

Beware Those Who Try to Create Utopias

There is a persistent temptation among human beings to seek after utopias. In our present world, we can see it in the world government ambitions of some political leaders, or the technocratic ambitions of reformers of the education system, or even certain parents who isolate their children from society in the hopes of preserving their original “purity.”

But as you can see from the following quotes, seeking after utopias can be a dangerous thing. What usually happens is that the final utopian vision ends up taking precedence over human persons. Realizing and maintaining the “utopia” requires stifling human freedom and choice. And paradoxically, the attainment of the utopian system results in what feels like a dystopia to most of its participants.

1. “The search for Nirvana, like the search for Utopia or the end of history or the classless society, is ultimately a futile and dangerous one. It involves, if it does not necessitate, the sleep of reason. There is no escape from anxiety and struggle.”

~ Christopher Hitchens

2. “And the weakness of all Utopias is this, that they take the greatest difficulty of man and assume it to be overcome, and then give an elaborate account of the overcoming of the smaller ones.”

~ G.K. Chesterton

3. “There is a tyranny in the womb of every Utopia.”

~ Bertrand De Jouvenel

4. "A utopian system, when established by men, is likely to be synonymous with a dystopian depression. The only way for perfect peace by man is absolute control of all wrongs. Bully-cultures find this: with each and every mistake, another village idiot is shamed into nothingness and mindlessly shut down by the herd. This is a superficial peace made by force and by fear, one in which there is no freedom to breathe; and the reason it is impossible for man to maintain freedom and peace for everyone at the same time."

~ Criss Jami

5. "Be very wary of people who declare that they're going to create heaven on earth, they almost invariably create hell."

~ François Lelord

6. "They constantly try to escape
From the darkness outside and within
By dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need to be good."

~ T.S. Eliot

7. "From being a movement aiming for universal freedom, communism turned into a system of universal despotism. That is the logic of utopia."

~ John Gray

8. "Idealism is the noble toga that political gentlemen drape over their will to power."

~ Aldous Huxley

9. "Uniformity, therefore, is an essential built-in element of utopian existence, and it is no less important that this uniformity remain permanent."

~ Thomas Molnar

10. "The newspapers of utopia, he had long ago decided, would be terribly dull."

~ Arthur Clarke, *2001: A Space Odyssey*