

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY HISTORY APTITUDE TEST
2017**

Question 3 (40 marks)

*This is an edited extract from **A Voyage to Icaria**, written by the political and social theorist Étienne Cabet, which was first published in France in 1840. It is written in the genre of a novel, and this extract takes the form of a letter from a young visitor to Icaria, Eugène, to his brother, Camille, back home in France. The society of Icaria described in this extract did not exist, and the two brothers are also literary creations. However, Cabet's intention was to write a work of political and social commentary. You do not need to know anything about the author or the context in which he was writing to answer the question below, and candidates will be penalised for making use of any outside knowledge.*

O my dear brother Camille, how heart-broken I feel when I think of France and see the happiness enjoyed by the people of Icaria! You will be able to judge for yourself in learning of their institutions concerning food and clothes.

Concerning food, this first need of man, like all the others, everything in our unfortunate country is abandoned to chance and corrupt abuses. Here, on the contrary, everything is regulated according to the most enlightened reason and the most generous care.

First imagine, my dear brother, that everything concerning food has been regulated by the law. It is the law which accepts or rejects every type of nourishment. A committee of scientists, set up by the national representatives, with the aid of all the citizens, has made a list of all known foods, indicating which are good, and of these which are most necessary and agreeable, and they have had this list printed in several volumes and each family is given a copy. They have done still more: they have indicated the most suitable ways of preparing each food, and each family has also the *Cookery Guide*.

Once the list of good foods has been agreed upon, the Republic undertook the task to have them produced by its agricultural workers, gathered in great republican storehouses, and distributed using extremely ingenious street-cars¹ to each family, with an equal share to everybody. Where there is not enough for everyone, each section of the population will receive it in turn. At every meal they begin with a toast, to the *glory of the good Icar, benefactor of the workers, benefactor of the families, benefactor of the citizens*. And they also have what they call the *common dinner*, which is taken in superb, elegant halls, and which can contain up to two thousand people, and they surpass the magnificence of anything you have ever seen. The best restaurants and cafes of Paris are nothing, in my opinion, compared with the abundance and delicacy of these meals, the quality of their decorations and flowers, and the delicious music which charms the ear while the nose enjoys the delicious perfumes.

And yet you must realise that these common meals present a great economy compared with separate meals and can therefore afford better fare. You will also realise that this community of meals among workers and neighbours has other great advantages, particularly of encouraging the

¹ The 'street-cars' referred to here had not been invented at the time that *Voyage to Icaria* was written.

workers to fraternise and also to simplify the housework for women.

As with food, so it is with the law which regulates clothes. A committee has consulted everyone, has examined the clothes worn in every country, has made a list of them with their shapes and colours (a magnificent book which every family possesses), has indicated which should be adopted and which must be avoided, and has classified them according to their necessity, utility, and pleasure. Everything that was extravagant or tasteless has been carefully banned.

Everyone possesses the same clothes, so there is no room for envy or pride. And yet one should not think that uniformity here is not without variety. Not only are the two sexes dressed differently, but each of them changes clothes frequently, according to age and condition. Childhood and youth, adolescence and maturity, the condition of celibacy or marriage, or widowhood and re-marriage, as well as the various professions are indicated by the clothes. Thus, all the individuals belonging to the same essential condition wear the same uniform; but a thousand various uniforms correspond to a thousand various conditions. Consider that one colour might be chosen for girls with brunette hair and another colour more fitting for blondes, and that a worker might have one set of clothes for the home, another for work, another for public meetings, and yet another for common meals – in such a way you can see that the variety in costumes is almost infinite.

The shape of each garment has been fixed in such a manner that it can be manufactured in the most easy, rapid and economic way possible. They are nearly all done by machine, and so the workers have little to do to finish them. And practically all the clothes, hats and shoes are elastic, in such a way that can suit people of different sizes. All of the clothes are manufactured in enormous quantities, and are afterwards deposited in immense storehouses where everyone is always sure to find immediately all that they need and is due unto them according to the law.

I have talked to you in this letter of the women: O my dear Camille, how you would love these Icarians, if you saw how they surround women with attention, respect and homages, how they concentrate all their thoughts and happiness upon them, and how they constantly endeavour to please them. Happy women! Happy Icaria! Unhappy France!

Your

brother,

Eugène

What does this extract tell us about the political and social values of the author?