**A Voyage into Tartary (1689) and political solutions to the religious wars and to the government of Louis XIV**

**Bruna Pereira Caixeta**

**Abstract**

*A Voyage into Tartary* is a utopia written in English and published in London in 1689, without indication of author - designated on the book cover only as an allegorical name with French ancestry: Heliogenes L’Epy, meaning as we suggested, “exiled son of the sun”, in our case, “son of Louis XIV, or of his homeland, which is in exile.” The book brings together the travel reports of the journeys that the narrator does to Rome, Greece, Byzantium, Georgia and to the Philippines and his discovery of utopian Heliopolis, a city of the sun. The present communication will focus especially in this city, in order to show that Heliopolis summarizes the ideological formulation of the French Enlightenment. After the death of Alexander the Great, and the succession of tyrannical governors, a group of his former followers decides to leave Greece and found a morally and scientifically developed society in a sunny area next to the vast Tartary. They set up a type of government similar to a republican monarchy and live under a single law, the Law of Nature - in the known Seneca’s stoic meaning. Its inhabitants are avid readers and estimate the books and know that prioritizes reason above mysticism and faith. All of them agree in a community where there is no religion (just a pagan ceremony in honor of the sun) and do not require any form of absolute power or power justified as divine gift. With a symptomatic publication date (1689) and also touching frontally the issues of the divine right of kings, the philosophy of nature, the system of absolute monarchy, the ordered community that dispenses religious militarism and promote the use of Science reason and ancient knowledge, we aim to show that *A Voyage into Tartary*, as a whole, will discuss the problems of the monarchy of Louis XIV and of a Europe ravaged by religious wars and the political interests in the nascent colonial empire. At the same time, we will show that the utopia touches very explicitly on topics that will be valuable to the Enlightenment, namely: a critique of the theological spirit; the proclamation of Reason as a sovereign instrument of knowledge and the issue of philosopher-kings.

**Keywords**

Utopia, city of the sun, Louis XIV, French Enlightenment, absolute monarchy

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A Voyage into Tartary (1689) e as soluções políticas para as guerras religiosas e o governo de Luís XIV

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Resumo

A Voyage into Tartary é uma utopia escrita em inglês e publicada em Londres, em 1689, sem indicação de autor – designado na capa do livro apenas por um nome alegórico com ascendência francesa: Heliogenes de L’Epy, cujo significado, como fica sugerido seria “filho do sol exilado”, na nossa hipótese, “filho de Luís XIV, ou da sua pátria, que está exilado”. A obra reúne os relatos de viagem que o narrador faz a Roma, Grécia, Bizâncio, Geórgia e Filipinas (essas duas últimas, regiões da vasta Tartária, no século XVII) e sua descoberta da utópica Heliópolis, uma cidade do Sol. A presente comunicação irá focar especialmente nessa cidade, a fim de expor como ela sumariza a formulação ideológica do Iluminismo francês. Após a morte de Alexandre Magno e a sucessão de governadores tirânicos, um grupo de seus antigos seguidores resolve deixar a Grécia e fundar uma sociedade moral e cientificamente desenvolvida em uma região ensolarada próxima à vasta Tartária. Nela instituem um tipo de governo similar a uma monarquia republicana e vivem segundo uma única lei, a Lei da Natureza, de acordo com a conhecida acepção estoica de Sêneca. Seus habitantes são ávidos leitores e estimam os livros e o saber que prioriza a Razão acima do misticismo e da fé. Concordam em uma comunidade em que não há religião, apenas um cerimonial em honra ao sol, e dispensam toda e qualquer forma de poder absoluto e justificado como dádiva divina. Com uma data de publicação sintomática (1689) e tangenciando frontalmente as questões do direito divino dos reis, da filosofia da natureza, do regime da monarquia absoluta, da comunidade em ordem e correção ao se dispensar o belicismo religioso e se promover o uso da razão científica e do saber antigo, intentamos mostrar que A Voyage into Tartary, em seu conjunto, discutirá os problemas da monarquia de Luís XIV e de uma Europa assolada pelas guerras de religião e pelos interesses políticos ligados ao nascente império colonial. Paralelamente, exporemos como a utopia tangencia muito explícitamente tópicos que serão valiosos ao Iluminismo, a saber: a crítica ao espírito teológico; a proclamação da Razão como instrumento soberano de conhecimento e a tópica dos reis filósofos.

Palavras-chave

Thomas Morus, Utopia, tradução

Bruna Pereira Caixeta atualmente é doutoranda no Instituto de Estudos da Linguagem da IEL/UNICAMP, orientanda do professor Carlos Eduardo Ornelas Berriel. Seu doutorado consiste em traduzir para o português e elaborar um estudo crítico-histórico para a utopia literária A Voyage into Tartary, publicada anonimamente em Londres, em 1689. Interessa-se precipuamente pelas produções literárias utópicas do século XVII e as pesquisas historiográficas sobre o século XVII na Inglaterra e França. Seu mestrado consistiu na realização de um estudo e também da tradução para a língua portuguesa do opúsculo inglês de viagem imaginária à lua The Man in the Moone (1638), de Francis Godwin.
In this brief communication, I will deal exclusively with the utopian city of Heliopolis, being in the fictional plot of A Voyage into Tartary, a utopia published anonymously in 1689, in London. This interest in only the city of the sun of this narrative, and not in the other elements and plot events, is because Heliopolis summarizes one of the more important issues of the Tartary. The issue to which I am referring, is the ideological formulation of the French Enlightenment.

I am still not saying that Tartary is an Enlightenment utopia, because there are other issues in the plot that lead to different debates, but I say that Heliopolis touches very explicitly on topics that will be valuable to the Enlightenment, namely: a critique of the theological spirit; the proclamation of Reason as a sovereign instrument of knowledge and, at the same time, as stated by Luiz Roberto Fortes (1989) "as the supreme body in charge of ruling the historical man’s destinations and lead to their emancipation before the prejudices of the past, as well as direct and organize life in society"; and finally, beyond this Rationalism, it will still be present in the issue of philosopher-kings or enlightened despots.

Something that will be specific to this narrative will be the presentation of these topics of the Enlightenment in a particular dialogue with the monarchical absolutist government of Louis XIV. Thus, while we will notice the building of the ideological foundations of the Enlightenment, a deconstruction of the Old Regime will be made, concerning the absolutism of Louis XIV. In a word, we will note that Tartary will constitute a harbinger of a new political age, as also the end of absolutism in France and the end of Louis XIV’s government.

I move to a brief presentation of Heliopolis, and then, discuss some points of the plot that redeem the maximum referred to the Enlightenment and also to the government of Louis XIV.

Impelled by religious conflict in the city of Lyon, the parents of L'Epy send him to another French province in the year 1636. In the middle of the journey, the ship sinks and the child finds himself near vineyards, behind which he hears conversations in ancient Greek. Soon he is sighted by Eugene, a native who presents that city to him as Heliopolis. Next, he is received by the Master of the Society, Callisthenes, who tells him the story of the founding of Heliopolis, and says that after Alexander the Great’s death, his courtiers divided his empire between themselves and ruled tyrannically, without the same esteem for philosophers that the Macedonian had. For this reason, a group of philosophers decided to leave Athens and settle elsewhere in the world, where they could live more comfortably under laws which they would be the first founders. They took with them
what they had of great value, especially books. After wandering for two years and two months, they found a sunny area, where they decided to settle. They founded a country whose center is the city of Heliopolis. The name was given in honor of the sun, which they believed to be the center of the world. After evaluating all forms of government which they knew from experience or study, the philosophers selected from them what they considered most appropriate for the common good. With this purpose of establishing a government body on the standards of a well-ordered family—which they defined as "sovereign government of a growing republic"—they agreed to convene a general meeting in which all men over 30 years would have the right to vote and decide on the government. They chose Misargyre for the integrity of his actions, and they enthroned him with the authority to establish laws. Misargyre, instead of following the usual ploy among lawmakers who, he said, liked to pretend familiarity with the gods (and thus, force people to venerate their laws), decides to found a single law, the Law of Nature. He believed as this was innate in everybody, this law would be recognized by all those endowed with clear understanding, that is, those in whom reason was not crooked and disordered by passions. Misargyre stated that "Man's nature is his Reason," and obedience to reason coincides with the maintenance of peace among citizens. For the times when the passions and occupations of life overshadow understanding, disturbing the reason of the action, the legislator decreed that every master of a family should write, on the most visible part of his home, the phrase: "Follow Nature"—which would be the same as "Follow Reason" for he takes Nature as Reason.

Children of Heliopolis are educated in mathematics, astronomy, grammar, Art, Military Discipline, and Moral and Natural Philosophy. They read Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Epicurus, Democritus, Thales, Diogenes, and all ancient philosophers, including Egyptians. They have a rich library, wider than the one of the Vatican, with rare manuscripts and translations from Egyptian. Trade is not much practiced in Heliopolis, except for when there are plenty of provisions, which they exchange for gems in India for the "Public Treasury" of the city. The physical aspect of the city is flat and it is divided into three concentric circles: the Council, the Temple of the Sun and the Schools, and houses occupy designated places close to the circles, forming a total of 30 tribes—the geometry is symmetrical and founded on the idea of three. The Temple of the Sun imitates the Roman Pantheon and is supported by columns of Corinthian order. There are still three steps with three Arab figures made of gold and precious stones. On the top of the step there is a figure with an eagle’s head, exhaling perfumes and which contributes as chandelier, and an inscription which has been present by a Persian king. Every day the Solarians go to the temple in the morning to watch the sunrise. At the ceremony, Solarians sing hymns and a child delivers a gold box to a beautiful
virgin priestess, responsible only for spreading perfume in the air (a ceremony which refers to the ancient pagan religions). The Solarians don’t have a God or gods. Finally, they have a room with a collection of "everything that Nature's womb produced or was invented for the Arts." In it there are all sorts of firearms (of which they value the invention and condemn the use), parabolic mirrors, a flying machine, potential glasses (telescopes) through which can be distinguished hills and some flying beings on the moon. Also, they preserved in crystals filled with wine, half of men and animals. All these objects are stored in a room, and are described as if they were stored, dispensed. L'Epy concludes that Heliopolis abounds in all things that can yield a pleasant and comfortable life, and that its residents live a "form of advanced frugal and austere life." After spending a month in the country, he decides to leave. He gifts his friend Eugene with precious stones and his friend, in return, gifts him with Democritus and Thales books together with a gemstone. L'Epy arrives in France in 1676, but suffers a cruel experience that forces him to depart to England. In this country he established himself and works as a teacher.

The historical period covered by the plot, from 1636 to 1676, and even the date of publication of the work, 1689, is mainly characterized by religious wars between Catholic France and the Protestant countries, England and Holland. Especially in the years 1676 and 1680, these clashes increase, and they go on to become unmanageable within France itself, mostly because of the more austere policy toward Protestants assumed by Louis XIV. In 1685, these measures reached a limit, with the decision of the king to revoke the Edict of Nantes, then, forbidding Protestants to conduct public worship in France. Since this act, Louis XIV assumes a tyrannical absolutism in the eyes of his countrymen and increases the disgust of the population. According to André Maurois (1950), this "was the biggest mistake of the reign of Louis XIV." The esteem for the king of the first 20 years of regency, and the growing esteem of the French monarchy are put into disrepute, and a period of great social and intellectual agitation begins aimed political changes.

From this dissatisfaction with absolutism is born the Enlightenment, which in the decades previous to the eighteenth century, will be spread through very varied works, from treated to fiction. The year of publication of the utopia under discussion here is the fomenting period of ideas and intellectual development that will culminate with the great systematic works of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, such as Montesquieu and Voltaire, for example. If we remember some of the works of Montesquieu and compare them with the above plot, we see how the spirit of the Enlightenment is in Tartary, and how much it is still in a nascent stage, without the systematization it will receive in the following years. However, it is still interesting to observe once more in the history of utopian texts, the particular characteristic of being able to advance many
issues. If we look carefully deep into the thoughts of Montesquieu in the book *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), which states, in his own words: "the laws, written or unwritten, that govern people are not the result of the will of those who legislate. In contrast, they stem from social and historical reality and have 'necessary relations with the whole of life. Such thinking, is similar in intent, if not identical to that of Misargyre who promoted a law for the exercise of legislative power to not be deliberate—as he said, it has been made by those who pretend familiarity with the gods—in other words, obviously: Louis XIV in his self-proclamation to be The Sun King.

Continuing still with this approach of *Tartary* toward the Enlightenment in the context of political issues, there is the suggestion of the distribution of powers by convening congregations, as in the employment of the word republic. Misargyre served once in the establishment of the single law of Heliopolis, however since its imposition, everything is decided in assemblies, in popular representation; he does not rule the city. Herein lies a head-on collision with absolutism. The Enlightenment’s ideal city is finally erected at the moment of the founding of Heliopolis, because it was both a city founded by philosophers, as started from scratch, and governed by philosophers. The city is still a place where Reason is sovereign and taken as the supreme body in charge of directing and organizing life in society—remember the "Law of Nature", consisting of follow the reason.

Finally, the criticism of the theological spirit, a strong topic of the Enlightenment, especially the French Enlightenment—and different from German—in addition to the atheism of the inhabitants, comes from the abundance of pagan references such as the cult of the sun, the Arab figures, and the Persian inscription that Heliopolis features. Something that will crown the presence of the spirit of the eighteenth century in the plot is the curious relationship of Solarians with scientific objects, an issue that motivated the only two papers on *Tartary*, which were written by Bleiler (1990) and Stableford (2006). The apparent disuse of scientific objects by the inhabitants signals the different stance the eighteenth century has towards science compared to that of the seventeenth century. For the eighteenth century, the figure of the philosopher, and also the belief in reason, surpasses the value of science to the first plan, as in seventeenth century.

In conclusion, we could say that the first drawings and formulations of the French Enlightenment, those first issues to be systematized by the works of the writers of the first moment of Enlightenment, as Montesquieu and Voltaire, are present in the utopian city of *Tartary*. The little implicit dialogue with Louis XIV and the regime of absolute monarchy are both responsible for the fact that Louis XIV no longer governs France, and also the means by which the anonymous author
of this work was able to establish a counterpoint between the best forms of government, and affirm the efficiency of this ideology that the century a decade after the work will call Enlightenment.

**Bibliographical references**

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