Utopia & Dystopia

UTOPÍA Y DISTOPÍA

INTRODUCIÓN

Definiciones

Utopía: viene del griego, es la unión del prefijo “u", que es equivalente al prefijo “a" en castellano (lo asimétrico es aquello no simétrico), y la palabra “topos", que significa lugar.
Por lo tanto, una utopía es un lugar que no existe, imaginario.
Tal término fue utilizado por Platón para hablar de la ciudad ideal, en la que podemos ser felices.
Por lo tanto, una utopía es un lugar soñado que deseamos que exista aquí y ahora. A diferencia de otros conceptos como el paraíso, al que se quiere ir tras la muerte.
Normalmente las utopías ponen el acento en temas como igualdad racial, económica o de género. Hubo un tiempo en que un sistema como el nuestro fue una utopía.
Por todo esto, las utopías representarán nuestros ideales y deseos más nobles.

Distopía: se trata de un lugar que no queremos que exista, pero que tememos que pueda existir. El distópico es un género literario o narrativo (historias, cuentos, narraciones…) en que se muestra un futuro de pesadilla causado por los vicios humanos. Al tratar mal a los demás o destruir a la naturaleza empeoramos nuestro mundo.
Los escritores crean las distopias para advertirnos acerca de los riesgos que sufrimos y arreglarlos antes de que sea demasiado tarde.
Por lo tanto, una distopía no es completamente negativa, sino que nos ayuda a conocer los riesgos que nuestra vida tiene a largo plazo. Por lo tanto, es un tipo de género literario didáctico y moralista, quiere enseñar una lección y educar a los ciudadanos o asustarlos para que sean buenos.
A veces asustar es mejor que enseñar y la distopía trata de hacerlo también.

DISAPPOINTMENT: “The awareness of the existing flaws in imagined societies had a positive intent, though: they aimed at making the readers keep looking for alternatives. Because of this, they came to be called critical utopias. But apart from these years, the twentieth century was predominantly characterized by man’s disappointment – and even incredulity – at the perception of his own nature, mostly when his terrifying deeds throughout the two World Wars were considered. In this context, utopian ideals seemed absurd; and the floor was inevitably left to dystopian discourse. In the second half of the twentieth century, in particular, dystopias became the predominant genre in the United States.

Two ideas, which are intimately connected, have fed dystopian discourse: on the one hand, the idea of totalitarianism; on the other hand, the idea of scientific and technological progress which, instead of impelling humanity to prosper, has sometimes been instrumental in the establishment of dictatorships. The first images of a future where the results of scientific and technological progress were misused are to be found in the canonical dystopias of the Russian writer Yevgeny Zamyatin (We, 1921), Aldous Huxley (Brave New World , 1932), and George Orwell (Nineteen EightyFour , 1949), and have, in fact, inspired generations of authors. Mainly from the 1970s until the present, dystopias, nourished by projective images of scientific and technological advancement". (p18)

EXTINCTION OF UTOPIA?: "The world is experiencing a grave crisis; the nature of our predicament is economic, environmental, social and political, but it is certainly also philosophical. Throughout history, utopia has been subject to similar pressures – will it not have a role to play this time? Looking around, it seems that utopia has been replaced by images of a very unsatisfactory present, or, in the case of utopian literature, by images of a dystopian future. Has man lost his capacity to think of alternatives? Is utopia, in fact, finally on the verge of death?" (p20)

UTOPIA NOWADAYS: "At the end of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century, utopia was too easily identified with socialist-communist projects, as well as with the idea of totalitarianism. The two World Wars, Hitler's utopian aspiration to 'purify the human race' and the collapse of the communist regimes all over the world led people to retreat from dreaming and forced them to adopt a very realistic perspective. Stigmatized by the ideas of impossibility and totalitarianism, utopian thought underwent an expressive change, and redefined its scope of action". (p22)

Could We Build a 'Star Trek' Utopia

I grew up on the *Star Trek* series, Captain Kathryn Janeway and Jean-Luc Picard exploring the galaxy and beyond. Unlike most sci-fi shows, *Star Trek* depicted a utopian future for humanity, but it wasn't without its challenges. One idea that caught me was the lack of an economy. Indeed, the characters would often remark with a wink and a grin on how they've never handled money. Business in the Alpha Quadrant is rarely done — save for a few cultures that treat it like a religion. But is it really possible to have a society without an economy?

Author Manu Saadia is working on a book that looks at the hard challenges a *Star Trek* society poses, writing:

"How can it benefit all without depriving anyone? And what could that mean for us, the passengers of starship Earth?"

The advent of replicators in the *Star Trek* universe — devices that can create anything out of pure energy — made scarcity a thing of the past, and our society is close to such developments.

Singularity University's Vivek Wadhwa believes that by the 2030s we should have secured unlimited energy, clean vehicles, mass-produced 3D-printed meat, and other mankind-bettering innovations. There's no reason why scarcity should exist; there's no reason why we can't have our *Star Trek* utopia. However, there's a human factor involved. Through these innovations, we'll either see people stepping up to solve the world's problems or creating more of them through greed.

There's one episode that comes to mind: *Star Trek: The Next Generation* season 1, episode 26: "The Neutral Zone." In this adventure, the crew of the Enterprise discovers a craft of people cryogenically frozen from the 21st century. Upon waking them, one man, Ralph Offenhouse, distinguishes himself as a man of greedy intentions. He demands Captain Picard put him in touch with his law firm, so he can check on the status of his portfolio. By the end of the show, Picard has had enough of Offenhouse's rude demands and explains:

"People are no longer obsessed with the accumulation of things. We've eliminated hunger, want, the need for possessions. We've grown out of our infancy."

Offenhouse responds, chastened by this revelation:

"There is no trace of my money. My office is gone. What will I do? How will I live?"

Therein lies an interesting question: How will all of us live if we don't have money to motivate us?

One Dutch city is experimenting with this idea in the form of basic income. Another study explored how generous welfare benefits cultivate ideas among people that when the worst of life hits you, there's something to fall back on. It makes people who receive that assistance want to give back — not fall back on it.

But before we jump to a money-less society, an evolution will have to take place. The president of Iceland says the secret to the Nordic countries' recent economic and social success is all thanks to social welfare programs, such as free access to education and health care, which have proved to be a boon to the free-market economy.

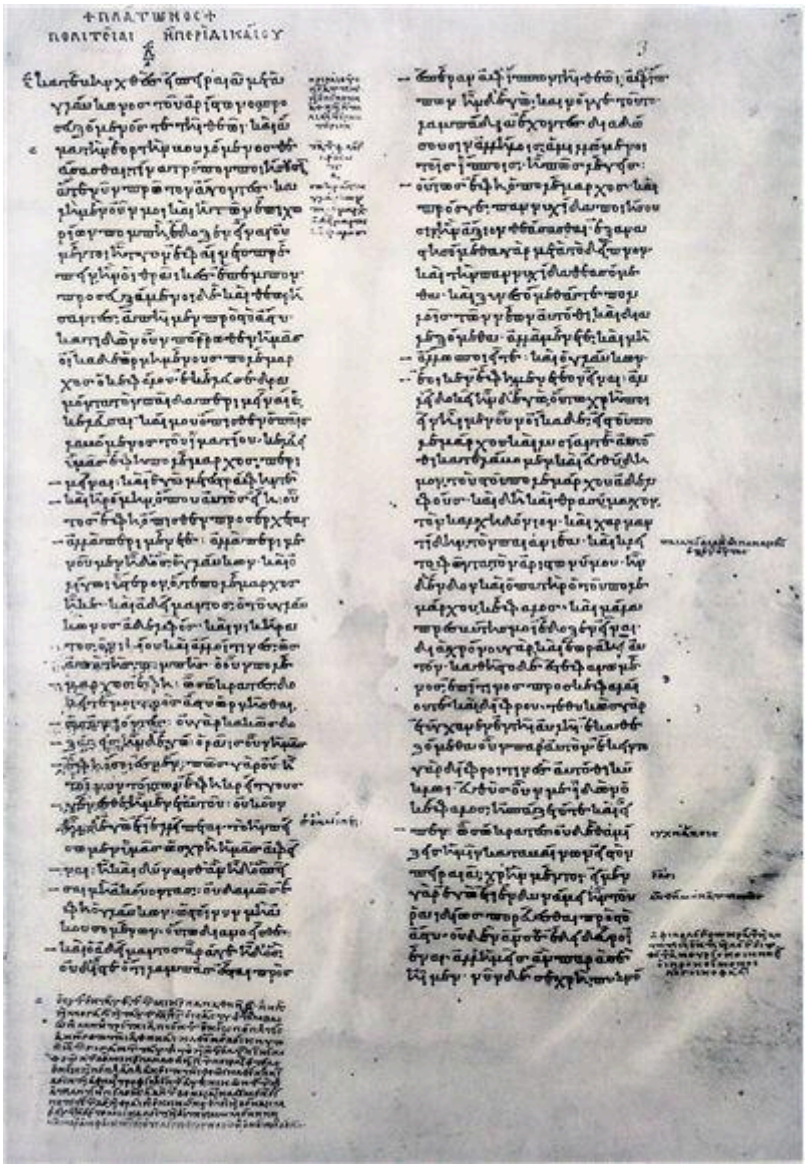
SOME EXAMPLES OF

UTOPIA

Pre-20th century

- **The Republic** (~380 BCE) by Plato, represents one of the first written concepts of the utopia. In it he proposed the necessary steps for the creation of the perfect Greek city-state, where citizens will be separated in specific classes and rules who would provide everything to them (security, resources, laws).

- **The City of God** (413-426 AD) by Augustine of Hippo, described the ideal utopian society of "eternal" Jerusalem. He proposed that Christian believers should not be concerned with earthly politics, but instead focus their beliefs to the mystical, heavenly city of "New Jerusalem".
- **Tao Hua Yuan** (421) is a poem by Tao Yuanming, described the ethereal utopia of Chinese intellectual class, where people lived perfect lives, freed from diastases, death, and in perfect harmony with nature. It spawned several similar beliefs, myths and literary works in China.



- **Utopia** (1516) by Thomas More, was a fictional book that brought the name of "utopia" to the western world. In it, Moore proposed religious toleration, freedom of marriage, and simple communal life, free

education, health care, and harsh punishments for criminals (slavery, euthanasia, banishment, and food deprivation).

- **New Atlantis** (1627) by Francis Bacon described futuristic utopia that revolved around the notions of "generosity and enlightenment, dignity and splendour, piety and public spirit". He proposed creation of ideal teaching schools called "Salomon's House", which was basis for the creation of modern universities.

20th century

- **A Modern Utopia** (1905) by H. G. Wells, describes futuristic world state in which every country of the world has merged into one, and every person has achieved perfect happiness. In addition, he proposed giving equal rights for women and men, with even giving more rights to women that are pregnant.



cinema utopias

Metropolis from Metropolis

Perhaps one of the most famous utopias in sci-fi movies to ever be made also happens to be one of the oldest. In the 1927 movie, *Metropolis*, the super-rich lived in a happy, healthy utopia filled with luxuries. The poor, though, lived in squalor—and existed in a serious dystopia.

That being said, the creators of this classic had a pretty good idea of what a utopia looks like. But, would you really want to live in a utopia that forces others to suffer?

The Eloi from The Time Machine

H.G Wells's classic story, *The Time Machine*, has a very similar utopia-dystopia dynamic going on. *The Time Machine* has been made and remade into movies several times over, and in each time, there are two worlds that seem to act as foils to one another.

The Morlocks are a vicious underground-dwelling race that hunts and eats the Eloi, a beautiful race of people who live in a nice utopia. The Eloi's utopia is one that looks so idyllic, but it has a serious dark side. The fact is that it's so pleasant, it made the Eloi totally apathetic to the fact that they're the Morlocks' food.

This is one of the most famous utopias in sci-fi movies, primarily because of the way it warns against complacency and being lure into "bread and circus." As such, *The Time Machine* also is one of the best utopian books out there.

San Angeles from Demolition Man

Imagine being in a society that's so peaceful and placid, no one knows how to react to a criminal. Such was the case with the city of San Angeles in *Demolition Man*.

In San Angeles, life is lush, plush, and great for everyone. The only problem with it is that the people in charge outlawed everything that could be considered even remotely dangerous—including kissing, booze, normal newspapers, and even listening to music. It's a much scarier dystopia than you'd think.

In its own weird way, San Angeles is a perfectly dystopian utopia, and its bizarre quirks make it one of the most famous utopias in sci-fi movies. After all, no other utopia has as many Taco Bells, or a newspaper service that's replaced by three seashells.

Gattaca's Society from Gattaca

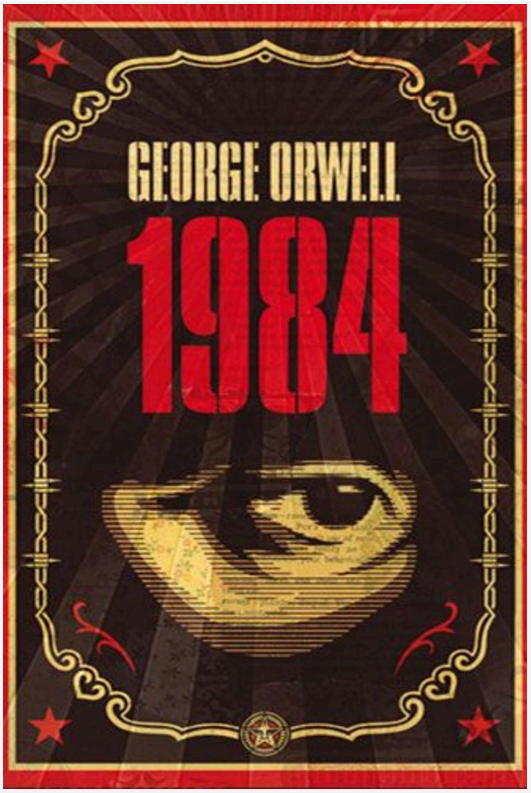
This is one of the most famous utopias in sci-fi movies to tackle the issue of a shallow society. Simply put, the society in *Gattaca* has everyone getting genetic modifications that make them look like a perfect human being. The genetically unmodified people in Gattaca's society are regularly discriminated against.

Basically, this is a utopia that's been purged of imperfections—and in that sense, it's a beautiful world. However, it quickly becomes a very ugly society the moment you're an unmodified human. Worth it? Probably not. It's probably not a utopia for anyone involved.

anity aims for constant progress; movement towards a superior standard of living.

But what happens when everything goes wrong instead? A mainstay of science fiction writing over the years has been to speculate about a future which has taken a distinct turn for the worse. There's no beautiful end point, only a joyless, dysfunctional dystopia.

We take a look at the 20 greatest novels focusing on the darker side of life.

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1984 (1949)
Author: George Orwell
A books so eerily prescient that a multitude of its terms are now commonplace in our modern world. Big Brother, Room 101, Newspeak and 2+2=5 all originate from Orwell's classic tale. A disturbing, dystopian world of constant surveillance and government-controlled media for sure, but one which, uncomfortably, we recognise more as real life than when Orwell wrote it in 1949.

Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep? (1968)
Author: Philip K. Dick
A literary phenomenon and one that inspired the equally successful movie *Blade Runner*, it's all built within a post-apocalyptic society featuring - of course - hover cars and robots. Following the nuclear 'World War Terminus' and the resulting radiation poisoning, animals are rare and unfeeling androids proliferate. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* forces the reader to consider what it is that really makes us human.

Brave New World (1932)
Author: Aldous Huxley
Inspired by the utopian novels of H.G.Wells, Huxley sought to write a book with a polar opposite prediction of the future. He managed it with some style, by painting an image of a cold world with numbing drugs, organised reproduction, no concept of family, and brainwashing from birth. While superficially a hedonistic environment, it soon becomes clear that this is no place to live: if you cannot feel pain, can you ever truly feel joy?

Farenheit 451
Author: Ray Bradbury
The ultimate dystopia for a writer, Bradbury described an American society where books are burned and intellectual thought is illegal. A free press and the dissemination of ideas is commonly viewed as a central tenet of democracy and intellectual progress - *Farenheit 451* tackled head-on the nightmare world where this was not possible. Brilliantly, in a triumph of irony, when it was first released, the book itself was banned for 'questionable themes'.
Get it here

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The Handmaid's Tale (1985)
Author: Margaret Atwood
A dystopian vision of the future that looked for a brief moment - when the Tea Party were on the march - like it might actually come true, *The Handmaid's Tale* is set in a totalitarian Christian theocracy which has overthrown the US government. In a post-nuclear world, women are forbidden to read, and the few capable of having children are subjugated and forced to serve the wider needs of society by becoming breeding machines. A harrowing read and a fascinating look at a dystopia based on gender discrimination.