

**Another World Is Possible:
Ecosocialism and Thomas More's *Utopia***

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In her Booker Prize winning novel, *Wolf Hall* (2009), Hilary Mantel counterposes Thomas More as the arch enemy of her chosen hero, Sir Thomas Cromwell. More is portrayed as a scheming, power-hungry plotter in the snake pit of the Tudor court. In the novel he is described for example by Archbishop Audley in the following murderous terms:

Your undivided church has liked nothing better than persecuting its own members, burning them and hacking them apart where they stood by their own conscience. Slashing their bellies open and feeding their guts to dogs. You call history to your aid, but what is history to you? It is a mirror that flatters Thomas More. But I have another mirror, I hold it up and it shows a vain and dangerous man, and when I turn it about it shows a killer. For you will drag down with you God knows how many, who will only have the suffering, and not your martyr's gratification. You are not a simple soul, so don't try to make this simple. (Mantel 2019: 566)

Responding to this selective literary treatment, Vanessa Thorpe writes in her *Guardian* review of the novel that it begs the question: "Thomas More is the villain of *Wolf Hall*, but is he getting a raw deal?" (Thorpe 2015). Thorpe sums up the character assassination of More by stating: "Mantel's portrait [...] is of a torturer of heretics with a penchant for self-punishment and a misogynist to boot" (2015). Most notably, Thorpe refers to the accusations leveled against More when he became Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor of him persecuting Protestants, whose brutal mistreatment he is to have personally supervised. This clearly remains a sensitive issue since Mantel felt herself obliged to defend her damning portrayal in an open letter she published in *History Today*:

I situate More's heresy hunting in the context of his time, but I cannot treat it as an aberration, a minor flaw in an otherwise impeccable character. It was at the core of what he did and what he was. He was proud of it and, in the light of his worldview, it made sense. But he conceded neither sincerity nor humanity to those who disagreed with him; he relished the thought of their pain, which he hoped would be prolonged for eternity. In his century or ours, we are entitled to be repelled by this. (Mantel 2015)

In his biography of Thomas More, however, Peter Ackroyd throws serious doubt about these charges against More by pointing to the religious propaganda war waged at the time in which More became a prominent figure of hate among those who supported the Protestant Reformation. This was also something that contributed to More's subsequent imprisonment and execution:

From John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and other post-Reformation sources we learn that [More] tied heretics to a tree in his Chelsea garden and whipped them; we read that he watched as 'newe men' were put upon the rack in the Tower and tortured until they confessed; we learn that he was personally responsible for the burning of several of the 'brethren' in Smithfield. Stories of a similar nature were current even in More's lifetime and he denied them forcefully. He admitted that he did imprison heretics in his house – 'theyr sure keypyng' he called it – but he utterly rejected claims of torture and whipping [...] It is likely that this incident prompted the later rumour that he had tied heretics to the tree in his garden, a report that More specifically rejected, 'as helpe me god'. He was not a man falsely to invoke the deity and it can be believed that the heretics whom he detained and interrogated suffered 'neuer [...] so mych as a fylyppe on the forhed'. (290-1)

As to the accusation of misogyny, suffice to say at this stage that in his biography of More's own family circle, John Guy shows there was in fact an unusually close relationship between More and his daughters, all of whom were highly educated by their father. Moreover, his eldest daughter, Margaret, became not only his most active collaborator, but was herself considered to be "one of Europe's leading women intellectuals" by their close humanist friend and scholar, Erasmus of Rotterdam (2009:142).

Another question closely related to this is how politically radical was More personally and how seriously are we meant to take his depiction of an alternative society in his book, *Utopia* (1516), which he wrote in Latin. Thus, on the one hand, we have More as a leading member of the Tudor court and then we have More the philosopher and his writings, in particular *Utopia*. As a humanist, More clearly thought he could combine the two roles, promoting progressive ideas both in church and state in the hope they would be adopted by some enlightened prince or monarch. As Ackroyd writes: "This is why it is impossible to separate More's theoretical interests from his practical pursuits; the immediate point of his humanism was social reform and, after the accession of Henry VIII, he played an increasing part in the affairs of London and neighbouring countries" (Ackroyd 1999:132). One has to remember, however, that More remained a monarchist as well as a Catholic, someone who believed in hierarchical authority over the affairs of the world. There was moreover no viable democratic alternative at the time to this monolithic feudal power structure. Nevertheless, on his fictional island of *Utopia*, the beginnings of real people's power can be discerned.

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Not surprisingly, given this complex personal and political context, there has been a recurring difference of opinion about how to assess the classless community More portrayed in *Utopia* – whether this work of imagination was meant as a real recommendation of radical reform or merely a playful intellectual exercise. The aim to change society solely by means of ethical

argument was later seen for instance by Marx and Engels as being the very definition of ‘utopian’ socialism – worthy in theory but hopelessly idealistic in practice, as Engels writes in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*:

If pure reason and justice have not, hitherto, ruled the world, this has been the case only because men have not rightly understood them. What was wanted was the individual man of genius, who has now arisen and who understands the truth. That he has now arisen, that the truth has now been clearly understood, is not an inevitable event, following of necessity in the chain of historical development, but a mere happy accident. He might just as well have been born 500 years earlier, and might then have spared humanity 500 years of error, strife and suffering. (Engels 1968:32)

Even though More’s political tactic for change appears flawed, his egalitarian ideas have nevertheless not failed to inspire many of those who felt one needs to envisage social change before attempting to achieve it. Thus, the title of his book, *Utopia*, has provided the generic label for all subsequent positive depictions of alternative forms of society. Significantly, the very first comprehensive study of Thomas More and his *Utopia* was published by Karl Kautsky in 1888. As the leading theoretician of the Social Democratic Second International, Kautsky sought to investigate the origins of socialist ideas going back to the Middle Ages.¹ In Kautsky’s view, More was much more than a pipe-dreaming utopian. Instead, he saw his work as a pioneering point of political departure for the emergent Labour movement:

We believe that we have disclosed the most essential roots of More’s Socialism: his amiable character in harmony with primitive communism; the economic situation of England, which brought into sharp relief the disadvantageous consequences of capitalism for the working class; the fortunate union of classical philosophy with activity in practical affairs – all these circumstances combined must have induced in a mind so acute, so fearless, so truth-loving as More’s an ideal which may be regarded as a foregleam of Modern Socialism. (Kautsky 1959:171)

In contrast, however, C. S. Lewis, the famous writer of fantasy fiction, viewed More’s book merely as a literary *jeu d’esprit*, a lighthearted display of wit and imagination with no lasting political implications: “It becomes intelligible and delightful as soon as we take it for what it is – a holiday work, a spontaneous overflow of intellectual high spirits, a revel of debate, paradox, comedy and (above all) of invention, which starts many hares and kills none” (Quoted in Logan 1975:200-1). In a similarly dismissive manner, R. W. Chambers also insisted on denying the political impact of More’s work: “[W]e must never think of More as writing it for Nineteenth-Century Radicals or Twentieth-Century Socialists” (Quoted in Logan 1975:167). Despite such disavowals, however, this is exactly how More’s book has been perceived by later socialists. Following directly on from Kautsky, the marxist historian A. L. Morton argues for example in his classic survey of English utopias that the point is not to dismiss More as an anomalous product of

¹ Kautsky also wrote a comprehensive study of the communist ideals of early Christianity, *Foundations of Christianity* (1908).

his time, but to appreciate the ways in which he went beyond it. Not least in his perception of what could be achieved through radical political, economic and social transformation:

[W]hat is remarkable about More is not his limitations but the extent to which they were transcended, not the fact that his tolerance had limits but that the principle of toleration was so plainly set forth, not the occasionally reactionary features of his *Utopia* but its broadly communist economy, not his fear of popular action but his understanding of the causes of poverty and his real desire to remove them [...] it is in the *Utopia* that these essential features show most clearly. Here the thought is most luminous, the passion most evident, and here, in the nature of things, the socialism which could not but be obscured in the practical difficulties that beset the statesman was able to find its fullest expression. And it is as a pioneer of socialism rather than as a saint or a philosopher that More is enduringly important. (Morton 1969:75-6)

Another authoritative comment on how genuine More was about his *Utopia* can be found in Paul Turner's introduction to the translation he did for the *Penguin Classics* edition (which will be used in this present article). Turner, whose translation has been praised as one of the most rigorous and fluent English versions of the book's original Latin, addresses the question of More's communism in the following affirmative way:

Personally, I feel dissatisfied by such attempts to make the communism in *Utopia* metaphorical, and to water down all its social, economic, and political suggestions into a mere call for individual repentance. I am simple minded enough to believe, with certain qualifications, that the book means what it says, and that it *does* attempt to solve the problems of human society. (Turner 1973:12)

Turner returns again in his appendix discussion of *More's Attitude to Communism* to state unequivocally: "I have yet to see any conclusive evidence that More did not mean what he said about communism in *Utopia*" (Turner 1973:151).

More recently, in his foreword to the latest edition of More's *Utopia*, published to coincide with the 500th anniversary of its original printing, the radical science fiction writer China Miéville pursues a similar line of argument about More's ideas still retaining the power to provoke us with their contemporary relevance:

We can't do without this book. We are all and have always been Thomas More's children. Even his literary ancestors were also his preemptive descendants, throwing him up, making him a hinge point, so his ditch-demanding king could give their earlier yearnings a name. That we must keep returning to the text, with

whatever suspicion, is to honour it. It gave us a formulation, a concept, we needed. Though it is perhaps past time to rethink that word. (Miéville 2016:6)²

* * *

As the above brief survey indicates, More's *Utopia* has attracted a range of critics and activists who have linked it to key concerns in latter day socialist politics. More is for example seen to be clearly aware that the successful functioning of any egalitarian society presupposes the complete redistribution of wealth as well as the elimination of social classes. While the political and economic aspects of More's utopian society have tended to be the main consideration of this critical attention, the relationship between the citizens of Utopia and their natural surroundings has not stimulated the same amount of interest. In recent years, however, this has begun to be remedied by scholars such as Ivo Kamps and Melissa L Smith, who have reacted to the ecocritical neglect in previous re-appraisals of More's work:

Concepts such as the Great Chain of Being, based on a set of correspondences between nature and human society, although interrogated vigorously by Marxists, feminists, and new historicists to the point that many feel they are now permanently discredited, offer ecocriticism a model for ecological kinship between a widely used early modern set of metaphors and the real. One could say that if Marxists, feminists, and new historicists worked hard to *denaturalize* nature, then ecocritics are trying very hard to *renaturalize* nature, and, in the process, to naturalize aspects of human society. (115)

At the same time as there is a growing awareness of the need to transform society in a fundamental way, the literary attempts to link the utopian imagination with ecosocialism have struggled in its ideological wake. In his critique of fossil fueled global capitalism, *The Progress of this Storm*, Anders Malm nevertheless insists: "[I]f the climate movement and its various allies are to make any real dent in the curves, they [...] have to reinvigorate, recycle, reroute utopian impulses" (2020:220). This remains no straightforward task, however. As Fredric Jameson famously commented, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism (Jameson 2016: 144). A profound sense of despair about the seemingly inevitable approach of environmental Armageddon has, according to Jameson, caused almost the whole utopian genre to fall into disfavour: "We have seen a marked diminution in the production of new utopias over the last decades (along with an overwhelming increase in all manner of conceivable dystopias, most of which look monotonously alike)" (Jameson 2016:1). However, in order to try to recover the visionary potential of the utopian tradition, we have, in China Miéville's view, to start by distinguishing between the fatalism of capitalist ecocide and the revolutionary challenge of ecosocialism:

² In his critical discussion of More's text, John Storey writes: 'The power of Utopia, and the reason why it has attracted such a variety of interpretations, derives from the fact that it opens up a space for debate – a space that consists not of answers but of questions. *Utopia* is not simply declarative, describing an imagined island, nor is it imperative, insisting that here is a blueprint for the future, it is, in all its complexities, interrogative, asking questions about sixteenth-century England. It is the reader who must answer these questions because it is only readers who can supply the human agency necessary to make another world possible.' (2019:22)

Utopias are necessary. But not only are they insufficient: they can, in some iterations, be part of the ideology of the system, the bad totality that organises us, warms the skies, and condemns millions to peonage on garbage scree.

The utopia of togetherness is a lie. Environmental justice means acknowledging that there is no whole earth, no ‘we’, without a ‘them’. That we are not all in this together. [...]

Those rivers of milk and wine can stop being surplus. There’s nothing foolish about such yearnings: they are glimmerings in the eyes set on human freedom, a leap from necessity. Far from being merely outlandish, these are abruptly aspects of a grounded utopia incorporating political economy, a yearning on behalf of those who strive without power [...] These are dreams of sustenance out of reach of the dreamers, of the reduction of labour, of a world that will let exhausted humanity rest. (Miéville 2016:17-8)

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Marx can also be of help in this context, even though he wrote very little himself about what he thought a future socialist society might look like, focusing instead on analyzing the depredations of modern capitalism, as well as the struggle of workers against it. He is famously to have said he would not provide any “recipes for the cook shops of the future” (Quoted in Hardcastle 1983). He did however concern himself with the impact the capitalist mode of production had on the environment. Society, according to Marx, was totally out of kilter with itself and with nature. The key term he used in this context was ‘metabolism’, a concept that he associated with questions of both sustainability and a symbiotic connection with nature. According to John Bellamy Foster: “Writing in volume 3 of *Capital*, Marx argued that the ‘excrement produced by man’s natural metabolism’, along with the waste of industrial production and consumption, needed to be returned to the soil, as part of a complete metabolic cycle” (2000:163). In another particularly telling passage, Marx wrote of how humanity’s access to natural resources was only on loan, a precious collective heritage that is passed from one generation to the next:

From the standpoint of a higher socio-economic formation, the private property of particular individuals in the earth will appear just as absurd as the private property of one man in other men. Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations, as *boni patres familias*. (Marx 1981: 911)

One of the areas where this long-term nurture of nature had, according to Marx, fundamentally broken down was in the split between town and country, an artificial division of society that has characterized capitalism from the beginning of its existence. This social, political, economic and cultural rift was the result of an urban concentration of capital and industrial production made possible by the uprooting and displacement of whole rural populations. Under capitalism this contradiction between urban center and rural periphery has remained insolvable. More recently, however, in environmental terms, such geopolitical divisions have become potentially catastrophic. As Mike Davis has argued, the utopian image of the city as the locus of unlimited

economic growth and mass market consumerism is being transformed into a nightmare of slum expansion that threatens the whole of the planet:

[The] cities of the future, rather than being made out of glass and steel as envisioned by earlier generations of urbanists, are instead largely constructed out of crude brick, straw, recycled plastic, cement blocks, and scrap wood. Instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first-century world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay. Indeed, the one billion city-dwellers who inhabit postmodern slums might well look back with envy at the ruins of the sturdy mud homes of Çatal Hüyük in Anatolia, erected at the very dawn of city life nine thousand years ago. (2007:19)

In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx and Engels saw the urgent need to bridge this gap as part of a total reorganization of society: “Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country” (Marx & Engels 1998:19). However, while acknowledging More’s prescience in identifying this growing urban-rural dichotomy early on in its development, Kautsky proposes in his critique of More’s ideas a one-sided solution to the problem purely in terms of the development of modern industry. This completely misses the point of More’s vision of a more organically integrated society as the key to human emancipation. More’s alternative world is an epoch of recuperation, one of garden towns and village communes where food is locally grown and where goods and services are freely exchanged. In contrast, Kautsky saw the limitations of More’s agrarian socialism as simply being solved by a comprehensive technological transformation:

More had a particularly good opportunity to observe the tendency of the modern mode of production to increase the size of the great towns, for London was one of the most rapidly growing towns of that time [...] The conditions of London and More’s own inclinations combined to convince him of the necessity for abolishing the antagonism between town and country.

This can only be done by transferring industry to the countryside, by combining industrial with agricultural labour. If, however, this adjustment is not to lead to general rustication, the technical means must exist to remove that isolation which is bound up with small peasant farming, means for the communication of ideas by other methods than personal intercourse – newspapers, post, telegraph, telephone, must be highly developed, as well as means for the transport of products, machines, raw materials, and persons: railways, steamers, motor traffic. Finally, every agricultural undertaking must be so extensive as to permit of the concentration of a larger number of workers in one spot [...] Thus More’s communism is modern in most of its tendencies, and unmodern in most of its expedients. (Kautsky 1959:213-4)

This sounds like a plan for the complete industrialization of the countryside rather than an attempt to balance both sides with one another. Kautsky also reveals a similar sort of bias against country

living (which he called ‘rustication’) as Marx, who spoke about the need to get rid of the “idiocy of rural life” (Marx & Engels 1998:5).³

With hindsight, it is clear for example that modern, chemically based agriculture has become seriously detrimental to the soil, air and water. As a result, foodstuffs are poisoned by artificial additives – from pesticides in wine to arsenic in rice. Moreover, the international market-based system of cash crops leaves millions of people in developing countries to go hungry when demand or prices fall. Kenya for example supplies Europe with hothouse roses in the middle of winter. Any disruption in the supply chain has disastrous consequences for the livelihoods of workers. What the world needs instead is co-ordinated food production that is varied, healthy and sustainable. Without doubt, the anarchy of today’s precarious agrobusiness makes More’s co-operative, locally sourced cultivation seem much more the sort of greener society we should be striving for.

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In part one of *Utopia*, More rages against the inhuman displacement of ordinary people who had accessed the common land for generations, yet who were now forced off it by illegal acts of enclosure. This brutal privatization of forest and pasture, on which only sheep are left to graze, is one of the book’s most powerful political indictments of the system of private ownership:

‘Sheep,’ I told him. ‘These placid creatures, which used to require so little food, have now apparently developed a raging appetite, and turned into man-eaters. Fields, houses, towns, everything goes down their throats [...]

‘So what happens? Each greedy individual preys on his native land like a malignant growth, absorbing field after field, and enclosing thousands of acres with a single fence. Result – hundreds of farmers are evicted. They’re either cheated or bullied into giving up their property, or systematically ill-treated until they’re finally forced to sell.[’] (More 1973:46-7)

These changes signaled the beginning of modern capitalist farming which was to transform the face of England and elsewhere in its voracious drive for profit. It is a process that continues today in places like India and Bangladesh, where thousands of poor farmers commit suicide every year after losing their land. In Brazil and Indonesia huge areas of unique rain forests are logged, slashed or burnt in order to graze cattle to supply Europe and America with cheap meat. More’s description of the condition of England at the mercy of a ruthless economic system lies at the political and moral core of his whole argument. It confirms that these are not the idle musings of a metaphysical scholar, but a genuine attempt by a pioneering radical thinker to address the disastrous imbalances of society.

³ In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels wrote: “The bourgeois has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made the barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West”. (Marx & Engels 1998:5)

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In book two, More shows why the Utopians needed to abolish private property and exert instead direct popular control over their natural resources. Such a fundamental political and economic break with the past represents the most decisive expression of democratic power that transforms everything else:

Though, to tell you the truth, my dear More, I don't see how you can ever get any real justice or prosperity, so long as there's private property, and everything's judged in terms of money – unless you consider it just for the worst sort of people to have the best living conditions, or unless you're prepared to call a country prosperous, in which all the wealth is owned by a tiny minority – who aren't entirely happy even so, while everyone else is simply miserable. (More 1973:65)

More imagined a society in which the creative capacities of every individual are set free. Moreover, whether people live in towns or in the countryside, everyone is regularly involved in the production of food and the conservation of nature, two sides of the same ecological coin. This personal contact with the land gives people from an early age a tangible appreciation of the interdependence of human beings and their environment:

And now for their working conditions. Well, there's one job they all do, irrespective of sex, and that's farming. It's part of every child's education. They learn the principles of agriculture at school, and they're taken for regular outings into the fields near the town, where they not only watch farm-work being done, but also do some themselves, as a form of exercise. (More 1973:75)

Such a reciprocal exchange between town and country is based on the recognition of the intrinsic value of nature as well as the essential nexus between culture and cultivation. It is also one of the most effective ways in which both the physical and psychological separation between urban and rural life can be overcome:

Each year twenty people from each house go back to town, having done two years in the country, and are replaced by twenty others. These new recruits are then taught farming by the ones who've had a year on the land already, and so know more about the job. Twelve months later the trainees become the instructors, and so on. This system reduces the risk of food shortages, which might occur if the whole agricultural population were equally inexperienced. (More 1973:70-1)

Another concrete expression of this is the fact that Utopian society not only meets the basic needs of everyone in terms of food, clothing, housing, schools and hospitals. There is no money involved in any of these contexts, everything is free (gold is only used to make chamber pots). This creates a strong sense of community sharing in Utopia that promotes the physical and spiritual wellbeing of all its members. The myriad number of local restaurants, for example, all of which serve fine

food without payment, are not only a varied source of nutrition, but also of social contact and support:

However, you're quite at liberty to take food home from the market, once the dining halls have been supplied, for everyone knows you wouldn't do it unless you had to. I mean, no one likes eating at home, although there's no rule against it. For one thing, it's considered rather bad form. For another, it seems silly to go to all the trouble of preparing an inferior meal, when there's an absolutely delicious one waiting for you at the dining-hall just down the street. (More 1973:81-2)

Moreover, eating together creates a natural forum for discussion of the problems and issues of the day, an integral expression of the direct involvement of both young and old in decision-making that is practiced on the island:

Lunch and supper begin with a piece of improving literature read aloud – but they keep it quite short, so that nobody gets bored. Then the older people start discussing serious problems, but not in a humourless or depressing way. Nor do they monopolize the conversation throughout the meal. On the contrary, they enjoy listening to the young ones, and deliberately draw them out, so that they can gauge each person's character and intelligence, as they betray themselves in a relaxed, informal atmosphere [...] During supper they always have music, and the meal ends with a great variety of sweets and fruit. They also burn incense, and spray the hall with scent. In fact, they do everything they can to make people enjoy themselves – for they're rather inclined to believe that all harmless pleasures are perfectly legitimate. (More 1973:83)

The ultimate proof however of any truly sustainable society is the equal status of women and men, something that went far beyond the actual social conditions of More's own time and shows just how progressive his thinking was. This gender consciousness on More's part stemmed, as has already been noted, directly from his active involvement in the upbringing of his own daughters:

[M]ore was convinced by the time he began *Utopia* that a liberal arts curriculum involving languages, history and philosophy was better suited to the creation of a good society than a vocational one based on law. He believed it met the needs of girls and boys alike. (Guy 2009:60)

In Utopia, everyone is given the same educational opportunities, a process that continues throughout their lives, alternating between study, work and play. Moreover, a robust welfare system allows women and men to pursue their own creative ambitions freely and independently. According to Kautsky, this is also a reflection of More's genuine socialist convictions: "The emancipation of women from the household involves their political emancipation. An equal footing for the sexes in public life is advocated by every modern proletarian socialist, as it was by the great Utopians" (Kautsky 1959:224). Women's ability to take an equal and active role in Utopian society also contributes towards a general abhorrence of violence, war and colonial

expansion. This radical correspondence between individual and collective freedom provides a firm foundation for a community based on solidarity, tolerance and mutual respect. The absence of privileged elites or bureaucratic castes in Utopia also speaks to us across the centuries about the viability of a truly democratic socialism.⁴

In her book *No One is Too Small to Make a Difference*, the young Swedish climate activist, Greta Thunberg writes of her own generation who will have to face even more deadly consequences of global warming. Their belief in a better future has, in consequence, already been forfeited:

We children are doing this to wake the adults up. We children are doing this for you to put your differences aside and start acting as you would in a crisis. We children are doing this because we want our hopes and dreams back. (Thunberg 2019:68)

Today, the Covid 19 pandemic has also brought home with terrible urgency the question of the overall survival of humanity. Clearly, we need more radical solutions to face these enormous existential challenges. Capitalism is killing both the planet and people on it. A secure future for both humankind and the planet demands a very different kind of society, one based on the ecosocialist principles of deep ecology and social justice. Thomas More's *Utopia* seems once again to offer a fruitful contribution to this ongoing debate.

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⁴ In his biography of More, Peter Ackroyd refers to the existence of slaves in Utopia: "They have a population of slaves, generally comprising criminals or prisoners of war, which is treated with paternal rather than tyrannical severity" (168). Paul Turner, More's translator, argues that the word 'slave' refers solely to prisoners-of-war: "[T]hat is what slaves usually were. It is not quite clear whether combatant P.O.W.'s were ever enslaved in Utopia. The original words are: *Pro servis neque bello, nisi ab ipsis gesto* (as slaves they do not have people captured in war, unless it was waged by themselves). This may mean either they enslave everyone caught fighting on the battlefield, or else that they only enslave those *responsible* for waging the war, i.e. supporters of war policies." (142)

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