

# Project Utopia an exercise in perfection

Nothing endures, nothing is precise and certain (except the mind of a pedant), perfection is the mere repudiation of that ineluctable marginal inexactitude which is the mysterious inmost quality of Being

H.G. Wells, A Modern Utopia —

Project Utopia's premise is to build an ideal society. So let's first explore what's *ideal*. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, something ideal is “existing only in the imagination; desirable or perfect but not likely to become a reality”. Even at this point, then, we are confronted with the difficulty of our endeavour.

Anything that's *ideal* or *perfect* can't exist in the real world. If it did, it would not be ideal or perfect. That said, though, as humans we always try to make our world *better*, we strive for *perfection*, with different degrees of success.

Project Utopia is not about perfection, but about advancement.

More importantly, as humans, we are emotional beings. If something pleases us, we feel *happy*. Thus, an *ideal society* should try to *please everybody*. Everybody should feel happy in our Utopia.

## How to make people happy?

Psychologist [Martin Seligman](#) has provided the acronym PERMA: people seems happiest when they have

- *Pleasure* (tasty foods, warm baths, etc.);
- *Engagement* (or flow, the absorption of an enjoyed yet challenging activity);
- *Relationships*;
- *Meaning* (a perceived quest or belonging to something bigger);
- *Accomplishments* (having realized tangible goals).

Then the problem of happiness is reduced to an optimization problem of PERMA's variables.

### Pleasure

Pleasure is the only PERMA variable that can be bought with money. So what's the perfect salary for happiness? A study made in 2010 by Princeton University claims that:

Emotional well-being also rises with log income, but there is no further progress beyond an annual income of ~\$75,000.

— Kahneman and Deaton. High income improves evaluation of life but not emotional well-being. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (2010) vol. 107 (38) pp. 16489-16493

So our society should guarantee in some way an income similar to \$75,000, but not more. There could be regulations to ensure that if somebody makes more than \$75,000 he will pay so much taxes on the extra money that the government could actually redistribute that capital to the people that contribute something to society but make less than \$75,000.

### Engagement, Meaning, and Accomplishments

Those three variables seems to be related to our passions and goals in life. We all heard the adage *follow your passion*. But very few of us can claim to have a clearly identified passion in life. Maybe having a wider choice of subjects and options from an early age can help people to discover their passions, but it's more likely that those passions will change over and over in their lives. What actually happens more often is that people discover their passions while already working. Thus, I think the working condition baseline needs to be raised so the possibility of falling in love with your work are higher.

All working places should provide *autonomy*, *respect*, and a *sense of impact*, and should reward *competence*, and *creativity*. This, of course, is no easy feat, but Utopia should provide a series of regulations and campaigns to encourage a change in the working conditions.

### Relationships

Professional psychological and relationship advice should be free for everybody. Of course a change of mentality is required before starting such a campaign, so people will accept this advice and take it seriously. This will probably create a mentally healthier society, which is in turn an happier society.

## Conclusions (or?)

In this short document I feel like I just scratched the surface of what is possible to create a better society. But I have faith in humanity. Our natural reward system makes big personal- and societal-level advancements possible, but most of all *desirable* because they bring us *happiness*.

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