Utopian Place Equals Dystopian World

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In *Candide*, written by Voltaire, is a story where the words "All is for the best," are often repeated by the protagonist, Candide. This is also in line with Leibniz's philosphy that all events, including bad ones, occur for the greater good. Among Candide's misadventures that proves that quote wrong, he comes across a city called El Dorado. This city is seemingly a utopia lacking conflict, but all is not as it seems in the utopia. J. Robert Oppenheimer once said “The optimist thinks this is the best of all possible worlds. The pessimist fears it is true.” This book agrees with the quote in that Candide, the optimist, is foolish enough to think that at some point, the world and El Dorado is a utopia. Meanwhile, the careful reader, the pessimist in this quote, knows that for a place to appear to be a utopia, it will have to have some critical issues. If such a place is the best possible world, then there is no room for improvement.  
 While Candide was still in his home in Thunder-ten-Tronckh, Pangloss taught Candide his philosophy that all was for the best. Once Candide was kicked out of his home, he was exposed to the real world. Candide remained an optimist for most of the book. He thought all was for the best, misfortune would eventually lead to fortune. After Candide suffered, going without food and sleeping on the ground, he came across an inn where two men treated him to a meal. In the text, it states, "'Come, sir [Candide], sit down. We'll [the two men] not only pay for your dinner, but we'll never let a man like you be short of money. Men were made only to help each other." "You're right," said Candide, "...I see that all is for the best," (18-19). Candide, the optimist in this situation, sees this situation to be a great fortune to his life, but a pessimist with more knowledge about human nature would see that something is not right here. People are usually selfish. Accepting this help is a mistake on Candide's part as he is forcibly drafted into the Bulgar army, a less than ideal situation. Therefore, if the outside world is a utopia, then it is flawed because it fails to account for human greed.  
 Eventually, Candide comes across a seemingly perfect society in Eldorado. The kingdom seems to be perfect to Candide. Inside the kingdom, he finds a city full of gold and precious jewels, received free food, large buildings, and fountains. To Candide at this moment, this has to be the best of all possible worlds. However, it is not the best of all possible worlds for everyone. Voltaire points out, "when Candide and Cacambo alighted from the carriage, they were received by twenty beautiful girls attached to the palace; they took the visitors to the baths and dressed them..." (63-63). The women of this society are not treated as equals to men seeing as some of them are attached to the palace, which would be a modern interpretation of a utopia. This relates to the previous rationale that if such a place was the best, then it would not be the best place to live in for women. In addition, there is also evidence of wealth inequality. Before entering the capital city, Candide and Cacambo were dining at an inn in a village. The host said, "You [Candide and Cacambo] probably have none of our money, but you don't need any to dine here. All inns... are paid by the government. You've fared badly here, because this is a poor village," (61). While the optimistic Candide sees getting a free meal as a great fortune, the pessimistic reader can view this dialogue with a critical lens and say that if the city housing the king is so wonderful and this village is poor, then wealth disparity definitely exists throughout this kingdom. If this kingdom is the best of all places, then a better place with these problems solved would not exist. The pessimist would fear such an imperfect place being the best place.   
 To conclude, *Candide* agrees with the quote, “The optimist thinks this is the best of all possible worlds. The pessimist fears it is true.” If optimists see a place to be the best, then a pessimist will fear that there is no other place with less problems than the best place in question. Candide's naive optimism is disproven in his many misadventures outside his home, and the place he seemingly deems to be the best is in reality, containing fault.