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# Underworlds, Utopia, and Justice: Analyzing the Cyclical Form of Ideals and Suffering in Human Existence From of Materialistic and Metaphysical Approach

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## Abstract

The interplay between visions of utopia and the presence of justice and underworlds within human thought reveals critical insights into the cyclical nature of justice, suffering, and human consciousness. Drawing upon religious, philosophical, and social narratives, this paper examines the concept of utopia as both an aspirational goal and a hidden source of oppression, particularly when framed within the metaphysical context of underworlds and cyclical suffering. Using the Buddhist concept of *Samsara* (the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth) as a philosophical framework, this research explores how ideological constructs—whether religious, political, or cultural—manifest as "underworlds," shaping the realities of justice and injustice in the world. The paper argues that the pursuit of a utopian vision, when driven by ignorance or unattainable ideals or philosophical means i.e. Marxism, often perpetuates cycles of suffering and injustice, thus entrenching a human "underworld" that exists even in societies that perceive themselves as "heavenly."

**Keywords:** Eutopia, Jannah, Behesht, Paradise, Promised land, Justice, Underworld, Samsara

## **Introduction**

The idea of an underworld—whether as a physical, psychological, or societal concept—has long been a central theme in human mythology, philosophy, and theology. It typically represents a state of suffering, punishment, or moral decay, often juxtaposed against idealized visions of utopia. Yet, what if these two constructs—utopia and the underworld—are not opposites, but intertwined realities within human existence? The paper investigates this hypothesis, examining how utopian ideologies, when pursued without an understanding of deeper truths, may serve as a mechanism for perpetuating cycles of suffering, creating "underworlds" within societies that seem to be striving for justice or perfection.

In this study, I apply the Buddhist concept of *Samsara*, the cycle of suffering and rebirth, as a model for understanding how human ideals of justice, utopia, and progress often result in recurring patterns of injustice and suffering. Drawing from various religious and philosophical traditions, I explore how societies—despite their visions of heaven or utopia—remain caught in cycles of violence, oppression, and suffering, which can be likened to living in an underworld. These cycles, once set into motion, can be self-perpetuating, as seen in the history of human civilization and particularly in the context of political, religious, and ideological struggles.

## **The Utopian Vision and the Hidden Underworld**

The concept of utopia, as an idealized state of human perfection, is often envisioned as a paradisiacal existence free from suffering, injustice, and inequality. The ancient Greeks spoke of *Eutopia* (the good place), while more modern thinkers like Thomas More, in his *Utopia* (1516), presented a vision of a just, harmonious society. However, historical and contemporary events show that utopian ideals, when imposed without critical self-awareness or regard for the complexities of human nature, often give rise to their opposite—an underworld of suffering, oppression, and violence.

For instance, the establishment of a "perfect" state often involves the subjugation of "the other"—those who do not fit into the vision of that ideal society. This pattern is visible in numerous historical

events, such as colonialism, totalitarian regimes, and religious conflicts, where the pursuit of a utopian order led to the creation of societal "underworlds." These underworlds are not merely symbolic; they are tangible realities for the marginalized, oppressed, and excluded members of society.

In Buddhist thought, the illusion of a perfect world is central to the cycle of *Samsara*. The pursuit of attachment to idealized forms of existence, such as a perfect state or "heaven," leads to suffering because it is based on ignorance (*avidya*) of the true nature of reality. This ignorance blinds individuals and societies to the inherent impermanence of all things, leading them to chase fleeting ideals that inevitably result in conflict, disillusionment, and suffering. As the Buddha taught, *dukkha* (suffering) is not merely physical pain but includes the mental suffering caused by attachment to false ideals.

In the context of political ideologies, the pursuit of utopia is often driven by an underlying desire for justice. Yet, as history has shown, such ideals are rarely achieved without significant human cost. Whether through warfare, systemic oppression, or the marginalization of dissenting voices, the quest for a utopian society often creates "underworlds" for those who stand in opposition or fail to conform to the new order.

### **Justice, Suffering, and the Cycle of Samsara**

At the heart of this research is the idea that justice, as pursued by societies, is often entangled with suffering and cyclical repetition. In Buddhism, *Samsara* represents the perpetual cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, driven by ignorance and desire. This cycle is not merely a metaphysical concept but also a reflection of the social and political cycles that govern human life. Justice, in many cases, becomes another ideal to be pursued without regard for the underlying causes of suffering.

The Buddha's teachings on *dukkha* reveal that suffering is not simply an external reality but an intrinsic aspect of the human condition, arising from our attachment to the self and our misconceptions about the world. In this sense, the cycle of *Samsara* is not just an individual process but a collective one. The suffering experienced by one person—whether through war, discrimination, or exploitation—creates ripples that affect society as a whole, perpetuating the cycle of injustice.

In examining historical examples, we see how political ideologies and utopian visions often contribute to cycles of injustice. The Holocaust, for example, can be seen as a tragic manifestation of the pursuit of a "pure" utopian vision by the Nazis. The vision of a racial utopia, in which only the "Aryan" race would thrive, led to the creation of an underworld for millions of Jews and other marginalized groups. The resulting genocide exemplifies how the pursuit of ideological justice can create massive suffering and entrench cycles of violence and hatred.

### **The Marxist Theory of Justice: A Materialist Perspective**

Marxist theory begins with the premise that human beings are shaped by their material conditions. Justice, then, is not a universal principle or an abstract moral law but a product of historical and social circumstances (Marx, 1867). Marx's theory of justice is rooted in the concept of historical materialism, which asserts that economic structures and relations of production shape social institutions, laws, and even moral values (Marx & Engels, 1846). In this context, justice cannot be understood outside the system of material production and the class relations that emerge from it. As Engels (1846) highlights in his work *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, the material conditions of society directly influence the ideologies that justify the existing order, including its conception of justice.

Similarly, the establishment of colonial empires was driven by the belief in the superiority of certain cultures and the desire to "civilize" the rest of the world. Yet, this utopian vision for a better world often resulted in the violent subjugation and exploitation of entire populations, creating underworlds of suffering in colonized regions that persisted long after the colonial powers had left (Fanon, 1963). This dynamic is illustrative of Marx's broader critique of how dominant classes or nations impose their vision of justice while perpetuating exploitation and inequality in the name of progress or civilization.

#### **1. The Role of Class Struggle**

In Marxism, the concept of justice is inherently connected to the dynamics of class struggle. Marx sees society as divided into two primary classes: the bourgeoisie (the capitalist class that owns the means of production) and the proletariat (the working class that must sell its labor to survive). Marx (1848) argues that in a capitalist society, justice is always skewed in favor of the bourgeoisie, as the

legal and political systems are designed to perpetuate their economic dominance. The existing state and its institutions function to maintain the status quo, serving the interests of the capitalist class and suppressing any challenges to their rule.

Marx contends that true justice can only be achieved through the overthrow of capitalist systems and the establishment of socialism—a system where the means of production are collectively owned, and the resources of society are distributed according to need rather than profit (Marx & Engels, 1848). The achievement of social justice, from a Marxist perspective, involves dismantling the economic and social structures that perpetuate inequality and exploitation. This transformative process requires a revolutionary change, as Marx (1867) suggests, in which the working class must seize control of the state apparatus and redistribute power, wealth, and resources more equitably.

## **2. Justice as the Abolition of Exploitation**

For Marx, exploitation is the fundamental injustice of capitalist society. In his analysis of labor and value, Marx (1867) argues that the value of goods and services produced by workers is greater than the wages they are paid. The difference between the value of what is produced and what is paid to the worker is called surplus value, and it is extracted by capitalists as profit. This surplus value is the source of capitalist wealth, and it arises from the exploitation of labor. According to Marx (1867), this extraction is a form of systemic injustice, as workers are not compensated for the full value of their labor.

Justice, therefore, in Marxist theory, means the abolition of exploitation. In a just society, workers would control the means of production and the distribution of wealth, ensuring that the value created by labor is returned to the workers who produce it. Justice is realized when workers no longer live under the oppressive conditions of wage labor and are free to determine their own conditions of life, work, and social existence (Piketty, 2014). As Marx (1867) famously writes, in a just society, workers would "reap the fruits of their labor," which would no longer be appropriated by capitalist owners.

## **3. The Abolition of Private Property**

The Marxist quest for justice also involves the abolition of private property in the means of production. Marx (1867) does not mean the abolition of personal property—such as personal belongings—but

the collective ownership of the tools, resources, and institutions that produce wealth. Private property, as Marx sees it, is the foundation of capitalist exploitation, as it allows the bourgeoisie to extract surplus value from workers (Marx & Engels, 1848).

The abolition of private property would create a society in which resources are shared and wealth is distributed based on need rather than ownership (Marx, 1867). This transformation is essential for achieving justice because it would eliminate the class divisions that underpin capitalist society. Marx's vision of justice, therefore, is one of collective ownership and communal decision-making, where the means of production are used to meet human needs and not to generate profits for a small elite. Marx's critique of private property goes beyond its economic role, framing it as a source of social inequality and alienation (Marx & Engels, 1848).

In Marx's vision, justice is not merely about fair distribution, but also about the elimination of the social relations of exploitation that underlie capitalist production. The transition to socialism, he argues, would restore human dignity by abolishing the alienation workers experience under capitalism, thus providing a more just, equitable, and humane system.

### **The Role of Ideological Constructs in Perpetuating Suffering**

The pursuit of utopia, whether driven by political, religious, or ideological motivations, often results in the creation of an underworld of suffering for those who do not fit the prescribed norms. In many cases, these ideological constructs are defended through laws, cultural narratives, and the creation of an "other" that can be blamed for societal ills.

In Buddhism, the concept of *Samsara* underscores the importance of recognizing the impermanence of all things. The attachment to any fixed ideal—whether of justice, peace, or a perfect society—inevitably leads to suffering. This is because such ideals are bound to the limited perceptions of human beings, who are often blinded by their desires, fears, and illusions.

In the case of the Jewish people and the establishment of Israel, for instance, the aspiration for a homeland after centuries of persecution has led to the creation of an idealized state. Yet, as history has shown, the pursuit of this utopian vision has involved violence, displacement, and the marginalization of the Palestinian people. The

creation of a "Promised Land" has, in this case, created an underworld for others—illustrating how the pursuit of one group's ideal can lead to the suffering of another.

### **Conclusion: Breaking the Cycle of Suffering**

In light of the analysis, it becomes clear that the pursuit of utopia—whether in the form of political, religious, or social ideals—can lead to the perpetuation of suffering and injustice. This cycle of suffering, which mirrors the Buddhist concept of *Samsara*, is driven by attachment to illusory goals and the failure to confront the deeper realities of human existence. Breaking free from this cycle requires not just the realization of the impermanence of idealized visions but also the cultivation of wisdom, compassion, and awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings.

Ultimately, justice cannot be achieved through the pursuit of idealized worlds that disregard the complexities of human nature. Human quest to overcome suffering or to pursuit justice, is often deemed unsuccessful due to the convergence of wisdom, science and intellect (Davoudpour, A.R., 2024). True justice, from a Buddhist perspective, is achieved through the cessation of attachment, the recognition of suffering, and the cultivation of compassion for all beings with the means that equalize all. There has been attempts to refer Buddhism as a solely materialistic practice with the means of meditation and happiness, however the ultimate happiness can not be achieved without a form of transcendental guidance or indifference to the suffering of other sentient being. Only by breaking free from the cycles of ignorance and achieving certain levels of wisdom can humanity hope to transcend its underworlds of suffering and find true peace. That is where an interplay between metaphysics and human life i.e. religion comes to play. Although religion can be considered a primary sign of such significant source of understanding.

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