

Philosophy Kitchen #23 / 2025

Utopia and Scepticism. Variations on the New World

Edited by Fabrizio Meroi e Paolo Vanini

CALL FOR PAPERS

In contemporary philosophical debate, utopia is often presented as a political project with the ambition of making a *tabula rasa* of the past to establish—in a future that is more or less imminent—a model of society radically opposed to the *status quo* of the historical present. In this sense, utopia is configured as a revolutionary, and potentially totalitarian, hypothesis, as it envisages a complete overturning of reality that does not admit any compromise or partial reform (Tower Sargent 2010; Altini 2013). Therefore, it is appropriate to maintain a critical gaze towards utopia, in the awareness that the road towards an ideal world can lead to the dead end of an impossible world.

This approach tends to underestimate the fact that the term “utopia” did not arise to denote a political project, but a literary genre originating in the Renaissance era (Fortunati 2001; Vieira 2010; Yoran 2010). As such, utopia exploits the narrative dimension of fiction not to create a *tabula rasa* of the past, but to practice a gesture of *epoché* in relation to current reality. The New World imagined and narrated by utopians, even before being an ideal place, represents an alternative model to the existing world: a world founded on logical, ethical, political, and religious principles different from those that regulate the mechanisms of contemporary society (Ruyer 1988). It is at this juncture that the sceptical dimension of utopian thought emerges: in order to imagine a society that obeys norms and values different from our own, it is necessary to suspend judgment on the actual validity of these values and norms. Utopia functions as both a fiction and a theoretical hypothesis, allowing the reader to observe reality from an unusual and paradoxical perspective, presenting an upside-down world that plays with the contradictions of the real world to suggest that these contradictions do not constitute the only possible reality (Ginzburg 2002; Piaia 2018).

Based on these premises, the present issue of *Philosophy Kitchen* intends to investigate the relationship between utopia and scepticism through an interdisciplinary approach. The aim is

to demonstrate how the utopian imagination has destabilized the boundaries that—within a given tradition or discipline—regulate and justify the distinction between possible and impossible, as well as between legitimate and illegitimate or right and wrong. When such boundaries are transgressed, the utopian-sceptic (whether writer, intellectual, or artist) does not materially generate a ‘new world’ but creates the conditions for acting, thinking, and composing in ways different from those crystallized by tradition. The habit of looking at and interpreting the world in compliance with certain traditional values triggers the erroneous and unconscious belief that these criteria are unquestionable and unchangeable (Montaleone 2011). Conversely, the utopian-sceptic advocates for doubting these criteria to emancipate one’s gaze from the coercive force of habit and to reveal the possibility of new horizons.

In this regard, this issue of PK explores two mutually complementary questions:

- 1) How has utopian scepticism contributed to the creation of new languages and forms of expression in both philosophical and artistic fields?
- 2) How have these languages and forms of expression represented a moment of discontinuity from the earlier tradition through a more or less confrontational dialogue with the past?
- 3) How can these moments of utopian discontinuity be interpreted as forms of 'conceptual design,' capable of accelerating the process that allows a theoretical vision to take root in the real world and common sense?

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THEMATIC SECTIONS

Proposals may explore these questions by focusing on various moments or themes in the utopian tradition, including but not limited to:

- Utopia and carnivalesque symbolism between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance;
- Utopia as a narrative *trompe-l'œil*;
- Utopia between secular thought and religious symbolism;
- The state of nature and utopia as legal fiction;
- The encounter with the Other: identity and otherness in utopian worlds;
- Nature and culture in utopian thought;
- The relationship between humor and skepticism in satirical utopias;
- Utopias and dystopias in the modern and contemporary imagination;
- Utopia and architecture;
- Music, time, and utopia: music as a form of utopian expression.

Bibliografia / Bibliography

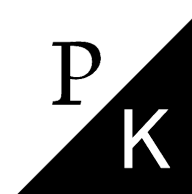
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SUBMISSION

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DEADLINES

- 30/09/2024: abstract submission
- 15/10/2024: notification of acceptance/rejection
- 30/04/2025: full paper submission
- 30/06/2025: notification of the peer review results
- October 2025: publication



LANGUAGES

English, Italian, French, German, Spanish.

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