

ISSA Proceedings 2006 - Undesirable Passions: Utopia's Emotionless Rationality



As these noble Houyhnhnms are endowed by nature with a general disposition to all virtues, and have no conceptions or ideas of what is evil in a rational creature; so their grand maxim is, to cultivate *reason*, and to be wholly governed by it. Neither is *reason* among them a point problematical as with us, where men can argue with plausibility on both sides of the question; but strikes you with immediate conviction; as it must needs do where it is not mingled, obscured, or discoloured by passion or interest. (Swift 1991, p. 285)

There is a large body of literature that might be called utopian ranging from Plato's *Republic* to many of the more recent works of science fiction that are often more aptly described as dystopian but which inevitably critique utopianism or the attempt to construct an ideal society. Indeed, the field of literature that might be considered in relation to what I shall attempt to argue in this paper concerning utopianism's implied notion of reason, as inferred largely from its treatment of the emotions, becomes impractically extensive when one attempts to include the countless utopianisms that haunt and inform great swathes of literature as novels, poems, and works of political philosophy variously refer to or attempt to construct utopias of varying hues. For example, to refer to just two of the main utopian texts frequently discussed by scholars of utopianism, one might examine the implicit notions of reason and how these can be better understood in relation to their respective treatments of the emotions in Tommaso Campanella's *City of the Sun* (1623) and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1626). But other texts, some of which figure less prominently if at all in academic discourse on utopianism, might also be examined with regard to their implicit notions of reason and treatment or omission of the emotions such as Milton's depiction of the prelapsarian Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden in *Paradise Lost*, Bunyan's quest in his *Pilgrim's Progress* towards freedom from the burden of sin and realization of salvation in the Celestial City, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, Voltaire's *Candide*, Robert Burns' poem 'A Man's a Man for a That', John Lennon's

famous hit single '*Imagine*', and so on. In short, perhaps unsurprisingly given the traditional connections between reason and many notions of idealism and given that all utopianisms are themselves types or sub-species of idealism, there is a superabundance of texts that are to varying degrees significantly relevant to utopianism and which might yield some interesting readings and reassessments when examined with regard to their respective notions of reason and their treatment of the emotions. However, to constrain my focus considerably: rather uncontentiously, there are three main texts that stand out as central to our comprehension of this often complex genre: Plato's *Republic*, Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). What I have to say in this paper relates to these texts and only indirectly to other instances of utopianism. Constraining my argument to a discussion of some rather broadly defined characteristics of utopianism, I shall not include any close reading of the primary texts in question nor shall I make any pointed reference to several of the secondary texts which have helped to inform this discussion (Kumar 1993, Molnar 1990, Starnes 1990, Slusser 1999). This paper therefore attempts to provide a merely preliminary exploration of some of the underlying assumptions concerning reason and the emotions, and the relevance of the fictive nature of utopian texts.

Evident within much of the literature on utopianism, it is justifiably a virtual commonplace to say that utopias are highly dependent upon rationality, as they construct more or less realistic fictional worlds in which conflict is minimized, social efficiency and cohesion is crafted by adherence to regulative principles, guidelines, and rules, and in which rational solutions for many if not all of life's ills and vicissitudes collectively describe the good for humankind as something only possible by means of the overarching governance of reason. The ideally just society that is outlined by Socrates in *The Republic*, or the utopian society more elaborately figured by More in *Utopia* or brilliantly satirized by Swift in the final journey of Gulliver to Houyhnhnmland is a society governed by rationality. Indeed, in certain utopian texts, so dominant is reason or the implicit and explicit appeals to rationality, and so de-emphasised are the emotions, that there is little room for any, except the most constricted or anaesthetized, emotional life.

This rationality in the utopian text is decidedly teleological or purposive as it seems to serve a single overarching end or *telos*, namely, the realisation and maintenance of peace, or of a peaceful, harmonious, and even tranquil existence – More's Utopians live wholesome lives, enjoying notably harmless, simple

pleasures, comparatively unperturbed by want or strife (More, trans. 1989, pp. 50-60, pp. 74-77). This peaceful nature of the utopian society or ideally good or just society is one that is largely if not entirely devoid of conflict. Certainly, More's *Utopia* seems to insist in several places on the overarching importance of internal peace or harmony and freedom from protracted internal disputes (More, trans. 1989, p. 49, p. 82, p. 104). Thus, the typical utopia is a society of internal harmony, a society almost entirely free of internal conflict. In *Utopia* social activities are restricted to minimize the possibility of brawling, crime, and vice (More, trans. 1989, p. 60, p. 73). Furthermore, there are plenty of severe punishments for conduct that might give rise to internal conflict – banishment, enslavement, and forced celibacy are just some of the more outstanding ones mentioned in *Utopia* (More, trans. 1989, pp. 80-84). However, despite More's severe restrictions on the possibility of *internal* conflict, the Utopians do seem to be eminently capable of dealing successfully with external conflict as they wage war on neighbouring states (More, trans. 1989, pp. 87-95).

To reverse Hume's famously troubling and parlous phrase concerning the relationship of reason to the passions, it would seem that in a utopia, as exemplar of a certain ideal of human well-being, the passions are and ought always to be the slaves of reason since the ameliorative purposiveness or teleology of a rationality aimed at the achievement and maintenance of peace and freedom from internal conflict not only pervades the characteristically utopian text but such reason is the prevalent engine that produces those solutions to some of the problematic features of human existence that comprise the bulk of the utopian text. The reason-emotion dichotomy within the utopian texts to which I am referring here, seems to acknowledge at least some degree of intersection between reason and the emotions, for how else might it be that reason could be said to control the emotions? And yet, in the utopian text what we tend to get is not so much an idea of reason controlling the emotions but rather something more akin to a reduction of the emotions as though, even more preferable to reason being the master of slave-like passions, reason's predominance seems to be guaranteed by the various ways in which the emotional content of the utopian citizens' lives has been drastically reduced. In More's text, the predominance of reason is a fundamental and inviolable assumption. For example, the Utopians regard an individual who disputes the virtue-generating proposition 'that after this life vices will be punished and virtue rewarded' as 'a low and sordid fellow'. Such an individual is not physically punished but is instead encouraged to argue

with the learned 'For they are confident that in the end his madness will yield to reason.' (More, trans. 1989, pp. 98-99). Grounded upon assumptions concerning the nature of a reason-emotion dichotomy in which conflict, as integral to certain emotional experiences and extremes of passion, and the emotions more generally, must be governed, constrained, suppressed, or in some other way rendered subservient to or eradicated from the state by the superior power of reason, the rationality or notion of reason that the utopian text implicitly relies upon may thus be described as an emotionless *and* non-conflictual rationality.

Now all this provides a fairly stark characterisation as mainly inferred from More's Utopia of some features of the typical utopian text pertinent to its vaunted rationality and treatment of conflict and the emotions. A more finely nuanced discussion of the utopian text's notion of rationality would need to make certain qualifications to these rather starkly stated points. But, leaving this aside for a lengthier discussion elsewhere, suffice it to say that the assertions I have made so far seem to apprise us of at least one main problem. If the implicit rationality of the utopian text is something that is so shorn of emotional content and of internal conflict, what kind of reasoning is this? Perhaps the notion of an emotionless rationality largely devoid of any sustained or significant conflict is in a sense comprehensible, but more worryingly, is an emotionless and largely conflict-free rationality thinkable or desirable with regard to the exercise of *human* reason? What sort of human existence would we live were our reasoning to be almost entirely emotionless and our argumentation devoid of all but the most transitory moments of conflict?

What I want to assert at this stage is that an emotionless rationality, though seemingly possible and even desirable in those cases where we particularly require a very high degree of impartiality, often bears the mark of something at least non-human and even inhuman or inhumane. Furthermore, if we refer to the Pragma-dialectical ideal model of critical discourse, with its reliance upon a definition of 'argument' as a dialogue between at least two disputants aimed at reaching a satisfactory resolution of their dispute, then the utopian notion of rationality as something largely or entirely free of conflict either describes a rationality much more extremely abstracted from real-life social argument or implies the virtual cessation of ameliorative discourse and indeed of any meaningful, or purposive dialogue concerning non-self-evident and thus at least minimally contentious topics such as seem to comprise so much of normal, human

discursive exchanges and arguments (Eemeren 1996, pp. 280-83). Though I am acknowledging that emotionless and non-conflictual rationality may be a logical or theoretic possibility (something we can at least comprehend), in practice it is either not possible or it is at least practically futile to construct arguments devoid of any conflictual dimension, and it is undesirable for us to reason without some involvement of our emotions (or it is undesirable for us to *think* that we can so reason without involving the emotions). If the utopian notion of reason implicitly regards the passions as undesirable, contra to this, I would claim that it is undesirable for us to aspire and resort to an emotionless rationality. Furthermore, it is unimaginable that we could reason in any way productively or concerning matters important to us without at least some degree of conflict, since the exercise of reason is so closely interlinked with language as a pre-eminently social and dialogic phenomenon of our existence generally pervaded by conflicts of opinion or perspective of greater or lesser severity, or by reasonable doubting (as is clearly acknowledged by the Pragma-dialecticians and by any other approach to argumentation that insists on conflict as a necessary condition of argument). Though it might seem to be logically or theoretically possible to be an emotionless, solitary reasoner whose reasoning never involves a modicum of conflict or negation, such reasoning would be at risk of failing to accommodate that large and admittedly often ill-defined but nonetheless important emotive dimension of our day-to-day reasoning (and thus, in dealing with topics where the emotions are significant, would run the risk of not only being less competent than a fully human emotional rationality would be, but would also run the risk thereby of being dangerously inhumane). Alternatively, an emotionless rationality, akin to much non-moral rationality, would quite simply lack direct relevance to the bulk of fully human concerns. Furthermore, just as it would seem to be largely pointless or overly theoretical to rid reasoning of all conflict, it would seem to be practically impossible to reason without some involvement of the emotions, since what possible motivation could we have for defending a particular standpoint if we did not care about that standpoint and thus have at least some degree of explicit or implicit emotional attachment to, or concern for, that standpoint?

Hence, I want to assert that the utopian text, to the extent that it relies upon a notion of reason as emotionless and free from conflict, attempts to construct an ideal world in which all (or at least the greatest majority) of its citizens are emotionless and largely incapable of conflict with one another to such an extent that they cannot be said to represent real human experience of reasoning or

argumentation – the citizens of a typical utopia, though in most other respects often quite closely resembling human beings, are at best not fully human in their exercise of reason. Though the utopian citizen may enjoy many of the benefits of an existence free from conflict and unruly passions, the loss of a rich emotional life and the capacity to be genuinely committed to many standpoints, values, and beliefs, and perhaps even to the most important standpoint of the utopian state concerning peace, implies a major reduction of what one might broadly describe as a fully human existence. And so, what I am asserting here is that the citizen of utopia is a de-humanised subject.

But herein another problem: the utopian text advocates that governance by emotionless rationality and its corollary of a de-humanised subject is greatly more preferable to present or actual conditions describing the common or shared experience of humanity. But what is this ideal of a model human nature largely stripped of an emotional life? It is as most ideal things are, contrary to and even contradictory of our present condition. But since this contrary of a de-humanised subject is proffered as preferable to the present condition of humanity, which it often severely critiques, the utopian text indulges in entertaining and even advocating the notion that a drastically modified human nature is crucial to the attainment and maintenance of peace.

But, in advocating as ideal a dehumanised subject, the utopian text is arguably also a dehumanising text in the ways in which it highlights or exaggerates the fallibility of human reason, an exaggeration that indicts humanity as being profoundly flawed in our abilities to reason and conduct ourselves reasonably. The utopian text, critiquing our present condition (not without some good reasons for doing so), indicts us as doomed to endure the countless ill effects of a rationality crucially flawed by our propensities to involve the emotions in our reasoning and to conflict with each other in argument.

The utopian ideal state of peace, harmony, tranquillity is wrought through an extraordinary degree of social cohesion or integration or a perfect harmonization of ends in which the individual becomes subsumed to the general will and more specifically the general good, largely defined in terms of sustainable peace and internal harmony or freedom from internal conflict. Furthermore, this peaceful state is presented as being only possible following the eradication of our worst vices, especially greed, envy, malice. But in the wake of such a seemingly desirable elimination of excessive or intense and troublesome passions, there would also seem to be an eradication of many other emotional states and emotive

aspects relevant to good argumentation.

Emotionless, yet highly rational, the utopian adheres (must adhere) to rules, principles, and norms that define his society, and in such strict adherence to this rationality and the *telos* of peace, the utopian must be said to be committed to his society's rationality and ultimate end of peace and its continuation. But just how can the utopian so adhere or be committed to his society, its rules, structures, the sole end of peace, and so on? How can a utopian be committed to any of the important aspects of his society if he is a dehumanised subject comparatively or largely incapable of experiencing emotions and virtually incapable of engaging in anything recognisably conflictual with his fellow utopians? Is it not fallacious of the utopian text to assert the possibility of a society of perfect internal harmony and peace achieved by the citizens' general if not universal high level of commitment to the *telos* of peace, and to the rules and so on that define the very rationality that seems to promise the sustainability of internal harmony but which now seems inconceivable since such commitment must be so cool or indifferent without some degree of emotional underpinning, participation, or content?

Although this requires much closer examination than I am able to offer here, it would seem that within the utopian text there is, as a corollary to the dehumanised subject utopia requires for its very existence to be thought of as a possibility, a pervasive fallacy, which I shall call the *commitment fallacy*. If utopians are utterly devoid of emotion (or are at least devoid of an emotional life that we humans might recognize as such), the commitment fallacy in a utopian text will have been perpetrated every time that a utopian expresses or in some other way evinces his or her commitment to, for example, one of the utopian's standpoints on or principles or norms of conduct that so clearly help to maintain a state free from internal conflict, since such commitment is meaningless or empty because it must be an emotionless and hence valueless commitment. Furthermore, the idea that More's Utopians, albeit reluctantly, wage war on enemy states in self-defence, begins to look rather queer – can they care or feel in any way strongly about their state as something worth defending? Suffering little or no grief or being relatively unperturbed by death[i], feeling no very strong if any emotions concerning the particular material goods of their society, and in general only capable of experiencing the mildest of emotions, More's Utopians seem to have little genuine reason to fight in defence of what they have and how they live, unless perhaps they may be thought of as dreading alternative modes of existence as rationally and existentially inferior or in some sense brutal and filled

with many of the very things their emotionless rationality seems to eschew or actively suppress (More, trans. 1989, pp. 80-81, p. 99). But, if there are certain hints that the Utopians do feel strongly about the importance of preserving their society against their enemies and can thus be sufficiently committed to that society's internal peace to defend it in warfare, such strength of feeling seems to be merely occurrent and not dispositional, and its occurrence, focused as it is exclusively on their society's sole telos of attaining and maintaining peace, seems to relate to a range of emotions they are largely incapable of or, through their society's processes of enculturation, are prevented from experiencing – thus any emotionally intense reason they may seem to evince (through their conduct in waging war), and which they require to motivate defending their society (making their conduct in doing so consistently rational), is at worst chimerical since the utopians lack the sort of emotions that may be said to ground or better inform the occurrent emotional condition requisite to any good reason there might be for waging war – which is to say, that a good reason for waging (or for refraining from or conducting themselves with any degree of moral propriety during) war must involve some emotion within the commitment to that reason which the Utopians can only apparently/ fictively/ chimerically (since not actually) undergo. But the emotional de-contextualization and merely occurrent nature of the Utopians' inferred intense feeling about the worth of preserving their society and their lives, if it does not render such a feeling chimerical, at best suggests that this necessary emotion to do with so highly valuing their society and their lives, is an instrumental or merely functional emotional experience or emotive reason that, while it may be tantamount to a concession to the importance and ultimate ineradicability of the emotions in reasoning, cruelly conditions the Utopians towards a unanimously agreed-upon decision to wage war and the inevitable violent conflict with non-Utopians necessary to maintaining Utopia itself against its adversaries. The idea that every citizen of More's Utopia could unfailingly enter into violent conflict without being troubled by any competing emotions that might suggest alternative ways of resolving the conflict, I am suggesting, seems to concentrate virtually all of the Utopians' emotive capability into one, highly restricted and functionally necessary (and thereby publicly-orientated and determined) emotion that we might call a love of peace. But some such overriding or all-governing love of peace, suggests a highly dubious kind of loving in its very necessity or implicit determinism and in the plethora of other emotions that now must be implicit within the Utopians' commitment to certain crucial principles of a just war (and yet which similarly seem to be out of kilter with the emotionless

rationality of the Utopians during their periods of peace). But, the Utopians' love of peace seems to be a highly dubious kind of loving in that it also largely subsumes all other feelings of love (for other ideas, people, and material things) to such an extent that this love of peace (this commitment to peace) suggests and even implies a radically dehumanised emotional experience in which the all-governing object of a citizen's love must be the ultimate good of peace within Utopia.

So, from all that I have said so far it would seem that the utopian text typically advocates a dehumanised subject exemplifying an emotionless rationality as the only possible kind of being that could realise and maintain the ideal good of complete internal peace. However, for such a society to be possible it must not only dehumanise itself (or be crucially dependent upon a dehumanised citizenry), but the comparatively emotionless citizens, virtually incapable of conflict, must rigidly adhere or be committed to the particular rules, principles, and norms that define that society, and they must also be committed to the single end or telos of utopia, namely, peace or internal harmony and freedom from internal conflict. However, this great commitment, so essential to the logical possibility of Utopia's realisation and maintenance of internal peace, is deceptively an empty or impossible commitment since, to put this bluntly, Utopians just cannot do commitment. We humans can be gently or fiercely committed to all kinds of thing; but More's Utopians are such emotional castrati – they are so emotionally empty or anaesthetized – that the text's portrayal of their dutifulness and defence of their otherwise often rather attractive society seems, if not strictly a logical impossibility, then at least rather too close to such impossibility for the text's ideal to be sufficiently credible as one towards which we might aspire.

This seems to take us towards claiming that the ideal of utopia is impossible; that the ideal the utopian text describes does not and cannot exist for human beings. However, the non-existence of utopia – its unrealisability – partakes in what I have been attempting to claim concerning the dehumanising nature of the utopian text. Indeed, arguably the impossibility of utopia drives the dehumanising knife into humanity even deeper than the text's advocacy of a de-humanised subject. Utopia seems comprehensible as a logical possibility (if only we could become dehumanised en masse and rid ourselves of those undesirable and troublesome passions and our resultant propensities towards conflict). Furthermore, the perfect peace, freedom from internal conflict, and immense security in an

absolute superiority over any opposition from beyond the parameters of our society are offered by the utopian text as a great inducement, tempting us in a most seductive way by appealing so strongly to some of our greatest fears concerning our security and our greatest desires for a complete life of pleasure or happiness. However, this seems to position the reader somewhat like poor Tantalus: attainment of the ideal is impossible for us and yet, since we seem capable of apprehending it as nonetheless the most desirable thing of all, foolishly, tragically, comically, paradoxically we crave it as the very end of all our craving. Divided against ourselves as we echo a false reason-emotion dichotomy, the utopian text encourages the reader to ascend into the seductively attractive dream-world of an emotionless and conflictless rationality. From this vantage point we may look down disparagingly on ourselves, our pitiful incapacity to be modified, on the complexity, weakness or partiality our emotions seem to generate in our reasoning, and hence we may gaze aghast at the despairingly unreasonable nature of human reason. But there is surely something potentially rather cruel, dehumanising, and ultimately self-destructive about how the utopian text so positions the reader, condemning the reader to participate in and thereby adopt a self or other-regarding attitude of general condemnation. All such construals of human nature, implicit within the utopian text, as an entity that is fatally flawed by self-annihilatory self-division, hopeless longing for what we can never attain, and the humiliating realisation of both a sufficient capacity to comprehend and value the ideal and an insufficiently emotionless rationality to realise it, so condemn the reader's participation in such humanity as to encourage the reader towards a misanthropic attitude that dehumanises both self and other.

Perhaps the greatest cruelty of the utopian text therefore is deceit and the fallaciousness of what the text appears to be arguing. The notion that the utopian text is fallacious may be buttressed by identifying several other fallacious moves within any given utopian text such as, typically, the use of hyperbole, straw man argumentation, the *ad baculum*, *ad hominem*, and *ad verecundiam*. But these aside, the fallaciousness of utopianism as evinced in *Utopia* and in *Gulliver's Travels* principally resides in its perpetration of a commitment fallacy by means of which the great commitment required to maintain the utopia's internal peace and many social comforts and advantages is deceptively little better than an empty or meaningless commitment since so utterly shorn of any emotion excepting the most purely functional feeling about the worth or love of utopian society and its telos of peace

- this is a love of peace that knows no love. The peaceful, harmonious, and understandably desirable state we are tantalisingly offered is one in which, as the commitment fallacy discloses, no human could exist and thus the ideal offered has no real existence beyond its linguistic construction and highly restrictive logic. But having this existence as a linguistic construction, the other-worldly unobtainability of the ideal it conjures for its reader, is ever at risk of being mistaken by the reader as, if not (for the most naïve of readers) a true account of some exotic but actual topos, then true in another sense: true as an object of desire since coherent and since accordant with certain incontestable features of what it is to be reasonable or rational. Inasmuch as the reader may slide into this dream of utopia and from thence partake in a by no means entirely unjustified misanthropy (much akin to what happens to Gulliver), the reader is led into a more or less dangerous collusion with utopian fallaciousness and may thereby unwittingly subscribe to a self-defeating and even self-annihilatory attitude that is, if not entirely, then largely against his or her best interests, the interests of humanity, and the possibility of both personal and social amelioration.

However, as soon as the reader charges the utopian text with falsely implying that: the ideal of rationality is emotionless; commitment to certain standpoints is possible without any emotional content (or, in the case of Gulliver, his commitment to the utopian Houyhnhnmland can be genuine and fully justified, though based on delusion or misperception); and, that reasoning itself may subsist without conflict - as the reader charges the utopian text with such fallaciousness, the reader's perspective concerning how best to read the utopian text may shift radically towards a more critical and hence more complete understanding of how the text constitutes a significant participant in our discourses concerning certain highly important aspects of human experience. Thus the utopian text can become a participant in developing our understanding of such things as: the relationships between reason and the emotions; the relative desirability and reasonableness of certain emotions or extremes of emotion within argumentation; the value and pervasiveness of conflict in relation to how conflict unconditioned by certain moral and rational rules and principles can be destructive and conduce towards the cessation of argumentative discourse; the interpretative role of the reader's moral perspective and commitments; the reader's capacity to interpret and read the text critically, and so on. But differences in moral perspective, commitments, interests, abilities, experience, and expertise between readers are alone more than sufficient to suggest that a

great many readers may, quite excusably, fail to notice from the vantage point of the ideal state that the utopian text describes, that this optimistic and no-doubt well-intentioned dream is dependent upon a dehumanised subject, acceptance of which brings the reader into a fatal, dehumanising and ultimately self-annihilatory attitude of condemnation towards humanity. This fallacious potential of the utopian text is thereby something that the reader, apprised of its ability so to mislead, may feel so indicts utopianism generally that its otherwise elegant castles in the air become tainted with the rank stench of countless human atrocities perpetrated in the name of reason and high moral idealism.

However, fallaciousness is, in a sense, the name of the fictional make-believe game in which, in order to enjoy the utopian text's various deceits and yet at once approach a richer and more accurate understanding of its philosophical import, the reader must become a *critical* participant. The impossibility of utopian existence, except as a fictive existence, is in fact something that More himself suggests by coining the term 'utopia', which as most commentators point out with reference to its Greek etymology means both a no-place and a good (or happy or fortunate) place. The ideal good of a complete and sustained internal peace and harmony only exists, so the term 'utopia' suggests, in a non-existent place or a *topos* of the imagination, a *topos* only possible as a linguistic abstraction or construct, a fictional *topos*. Furthermore, at least in More's *Utopia* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, it is strongly hinted that the narrators of these texts are at least somewhat crackbrained, the preposterous mouthpieces of somewhat crazed or ridiculous notions. In More's text the narrator Raphael Hythloday's very name means something like wise-fool (More, trans. 1989, p. 3, p. 5), whereas in Swift's text Gulliver's name hints that he is one who although veracious has been gulled or deluded and hence is the honest reporter of his own highly unreliable testimony or judgement. Thus, what I am alleging concerning the fallaciousness of these texts and the nature of the ideal they seem to advocate, needs to be modified to accommodate the self-consciously and at times playfully fictive characteristics of the utopian text that invite the reader to participate in an extended joke, or be amused by the texts' playful treatments, and at times inversions, of reality, truth, falsehood, the profound, and the trivial. Once we begin to feel the full force of these texts' humour, playfulness, their wanton hyperboles, caricatures, and dependence upon narrators who can be to our immense amusement ridiculous, preposterous, wise, insightful, and misguided in the extreme, charges concerning argumentative fallaciousness seem to fall out of

account as irrelevant, if not for the more naïve reader (about whom we ought to be most urgently concerned), then for the ideal implied reader these texts seem both to foster and demand. To avoid the folly of a naïve reading of these texts – to avoid becoming, as it were, the butt of the writer's joke against flawed humanity and perhaps paradoxically thereby a dangerous misanthrope – one needs to become aware of how these texts beckon the reader towards the highly problematic nature of their subject matter and also of the relation between art and life, text and reader. What More's *Utopia* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* seem to demand of us is that we become ever more cautious, perceptive, sensitive, knowledgeable, and playfully alive to both the seriousness and the humour they attempt to encompass and impart – and in all this the utopian text is a humanising and not a dehumanising discourse.

Utopian literature is by no means straightforward polemic or advocacy of any particular standpoint and as soon as we pay attention to the playfully fictive nature or dimension of the typical utopian text, attempts to charge utopianism with perpetrating fallacies and misleadingly seducing the reader towards profoundly misanthropic attitudes, seem to become less appropriate or greatly more problematic as though we are missing the point, not getting the joke, being as dull as the very coolly rational horses in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* who have such laughably great difficulty in understanding how one can say the thing that is not, or lie. By means of the complexity of the utopian text's fusion of rationality, philosophical argument, social critique, a sustained comparison of human societies with a supposed ideal society, fiction, and humour, the reader enters a labyrinth of competing notions that collectively unsettle, disturb, delight, and instruct or beckon the reader towards an increasingly sophisticated grasp of several aspects concerning reason and the emotions, and the place of fictional literature within the reader's moral and rational discourse. Dystopian literature, starting with Swift's satire upon the utopian ideal and our dreams and hopes of a utopian state, draws attention to the dystopianism embedded or implicit in the utopian text, the harshness, cruelty, and inhumanity of a broadly misanthropic attitude towards human reasoning and hopes of social amelioration – yet arguably Swift's satire of utopianism, albeit more playfully than More, condemns humanity much more severely or more universally. Thus, for all the playfulness and humour of many utopian texts, I do not think that utopian literature can entirely wriggle free of this indictment of its indictment of us, particularly when one considers the corrosive dehumanising aspects of Swift's own satiric humour and the general

pervasiveness of naïve readers all too susceptible to the text's fallaciousness. However, when we actively engage with the utopian text's humane longing for betterment, its challenging disparagement of human reason as marred by the propensity towards conflict and unavoidable incorporation of undesirable emotions, and its deft and humorous highlighting of its fictive ontology, we enter a field of discourse that invites reflection on our morality, rationality, emotionality, and in doing so the utopian text's greatest contribution to our humanity inheres in the ways in which pre-eminently such texts invite us to enter a complex process of reassessing the nature of our fondest wishes, desires, ideals, a process of re-assessing ourselves, the limits, failures, strengths, and richness of our extensive exercise of reason through argumentation dependent upon, or conditioned, informed, or aided and abetted by the emotions, a reassessment of reason in relation to the emotions, conflict, what constitutes the good for humankind, and the rich diversity of our emotional lives as the only hope we may have for achieving that human amelioration, well-being, and flourishing dependent upon our capacity to resolve conflicts involving widely varying degrees of emotional intensity and intelligence, and albeit imperfectly envisioned by utopianism's enchanting, and enchantingly comedic, visions of peace.

NOTE

[i] More's Utopians do grieve (or 'mourn over a death only if the man was torn from life wretchedly and against his will' (More, trans. 1989, p. 99) but their response to death seems to be rather unnaturally cool, an aspect of their emotionless rationality satirized by Swift's description of the Houyhnhnms who experience 'neither joy nor grief' at the deaths of friends or relations. Gulliver here cites with admiration the female Houyhnhnm's cheerfulness and utterly emotionless response to her mate's death (Swift 1991, pp. 293-4).

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