

The Permanent State Society

This paper was handed in for the 'Write a New Utopia' contest organized by the KU Leuven in 2016. The contest, which was open for all KU Leuven students, celebrated the 500 years of Thomas More's publication of Utopia in the city of Leuven. The task was to write about your own utopia in less than 5000 words (without summary).

Summary

Our current way of reasoning has led us to the world we live in today: overpopulation (with all its consequences) and large-scale economic, commercial and industrial activities not only destroy our environment but our humanity too. The more people we try to fit into this world, the lesser becomes the value and freedom of each individual, lowering the quality of life for all. To accommodate this ever increasing population, societies become more complex, less sustainable and more prone to collapse. This much is clear to me: if humanity wishes to save and improve itself we must change the way we reason and interact with our environment.

As you might already have guessed, a better world will have to be a world with a lot less people. A lower population density will provide a more harboring environment not only for humans, but to all creatures that have the right to call this planet their only home. Another crucial aspect that will have to change is our relationship with nature. Any civilization that wants to survive must respect the natural limits of its environment. We will have to look at nature not as a fierce competitor but as a child looks at its parents. A small-scale society will help us achieve that.

Democracy too will have to reinvent itself. Only people that act responsibly will have political rights and the right to define the future of their society. Without being constrained by the bottom layers or the economic elite, they have the task to reorganize society into a just and good place. Not motivated by power and money, they choose for a small-scale and decentralized

organization of society and call their Utopia 'Cellular Society', honoring Nature's great design. In this paper I will introduce the reader to this kind of society.

In the following 5000 words or so, I will give the reader a short description of how these Utopian societies are organized and how they function. I will talk about the social and economic organization, physical infrastructure, public services, the family unit and private property, politics and foreign policy of a Cellular Society. To give the reader a visual idea of the concept, I have added in attachment an illustration of a possible layout of such a society.

Introduction

At a certain point in the future, Humanity will reach its permanent state. It will no longer undergo any major transformation in its organization and Humanity will reach its moral optimum. Any new disruptive development would mean a worsening of the human condition. Finally, our population will reach a stable and sustainable size, much lower than the carrying capacity of the Earth, and will be organized into Utopian societies, which I call Cellular Societies.

These societies are characterized by their small size and their ability to provide their own primary needs. I like to think about them as modern versions of the ancient Greek city-states. Within these communities, Humanity mastered the most difficult of crafts, that of living well and doing good.

But before the world can be organized in such a way, these city-states will have to compete with current society, the primitive state. During this period in human history, known as the long and harsh intermediate state, Humanity will be divided into two groups. One group, a small minority, will have to settle themselves in isolated communities that are organized according to high moral standards. They will educate their offspring according to these standards and by doing so they will evolve into the Cellular Societies of the permanent state. The other group, the vast majority of the human species, will be left to

function in the existing societies. Incapable of improving themselves morally, they continue their quest for never ending growth and fool themselves with the thought that humans have the right to subject nature and their fellow brothers and sisters for their own profit. Because of their completely different view of life and adherence to other values, they will never understand how people can live in Cellular Societies.

But the cellulars have a high moral standard and they believe that everybody can and deserves to live in their society. Gradually, they integrate families (that meet certain criteria) from the primitive societies into their communities. They learn them how to live the good life and this is how, little by little, the whole of Humanity will achieve the permanent state.

While I'm eager to explain to you how this adventure of the intermediate state would look like, I will only describe the permanent state in this paper. More importantly, the many philosophical theories that form the foundation of my reasoning will have to be omitted in this paper as I have barely enough space to describe to you this Utopian society I dream of. The philosophical foundation and description of the intermediate state are treated in respectively the first and second chapter of my manifesto 'On Human Improvement' that I have been writing during the last few years. This paper is a summary of the third and final chapter, titled 'The Permanent State Society'. I certainly hope that I can finish this manifesto in the coming years, because promoting a Utopian society without explaining how to get there is only a job 'half done'.

Cellular Society

To explain the structural organization of Humanity in the permanent state I use the analogy with a biological organism. Organisms consist of many cells that cooperate to form a larger and complex living being. Each cell produces its own energy and has its own function within the organism. Through their membranes they exchange resources with each other which they need to fulfill their function.

In this analogy, a single cell represents one community. A multitude of them form societies and a multitude of societies form nations. There are two main types of cells: the living cells and the working cells. The living cells are those that harbor populations and their only function is to provide the basic services and goods for a fixed population size. Their size can vary greatly but most of them have a small population of not more than a few hundred inhabitants. They produce their own energy and food (primary goods) so they can function autonomously but they also trade these goods with neighboring living cells. The village center forms the nucleus of the cell (which is not necessarily situated in the geographic center of the cell) and this is where all public buildings are located and where the major roads connecting each cell, meet and form a large roundabout. Near this center the inhabitants have their homes and around these settlements are grass- and farmlands covering nearly half of a cell's surface. Each cell is surrounded by forest, which functions as borders that separate each cell.

Working cells contain all the factories necessary for the production of more complex goods and services. Healer cells, which are a kind of working cell, have elaborate medical facilities and gray cells have research facilities and academies. Most of the working cells have no permanent populations. Instead, inhabitants commute daily to the neighboring working cell, the distances are always within cycling range.

The most profound difference with primitive society in terms of its organization, is the fact that it is organized for a small and stable population. This has many advantages. First, there is no need for a continuous creation of more jobs, houses or any other infrastructure. The number of hospital beds, school chairs and workplaces remain constant, simplifying society enormously. The same property is constantly inherited by the same amount of people and there is only a need to produce something when it is worn-out beyond repair.

Secondly, a low population density means less stress on the natural environment

and an easier integration of society in that environment, further simplifying its organization. In primitive society, with so many people cramped into cities, there is a constant need for a more complex set of laws and rules to live by (excluding nature and limiting human freedom in the process).

The citizens of these communities call themselves 'cellulars'. Physically they look like us, after all they are our descendants, but their moral character is not to be compared to ours. They show the same emotions and behave like our finest, but we would find their convictions radical and inappropriate. Some of us may find them boring, but I'm sure they would judge us as irresponsible.

Cellular Society is not difficult to understand, its structure is logic and its organization is as simple as it gets, so the following description will suffice to give you a good idea. On the other hand, it is very probable that you won't agree with it, but this is quite normal: your reference frame (the standards you use to judge and that have been formed by your social environment) rejects everything that is in violation with it. But if you are open to reason and logic, it is possible that your perception will be convinced by the sheer power of the truth hiding behind these words, thus making it possible to accept things that your reference frame rejected at first sight.

Belief system

That what differentiates Cellular Society from the primitive societies is its philosophical foundation. This philosophy was penned down by one of the founders of the first Cellular Society, in a masterpiece called 'On Human Improvement', which remains the fundamental reference work in cellular politics and education.

Humanity was in dire need of a new reference frame. It was just beginning to shake off the yoke of religion while the spiritual void that it left was being filled by an even greater lie. Instead of worshiping an external god, humans started to worship their own and that is how growth became the new god. Humanity remained enslaved, it simply had a new

master.

The philosophy that would bring hope consists of three main components: the responsibility of the individual, the task of society and the purpose of Humanity. The first level, the individual task of each human, is twofold: (1) he must develop himself into an autonomous and moral agent and (2) he must contribute to the two higher levels. The second level, the task of society, dictates that a society must provide an environment where (1) humans can fulfill their individual responsibility and (2) realize Humanity's purpose.

This purpose Humanity has given itself is (1) the protection of all sentient life (2) and the guardianship of moral life. In order to achieve this, Humanity had to protect and restore the natural environment of all animals (and people) and evolve towards a steady-state economic system. To preserve a high quality of life for humans, society had to be organized into small-scale societies where each individual can receive the necessary care and value. Because of this organization, humans developed a very strong relationship with their natural environment and learned how to respect her. Another crucial aspect of a moral life is the omnipresence of the truth. The truth is considered so sacred by cell citizens that secrecy on any level is severely punished; they believe that justice and balance can only be achieved if every person knows the truth. In Cellular Society all knowledge and every bit of information is available to everyone.

This philosophy is ubiquitous in Cellular Society. Cells are organized as simple as possible using relatively simple forms of technology so that the citizens can achieve their personal responsibility without compromising the natural environment and other sentient beings. But in order to fulfill Humanity's purpose, they must also develop advanced forms of technologies so that they can protect moral life from its many enemies, whether they come from within or from other worlds that must be out there.

Another consequence can be seen in the education of all inhabitants and their function within society. During education, every citizen

is raised for one of the three purposes. Some will develop themselves as much as they can (and by doing so they contribute to the value of Humanity by doing research or becoming a master), some will serve society by providing services and goods (for example, by becoming a craftsman or a farmer) and others will develop, build and maintain the more complex forms of technology that help Humanity realize its external responsibility. But in Cellular education, everyone is taught the truth. The sciences teach them how the physical world works while history and humanities teach them how humans interact with each other and with their natural environment.

Economic organization

In a Cellular Society, the economic system is no longer a system for exploiting and deceiving the masses and it is no longer controlled by a small elite. Because people can only have a limited amount of property and all goods are plentiful and equally distributed, there is no need for money as a currency. Money lost its use and became obsolete a long time ago.

The economy is divided into two separate activities. The first activity concerns the production of the primary goods such as food and energy. The second activity provides society with non-critical goods such as electronics and other luxury items.

Since private property is limited and money is obsolete, people consume far less secondary products than in primitive society and enjoy lots of free time (only few goods and services must be produced). Publicity and sponsoring are not allowed (it would make not much sense) and when people need something which they can not find in their village center, they look it up on the cellnet. There is no economic competition between cells, the continuous struggle of societies and individuals to compete with each other would not only deplete the Earth but also the human spirit. As described earlier, individuals are not motivated by awarding them more property but they are driven by a common purpose. The necessary tasks to maintain society (such as

maintaining public infrastructure) are done by all citizens through a labor rotation system.

The production of food

The food the inhabitants consume is healthy and diversified. Their diet is vegetarian as killing animals is regarded as an immoral and barbaric act. Animal products such as milk and cheese are only produced under strict animal rights.

The production of fruits, vegetables, cereal-based food and animal products happens on the many farmlands located around the village center (known to the inhabitants as the cytoplasmic region). These grass fields are peppered with trees and other plants that provide shade and opportunity for many birds and insects. The dairy animals are free to go where they want in a cell, they share the same land with the inhabitants. Most households have their own greenhouses where they cultivate their vegetables and fruits are harvested from the many trees that can be found all over the cytoplasmic region.

The common agricultural land and greenhouses are owned by the cell's agricultural cooperative. Most cell inhabitants are member of this cooperative and are enrolled in rotating labor schemes for work on the fields or inside greenhouses (allowing year-round harvest). They are taught to use the permaculture technique and by using this method they can produce enough without the use of any chemical products (human waste is reused as main fertilizer). The harvest is distributed among the inhabitants during the weekly market in the cell's village center.

Villages trade primary goods with their neighbors and this is how the diet of the people is diversified. Fruits, vegetables and animal products that are not produced in one cell can be imported from neighboring cells by trading them with goods they produce plentiful. In case a harvest yields less food than expected the deficiency is compensated by the surplus of previous years or by neighboring villages.

The production and distribution of energy

Besides food, the only other primary good is electricity. The settlements of cellulars need electricity for powering their homes, factories and village center. Depending on the local environment, they use a combination of different technologies. Wind turbines provide the majority of the energy but some cells diversify their energy production with concentrated solar power and small hydro power. To ensure the availability all year round energy is stored as compressed air.

Every home and building is connected to the electricity grid which runs (underground) along the main roads connecting each cell nucleus (together with a potable water pipeline and a high-speed data network). The homes of cellulars require only a very small quantity of energy and many of them produce their own energy. If technical failures or natural disasters disable a power plant, energy from surrounded cells is automatically rerouted to the affected cell.

Transportation infrastructure

Because the distance between each cell nucleus is not more than 10 km, personal transportation between cells happens primarily by (electric)bicycle. For the inhabitants whom it is unsafe to ride a bicycle, such as the elder or disabled, there are small autonomous cars available in each cell. They are allocated among those who need them most. The roads do not have lighting and are not treated with salt during cold winter days, as this would only increase power consumption, environmental destruction and disturb the natural day/night cycle all living beings are used to. Instead, the citizens are forced to live according to the rhythm of nature.

Each working cell that needs heavy equipment or produces larger goods is connected with a railroad system. This is how the different industries distribute their products to all living cells quickly and safely without disturbing the public road system.

The production of secondary goods

The production of most secondary goods happens in specialized working cells. The common factories located in these cells produce all the necessary goods a civilized society needs. As many goods as possible are made from locally sourced natural materials such as wood, ceramic and wool. Metals such as steel and aluminum are also widely used as they can easily be recycled. All tools within households are made of these materials and bio-plastics are only used in a limited number of products.

Of course, electronic products require other materials. These materials are mined and processed in miner cells and are shipped with rail to local factories in the working cells that are located close to the living cells. Although all goods are designed and built to last, damaged or worn-out goods that are beyond repair are disposed of in recycling cells.

Public services

Besides the production of goods there are some public services that all cellulars have access to. The two most important services are the public education and health service.

Education

Like in any wealthy society, the education of the young is crucial for the success of the society's future (education is mandatory for all cellulars). It is true what they say: the quality of the inhabitants is reflected in the quality of their community. Of course, these inhabitants have to grow up in a caring environment.

The education process is split into three parts. When the child is able to walk and fulfill its primary needs on its own, it starts the first part of its education. This first stage happens within the family: the parents are responsible for teaching basic social behavior and morality to their children. From birth to the initiation of the first part, both husband and wife are exempted from community service, providing them with enough time for care.

After a few years, they attend the

community school, which is the second part of their education. This part is the same for all children and this is where they discover the sciences, history and their language. Most cells have their own primary school and if they don't, parents bring their children by bicycle to a neighboring cell that has a primary school.

Only two languages are taught in school. The first language they learn is the native language of the cell they live in. If the cell has a particular dialect, they learn the dialect. This is how the remaining diversity in human languages is safeguarded and passed through from generation to generation. They cannot understand why the primitives made it illegal to teach these languages (because of this most of them are extinct). The second language the students learn is the universal language, English, which is taught to every citizen of a cellular society.

Equal attention is given to the teaching of the sciences, history and philosophy. They start with history and gradually more science is introduced into their curriculum. Although chemistry, biology and geography are the basics, the most important science classes are ecology and anthropology. Only at the end of the primary education, when they have a good understanding of how the natural world works and know well their own history, they are introduced into philosophy. Last but not least, each child is taught how to grow and harvest food.

Around adolescence, children enroll in academies. These are scattered throughout the nation so that each cellular has access to it within an acceptable range. This is where they specialize their skills. Basically, they have to choose between the three main functions citizens are given in cellular society: caretaker, craftsman or builder. All three specializations are equally crucial for the proper functioning of a cellular society and for the fulfillment of the society's tasks.

Caretakers are responsible for all work linked to the caring of nature and its many biological lifeforms. They provide health care and research all threats to life and newly discovered lifeforms. Craftsmen are the handymen and maintainers of society. They

make and maintain everything from the smallest household items to houses. Builders are like craftsmen but they build and maintain more complex forms of technology like scientific instruments or spaceships. All men and women are free to follow more than one function and this is even encouraged (the more each knows, the more autonomy and value each has).

Health care and emergency services

Each cell can provide basic health care in the village center but more complicated forms of treatments are provided in hospitals that are located in specialized healer cells (also called white cells). These hospitals are equipped with state-of-the-art tools and because of the low population density they can give patients a personalized treatment in a serene environment.

Each village center has its own emergency response team which consists mostly of a few trucks and some caretakers and craftsmen. They provide the know-how that the cellulars in need do not have as fast as possible. This can range from a leaking roof to a burning house or a dying citizen. Logically, emergency resources are shared between cells when circumstances require it.

The family unit and private property

In Cellular Society it is very important to control population size. To solve this issue, every citizen is born with one 'child right'. When a citizen decides to remain childless (or is born sterile or dies before reproductive age), it can donate his child right to a member of another family. But to ensure that parents have enough time to raise their children in a proper way, the number of children a couple can have is limited to three, even in a reconstituted family. The family name of the mother is passed on to the daughter(s) and the father's family name is passed on to the son(s).

Each family line, which comprises all three (or sometimes four) generations of the same family have three different private properties. Each property consists of a house

and a piece of land large enough to provide food for the family (if they choose to grow their own food). The houses are fully equipped with all necessary appliances and meet the highest standards in energy efficiency and comfort. To further limit the ecological footprint of each family, the amount of electronic appliances in a house is limited. For example, a house may not have more than one electronic product of each type (one TV, one fridge, etc...).

The young, when leaving their parental home, are given the house that is not occupied by their grandparents. This is how family property is passed on from generation to generation, there is no need for the construction of new houses. Families are allowed to exchange houses with other families but this requires the consent of all members of both sides. When a family remains childless, the property is transferred to a child of a family with three children.

The private property of a person (or family) is limited to his home. People may choose to increase their material wealth by appropriating more goods and luxury items, but by doing so they risk losing their political rights.

Cellular Politics

Politics has lost its complexity and regained its effectiveness. As you can expect, politics becomes easier as the population size and density decrease. Each cell has political autonomy and the system can best be described as a direct unanimous democracy with conditional participation. The political organ of a cell is the cell council and they meet every three months in the village center.

The democracy is direct and unanimous because inhabitants represent themselves (there are no political representatives or parties) and the voting of laws happens unanimously, decisions are made only when all members agree and voting is public. Although it is a democracy, before becoming a member of the cell council inhabitants have to pass an exam on universal ethics and have to make a vow that they will act according to the

standards of the world liberation philosophy (as described in the reference work referred to earlier). When members show signs of irresponsible behavior (like smoking, owning too many luxury goods or exceeding their breeding limit) their political rights are withdrawn and serious offenders can even lose their child right. When citizens show regret and change their behavior they can regain their political rights. This is how the permanent state is maintained: only individuals who want to live the good life have a chance to determine the future of their community. As the knowledge and application of moral values is not dependent on the intellectual capacity of an individual, every citizen has equal opportunity to political participation.

The council discusses all sorts of things that affect the functioning of the cell. The labor rotation system, trade with other cells and foreign policy are three important items but citizens with political rights can also make propositions of their own that are subsequently discussed into detail and voted. But most importantly, local politics must ensure the political autonomy of the cell. Thanks to the political decentralization of Humanity, all people who did not have a nation and had to bear the yoke of imperialism were given their independence. Nations such as Scotland, Wales, Catalonia, Palestine, Wallonia and Flanders have finally rid themselves from their oppressor and now enjoy the same rights of all other cell nations. Now they have all the tools at their disposal to define their own future and to protect their culture and language.

Foreign policy

Cells must maintain a good contact with their neighbors. Trade between cells is not critical for the survival of a cell but crucial if the living standards are to be maintained. The council fixes the trade quotas for primary products and decide which goods must be exchanged.

Another important reason to have a good foreign policy is to safeguard the serenity and justice that endows all cell nations. If, in a rare case, there is hostility between cells it is the moral duty of every neighboring cell to

safeguard peace and investigate the matter.

Foreign policy is also necessary to sustain the remaining cultural diversity that blesses the human species. Cellulars find it remarkable that their ancestors who pleaded for more cultural diversity in their societies supported a process that eradicated most cultures. As a result, only a few cultures remain and this is why cellulars take this issue very seriously and maintain a strict immigration law. Only a few individuals coming from other nations can settle permanently into cells of other nations so that the non-native population size remains a small minority (they only get political and child rights after a long integration period). Individuals of different nations have the right to form a family but the amount of such mixed families must be so that it does not compromise future cultural variety. Everybody has the freedom to travel to any destination they wish as long as it is not permanent.

Foreign policy was much more important during the intermediate state. During this period, they had to resist and fight the political, economic and sometimes military attacks of imperialist primitive cells. But by simply telling the truth, the first Cellular Societies convinced more and more people to join their cause. Primitive societies countered this by spreading lies (like 'growth is necessary' or 'cell citizens are racists') through their well-equipped media but after centuries truth prevailed and balance was achieved. Unquestionably the most important accomplishment of the cell nations' foreign policy during the intermediate state was the reinstatement of the original cultures and populations of colonized territories such as America and Australia.

Conclusion

I hope that I have given the reader a fairly good description of the Utopian society I have in mind, it is not simple to describe such an enormously complex subject in a relatively short essay. I have clearly stated that in order to value the individual and the natural environment he is part of, we must evolve towards a small-scale society. Only then can

we provide enough space, resources, care and time for each of us.

It is nice to dream about what we have to achieve but more importantly it is crucial that we become conscious of the problems that are obstructing us from achieving it. While these dreams may give us the will to achieve it, it is this consciousness that reminds us what we must do. That is why I always keep asking myself why is it that we can dream it, but fail to achieve it? It must be because Humanity is not yet conscious enough.

One thing is sure, we will have to change our reference frame and values. We must realize that the choice of how many children we wish to have is not a personal choice, but as it affects the future of the whole human community, it must be decided by that community. We will have to set ourselves an external purpose, a goal that we need to achieve how impossible it may seem, and that goal must not be growth. Also, we will have to reinvent democracy as it is limited by the moral potential of the people. In a society where citizens vote with their wallets and deny or belittle the ecological impact of their lifestyle, capitalists will remain in power and politicians will not care taking drastic measures to save our environment (there are good reasons why prison guards are not elected by the inmates). In order to protect and sustain biological and cultural diversity we will have to give every animal and every people its own home were it can flourish at its own pace. Finally, we must realize that all non-radical measures are exhausted in a world where we know what we must do but fail to do anything about it. The longer we wait, the more drastic the corrective measure shall be.

But as in any philosophical approach of the Utopian idea, the most difficult question remains unanswered: who decides who are the conscious among us? Or in case we already know who they are (and I believe that many of us do), how do we give these conscious men and women power in an unconscious world?