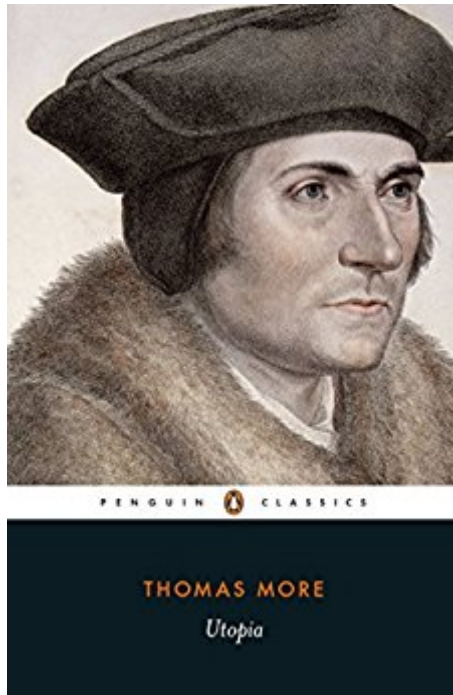


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Utopia (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

'Even if you can't eradicate harmful ideas or remedy established evils, that's no reason to turn your back on the body politic' In *Utopia*, Thomas More gives us a traveller's account of a newly-discovered island where the inhabitants enjoy a social order based on natural reason and justice, and human fulfilment is open to all. As the traveller, Raphael, describes the island to More, a bitter contrast is drawn between this rational society and the custom-driven practices of Europe. So how can the philosopher try to reform his society? In his fictional discussion, More takes up a question first raised by Plato and which is still a challenge in the contemporary world. In the history of political thought few works have been more influential than *Utopia*, and few more misunderstood. Dominic Baker-Smith's introduction examines the conflicting voices and perspectives of More's masterpiece and relates them to the European context of his time. This new edition also includes a chronology, notes, appendices, glossary and suggested further reading. Translated and introduced by Dominic Baker-Smith

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Customer Reviews

This is a first-rate biography of the sainted Thomas More. Ackroyd's goals in this biography are to present a non-anachronistic depiction of More, and through his portrait of More, to give readers a sense of the late Medieval world destroyed by the Reformation and the emergence of nation-states. Ackroyd presents More as a man exemplifying the late Medieval ethos. Deeply religious, highly intelligent, and well educated, More existed with a profound sense of human fallibility and saw all aspects of his world as manifestations of a divine order. The world as the body of Christ, a metaphor to which Ackroyd returns repeatedly, is a recurring theme. The temporal world is transient and a necessary preparation for the eternal and in a crucial sense, less real than the eternal world of Christian teachings. This world is bound by custom and inherited legal and religious traditions, hierarchial and paternalistic in its structure of authority, and deeply enmeshed in rituals that mirror the structure of divine authority. More was not, however, a reactionary except when the radicalism of the Lutherans pushed him to stringent and violent acts needed to defend the integrity of his perception of the Christian world. A prominent member of the Northern European Humanist movement, More was dedicated to the recovery of a renovated faith based on a new reading of the Patristic fathers, attention to classical, particularly Greek neoplatonic authors, and disdain for complex scholastic theology. He and his fellow Humanists hoped for reformation of the Church without abandoning the unity of Christendom, the apparatus of ritual and hierarchy that defined so much of their lives, and the primacy of papal authority. Ackroyd's efforts to present More and the late medieval ethos are very successful.

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