Lamentations of the Dust: Construction

Prologue

A crack appeared in the firmament above the One World Trade Center. People on the streets of Manhattan found themselves watching and filming in awe as four figures descended from the sky. These four individuals, as soon as they found themselves on the street, were surrounded by the police, ambulances, and fire trucks. They laid on the streets of New York, unconscious. Several men and women in dark blue clothes came and put the four on stretchers and carried them away to a hospital.

The first among them to wake up was a German man. Pale in complexion and donning a beard and mustache, he looked to find himself in a completely unfamiliar area. There were two strange men in brown trench coats, one taller than the other, standing above him. Upon noticing the patient, they tried to speak to him. The German recognized the language of the men, and tried to respond:  
 “I do not know where I am, nor do I know where I came from. My name is Karl, and I am a citizen of Rheinpreußen.”

The two men looked at each other in awe. The older man laying before them was none other than Karl Marx! But how could this be? How was Marx summoned to this time period, centuries after he died? They told him about when and where he was, but Marx did not have the energy to speak or even be surprised. He fell asleep, and the two men visited one of the other three people.

They approached the one woman in the group next. She slowly opened her eyes a few minutes after their arrival. They asked her who she was.

“My name is Mary Wollstonecraft. Who are you?”

The two men explained the situation to her, that she had descended from the sky and just woke up from a state of unconsciousness. Upon hearing of the year, she realized that somehow, she was transported to another time period. She found herself sweating and worried, and the two men noticed. They told her to remain here until they came back, and that it would take a while. In the meantime she would be free to watch whatever was on the television. They showed her how to operate the machine and left. She was quick to learn.

The two remaining people were still in a deep sleep, so the men decided to leave for a short coffee break. They departed from the hospital and made their way to the nearest Starbucks.

“Would you mind looking up who Mary Wollstonecraft is?” Asked the taller man.

The shorter man pulled out his smartphone and looked up the name online. He found out that Mary Wollstonecraft was an English writer, philosopher, and advocate for women’s rights. Her life reached its end in the late 1700s.

The taller man was surprised, and after they both received their order, they sat down outside.

“Two of them are people who died so many years ago. How much do you wanna bet the other two are the same?” The taller man asked.

“I honestly wouldn’t be surprised!” The shorter man chuckled.

“Still, what are these people doing here? The giant crack in the sky closed after they landed, and I don’t think anyone among them has any clue what the heck happened.”

“What should we do with them, then? The police gave us this case to figure out who these people are and how they got here. They don’t have the resources to do anything on their own because they’re short staffed and have no funds.”

“I know that, and we’ll figure out exactly what happened, just give me some time to think.”

“Still, if we can’t get any information out of them, how do you think the government is gonna respond?”

“New Yorkers are definitely going to demand to know what happened to these people and who they are. The fact that one of these people could be Marx does not bode well, in my opinion” the taller man looked worried while he sipped his Java Chip Frappuccino.

“Why do you say that?” The shorter man took a bite out of his cookie.

“Because a lot of people in this city practically worship the guy! They’re probably going to protest until he’s freed or given a public platform so that he can preach to the masses.”

“Well, his ideas were really influential. I learned about him in one of my gen eds in college. I think his ideas are great, and I wanna talk to him for myself to see what he might think of our country.”

“I think we should kill him.”

“WHAT?!” The shorter man’s jaw dropped.

“He’s a danger to public order, c'mon man. We can get information out of him but as soon as the people find out he’s alive, he’s a threat to all of New York. I also learned about him, and I know that what he teaches is dangerous.”

“His goals were good, though. I’ll tell you what. Why don’t we tell all four people everything about America today, and then we’ll ask them about how they’d make the perfect country! We’ll record the conversation, turn it into a book, and retire.”

“So you’re okay with me taking all their lives after we’ve had them talk?” The taller man asked.

“I wouldn’t stop you. These people weren’t even meant to be alive right now in the first place. Well, I can’t speak on the other two since we haven’t talked to them yet. I will say that even if you were to kill them, the NYPD couldn’t do anything. The youth made the vast majority of officers retire, and their budget is just nonexistent. Once they gave us investigators custody over this case, they said we were free to do as we pleased.”

“You’re right,” the taller man chuckled, “I’ll set up a room at a special place for all four of them to talk to each other.”

The two men, after finalizing their plans, returned to the hospital. The last two individuals were in the same room, and both were awake.

“My name is Galileo, and I am from the Duchy of Florence.”

“I am Hayy ibn Yaqzan, and I am a citizen of this earth. I am without nation, son of a doe, and friend of God.”

The two men recognized Galileo, but not the other. They told Galileo and ibn Yaqzan of the events leading to their hospitalization. Galileo looked at them both in confusion, and ibn Yaqzan praised God. The investigators took Marx, Wollstonecraft, Galileo, and ibn Yaqzan to an abandoned building on the edge of Manhattan. The trip was silent, as all four of them were contemplating how they got here and what it is that they were meant to do now in this new world of theirs.

“You four are to discuss the formation of the ideal country. We will tell you about the history of the United States and our culture today.” The shorter investigator said. He was looking at ibn Yaqzan through the rear view mirror as he drove.

“What is a country?” ibn Yaqzan asked, looking back at the shorter investigator.

“It is just an area of land where people live together and follow the same laws and have some sort of government to establish order.” The taller investigator replied.

“I have a friend named Salaman. He is the chief of an island tribe and he is one of the most knowledgeable among them regarding religion. He tells people what to do and what to believe, is this what you mean?” ibn Yaqzan still didn’t quite understand.

“Salaman is the government in your example. He leads people and explains the laws to them so that they listen, and I’m sure he punishes people who break those laws,” the taller man turned around to see ibn Yaqzan nodding, “and the people as well as the land owned by the people in that tribe represent the nation.”

“I’ve seen enough of your country to know that this is a terrible place where women are still treated as objects for the pleasure of men. I saw the abomination that is ‘WAP’ on the television. How could any self respecting woman dance in such a sexual manner and expose so much of her body for the whole world to see?” Wollstonecraft sounded repulsed.

“Well, there’s a lot more to our culture that you all should know…” and for the rest of the ride, the taller man explained all that he knew about American history after the first World War.

Once they arrived at the building, he turned around and saw four completely different expressions. Marx was grinning from ear to ear, ibn Yaqzan looked confused, with his eyebrows scrunched up, Wollstonecraft was obviously disgusted, with her mouth agape, and Galileo was just looking out the window, it seemed like he wasn’t really paying attention to everything that was said. The taller investigator turned back around, and opened the glove compartment. The shorter investigator grabbed a recording device while the taller one took a pistol from within and put it in his holster.

They led the four people to the underground floor of the building.

“Begin.”

Construction

Marx: I suppose I should begin since my speciality happened to be in government and economics. The reality of this world is that all history, up to and including this point, is the history of class struggles. In every society there has been an oppression of the workers by their masters. In some form or another, there has always been an exploitation of the working class. I have proposed a series of solutions designed to remedy this disease inherent in any capitalist society: 1) the abolition of the private property of the rich, 2) a heavy and graduated income tax, 3) abolition of the right to inheritance, 4) confiscation of the property of the treacherous and the emigrants, 5) government control over banking, communication, and transportation, 6) government control over factories and agriculture, with obligation for all people to work and the formation of industrial armies, 7) free education for all, and 8) the gradual disintegration of distinction between town and city, so that the population is more evenly distributed. In the ideal state, the family will have also been abolished, for even the relationship between parents and their children is one of control. Giving people complete autonomy over themselves is what is best for them.

Galileo: How did you come up with these solutions?

Marx: Through thorough thought and contemplation of interactions for all of history that I have studied.

Galileo: And you are certain that these solutions will work?

Marx: These solutions will certainly break the cycle of class oppression and result in a more just society wherein the workers have control over their labor and people are not oppressed. Everyone will work, be educated, and be free to do as they please.

Wollstonecraft: Do women also have the freedom to be educated in this plan you have proposed?

Marx: Why, yes. Women will be educated just as men are, and women will also be made to work, as they are also capable of manual labor just as men are.

Wollstonecraft: If women are given the same rights as men in this society, and they are free to do as they please, then there surely must be something wrong. I do not think people would so willingly accept such a system wherein those who have been stepped on for centuries will be so easily given the same treatment as men.

Marx: Times have changed, Miss Wollstonecraft. People now are certainly more receptive to giving women the rights they deserve. You see how in this country of the United States that women are given positions of power in politics and culture. How could they get to those places if not for the acceptance of females into society?

Wollstonecraft: You make a fair point, and it does seem to be the case that women in this country are free to do as they please. Do you think that’s doing them any good, though? They’re using their freedom to prostitute themselves to men, seemingly for free!

Galileo: Who taught you how to operate the television? We had one in our room as well, but the controls of the device we were given were impossible to operate. In the end, ibn Yaqzan and I sat watching a puppet show (Sesame Street) for some time.

Wollstonecraft: Our two friends taught me. The things I saw on the television absolutely disgusted me, you should be grateful that you were limited to what you saw.

Marx: Why is it wrong that those women are making a living off of selling their bodies?

Wollstonecraft: Are you kidding me? They are selling themselves as objects! Women are noble creatures, equal to men in intellect and spirit. I did not see men sexualizing themselves the way women were. How is this equal treatment in any sense? I saw on the television many things: male and female doctors, male and female heroes, and male and female singers. But something I only saw from women was the explicit sexualization of their bodies. It is true that women are free in this country, but they are limiting themselves to their physical form and ignoring the fact that they are so much more. Do children have access to television? What will they think?

Marx: Is it not the choice of the individual to decide what they will do with their bodies?

Wollstonecraft: It certainly is, but these are not the types of choices I was expecting women to make! What is freedom if people do not have the discipline to use it wisely?

Marx: But what is to use it wisely? In this country the rich continue to oppress the poor and the minorities, what is the problem if women use that which they have been blessed with to gain an advantage in a society that worships them?

Wollstonecraft: They sacrifice their dignity! Their status as intelligent creatures is diminished when they limit their abilities to purely the physical. They are not stimulating themselves, they are doing the most basic task any person could ever do, they are selling their bodies.

Marx: What use is dignity? You and I will go on for hours but at least I can acknowledge that these women are likely happier than the women of your time period, since we know that American women are free to do with their bodies as they please whereas the vast majority of your women remained under the feet of men.

Wollstonecraft: I have no words. You disgust me, and the women of this day disgust me. I fought for women’s rights to education and labor, not for gluttonous prostitutes to brainwash little girls on the television.

Marx: But they are free.

Galileo: Why is it wrong that the rich own property?

Marx: Because it is through their ownership of property that they oppress others. They own land that they do not use, or force others to labor upon it through wage slavery.

Galileo: In my time, the Catholic Church controlled the availability of the Bible and all religious thought related to it. I understand what you mean by those in power using their authority to force others to think or act a certain way.

Marx: So you agree.

Galileo: Not quite. Even though the Catholic Church had complete control over theology, they are the heart of the Church, the Body of Christ, and necessary for believing Christians. I can relate to what you said with regard to authority, however I must mention that authority has its place in any society. In this case the authority is God given. In the case of this economy, there are people who own property and those who work on property. Just because you have taken the property of the wealthy does not necessitate that those it is given to are bound to use it for good as you have assumed.

Marx: You are right, for I know that power has a tendency to corrupt people. Where do you suppose then that the authority for those who own the means of production comes from? If not God given, then surely by some form of aggressive exploitation?

ibn Yaqzan: God’s creation mirrors God’s Richness. Just as God is vast and also One, we as humans are one in species but vast in who we are. I know the answer to this question, having experienced the reality of the human condition myself. When I went to the Island of Salaman, I was met with many types of people. My friend Absal presented me with the most religiously knowledgeable individuals among those in the Island. It was when I was preaching to them that I realized many men are no better than unreasoning animals. They did not listen to the spiritual teachings I wished to impart unto them. The men of the Island rejected me. In their devotion to the Law and the material world, they did not strive to become closer to the One, to God. However, Absal and myself, and I’m sure few others, took the time and effort to strive closer to Him. Yes, this is the human condition: that some people are naturally inclined to strive toward greater heights than others. This is where any authority comes from. God has created us all spiritually equal, but it is up to the individual whether they choose to cultivate that spirit and know Him.

Galileo: Agreed. I will say this, in addition to what you have said: not only are people different in the way they cultivate their spirituality, they are also different in the way they cultivate their minds and skills.

Marx: Even if it is the case that some men are inclined to have different levels of eagerness to work, how does that give them the authority to exploit others?

ibn Yaqzan: It doesn’t. I do not know whether power really corrupts people, because I have not seen such a thing in my time that I was on the Island of Salaman. If what you all say is true, then we must look to God’s prophets for guidance, for they certainly have a solution to all this.

Marx: What do your prophets teach?

ibn Yaqzan: We believe that the function of wealth is to sustain life and enable its growth. God has blessed mankind with the intellect to rule over this planet and nurture it. We take what we need and no more, and do as little harm as possible to those around us. We are taught that all property inevitably belongs to God; ownership over land is, in the end, a trial for whoever owns it. We believe that ownership of land should be limited to the size of which the individual is able to bring life from it, and should the person be unable to bring life to the land for three years, it should be seized and given to someone else who is capable. This is what has been passed down in the tradition of our scholars, as was taught to me by my friend Absal, who was learned in the religion of God, and taught on the Island of Salaman.

Marx: So your suggestion is that, instead of abolishing the property of the rich, we should permit people to own property so long as they are actually capable of using it themselves? Is there no such thing as employment in your religion?

ibn Yaqzan: There is, and we have rules regarding that as well. Men and women can both work, and there must be a contract between employer and employee. It is said that workers should be paid their dues before their sweat dries, and this is from the tradition of the prophets. We fear God in our contracts, and believe that all wrongs will be turned right on the Day of Reckoning.

Wollstonecraft: I’m guessing that women can also be educated in your religion?

Galileo: How else would they work if they were not allowed to learn? I’m sure the women are allowed to be taught things. In my experience, there was never a very good relationship between women’s education and the Church. I don’t know why women would need to have a voice, anyway. It is taught in the scriptures that women ought to be quiet in the presence of men and especially when in Church.

Wollstonecraft: Times have changed for you as well, Galileo. Bibles are freely available and there are now many perspectives on its interpretation. I for one disagree with what you’ve said. While it is true that women are told to remain quiet, this is not because of their own spiritual disability, it is a warning against those who speak in order to subvert the authority of the men leading worship.

Marx: We are getting besides the point. Just because you have established contracts between employer and employee does not mean that you are being treated justly! After all, in the end the employer is gaining control over your excess labor and making capital off of it.

Galileo: But did the worker not consent to the employer gaining ownership over the excess product by coming into the contract in the first place?

Wollstonecraft: It seems as though this type of system does provide people with more freedom. Men and women get to enter into contracts with those whom they work for, and whatever labor is produced is compensated for according to said contract. Where is the problem?

Marx: The problem is that after the laborer has completed whatever minimum necessary task is required for his employer, any excess product she creates ought to belong to her.

Wollstonecraft: Give an example.

Marx: For example, say an employer has hired a woman to work in his factory as a seamstress for twenty hours. The employer only has a need for thirty garments per worker. Now let’s say our worker has produced forty articles of clothing in these twenty hours. The contract has only accounted for the time value of the laborer’s work, rather than the value of the actual product that she produced. Do you understand?

Wollstonecraft: So in this sense, the employer is taking advantage of the worker’s excess product and raising capital from it, when in reality the employer had no need for that excess garments and could have seemingly gone without it.

Marx: Precisely.

Wollstonecraft: I understand the problem. The issue is not in the contract itself, but in the transparency between the employer and the employee.

ibn Yaqzan: All wrongs will be righted on the Day of Reckoning. I agree with you, my friend. Then we can agree that when establishing contracts, employers should be open with exactly what they need, and whatever else is produced in work should belong to the worker, unless they both agree otherwise. Is this a reasonable compromise?  
  
Marx: It is apparently the best compromise.

Galileo: What of the income tax?

Marx: What of it?  
  
Galileo: I mean, what do you hope to gain by increasing income taxes specifically on the wealthy?

Marx: The money will be redistributed to the lower class of course.

Galileo: What if the rich artificially decrease their reported wages?

Marx: How would they even do such a thing?

Galileo: I’m sure it is possible. Perhaps not for myself, for I am not rich and I am not nearly as economically inclined as those wealthier than myself, but I am certain that they could find a way. If the rich among the citizens managed to do such a thing, then we know that your plan has failed, and you are actually not redistributing the wealth of any person whose wealth is worth redistributing. This is because if anyone could artificially decrease their reported wages, it would be the richest among the rich: the same people who could bribe the Catholic Church and kings due to their influence.

Marx: Even if it was the case that this happened, what are you suggesting is wrong with my plan for a graduated income tax?

Galileo: Nothing is wrong with it, but we should be aware of any possibilities that might result in it failing.

Wollstonecraft: I also think it might be the case that if you were to make the graduated income taxes too high on the rich, they could flee the country, or to a different province wherein the State will not take as much from them.

Marx: In order to remedy this, what do you suggest we do then?

Galileo: A wealth tax might be more reasonable. While the rich might be able to hide their income, it would be nigh impossible for them to hide all of their wealth, except through corruption of the government. In which case, there are bigger problems to deal with.

ibn Yaqzan: My religion teaches us to give two point five percent of our wealth in charity. On the Island of Salaman, this money is taken by Salaman and his friends and redistributed to the poor, the needy, those in bondage, those in debt, the wayfarer, and more.

Marx: What counts as wealth?

ibn Yaqzan: I did not stay long enough to learn their economy, only that charity is a requirement for all believers. I cannot be of use to you in answering this question, and God knows best.

Wollstonecraft: Is the wealth tax flat?

ibn Yaqzan: What does that mean?

Wollstonecraft: I mean does everyone pay the same amount regardless of how much people make?

ibn Yaqzan: Everyone pays the same percentage. That number does not change for anyone.

Marx: I’m not sure if I agree with that. The rich should pay more, even with a wealth tax.

Galileo: A graduated wealth tax then?

Wollstonecraft: Hold on, if we have a graduated wealth tax as well as a graduated income tax, aren’t we taxing the rich too much? Then as I warned before, they might flee.

Marx: Then do you suggest we have a flat income tax and graduated wealth tax?

Galileo: This might be the best option we could think of.

Wollstonecraft: Yes. I think Galileo is right in saying that it is likely easier to hide an income than it is to hide all of someone’s wealth. It will be easier to hold the rich accountable for their wealth than their income.

Galileo: The State should also be established such that the citizens cannot have wealth saved in foreign lands, and that should help prevent fraud and increase transparency. We are ready to move on to Karl’s next statement. Why is inheritance bad?

Marx: When the means of production are handed over to the state, there would no longer be any individual wealth for the person to transfer to an inheritor in the first place. The point of inheritance is that it provides the inheritor with a means to get ahead, using the tools her forefathers left behind. Ideally, the individual would be able to pull these tools from the fruits of the labor of everyone in the working class, rather than having it handed down to her.

Galileo: This seems awfully Utopian.

Marx: Don’t we all dream of a Utopia?

Galileo: You cannot seriously expect everyone to get along like this, can you? I mean, even among the Body of Christ, there are dissenters despite the Pope being given divine authority in theological regards. If there is bloodshed and dispute even within the godly institution of the Church, how can you possibly expect all laborers to be just to each other?

Marx: I have already agreed with you that redistribution of power does not necessitate that the power will be used in a just manner.

Wollstonecraft: If inheritance had mandated ratios, would that be okay?

Marx: What do you mean?

Wollstonecraft: I mean what if the State required inheritance to be given in certain proportions to specific people. Once a person’s remaining debts have been paid off, the remaining wealth could be distributed to their spouse, children, extended family, and charity according to set ratios.

Marx: That way the wealth is not all concentrated in one hand.

Galileo: Marx, did you not mention earlier that the family ought to be abolished?

Marx: Yes, and as such I think that the distribution of wealth to the family is wrong.

Galileo: Then for Miss Wollstonecraft to push her position, we must convince you that the family is a necessary part of society, right?

Marx: So long as the parents exert control over their children, this perpetuates the cycle of oppression from one person over another.

Galileo: But without parents to guide the child in a way that is appropriate, who will be the one to raise the children?  
  
Marx: The State, of course.

Wollstonecraft: And you are absolutely certain that the State is free from corruption? You would risk brainwashing children because you think that there is something inherently wrong with parents having control over their children?  
  
Marx: Are families immune to corruption? And to be specific I wished to abolish the bourgeois family.

Wollstonecraft: I came from the type of family you are talking about. My father would abuse my mother as well as his children. He was poor with his money management and only sent one of his seven children to school. Just because some families might end up raising children poorly does not necessitate that the whole concept of families should be abolished. Some children raised incorrectly by a few families is much better, in my opinion, than risking all children being raised incorrectly by a corrupt State. Though I’m sure my family was not from among the bourgeoisie, I hold no contempt for families in the upper classes using their wealth to inculcate education and good manners and religious devotion in their children. If anything, it is intrinsic in most good parents that they use their wealth for the benefit of their children, rather than themselves.

Marx: For the sake of this discussion, I’ll agree. The abolition of the family is something that even the Communists might struggle with establishing, though I believe it will be a natural result of the elimination of capital. Families can receive certain amounts of inheritance in this make-believe State we are creating.

Galileo: Does anyone have comments on seizing the property of those who commit treason and emigrants?

Wollstonecraft: No.

ibn Yaqzan: I cannot say.

Marx: What about the amount of control I give the government?

Galileo: You seem to put a lot of faith in the government to provide everything correctly.

Marx: A government run by the people is less likely to take advantage of its citizens.

Galileo: But a government with so much power is even more prone to corruption, isn’t it?

Marx: Well if the government is too weak then people are going to exploit each other, so some amount of strength is necessary, isn’t it?

Galileo: I’m starting to think of the Catholic Church’s monopoly on scriptural interpretation. I had my own grievances against them when I tried publishing my work on the heavenly bodies. In any case, I do think that a government should have power, but not so much that we invite dictatorship.

Wollstonecraft: How would democracy fare?

ibn Yaqzan: What is democracy?

Galileo: There are many types of democracy. The most basic form is the direct democracy, wherein the whole population votes on issues one at a time. This is quite a time consuming process. Good on you for mentioning democracy, Miss. You have reminded me of my good childhood neighbor: the Venetian Republic.

Marx: Are you suggesting a democratic republic, then?

Galileo: A democratic republic comprised of various branches, all with distinct roles that contribute to the common goal of protecting individual liberties. Just as the Catholic Church has its Priests, Bishops, Archbishops, Cardinals, and the Pope, this State will have different stages of government. Each stage will be delegated with different roles, and the higher up one goes in the hierarchy, the less influence the government has on the individual. That is to say, just as not every man meets with the Pope for confessions, the role of the highest level of government should not directly impact every individual.

Marx: What would the power of the government be then?

Galileo: The Venetian Republic was not as large as many empires we learned about in history, but its model is quite respectable. It was even praised by Machiavelli! Their government was a mix of democratic, monarchic, and republic style ruling. I think the best way to explain what I’m thinking is like this: a government wherein the citizens vote for representatives who will form laws on their behalf, and all of these laws will only be found locally. That is to say, towns within a nation will not all abide by the same laws, rather they will live according to their native culture and custom, and not be forced to live according to the rules of another.

Wollstonecraft: I see, so people would only be effectively ruled by laws determined by their own local customs? This would mean that if, for example, a tribe of Mahometans were to come and live, they would be free to establish laws according to the religion of Mahomet?

Galileo: Well yes, but also bear in mind that I have not discussed the role of the higher levels of government. I cannot say how many tiers there might be between the local and the national government, but my statement about their laws remains the same: the further away you go from the individual, the less power the national government would have over you.

Marx: Well then tell me about the national government already!

Galileo: The national government then, would only exist to make sure that the local governments are cooperating with each other and there is free trade between each town and state. The national government would prevent any single person from amassing too much control over the economy and break down businesses that suppress freedom of choice in markets. While the local governments would be in charge of land redistribution, it is the national governments that will take money from the wealth tax and redistribute it among the poor citizenry throughout the whole of the country. The national government could also mandate national laws, such as ones that end certain specific practices, such as the suppression of knowledge done by religious institutions, or actions of the occult, as done by witches.

Marx: So you would allow private corporations to take control over communication, agriculture, banking, transportation, and factories for production? Private businesses are bound to be corrupt! The only thing the capitalist pursues is the accumulation of further capital, not the wellbeing of his consumers. So long as he can continue the consumers’ dependence on him, he will continue to exploit them.

Galileo: Instead of handing over complete power over making these things to the national government, why not have the national government have the power to break down businesses that have these evil practices in the first place? If the government fails to even do this, then there’s no way we could possibly dream of establishing a government that can provide all those services on its own in the first place. The government would oversee the production of roads as done by private companies through regulation, and penalize businesses with predatory practices harshly. Same with every other industry. When you leave things to private corporations instead of having a single institution take care of it all, you allow for specialization and higher quality of work. I saw something similar to this in the markets of Italy. The national government will also shut down private industries that do not allow for free dialogue. That is to say, rather than centralizing media within the government, the government will prevent media companies from spreading lies and false narratives. There will be no senseless sensationalization of events without the full story being available to the public.

Marx: Galileo, I had learned that you were a scientist. I did not know you were so astute in politics!

Galileo: I had to be at least somewhat familiar with politics, since I was seen as an enemy of the Catholic Church and needed to defend myself against my fellow Christians.

Wollstonecraft: Now wait just a minute, I’ve agreed to nearly everything that’s been said thus far, but what of the women in this society? Surely they will be educated and given the same opportunities to succeed as men?

Galileo: Well that would depend on the culture of the local people, unless they gave the national government the power to enforce womens’ ability to get educated and pursue an education and vote universally. But then how would we limit the national government’s authority over the whole? There’s no doubt that over time, as the local regions become even more interconnected, local cultures will adopt from other cultures, and eventually the distinctions between each region will vanish, and the need for local governments might disappear as well. The citizenry would end up neglecting the authority vested in their regional governments and instead rely wholly on the national government, which would slowly invite authoritarian government once again.

Marx: How would you stop such a thing?

Galileo: This is something I don’t have the answer to.

Wollstonecraft: Is the question of whether there is some way to keep people united under the national government while allowing them to maintain their unique cultural identities?

Galileo: Yes, and also how to make sure they continue to recognize the importance of their local governments over the national government, which should not be given so much power in the first place.

Wollstonecraft: Perhaps instead of considering how to limit the peoples’ ability to interact and evolve culturally through intermingling, why not set hard and fast limits to the powers of the national government?

ibn Yaqzan: I have been quiet throughout much of this discussion because I was not taught a lot of the words you all are using. If I had to give any input to what you all are saying, though, it is that I think the best way to organize each group is by their religion. Christians should stay among Christians, Muslims among Muslims, Mahometans among Mahometans, and whatever other faiths there are that exist.

Wollstonecraft: Mahometans and Muslims are the same thing.

ibn Yaqzan: Oh. My point remains. Allow people of each religious group to govern themselves. Because each religion has hard and fast rules, it is not likely that you will find much cultural mixing between Christians and Muslims, and Jews and Christians. If anything, they will be more insular in their communities. People of all faiths should be given their own sectors governed by their religious laws, and there should be free movement between each sector. The Salaman of this Island will be composed of not just one Salaman but Salamans of different religions, so that no one religion has complete dominance or authority over the whole.

Marx: I don’t think religion will be going away any time soon, though I think it is something backwards and needing to be wiped off of the history of humanity, I agree with ibn Yaqzan with regard to its utility for separating people into groups that will have lesser cultural exchanges.

Wollstonecraft: So then we have decided that the separation of towns and local regions should be done through religion?

Galileo: I suppose we have. And perhaps allowing women the right to an education, vote, as well as work, might come naturally through democratic means, if we do not establish it at the onset of the creation of the State we have discussed. There should be strict limits to the national government as well, to further limit its power over the people, but there are too many perspectives to discuss for us to go over in just one sitting.

Wollstonecraft: And what about this country? How would we tie this all to this country?

Marx: We need a revolution!

Galileo: What kind of revolution?

Marx: Well, if I were to continue the line of thought established in our discussion, it would have to be an uprising of those religious individuals who are willing to create a system of government like the one we’ve talked about. But such a thing would be extremely difficult, as it seems like people in this country are already suffering the consequences of being too connected.

Galileo: Then what option do they have?

Marx: I don’t know. It seems like many of the younger generation here have especially been influenced by my own works, and they think of my solutions as the perfect ideal. I still think that the society I have dreamt up is in fact, an ideal as well, but from a realistic lens I would agree to what has been mentioned so far. I don’t think we can reverse the damage that’s been caused by the government of this country. From what our two friends told us, it seems as though politicians are extremely corrupt, and the media thrives off of division. The reality of this country is that the ruling political parties are no different from one another, and the people have been divided so much through brainwashing done by major media companies that the only thing awaiting them is total collapse. The capitol will burn, and a new government will rise up. This is a slow revolution, but I do not expect the country as it is to last any more than another century.

ibn Yaqzan: This does not sound good. We were also told that many of the younger people in this generation have turned to atheism as well. May God guide them.

Galileo: Amen.

Wollstonecraft: If everyone in the nation were to be atheist, how would you limit cultural interactions between them?

Marx: I don’t think you can. There are no rules to atheism and so they live in a constant state of change. This can be a good thing but for ruling over people and preventing a dictatorship, it can also be bad.

Galileo: Well to be fair, religiosity does not guarantee that religious institutions will not have a monopoly over the people either. The only thing we had going for us in the discussion of limiting cross cultural growth was the fact that religious people are naturally tribalistic against people of other faiths. Just as the Catholic Church would excommunicate dissenters, religious communities would likely reject those who denied the religion of the majority.

Wollstonecraft: Well then everything we have planned so far is contingent on a religious population, isn’t it?

Marx: I wish that weren’t the case. Perhaps in another discussion we could discuss alternative options that could account for such people. People are not limited in their tribalism with regard to religion, there is also tribalism in many other regards.

Wollstonecraft: For another discussion, then.

ibn Yaqzan: Then we have decided upon a democratic republic with multiple levels and branches, comprised of elected officials and with each region distinguished by religious identity? And we have also discussed certain laws as well for this State, such as inheritance and ownership of private property, among others.

Marx: Yes, we have. I’m still a little confused about how we got here, I didn’t even realize we had strayed this far from the ideas I had originally presented.

ibn Yaqzan: What did you mean when you said that the population should be more evenly distributed?  
  
Wollstonecraft: He means that factories and farms should be spread throughout the land so that the distinctions between those working in factories and those working in agriculture does not grow too much.

ibn Yaqzan: What’s a factory?

Wollstonecraft: They’re big buildings where many people work together, usually to produce one type of product.

ibn Yaqzan: Why is it a bad thing that factories and farms are put apart?

Wollstonecraft: I think the issue arises when people in cities become too unfamiliar with life on a farm. It is likely that in cities, there is a lot more cultural growth and this leads to people being more intellectually aware as well. Farmers do not really get to experience many other cultures because they’re more focused on providing food for the rest of society whereas people in cities have more luxury to think about other things. Even within our democratic republic, I think it is possible that once the population of cities grows significantly more than the population of rural areas, the voices of the city folk will drown out the farmers. In a truly democratic society, everyone will have equal say, but what happens when everyone in one region thinks one way while everyone in another region thinks another? That is to say, farmers will have more shared experiences with other farmers, and city folk will have more shared experiences with city folk. Even if we agreed that everyone’s vote is equal, is it not the case that the people of urban areas might eventually take advantage of and force people of rural areas to do whatever they commanded?

ibn Yaqzan: Then either we must set up a system where people of rural areas are given preferential treatment in voting by virtue of their situation, or we should do as Karl said, and evenly distribute factories and farms.

Wollstonecraft: How would you give preferential treatment of one group over the other?

ibn Yaqzan: Each region would have to be given a certain number of representatives according to their population, and there will be a minimum of one representative per region, regardless of how large or small their population is. Then, when it comes time to vote for the many Salamans in the national government, it will be the representatives who vote in that election, rather than the people. This will make it so that people will be more focused on their local elections like we want them to be, and also so that voting for the national government will not have a strong preference for those regions with very high populations like cities.

Wollstonecraft: This sounds like a good idea, but what if people want to have a popular vote with the national government instead of letting the representatives vote?

Galileo: In that case our government has failed, because once the population starts relying on the national government, there is no doubt that they will continue to give it more power until it eventually becomes authoritarian, and local governments can do nothing to stop it.

ibn Yaqzan: The other option is to spread factories and farms evenly throughout the nation. Would this even be possible, given that some land is barren and other land fertile?

Galileo: And some land is better suited for construction while others only return detriment to those seeking to develop it.

Marx: You bring up good points, and I suppose I should take my own time to redevelop my positions so that they can be more specifically applied given varying circumstances.

Galileo: One last topic before I take a break: who will the politicians be?

Marx: The government ought to be made up of working class people rather than the noble elite.

Galileo: Then statecraft should not be taught in schools?

Wollstonecraft: Politicians are dastardly people. We should not teach anyone how to be a liar and a hypocrite. Schools should instill good Christian moral values and establish character for the first few years, and later on the children can be taught the sciences, mathematics, history, and philosophy.

Galileo: Then leaders will be elected from among the laymen, and the representatives will truly be representative of their population. Farmers will be able to elect farmers with the best of character, and factory workers will be able to elect the best among them as well.

Marx: These politicians should not be paid either. They are public servants, after all. Their duty is in their trade, and politics should not be something that consumes them. Once a person obsesses themselves with politics, they are bound to become corrupt.

Galileo: I would agree, except do you not think that they should at least be somewhat compensated for the work they do in maintaining a free society?

Wollstonecraft: How would a fair system be established? If wage labor is widely adopted and salaries become the norm, then perhaps the politicians should be paid the salary of the average laborer.

Galileo: If salaries become the norm then what you have suggested sounds like a good plan. The intricacies of a barter economy would make it quite difficult to say what a fair payment for the work of the politicians would be.

Marx: Then if the economy has established salaries, the politicians will be paid the average salary of the working class people, while if the economy is based upon bartering…

Galileo: I’m not sure, but saying that politicians in such a state will not be paid is an easy way out of that mess. How will the politicians make themselves known? If they are not known then the people have no incentive to elect them, after all.

Wollstonecraft: Just a few years ago, the United States came to be. Well, before I found myself here, at least. In their system, it appears as though local officials would be elected through word of mouth, and they could establish fundraising to spread flyers and posters to promote their candidacy.

Galileo: It seems like a good idea, allowing people to use their own money to self promote. However, we run the risk of corruption and easy manipulation of the masses. If a rich man and a poor man were both to run, and the rich man printed more flyers and posters in his name, the populace would no doubt be more familiar with the richer person. This will inevitably lead to a state run by a rich oligarchy, because the average citizen would no longer have equal access to running for office.

Marx: The simple solution would be to make it so people are only allowed to use fixed amounts of their own wealth for advertising.

Galileo: Having a precise number might make things difficult, though. If the population increased or the size of the region for which representatives were to be elected increased, then some amount of money might not be enough to reach all the citizens.

Marx: But if you set up ratios then those among bourgeoisie will still have more.

Galileo: And this makes things difficult… We weren’t told what the Americans of this country have established with regard to this. However, there is no doubt their political world is corrupt. Even if we were to have a fixed amount for how much of a person’s wealth could be used for campaigning, people would want to contribute to the running man of their choice, and most likely monetarily. If we allow citizens to give fixed amounts of money to their favorite politician then we have circled back into the worst world.

Marx: What is the worst world?

Galileo: It is the world wherein politicians are more focused on having eloquent speech and wooing the citizens, rather than actually establishing just laws and protecting the rights of the people. Essentially, they will be more focused on getting money so that they can further spread their influence rather than actually discussing their policy. Our friend ibn Yaqzan was right in saying that most people are no better than sheep. Many citizens simply do not have the capacity to understand the intricacies of politics, nor are they interested in hearing about the many issues plaguing their society. The average citizen’s only desire is to be able to live without having his rights infringed. They do not care about all of this.

Marx: I understand. If we allow other people to contribute to campaigns through money, then politicians will only be interested in getting more money to help spread their influence, and as a result their focus will be on spewing hot air rather than being just to their society.

Wollstonecraft: If people were not allowed to contribute with their money, then how would they? In a free state, there is no doubt that ideas will spread through writing and speech. People will come to know of politicians during election time in day to day discussions no matter what.

Marx: But then what stops politicians from spouting false promises in order to gain more support?

Galileo: Nothing, and that’s not something we can stop. It is the natural state of representative democratic politics, and we can only hope to slow it down by doing as Miss Wollstonecraft said: instilling ethics and good moral character in the youth through their primary education. Other than that, politicians are prone to corruption and despite our best efforts, even this democratic republic is bound to fall eventually.

ibn Yaqzan: It has gotten rather late, perhaps we should continue this at another time.

Wollstonecraft: Where will be staying in this new land we’ve found ourselves in? I would love to continue this discussion with these gentlemen another time.

The shorter man pressed a button on his recording device and the red flashing LED ceased. Four shots were fired from the arm of the taller man, and no one was there to hear it.

Epilogue

A few days later, the two investigators went to the top floor of the World Trade Center. As it turns out, there was an event being hosted at Observation Deck. It was there that some rich folk were being shown a live demonstration of some sort of machine. The research was funded by unknown contributors, and there were no leads with regard to who they were. What is known, though, is that the gash in the sky was probably a result of that machine being activated. An unpredicted consequence, and any trace of the event was wiped off of the world wide web. Perhaps on the darker side of the internet, videos of those four descending can be found again.

In any case, the two men ended up writing the events of that day in a story, and found themselves imprisoned not too long after they sent it to a publisher for review. This story is a testament to a conversation that’s believed to have never happened. A revival of the events that happened on that fateful day. A recollection of the lamentations of the four people who returned to the dust. Their grief is for the citizens of this country, who are doomed to apocalypse in the near future. They provided their blueprints for the construction of a new society, one that leads people toward a prosperous civilization that will last the ages. Is an everlasting civilization possible? If it was, would that civilization be representative of the Common Good? Is the Common Good found in the pages of this book, or is it something humanity can only dream of, limited by their own nature? God knows best.