

Summer Conversation Cafe

Week Eight: Lifestyle Topic- Utopia

The term 'Utopia' was coined by the political philosopher Thomas More. Utopia comes from the Greek, and literally means 'No place.' In the book, *Utopia*, published in 1516, Thomas More details a fictional country where there is no crime.

Nobody owns anything but everyone is rich - for what greater wealth can there be than cheerfulness, peace of mind, and freedom from anxiety? –Thomas More from *Utopia*

Today, the word 'utopia,' refers to a perfect place, where there are no problems, no pain, and no corruption. Over the years, philosophers and writers have presented their ideas for how to create a utopia. Usually these stories are set in the future and take place in an isolated place with a ruling class that controls other people, but only for their good and the good of society. A "dystopia," is when the ruling class uses their power to help themselves, despite the suffering it brings to everyone else.

Read the following quotations.

I grew up in a utopia, I did. California when I was a child, was a child's paradise. I was healthy, well fed, well clothed, well housed. I went to school and their libraries had all the world in them. And after school I played in orange groves and in Little League and in the band and down at the beach and every day was an adventure...I grew up in utopia. ~ Kim Stanley Robinson, *Pacific Edge*.

Why did this author consider his childhood utopia?

What is your idea of utopia?

Utopian visions provide an ideal which people can then struggle to reach. ~Erin McKenna, *The Task of Utopia: A Pragmatist and Feminist Perspective*.

What do you think this quote means?

Do you agree or disagree? Why?

What kinds of things do people do to contribute to utopia?

The newspapers of utopia...would be terribly dull. ~ Arthur C. Clarke, 2001: *A Space Odyssey*

What do you think this quote means?

Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Do you think the idea of utopia is worth working for?

Questions for further discussions:

Do you think that we can ever create a utopia?

Do you think it is worth trying to create a utopia?

What do you believe is the main obstacle to creating a perfect world? How would one go about fixing the obstacle?

What role do you think the following groups should play in creating utopia?

private individuals

governments

educators

religious organizations

Look at the painting. Describe what you see.

If you were going to create a painting to demonstrate utopia, what would you paint?



Thomas Cole. The Arcadian or Pastoral State, 1834. Oil on canvas, 100.3 x 161.3 cm. New York Historical Society, New York City