Toward the Star Trek Society

By Rob Lund

Every day of our lives, we are made aware of the current sad state of humanity. We read the newspapers, listen to the radio, and watch television, and we hear about wars, riots, poverty, and starvation. We hear about theft, violence, and murder. I always wonder: why it is that we humans cannot live in peace and harmony; what it would take to be able to live like that; is there a better model for society?

I'm sure that most of you have seen an episode or two of one of the star Trek series on TV, or one of the movies. Those of you who have, will know that the general theme is the exploration of the universe – "to boldly go where no one has gone before". The stories are about discovering new places, new beings and cultures, new phenomena, and are woven with the trials and tribulations of individual characters, leading to their triumphs and the triumphs of mankind.

What most people don't notice is that there are occasionally references in the dialogue that hint at the state of human society, in general, in these stories. Star Trek, especially the later series, portrays a very positive vision of humankind in the 24th century. It provides a blueprint for society that seems to be based on a combination of the Liberal Humanist and the Utopian Socialist philosophies. These are not new philosophies: they have been written about since the early 19th century. I will briefly describe these philosophies.

Liberal Humanists are optimistic, and believe in freedom. To quote Captain Kirk: "It's the nature of humans to be free" and "Without freedom of choice, there is no creativity. Without creativity, there is no life".

Humanists believe in social progress that emphasizes the dignity and worth of the individual. In one episode of Star Trek: Next generation Captain Picard tells LaForge that "*one of the most important things in a peron's life is to feel useful*".

Humansts aspire to a single human nation, but don't want a single state. They don't want leaders or bosses, and don't want to boss or represent anyone else. In ST:TNG, Picard states that "*no being is so important that he can usurp the rights of others*". And yet Humanists don't want a uniform world. They want different cultures, beliefs, and ideas. As Picard states "*It is the differences that have made us strong*". The Vulcan philosophy in Star Trek is infinite diversity in infinite combinations.

The Utopian Socialist philosophy is not to be confused with other socialist philosophies. There is Revolutionary Socialism – also called Communism. There is Reform Socialism – also based on Marxism. Thirdly, there is Guild Socialism, which has evolved into the modern Labour Movement.

Utopian Socialism strives to ensure that everyone has a job, goods are owned in common, and wealth is shared, in a classless society. This would lead to the absence of money, since it would no longer be required. Captain Picard, in First contact, states that "*money doesn't exist in the 24th century*", and goes on to say that "*the accumulation of wealth is no longer a driving force. People work to better themselves and the rest of humanity*". Actually, they did need currency for dealing with other cultures.

Another element of Utopianism is the improvement of the human condition. In one episode of ST:TNG, Counselor Troi tells of poverty being eliminated on Earth a long time previously, and a lot of other things disappearing with it, like hopelessness, despair, cruelty, and greed.

A key requirement for achieving this Utopian state is the free and liberal use of science and technology, cheap mass production, and labour-saving devices. A commonly shown device in ST is the food replicator. Commander Riker tells a new crew member that she didn't need to clean her room, because the ship cleans itself. There are many references to almost limitless energy for ordinary use, using Dilithium crystals, which is what powers the warp engines of the USS Enterprise.

Having painted this picture of a Utopian society, the question we now have to answer is "can we ever get there and, if so, then how?" I strongly believe that there is one obstacle that will impede humankind from getting there, just one: selfishness! That trait that drives us to do things for our own self-interest, and that drives us to accumulate possessions, wealth, and power.

If only the principles of Freemasonry, or the principles of Theosophy, could be adopted by all of humankind: the principle of a universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, gender, caste, or colour, we would be able to get there, but until we stop looking inward, and start doing things for the general good of others, we are doomed to our current chaotic struggle for existence.