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Thomas More’s outrage at cruelty to the poor in England drove this illustrious man to write his provocative *Utopia*: he wanted to censure despotic monarchy and to show what a virtuous state could look like. He wrote it to denounce Niccolò Machiavelli’s depraved *The Prince* too, which the Florentine first circulated in 1513 antedating More’s own book by only three years. More took his ethics very seriously, enough to be executed by Henry VIII for his moral obstinacy; so it is strange that, with all of More’s ethical obsession, contemporary criticism of *Utopia* glosses over his ethics. The reason for this is rather less that they have already been thoroughly debated over the past five hundred years and rather more that today’s critics compulsively discuss not his ethics, but Marx’s. This is not altogether justified because Thomas More’s Catholic, pre-Enlightenment temper in the face of sixteenth-century feudal tyranny is remote from Marx’s nineteenth-century march of the proletariat and, at all events, Marx claimed he was a ‘scientific socialist’ and scorned those whom he found to be moralistic and ‘utopian’. In the first part of this paper therefore, I wish to focus on More’s own disruptive ethics by placing them in the light of their true dystopian context, which is that of Machiavelli’s contemporaneous *The Prince*.

Secondly, Utopia’s ethical drift has been matched by a semantic one. Thomas More defined Utopia as a normative island nation, but since the nineteenth century, a host of signifiers using the -topia suffix and purporting to relate to Utopia has surfaced. Examples are John Stuart Mill’s 1868 parliamentary invention, *dystopia*, or the pervasive lower case adjective *utopian*, or Foucault’s *Heterotopia*. According to Kathi Weeks (WK), such words have been invented to equip Utopia with a performative vocabulary able to mimic the language of a manifesto. This may be so, but the problem with the word Utopia is that it signifies the normative entity of an island state, which is constative and cannot be
performative. In the second part of this essay then, I review how such derivation neologisms (sic) (VF1) have bluffed their way into the language to give Utopia its performative idiom.

**Thomas More’s Ethics in Utopia**

I believe that More’s ethics should not be overlooked in the way that so much contemporary criticism seems to. In 1516, ethics would have been expected to be Scholastic, but More’s are not: in fact, Thomas More anticipates humanist Enlightenment ethics by more than two centuries¹. His are not at all compatible with the pervasive monarchical ethics of his time, as Machiavelli’s The Prince were. Enlightenment anti-monarchists, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (RJJ) and Thomas Paine (PT) would two centuries later become instigators of change as fathers of the French and American revolutionary republics, and More’s Utopia provided them with a blueprint as an all-time work of reference on virtuous administration. In France, More’s brand of Utopian humanism would lay the road to the egalitarian and fraternal 1871 Paris Commune much to the early admiration and later disappointment of Karl Marx. In the United States, those same Enlightenment ethics would foster an egalitarian and republican model among the Pilgrim Fathers, which is portrayed in Max Weber’s 1901 thesis on the development of capitalism under Calvinist predestinarian teaching (WM)². Furthermore, More’s ethics do insist on the evil of money, much as the Catholic Church demonises money in the tradition of St. Francis of Assisi, and, as long as there is property...
and while money is a standard of things, More cannot think that a nation can be governed 
either justly or happily (MT67). His moral code also shows compassion for the poor and 
the weak: it is the fear of want that makes anyone greedy and leads every man to seek 
only his own wealth; he must provide for himself and for his family, or all will die of 
hunger, whereas in More’s *Utopia* no man is poor because none is in want (MT88). He 
complains that the enclosure of lands for grazing destabilises agricultural communities 
and leads to the breakdown of families and to ultimate poverty (MT44). More stands up 
for these beliefs even if they are unwelcome to the ears of aristocratic land owners.

More’s ideas foresee and predate the formulation of Enlightenment ideals such as the 
primacy of the good of the collective, fostered by the English Utilitarian, Jeremy Bentham:

> The greatest happiness of the greatest number is the foundation of morals and legislation 

(BJ).

Bentham supports the collective good over individual or minority interests, and Kant 
completes this by focusing on individual obligation with his ‘categorical imperative’:

> Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should 

become a universal law (KI).

And, where in the deductively reasoned Book 2 (GB30), More uses the method of the 
Scholastics to describe the organisational wisdom of Utopia, his discussion in Book 1 
around the death penalty for theft and around the desolation of the poor, rather appeals 
to the sentiments, supporting David Hume’s Enlightenment view that:

> Moral distinctions are derived not from reason but from sentiment,(HD).

It is sentiment on the subject of legislative cruelty against theft, which brings More to 
state that:
It seems to me a very unjust thing to take away a man’s life for a little money, for nothing in the world can be of equal value with a man’s life (MT47).

But why should anyone care about ethics in Utopia at all? Is it not enough just to read More’s work as an ancient societal construct which documents a quaint old theory of governance? Were the ethical questions not resolved by Plato or definitively side-lined by the anticlerical Rousseau or Voltaire? I believe not. Utopia’s narrative only really comes alive when it discusses purely ethical questions, and many of them remain relevant today. More opens with a seemingly obsolete ethical argument implying that his own State, meaning England, is one of excessive cruelty in dealing with thieves and of manipulation of the law to protect aristocratic assets (MT40-51). But its obsolete aspect may not seem so obsolete in Saudi Arabia, where thieves’ hands are still cruelly hacked off, even if, writes Machiavelli, cruelty is an appropriate reaction to a threat to personal safety or to princely assets. And has the global village really resolved the problem that political power tends to play into the hands of the rich? Three centuries before Marx’s assault on capitalism, More already mocks man’s infatuation with gold (MT97) and describes ethical fields of choice involving freedom; equality before the law; charity towards the poor; provision of food and other essentials; safety; education; healthcare and prosperity (MT103-105). At the time, these are ground-breaking ethics from the mouth of an eminent servant of a great sixteenth century monarch, so much so that they were still thought modern enough for the word utopia to appear in various forms a dozen times in Marx’s and Engels’ 1848 Communist Manifesto.

But More is disapproved of too: in Utopia’s Book 2, Hythloday’s checklist of organisation and of civil statistics appears dry and rules-based, bringing More opprobrium for reputedly totalitarian, conservative values (LR6); in addition, More writes that happiness is a key ingredient in Utopia (MT109-110), even leading him to be challenged as Hedonistic (GS); and as More does not protest that slavery is unethical, a reader may conclude that
he believes it acceptable because his Utopia practises it (MT118). But such criticism only throws into relief half a millennium of temporal shift in values: More’s sixteenth-century frame of reference permitted slavery as an unquestioned feature of society because war was a habitual device of princely nations and because their vanquished were often subjected to slavery. Slavery and warmongering still exist throughout the planet today even if they strike us as immoral, but Jacques Derrida would have explained such differences of view away as examples of différance (RNCh7), where distance in space and time, in culture, in history, in behaviour and attitudes between an author and his or her readership lead unavoidably to investing his idea of the ‘supplement’ (RNCh5) with contrasting or even diverging perceptions of context (DJB). Derrida would have read Machiavelli’s seemingly outrageous advice in The Prince through this same eyeglass of différance.

On another ethical note, More makes an implicit ethical assumption that Utopia’s instigator of change was benevolent and was virtuous in acting for the good of Utopia, but is this always the case? Although the oligarchy around the Utopian prince and his Tranibors (MT79) virtuously governs in the interests of the collective, what would happen if the instigator of change were not benevolent? An example is Machiavelli’s prince, who leads societal change in his own interest: Machiavelli openly admits that his recommended policy of expediency, of avarice and of cruelty has the sole objective of protecting his prince in a hostile environment and in this, it is, on the face of it, a form of ethicv. And, even if the instigator of change is ethnically benevolent, thinking truly to act on behalf of the collective, the ultimate success of Utopia is never guaranteedvi. Its survival is under constant threat from the foibles of human naturevii: tomorrow’s Utopia can become dystopian the day-after-tomorrow by moving away from the guiding ethical norm. Furthermore, even if the instigator of change is his or her own client, he or she is not necessarily malevolent either. An example of successful, if disputed, change in the
Soviet Union was that administered to his own discredited Soviet Communist Party by Mikhail Gorbachev invoking *Perestroika* (meaning restructuring) from 1985 to 1991 and applying his principle of *Glasnost* (meaning openness), which had something of a personal vision of ‘a utopia’.

And how does *Utopia* reveal something of More’s own personal ethic? Such a strong personal ethic certainly was dangerous in a world of despotic anointed princes so far removed from today’s ideals of post-Enlightenment, ‘*Rights-of-Man*’ republicanism. Close to the end of his life, More must have been alarmed by his autocratic, foot-stamping monarch, Henry Tudor, who was purportedly learned and a scholar, but finally a petulant and expedient egotist. With Henry’s agreement from 1517, More officially resisted the burgeoning Reformation arriving from the European continent: it was widely supported by the northern princes and, in the end, Henry VIII joined them turning violently against his own Lord Chancellor Thomas More, who remained a recusant Catholic: his Catholicism even leads him to write that the Utopians revere the Pope and exhort other princes to keep the faith (MT126). In the end, his convictions were so strong that he paid for them with his life. Henry knew More’s dislike for the pomp of princes: in *Utopia*, More had unwisely written under his own name in the narrative (MT38) about not being a slave to any king (MT37); about most princes applying themselves rather to affairs of war (which was Machiavelli’s recommendation in *The Prince* against which More was writing (GB48)) than to the useful arts of peace; about kings being corrupted from their childhood with false notions which would never fall in entirely with the ‘counsel of philosophers’ (MT38). He finds noblemen as idle as drones and hardship suffered by the poor as manipulation of justice by the rich (MT41;46). On a personal note, in *Utopia*, More even decries those who pay respect for the sake of rich garments:

> Bending the knee and bearing the head to nobles who are pleased with their conceit (MT106).
On the island of Utopia, More writes that garments are not dyed but left in natural colours; they are rough, long-lasting and unrefined, even for the prince (MT124). It took conviction, courage and not a little carelessness to provoke his monarch in this way even if the younger Henry he had known had appeared Catholic and liberal. Thomas More does use the weak device of being two to speak (MT33) about the foibles of kings (for fear no doubt of exasperating his own) by prudishly putting the ‘hard stuff’ into the mouth of his narrator, Raphael Hythloday, but this transparent literary ruse did not finally save his life. An exasperated Henry and a jealous parliament signed his death warrant in 1535.

Where Machiavelli teaches his monarch the advantages of expediency, we see More exercise his contempt for the vices of the aristocracy: More’s *Utopia* ethic stands in fierce opposition to mediaeval monarchical despotism whereas Machiavelli tells his prince not to worry about a reputation for deceit, because:

Princes who got their way through bad faith and treachery have been more successful than those who have always acted loyally (GB42).

Even religion has practical uses for Machiavelli’s prince: when indeed, in *Utopia*, Thomas More criticises:

Imputing to the piety of a prince the semblance of a religion working harmoniously among his people.

he shows he has read *The Prince* by bluntly attacking Machiavelli’s cynical phrase, where the Florentine writes:

There has never been an extraordinary legislator who has not had recourse to God, for otherwise his laws would never have been accepted (GB51).

Thomas More witnessed Henry VIII using Machiavelli’s advice diligently in having recourse to God by creating his Anglican Church. After a debacle with the Vatican, Henry became a
solitary and remote ruler; he resorted to secrecy and to formality to protect his privacy; he kept his dangerous aristocracy at bay and plunged into an orgy of executions. He continued to preach charity and loyalty without practising either, fully understanding in *The Prince* (GBCh3) that a monarch’s virtue is useful only insofar as it is expedient.

So More’s goal in writing *Utopia* was very different from Machiavelli’s in writing *The Prince*: according to a 1519 letter written by Erasmus, More’s goal was:

To present a critique of governance under the British constitution (ED).

Presenting a virtuous norm was not at all Machiavelli’s goal: it was to advise on effective procedures for survival, and as a handbook, *The Prince* reads like the definitive dystopian tract. For example, More claims that he believes a benevolent prince among a happy people to be in greater safety than a despotic one (MT60-61), which directly contradicts Machiavelli’s advice to his necessarily unpopular prince against getting trapped by some foreign prince in his own castle (GB49). This exchange and others appear to show again and again that More wrote *Utopia* in response to *The Prince*, first circulated in Latin when Erasmus was travelling in Italy: this idea of foreknowledge is borne out in a 2016 Times Literary Supplement article by William Connell:

It has now become at least possible to imagine that, when Thomas More wrote *Utopia* in 1515 and 1516, he had some knowledge of Machiavelli’s *Prince*...Ideas concerning princes and statecraft were very much in the air, as we know not only from the writings of Erasmus, More and Machiavelli...Given the dating of *The Prince* and *Utopia*...and given More’s liking for the Italian language, we can’t rule out the possibility that More may have read Machiavelli’s *Prince* in some form...Machiavelli was not the lonely writer he is so often imagined as being...he belonged to a network of writers who were contributing to a shared discussion of princes and statecraft...Erasmus and More, in the years before the Lutheran break, were being read in ways that were more radical than is generally thought.
Utopia’s Semantic Shift

In this second part, I review semantic difficulties which have arisen with the word Utopia and its derivatives and which disturb its original meaning. Thomas More’s book, Utopia, has survived its first half millennium as a canonical work, but following what Ernst Bloch calls transformation (BE4) into what Fatima Vieira calls derivation neologisms (VF1) the meaning of today’s Utopia, or rather, of today’s utopia, has shifted. Marxist thought naturally induces such change: inspired by the appeal of socio-political re-engineering, writers quickly bypass the flat, constative language of Utopia to embrace a ‘manifesto’ strain of performative utopian vocabulary. Marxist writing needs to go beyond constative description to focus onto performative, ‘process-of-change’ language which exhorts its agents to act on the dystopian state to become a utopian one.

Fatima Vieira (VF) provides an inventory of the ‘slippery’ set of senses given to her ‘derivation neologisms’: utopian, utopia, dystopia, utopics and utopias, adding anti-utopia, alotopia, euchronia, hyperutopia, eutopia and Foucault’s Heterotopia in a potpourri of mainly lower case metonymic, synonymic and antinomic definitions, some static to suggest normativity and others dynamic to suggest change. Among the static definitions for some of these words, she suggests that they mean:

- ‘a sustainable scheme for overcoming crisis’;
- ‘a strategy’;
- ‘something present in time and in space from which we need to depart’;
- ‘a strategy for questioning the reality of the present’;
- ‘a strategy for creativity’;
- ‘a guide to man’s reinvention and reconstruction’;
- ‘a direction without a point of arrival and a horizon of expectation’.

And she adds other dynamic, ‘journey-of-change’ definitions:

- ‘a change programme’;
- ‘something which takes the shape of a process’;
- ‘a transformation process with vague guidelines’;
- ‘something performing a catalytic function’ and ‘something operating at different levels’.
Vieira’s inventory well shows that these -topia signifiers compete and struggle for meaning.

The 1964 transcript of a radio discussion in German between two eminent Marxist thinkers Ernst Bloch and Theodore Adorno throws light onto the nature of this semantic struggle (BE). Bloch launches the debate by making an indisputable admission that:

Thomas More designated Utopia as a place, an island in the distant South seas...and...set it as a goal (BE1;4).

He then alarms his listeners (who cannot hear upper case characters) with the words, ‘whatever utopia is’! He says that eighteenth- (Enlightenment), and nineteenth- (Marxist), century writers have transformed More’s idea (BE3). But is this possible? After five hundred years, More’s Utopia still stands undefiled and almost biblically monumental in its 1516 form. Therefore, Bloch’s word transformation means that Utopia must change into something else, as he cannot be speaking of More’s Utopia, it is of another thing, of a utopia written in the lower case. Bloch and Adorno even go on to talk of plural utopias in the lower case, which certainly cannot mean More’s island state either, because there is only one.

Their conversation turns to the worrying condition of the Soviet Union’s socialist journey: in 1964, heavy handedness with its Warsaw-Pact neighbours was discrediting the onward march of its proletariat: Adorno explains:

The horror that we are experiencing today in the East...The idea of utopia has actually disappeared from the conception of socialism (BE12) The theory of socialism...has become a new ideology concerned with the domination of humankind (BE13).

Adorno then observes that the dystopian nature of the chosen path is the failure of utopia itself, which is a difficult remark: because the OED defines Utopia as,

An imagined perfect place or state of things,
nothing can be ‘bad’ in this perfect place in the way that it is in dystopia. If Adorno is confusing utopia with the chosen path to get to utopia, that is to say with the process of change itself, he is indeed qualifying utopia as dystopian, which ends in meaningless dissemination of opposites and nullifies his dystopian utopia into Derridean empty signifiers. If however, Adorno is blaming the failure of the chosen path on utopia itself then his utopia cannot be utopia, because it is deemed to be perfect; in this case, he may be stating that the actions of the Soviet Union show it to be dystopian and not at all utopian.

Bloch claims that Soviet Communism has failed to operate a process, which ‘transcends, but belongs to, utopia’ because he believes that ‘something is missing’ in the ‘decisive incentive’ towards utopia (BE10;15). Bloch has already referred earlier in the conversation to utopias as having an ‘itinerary’ and a ‘time schedule’ (BE4), so, again, he really is referring to process because itineraries and schedules cannot presume stasis. The dimension of time during transformation entails process, so Bloch’s comments would indeed signify process, however, utopia is not process: its normative status entails this; it must be in stasis; it is a referential place where immobility is a prerequisite, otherwise it would not be normative. A norm can have no characteristic changing at the time of comparison, otherwise there would be no stable datum with which to compare. In 1519, Erasmus himself confirms the normative nature of More’s Utopia, writing:

He published Utopia for the purpose of pointing out inconveniences in government with particular reference however to the British constitution which he understands thoroughly.

In Erasmus’ statement, ‘inconveniences’ are static inferences: the normative word is ‘reference’, which demands a fixed basis of comparison; Utopia is necessarily in stasis
otherwise it could not do its job. The *OED* definition of a *process* helps to show why this is so:

A series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end.

A process therefore implies *becoming*, something changing step-by-step, but More writes about Utopia which already *is*, so it cannot *also* be becoming, nor a process, nor in process and this logic is as valid today as it was in 1516. A journey of change is synonymous with a process of transformation from, for example, a current dystopia towards a future utopia: such a process requires time and resources to transform: indeed the function of process is to transform. Calling the island of Utopia a process is like calling England a process: the phrase is meaningless. This affects the adjective, Utopian, too when applied for example to the word change: does the phrase ‘Utopian change’ signify a journey of change progressing towards the values of Utopia, or does it describe change as it occurs in Utopia? The same aporia results with the phrase ‘English change’. What does it mean? Once again, its stand-alone sense is undecidable. In a nutshell More did not write about Utopia’s journey of change, he wrote in constative fashion about Utopia itself, as it was; he took a ‘literary photo’.

How is it possible that such an eminent philosopher as Bloch, after a good start, would confound the idea of Utopia then with the process of getting to Utopia? In his book, *The Principle of Hope*, he explains his reasoning by distinguishing between what he calls ‘imaginary utopias’ and ‘concrete utopias’, the second of which, he says, are ‘mediated with process’. An imaginary utopian end state forms the normative model or goal towards which a current dystopian state would evolve into a concrete utopia thanks to a process operated by change agents; this is what Bloch means when he claims that concrete utopias are ‘mediated with process’. He forgets More’s Utopia and does not even use the word Utopia; but he does use the expressions *a utopia or utopias mediated with process*. 
Kathi Weeks (WK) calls a manifesto a recognisable utopian form of writing in political theory which provokes a desire for and movement towards a different future: she is talking here of a journey of change, of a process. It becomes a literature of provocation which challenges its readers; extravagant gesture and immoderate demand are staples of this kind of writing. ‘Whereas utopia focuses on the constative vision of a better world, a manifesto concentrates on the performativity of bringing an alternative world into being’:

As Thomas More founded the genre of the literary utopia, Marx and Engels can be said to have inaugurated the genre of the manifesto (WK).

In a 2017 article, Ruth Levitas usefully discusses Utopia’s attributes and ethics focusing on the meaning of utopias, utopianism and dystopias (LR) by describing thought processes, not processes of societal change. Utopia is something which encourages us to think systemically about possible futures and to break with the present, noting that Roberto Unger has argued, ‘human beings are shaped by their context, but also transcend it’.

She adds, ‘Utopias are not plans; they are, rather, hypotheses’. Utopias can be owned as individual ideas of a better world, as countless imaginary societal models people carry around in their heads: in this respect, utopian speculation is always subject to critique because it is individual and provisional and there can be no endpoint to it. Utopianism allows a person to examine what he or she does do in the light of what he or she should do: it is the ‘expression of a desire’ for a better way of living or of being; that things might be otherwise; of an alternative society with different ethics. Utopias and dystopias share a ‘method of depicting an alternative society’ and dystopias ‘constitute a warning of what may happen if we go on as we are, rather than the projection of the desired future’.

However, Ruth Levitas has also written that she believes that the form, function and content of utopia have changed over time leading to an idea of ‘spatiotemporal
utopianism\textsuperscript{xxvi} (SY). She adds that an attempt has been made to redefine or to broaden the concept of utopia to regain its ‘critical and subversive potential’, meaning presumably the search for performativity. Utopia should no longer designate a pre-existing model; it should be seen as a perpetual process rather than as a completed total system in stasis. This would construe Bloch’s model as a sequence of concrete utopias being reimagined at a same location and then mediated with process to become yet better concrete utopias in a perpetual cycle. Despite this, it remains impossible for the ‘form, function and content’ of Utopia, or even of a utopia, to ‘change over time’: utopia remains constative, at rest and fixed over the time a norm is required; when Levitas herself uses the word \textit{normative} she implicitly accepts this. A utopia whether imaginary or concrete is normative; it can only describe a model and cannot be turned into a process to gain ‘critical and subversive potential’. Even Bloch is careful to specify that process mediates concrete utopias; process does not replace utopias. Regrettably, Levitas is challenged by the argument of the referential nature of Utopia, or of a \textit{utopia}, and thus reverts to the problematic point of departure, which is its constative nature as a normative signifier: process can be performative because it performs change; utopia can’t.

Similar semantic difficulties occur in Vieira’s definitions where she uses the word \textit{strategy}. The \textit{OED} defines strategy as:

\begin{quote}
A plan designed to achieve a particular long term aim.
\end{quote}

Strategy formulates the resources and procedures required to achieve an aim; it makes explicit the rationale for choosing that aim; it defines not just a point of arrival, but how to get there; it replies to the questions: why am I changing? For whom? In accordance with what architecture and what values? What will the final state look like? Strategy specifies how and when I shall reach the long term aim. Contingencies are planned for, and it may even specify how to control the future state to avoid reverting to an earlier
dystopia, because the natural tendency of nature is to return to an original state of quietude as Freud explains in the Death Wish (FS). If More’s Utopia or even a utopia were a strategy, they would have to imply all of the above, and they certainly don’t.

In conclusion, Thomas More’s Utopia is nothing more than an imaginary island state whose virtuous administration is intended as a reference. It provides More with a normative basis against which to expose his personal ethical opinions and especially to criticise the tyrannical practice of sixteenth-century princes described in Machiavelli’s dystopian The Prince, a book which appears three years earlier: in this respect, a normative dystopia is already available to Thomas More before he publishes Utopia.

Although More’s Utopia has not changed in over half a millennium, the need to find performative neologisms adapted to the different ethical understanding of every individual admits the singular concept of a utopia and entails a plural idea of utopias. In this respect it is not More’s Utopia which has changed but the use of the signifier. Ruth Levitas qualifies the lower case utopias as signifying this multiplicity of individually imagined intellectual models which employ utopian thought processes.

Where Utopia is constative, describing a single notional virtuous state, manifestos need to engage the performative language, for example, of process, to encourage agents towards an imaginary Marxist state of virtue in the nature of a societal goal: such an ‘imaginary utopia’ is normative, but the result is what Ernst Bloch calls a ‘concrete utopia’. As they are the outcome of processes of change, Bloch says that concrete utopias are mediated with process which opens the language onto performativity. In any case, any utopia not mediated by process remains constative and normative, and cannot be performative.
The *OED* defines *dystopia* in the lower case as

An imaginary place or society where everything is bad.

This definition also admits the idea of a plurality of *dystopias* and of the existence of the adjective, *dystopian*. It confirms that dystopia is logically not Utopia and substantiates the idea that any point of departure, or of passage, on a journey to a utopia is dystopian simply because it has yet to reach the targeted utopian end state.

Finally, is it really useful to add more *-topias* to the current stockpile even as metonymies, synonyms, homonyms, or antonyms? Use of the same suffix in repeatedly different semantic contexts appears to confuse readers, and the English language is surely rich enough to provide other perfectly usable *non-topian* signifiers instead. I propose to leave *utopics, anti-utopia, alotopia, euchronia, hyperutopia, eutopia* and even *Heterotopia* in this category.
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Scholasticism is a method of critical thought which dominated teaching in medieval universities in Europe from about 1100 to 1700. It was an outgrowth of Christian monastic schools.

Following the 1572 St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre of Huguenots, Republican France has remained essentially Catholic. By revoking the Edict of Nantes in 1685, Louis XIV ensured that the concept of the Protestant work ethic and its attendant justification of the accumulation of capital through virtuous work be virtually removed from French thought (GB19).

The Utopians send their surplus to other nations with a seventh part being freely given to the poor (MT94).

‘As men attack through fear, and as even those receiving privilege do not forget previous offences, then the prince must methodically eliminate all those who oppose him because not one of them will help him up should he fall.’ *The Prince* Machiavelli (GB49).

Cesare Borgia, Duke of Ferrara, illegitimate son of Pope Alexander VI. For four months beginning on 7th October 1502, Machiavelli studied Borgia’s feudal administration to catalogue the behavioural model he wrote into *The Prince* (GB41).

The attempt by Lenin to establish a Marxist state in Russia was frustrated after his early death by Stalin’s despotic management through the Party. Similarly, La Terreur, which followed the 1789 revolutionary drive of Rousseau, Voltaire and Danton almost undermined early progress through popular mistrust of its despotic leader, Robespierre.

The dream of a virtuous instigator is complex because the scale of national governance is boundless; the articulation of a national chain of command can be subverted by the foibles of human nature at all levels. Complexity slows the speed of change causing inertia and paralysis. Hence the adjective, utopian, assumes a discrediting inflection of the illusory, of the wishful, if not of the impossible. Uncertainty during change requires wisdom, assiduity and staying power: the instigator disturbs the stasis of society at his or her peril. People fear change: at a time when composure, energy and focus are needed, society suffers from a debilitating flush of entropy, of disorder and confusion.

The coup de grace was given by Gorbachev shortly after the traumatic, popular 1989 demolition of the Berlin Wall. It took a man in the mould of Thomas More to bring down the creaky, repressive communist structure and Gorbachev’s 1990 Nobel Peace Prize attests to this. [http://hforhistory.co.uk/article/henry-viii-tyrant-hero/](http://hforhistory.co.uk/article/henry-viii-tyrant-hero/)

Henry pompously wears the rich garments Holbein shows us in a 1536 portrait which contrasts with his ‘brown’ study of a modest Thomas More painted in 1527 (p2). Henry had himself painted the year after he executed More, but whereas More is now still hanging magnificently in the Frick Collection in Manhattan, Henry’s original burned in a fire. Both portraits followed Holbein’s 1523 portrait of Erasmus today hanging in the National Gallery.

In 1526, Henry wanted to annul his marriage to his Spanish Queen Catherine of Aragon so as to marry Anne Boleyn. He didn’t get his way with the Pope nor with Thomas More, who challenged Henry all the way.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau plagiarises this sentence in The Social Contract in a characteristic broadside on French clerics before 1789 (GB85).

Thomas More and Niccolò Machiavelli were contemporaries. Only nine years separate More’s birth from Machiavelli’s, and only three years separate Machiavelli’s completion of *De Principatibus* (*About Principalities*) in Latin in 1513 from More’s Latin *Utopia* published in 1516 (GB49).

*Machiavelli’s Utopia* William J. Connell 2016 https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/machiavellis-utopia/. *Utopia* and *The Prince* were written in Latin and Machiavelli, Erasmus and More were all Latinists.

Kathi Weeks (WK) even propounds the idea of a utopian manifesto.

If Communism was indeed on the march towards utopia and if conditions were different place by place then Foucault needed a name for alternative real-life spaces, and this is his *Heterotopia*.

Kathi Weeks tells us that Bloch is one of the most inventive of Marxists and a staunch proponent of the Soviet Regime (WK).

I am using translated texts for both Utopia, originally in Latin, and the Bloch-Adorno conversation, originally in German: I take the English translations I have at face value.
Adorno states that one can only talk about utopia in a negative way: if then utopia is disseminated into its opposite, presumably dystopia, then dystopian Utopia must pair off to neutralise meaning in the way in which Derrida explains how unity is impossible after dissemination (DJA306#67).

Bloch states: ‘In the process, the utopian is transcended in the choice of its possible means…and, nevertheless, it belongs to utopia (BE10)’. He adds ‘Something’s missing…in the decisive incentive towards utopia’ (BE15), borrowing a phrase from Bertolt Brecht.

Erasmus’ letter from Antwerp 23/7/1519 in The North American Review, Volume 8 (ED)

The Principle of Hope Ernst Bloch - Blackwell - 1986

A document like the Communist Manifesto whilst being constative is also performative, particularly as Kathi Weeks (WK) points out its use of the word we as the Manifesto’s ‘daunting pronoun’. She goes on to use the words utopian manifesto followed by utopian demand smoothly extending the utopian idea to a performative concept.

Marx and Engels were suspicious of Utopia and rather than burdening the proletariat with a ready-made model tried to call it into existence through the proletariat as political agents. Their manifesto empowered the proletariat and searched to mobilise political desire, and in this respect was performative. For Marx and Engels communism was something to invent, something that would emerge from the political struggle.

The Self Awakened: Pragmatism Unbound Roberto Mangabeira Unger Harvard University Press 2007

Foucault’s Heterotopia

As More’s Utopia is a nation like England, it is clearer to write it only in the upper case, even as a national adjective.

Though several earlier usages are known, dystopia was deployed as an antonym for Utopia by J. S. Mill in one of his Parliamentary Speeches 1868[4] (Hansard Commons). “What is commonly called Utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they appear to favour is too bad to be practicable.” Ref. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dystopia

Levitas’ definition that dystopias share a ‘method of depicting an alternative society’ where they ‘constitute a warning of what may happen if I go on as I am, rather than the projection of the desired future’, admits Unger’s idea of the transcendental human thought process which imagines a utopia.