

Loriana Aviles
646-425-4364
loriana.aviles@gmail.com

Utopian Dream or Dystopian Nightmare: The Cost of Creating an Ideal Society in Early Twenty-First Century America

Part I

“Moreover, you shall not follow the customs of the nation which I will drive out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I have abhorred them.” (Leviticus 20:23)

Throughout history, civilizations have focused on positioning themselves as the “standard bearer” that future generations could use as exemplars to justify their ways of living. Many cultures have utilized various strategies to support their development and to better their citizens across the board. Some societies relied on the guidance of an individual with absolute power, such as kings, dictators, and rulers. Others have relied on more democratic means, such as a governing body or a team of authority figures. Regardless of the approach, the common theme across these cultures has been the attempt to create a perfect society for their people, or a utopia.

The term “utopia” - which applies to a place or society that is considered perfect, accepting, and equal - was coined by Thomas More in his 1516 book *Utopia*. A major critique of these “standard bearers” is that current societies across multiple cultures do not adhere to the same set of guidelines set forth by their predecessors. However, some form of general conformity would be necessary to create a utopia. How then could a utopian society be realized today and in the future? Conformity through physical modifications, through medical interventions, and through technology have been explored historically and throughout literature, specifically in speculative fiction novels. By considering environmental, psychological, and physical improvements to individuals and society, we can investigate how these changes could lead to a utopian society or, consequently, a dystopian society.

The term “dystopia” is a direct antonym of utopia, and the dynamic relationship between these two realities is captured in the following quote, “In the quest for an idealized, utopian tomorrow, how do we recognize the possible threat of a dystopian outcome, and how do we find hope-the promise of a utopian society- amid an eco-system of corporate greed, a pillaged earth, and inequality among beings?” (Pringle 32) Before I can create a modern day utopian society in the United States, I must first understand what it means to be a dystopian society and how the use of technology and medicine, for the better, make a society thrive or crumble.

Conformity is a societal influence that impacts acceptable behaviors or ideas in order to fit in. It can be used as an oppressive means of control in a totalitarian society in which the actions, thoughts, and words of individuals are closely monitored. Those who do not adhere to rules established can be expunged and punished. The fear of repercussions is enough to maintain control, and the perfect society is realized through dehumanization and by eliminating free will. This is the premise for most modern day dystopian novels, which also reflects historical and current day social situations such as North Korea under Kim Jong-Un’s leadership and Germany under Adolf Hitler’s leadership from 1934-1945. The process of obtaining conformity can differ slightly from book to book, such as through adhering to certain behaviors, ideas, or beliefs.

In literature, the dystopian genre is an emerging favorite, especially among the youth. With the growing popularity of both the movies and novels of *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, dystopia has carved its niche into our hearts and our minds, forcing us to view a futuristic world with frightening outcomes. In these post-apocalyptic cities, there is a singular ruling authority and society is systematized into varying groups. Depending on the novel, these groups can be arranged by class, personality, professions, and so on. This allows for more control of a governing rule. While the authority in these stories justify their disturbing actions with the promises of a safer, better, and more perfect life, it is the population that ultimately suffers; the people that are left hungry, sick, scared, and dying at the hands of the rulers they trust are the ones who are able to see the injustices. With people and the environment suffering, the perfect society is no more than a “pipe dream.” With the advancement of new medical procedures and the growth of technology, those in power have all they need at their disposal in order to gain control.

In fiction, for a society to accept government control without resistance, education and fear are taught from a young age. Authority is obeyed without hesitation, and teachings are followed without question. The findings in the following experiment can be linked to the societies in

dystopian novels. In 1963, Stanley Milgram, a psychologist, conducted an experiment to test social obedience. Milgram concluded that “ordinary people are likely to follow orders given by an authority figure, even to the extent of killing an innocent human being. Obedience to authority is ingrained in us all from the way we are brought up.” (McLeod) This can help explain why control through conformity is effortless.

Another explanation for why control is effortless is due to the perceptions generated by society that the majority are incompetent and only those in charge know how to tend to the needs of the people. In the novel *Agenda 21* by Glenn Beck, the government felt that in order to sustain Earth, society is expected to produce energy while consuming as little as possible. Transportation is limited to walking and bicycles, and food is portioned out per household based on the minimum needs of the human body. The government goes as far as to take newborn babies away from their mothers and place them in a community in which they are raised together and taught the values of the government. In this sense, the government felt they would do a far superior job of raising children than their own parents (since the parents are the cause for the destruction of Earth). However, an unforeseen outcome of this control was that women were becoming infertile and children born were weak and ill due to the lack of love and proper nutrition. While this extreme is presented as fiction, it is also grounded in an actual United Nations initiative concerning Earth sustainability that was first articulated in 1992 at a conference in Rio de Janeiro. This is an example where fiction begins to bleed into reality.

Medical advances that can cure, heal, and save a whole planet are instead used for the purpose of obtaining social control through conformity. In the novel *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, society is organized into Factions. These Factions are constructed based on an individual’s most prominent virtue. The virtues are selflessness (Abnegation), bravery (Dauntless), honesty (Candor), intelligence (Erudite), and peacefulness (Amity). Serums that are injected into the body are used to suppress independence and free will, which can threaten a harmonious community. However, there are few who are called Divergent, or individuals who do not conform into any Faction. The Divergent s are viewed as dangerous and are dealt with by means of death. There are additional serums that are used to keep their virtues controlled; truth serum, peace serum, death serum, memory serum, and simulation serum. All serums are developed by a single Faction, Erudite. It is the leader of Erudite that seeks to gain sole control of all Factions. She envisions unity among the Factions, but in the process of obtaining it, she resorts to murdering innocent men,

women, and even children. This is a perfect example of how a ruler who seeks utopia implements the ideas by means of control, conformity, and fear, thereby creating a reversed utopia.

There are dystopian novels in which technology is society's ultimate downfall. Technology is used by the government to uncover those who oppose the higher order and to control the people who use it. In the novel *Feed* by M.T. Anderson, the author paints a very realistic picture of a world controlled by corporations that abuse telecommunications. Society is embedded with a computer-like device called a "feed" into their brain. The feed is used as a form of instant communication with others as well as a way to look up information. This can be compared to having the ability to access Google in one's head. Through these feeds, individuals are also presented with constant advertisements of things that can be purchased or upgraded. Society is taught to venerate money, objects, and entertainment over everything else, including its own people. This type of idolization is seen regularly on current social media platforms. While the emergence of these "feeds" are met with excitement and acceptance, the environment around them is decaying, and women are no longer able to reproduce naturally. Instead, women are subjected to in-vitro fertilization in which they can customize their own children. No one cares that the corporations are allowing the planet to die, and those that do care feel that because there is nothing they can do to stop them, there is no point in trying. If America continues down the road it is on, this could very well be a window into what our society will resemble.

Just by these few dystopian examples, we can begin to recognize where the breakdown lies and how a utopian idea becomes a dystopian society. I can use this as a guideline to determine what may work and may not. These stories give us the chance to do things differently and to make a decision on how we want our world to be. With art imitating life, I can see how our actions could shape our future if things continue down the road they are on. "The vision created is a manifestation of the status quo-mass advertisement, urban decay, waste pollution, intolerance - in other words, the science-fiction is less about tomorrow than it is about today. The wake-up call is clear: To create a future we want to be a part of, we need to reexamine our way of living, now." (Pringle 33) With the right course of action, our technological and medical advances, and learning from our past, I can begin to construct the makings of what could be a utopian society. A tangible way to create a perfect society is to set a physical standard that clearly exemplifies the values of the utopia. In some cases, the only way to achieve this would be to alter the biological makeup of individuals under the direction of authority figures.

Part 2: Social Conformity through Physical Modification

“People spot a big black lens, and they worry about what they’re doing, or how their hair looks.

Nobody sees the person holding the camera.” (O’Rourke)

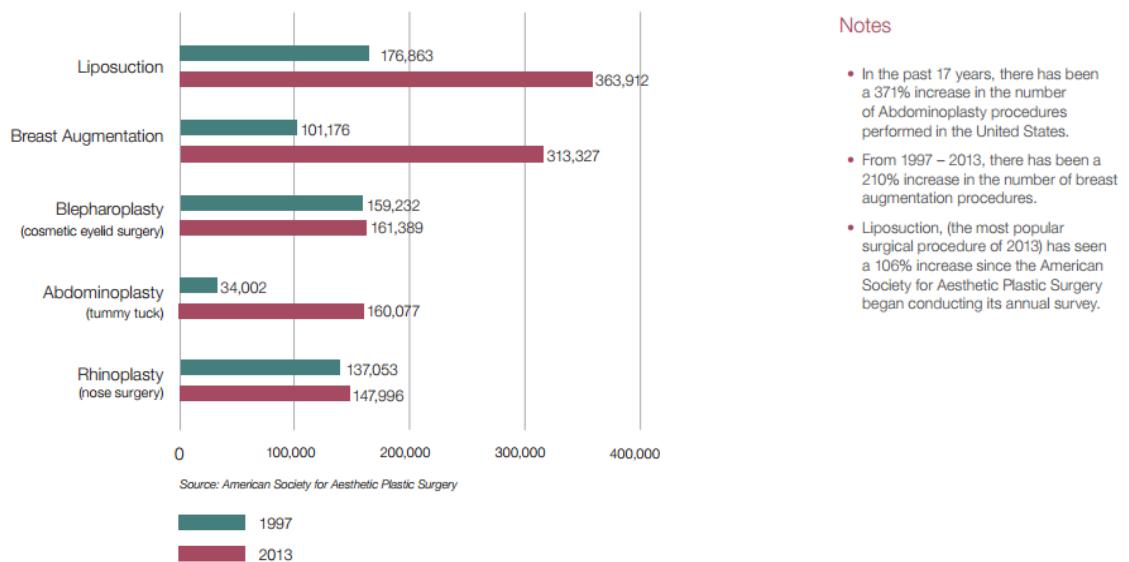
What the United States once thought of as beauty is now being shaped by what media, such as television, cinema, and magazines, defines as beauty, in so much that fashion magazines and celebrities are the deciding factor as to what constitutes “true beauty,” with every country having their own unique ideals. In Scott Westerfeld’s futuristic novel, *Uglies*, a dystopian society uses cosmetic surgery to conform and control how beauty is presented. Books are not the only evidence of how physical appearances can change a society; there are many examples in our own culture and history.

Throughout history, ideal beauty has changed in very different ways. For example, in European history going back hundreds of years, being pale was a sign of upper-class and royalty. Those who worked in the fields and on farms were tanned; therefore, they were lower-class, since if you could afford to stay in, you remained pale. Today, society is so intent on getting a tan that they seek it out, even artificially. Another popular trend focuses on body image, such as the mantra “thin is in.” This ideal of beauty highlights skinny people as more attractive. Models, especially runway models, are thin to the extreme that is considered unhealthy. This trend has been fashionable for the past one-hundred years, but with a look back in history, curvy was considered voluptuous. Being full figured meant that you had plenty of food which also meant that you were wealthy. There are many other examples that are too vast to list each one. While beauty has changed dramatically over time, modern day beauty has been compromised by expensive physical modification.

In the United States, the glossy pages of magazines are splashed with flawless models. A look that was once thought of as unobtainable is now being obtained through surgical means. The “ideal” beauty has become known to be thin and tall with long flowing hair, perfect painted lips, and eyes that mesmerize. Due to this “ideal,” cosmetic surgery is becoming the norm with men, women, and even children getting some type of surgery. In 2001, seven-year old Samantha Shaw had cosmetic surgery to correct a fold on her right ear because she was being bullied. In 2012, 14-

year old Nadia had her ears pinned back and alterations made to her nose and chin because she was being made fun of by classmates. Over the years, turning to surgery to improve the quality of one's life and one's self-confidence has been on the rise. How has ideal beauty been presented and affected in the past?

Surgical Procedures: 17-Year Comparison, 1997-2013



In 1933, Adolf Hitler believed that Germany could be strong again if their race was purified. Hitler used eugenics to achieve his goals and those who were unworthy were termed “life unworthy of life.” These individuals included people who had both physical and mental disabilities, imprisoned citizens, and those who were considered insane. Against their will, hundreds of thousands were sterilized and hundreds of thousands more were euthanized. “The ideology was one of racial purity. There was the idea that genetic mixing with other races lowered the quality of people.” (Glover 57) Hitler believed that only those deemed “pure enough” could procreate, giving rise to the “Master Race.” This was based on the theory of social Darwinism, in which “the weak were diminished and their cultures delimited, while the strong grew in power and in cultural influence over the weak.” (Encyclopedia Britannica) Considering these examples of how our past has been affected by the notion of “ideal beauty,” how will our future look? For this question, we look to science fiction novels for a glimpse at our world at the mercy of beauty.

If a look into the lives of modern day American teens can tell us anything, it is that one aspect that can be quickly distinguishable is that teenagers judge, ridicule, and fight over the appearance of their peers. A unison appearance will eliminate jealousy and bullying. In the novel, *Uglies*, the time is 300 years in the future and the government controls and provides society with everything, including cosmetic surgery. When a teenager reaches the age of sixteen, they undergo an operation that transforms them from "uglies" to "pretties," based on society's standard of beauty. "Maybe just being ugly is why uglies always fight and pick on one another, because they aren't happy with who they are." (Westerfeld 84) During the transformation, they are also implanted with a chip that alters their emotions and their thinking, though society is unaware of the chip. Society now looks, acts, and thinks the same. In turn, this allows the government to control society easily by having them focus on just superficial concerns. This showcases how modern day America can be on the road to a similar outcome.

The desire to have the perfect image is one way that we try to conform to what society says is normal. One would think that plastic surgery (which is still major surgery, make no mistake about that) has become as commonplace today as having your teeth cleaned. Diets galore and "nutritional" cleanses are available to help us fit the size that society says we should be. What we do to our bodies borders on torture, starvation and mutilation simply to fit in. (Houghton)

Beauty has become a way to define each other. Those who do not hold to the standards that are expected of society are shunned. Though America does not support euthanasia, those who cannot handle the pressure choose to end their own lives; a pressure that should not be imposed upon them to begin with. "Despite the potentially positive effects of cosmetic procedures on the self-esteem of individual woman, the propagation of these surgeries helps create a monoculture where women are no longer permitted to possess the unique markers which help establish their identities." (Okopny 55)

An important question emerges from these examples - is social conformity through the use of physical manipulations unacceptable, or is there some good that can come of it? Perhaps Hitler wasn't completely unethical in trying to purify the race; he just went about it in the wrong manner. If I begin to reconstruct society, I would begin with those who are prone to genetic diseases. In order to eliminate genetic diseases, scientists would first need to eliminate those genes that are imperfect. This is not to say scientists eliminate the gene for brown eyes. Instead, they focus on

diseases that would diminish the quality of life, such as those that could lead to physical deformities and even death. Of course in these instances, I would need to convince those that carry these deformed genes that sterilization is the best procedure in order to eliminate these genetic faults. With cosmetic surgery, society could alter a person's appearance in order to fit in with the social view of beauty. If I begin to require cosmetic surgery, bullying might decrease, deaths due to the unhappiness of not being able to conform would decrease, and society could generally be happier. No one would be jealous of what another's appearance because we would all look the same. Would we lose the unique part of us that makes us who we are? The short answer is yes though the long answer is far more complicated. It is these unique physical traits that also lead to bullying and unhappiness. If, as a society, we do not celebrate the flaws of a person, then why not eliminate the flaws to begin with? In order to get where we want, sacrifices need to be made. If I want a society that can finally be satisfied with a standard of beauty, I need to create that standard and then implement it through the use of physical modification.

Part 3: Living and Surviving in Social Confines

“You have taught them the sickness of your mind And the sickness of your body You have taught them to be servile To hang servilely upon your countenance To be dependent touching and entertaining To have rights to be wronged And wrongs to be righted.” (Smith 74)

To live in a society that is fenced in is to live like a caged animal; separated and alone. Yet, this is how many societies in the dystopian universe live. I can, sadly, also see this lifestyle in many countries in my own reality. The best example of a totalitarian who has caged his people and has separated them from the outside world is Kim Jong-Un in North Korea. How can I compare North Korea to a novel written for entertainment value? The following shows how North Korea can be compared to a realistic version of the novel *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins.

In 2008, the first book of the series *The Hunger Games* was released. Reviving the dystopian genre, the book gave readers a fresh outlook on a dystopian life. In the novel, the people of Panem are broken up into twelve Districts, with each district overseeing their own industry. The story follows sixteen year old Katniss Everdeen who lives in District 12, the poorest district, and is chosen to compete in the Panem wide Hunger Games, a competition to the death. Katniss, unlike

many others, can see the injustices her district faces. "When I was younger, I scared my mother to death, the things I would blurt out about District 12, about the people who rule our country, Panem, from the far-off city called the Capitol. Eventually I understood this would only lead us to more trouble. So I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts." (Collins 6) This sentiment is also expressed by the people living in North Korea at the present time.

The people of North Korea are closely monitored by authority figures. Even children are raised to become informers on their own family and friends, should any of them speak ill of their country or its leaders. They are promised a reward of some type; however a reward is generally never presented and those who snitch may be tortured for potentially conspiring with those who they snitched on. Prisoners are sent to concentration camps for varying reasons, from political crimes to common crimes to religious differences. Life in these camps gives a vision of a life unimaginable.



"There are about 200,000 inmates in six camps, the largest of which is 31 miles long and 25 miles wide, an area larger than the city of Los Angeles. According to the testimony of camp survivors, prisoners live and die without soap, socks, underwear, toilet paper or sanitary napkins. They are forced to do hard labor while subsisting on a starvation diet of corn, cabbage, salt — and the occasional rat. As they age, they lose their teeth, their gums

turn black, their bones weaken and they hunch over at the waist. They usually die of hunger-related illness before turning 50." (Harden)

Rule breakers and informants are sent to these concentration camps along with three generations of their families. For example, if a grandfather were to attempt to escape North Korea, his wife, children, and grandchildren will also be punished. With this method, it discourages those who wish to break the rules by extending the scope of the punishment to loved ones and relatives. Starvation, famine, violence, and death are among the many experiences that people face in these North Korean camps. Public executions are commonplace, and torture is a part of life.

In *The Hunger Games*, public executions are introduced in a different way. Two “tributes,” one boy and one girl between the ages of 12 and 18, from each district are chosen at random to compete in the Hunger Games. The winner of the games is then rewarded with a lifetime of food and money. Obtaining these riches is a rather grim consequence as the winner must survive death by another tribute and death by environmental means. These games were created in response to a rebellion against The Capitol many years prior to the start of the novel as a visible and tangible method for The Capitol to gain back control. “Taking kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch – this is the Capitol’s way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion.” (Collins 22) The districts are kept under control by fear and the withholding of resources. Districts 1 and 2 are the richest districts; the tributes from these areas are stronger and are raised to be fighters. Consequently, the winners of the Hunger Games are regularly from these districts. This usually perpetuates the cycle of the richer districts staying rich and the poorer districts remaining poor.

In North Korea, authority has taken control over every aspect of its people’s lives, from what they can eat to what they are allowed to say. The population is purposely cut off from the rest of the world. Access to the Internet and reading materials from outside of North Korea are banned. The only publications allowed are the ones that Kim Jong-Un deems appropriate. The content of these readings are dramatically skewed and persuasive. They usually praise the greatness of North Korea’s leaders, how wonderful North Korea is, and how awful America is. Any citizen who is caught with “forbidden” readings or materials is sent to a concentration camp. Society is taught to revere their leaders and hold them in such high regards, similarly to how deities are worshipped. This form of thinking and feeling is so ingrained into them that they cannot, and will not, see any other way of living. They blindly accept all that their leaders are telling them, despite knowing how grim their own situation might be. For those who do not follow their leaders without question, they might be aware of what is going on but are too scared to say otherwise.

This was a similar situation in *The Hunger Games*. Despite knowing how the people in the districts felt about the games, no one ever spoke out. Speaking out meant disobedience against the Capitol, which led to punishment. The president of the Capitol, President Snow, resorted to destroying District 13 and killing its residents, which is the District that began the first uprising which led to the Hunger Games. President Snow had to act violently; allowing a District to begin a rebellion and not have dire consequences meant that any other district could rebel without fear

of repercussions. Could this explain why Kim Jong-un oppresses his people so much? Does he fear that if the people of North Korea find out the truth of how the rest of the world views North Korea that his people would rebel, effectively ending the Kim dynasty? This is exactly what happened when Katniss undermined the Capitol while in the Hunger Games and unintentionally became the face of the rebellion.

Is it possible to rule a confine while still being virtuous? For this question, let us look to Niccolo Machiavelli and his work, *The Prince*. Machiavelli wrote this book as a guideline for future rulers on how to obtain and secure states and principalities while still being respected among your people. "My intention being to write something useful for whoever understands it, it seemed to me more appropriate to pursue the effectual truth of the matter rather than its imagined one." (Machiavelli 50) The passage essentially is stating that there is a set of rules for how one must treat his subjects and his allies when ruling. In order to be an effective statesman in life, one must have a certain measure of virtue and an equal measure of vice. An effective statesman must have the judgment to identify which vices to avoid, which ones can lead down an unjust role, and the reputation thereby associated with it, while not fearing to shoulder the burden of blame for negative practices that are necessary for safeguarding the state. This takes into account that certain virtuous acts put into practice can lead to ruin, while certain vices will bring a ruler security and prosperity. Machiavelli writes, "Many have dreamed up republics and principalities which have never in truth been known to exist; the gulf between how one should live and how one does live is so wide that a man who neglects what is actually done for what should be done moves towards self-destruction rather than self-preservation." (50) This is the duality of man, and the duality of rule. In order to rule, a man must lead through his values but cannot be reluctant to shoulder the consequences of unjust actions in order to secure the state. Therefore, there is a necessity for evil toward the better good.

"Si guarda al fine." (Machiavelli 58) Here is a phrase than many people understand to mean, "The end justifies the means." The phrase better translates as "one must think of the end result." Some actions are so heinous that the desired ends are not worth it. A Prince must convey mercy, faithfulness, integrity, kindness, and virtue. Machiavelli believed that a prince should be both feared and loved and if he could not be loved, then he should be feared but *not* hated. As long as one kept the kingdom prosperous and safe, the people would believe the ruler to be virtuous, regardless of one's actions. Every subject's existence is precious and shouldn't be destroyed unless

absolutely necessary. When measuring the final results of your actions, you must also measure the suffering and death added to the world in pursuit of your goals because they will be present as part of the final results. If we take what Machiavelli has told us and apply it to a modern day confine, we can still obtain the control while not oppressing our people. Authority can still be feared but respected, and even loved.

The benefit of living in confines is the ability to retain control. In North Korea, everything within the confines is monitored, from daily conversations to daily actions. Books, news, television, even food, are all controlled so that information is not corrupted or falsified and sustenance can be divided evenly. While it would not be easy to gain this control in the beginning, following Machiavelli's methods can aid in obtaining control. Authority will have to be cunning while still appearing to be genuine and virtuous. The main causatum is to acquire the love of the people which will help to secure your position but authority still cannot be afraid to dole out punishment; how else will authority secure their position without fear of repercussion? However, punishment should not be the essential factor. When applied to the United States, because there is such a large area of land, confines will have to be divided into smaller confines.

Social confines would not only help to control information, but it can also create a better economy. Lawlessness will be easily controlled as will crime rate. There will be accurate accountability since day to day activities will be monitored. There will be a decline in poverty since equality will be influential. Extremism will be regulated and transparency will be increased. An identical education structure would guarantee that society will be educated uniformly. Because there will be small social confines all over the United States, societal personalization and control would promise to be beneficial. While Kim Jong-Un is an extremist in putting ideas into effect, if presented in another manner, the ideas are practical and could help create a more organized and pleasant society.

Confines do not have to mean cages and fences with no means of escape. Instead, a confine could be a small walkable community that is able to sustain itself through farming. A walkable community is as it sounds; you are able to walk or bike ride wherever you need to go. Not only does this eliminate the need for a car as transportation, which will also minimize gas emissions all over the world, this also aids in helping to make the community healthier. Each community will have their own farm land and be able to survive agriculturally and even independently if needed. As per the ideas set forth in the book *Utopia* by Thomas More, when one community has a surplus

of agriculture, it transports the surplus to the surrounding communities and vice versa, free of charge. This will ensure that all communities are affluent and that nothing goes to waste. In addition, each community will also have its own hospital and schools. Within the confine, it is important to create a system of control that will make society open to the ideas of conforming and do so willingly.



(Images courtesy of Transit Miami)

Part 4: Social Conformity Through the Use of Pharmaceuticals

“No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse.” (Nietzsche 18)

The prospect of one’s physical, mental, and emotional problems being cured by a simple pill or an injection is a provocative idea, one that is prevalent in dystopian novels and emerging in the United States culture. New medications are being developed on an ongoing basis, and many individuals are becoming increasingly dependent on pharmaceuticals. Could this dependency evolve into a “tool” utilized by society to control its citizens? As seen in the novel *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, the mandatory implementation of specifically engineered pharmaceuticals has the potential to modify the way society thinks and acts.

If individuals were able to suppress their negative thoughts and feelings, they could theoretically control how society functions as whole. Clinical trials on the psychiatric uses of psychedelic drugs are currently underway in the United States. Specifically, the drug psilocybin is being investigated to see how it affects cancer patients, addiction patients, and those suffering from anxiety and depression. In 1938, Albert Hofmann manufactured LSD and submitted it to

researchers in the hopes that there could one day be a need for it. “Psychedelics were tested on alcoholics, people struggling with obsessive-compulsive disorder, depressives, autistic children, schizophrenics, terminal cancer patients, and convicts, as well as on perfectly healthy artists and scientists (to study creativity) and divinity students (to study spirituality).” (Pollan 36) The results then and now have been positive.

When the topic of drugs is discussed, one might first consider potential adverse reactions and whether these chemicals can be prescribed legally. Within this framework, there are some drugs that are neither illegal nor need a prescription to obtain that can cause adverse reactions. How do drugs that fall into the legal and attainable category impact a utopian society? A popular drug used in the current United States society is caffeine. One would not immediately suspect caffeine to be a drug; however, when considering how caffeine can become addictive and how it has a stimulating effect by releasing adrenaline it is clear that it has drug like properties. Caffeine can trigger feelings of anxiety, fear, and panic. Adrenaline inhibits concentration and can cause stress after prolonged use. Additionally, adrenaline can lead to “fight or flight” responses.

“If you’re drinking so much coffee that you get tremors, have sleeping problems, or feel stressed and uncomfortable, then obviously you’re drinking too much coffee. But in terms of effects on mortality or other health factors, for example, we don’t see any negative effects of consuming up to six cups of coffee a day. Keep in mind that our study and in most studies of coffee, a “cup” of coffee is an 8-ounce cup with 100 mg of caffeine, not the 16 ounces you would get in a grande coffee at a Starbucks, which has about 330 mg of caffeine. Also keep in mind that the research is typically based on coffee that’s black or with a little milk or sugar, but not with the kind of high-calorie coffeehouse beverages that have become popular over the past few years.” (van Dam)

This also does not account for the amount of other caffeinated beverages, such as sodas, and medications that contain caffeine, such as headache medications, that one consumes throughout the day.

With the growing number of adverse effects, one can assume that if caffeine was taken away, society could be positively impacted, though there are some potential positive effects, there is still not enough evidence to support the claims and more research needs to be conducted. However, there have been studies that show how caffeine affects neurotransmitters such as

dopamine, which activates pleasure, and adenosine, which activates drowsiness in order to fall asleep.

To a nerve cell, caffeine looks like adenosine: Caffeine binds to the adenosine receptor. However, caffeine doesn't slow down the cell's activity like adenosine would. As a result, the cell can no longer identify adenosine because caffeine is taking up all the receptors that adenosine would normally bind to. Instead of slowing down because of the adenosine's effect, the nerve cells speed up. Caffeine also causes the brain's blood vessels to constrict, because it blocks adenosine's ability to open them up. This effect is why some headache medicines like Anacin contain caffeine -- constricting blood vessels in the brain can help stop a vascular headache. (Brian)

As with other drugs, withdrawal symptoms would initially be prevalent, but the overall health benefits and neurological benefits would be better in the long run.

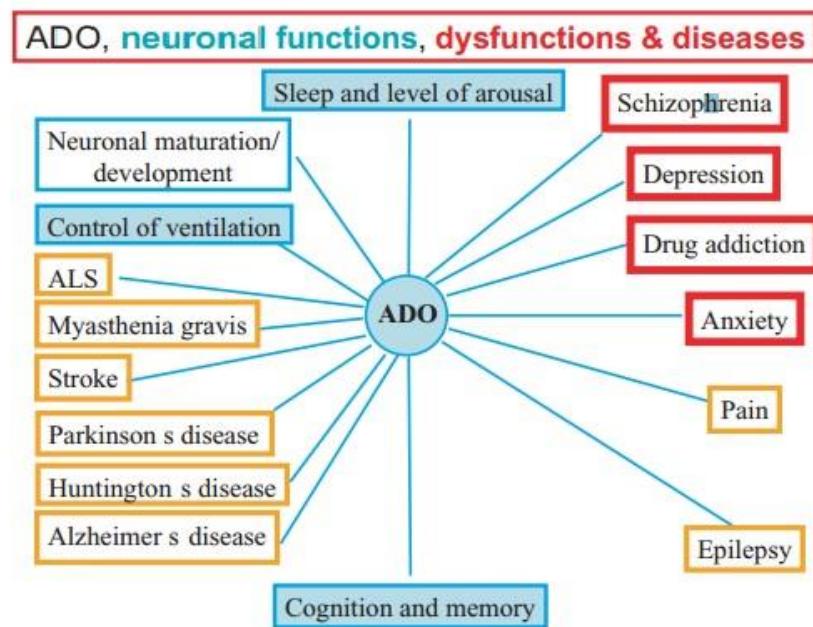


Fig. 1. Actions proposed for adenosine on the central nervous system, including on brain functions, dysfunctions and diseases. As caffeine is a non-selective adenosine antagonist and crosses easily the blood brain barrier, it is likely that the caffeine effects on these adenosine receptors mirror those caused by adenosine actions. For further details see Sebastião and Ribeiro, 2009 – Handbook of Experimental Pharmacology, 193, 471–534.

Alcohol is another widely used drug in the United States, and it is considered a depressant. “Harmful use of alcohol results in the death of 2.5 million people annually, causes illness and injury to millions more, and increasingly affects younger generations and drinkers in developing countries.”(NCADD) Aside from physical bodily harm, alcohol reduces a person's inhibitions and alters their judgment; the more alcohol consumed, the more a person loses control. It can also lead

to depression and anger outbursts. With the elimination of alcohol, our ideal society can now think coherently and can potentially see a reduction in depression and anger caused by chemical influences.

When considering how drugs could positively impact society's way of thinking and acting, the novel *Divergent* offers a telling example of how the use of pharmaceuticals can help maintain control over society. Through this lens, we can begin to understand how the role of drugs could help the current United States society. In the novel, society is broken up into Factions in which each faction is organized by a person's dominant trait. These traits help to keep the confined society safe, protected, and running harmoniously. Individuals who are considered brave become the authority, and they will consequently use simulation serums in order for one to face their fears, thereby enhancing their bravery. "Becoming fearless isn't the point. That's impossible. It's learning how to control your fear, and how to be free from it, that's the point." (Collins 239) Individuals who are considered selfless become the leaders of all factions, since their altruistic ways ensure that decisions are made to benefit the entire society. The ones who are intelligent become the doctors, scientists, and researchers; they are the ones who create the drugs that are used to maintain control. Another faction consists of those who are considered peaceful. They remain harmonious and use serums to suppress any un-peaceful tendencies and feelings. The final faction are comprised of those who pride themselves on honesty; they ultimately become lawyers and use serums to maintain honesty amongst all factions. A memory serum was used in the beginning of this society to erase the memories of the past of those in the confines and to begin to create a world that is controlled and maintained by the factions themselves.

By taking the use of pharmaceuticals in the society that Collins produced in her novel and applying it to our American society, I could find the makings of the perfect society within our own country. Each of the factions would contribute to our societal needs and structures. I will need those leaders and protectors, the peaceful and the selfless, and the intelligent to help start us on this journey. The positive aspect of using pharmaceuticals is that it levels the playing field and allows everyone to begin on the same exact page. The governing rule can administer a memory blocker and build the society from the ground up. We would be able to implement changes without resistance, allowing us to create what is best for society. Consequently, this could eliminate the issues of crime and war and contribute to a happy and coexisting society. However, an implementation of this magnitude would take several years of clinical trials on appropriate and

useful pharmaceuticals. This is why the current clinical trials on psychedelics are imperative to the advancement of a better society since "...the psychedelic experience can help people by relaxing the grip of an overbearing ego and the rigid, habitual thinking it enforces." (Pollan 46) The psychedelics being tested can help to promote peace and tranquility. A new level of clarity and understanding can be achieved and eventually, it could lead to a better living experience. Not only psychedelic medications lead to a happier life, but so can improvements on the human condition through biogenetics.

Part 5: Human Transplanting Towards a Better Society

"We look for medicine to be an orderly field of knowledge and procedure. But it is not. It is an imperfect science, an enterprise of constantly changing knowledge, uncertain information, fallible individuals, and at the same time lives on the line. There is science in what we do, yes, but also habit, intuition, and sometimes plain old guessing." (Gawande 7)

In 1931, the world was introduced to Frankenstein the movie. Frankenstein is based on the story of a doctor who, with the help of his assistant, stitches together body parts from several sources to create a human body that is living. Back then, a procedure like this never seemed possible. However, modern medicine has gone far beyond what we ever could have imagined, and the future of it could very well lead to our very first "monster" of Frankenstein. Will there come a time in our future where all parts of the human body could be harvested and used, or will ethics and social backlash prevent that from happening? Author Neal Shusterman tackles that very theory in his fiction series *Unwind*. According to recent developments, modern medicine may follow in the footsteps of this novel. These procedures, and any others that come after, have the potential to heal those from the outside/in, and vice versa, if they can work.

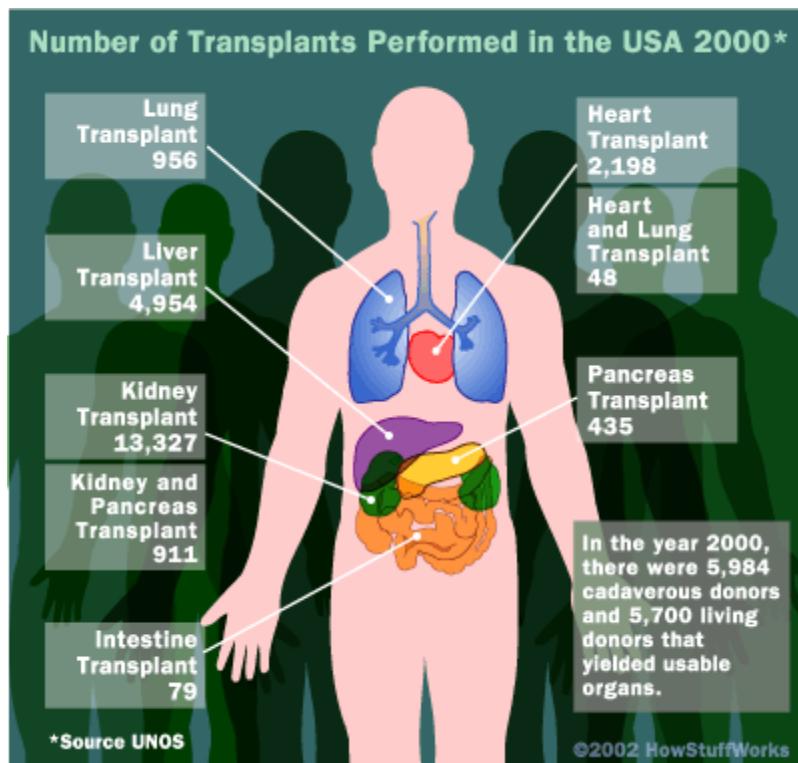
In February of 2015, an Italian doctor by the name of Dr. Sergio Canavero outlined the technique to perform the very first human head transplant. The patient, Valery Spiridonov, is a 30 year old Russian man who is currently suffering from a genetic disorder called Werdnig-Hoffmann disease, which is a type of spinal muscular atrophy. The procedure is said to take over 36 hours and include a team of 150 doctors and nurses. This procedure is also an extremely controversial one and one has to question the ethics.

Patricia Scripko, a neurologist and bioethicist at the Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System in California, says that many of the ethical implications related

to the surgery depend on how you define human life. ‘I believe that what is specifically human is held within the higher cortex. If you modify that, then you are not the same human and you should question whether it is ethical. In this case, you’re not altering the cortex.’ However, she adds that many cultures would not approve of the surgery because of their belief in a human soul that is not confined to the brain. (Thomas)

If this procedure does work, think of all the benefits that it could bring along with it. Paraplegics may finally be able to walk, albeit, with a different body. Other spinal diseases would no longer be an issue. All of this, of course, is dependent on *if* the procedure even works. There are still complications to it and no one knows what will happen after the surgery. The only evidence of a successful transplant was a procedure done in 1970 by Dr. Robert White, who transplanted the head of one monkey onto the body of another. The monkey died after eight days due to the body rejecting the new head and was also unable to breathe on its own. Nonetheless, Dr. Canavero is confident that with today’s medical advances, the procedure can work. This procedure, paired with the IVF of three-parent genes that I will discuss further in the paper, could essentially lead to a future where we would no longer have to worry about diseases and, now, even paralysis would have several methods of cure which will lead to the formation of an American perfect society through medical advances.

While we are still two years away from Dr. Canavero doing the procedure, and many more years from being able to do similar transplants on a much grandeur scale, let us not forget the journey transplanting has taken. In 1954, the first human organ transplant was performed by Dr. Joseph Murray, who won a Nobel Prize for this accomplishment and the recipient of the organ lived eight years. Since then, organ transplants have become a normal procedure and the survival rate is extremely high thanks to the anti-rejection drugs available.



There could come a time when scientists and doctors can very well create their own “monster” using several body parts. Imagine a human that was never human to begin with, but became so only after it was given life. This is a premise in the series *Unwind*, which takes place in a future in which an agreement was made after the second civil war between pro-life and pro-abortion. Abortion is no longer allowed; however, between the ages of 13 and 18, parents can elect to have their child “unwind”, meaning their body parts (every single part of them) are harvested and used for a later date on others who need certain parts. The theory is that since unwinding used 100% of the body, no one was actually dying. While this tale seems too grim to ever imagine, this outcome could be possible with the new medical advances, turning a procedure that is meant for good into something that could potentially be abused. In the series, the ethics of unwinding is still in question when, in the 3rd installment of the series, *Unwholly*, a young man by the name of Cam became the first product of unwinding, meaning he was “created” by using all parts from unwound children. In this way, he became the “monster” of Frankenstein. Because he was never a human to begin with and was “created,” his society claims that he does not even exist nor does he have a soul. This could potentially mirror similar concerns our own society would have if Dr. Canavero’s procedure is a success.

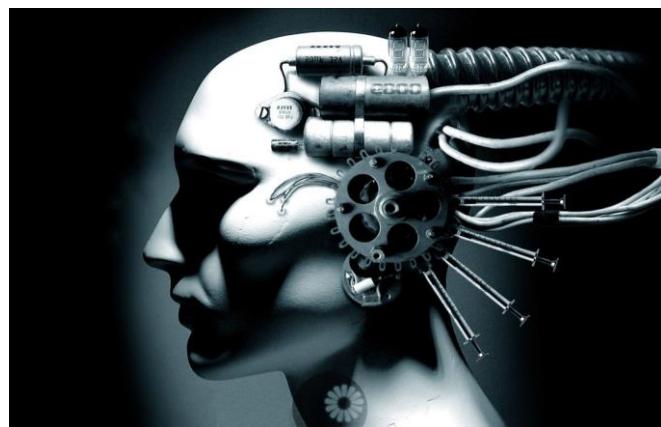


If Dr. Canavero succeeds, then it will mean that we are able to connect spinal cords from two different recipients. This will lead to full body transplants and could potentially lead to a doctor attempting to create a human out of transplanted body parts. Currently, we are able to transplant all organs, including skin, and once we are able to successfully transplant the spinal cord, then the next step can lead to a fully transplanted body human. So how can all of this lead to a better future? With procedures such as this, we are improving on the human form and making it better. We are giving a patient the chance at a life they were meant to live. No longer will failing bodies and high medical bills be our downfall. Perhaps, this can even be the next step to creating a super-human race.

Part 6: Transpiring Transhumanism

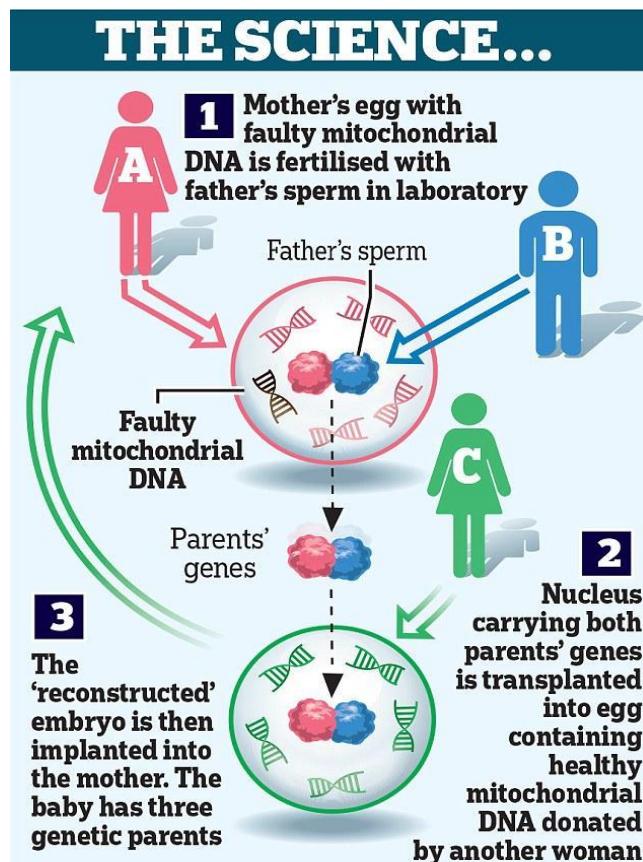
“Technology is in our nature. Through our tools we give our dreams form. We bring them into the world. The practicality of technology may distinguish it from art, but both spring from a similar, distinctly human yearning.” (Carr)

Throughout time, humanity, as a whole, has grappled with the implications of sickness and death and imagined a world without either. Today, advances in genetic engineering research and technology have made improvements to current health issues with an eye on potentially curing any disease or affliction in the future. A similar vision can be seen in Aldous Huxley’s novel *Brave New World*. Despite potential ethical dilemmas, both reality and fiction together give birth to a future that is being imagined into existence.



In an interview with Dan Brown conducted by Scott Stump, Brown states, “Transhumanism is the ethics and science of using things like biological and genetic engineering to transform our bodies and make us a more powerful species.” In the entertainment industry, transhumanistic views can be seen on the big screen, as stories of a new race of humans emerge. Movies, such as *The Matrix*, give us a glimpse of how society could be if man and machine combined to create a super human. This “super human” is currently being explored in today’s world. While we are still many years away from living a “matrix” style life, there are scientific breakthroughs that can be seen today, which leads to the question “just because we can, should we?” The answer is, yes, if it will improve a human life.

In February 2015, UK lawmakers became the first to vote in favor of three parent IVF (in vitro fertilization). In this procedure, a mother’s and father’s DNA is mixed with a third female donor’s DNA. This procedure raises ethical questions; the DNA of a three parent child will be passed down through the child’s offspring and can alter the rest of the child’s lineage in a myriad of ways due to the “extra” parent. Consequently, should these procedures become more widely used, the very DNA makeup of offspring could be altered to “design” a human, in the future.



On the other hand, this procedure could lead to a number of positive benefits, such as treating diseases that are currently incurable. "These diseases, such as muscular dystrophy, affect one in 6,500 and are passed down in the mother's mitochondria, the 'batteries' that power the body's cells." (Cohen) By factoring in an extra set of mitochondria, these types of diseases could be suppressed and change lives completely.

Ethical issues arise within religious individuals who feel that the science behind it is "playing God." If we can use genes from a donor to create a healthy child, what else can we use a donor for? In the future, perhaps we want our child to have blue eyes instead of green, and brown hair instead of blonde. Where will the line be drawn when it comes to genetic manipulation? Will doctors and scientists push the envelope of what they can do, even if they know it is not necessary for sustaining life?

Beyond questions of safety, issues of individual liberties also arise. For instance, should parents be allowed to manipulate the genes of their children to select for certain traits when the children themselves cannot give consent? Suppose a mother and father select an embryo based on its supposed genetic predisposition to musicality, but the child grows up to dislike music. Will this alter the way the child feels about its parents, and vice versa? Finally, in terms of society, it is not feasible for everyone to have access to this type of expensive technology. Thus, perhaps only the most privileged members of society will be able to have "designer children" that possess greater intelligence or physical attractiveness. This may create a genetic aristocracy and lead to new forms of inequality. (Simmons)

This would require a checks-and-balances system in which authorities within a society would have to strictly regulate the use of such procedures.

With the technology scientists have today and the technology that is the dream of fiction, I could potentially see a life in which fetuses are grown in an environment, rather than in a human womb. I can see this future envisioned in the novel *Brave New World*. In the year 2540AD, population is limited to no more than two billion people and natural reproduction is no longer valid. Instead, fetuses are produced and raised in hatcheries. They are divided into a caste system of five tiers: *Alpha*, *Beta*, *Gamma*, *Delta*, and *Epsilon*. Fetuses are predestined into their role in society, and their destiny is in the hands of the World Controller. Those that are in the top two tiers are given stimulants to aid in their growth and intelligence. Those in the bottom three tiers undergo

cloning since they perform identical jobs at identical machines, and they are given treatments to establish lower intelligence and limit their physical growth. This ensures that the government can maintain control, especially through the use of conditioning by psychological, physical, and genetic means. Conditioning establishes a society that, despite their caste, love and accept their drudgery. The use of a caste system and social conditioning in reality can guarantee a social system that is happy and, because they are happy, are less likely to cause an uprise and less likely to cause wars.

With the newfound ability to cure some incurable diseases through the use of genetic modification, this marks the inception of man's hand guiding a new evolution. Who is to say man would not continue down this road for purely superficial reasons? The imperfections of man often outweigh the intentions for the good of mankind. The idea that a society can be developed just how we want from the moment a fetus is created is an ideal improvement for humanity. While scientists can currently only cure some diseases through IFV, this is just the stepping stone needed for a disease-free world. This technology is a powerful one that will need to be closely monitored and even controlled by an authority figure. Through the application of regulations, authority can monitor the use and abuse of such technology and continue on the path of the improvement of human life and the environment.

Part 7: Sustainable Development

“We need the tonic of wildness...At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature.” (Thoreau)

How many times can I say that I learned valuable information regarding society's own present day from reading a sci-fi dystopian novel? Dystopian novels reflect current events and controversies in fantastical, and sometimes exaggerated, manners. They predict a certain outcome based on what the world looks like today. But can a society like the ones demonstrated in this paper previously really happen? Or is that just our own fantasy? What if the truth of what is happening today is hidden in a dystopian novel that is read for entertainment? The novel *Agenda*

21 by Glenn Beck not only opens our eyes to an actual United Nations initiative, but it also shows a grim future if what is proposed is carried out, which leads to an authoritarian state where individuals no longer have rights and their freedoms has been stripped away. By breaking down the agenda as well as the book, we can see the commonalities as well as how these changes can either make or break our society. While Agenda 21 is considered a conspiracy theory to some, it does not eliminate the fact that it does exist and that there are positive aspects to it.

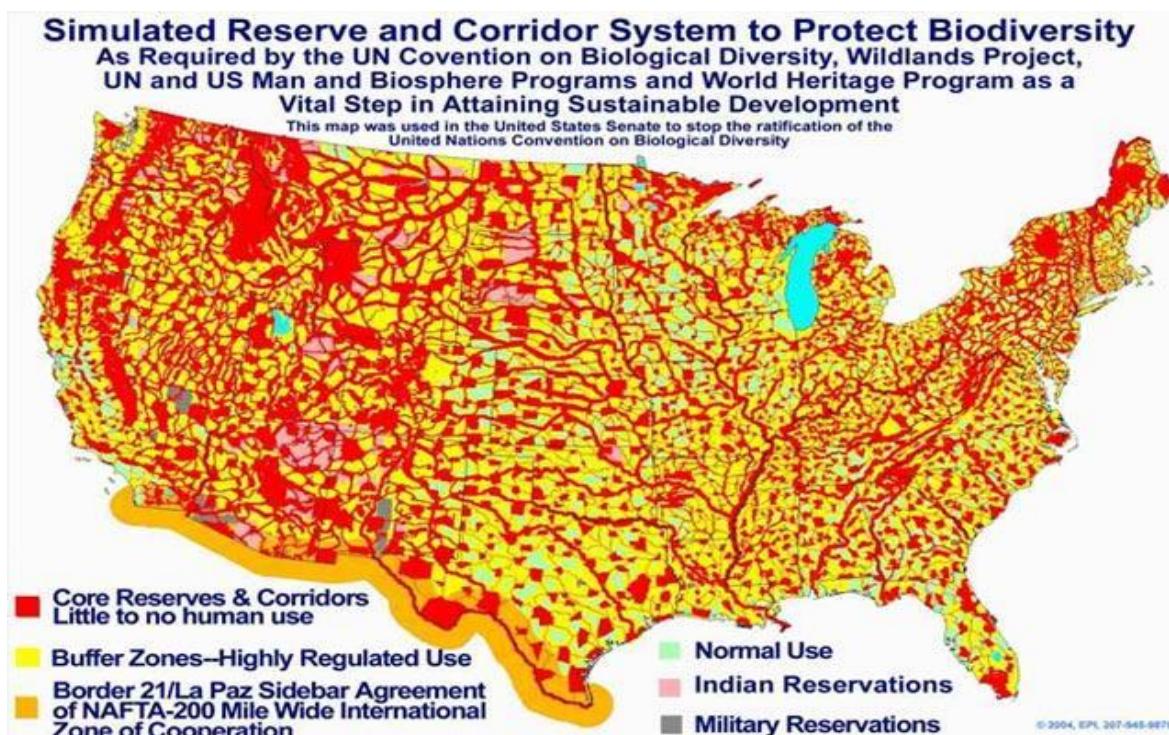
Agenda 21 is a 351 page, non-binding, voluntary initiative created by the United Nations with regards to sustainable development in areas where humans impact the environment. 178 world leaders have agreed to it, including our own Presidents: Obama, Clinton, and George H.W. Bush. The plan came to be at the 1992 Earth Summit Conference held in Rio de Janeiro and “addresses the pressing problems of today and also aims at preparing the world for the challenges of the next century.” (UNCED 1.3) The implementation of the plan is done on a local level, and in the United States over 528 cities are members of ICLEI (an international association of local governments that have made a commitment to sustainable development and helps to implement Agenda 21 concepts across the world.) The plan is divided into four sections:

- Section I: Social and Economic Dimensions - Addresses poverty in developing countries and helping to make them more sustainable in both population and settlement as well as addressing the health of the people
- Section II: Conservation and Management of Resources for Development - Addresses environmental issues including the protection and conservation of the Earth
- Section III: Strengthening the Role of Major Groups - Addresses the roles of children, woman, authority figures, farmers, businesses, communities, and workers
- Section IV: Means of Implementation - Addresses implementation through science, technology, education, finances and international institutions.

“In so many words, the United Nations seeks to co-opt, via individual governments, and eventually, a ‘one-world government,’ privately held land under the auspices of ensuring its ‘sustainability.’ Worse still, the UN’s Agenda 21 has even laid out plans for ‘depopulation’ or rather, ‘population control.’ If it sounds like something out of George Orwell’s 1984, that is because Agenda 21’s tenets are eerily in line with the demented alternate reality Orwell himself had imagined while scribing the pages of his famed novel.” (Gabbay) Despite Gabbay’s opposition, if global sustainability were enforced as per Agenda 21, then it will need to be implemented

globally for it to take effect which will have to include a single world government in order to oversee the plans. While it may sound like a premise right out of a dystopian novel, it does not mean that the plan will follow in the footsteps of it.

The map below shows what sustainable America will look like through the implementation of Agenda 21.



The red spots in the above map are places that are focused on the environment, making it prohibited to humans. The yellow spots will be highly regulated as well; so while humans (with permission) may travel to these spots, they will certainly not be able to live there. The green and pink spots are where society and humans will live in small communities. The goal is to keep as much of the wilderness intact and away from human influence as much as possible, allowing it to flourish and grow along with saving natural habitats of animals that may become extinct. In this sense, the plan is to put the environment first and then worry about humanity later.

When looking closely at the agenda, it emphasizes that youth are the key to our survival. “The involvement of today’s youth in environment and development decision-making and in the implementation of programmes is critical to the long term success of Agenda 21.” (UNCED 25.1) We can see the outcome of this in the novel *Agenda 21*. In the novel, the government takes the newborns away from their mother in order for the government to raise the children with the

knowledge of preserving the environment. They are then raised in communities of their own (with no parents) and are taught the values of the agenda. Without the nurturing and love of their parent, they grow up to be sickly and underdeveloped. The novel goes on to show the other consequences of the agenda; for example, marriages are now arranged, people live in walking communities and work menial jobs, they are controlled and monitored, there are no automobiles, and everyone in the community must contribute to the environment by walking for a certain amount of time on treadmills that produce energy.

While the future in the book outlines a very scary scenario, what is to stop this future from becoming a reality? Society's awareness of the agenda has brought to light what this plan will stand for and who gains from it as well as who stands to lose. However, there are parts of the agenda that make sense. If humans want to have a planet that will stand the test of time, then humans need to nurture it and care for it. Learning and implementing sustainability developments will not be a terrible decision. What the plan focuses more on is the environment and the education of the sustainability. Nevertheless, there are plans for creating a population that is healthy and knowledgeable, and very much a part of the process for creating a better world. Some will argue that there are plans for depopulation within the agenda, but that is done through environmental and natural means without the hand of authority involved. The agenda seeks to improve the quality life through the environment, education, health, science, and technology. Who can say no to a better life?

Part 8: Constructing Utopia

“A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias.” (Wilde)

Within the confines of society as a whole, a utopian society is a matter of perspective - what might be utopia for one could even be a dystopia for another. When constructing a utopia, it is critical to avoid turning society into one that is dystopian. While this seems like an obvious statement, crafting a perfect society creates a “slippery slope” situation that can easily create negative consequences if we are not careful. Building a new society from the ground up will take

decades, if not centuries. It will have to include reimagining everything that we know of today and putting into action new plans and ideas. By using general ideas from the novel *Utopia* by Thomas More, and applying the ideas that were used previously in this paper (as well as new ideas), I have a framework to create the “perfect” society. However, how can I avoid dystopia without first knowing the characteristics of a dystopian society? Some characteristics of what makes a dystopian society include:

- Propaganda is used to control the citizens of society
- Information, independent thought, and freedom are restricted.
- A figurehead or concept is worshipped by the citizens of the society.
- Citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance.
- Citizens have a fear of the outside world.
- Citizens live in a dehumanized state.
- The natural world is banished and distrusted.
- Citizens conform to uniform expectations. Individuality and dissent are bad.
- The society is an illusion of a perfect utopian world.

(Chung)

If I were to ask one hundred people what their idea of a utopia would be, I would get one hundred different answers, and that is the problem with the creation of a perfect society. I can list all the changes I would implement in order to create my own vision of what my utopia would include and still have a hundred people disagree with me and oppose me. But let me ask this, reading the characteristics above, what does your utopia look like without it turning into a dystopia? What will you implement that will please all of your citizens? It’s not that easy, is it?

Part 9: The Death of Utopia

“There was eternal disorder in the silence which followed the expulsion of the species.”

(Gamboa 282)

Before I can even imagine a perfect world, I can already assume that the outcome will be a grim one based on past experiences. Is the human race even capable of creating a utopia, or will greed, human error, government, corporations, and the need for freedom prevent that from

happening? Can human instinct be changed, or will it only remain hidden in our bones until such a time when we either fight to survive or become prisoners in our own life? I see examples of failing utopias for various reasons across literature, and I have examined many of them in this paper. A key takeaway is that even for the ultimate good, utopias will fail, and in its place a dystopian nightmare will emerge. We can see in the first novel of the *Maddaddam Trilogy*, *Oryx and Crake*, by Margaret Atwood how one person's vision for an improved human race can lead to worldwide devastation in the attempts to start anew and how it can potentially mirror our own ominous future. As John D. Ribo, a Ph.D. candidate in comparative literature at the University of North Carolina, states, "Shit already hit the fan. We are living in the aftermath."

As I have examined in this paper, there are many perspectives on how and why a utopia becomes a dystopia. From government control to a need for perfection, I can see how delicate the balance is when wanting to create a perfect society. What exactly happens that causes the minor shift crossing into a problematic state? Greed seems to be the number one offender that results in the downfall of a society, whether it is governmental greed, corporate greed, or financial greed. As psychologist John Selby, states, "If we're going to curb greed in banking, investing, etc., we must first admit that we all possess the greed bug. Unless we shine the light of reason and higher awareness directly at this selfish reactionary pattern of the human mind, there's no hope of changing it - because significant change always starts from within." On the contrary, "Trying to eliminate greed entirely is a fool's errand....We cannot eliminate greed, but we can (and should) bridle it." (Anderson) It is safe to assume that as long as greed exists, so does the possibility of a utopia remain fictitious.

On the heels of greed, the need to survive can have devastating consequences to a utopian society. At first, it may not seem like survival could be a bad thing. But as I have noted, in the novel *Agenda 21*, the need for planetary survival outweighs the need for human survival, thereby creating a society that cares more about the environment than human well-being. This results in a society in which humans are diminishing due to lack of reproduction and with that the end of mankind. In tandem with survival also comes the need for individual freedom. While again this may not seem like a bad thing, let us keep in mind where freedom has taken Americans, today, in the United States: wars, suicides, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, oppression, government control, corporate control, and so on. Sure, Americans can say whatever they want and wear whatever they want but at what cost? They can be arrested, shot, bullied, and any other imaginable consequence.

Is individual freedom such a good thing when it has led to nothing but hate and discrimination? Like a mother to a child, perhaps Americans need someone to tell them what they can and cannot say or where they can and cannot go. While eliminating every freedom is unfathomable, strictly limiting those we do have can add to a better life experience.

Another culprit for the end of a utopian state is human innate behavior, or human instinct. Humans have evolved over millions of years, which means millions of years worth of instincts passed down. While many instincts have heightened our abilities to survive and procreate, some instincts just do not work as well in today's time, such as greed and to some degree reproduction. *But doesn't reproduction ensure the survival of mankind?* Yes and no. Beginning in the 1700s, there was a steep incline of human reproduction and it continues to grow. "A tremendous change occurred with the industrial revolution: whereas it had taken all of human history until around 1800 for world population to reach one billion, the second billion was achieved in only 130 years (1930), the third billion in less than 30 years (1959), the fourth billion in 15 years (1974), and the fifth billion in only 13 years (1987)." (Current World Population) This means that there are too many people in the world and not enough resources and money to aid all of them. If population continues to grow at the rate that it is, we will soon find that there is not enough space for everyone to live. So while, yes, procreation ensues mankind's survival, it can also be the downfall of our own species. In addition, take into account the amount of gene based diseases that are inflicting humans and have yet to have a cure. This mixed with a growing population can see an influx of more of a diseased population.

There is no one way in which decreasing human population could be accomplished without some sort of backlash. If sterilization or forced policies against birth were an option, it would have to be on a global scale. Even then, who gets to decide who to sterilize and how can the policies ensure the continuation of humans? The push back from such an act would be tremendous. Humans can already see that outcome, somewhat, in China. China had a policy that each family may only have one child. As an unforeseen consequence, families in China decided that having a girl was of low priority because females cannot carry on the family name. Because of this decision, males far outweighed the females, and by 2020 it is expected that there will be 30 million more males than females. This also heightened the statistics on female fetus based abortions. Although the policies have changed since 2013 (a family may have two children if the first child was a girl), the repercussions will not right themselves for many years to come.

Overpopulation is also seen leading to dystopian and apocalyptic futures in fiction and in the case of *Oryx and Crake* it is also with the improvement of the human genetics and splicing that leads Crake to implement his own utopia through the creation of his genetically spliced humans, whom are known as Crakers, and the elimination and sterilization of the rest of the world through the creation of “BlyssPluss Pills.” As Crake advertises, BlissPluss Pills:

- Protects users against every sexually transmitted disease
- Provides limitless supply of libido
- Provides energy and well being
- Blocks testosterone, reducing frustration which leads to jealousy and violence
- Eliminates feelings of self-worth
- Prolongs youth
- Full birth control for both males and females

What was not advertised was that the “birth control” was in fact a means of sterilization as well as had a hidden component that turned the pill deadly. There was a delayed release of the pill once it was taken in order for the entire world to take the pill, before the pills true nature was exposed. Worldwide devastation ensued as a deadly virus was released into the bodies of those who had taken the pills. However, the virus was also able to be transmitted via air, thereby ensuring that those who had not taken the pill would still be victims to the virus. In the midst of all the chaos, Crake has ensured the survival of his own creation, the Crakers, who are humanoid beings which were created with various attributes including UV resistant skin, strictly herbivores, non-racist, no jealousy, lack neural complexes that create hierachal systems, and they come in various colors. While the intentions of Crake are not apparent, it can be assumed that in order for his creations to thrive and live on to be the sole global populating factor, which ensured the attributes are passed down, the rest of the world had to be eliminated. This is a clear example of how one man’s vision of a utopia led to global destruction, thereby creating a dystopia.

Part 10: Conclusion

When the idea of my thesis first came to being, I went in thinking and arguing that a modern day utopia is a possibility; all we need is unity in the plan and those who are willing to make the change. In the end, what I have found was that while a utopia can possibly be created, it never lasts

long. In the end, human instincts and greed break free causing the unravelling of the perfect society. Perhaps with more research, I can find other means and methods to achieving this goal. Or, perhaps, I have to face the fact that I will never have a utopia. However, while creating a perfect society can only be thought up in theory, that is not to say that I cannot come close. I can never perfect an imperfect human, but I can come close to making the world we live in a better one. We, as in all of mankind, can still take the steps needed to eliminate diseases, improve environmental sustainability, educate our future, and strive to make our lives better. While the novels used in this paper have all been dystopian, or speculative fiction, there is something I can learn from each one. If humans do not change their way of life now, they can certainly expect to have a bleak future. I leave you with this final statement by Jackie K. White, an associate professor at Lewis University, “I do not think stories can change the world but they can change minds and that is how we change the world; one reader at a time.”

Bibliography

"2.5 Million Alcohol-Related Deaths Worldwide- Annually." *NCADD*. National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc., n.d. Web. 28 Feb. 2015.

Anderson, Max, and Peter Escher. *The MBA Oath: Setting a Higher Standard for Business Leaders*. New York, NY: Portfolio, 2010. Print.

Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake: A Novel*. New York: Nan A. Talese, 2003. Print.

Beck, Glenn, and Harriet Parke. *Agenda 21*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012. Print.

Brain, Marshall, Charles W. Bryant, and Matt Cunningham. "How Caffeine Works." *HowStuffWorks*. HowStuffWorks.com, Apr. 2000. Web. 13 Mar. 2015.

Bostrom, Nick, and Rebecca Roache. "Ethical Issues In Human Enhancement." *New Waves In Applied Ethics*. Eds. Jesper Ryberg, Thomas S. Petersen, and Clark Wolf. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 120-52. Print.

Carr, Nicholas G. *The Glass Cage: Automation and Us*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2014. Print.

"Chinese Facing Shortage of Wives." *BBC News*. BBC, 12 Jan. 2007. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

Chung, Terri. "Dystopias: Definition and Characteristics." *Dystopias: Definition and Characteristics*. North Seattle College, n.d. Web. 05 Apr. 2015.

Cohen, Tamara. "MPs Clear the Way for Three-parent Babies: Commons in Historic Vote Despite Opposition from Church Leaders." *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers, 03 Feb. 2015. Web. 08 Mar. 2015.

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic, 2008. Print.

"Exploring Learned and Innate Behavior." *Science NetLinks*. Science NetLinks, n.d. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

Gabbay, Tiffany. "What Is Agenda 21? After Watching This, You May Not Want to Know." *The Blaze*. The Blaze, 19 Nov. 2012. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

Gamboa, Harry. *Urban Exile: Collected Writings of Harry Gamboa, Jr.* Ed. Chon A. Noriega. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1998. Print.

Garcia, Tony. "Lee County Adopts Miami 21 Inspired Code." *Transit Miami*. Transit Miami, 3 May 2010. Web. 05 Apr. 2015.

Gawande, Atul. *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*. New York: Metropolitan, 2002. Print.

Glover, Jonathan. "Eugenics: Some Lessons From the Nazi Experience." *The Future of Human Reproduction: Ethics, Choice, and Regulation*. Ed. John Harris and Søren Holm. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998. 57-65. Print.

Goldberg, Stephanie. "Children With Disabilities." *Journal of Christian Nursing* 24.3 (2007): 141-42. Web. 12 Apr. 2015.

Grossman, Lev. "2045: The Year Man Becomes Immortal." *Time*. Time Inc., 10 Feb. 2011. Web. 07 Mar. 2015.

Harden, Blaine. "A Real-life 'Hunger Games'" *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, 04 Apr. 2012. Web. 15 Feb. 2015.

Harris, Tom. "How Organ Transplants Work - HowStuffWorks." *HowStuffWorks*. How Stuff Works, 5 Feb. 2002. Web. 12 Apr. 2015.

Houghton, Kristen. "The Sadness of Conformity." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 26 Oct. 10. Web. 22 Feb. 2015.

"How Cells Communicate During Fight or Flight." *How Cells Communicate During Fight or Flight*. University of Utah Health Sciences, n.d. Web. 02 Mar. 2015.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1998. Print.

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. England: Penguin, 2003. Print.

McLeod, Saul. "The Milgram Experiment." *Simply Psychology*. 2007. Web. 03 Feb. 2015.

Melton, Melissa. "Future Earth: Agenda 21's 'Forbidden Zones'." *Truthstream Media*. Truthstream Media, 31 July 2013. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

More, Thomas. *Utopia*. Trans. Paul Turner. London: Penguin Classics, 2003. Print.

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Walter Arnold. Kaufmann. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. New York: Modern Library, 1995. Print.

Okopny, Cara L. "Reconstructing Women's Identities: The Phenomenon of Cosmetic Surgery in The United States." Diss. U of South Florida, 2005. *Reconstructing Women's Identities: The Phenomenon of Cosmetic Surgery in the United States*. Scholar Commons, 28 Mar. 2005. Web. 22 Feb. 2015.

O'Rourke, Erica. *Torn*. New York, NY: KTeen/Kensington, 2011. Print.

Pollan, Michael. "The Trip Treatment." *The New Yorker* 9 Feb. 2015: 36-47. Print.

Pond, Russ. "Can Caffeine Cause Anxiety and Panic Attacks? - Season of Peace." *Season of Peace*. Season of Peace, 01 Apr. 2012. Web. 02 Mar. 2015.

Pringle, Ramona. "Life Imitates Art: Cyborgs, Cinema, and Future Scenarios." *World Future Society / Tomorrow is Built Today*. The Futurist, July 2013. Web. 08 Feb. 2015.

Ribeiro, Joaquim A., and Ana M. Sebastiao. "Caffeine and Adenosine." *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* 20.1 (2010): S3-S15. *IOS Press*. Web. 2 Mar. 2015.

Ribo, John D. "This Future Sucks." Latina/o Utopias: Futures, Forms, and the Will of Literature. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York. 25 Apr. 2015. Reading.

Roth, Veronica. *Divergent*. London: HarperCollins Childrens, 2012. Print.

Selby, John. "Is There A Cure For Greed?" *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 5 May 2010. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.

Simmons, Danielle. "Genetic Inequality: Human Genetic Engineering." *Nature.com*. Nature Publishing Group, 2008. Web. 25 Feb. 2015.

Shusterman, Neal. *UnWholly*. New York: Simon & Schuster For Young Readers, 2012. Print.

Shusterman, Neal. *Unwind*. New York: Simon & Schuster for Young Readers, 2007. Print.

Smith, Stevie. "Nature and Free Animals." *Birds, Beasts, and Seas: Nature Poems from New Directions*. Ed. Jeffrey Yang. New York: New Directions, 2011. N. pag. Print.

Stump, Scott. "Dan Brown on 'Inferno': 'I Just Spent 3 Years in Hell'" *TODAY*. TODAY, 14 Mar. 2014. Web. 08 Mar. 2015.

"The Benefits of Walking." *American Heart Association*. American Heart Association, n.d. Web. 05 Apr. 2015.

The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Social Darwinism." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 12 Oct. 2014. Web. 22 Feb. 2015.

The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1984. Print. The New King James Version.

Thomas, Helen. "First Human Head Transplant Could Happen in Two Years." *NewScientist*. New Scientist: Health, 25 Feb. 2015. Web. 12 Apr. 2015.

"Top 22 Benefits of Trees." *TreePeople*. Tree People, 13 Jan. 2015. Web. 05 Apr. 2015.

Thoreau, Henry David, and Edwin Way Teale. *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1946. Print.

UNCED. "Agenda 21." *...: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*. Sustainable Developement, 1992. Web. 19 Apr. 2015.

Van Dam, Rob. "Ask the Expert: Coffee and Health." *The Nutrition Source*. Harvard T.H. Chan, n.d. Web. 11 Feb. 2015.

Westerfeld, Scott. *Uglies*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2005. Print.

"Walkable Communities, Inc." *Walkable Communities*. Walkable Communities, n.d. Web. 05 Apr. 2015

"What Is Alcohol? Is Alcohol a Drug? Alcohol Content - Drug-Free World." *What Is Alcohol? Is Alcohol a Drug? Alcohol Content - Drug-Free World*. Foundation For A Drug-Free World, n.d. Web. 2 Mar. 2015.

White, Jackie K. "Julia Alvarez's Young Adult Fiction: New Coordinates of Latina/o Literary Production Empowering a More Just Collective Futurity." Latina/o Utopias: Futures, Forms, and the Will of Literature. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York. 25 Apr. 2015. Reading.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism and Selected Critical Prose*. Ed. Linda Dowling. London: Penguin Classics, 2001. Print.

“Current World Population.” *World Population Clock: 7 Billion People (2015)*. Worldometers, n.d. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.