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# Utopia in the 21st Century: A Totalitarian Dilemma

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**Abstract.** This article describes the construct of utopia, examples of the construct, the common political consequences that the construct engenders, and the intractability of modifying the incidence and prevalence of utopias and their consequences.

The construct of utopia denotes an ideally perfect state of affairs--especially the sociopolitical aspects of that state. Although the term is first described in Thomas More's *Utopia*, the construct can easily be traced back to the first recorded human musings in political philosophy.

One might think that it is quite problematic to discover examples of Utopia but less so to find attempts to construct Utopia from the utopian construct. This is because data on thinking about utopias and on trying to arrive at them can be obtained through surveys, behavior sampling, literature searches, reason, and inference. One might even infer that utopian thoughts and strivings may be common human traits. On the other hand, one might point out that there is "no real way to know" when the point of arrival has been reached--when one actually begins living in Utopia.

However, validating the ontological status of thinking about, striving towards, and arriving at utopias share the same epistemological pathways. In fact, the concurrent discomfort at pointing out Utopias and comfort at pointing out utopian thinking and striving may constitute a false consciousness in that they can facilitate being politically exploited.

In any event, combinations of thinking of, striving towards, and arriving at Utopias have generated a range of consequences from extreme Good to extreme Evil. Certainly, Utopias have generated selfless and benign behaviors that seem to render humans almost God-like. In the 20th century, communism and fascism have effected results close to extreme Evil and have sullied the notion of Utopias being linked with extreme Goodness. One might posit that as utopias take on the trapping of mass movements, large organizations, and bureaucracies, the threat for more Evil geometrically increases. Yet this positing might only reflect a greater difficulty in linking Evil and personally constructed Utopias for individual people based on yet to be discovered covert heuristics.

Is there any way out of the risk for Utopian-related Evil in the 21st century? Probably not. Utopian thought, striving, and arrival are based on totalitarianism, on having no political opposition--even if it is maintained that there should be no political opposition to people who desire to effect political opposition. In other words, there cannot be exceptions whether to the legitimacy or illegitimacy of exceptions.

Does this mean that one must jettison Utopian-related Good as the means to avoid Utopian-related Evil (assuming one could)? Perhaps. It may be for this reason that More's *Utopia* was an imaginary island and that the term "utopia" is etymologically related to the Greek "ou" (not) (not the Greek "eu" good) and "topos" (a place). (See Chodoff, P. (1984). 1984, utopias, dystopias, and psychiatry. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis*, 12, 459-470; Dufort, R.H. (1965). A suggested approach to the study of utopian writings by the psychologist. *Journal of Psychology*, 60, 25-30; Mead, M. (1958).

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Towards more vivid utopias. *Science*, 126, 957-961; Morawski, J.G. (1982). Assessing psychology's moral heritage through our neglected utopias. *American Psychologist*, 37, 1082-1095; Stoller, R. (1997). Notes sur Foucault (Notes on Foucault). *Revue Francaise de Psychanalyse*, 61, 1003-1011.) (Keywords: Evil, Good, Utopia.)