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“ TEXT →
PARAGRAPH → ... ”

CAN SOCIALISTS BE HAPPY?

GEORGE ORWELL.

By far the best known modern Utopias are those of H. G. Wells. Wells's vision of the future is almost fully expressed in two books written in the early Twenties, *The Dream and Men Like Gods*. Here you have a picture of the world as Wells would like to see it or thinks he would like to see it. It is a world whose keynotes are enlightened hedonism and scientific curiosity. All the evils and mis-

Agreement between the two measurements was excellent ($r = 0.99$).

Heaven either say frankly that it is indescribable or conjure up a vague picture of gold, precious stones, and the endless singing of hymns. This has, it is true, inspired some of the best poems in the world:

Thy walls are of chalcedony.

Thy bulwarks diamonds square,

Thy gates are of right orient pear

Exceeding rich and rare!

the ordinary man being actively wanted to be. Many a revivalist minister, many a desert priest (see, for instance, the terrific sermon in James Joyce's *Persuasion*) has frightened his congregation almost out of their skins with his word-pictures of *Hall*. But as soon as it comes to *Heaven*, there is a prompt falling-back on words like 'ecstasy' and 'bliss' – with little attempt to say what they consist in. Perhaps the most vital bit of writing on this subject is the famous passage in which Terullian explains that one of the chief joys of *Heaven* is watching one of the damned.

The pagan versions of Paradise are little better, if at all. One has the feeling it is always twilight in the Elysian fields, Olympus, where the gods lived, with their nectar and ambrosia, and their nymphs and Hebes, the 'immortal tart's' as D.H. Lawrence called them. It might be a bit more homelike than the Christian Heaven, but you would want to spend a long time there. As for the *Muslim Paradise*, with its 77 hours per man, all presumably clamouring for attention at the same moment, it is just a nightmare. Nor are the spiritualists, though incessantly assuring us that 'all is bright and beautiful', able to describe any next-world activity which a thinking person would find endurable, let alone attractive.

[illegible]

It would seem that human beings are not able to describe, or perhaps to imagine, happiness except in terms of contrast. That is why the conception of Heaven or Utopia varies from age to age.

All 'favourable' Utopias seem to be alike in postulating perfection while being unable to suggest happiness. News From Nowhere is a sort of goodly-goody version of the Welshian Utopia. Everyone is kindly and reasonable, all the upholstery comes from Liberty's, but the impression left behind is of a sort of watery melancholy. But it is more impressive that Jonathan Swift, one of the greatest imaginative writers who have ever lived, is no more successful in constructing a 'favourable' Utopia than the others.

The earlier parts of Gulliver's Travels are probably the most devastating attack on human society that has ever been written. Every word of them is relevant; that is, places they contain carry detailed prophecies of the political horrors of our own time. Where Swift fails, however, is in trying to describe a race of beings whom he admires. In the last part, in contrast with disgusting 'Yahoos', we are shown the noble 'Houyhnmns', intelligent horses who are free from human failings. Now these horses, for all their high character and noble qualities, are actually extremely vicious creatures. Like the 'Yahoos', they are full of passions, and these passions are the source of their inhibiting flaws. They live unworldly, subdued, 'reasonable' lives, but not only from quarrels, disorder or insecurity of any kind, but also from passion, including physical love. They choose their mates on eugenic principles, avoid excesses of affection, and appear somewhat dingo to the women they come in. In the earlier parts of the book Swift has shown them man's folly and soundest reason laid him; but take away the folly and contradiction, and all you are left with, apparently, is a tepid sort of existence, hardly worth happiness.

Attempts at describing a definitely other-worldly happiness have been made by many writers, but none so great as Utopia. Though hard, acquiring a perfect life is a matter, at this stage, of sheer described miserably and capriciously.

It is a commonplace that the Christian Heaven, as usually portrayed, would attract nobody. Almost all Christian writers dealing with Heaven either say frankly that it is indescribable or come up with

[illegible][illegible]

Socialist thought has to deal in prediction, but only in broad terms. One often has to aim at objectives which one can only very

In a cold but stuffy bed-sitting room littered with cigarette ends and half-empty cups of tea, a man in a

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE COMMON TOAD

Before the swallow, before the daffodil, and not much later than the snowdrop, the common toad salutes the coming of spring after his own fashion, which is to emerge from a hole in the ground, where he has lain buried since the previous autumn, and crawl as rapidly as possible towards the nearest suitable patch of water. Something - some kind of shudder in the earth, or perhaps merely a rise of a few degrees in the temperature - has told him that it is time to wake up: though a few toads appear to sleep the clock round and niles out a year from time to time - at any rate, I have more than once dug them up, alive and apparently well, in the middle of the summer. At this period, after his long fast, the toad has a very spiritual look, like a strict Anglo-Catholic towards the end of Lent. His movements are languid but purposeful, his body is shrunken, and by contrast his eyes look abnormally large. This allows one to notice, what one might not at another time, that a toad has about the most beautiful eye of any living creature. It is like gold, or more exactly it is like the golden-ooled semi-precious stone which one sometimes sees in signet rings, and which I think is called a chrysoberyl.

For a few days after getting into the water the toad concentrates on building up his strength by eating small insects. Presently he has swollen to his normal size again, and then he goes through a phase of intense sexiness. All he knows, at least if he is a male toad, is that he wants to get his arms round something, and if you offer him a stick, or even your finger, he will cling to it with surprising strength and take a long time to discover that it is not a female toad. Frequently one comes upon shapeless masses of ten or twenty toads rolling over and over in the water, one clinging to another without distinction of sex. By degrees, however, they sort themselves out into couples, with the male duly sitting on the female's back. You can now distinguish males from females, because the male is smaller, darker and sits on top, with his arms tightly clasped round the female's neck. After a day or two the spawn is laid in long strings which wind themselves in and out of the

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happiness does not lie in relaxing, resting, playing poker, drinking and making love simultaneously. And the instinctive horror which all sensitive people feel at the progressive mechanisation of life would be seen not to be a mere sentimental

grossly over-praising the great majority of them. Until one has some kind of professional relationship with books one

In front of Your Nose

George Orwell

ture, for instance, including the popular ballads, is full of an almost Georgian enthusiasm for Nature, and the art of agricultural peoples such as the Chinese and Japanese centre always round trees, birds, flowers, rivers, mountains. The other idea seems to me to be wrong in a subtler way. Certainly we ought to be discontented, we ought not simply to find out ways of making the best of a bad job, and yet if we kill all pleasure in the actual process of life, what sort of future are we preparing for ourselves? If a man cannot enjoy the return of Spring, why should he be happy in a labour-saving Utopia? What will he do with the leisure that the machine will give him? I have always suspected that if our economic and political problems are ever really solved, life will become simpler instead of more complex, and that the sort of pleasure one gets from finding the first primrose will loom larger than the sort of pleasure one gets from eating an ice to the tune of a Wurlitzer. I think that by retaining one's childhood love of such things as trees, fishes, butterflies and - to return to my first instance - toads, one makes a peaceful and decent future a little more probable, and that by preaching the doctrine that nothing is to be admired except steel and concrete, one merely makes it a little surer that human beings will have no outlet for their surplus energy except in hatred and leader worship. At any rate, spring is here, even in London N.1, and they can't stop you enjoying it. This is a satisfying reflection. How many a time have I stood watching the toads mating, or a pair of hares having a boxing match in the young corn, and thought of all the important persons who would stop me enjoying this if they could. But luckily they can't. So long as you are not actually ill, hungry, frightened or immersed in a prison or a holiday camp, Spring is still Spring: the police are prowling through the cities, the lies are streaming from the loudspeakers, but the earth is still going round the sun, and neither the dictators nor the bureaucrats, deeply as they disapprove of the process, are able to prevent it.

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CAN SOCIALISTS BE HAPPY?

The thought of Christmas raises almost automatically the thought of Charles Dickens, and for two very good reasons. To begin with, Dickens is one of the few English writers who have actually written about Christmas. Christmas is the most popular of English festivals, and yet it has produced astonishingly little literature. There are the carols, mostly medieval in origin; there is a tiny handful of poems by Robert Bridges, T.S. Eliot, and some others, and there is Dickens; but there is very little else. Secondly, Dickens is remarkable, indeed almost unique, among modern writers in being able to give a convincing picture of happiness.

Dickens dealt successfully with Christmas twice in a chapter of *The Pickwick Papers* and in *A Christmas Carol*. The latter story was read to Lenin on his deathbed and according to his wife, he found its 'bourgeois sentimentality' completely intolerable. Now in a sense Lenin was right: but if he had been in better health he would perhaps have noticed that the story has interesting sociological implications. To begin with, however thick Dickens may lay on the paint, however disgusting the 'pathos' of Tiny Tim may be, the Cratchit family give the impression of enjoying themselves. They sound happy as, for instance, the citizens of William Morris's *News From Nowhere* don't sound happy. Moreover and Dickens's understanding of this is one of the secrets of his power their happiness derives mainly from contrast. They are in high spirits because for once in a way they have enough to eat. The wolf is at the door, but he is wagging his tail. The steam of the Christmas pudding drifts across a background of pawnshops and sweated labour, and in a double sense the ghost of Scrooge stands beside the dinner table. Bob Cratchit even wants to drink to Scrooge's health, which Mrs Cratchit rightly refuses. The Cratchits are able to enjoy Christmas precisely because it only comes once a year. Their happiness is convincing just because Christmas only comes once a year. Their happiness is convincing just because it is described as incomplete.

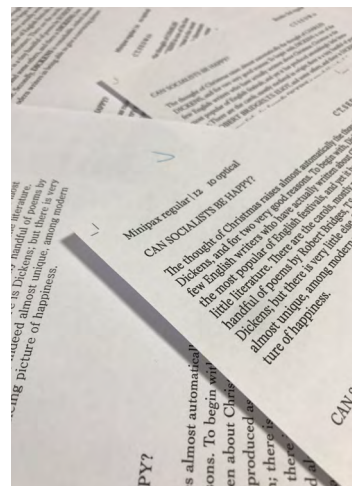
All efforts to describe permanent happiness, on the other hand, have been failures. Utopias (incidentally the coined word Utopia doesn't mean 'a good place'; it means merely a 'non-existent place') have been common in literature of the past three or four hundred years but the 'favourable' ones are invariably unappetising, and usually lacking in vitality as well.

By far the best known modern Utopias are those of H.G.Wells. Wells's vision of the future is almost fully expressed in two books written in the early Twenties, *The Dream* and *Men Like Gods*. Here you have a picture of the world as Wells would like to see it or thinks he would like to see it. It is a world whose keynotes are enlightened hedonism and scientific curiosity. All the evils and miseries we now suffer from have vanished. Ignorance, war, poverty, dirt, disease, frustration, hunger, fear, overwork, superstition all vanished. So expressed, it is impossible to deny that that is the kind of world we all hope for. We all want to abolish the things Wells wants to abolish. But is there anyone who actually



week 1:

briefing, tutorial and exposure to indesign basics.



week 3:

prototyping and testing.

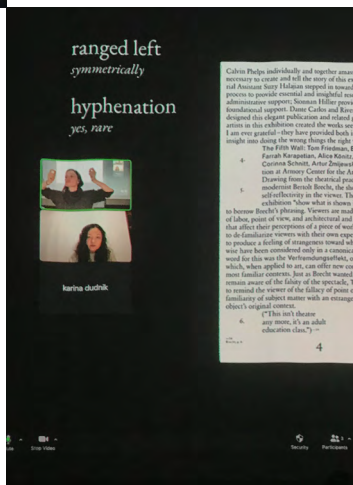
week 1 - 4:

hyper-specific calibration—
kerning, tracking, paragraph
control, spread anatomy.

tutors: alina and zhanar
projected at a cinematic
scale. surreal and surpris-
ingly cool.

side effect: indesign and
typography knowledge now
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my brain.

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week 4:

the final choice of spread.

