the solution of the greater Jovian secular acceleration problem which carried in its train the dynamic stability of the whole solar system: this enormous and unparalleled (since at least Aristotle) success engendered a corresponding enthusiasm and optimism. Now that recently discovered (by reason) natural laws, operating naturally, were observed to be the basis of universal stability and harmony, what other natural laws, awaiting discovery, laws, say, in the social realm, which, freed to operate naturally, might reasonably be expected to result in social stability and harmony?

The subsequent 18th century work stemming from Newton's *Opticks* is less dramatic but more broad and, perhaps, in the long run, more important. This work includes that of Benjamin Franklin's in electricity: studies in chemistry from Newton's own

chemical socialabilities through Lavoisier and Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. Newton's *Principia* demonstrated monumental (synthetic) results Newton's *Opticks* suggests much, invites all and engages savants of diverse stripes and persuasions as to what to do and how to get *Principia* type results. The 18th century has rightly been termed Newton's Century.

2. The French Enlightenment, too, owed much to the enthusiasm and optimism of the Newtonian success story. And to the end of Pansophism. There was a great deal of utopian thought and writing, but none of the key figures wrote a utopia. Part of the reason is that they tended to think in terms of great cyclic movements in history rather than in the linear mode of a utopia.

Within the French Enlightenment we find the Encyclopaedists. Within the *Encyclopedie* we do not find an article on Utopias! Diderot, and the few others, strove for clear and exact meaning for words and concepts; clear and exact expression using understood linguistic formulations and relationships. There was to be a reformation of the language and a "natural" new ordering of knowledge. All this would further clear thinking. It is not unlike what the great taxonomist, Linnaeus, was doing in botany at about the same time, or what Lavoisier would do in chemistry at the end of the century. Though they wrote neither an article on utopia for the *Encyclopedie* nor a utopia itself, the Encyclopaedists constitute something of a utopian group setting out to transform their society by getting the language straight.

For More and Erasmus getting the language straight meant Greek instead of Latin.

Our next group, the Philosophes, saw in the future a beckoning, promising world no less than had Thomas More from Columbus's discoveries. This new world, however, once it came to be, might be expected to endure, since it would have grown out of the disaster of the 18th century. Columbus's new world had been exploited, pillaged and raped by an earlier version of Christian Europe. Kirkpatrick Sale has written a book about this: *The Conquest of Paradise*.

The enemies for the Philosophes, the rubbish that lay between them and the new natural society that they were mid-wives for, the rubbish which obscured everyone else's vision, included ignorance, superstition, established institutional religion and unwarranted privilege. This rubbish would all be cleared away by education of the many and by ongoing research and study by the few. The fresh society, the newly discovered laws of which would not be tampered with, would blossom.

In closing this section, let me first touch upon two figures of 18th century French Enlightenment thought and writing.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) in his writing produced works of the nature of More's book 1 except much less specific. His is a sweeping denunciation of the whole of civilization. He began with the dystopian condition of modern urban man and then supposed the opposites to signify utopia. Hence the noble savage and the social contract. The idea of the noble savage has classical roots and many and varied uses in the 18th century. Rousseau is enormously influential down, perhaps, to the present day.

A much greater thinker, the Abbe Turgot (1727-1781) was not a philosophe himself but was one of their great heroes. It's easy to see why. After he turned from the cloth, but not religion, he was an active and vocal reformist economist, embracing the new prospect of a natural economic order and denigrating self-serving economic interests. Exact and precise language was both the means and the vessel. The mathematical theorem was the exemplar. Until he expounded and proclaimed controversial philosophe doctrine, rejected by many in high places he was Finance Minister to Louis XVI. Turgot early on adopted a Lockean sensationalism as the root of knowledge and held that humans had an innate tendency to innovate which led, finally, to reason. Human history was subject essentially always, to change which provides openings which men of genius will use. In this manner, Turgot accounted for ethnologically observed diversity in, however, an inevitable progress of humankind, not dependent upon chance. An inevitable progress: Here clearly the cyclic view of human history has been rejected. Turgot was the long time mentor of Condorcet.

I have argued that since Bacon's 1626, unfinished utopia, *New Atlantis*, (which described surface aspects of a rich, contented, ordered and static, Christian city and detailed the complementary functions, structures, and safeguard of the dynamic House of Solomon, without showing much connection between the science and the society), there has not been a genuine utopia. What happened is that when Pansophism failed in its attempt to wed Christianity with the new Baconian science, the formerly central core of Christianity also was lost. And so, utopias lost their focus, and the greatest post -- Baconian writing in the utopian genre, (but there were no utopias, per se), were the brilliant workings of the satirist, Jonathan Swift. However, the Baconian science component survived and by the end of the 18th century Newtonian mathematical science became the new core for utopia.

## **Condorcet's *The Tenth Stage***

Condorcet's (1743-1794) utopia, *The Tenth Stage*, is more philosophic than novelistic. (The first nine stages were a chronicle of humankind's history.) It was supplemented by his comments on Bacon's *New Atlantis*. Unlike More and Bacon, Condorcet does not describe the goings on in his society of the future and his society is not an isolated

outpost; it's the future of the whole human race. What Condorcet does is to apply probability theory to a reordering of human history taken as a science to show that Newtonian Mathematical Reason makes the perfection of the human race inevitable. *The Tenth Stage* is as much about the voyage as it is about the destination.

Condorcet owes much to Turgot, his mentor. For them both scientific advancement is crucial. For Turgot this required absolute freedom for science; for Condorcet not and since progress is for him now inevitable and a moral imperative, Condorcet considers ways of managing science in order to maximize progress. This opens up a huge realm of discussion, argument and planning in the 19th and 20th centuries. Also for Condorcet, the reception and assimilation of scientific advances in the populace is more important than scientific discovery itself. This has and will continue increasingly to occur as new laws of nature, new combinations and organizations of scientific knowledge, which require genius for discovery are, by their very nature, intellectual simplifications and economical representations and are therefore readily teachable to an educated people.

For both Turgot and Condorcet, the role of genius is crucial for taking advantage of opportunity to advance science and further progress. For Turgot there was always a tiny fraction of genius in the human population: For Condorcet the fraction was a function of the rational education of the population. So there will be a boot-strapping process: More and better education will produce more geniuses who will advance science which will further progress as it is propagated throughout the population which is increasingly receptive and therefore more geniuses will be produced who . . .

In its train this boot-strapping, while always advancing upwards, also leads to increasing intellectual equality. And this tendency obtains everywhere. For Condorcet, reason, so developed that humankind's perfection is in the offing, is yet still developing. Therefore scientific knowledge (and especially in the hitherto almost not explored domain of morality) will doubly advance and with an increasingly receptive, educated populace there will grow the understanding that increasing equality in all realms is not only morally proper and good, but is also in everyone's enlightened self interest.

Condorcet provided an intelligent reorganization for science which was required since henceforth various observations, e.g., astronomical and meteorological, were to be made, essentially continuously, from all parts of the globe and would require coordination. Furthermore, with the physical sciences, by no means complete, but still much advanced, the future emphasis was to be on the human sciences as very broadly conceived by Condorcet.

Although he enormously compressed what we call 18th century colonialism, 19th century imperialism and late 20th century independence, Condorcet could take the long view. He proposed erecting virtually indestructible steles which would present, symbolically, current attainments so that a future Plato would not have to start all over again from his cave.

(Finally: Malthus wrote his treatise on population and food production against Condorcet who, however, had already dealt with the problem in *The Tenth Stage*.)

## **What of the Scientific Revolution?**

Had we time it would be interesting to reflect upon our three utopias from the perspective of the scientific revolution which they span.

## **The French and Industrial Revolutions**

We need, perhaps, to take a look at another line of philosophical utopian thought stemming from the 18th century French Enlightenment which, as we've noted, was so much more original than the flood of contemporary novels. This line involves both the French and Industrial Revolutions.

Saint-Just (1767-1794) and Gracchus Babeuf (1761-96?) both advocated violent means to impose a better society immediately. Saint-Just was very like Robespierre as the first theorist of terror as the means to utopia.

Babeuf's radical writing and use of his trial to broadcast his doctrine (both he and Saint-Just were guillotined) inaugurated the modern era of radical action utopias. Babeuf insisted upon an iron law of equality. If there wasn't enough of some desirable thing to be divided among all, it was totally denied to all. If there are 18 households and 17 eggs, no one gets an egg!!

As we enter the 19th century we encounter a triumvirate of utopian philosophical thinkers stemming more from the Industrial Revolution than from the French Revolution.

Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (1772-1837), and Robert Owen (1772-1858) all found their basic doctrines at about the turn of the century, were in print by about 1810 and presented their final systems in the 1820s. They had their similarities: for all, the current political system was not to be destroyed (they were peaceful utopians.) It was to be changed gradually by persuasion and example. Newton was the font: each saw himself as doing much the same thing, as Newton.

They fought each other and their followers, bickered between groups and within groups. And although they did have important differences, especially as regards equality and pleasure, and in the settings for their systems, they were all lumped together by outsiders; e.g., Marx who swallowed them all up. They were influential with their doctrines; spreading as far as America and Russia.

## **Saint-Simon**

Saint-Simon is extremely important in his influence as a philosophical utopian but his system is a more or less linear extension of his own France. His followers are important relative to the credit-mobilier, deployment of railroads and the building of the Suez canal.

Early on, science is at the apex in the style of Condorcet, with the gravitation law the cream of the cream. But, then Saint-Simon posited three different kinds of men, administrators and moralists, as well as scientists. Thus, there would be a natural inequality, but whereas before there had been a natural antagonism of man against man, now there would be harmonious varied actions of men working upon nature. The key, an Industrial Revolution key, is production. The more Saint-Simon's three kinds of men functioned together in nature the less need there would be for state and government, even for police. Shades of the Karl Marx to come. At the end of his life Saint-Simon set out his system as a religion - a tawdry religion to be sure - but that, too, has been influential. [Perhaps we'll hear more of this next week.]

The followers, the Saint-Simonians, extend the doctrines, positing Saint-Simon's three kinds of men as, rather, three different aspects of each man. This reduces inequality and furthers harmony. This refined scheme is also later formulated as a religion. The singular reign of reason promulgated by Turgot and Condorcet is ended.

## **Fourier**

Charles Fourier and Robert Owen were much more the utopians than Saint-Simon. They, too, wrote philosophic tracts but they also set up utopian communities to further their ideas.

Fourier criticized the Saint-Simonians for being too much of their own society. They were, he held, trying to change human nature while he was exalting it: it was the repressive society which had to change. Fourier, hugely influenced by Rousseau, began his major formulation with a total refusal of all earlier philosophical and moralistic systems. They had contributed nothing. The 18th century had pretended to improve society, but society was actually a prison worthy only of demolition and

reason was merely the new 18th century superstition. Fourier, like Rousseau, insisted upon a clear view of his society and what it did to people.

Fourier extended Newton with what he called his law of passionate attraction. The passions were the only authentic stable force throughout time, never mind the Church and the moralists. Human history was a chronicle of repression, and the repression of desire was not only unnatural but the source of corruption. Witness that savages and children must be coerced into civilization. If the coercion were ended civilization would be abandoned.

Fourier devised an interesting taxonomy of the twelve passions he identified.

Fourier sought far and wide for a patron, including Napoleon and the Czars and finally succeeded and founded a pilot community in what is now Rumania. Since man is psychologically complex, a complex social order is required for man's fulfillment. Therefore, this Columbus of the social order, as he called himself, adopted for each unit of his phalanstery a membership of 2 times 810 carefully chosen persons: 810 being the basic number of human passionate combinations. Each member was in a number of different groups engaging in a variety of different work, mostly agrarian, and other activities. In these different groups a great variety of different passions were involved and the emphasis was always upon love and friendliness within each group and friendly competition between groups.

## **Owen**

Robert Owen was something of a self-made, enormously successful, cotton-mill industrialist at the time of the Luddites.

By 1812, extremely wealthy, he was concerning himself with the economic and moral conditions of his workers, especially at his New Lanark works. He initiated a new educational system stressing the formation of good habits, partly to counter alcoholism. Then, studying the post-Napoleonic economic downturn he established self-sustaining communities, first for indigents and children, whom he saw as the initial victims of the social disorder. About 1200 inhabitants were well housed in rural settings away from slums. Surrounding the housing were workshop areas which were themselves surrounded by agricultural areas. The people were to live in the midst of the food they grew and ate.

Soon his scheme expanded to include members of different income levels living in a variety of communities. This scheme was intended to further develop into a cooperative socialism, world wide.

In all this, Owen was not only advocating private financing but was also consuming his own fortune.

This self-conscious behaviorist demonstrated the changing of children, indigents, and workers by altering their environment. In his 30-year experiment at New Lanark, Owen, and observers from all over the world, reported upon workers who had gone from being drunken and shiftless to being the best workers in the world.

Owen then gave up his New Lanark works to start afresh in the pristine conditions of new world New Harmony, Indiana. This turned out a disaster.

Owen wrote increasingly savage attacks upon the social ills of industrialism and upon the industrial society which held the victims responsible for the ghastly conditions which had been visited upon them. He held that most people had their characters chosen for them, not chosen by them. As he increasingly attacked the church, the family and property as the institutions which were really responsible for the maladies of industrialism he became increasingly ostracized.

Throughout the first three quarters of the 19th century the philosophic utopian thought and writing continued strong, solid, and complex while the novels continued to be weak.

## **The Second Half of the Nineteenth Century**

In the second half of the century three figures arose who had some claim to the title of "the Newton of their own fields."

### **Karl Marx**

The first of these is Karl Marx (1818-1883). Marx's and Engel's relation to utopian thought is extremely mixed and problematic. They denigrate, reject and repudiate it, heaping scorn on most utopians, while using certain aspects of it, praising a very few of its practitioners and often sound (and are), utopian in some of their own utterances.

Marx and Engels take themselves to be in the process of establishing scientific socialism. This life-long process involved painstaking historical investigation, voracious, scrutinizing, critical reading and analysis, and constant interaction. It is scholarship of a very high order. Their discovered social system is the result of a material historical inevitability. Society began in a certain way, grew and developed and ripened and will climax in bloody class revolution. This will be followed, after a transitional phase in which human necessities are met, by the freedom of fulfillment

of full human potential. For Marx and Engels the utopians, by and large, started anyplace, dreamed up some dumb innovation, applied it slap-dash, and then claimed results. It is not surprising, then, that Marx and Engels castigated the utopians; the most recent ones, who had the possibility of knowing better, the most vociferously.

Thus, it is that Marx and Engels, who came from Rhineland society and the German university system, lambast, for the most part, the work of Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen, who were products of the Anglo-French Enlightenment of fifty years earlier. Specifically, they strongly criticized the anti-rationalism of Saint-Simon and Fourier, the religious foundations of the former and the, for them, bizarre excesses of the latter. For good measure Marx mocked the Saint-Simonians who defected to Napoleon III in becoming international financiers and other forms of economic pimps. Marx and Engels were appalled by the radical egalitarianism of Babeuf which would rob the future humanity of their Phase II, of the economic possibilities of the present, and of phase I.

For Robert Owen, whose writing provided rich sources for Marx and Engels, there was deep respect, never mind, apparently, Owen's deep anti-revolutionary stance. Owen was praised for having transcended his own class in working rationally and effectively for the working class and for his scathing attacks upon industrialism, property and the church. Similarly, the 18th century utopian, Morelly, and followers, were lauded for their analyses leading to the understanding and exposure of the essentially lovelessness of marriage, based, as it was, upon property, and for the perfect willingness of the bourgeoisie to sacrifice to prostitution and disease poor girls in order to raise their own daughters in what they termed respectability.

As we've seen Marx's and Engel's attitude toward utopia was complicated but generally negative. As we will see, in a bit, their influence upon subsequent utopias was usually the same.

Yet, from Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program, 1875, we read "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." One could scarcely hope for more ringingly utopian phrases. It is curious that the first closely parallels a phrase from Saint-Simon, the second one from Fourier and both, from phrases from Babeuf.

## **Anarchism**

Let me return one last time to the late 18th century. William Godwin's 2 volume Political Justice of 1793 became the foundation text for modern anarchism. For his book Godwin drew upon material from the 17th century Ranters, Levellers and

Diggers and completely rejected the social contract concept of Locke and Rousseau as an ongoing basis for a society.

The rich and diverse subsequent anarchistic literature stems largely from the 1840s writings of Proudhon, Stirner, Bakunin and Kropotkin (1842-1921). These thinkers defined their positions partly in opposition to Marx and partly in reaction to each other. For example, Kropotkin's scientifically grounded, fully formulated, anarchist-communism called for the full freedom of Marx's Phase II, immediately.

Georges Sorel's ( - 1924), virulent anti-utopianism stemmed from the defeat of the Paris commune (which defeat made it manifest that socialist revolution was not imminent), and from the gradual collapse of the French left. Sorel railed against all utopias for being systems which were essentially merely patch-work jobs on fatally flawed societies. Also their socialistic advocates, and the Saint-Simonians were only an especially egregious instance, took part in the governments they purported to oppose and so became increasingly corrupted. What was required for Sorel was a return to a second historical stage, that of heroism, which followed the stage of the gods, and, this time might not lead to a degraded humankind.

Toward the end of the 19th century the strong analytic thought and writing of the previous century or so, with the escalation of impoverishing colonialism, imperialism and industrialism (pace Condorcet) produced a utopia and a dystopia of great note.

## ***Bellamy's Looking Backward***

Edward Bellamy's extremely influential (1888) *Looking Backward* is not one of them: rather it is a kind of new age utopia and needn't detain us for long. The voyage is by mesmerism, evolution has worked its wonders in only a century with the wealthy industrialists peacefully turning over to the state the means of production because it's the right thing to do. Boston in the year 2000 is efficiently run by means of an industrial army which produces a flood of goods in which everyone wallows equally. William Morris reviled the novel as "A cockney paradise."

## ***Morris's News from Nowhere***

One of the best things about *Looking Backward* is that it provoked Morris to write *News from Nowhere* (1890) which is a first rate utopia.

Morris's hero, Guest, falls asleep in his own bed after yet another long, boring, frustrating socialist meeting and awakens some three centuries later into such a transformed London that he can barely comprehend it, even with time,. He learns, in

great detail, from one of the very few Nowhereers interested in the past, of the long, bloody class warfare that had been required to wrest control from the privileged few. Many lessons from the French Revolution and the Paris Commune were learned and used. During the protracted and ever shifting class war, especially toward its close and continuing after the fighting, new, fresh, germane leadership emerged to further the revolutionary movement. One of the greatest difficulties, Guest was told, was learning to think and dream of new possibilities rather than to merely shift power from the few to the many. An early triumph was the giving up of commercialism. The revolutionaries learned to question, reject and abandon consumerism.

Morris, as an artist and craftsperson, lived his life in reaction to commercialism and consumerism. He complained that the only well-made things were the machines which ground out huge amounts of unneeded and, were the truth known, unwanted shoddy.

In Nowhere, there are machines but they are used to produce the very, very few goods and/or services that people need and want but do not want to produce by hand. The overwhelming emphasis, and for everyone, is on doing creatively and artistically whatever one wants to do. Everyone is a creative artist in what he/she does and in how she/he lives: and not just for oneself. If, no one wishes to do something no one wishes to subject someone else to doing it and so, by and large, it is done without. Need, want, desire, and action have coalesced. This crucial attitude toward the artistic, social life was difficult and came late in the revolutionary movement.

Late, too, was the return to pristine nature and pristine nature's return to humankind. England is once again open, green, healthy, and lovely.

There once was a sink-hole called Manchester. It has vanished.

The basic setting for Nowhere is an idealized and refined 14th century before the Renaissance spoiled art and before capitalism spoiled our ordinary, daily lives.

## **Charles Darwin**

The second of our triumvirate of "Newtons" of the 19th century is Charles Darwin.

From our perspective his influence is important and mixed. For Karl Marx he helped confirm the bloody transitional revolution. For imperialists, robber barons and other capitalists (indeed anyone on top of the heap and the lackeys who were attempting, by groveling, to inch upward) Darwin was taken as justification. They were surviving magnificently: at the expense of everyone else. Therefore, they must be the magnificently fittest.

For utopian thought, Darwin lent scientific credibility to the use of drastic biological modifications. These had appeared earlier: witness Swift's Yahoos and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley's man-made monster of Frankenstein. After Darwin biology was the main realm of transformation and the new focus continued to tend to be degradations and monstrosities.

## **Wells's *The Time Machine***

*The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells (1895) is the font for a half-century of almost uninterrupted dystopias. In it the voyage forward to the year 801,701 AD is via the time traveler's newly invented machine of mature industrialism and new burgeoning science. Expecting to find a greatly advanced civilization, the time traveler encounters instead a humanity very much on the wane. The Eloi, small weak and lacking in interests and attention span, spend their days idly in the lush, pest-free, fruit-laden valley of the Thames garden, and their nights huddled fearfully in once magnificent palaces.

The time traveler speculates that the continuing progress of his own time had led soon to a utopia and thereafter, humankind having been freed from necessary activity, physical and mental, had devolved into the pleasant, vapid Eloi. Wells had learned well his Darwin from T.H. Huxley.

The time traveler then discovers the meat-eating Morlocks who dwell underground, having evolved into being unable to be on the surface, except at night. They, by dint of maintaining their required air pumps, are more capable, physically and mentally, than the Eloi.

Given this new information, the time traveler theorizes that shortly after his own time, the upper class, tired of seeing slums, relegated the labor class to working and living underground, while they alone enjoyed the increasing splendors of the surface. Much later, after a serious social breakdown, the Morlocks, no longer being fed, had to fend for themselves and, in effect, turned the Eloi into their cattle.

Thus, the class struggle led to definitive physical separation and grossly different environmental conditions such that the Eloi and Morlocks had evolved, perhaps, into different species.

Darwin and Marx with a foreshadowing of Freud and we have a splendid dystopia leading into the 20th century. We will learn of two other examples of this lethal combination: *Brave New World* and *1984* two and three weeks hence. Other examples could be cited, including *Walden II*, which has the distinction of being a dystopia,

never mind that B.F. Skinner aimed for a utopia. Six weeks from now we'll learn of Thoreau's *Walden*.

## **Sigmund Freud**

Karl Marx, Charles Darwin and, now, Sigmund Freud. All cast equally long shadows over utopia. The Darwinian shadow, while important, didn't obscure Marx's shadow was penumbral and did obscure, while Freud's umbral shadow very nearly eclipsed utopia.

For Freud there was ever-present Thanatos. Human aggressiveness is instinctual, innate, unavoidable and irremediable. Human problems are profoundly human and profoundly problematic: they stem from our very intrinsic natures. And what holds for individual humans holds equally for human groups. Humankind is social and the countervailing Eros does bind us together in love and in unified societies, but always at a cost. For example, a unified society directs its Thanatos outward. Thanatos may be somewhat redirected and redistributed (in fact that's what Freud's "talking cure" sought merely) but it can never be eliminated. Talk as they might, utopian property, and other, relations were peripheral and utopias were, in Freud's words merely "lullabies from heaven."

## ***Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time***

Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* is the story of a poor rejected, down-and-out, abused, Hispanic woman, Consuelo, who refuses to give up and is credibly extraordinary. She is a "receiver", capable of being called up for short periods of time, to Mattapoissett; a human-scale, ecologically sound, genuine utopia in the future. Mattapoissett is remarkable fulfilling and free (phase II), especially considering that it is at war with the dystopian rich, exploiting, wasteful, polluting and dominating corporate class, driven then, in More's Utopia and now, by greed and the lust for power. Connie becomes a "sender," capable of extending herself into the future, and on one of these voyages she finds herself in the ghastly, artificial whoredom of Corporate dystopia.

There are two futures out there, striving to endure, and which one will depends upon the past, which is why Connie was called up in the first place.

Connie, initially, thought the Mattapoissett practices weird; many were completely outside her experience and some few are outside our's as well, such as women no longer giving birth to children. Connie gradually learned what it was Mattapoissett was

attempting and why it was crucial that they succeed and came to give herself completely to it.

She returned to the research medical facility where she with other deemed mental cases were subject to new, radical procedures. To the extent Connie had a mental problem, it had been induced by her society. In the procedures the brains and minds of the patients were sacrificed in the interests of uniformity and control. Some of the same vagaries of mind which were extolled, exalted and utilized richly in Mattapoisett were being excised. Connie very cleverly, she's got street smarts and ward smarts, poisons and kills the prominent research doctors and in this way does what she can, in her situation, to prevent Mattapoisett from "winking out" in the future.

What have we done in our present to further a desirable future which depends crucially upon us?