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Tommaso Campanella and the Philosophical Foundations of Utopian Idealism: Ethics, Citizenship, and the Vision of The City of the Sun

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Abstract

From the Renaissance onward, utopia emerged not only as a literary genre but as a philosophical expression of humanity's deepest ethical and political aspirations. This study investigates Tommaso Campanella's The City of the Sun as a foundational text that bridges metaphysical idealism, moral philosophy, and early modern concepts of citizenship. Through a comparative and historical approach, the paper explores how Campanella's utopian vision represents a profound rethinking of human nature, social justice, and divine order in the face of political oppression and ecclesiastical authority. The research contextualizes Campanella's intellectual evolution-from his Dominican education and engagement with Telesio and Galileo to his imprisonment and philosophical maturation-arguing that The City of the Sun was born out of both existential suffering and rational conviction. Unlike the static perfectionism of Thomas More's Utopia, Campanella conceives of society as a dynamic organism governed by three spiritual forces: power, love, and wisdom. This triadic model reflects his conviction that moral enlightenment and rational governance are inseparable from metaphysical harmony. Furthermore, the article reveals how Campanella's concept of citizenship transcends political utility, embodying a synthesis of ethics, aesthetics, and divine reason. His utopian ideal becomes a symbol of human freedom against tyranny—a poetic and philosophical protest that anticipates Enlightenment notions of moral autonomy and universal human dignity. Ultimately, the paper concludes that Campanella's thought offers a timeless framework for understanding utopia as both a philosophical ideal and a moral imperative, one that unites knowledge, virtue, and political order in the quest for the perfect commonwealth.

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Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639):

Tommaso Campanella is an Italian monk, philosopher, poet, and astrologer. He joined the Dominican order, where he had the opportunity to quench his boundless thirst for reading. He read indiscriminately the works of philosophers, physicians, mathematicians, jurists, politicians, theologians, humanists, poets, and scholars of rhetoric and eloquence, both ancient and modern. He did not refrain from studying works on occult sciences, astrology, and even magic, and was able to assimilate everything he read thanks to his extraordinary memory and intellectual capacity (Tarabishi, 1997, p. 511). He began his life as a writer and author, but soon clashed with the courts, facing multiple trials. In 1591, he was imprisoned in Naples because of a famous philosophical treatise. Later, prosecutions against him continued. In 1597, he was tried again for his ideas on idealism, for defending the concept of a theocratic republic, and for attacking the Church. In 1599, he faced another trial, during which he pretended to be insane. Despite being tortured for a long time, he stood firm in his convictions until he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1602. He spent 27 years in prison without renouncing or compromising his ideas, formulating during that time his philosophy of the political unity of humankind as an absolute principle explaining his philosophy of movement. Besides, during his imprisonment, he continued writing and corresponding with the outside world, and in 1626, the Spanish government managed to release him and he moved to Rome, where Pope Urban VIII allowed him to reside and resume his intellectual activity. He returned to defend the idea of unity, making France the axis of his vision of the new political world. On this basis, the French ambassador helped Campanella leave Italy, and he spent the rest of his life in Paris under the protection of King Louis XIII, until his death in 1639 and left behind a vast collection of philosophical and political works; about thirty books, the most famous of which is The City of the Sun, a model of utopia that still holds intellectual significance today, before discussing the principles of citizenship in The City of the Sun, we can mention some of his other works, such as The Sense of Things and Magic, in which he presented Telesio's views, defining magic as the art of using the powers of the stars and the influence of human will upon nature (Karam, 1986, p. 37). This position placed him in paradoxical opposition to Galileo. Another major work, Defense of Galileo (1622), contained his views on intellectual freedom, the hallmark of the Renaissance where he urged the Church to grant freedom to experimental inquiry, for "the Book of Nature, if studied deeply, will be found in agreement with the Holy Scripture (Karam, 1986, p. 37)." In On General Philosophy or Metaphysics, Campanella aligned closely with Descartes, evaluating his and Telesio's ideas on a rational basis. In The City of the Sun, he presented his social ideas in the spirit of Plato's Republic and Thomas More's Utopia.

His philosophy rests on three main principles: Philosophy is a tool for renewing the human conscience in all its moral and religious dimensions. Political existence revolves around a philosophical triad: power, love, and wisdom. The ideal state is that which can be described as a republic governed by the principle of qualitative distinction across all aspects of social existence. As Professor Ativvat Abu al-Saud notes, Campanella was one of the earliest opponents of Aristotelian philosophy and scholastic science, which had dominated European thought during the Middle Ages (Al-Saud, 1997, p. 386). It can be said that the factors behind writing (City of the Sun) are political factors, as his suffering, his feeling of alienation, and the absence of the right to freedom upon which the philosophy of citizenship in political or civil society is based, were behind thinking about the book, which was a political reform project. Moreover, his criticism of Aristotle was deemed an unforgivable crime by the Church at the time, and he was accused of heresy and impiety. He also took part in a conspiracy to expel the Spanish occupiers, and the religious factors included his strong belief in miracles and astrology which is forms of knowledge still rejected by religious institutions. Furthermore, the influence of the thinker and astrologer Nostradamus (1503-1566) is clearly visible in his doctrines and political ideas in The City of the Sun. Belief in transcendent, free ideas beyond the dominant reality often causes suffering: the intellectual and emotional torment experienced by creative individuals in times of darkness cannot be understood except through their own lived experience.

Campanella portrayed the relationship between the "ruler" and "ruled" in an artistic and powerful style, reflecting his deep understanding of the psychological structure of the people. He wrote: "The people are like a beast with a dull, confused brain; they do not know their own strength. They stand burdened with wood and stones, led by

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the frail hands of a child with reins and a bridle. A single kick would be enough to break the bonds, yet the beast is afraid and cowardly, doing whatever the child commands, unaware of its power to terrify him and what's more astonishing is that it binds itself, gags its own mouth with its hands, and brings death upon itself in exchange for a few coins that kings throw to it from its own treasury. It owns all that lies between earth and heaven but does not know it, and if someone dares to speak this truth, they kill him without forgiving his 'sin.' (Durant, p. 302)" For Campanella, politics and ethics are of the same essence and cannot be separated because politics is not an independent science but is founded on the love of man for himself in the higher sense and his love for the society that is essential to his existence. His dream was to create a great empire governed by a council of kings guided by the Pope, with the best organization being one grounded in natural science and philosophy where scholars and philosophers would manage political and administrative affairs, we also noticed that there are parallels between Campanella and Plato, particularly regarding sexual education and regulation, aimed at forming a strong and virtuous citizen. His view was not one of sexual communism but rather of sexuality as a natural function, not merely as a pursuit of pleasure. Campanella's concept of civic education was based on ability and aptitude: professional duties were not coercive but arose from the citizen's will and attachment to his work. Every task was a moral act; no work was inferior or despised. Justice was achieved by distributing the products of labor according to need and merit, eliminating injustice and poverty and work was organized according to each person's ability, allowing time for study and intellectual exploration outside working hours. Exhausting labor that disregards human capacity leads to alienation, ignorance, and moral decay. He wrote: "The population of Naples reaches seventy thousand, yet no more than ten or fifteen thousand actually work. These few overexert themselves beyond their strength. But in the City of the Sun, since work is evenly distributed, no one works more than four hours a day. (Brehie, 1988, p. 317)" Thus, the organization of working hours became a foundation for the worker's freedom. The precision governing the society of the City of the Sun makes it a utopian community where private property is abolished, the family disappears, and communal life replaces individuality entirely where everything is planned, monitored, and provided for both materially and spiritually, this relieves man from the burden of responsibility and choice, resolving all social and historical contradictions. According to Professor Abdelwahab El-Messiri, The City of the Sun reflects a natural world governed solely by natural laws, where the greatest of men is the one who understands and applies these laws to direct the life of the city in perfect harmony with the universe and nature (El-Messiri, 2001, p. 261).

The City of the Sun:

The book The City of the Sun embodies and chronicles the life of the philosopher more than it expresses the genuine idea and political project that Campanella aspired to. Inasmuch as, the editions that appeared during his lifetime underwent revisions and additions intended to protect the philosopher's life. Therefore, the first version which, as Maria Luisa Berneri notes was written "in his youth, when his body was chained but his mind still free" (Berneri, 1997, p. 125) is the most authentic and the closest to Campanella's intellect and heart, its title expresses the idea of reforming the Christian Republic according to the promise that God made to Saint Catherine and Saint Bridget.

Campanella employs a dialogue between a knight Hospitar and a sailor from Genoa, who describes an ideal city he visited during one of his voyages. The City of the Sun is located near Taprobane, on a vast plain, and is divided into concentric circles. Each circle has four gates, and to reach the center, one must pass through four streets, at the very center stands a temple, and the city's architectural design was primarily motivated by security concerns protecting citizens from invasions and external attacks. For, security according Campanella is one of the fundamental moral values upon which citizenship is built, and the absence of safety within a homeland deprives the citizen of the most basic ability to exercise their rights. When one's life and family are threatened, the citizen's focus shifts solely to survival mechanisms, rendering all other rights secondary. In political heritage, we find the well-known parable that illustrates this idea: when a king dies, the people are left for months without a ruler; chaos, attacks, and violations spread everywhere until the citizens realize the necessity of having a ruler and that he must possess all powers. Thus, security becomes both a value and a tool in the ruler's hands. On the other hand, we political system of the City of the Sun the just ruler, known as the Sun (they have a sacred prince

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called "O" (Berneri, 1997, p. 128) while Will Durant wrote his name as "Hoh (Durant, p. 303)," which in our language means "the metaphysical sailor"), is both their spiritual and temporal leader and all matters ultimately refer back to him (Campanella, 2000, p. 6). He presides over the political and administrative authority of the city and is described as: "A metaphysician of the order of the supreme priest, possessing total knowledge and absolute sovereignty, resembling in metaphysics the First Essence (Janet, 1872, p. 256)." However, his constitutional powers are not absolute. Political authority is distributed among several bodies, and the system includes a consultative council that assists the ruler in managing the affairs of the state. These advisors can be considered, in contemporary political terms, ministers or in monarchical language princes. The Prince of Power (Pon) is responsible for matters of war and politics, including decision-making, oversight of military commanders, soldiers, armaments, and fortifications. The Prince of Wisdom (Sin) oversees all sciences, doctors, and professors specializing in both the liberal and mechanical arts. He is assisted by a number of supervisors or judges equal to the number of sciences such as the astrologer, cosmographer, geometer, physicist, rhetorician, grammarian, physician, and scholars of politics and ethics. For these scholars, there exists a single book, The Book of Wisdom, which is read aloud to the people following the Pythagorean tradition. In modern terms, the authority of knowledge in the City of the Sun corresponds to what we might call the ministries of education, training, and intellectual formation, both at the basic and academic levels. The Prince of Love (Mar) is in charge of social and family affairs and the organization of relationships among citizens. Thus, the political system of the City of the Sun consists of the supreme ruler (the Sun), followed hierarchically by the Prince of Power (Pon), the Prince of Wisdom (Sin), and the Prince of Love (Mar). Together, these constitute the executive authority. Alongside them, there are two legislative assemblies: One composed of clergy, which holds legislative power and the other composed of the general populace, which decides on matters of peace and war and approves the laws (Al-Khashab, 1966, p. 182).

Morality and Citizenship:

From the preceding observations, it appears that the political system in The City of the Sun is organized according to the logic of reason and knowledge. Furthermore, the presence of a single person at the top of the power hierarchy is deemed necessary and cannot be dispensed with. However, the supreme ruler is not a despot wielding unchecked administrative authority; power is equitably distributed among the three princes, the Prince of Power (the military leader and minister of defense), the Prince of Wisdom (the minister of knowledge), and the Prince of Love. Thus, plurality is evident in the city's political structure. Since political freedom manifests itself in the citizens' participation in governance, freedom for Campanella does not mean acting according to one's whims; the strictness of law is a necessary condition for sound political management. Professor 'Atiyyāt Abū al-Sa'ūd captures this rigor aptly when she writes: "We now move from the liberal freedom and religious tolerance of Thomas More's Utopia to the other face of freedom, to the strict system that puts everything in its proper place." (Al-Saud, 1997, p. 386) This strictness in dealing with citizens has led to varied interpretations of Campanella's political thought; what's more, the citizen of The City of the Sun practices citizenship in its highest form by participating in the selection and replacement of rulers and princes. Will Durant writes: "All its officials are chosen from among the best; they are removable by a national assembly composed of all citizens over twenty years of age, these selected officials, in turn elect the head of government the priest called Hoh." (Durant, p. 303) Furthermore, the thirteen heads of departments meet every eight days under the presidency of the Metaphysician to deliberate on the appointment of provincial governors or district leaders, whereas the thirteen princes themselves are elected in a general assembly attended by both men and women (Blanchet, 1920, p. 499). Campanella points out that the conditions for becoming the supreme ruler are not granted to everyone: "No one can become O unless he is well-versed in the histories, rituals, sacrifices, and laws of nations, he must also possess knowledge of all mechanical arts, learning a new one every two days, and be proficient in all the sciences including mathematics, physics, and astrology. He need not know languages, as he has interpreters, he must also be over thirty-five years old to hold such a position, and he remains in it until a man more learned and capable than he is found (Berneri, 1997, p. 133)". The ruler, therefore, holds full powers as long as he meets these conditions; if he ceases to do so, he must be deposed and this according to Campanella is the essence of



citizenship. Furthermore, one of the most elegant ideas in The City of the Sun regarding patriotism and citizenship appears in the dialogue on communal property, so if everything is shared and everyone's needs are met, what then drives citizens to work? The answer given is that the motive is patriotism citizenship itself: "I cannot debate this idea, but I can tell you that they love their homeland with a sincere and astonishing love greater even than the Romans' love for theirs. They have renounced private property far more completely. I believe that if our priests and monks were to renounce family ties, friends, and ambition for high office, they would own less than they do now and would be filled with the spirit of holiness and charity toward all." Citizenship, then, means renouncing every attachment to the self or anything other than the homeland living for the nation alone.

Political practice in The City of the Sun is founded primarily on moral values, as well as on monitoring citizens' adherence to them. As B. Malon notes: "Governmental intervention has no limit, because all moral values are required. Law gives these values an official form, and even judges are appointed according to a moral hierarchy valor, chastity, generosity, justice, fairness, prudence, and truth. (Malon, 1892, p. 25)" Accordingly, we see that the moral implications embedded in utopian literature have been a source of inspiration for politicians or at least for their slogans. Due to the fact that, the thinker Villegardelle, a faithful translator of Thomas More and Campanela, declared that The City of the Sun surpasses More's Utopia, and Campanella says that, knowledge stands at the summit of moral values, to the point that it becomes an object of worship. Mastery of all sciences is a moral duty, since human progress is only possible through knowledge the force that allows us to master nature. Moreover, citizens of The City of the Sun must learn the languages of all nations. Campanella writes: "I expressed my astonishment at their vast knowledge of history, and they told me that they know the languages of all peoples, for it is their custom to send ambassadors to every part of the world to learn what is good or evil in each. From this, they have gained immense benefits. (Berneri, 1997, p. 130)" Thus, the purpose of knowledge and of mastering the world's languages is to learn from the moral experiences of nations.

Historically, the idea of communal property arose from humanity's discontent with private ownership and its social consequences. In Plato's view, community concerned mainly sexual matters; in Campanella's thought, it extends to wealth, honor, knowledge, and pleasure. He writes: "Everything is shared among the inhabitants, under the supervision of judges. Sharing is not limited to food, but extends to knowledge, joy, pleasures, and honors, so that no one can claim exclusive ownership of anything. (Berneri, 1997, p. 130)" For Campanella, private property is the root of all sins and social ills. Fro, inequality in ownership creates deprivation, which breeds crime. Wealth and poverty, therefore, are not divine decrees but human constructions, he justifies his communal vision: "Property is the origin of self-love. A father seeking luxury for his son either seizes public wealth if he is strong, or becomes greedy and deceitful if he is weak. If self-love were abolished, only the love that binds members of society would remain." Hence, historians of socialist thought consider Campanella one of the early pioneers of socialism, based on the communal system he proposed in The City of the Sun.

Like Plato, Campanella insists on selecting women capable of producing virtuous citizens, but he entrusts this task to the Prince of Love, who oversees marriages to ensure that unions yield the best offspring. As the citizens of The City of the Sun mock those who devote effort to breeding horses and dogs but neglect the quality of human generations. Since man is the true image of God on earth, they must care for the "species" and its perfection. On the other hand, judges set the age of marriage at twenty-one for men and nineteen for women (Blanchet, 1920, p. 500). Sexual union, therefore, is not merely for procreation but also serves to enhance collective labor. As Paul Janet observes: "Campanella assigns judges the duty of monitoring natural relations between men and women, entrusting to an intrusive and authoritarian police force the task of overseeing personal emotions, thus disregarding the rights of the heart and individual dignity. (Janet, 1872, p. 257)"

Science holds the highest place in education and training in The City of the Sun, alongside manual labor. Moreover, the city's educational philosophy rests on artistic and sensory foundations: visual learning is central. Teaching through illustrations and wall display which we now call "visual pedagogy" is seen as the most effective way to form the citizen, since observation is the citizen's window to knowledge and the universe. Four elders

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oversee each educational stage. At the age of seven, children begin learning practical skills: "Every individual learns all types of crafts. After the age of three, children learn language and letters by walking around walls arranged in four rows, guided by four elders. They continue until the age of seven, when they are taken on tours of workshops; those of tailors, sculptors, goldsmiths, and others in order to discover their tendencies and abilities." Hence, education for patriotism begins by forming the citizen's intellectual base, not by keeping him ignorant. For, the danger posed by ignorance is far greater than that of knowledge and recognizing and respecting individual capacities is, in itself, an act of justice and fairness.

Work and knowledge are the pillars of Campanella's ideal society, a city he conceived in thought long before writing it, having endured torture for most of his life (in one case lasting forty continuous hours) (Durant, p. 302), Campanella came to see that work without knowledge is madness, and knowledge without work is futility. He praised the virtue of human labor and condemned those who live off the work of others, likening them to barren women in the state. Work is a duty for every citizen, but fairness requires that tasks be assigned according to individual abilities and gender differences. Women's work differs from men's; thus, each person should perform the work best suited to their aptitude. Labor is a human virtue, and social rank should depend on one's contribution and service to the community. Regarding the distribution of production, Campanella insists that every citizen has a right to the city's output by virtue of citizenship, yet distribution must be governed by justice and equity according to each person's contribution to collective work. When every citizen works, and when production ensures universal well-being, egoism and greed disappear, and spiritual and material solidarity prevails among all. Once citizens are assured of their livelihoods and have all their needs met, they devote themselves to learning, philosophy, and active participation in political and social life.

By and large, some thinkers and politicians believe that utopia is based on denying the soundness of the existing society and questioning the possibility of reforming it. From this perspective, it encompasses theoretical projects that are detached from the social realities and historical development that led to them. It treats the social system at a given moment as an independent reality, separated from its time, place, and history in other words detached from its truth as a human community with a historical identity. It never considers the actual possibility of transforming the existing society into an ideal city according to the proposed vision. Moreover, most advocates of the ideal city tend to believe that human nature is inherently virtuous and that the sins and vices of individuals are merely the product of social circumstances which can be observed in Sir Thomas More's Utopia, and if such a corrupt society were replaced by a new and virtuous one, sin and its causes would automatically disappear from communal life. These idealists also believe that human beings are capable of reaching perfection and call for reforming humanity and enabling it to attain that state. According to this view, the strange aspects of human life and its evil tendencies are not part of human nature itself, they promote this perspective in contrast to the one that asserts that human nature inherently contains both good and evil inclinations, as well as the causes of happiness and misery and that changes in social conditions can either lessen the evil tendencies or enhance the inclination toward goodness, but can never alter the essence of human nature, which always remains capable of choosing both paths. Idealists, although, reject this latter vision and its implications, they believe that changing social circumstances will eradicate the causes of sin and suffering once and for all a return of humanity to what they consider its original, virtuous, and good essence. Based on this conviction, idealists and advocates of the ideal city have focused on the goal of changing society and emphasized administration and leadership as the decisive factors in reform. This focus, as expected, led them to neglect the essential subject and instrument of reform: the human being, with all the diversity of dispositions, perspectives, and experiences that characterize human society. We might say, metaphorically, that idealists have viewed human society as a rigid mold composed of parts identical in qualities and traits, capable of being reshaped and modified by the most virtuous or capable elite. From this standpoint, philosophical idealism has provided the proper justification for totalitarian political doctrines and methods. We also believe that utopian discourse represents a "potential human" speaking to an "actual human." True and actual humanity hides within utopian discourse in all its forms such as novel, story, painting, cinema, expressing above all the rejection and repression exercised by those who share moral attributes against others. In reality, it expresses the animal aspect of being, one of the essential functions of utopia is to be aware of the not-yet. As Professor Atiyyat Abu Al-Saud puts it, it depicts "what once was and still deserves to be

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in the future; it reveals what has not yet been disclosed in the past. (Al-Saud, 1997, p. 132)" Thus, moral and ethical ideals constitute the main driving force behind all utopian writings. For, ethics is politics in another language, and politics is ethics or rather, the practice of ethics in another form. Since the violence and domination exercised by cultural, religious, or political institutions have been among the main factors inspiring the creation of utopias, all utopias paved the way for the emergence of the concept of citizenship in the modern and contemporary eras. To conclude, moral values cannot be separated from the values of beauty or truth. Utopias are the artistic expression of hope for happiness in an age of despair and alienation. Everything beautiful, in one way or another, traces its roots back to utopia.

Findings

The study finds that Campanella's philosophy, grounded in his theological background and resistance to scholastic orthodoxy, reveals an early form of rational humanism. His belief that truth arises from harmony among reason, faith, and sensory experience anticipates the modern scientific worldview.

- 1. Philosophical Triad: Campanella's three governing principles—power, love, and wisdom—represent an ethical architecture for ideal governance, fusing political order with moral virtue.
- 2. Critique of Aristotelianism: His rejection of Aristotelian dogma marks a pivotal break from medieval scholasticism, affirming empirical inquiry and intellectual freedom as moral duties.
- 3. Citizenship and Freedom: Campanella's utopia integrates civic participation with spiritual elevation, defining citizenship as an ethical relationship rather than a legal status.
- 4. Influence and Legacy: His ideas influenced Enlightenment thinkers such as Leibniz and later humanist movements advocating the unity of science, ethics, and politics.

In essence, Campanella's City of the Sun envisions a society where knowledge serves justice, and justice mirrors divine order—a vision that continues to inspire philosophical discourse on ideal states and human perfection.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in adherence to ethical research principles. All referenced sources have been accurately cited, and no part of this research involves human or animal experimentation. The authors affirm that the content respects intellectual property, scholarly integrity, and the ethical standards of academic publication.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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