

Nicole Oresme declared that "it is monstrous and unnatural that an unfruitful thing should bear, that a thing specifically sterile, such as money, should bear fruit and multiply of itself," while Martin Luther declared more concisely, "pecunia est res sterilis" (money is a sterile thing).

A possibly related and much earlier idea depends on the metaphor of coining. Writing about A.D. 30, the Jewish thinker Philo of Alexandria called for the death penalty for "the man-woman who debases the sterling coin of nature." The association of sodomy and false coining recurs in the *Basilikon Doron* of King James I. A folk recollection of this thought-complex may survive in the expression "queer as a three-dollar bill." The implication of André Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* (The Counterfeiters, 1926) is more subtle; the schoolboys' effort to produce and circulate counterfeit money seems to symbolize the acquisition of society's false values.

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## UTOPIANISM

Beliefs in a blissful state of social harmony and fulfillment take several forms. Depending on the theorist, such a condition may be detected in the past, may exist now in some other land, or may be expected in the future.

*Basic Features.* The literary tradition of Utopia (Greek: "no place") began in the Renaissance, with examples by Sir Thomas More (1516), Sir Francis Bacon (1627), and Tommaso Campanella (1627). Insofar as sex is discussed at all in the ideal societies, it takes the form of exclusive heterosexual monogamy or even of elaborate schemes for eugenic mating in which procreation remains the focus of concern. Only after the rise of the romantic movement did Charles Fourier project his phalansteries, which provided for both lesbian and male homosexuality—but only under strict supervision. Until some of the "intentional communities" of the

mid-twentieth century, Fourier's example remained an exception. Even H. G. Wells' vision of utopia entailed severe restrictions on the sexual activity of women. Although it is often denied, elements of the utopian tradition passed into **Marxism**, where they helped to contribute to the prescriptive heterosexuality enjoined in all countries that have adopted the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Virtually no utopian design allows or even contemplates the promiscuity and free choice of acts and partners in which some advocates of **sexual liberty** would like society to acquiesce; instead utopian thinking endorses the need of society to direct the sexual energy of its members toward the ends desired by the planners. In this regard sexual liberty is simply the logical corollary of laissez-faire in economic life; it fundamentally contradicts the ideal of a planned, goal-oriented social order.

The utopian genre has engendered a countercurrent: the dystopian novel. In Evgeny Zamyatin's novel *We* (written 1920), an insightful forecast of the coming Stalinist tyranny, the consequences of sexual overregulation are clearly shown as one of the integral features of a totalitarian future state. In George Orwell's *1984* (1948), which is in some respects an imitation of Zamyatin's novel, puritanism is enforced by the "Women's Anti-Sex League."

*Homosexual Aspects.* For generations many male homosexuals have cherished the belief that ancient Greece was a paradise for those with homosexual desires. This is part of a larger pattern of idealizing Greek civilization or **Hellenism**. The sexual version of this trend collapses the differences between the various periods of Greek history and the local variations of the Greek states, as well as ignoring the restrictive and normative character of Greek *paiderasteia*, which gave no place of honor to two adult men who were lovers. Another popular locus is Islam, but this idealization presents its own problems. In similar fashion, many feminists today believe in a pre- or proto-

historic matriarchal society that accorded women places of honor and power. Despite much speculation factual support for matriarchy has not been forthcoming. Textual and archeological evidence is ambiguous at best, and anthropologists—despite much searching and wishful thinking—have failed to document living tribes that are matriarchal in the true sense of the word whose customs might have been survivals of a prehistoric past.

What are the functions of such projections into the past? They are not, it should be acknowledged, necessarily untrue in every respect, and study of past patterns may provide models for attempts to transform one's own society. The problem arises when one assumes that such transformations may be easily secured, or may be accomplished without modifying the source of inspiration to accommodate it to present conditions, which are vastly different from those of ancient civilizations. For others, the privileged historical epoch is a dreamland, and contemplation of it serves to compensate for discontents in one's present life. But in more active individuals this motivation may lead to fruitful historical research.

Then there are projections that reach not across time, but across space. Since the eighteenth century, many male homosexuals have believed that sexual freedom is to be found by traveling to the Mediterranean, especially Italy, Greece, and the Arab countries. Today one has the phenomenon of sexual tourism in impoverished countries of the Third World. While some of these countries may indeed have freer sexual mores, in others the easy availability of commercialized sex reflects the economics of the tourist resort and the peculiar status of the foreigner as an

"exotic" sexual partner. In other words, the country may be a sexual paradise only for rich foreigners who can leave whenever they wish, without having to suffer the ostracism that might happen to their native counterparts. Such aspirations are not limited to Third World countries. Many American homosexuals believe that Amsterdam or Berlin are the places to go, while residents of those cities may have the same impression about New York and San Francisco. Conditions change quickly, and this type of utopia (the earthly paradise) may merge with the first (the golden age), so that it is, say, San Francisco in the 1970s (before the AIDS crisis) that is viewed with longing.

Sexual utopias that involve the future are sometimes found in science fiction. For example, it is possible to imagine a society in which there are more than two genders, or only one. In other projections, sex changes are so simple that they can be completed in fifteen minutes. Bizarre though they may seem, such speculations are interesting as an indication of present aspirations.

The realist urges a stern avoidance of utopian fantasies, and they should not be taken literally. Since the Renaissance, however, with More, Bacon, Campanella, and their successors, utopian writings have served to showcase designs for social change. In an era of rapid technological advance, it is worth pondering how different social arrangements might operate. Such anticipation may be able to affect the outcome.

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