

Alex Samoylov, Cover Letter/Reflection, Professor Belli, 11/14/16,

Dear Professor Belli, this project was one of the most challenging that I had to complete with many requirements that took time to fill. Most noticeable was the research topic or the lack there of at the start. The starting ideas was that utopias and dystopias are a part of each other and exist at the same time in one form or another. This was due to the though process based on past reading done and other media seen prior. However this was not the correct way to do the project due to the lack of secondary resources and evidence from them. This lead to a long time of looking for second hand writing about utopias and dystopias. Some of the sources found were better than others, but all worked within the realm needed to complete the paper. They all showed more about the past of utopias and dystopias, how one came to exist because of the other. This formed the new ideas that were put into words as to why people created this two ideas. Soon after this a trend was seen, in nearly all pervious writing people were mentioned as part of why this idea come to be. This shifted the focus from utopias and dystopias existing side by side in a society in one form or another, to how people create this paradox through perspective. The lead to a complete rewrite and redistribution of support material to back this new claim. However this lead to the problem of being very broad and could lead to general claims that could work anywhere but not fit well within the project. Even with keeping the focus close to the topic at hand it was difficult to the right wording that would keep everything on track, as seen in my other works. The world is not just one thing closed off from everything else, it is interconnected with everything that happens around the planet. This is every much true of utopian and dystopian works, they need to be relevant to humanity and the world they occupy. If they are not then it is fiction to the point where it holds every little meaning and cannot teach or comment on the world at large. That was something that needed to address in the paper, the world outside and how it affects the research being done. First off there were the secondary sources, they spoke about writers and readers, the message that utopian and dystopian workers convey, the goal of the authors. It was not possible to keep to just the pure topic, for the main topic is interrelated to the real world. In fact the shift mentioned before necessitated the discussion of people and therefore the world they occupy and how that affects their perceptive. It was also a factor in the presentation of the project recently done, it lead to examples of current media and how it shows something about our society. In particular how people seem to be more likely to respond dystopian works then utopian visions. In class most people were able to understand the main point of paper even before the shift to what it is now, however that was before the addition of the secondary sources and the removal of most the primary that were before. The current draft was based on the presentation done and follows a similar format in order to keep the paper flowing. This was based on feedback from students who said that it was very concise and got to the point better then past works done. This could come out as a bad idea due to the fact that an essay is not the same as a presentation, however the same information was to shown on both. Overall the formatting should work to aid the reader in understanding the main idea throughout the paper and it transitions well from paragraph to paragraph. The paragraphs are short to keep from the normal way this comes out with overly long paragraphs that lead nowhere. The only problem may be that in keeping everything short, the idea may not have been allowed to rise within the paragraph. Overall this is one of the better works made over the course and past works.

Alex Samoylov, Final Project Write-Up, Professor Belli, 11/14/16,

“Definition”

People create everything around them, both in the physical realm and in thought. They seek perfection following an idea but are not able to bring to the real world. They also fear falling from their great height that they have achieved over the years. This is the idea of utopia and dystopia, a world better than our and a world far worse. However each person builds their own vision of what each entails.

People always dream of better places, the highest possible being a utopia. It is a place that doesn't exist but if it did it would be as close to perfection as possible. The original idea had it as a perfect society for everyone, all would find it satisfying. However, that is the flaw of utopia, it tries to be perfect for everyone which is not likely. The only way to do this would be to cover the basics and spread out a little bit from there to meet people's wants. This by default no longer makes it a utopia for everyone, for it no longer meets all of their expectations. In fact for some it may not be utopia at all.

The direct opposite of a perfect world for everyone is a world that is terrible for all. This is what people have called a dystopia or prior to 1868, anti-utopia and satirical utopia. This world is made to be negative, it is written to counter utopian thinking. Its goal was meant to bring people back down to reality by cancelling out utopian dreams. It showed people dark images of what the future may hold, how utopias can fall into dystopias. Everything that makes a utopia great a dystopia takes and twists into how it can create a nightmare.

Utopian literature and the idea were created to show how a better world should be. The writers and thinkers of this ideology sought ways of how to make this possible or at the very least create worlds where people would want to be. They used advances in technology, changes in society and thought to make these worlds better than what they had at their time. "Utopias are of interest because they project ways of life that their authors take to be both radically distinct from and ethnically superior to those prevalent in their own time and place." (Browning). However, others saw that these hopes and dreams could lead to disaster if allowed to continue unopposed. They wrote about worlds ruined by the pursuit of these ideas and how those ideas ended up twisting due to human nature into something dark. The worlds they created were not necessarily terrible places to live but they would remove many freedoms, thoughts, activities and ways of life that people would find unacceptable in our world. "Some of humanity's best thinkers and artists have, for 2,500 years, created moral compasses by distilling human wisdom (and folly) into imaginative works called utopias and dystopias." (SHELTON). Utopian literature was made to make people believe in something greater, while dystopian was made to protect people from the harsh reality of human nature.

With time came advancement, due to this there was a shift in what people saw as a better or worse world. The advancement of technology radically altered what could become possible in the near and far future. Society became more complex as did the economic and industrial landscape. Therefore utopian and dystopian literature had to mimic these changes and incorporate them into their worlds. At the same time, however, they could also let go as they have done in the past and promote a simpler time. People also start using the two words in a way that was not what they stood for prior. They jokingly used it to describe people who

wanted improvement and betterment not of the world but of small things. The words utopian and dystopian was no longer just to talk about a place that doesn't exist. Many organizations and governments used either one or both of these words to describe what they are striving for or away from. It became a false hope told to the masses to make them believe that by joining or supporting a group they could achieve or avert something.

This change in use of the words lead to many different interpretations of it. "A utopia is "as you like it" not necessarily a "perfect" world just a world that is perfect in an individual's eyes." (Millwee). Some people saw it as an individual's personal view on what is better or worse. While others still saw it as two opposing ideas similar to a dream and a nightmare. Moreover they saw it as one person's dream being another person's nightmare due to people having different views on what either one is. Technology also plays a role in all of this. It can lead to marvelous inventions that make it easier to live and be more productive, or it could lead to the creation of something that will empower someone who will ruin the world.

An interesting aspect is that people seem to learn more from a dystopian work than utopia visions. There is more conflict in a dystopia world then most utopia worlds, often the only conflict within utopia worlds is a person getting used to utopian lifestyle from an external world. While a dystopian world is filled with people fighting people, idea vs idea, reality vs fiction, what is good and what is bad, what justifies actions? The list goes on, but the main point of the work is the conflicts that is failed world creates and how they interact with the characters. The resolutions or lack of them to these conflicts leads to lessons that the reader can recognize, while also enjoying the progression of the arc.

People respond to changes in their environment such as new technology, changes in ideology, world events, shifts in power and many other things that change. This creates new hopes, dreams and fears for people who may or may not be affected by these changes. This creates dialog between all involved and all who might be involved in reality. In response to this new works of utopian and dystopian visions are made. "These compasses are neither timeless nor universal; instead, their poles are constantly aligned and realigned by the forces of history, economics, politics, and aesthetics." (SHELTON). This allows people to look at projected future based on current trends that are active, even if they are written by people who do not know all the facts and may even put a spin on it to get a certain view across.

That is the main goal of utopian and dystopian writing, to show a particular element or multiple elements of the current world in a different clear light. Within the day to day lives of most people few spend time to really look ahead and analyze causes and effects. They may look at a current issue whether it be small or large and not really see how big of an impact it could have if allowed to go through or if stopped. But the issue can be stretched exponentially within utopian and dystopian works to the point where an entire culture can be made around that one issue. This then let the reader to look at the real world issue in a different light, however, they are still free to interpret it as they wish.

However, this freedom could be used to say that neither the utopian work nor the dystopian work really capture the issue at hand or that they are false thinking. They can dismiss the entire argument made by both as flights of fancy that the authors do not know what they are writing about. This issue exist in all media, where the masses are free to say whatever they

want, even that the entire work was wrong. Some people will chose one or the other and that is where the discussion will begin, and something good or bad will come of it.

One of the greatest thing that people put their hope on but fear is technology, in many cases it has helped lives but in some it also helped end them. The great fear is that technology will replace human beings at the current rate it is happening. Many people have lost jobs due to automation and in turn have lost the lives they had. While at the same time others have gained work because of it. New robots and machines are made every day to serve new needs and jobs, there is also just new technology such as solar panels that threaten many major corporations based on oil. "Yet while many anticipated and welcomed the rise of modern industry, science, and technology, a minority questioned their impact, wondering not about the feasibility but the wisdom of utopian schemes. Utopias and dystopia are asymmetrical concepts, akin to health and disease, whereby one persons hopeful dream is anothers dyspeptic nightmare."

(SHELTON). One technology can lead to a revolution as it has done in the past, while this is overall a positive as seen in history there can come many negative side effects.

Technology has a large grey area between being a positive and a negative much like utopia and dystopia. In many cases it is difficult to say if a world is positive or negative within literally works due to perspective and understanding the world being described. It is not until radical differences that a world can be classified as a utopia or dystopia, even then some may say that it falls into category of realistic fiction. It is possible to create such a living and breathing world within literature and other media that the observer will believe it as such.

In many cases utopian worlds too quickly fall out of favor because they are not as believable as their dystopian counterparts. A dystopian world is much more possible within the real world due to all the flaws that it has and sometimes shares with a real world. They have wars, slums, dictators, loss of freedom, suffering, conflicts, and people who live in this world and try to survive. As said before, a utopian world doesn't have many of these conflicts, the only real conflicts that they gave are on a mental battle ground than a physical one. "Idealist utopias are quieter than their naturalistic cousins. A sense of community is earned in them not by way of technology but through the avenues of spirit" (SHELTON). A utopian world is a great place to live, however, it itself is not alive, it has become stagnant.

Progress is what keeps the world going. It is what people understand as being alive. Time keeps moving forward, therefore something has happened between what was and what is. During this time work of any kind was done by anyone, even if no labor was achieved, things are no longer the same. Progress is when work is done in a way that justified the time spent on it and is leading to an endpoint. It also means that after one project is done, another can be started. Progress is a cycle. A dystopian world for all its shortcomings is still for the most part functional, while utopias are stuck within a loop that doesn't create new things following the definition that everything is perfect.

Perfection is an idea that people long ago made to describe the final good end of something. Nevertheless, it is a concept much like utopia that cannot generally be reached by humanity. Humans are too random to create an ideal construct of anything, they are physically different from each other, mentally, emotionally, socially and financially different. Therefore, any benchmark created that it is the highest achievable can either be broken or not reached by

some. Any ideal that is perfect has the flaw of not having everyone reach it, and even those who do may not fully satisfy all the requirements. You can be the fastest but you cannot be the smartest, you can be wealthy while being ill and many other strengths and weaknesses. Some things cannot exist within the rule set of the real world.

Nevertheless, this is not a reason to give up believing on the pursuit of perfection and utopia. Having something to dream about and to strive for has led to the creation of many great things and individuals throughout history. What is impossible now was never dreamed of long ago when they considered what we have today to be impossible. Time and technology as well as people determine what is impossible and what is possible. The same factors determine how close we are to utopian world or dystopian one. People are the determining force in what gets done and how. This is what leads to a better world of tomorrow or a nightmare of the past today.

Utopias and dystopias counter each other not just because of their definition but to show people a counterpoint of each other and of reality. They are meant to serve as a tool for society to better itself by being shown what it can become in either light. It has been this way through out all of history, as ideas clashed with one another. They have been changed countless time to meet the vision of those who talk about them, with each person a new vision comes forth. There are as many deflections of what is a utopia and dystopia as there people alive who think about the world and want something better and fear something worse.



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