

Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction
Lyman Tower Sargent

There are many debates about utopia - What constitutes a utopia? Are utopias benign or dangerous? The idea of utopia has become commonplace in social and political thought, both negatively and positively. This *Very Short Introduction* explores utopianism, its history, and its role in modern debates.

Questions for thought and discussion

- What does the word utopia mean to you?
- Why is the word utopia used to reject change?
- Is a better world possible? Why, or why not?
- Imagine your own vision of a good society. What are the three most important features? Why are they the most important features?
- Many dystopias are presented as projections into the future of things in the present that could become the basis of a worse future. What two features of the present do you think are the most likely to produce a bad society in the future?
- In chapters 4 and 5 it is argued that utopianism is important in most religions. What role does utopianism play in your religious beliefs or does it play one at all?
- In chapter 5 it is argued that while Eden, heaven, hell, and the millennium are fundamental aspects of both utopianism and Christianity, many Christians consider utopianism heretical while other Christians consider utopianism central to both Christian belief and practice. Discuss, considering the arguments for and against each position.
- Would you join an intentional community? Why, or why not?
- Many religions have formed intentional communities like ashrams in Hinduism and convents and monasteries in Buddhism and Christianity. What purposes do such communities serve?
- Are there utopias of anarchism, communism, conservatism, feminism, liberalism, and socialism? If so, how do they differ?
- Can there be such a thing as a Nazi utopia?
- Why do people move from one country to another? Are there utopian aspects to such moves?
- What are the arguments for utopia?
- What are the arguments against utopia?
- Do utopias differ from country to country? Why, or why not?

Other books by Lyman Tower Sargent

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Further Reading

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Moylan, Tom. *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*. (London: Methuen, 1986.)

Pitzer, Donald E., ed. *America's Communal Utopias*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.)